Pericles

Policy recommendation and improved communication tools for law enforcement and security agencies preventing violent radicalization

Criteria Analysis Report

Using interviews with professionals from the field of prevention

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Result Report

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Using interviews with professionals from the field of prevention

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This report provides the results from interviews with frontline practitioners across Europe who are involved in the prevention of radicalisation and violent extremism.

Results revealed a mixed consensus for the use of certain prevention tools, particularly those instruments measuring risk. It is recommended that more evaluations be required to evidence the effectiveness of identification tools in order to improve their uptake by relevant practitioners.

Specific tools that received broad support were educational measures. Furthermore, a broad and group based approach was considered financially more appropriate when placed against the more desired individual level approach.

In place of exploring new prevention tools respondents placed greater emphasis on enhancing existing instruments. The report supports the view of making fuller use of available instruments and ensuring that these are comprehensively available to European citizens.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Despite a number of high quality comprehensive research projects within the European Union, there still remains much to learn about processes of radicalisation speaks to the complexity of this phenomena. This report shall provide a contribution to our ever-ceasing knowledge and expertise in this field by presenting analysis of qualitative interviews with key informants. The aim is to uncover crucial insights into the practice of radicalisation prevention, the containment and de-radicalisation of extremist individuals, and the plethora of personal and social characteristics that increase vulnerability to radicalisation.

The particular role of the internet and media in fostering extremism and radicalisation is currently being examined by several projects. However targeted approaches to address the role of the internet were seen to be highly lacking in almost all existing and previous EU projects. This therefore informed the inclusion and furthering the consideration of such mechanisms and their contribution to potential radicalisation of susceptible individuals.

Although EU projects have contributed to the identification and scoping of the social characteristics of potential vulnerable groups who might be prone to radicalisation (including young individuals) and the social inequalities and perceived disadvantage factors which might drive them to radicalisation, more information is needed on their susceptibility, and the targeted responses which can be used to address those factors. The expansion of such considerations to potentially cover mental health issues has not been adequately covered in previous EU projects and also in the literature. This issue will be highlighted and investigated in this engagement covered in this report.

The report is the final of three research reports, which together will identify a set of policy recommendations that can be used to inform future measures for the prevention of radicalisation and violent extremism. The report provides an analysis of topics identified in the previous gap analysis report that will inform the development of policy recommendations. Topics included in the report were selected as criteria on the basis of its potential significance in enhancing current policies in the prevention of violent radicalisation. Individually, these criteria were existing prevention measures, education, social background, vulnerable groups, prison and spiritual welfare, role of internet and media and stakeholders. Each criterion was

transformed into questions, which were presented to professional actors across Europe in order to ascertain their opinions in these areas as well as to discuss findings from the project's previous reports for a validation of these outcomes.

The report continues with Section 2 and provides essential information concerning the methodology used for the interviewing of professionals. Section 3 is structured according to the criteria wherein the analysis of interviewees' responses are presented. Section 4 summarises the findings.

2 METHODOLOGY

The basis of this report is twofold: first to retrieve the views and opinions on selected topics currently relevant to radicalisation from professionals involved in counter-radicalisation and violent extremism, and second to present previous report findings in order to ascertain new insights and possible explanations.

2.1 SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

Interviews were seen as the most suitable instrument to attain the viewpoints of professionals and to acquire a richer understanding to themes in counter-radicalisation that are underdeveloped. The interview questions were based on the topics identified in the Pericles Gap Analysis report. The interview guideline developed comprised of five main sections:

Section A: Relation of the interviewee's job to the prevention of radicalisation.

Section B: Understanding of the term radicalisation.

Section C: Use of prevention tools by the organisation.

Section D: Professional views on results in the following areas (prevention measures, education, social background, vulnerable groups, prison and spiritual welfare, role of internet and media).

Section E: Stakeholders in counter-radicalisation.

Given that the interviewees represented fields that encompassed different roles and responsibilities, a semi-structured format was used so as to mould certain questions to the interviewee's field of expertise and ensure that answers provided were based on expert knowledge. A small number of preliminary interviews were performed to identify whether any questions should be eliminated and to ensure that the questionnaires were understood and produced the desired response.

2.2 INTERVIEW SAMPLING

The sample included seven practitioners whose current responsibilities are in the field of counter-radicalisation and violent extremism. Interviewees were gathered from across Europe so as to gather a cross-sectional

sample; countries included England, Ireland, France, Spain, Denmark, Finland and Bulgaria. The participants' selection were based on the following criteria: currently working within counter-racialisation, availability and willingness to participate. Respondents were access largely through the networks provided by the European Commission, such as the Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN). These networks provided an effective way of targeting different stakeholders from member states who are involved in the prevention of radicalisation and violent extremism.

Interviewee's were contacted via email and were asked to participate in a telephone interview, which typically lasted between 30 and 60 minutes. Telephone interviews were deemed essential in order to achieve a sample of frontline practitioners from different European states. Given the tight work schedules frontline practitioners often have, conducting interviews per telephone were seen as both a practical and flexibles means to arrange and realise interview dates. The interviews took place over a period of eight weeks beginning in November 2017 and ending in December 2017. KFN was the consortium partner solely responsible for the conducting of interviews, which were conducted on-site in the institute's offices. Interviewee's could be placed in the following distinct categories:

Grassroots organisations: Educational and religious projects were part of the sample who were geared towards the preventative end of radicalisation and violent extremism. Educational activities are one of the mechanisms used to assist local authorities in engaging and building interfaith collaborations as well as creating spaces where individuals can debate and speak freely about difficult topics, for example extremist ideologies.

Law enforcement agencies: The prison and probation service were represented in the sample as well as police agencies, in particular counter-terrorism units. These public services are often the first in contact with issues regarding radicalisation either by referrals or by dispensing advice.

Social workers: Both adults and children at risk of violent extremism is a current challenge which social workers may have to address; this can also include working with those suffering from mental health problems.

2.3 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

All interviewees were asked in advance of the interview to carefully read and sign the consent form before agreeing to participate in the research study. The purpose of the research was explained and participants were given the opportunity to ask questions any time before, during, or after their participation in the research. The decision to participate was entirely voluntary. The interviews took place on-site in office locations and with a

recording device. As various participants were possessed leading roles in their organisation or field, personal identities were kept completely anonymous.

2.4 DATA ANALYSIS

A thematic analysis was used on the dataset in order to identify emerging themes and to provide possible explanations for recurring patterns, which is why the interview guideline was grouped according to five criteria as previously mentioned. The analysis was chosen to provide an insight into the understandings of frontline practitioners and how they view current policies and prevention measures, which will be used to inform future policy making and enhancement of working practices.

The reports also provide a basis for the development of the Pericles toolkit, so the opportunity was taken to present findings from the projects' previous reports in order for validation. In doing so, current knowledge was disseminated directly to stakeholders and stimulate interest for the project.

3 RESULTS

3.1 PREVENTION

European states have responded to radicalisation and violent extremism in differing ways, particularly in consideration of the making and implementation of counter-radicalisation tools. Whereas certain EU states such as the Netherlands, Denmark and Germany are often seen as the frontrunners in this regard, other member states like Poland and Bulgaria have responded with measures that are either underdeveloped or restrictive in nature. These comparisons exist also between the outputs of stakeholders, such as health practitioners, law enforcement agencies, educators and local communities.

One French respondent described the prison and probation system in France as being experienced in the tools and interventions they use. For example, working groups have been built in approximately 30 prisons whereby prisoners engage in discussions concerning citizenship and religious sharia. Also, staff prison training programs have been developed to inform psychologists, educators and socials workers about the emotional, cognitive and social dimensions of radicalisation. In terms of specific tools, the respondent mentioned that prison staff, primarily psychologists and educators, are being trained to use VERA-2R, which assess the risk of radicalisation for prisoners. A lack of tool development does not appear to be a problem in French prisons as formalised structures have been put in place both for the prisoners and prison staff, and with good multidisciplinary representation. Instead, the respondent commented that French prisons are suffering at the moment from overcrowding, which has a direct impact on the quality of contact between prisons and staff. As the respondent explains, "[…] the staff do not have enough time to observe all the inmates and to do a good job with them…." The issue of overcrowding, though extensively discussed as a challenge itself, is seen here as having overarching implications for the prevention of radicalisation. The respondent indicates the overburdening strain an overcrowded prison can have on its staff, restricting their capabilities to perform preventative work on an individual basis and to a satisfactory standard. Potential spillover effects are also viewable whereby a reduced capacity to perform educational work groups and other de-radicalisation programmes could result in participation restrictions for prisoners. Policies that aim to reduce the inflation

of prison populations is a possible recommendation for enhancing the realisation of current counter-radicalisation frameworks in prisons.

The French respondent also highlighted the need for more prison officers to receive specialised training in terms of recognizing the different behaviours linked to radicalisation in prison. Other staff, however, were seen as having received such training already, specifically the psychologists, educators and social workers. Bettering the understanding of the processes of radicalisation for frontline staff and their ability to correctly identify signs of individuals at risk of radicalisation is an increasingly encountered recommendation. Not only does this allow for a more professional response but it also reduces possible mislabeling and the repercussions thereof. The respondent echoes what these trainings should offer, "[…] they need to learn about the processes of radicalisation and they need to know more about the jail politics and have to know more about non-violent communications perhaps". Here, the respondent advocates the quality of the relationship between prisoners and prison staff and encourages the building of one that is positive. The report therefore underlines the importance of investing into specialised training programmes.

Furthering the view that certain stakeholders already possess a host of tools for the prevention of radicalisation, one English respondent indicates, "We do a range of different things at the very preventative end it would be kind of the education work we do specifically around digital literacy and digital resilience so teaching young people how to stay safe online how to critically assess information they come across whether that's sort of mainstream media, more niche ideological media or propaganda material released by terrorist and extremist groups so that's the kind of preventative stage […] with the ones we deem to be the highest risk we reach out to them online on Facebook using a combination of either former extremists, survivors and faith members and then also trained counselors to basically start up a conversation and try to introduce alternative viewpoints, different world views". Here, the respondent describes a well-thought out communications campaign addressing the attitudes and behaviours of young individuals in online spaces. The mentioned use of credible messengers to deliver information to 'at-risk' audiences provides evidence that grassroots organisations are using strategic approaches in line with current understandings of counter-radicalisation research. To elaborate, academics and researchers have invariably purported the necessity of including key players, such as former extremists, particularly in counter-narratives given their effectivity and credibility.

The English respondent was questioned as to whether they thought any prevention tools were needed in the UK and responded, "Off the top of my head I'm not sure there's anything kind of specific missing. I think the issue

at the moment is more about access and an even spread." The benefits of a counter-radicalisation strategy that is regulated centrally and statuto-rily are implied here in that practitioners with a key role in the prevention of radicalisation are obligated to engage and cooperate, thus providing an all-encompassing approach to prevention. Instead, it is mentioned that the service provision is subsequently patchy resulting in certain populations having limited access to needful services and tools. Rather than the pro-duction of new tools, the respondent calls for more attention on accessing existing counter-radicalisation organisations and services, highlighting consideration of those populations who are geographically isolated or have narrowed networks. The research report points to a need for more coordinated models, such as national contact points, as one possible rem-edy to improving access to prevention services. Supporting the idea of a shift of focus from generating new prevention tools to bettering the efficacy of already prevention measures, the respondent indicates "… Other areas broadly in CV that need some work is the evaluation side so I think that has improved in the last couple of years but there's still a need for better and more robust evaluations to really understand what's working and what isn't …." The need for more evaluations of existing provisions is stressed by the respondent in order to identify and improve insufficiencies. More importance is therefore placed on making the most out of internal instru-ments and improving the efficacy of existing structures as opposed to in-troducing new means of prevention.

However, not every respondent claimed to have used counter-radicalisa-tion tools. One Danish respondent indicated that their organization does not endorse the use of tools that measure features of radicalisation owing to issues of reliability and effectivity. From this respondent's perspective, research concerning radicalisation is still too limited, particularly with Is-lamic radicalisation, and so thorough understandings are still required of the individuals who are radicalising, when radicalisation becomes a prob-lem and those that can be identified as dangerous. When asked to expand on reasons for not using prevention tools the respondent said, "We do not know what effect they will have if we were to use them." The reluctance to use prevention tools for fears that they could do more harm than good underlines the above-mentioned need for further evaluations on the effec-tivity of prevention measures. The risks communicated were the huge margins of error and the repercussions of incorrectly labelling or stigma-tising individuals as fitting the 'at-risk' profile of radicalisation. From this, the requirement of empirical evidence for practitioners regarding the effi-cacy of prevention methods is reiterated. It is therefore suggested that priorities of research funding should perhaps move towards those projects engaging in evaluations and slowly away from those proposing new tools based on limited evidence.

Upon asking how they believed prevention measures could be improved the respondent replied, "[…] I would say by giving access, quick access to education or work as soon as possible and I would give in the case of families obviously support for the parents and to also give them some form of outlet for all the frustration that they have …." The suggestion of having a more comprehensive and immediate access to counter-radicalisation support and services resurfaces once more. The promotion of early intervention is often heralded in research as being key to preventing the onset of radicalisation. Yet this is only achievable if persons know whom to contact and those involved in preventive work. Therefore, in order to ensure access is homogenised across populations, it is recommended that national contact points be put in place that extend to all relevant local authorities and collaborations.

An Irish respondent too reported that their organisation utilised no formalised prevention tools. According to the respondent, the reason is tied to the finite cases of radicalisation that have occurred or exist in Ireland, which given its lack of severity has not seen a use for formalised tools. It was further reasoned that the putting of counter-radicalisation measures in place would paradoxically create or provoke situations that were not necessarily apparent before. When asked what the respondent felt was needed to improve the current prevention measures in Ireland, it was alluded to that more formalised structures between government departments and local agencies were needed. The absence of formalised liaison structures between frontline agencies reflect the larger issue of diminished cooperation between agencies in Europe. In light of the sheer importance of multi-agency cooperation on a local, national and international level, the report supports the recommendation for stronger cooperation between practitioners who encounter radicalisation and violent extremism. The same respondent also agreed on the need for credible prevention measures, especially with regard to identification tools; this reinforces the view that increased evaluation efforts are required to improve practitioners' confidence in prevention tools and with this its uptake and implementation.

3.2 EDUCATIONAL AND PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND

Prevention and anti-radicalisation education is part of the standard curriculum in the United Kingdom under the Prevent Strategy. A UK based respondent explained that educational institutions are responsible for half of all referrals to British authorities. This respondent also agreed that young people should be a priority in regards to targeted education but also made special mention of the need to educate parents also. The 'Syria Mother Campaign' was a media campaign run by British authorities to educate

parents on the signs of radicalisation. That particular campaign was aimed at preventing young people from travelling to Syria to fight. Further campaigns such as the 'Action Counters Terrorism' campaign encouraged parents to take responsibility for their family and provides resources they can use if they are concerned about a family member. Another respondent agreed that society and concerned people need to be educated about a variety of issues surrounding radicalisation and terrorism. Moreover, prevention education should be provided to all citizens to spot radicalisation and maintain security.

The Danish respondent emphasised the necessity of providing education on radicalisation in a careful and considered manner. Anti-radicalisation workshops in education institutions are provided throughout Denmark; often in schools with many Muslim students. There should be an emphasis on describing the many positive aspects of Islam in order to avoid stigmatising and alienating Muslim students. In addition, Denmark is a very secular society and religion is considered a private matter. Many immigrant communities however consider religion to be the primary part of their identity and of upmost importance in how they live their lives. This tension between the secular and the traditional also needs to be navigated carefully within the context of anti-radicalisation education. Therefore, many young Danish students can benefit from workshops that describe what religion is, what are its benefits, and why do people believe in different religions.

The Finnish respondent identified schools as the crucial element in whole society education as they are the primary institutions in which children are socialised. Schools, therefore, should actively seek to educate children and young people about different faiths and cultures in order to decrease the sense of otherness in a multi-cultural society. In addition, education should have a strong civic component and focus on democracy, diversity, and respectful communication.

Low levels of general education is considered a common characteristic of individuals involved in terrorist attacks in the experience of one respondent. Further, this respondent stated that these individuals also have a very poor understanding of the ideology or religion on whose behalf they claim to be fighting. Therefore, both general and specific education is crucial for people who are radicalised. However, a further respondent provided a differing account of the link between education and vulnerability to radicalisation. This respondent spoke on the nuances of education that should be targeted at radicalised people. In the knowledge and experience of this expert, there is a wide variety of educational backgrounds amongst radicalised individuals, that is, there are just as many university graduates as there are school dropouts in radicalised groups. Therefore, low levels of

educations do not always equate to vulnerability to radicalisation; having a graduate degree is not necessarily an indicator of resilience. Rather, from this respondents perspective, it is the quality of tuition in the areas of critical thinking and emotional learning at a young age that has influence over vulnerability and resilience to extremist propaganda and recruitment. Such tuition could be achieved through a variety of curriculum subjects, such as English and Philosophy, and does not necessarily require a theological focus. In fact, this respondent does not consider it the responsibility of the state to provide theological education at all, and considers that in non-school settings community groups are best situated to provide such guidance.

The Danish respondent agreed that targeting anti-radicalisation education at young people is a good strategy as the average age, in his experience, in radicalised groups is twenty. Therefore, it is essential to educate young people before they become radicalised, as 'some of the most dangerous radicalised individuals are not in their teenage years, they are adults and it is very difficult to discuss with them once they've crossed this threshold. I think that the idea that you do prevention earlier in life is a good idea but we lack some credible options' (Respondent 4). Another respondent approves of young people being the highest targeted population of prevention measures. Young people who may already be experiencing a period of detachment from society and may be involved in petty crime and drug use are especially vulnerable to the pernicious influence of recruiters to extremist causes.

The focus on young people that is represented by the 44% figure is broadly the correct approach according to yet another expert. A human rights and civic education approach should be targeted at the very young, while more specific anti-radicalisation material can be introduced as they mature. Interestingly however this respondent pointed out that many individuals involved in extremist activities are not young, especially in far-right circles. Indeed, there are many individuals identified who are over the age of fifty, some of them women, who have been very active in creating and spreading right wing propaganda. A further respondent also identified an older cohort in far-right groups and argued that they defy the youth radicalisation link. While it is true that in Finland many of the individuals who have travelled to fight in Syria and Iraq have been under the age of thirty, there are many far-right activists within Finland who are over that age group.

3.3 SOCIAL BACKGROUND

Our British respondent stated that both broad and an individual level approaches are needed, and in an ideal situation could work in tandem and complement each other. The Prevent Strategy has, in many respects, taken a broad approach by identifying high priority geographical areas and providing funding for anti-radicalisation work in those areas. However, according to this respondent, there has been a persistent backlash from many Muslim communities in the United Kingdom who feel they are being unfairly labelled as extremists. Prevent has been refreshed a number of times to, at least in part, review these representational issues amongst Muslim communities but the perception of unfair targeting persists. In addition, from a resource point of view, it makes sense to take a broad approach. Nevertheless, this respondent did state that an individual level approach is often required and more effort should be spent locally and get to know key individuals within communities of concern.

Another respondent stated that both an individual level and a broad focused approach are necessary. Community and societal resilience to extremist beliefs needs to be built and maintained; such work needs a sustained and coordinated effort. However, the broad approach is also necessitated due to funding constraints within criminal justice agencies who are struggling with the volume of cases they are expected to investigate. The criminal justice system is overburdened and cannot possibly deal with each case individually. Therefore, a more broad diversionary approach is necessary, especially with young people.

One respondent stated that building resilience against polarisation in the whole society is a vital aim and a broad approach is necessary to meet that aim. Avoiding deep and hostile divisions in society can greatly reduce the stresses that contribute to radicalisation and can be achieved through democracy education, media literacy, and a range of school based programmes. Therefore while the individual focused approach has merit and is appropriate in some cases, a more broad whole society approach is a more effective anti-radicalisation strategy.

Nevertheless, there was a strong sense from some respondents that taking a broad approach is not as promising as it may appear. They argued that social and economic conditions contribute towards processes of radicalisation in very significant ways. One respondent expressed this particular point of view with clarity and is therefore worth quoting at length: "It depends on the vulnerability I mean insofar as targeting groups is concerned I'm not convinced about that one. I mean if the vulnerability is coming from lack of services, lack of inclusivity, lack of opportunity and say not meeting their requirements, if those vulnerabilities are being created.

From that particular perceptive well then the vulnerabilities need to be addressed. If they are being left open for radicalization through a feeling of grievance or say lack of inclusiveness or excluded from society I mean if that's the case well then I suppose there's a root problem that needs to be addressed and there's little point in targeting them with anti-radicalization tools or de-radicalization programs. It is the underlying causes that are contributing to radicalization. I mean that's how I would see it" (Respondent 2).

Another respondent however was less certain about the role of such social and economic factors in processes of radicalization and stated that it is exceptionally difficult to identify exact factors that contribute towards extremism in individuals. From the examination of large databases, this respondent claimed that it is very difficult to identify obvious trends in terms of education levels, or socioeconomic or social backgrounds. There appears to be a wide variety of personal and social characteristics in the lives of radicalized people, and pinpointing any particular individual or combination of factors that contribute to radicalization is highly problematic.

Young people in Denmark who have travelled to Syria to join Daesh have done so in groups according to our Danish respondent. Specific communities appear to be vulnerable to Daesh recruitment drives and therefore should be targeted with anti-radicalisation initiatives. However, according to this respondent, it is actually very difficult to take such a broad approach within the current legislative framework in Denmark. Security concerns dictate that people have to be dealt with as individuals. Another respondent argued that tackling radicalisation on an individual level basis would involve an unmanageable level of complexity. This respondent is therefore very sceptical about an individual centred approach and states, in his own words, that "one person's path to radicalization will not be the next persons path and one person's symptoms of radicalization might bear no resemblance to the next". (Respondent 2)

3.4 VULNERABLE GROUPS

The question of vulnerability to radicalisation, especially in relation to refugees, brought intriguing and nuanced reflection from respondents. The weight of experience and insight brought by experts highlights the complexity of this topic. While there is general consensus among respondents that refugees are not especially vulnerable to radicalisation there are also important caveats. For example, one respondent wondered if the percentage of prevention initiatives, programmes and projects, that specifically target asylum seekers is due to the difficulties involved in accessing new

communities. Refugees may experience disconnection and social isolation, may not be members of an institution or participate in mainstream social conventions, and are therefore difficult to access. Penetrating newly arrived migrant communities is careful work that can take a lot of time and effort, and even then may not be successful. Therefore, there may not be an identified need for such initiatives. The respondent also claimed that this social isolation is a very big problem that can lead to a wide range of difficulties beyond radicalisation, such as involvement with drugs, crime, and undiagnosed emotional and mental health issues.

While recognising that 2.8% is a very low number, one interviewee discussed the difficulties that refugees face and wondered if there is any programme or project that could help them. For example, he argued that many refugees may feel unwelcome and marginalised, and may consider that their asylum applications are not receiving due process. A general sense of racism they may experience from their host society coupled with any existing trauma or PTSD problems they may have, can create the potential for radicalisation. This respondent stated that: "It is a very big political question in our society, how do we treat those people who come here and you know what are the effects of our policies […] some of the asylum seekers might be radicalised in Europe: what is the responsibility of the receiving community to beat those vulnerability factors or actually building resilience? I think it's a very complex issue" (Respondent 6). Further, this respondent argued the NGO's and migrant rights activists may be very reluctant to connect the issue of radicalisation with refugees. Human rights based groups in particular may be aware that radicalisation is an issue amongst immigrant groups but do not want to highlight the issue due to concerns about societal rejection of immigrants. Therefore, as part of their efforts to combat racism and support refugees, they may not prioritise links between radicalisation and refugees in their work.

One respondent claimed that the threat from refuges is greatly overstated in Denmark. This particular expert has not seen any cases in his work practice where refugees were involved in activities linked to radicalisation or extremism. Indeed, he also claimed that he has extensively searched recent terrorism research databases and similarly could not identify many significant instances of refugees being involved in terrorist activities. The respondent pointed out of the few attacks, attempted attacks and interrupted plots, that he is aware of where refugees were involved, all were carried out by failed asylum seekers. Rejected asylum can be a devastating blow to an individual or a family and has been identified as a factor in an individual's drift towards radicalisation. Extremist recruiters are only too willing to take advantage of the resentment, despair and fear that such rejection causes to an individual. Immigrants awaiting judgements on the asylum applications are an extremely vulnerable group and the lack of

prevention initiatives targeting this group is of great concern. Therefore, from this respondent's perspective, the lack of prevention initiatives that target refugees reflects the very low rate of involvement of refugees in radicalised activities. Nevertheless, this respondent provided a cautionary warning regarding the difficulties of integration in Danish society for recent immigrants. While he described the sincere efforts of Syrian refuges to integrate and contribute to Danish society, he also surmised that the many obstacles they face might create resentment and hopelessness in coming years. Social isolation and structural disadvantage may contribute a fertile ground for radicalisation to begin in this so far peaceful immigrant group.

An important final point is that while links, or supposed links, between refugees and radicalization receives much public attention in the United Kingdom, right wing groups are a particular focus of law enforcement authorities. A UK based interviewee explained that under the Prevent Strategy there have been an increasing number of referrals for far-right radicalization in recent years. Further, intelligence gathering on right wing groups is an ongoing concern, and some far-right organizations have been banned.

Within the data collected from interviews with experts, there are divergent views regarding the links between mental ill health and radicalization or extremism that leads to violence. This section will first provide a summary of views that posit a direct link between psychological problems and violent extremism, and then consider the opposite points of view offered by experts. One of the individuals interviewed provided a thought provoking analysis of the potential links between mental illness and radicalization. This respondent described a very unsuitable environment in Finland regarding access to mental health services for asylum seekers. In short, asylum applications usually take three years to be processed and adjudicated. During that period, applicants do not have access to mental health professionals. These individuals may be experiencing severe trauma related symptoms related to violent conflict in their country of origin and may desperately need support to cope. Further, and compounding their preexisting psychological sequelae, the insecurity of their residence during this period can increase feelings of separation and resentment. For this respondent, these factors greatly contribute towards radicalization amongst a very vulnerable group. Services for asylum applicants suffering from trauma and stuck in an asylum limbo are 'much lacking and I think they would be absolute priority when we think about radicalisation among the asylum seekers' (Respondent 6). A related point was made by another respondent stated that mental health issues among the general population needs more focus and funding. Therefore, the lack of appreciation of

the possible role of mental illness in processes of radicalization reflects a wider cultural and societal attitude to mental health care.

One interviewee stated that mental health was a particular concern among young unaccompanied asylum seekers fleeing conflict zones. People with mental health issues are disproportionately represented in cases of concern that come to the attention of the United Kingdom Government for radicalization or extremism and that 'indicates to us that radicalisation and violent extremism is impacting slightly more on people with mental health problems in the general population'. (Respondent 3)

Some of the experts interviewed expressed the desirability of having a tool to detect vulnerability. Specifically an evaluation tool that would enable professionals in law enforcement and within prisons to identify individuals who could be referred to a psychologist or psychiatrist. Indeed a further respondent believes that a lot of the referrals his agency receives includes people with mental illness of some description. Interestingly he stated that many people who travel to conflict zones have been diagnosed with ADHD or Autism at some point in their lives.

Nevertheless, some respondents were very clear that, in their considered opinion, mental health problems had no connection to radicalisation or extremism leading to violence. Indeed, as one respondent succinctly stated, 'most inmates who are convicted of terrorism have no mental illness' (Respondent 1). Another respondent emphasised that while some people with mental illness might be vulnerable to radicalisation, holding radicalised or extremist views is not in itself an illness. Terrorist violence does not originate from an irrational mind and therefore does not qualify as mental ill health. The rationality of violence, no matter how barbaric, can be understood by examination of the perpetrators ideological motivations. Regarding people who join extremist groups, this respondent stated that 'they obviously have a very different worldview and a very different understanding of morality and things like that but essentially they're not acting irrationally within their own kind of framework' (Respondent 5)

This brief section will explore respondents' views on the desirability of improved collaboration with health care staff in the battle against radicalisation and extremism that leads to violence. In the United Kingdom, the Prevent Strategy places a statutory obligation on health care providers to identify concerns and target interventions. Professionals from the National Health Service are called upon by law enforcement agencies when it is judged that their services are needed. A UK based respondent stated that collaboration between law enforcement and National Health Service staff has been very successful in recent pilot projects. In London, Manchester, and Birmingham, interagency work in successfully managing risk and

sharing information about potentially radicalised individuals who exhibit symptoms of mental illness.

Another respondent stated that while formal structures for collaboration do not exist in the relevant jurisdiction, there is a lot of contact between law enforcement and health services. This is crucial to permit the assessment of immediate risk in some individuals. Risk to self or others can be mitigated if based on a psychological assessment; the individuals concerned can be detained and treated. This important inter agency collaboration is a crucial component of successful intervention in pressing cases.

The Finnish respondent expressed approval of a formal structure with health service providers to tackle radicalisation but claimed that capacity is lacking. In other words, there is a severe shortage of qualified professionals to deal with the type of trauma that many asylum seekers present with. Front line workers need to receive training in order to be able to recognise the symptoms of PTSD and other disorders amongst affected individuals. Currently many such service providers do not feel that they have the necessary knowledge and skills to work with survivors of torture or violent conflict.

One respondent stated that one of the key issues is that health care services are already overburdened and do not have the capacity to engage with radicalised individuals. Further, actually engaging with radicalised individuals brings a range of problems that must be dealt with in a very sensitive manner. This respondent stated that: "We are essentially saying to a radicalised person that we can consider your radicalisation a symptom of illness and it's difficult for them to accept it. It maybe sometimes that we just get it wrong and it's nothing to do with illness or anything but more so hopelessness that people develop. If we can help them by bringing in health care personnel then they have a huge role to play because a health care worker you are unconditionally there to help, you are accepted as ultimate helpers. They definitely have a role to play but you have to be careful in how you play that card and how you present this into the radicalised person's life" (Respondent 4)

3.5 PRISON AND SPIRITUAL WELFARE

With regional/national prison and probation systems identified to be highly significant for being increasingly implicated in radicalisation processes which have being observed to often lead to violent extremism, the role of such environments in radicalisation of individuals was deemed an important factor by the PERICLES project, with the potential of programs and actions targeting such systems investigated. The RAN (Radicalisation Awareness Network) practitioner working paper (2013) identified prisons

as a potential breeding ground for radicalisation owing to the following risks that are enabled due to the confined and excluded conditions afforded by such systems:

- Recruitment of other prisoners.
- Supporting extremist groups from prisons.
- Getting support from extremist groups outside prisons.
- Preparation for violent extremist/ideological inspired illegal acts after release.
- Hostility to other groups of prisoners and/or staff.
- Becoming more radicalised because of grievances/frustrations/anger related to being in prison.

The prison and probation systems administration therefore should logically be expected to be involved as strong partners in potential de-radicalisation /disengagement, rehabilitation and resettlement strategies and actions. While prisons have been emphasised to not be the main incubator for radicalisation, its increasing role especially factoring the current scale of radicalisation and violent extremism in Europe, and the growing number of extremist offenders (and reoffenders) calls for reflection of existing measures and interventions currently used to manage such processes and the implementation of potential prevention programmes to counter or hinder the radicalisation of individuals in prison systems in the first place.

An analysis of 108 prevention projects and programmes focused on extremism, counter radicalisation and de-radicalisation implemented in several EU cities, nations and regions carried out in the early phases of the PERICLES project revealed that only ≈14% of such programmes specifically targeted prisons and probation systems (Kudlacek, 2011).

Aspects of this interview were therefore developed to further elucidate opinions from practitioners and stakeholder experts in the area of de-radicalisation and counter extremism approaches on why such projects and programs have not been adequately directed at the prison environments.

One of the interviewees, who is a practitioner in the prisons sector, highlighted that the prison system is indeed a key area of concern for de-radicalisation approaches. This point was also agreed by another practitioner working in the field in Finland. The role of religious perspectives in prisons was also highlighted in the light of prison environments and faith communities in them where it has been observed that sentenced individuals change and experience a "religious awakening". This might be Christian or Muslim, but what has been observed is that the converts usually seem to have a clearer view of their wrongdoings, hence prison is definitely one useful target space. In Finland, this has led to collaboration with organisations where spiritual leaders are trained as mentors to visit prisons to

offer spiritual guidance and lead prayers. Trainings have also been pro-
vided to prison officers so that they understand the basics of religious
practices and how it effects inmates' life on a daily basis in prison in order
to avoid conflicts that might come between personnel and inmates be-
cause of a miscommunication or misunderstanding on what a religious
practice is or what the inmates need to be able have their freedom of reli-
gion respected.

Another interviewee suggested that the findings from the analysis carried
out in PERICLES Gap Analysis was not much of a surprise especially
since individual prisons and their administrative structures have individual
ways of dealing with such issues such as radicalisation and the individuals
that might be involved in such processes. It was advocated that actions
and decisions could potentially be taken in the prison environments to
counter potential perceived risks related to risk individuals without the
need to introduce the kind of counter extremism or de-radicalisation pro-
grams as analysed by the PERICLES project. An example was provided
for the case of an individual who is recognised as being a potential radical
influence in a prison could be moved to another facility by the prison ad-
ministration hence resolving the local issues of radicalisation within that
particular prison environment (at least temporarily). The close-knit nature
of prison systems and the flow of information between prison and proba-
tion systems as well as with local and national law enforcement agencies
means that specific information of incarcerated individuals, their potential
risks, past activities and extremist connection could be obtained by the
prison administrators who in turn can implement specific actions for that
individual without the need for projects and programmes. The administra-
tors can further use such information flows to find out if the individuals are
real risks with a potential of radicalizing other individuals in the prison en-
vironment or if their "extremist credentials" are spurious.

In a national context, the problem of radicalisation of individuals in prison
environments was highlighted as not being a big problem by one of the
interviewees and that the 13.9% of prevention projects implemented in
prison appears to be quite accurate at least in relation to Danish prisons.
Here, it was noted that more problems might more be encountered with
the gangs developing in the prison which might not have any religious or
ideological basis. This was exemplified with the case of overrepresenta-
tion of people of immigrant backgrounds in prison, which might result in a
congregation of such individuals, fostering potential radicalisation or vio-
lent implications upon release. The lack of knowledge on the topic or con-
text surrounding the reasons as to why selected prisons were not imple-
menting prevention programmes was further highlighted by one respond-

ent. Here, the difficulty in knowing if the percentages identified by the previous PERICLES report was reflective of current practice or not, was pointed out. More clarity is needed on the location where the sample projects were based, the prison populations, and the number of extremist prisoners identified in those prisons which are important circumstances to consider. The practitioner (who operates in the education sector) gave the example of recent statistics released by the UK Home Office home office of about 220 extremist individuals in UK prisons, of which 88 percent were Islamist and then the remainder were far-right. It was opined that in the UK the issue around extremism in prisons does not particularly have a strong de-radicalisation support component. It was further mentioned that an ongoing debate as to whether it is better to segregate extremist prisoners so that they cannot radicalise others (with the danger being that they could radicalise each other more), or whether they spread them among the prison populations and isolated from other prisoners with extremist views to obtain a dilution effect (this has the risk of exposing others to their radical ideas). So, while there is probably a need for more focus on prions, the raw numbers (i.e. the 220 reported) are quite small, and might not necessarily support the implementation of numerous programmes with the related resources associated with such programmes.

As noted by one of the respondents, it can be summarized that prison populations generally need much attention in the sense of educational projects, mentoring and life coaching, however current prison systems are very much focused on punishment and not reintegration, hence a shift is needed there.

3.6 ROLE OF INTERNET AND MEDIA

Drawing from the increased awareness and current understanding of the role of the internet, media platforms and new technologies (especially online media) in the process of radicalisation, especially regarding their use by extremist or ideological groups as a mechanism to recruit, train coordinate and communicate with vulnerable individuals, special attention on the role of the internet was given by the PERICLES project.

This has been based on growing concerns that the internet could potentially increase the rate and reach of radicalisation and recruitment to terrorist activities or organisations. Such fears are due to the fat that the internet and new media platforms allows vulnerable individuals to "self-radicalise" without any encouragement from individuals in an off-line setting, i.e. "lone wolves". The availability of information on the internet especially those with disastrous implications i.e. bomb making further creates a po-

tential for nefarious activities to be carried out without the normal infrastructure usually utilised by formal terrorist group. Such platforms have been reported to be increasingly used by extremists for operational purposes, including for communication and the coordination of attacks.

A working paper from the Institute for Strategic Dialogue (2011) summarised that the internet is important and is a growing factor in the radicalisation process, and presents a few examples of individuals reported to have been radicalised entirely online, with indications that this could increase over time. The PERICLES project delved into this issue during the interview process, and sought the views of the practitioners on why the role of the media and the internet in countering radicalisation was not duly reflected.

A respondent expressed that providing a view on why this is the case might be difficult, especially in the specific context of the prison environment and given the national circumstances (France). This was since there was no available research outputs for France regarding prison inmates, and subsequently no knowledge on the numbers or the extent of individuals involved in radicalisation by these sorts of media. This point was also reiterated by another practitioner (education sector, UK) who pointed out that the low representation as identified by the PERICLES analysis might be because those types of approaches are very difficult to evaluate. This is since in any kind of communication space prevention or counter-activities in radicalisation are very hard to attribute causation, and this is not just restricted to the extremism prevention field. For example, in anti-smoking campaigns, it will be very hard to prove that running theories of anti-smoking leads to x-number of people quitting smoking but having said that there is potentially a correlation so we've been running anti-smoking campaigns for over 40 years now, and over that period, the numbers of people smoking have dropped quite substantially. With such examples, there is always that attribution challenge when it comes to communication projects which can be tricky. The practitioner also highlighted the challenge in trying to connect online and offline behaviours and the disagreement over the impact of the internet on radicalisation. This is since there has probably been few reported cases where someone has sat in isolation consuming propaganda and not speaking with anyone either online or offline leading to self-radicalisation. The role of the internet as a catalyst in radicalisation was however affirmed, especially since it makes it easier for terrorist groups to spread their ideology net far and wide, with the potential of finding the "one in 100,000" or "one in a million" person interested. When further asked if "tools *should be developed that targets the impact of the internet and media on radicalisation*?", the practitioner agreed and highlighted that the fact that over the past sort of 4-5 years the average

age of people becoming radicalised and joining extremist groups has been observed to be dropping, means that there is still a lot of work to be done regarding the role of the internet and social media in radicalisation.

A view on why the identified programmes in practice is low was explained by another practitioner to be potentially due to the question of target groups. This is since a lot of back channel discussions and not programmes are operational for example with media representatives concerning the vocabulary that they use. Such round table talks with media representatives where the concepts are discussed and how they are presented and the impacts that might have are presented. The role of the internet is not only relevant for the spread of violent radicalisation ideologies, but also for hate speech and the increase in hate crimes which might result in societal polarisation as well.

One practitioner responded that the number of programs identified targeting the process of radicalisation via the internet, might be considered as a fair reflection of current practice, although a core of the actual work that is being done would of course in the last few years consider the internet to be the key radicalizing space. Hence more projects could be seen targeting this particular aspect in the coming years.

A practitioner working on the coordinating unit with the police, crime prevention unit and the parole service offered an opinion that the implemented EU programmes targeting the role of the internet can be seen to be proportionately low number because the sort of emerging media content produced and distributed by extremist groups (i.e. Daesh) are well produced and effectively connect and find viewership with the targeted young people who mainly use such media platforms, with increased difficulty in producing effective counter actions that adequately matches those media offerings or reduce their reach. These contents might target the individual worries, emotions and fears of their audience, resulting in influencing vulnerable viewers to considering radical ideas. When further asked if "*Should more programs and projects focus on the internet and media?"* The practitioner responded "Definitely, it's probably the key radicalizing area for us".

An opinion that the role of the media and the internet might be hugely overstated by the media was given by a counter terrorism police practitioner. Hence the interviewee was not surprised by the findings of the PERICLES deliverable, and believes that it reaffirms that the extent of self-radicalisation and media radicalisation is limited, especially without the structures and networks that would have provided tractions to the radicalised individuals absent from such emerging platforms. It was considered that such structures and personal contacts and the networks are what is key to radicalisation and violent extremism. The role of the internet

and emerging media platform as a very useful tool for disseminating extremist messages and ideologies, for establishing contact with vulnerable individuals, for messaging, for communication, and even for directing terrorist operations was however noted to be very important and essential in the spread of radicalisation in a globalised context. But, as individual radicalisation is concerned the practitioner reiterated that the role of the internet and media would not be regarded as being crucial or as being the main influence.

When questioned further *"Do you think prevention tools should target the dissemination of radicalizing messages?",* the practitioner commented that more tools should be aimed at countering the dissemination of extremist messages on the internet, with emerging media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Google, being the main targets currently. There is however an issue with establishing an effective methodology for countering the online message. I was noted that resolving this issue would be a huge bonus.

The need for more targeted programmes focused on this factor was expressed by a respondent since not enough was currently being done with regards to this theme. The interviewee identified that this might be difficult especially since this is a new emerging area which is constantly evolving. More prevention work was mentioned to still be needed in the area of the internet and the media especially with regards to counter-narrative and providing basic information. However, it was pointed out that there might be limits as to what can be done on the internet.

4 CONCLUSION

Data collected for this report highlights and emphasises the importance of targeted sophisticated anti-radicalisation education. The United Kingdom's comprehensive Prevent Strategy has seen a number of campaigns that target the communities and families of people judged to be vulnerable to radicalisation. One of the strengths of the Prevent Strategy is its all-encompassing approach that seeks to use all of the statutory institutions of the state, as well as community based organisations, to saturate British society with information about radicalisation. Further, with teachers providing half of all referrals to British authorities, it is clear that the education sector has much to offer in the fight against radicalisation and extremism that leads to violence.

There was broad consensus amongst respondents that anti-radicalisation education, the development of counter narratives, and the provision of theological education where appropriate, need to be provided in a sophisticated and thoughtful manner. In other words, the best intended efforts can backfire if they are judged to be stigmatising and labelling entire communities.

Retaining focus on the issue of education, there were important divergent views on the role of educational and social disadvantage amongst respondents. While some experts considered low levels of education to be a cause for concern, others were adamant that levels of education were irrelevant. Indeed, they pointed to the wide variety of educational and social backgrounds amongst known radicals to support their case. This is a complex area that requires nuanced analysis, however it appears that the quality of civic, religious, and critical thinking education that a young person receives is equally, and probably more, important than their final levels of credentialisation. In addition, there was broad agreement that young people should be the primary target of anti-radicalisation measures with some important caveats regarding right wing groups. Far-right movements demonstrate that age is no defence against susceptibility to extremist dogma.

Regarding the finding that considerably more anti-radicalisation initiatives target a broad group approach than an individual level approach, there are some important insights. Funding was a persistent theme in the respondents' answers, that is, the necessary money is not available to target each individual who may present a risk. Therefore a broad and group

based approach is adopted that considers young people or certain cultural minorities, for example, and appropriate target group. Of course this approach is not without controversy, as seen in the backlash against the Prevent Strategy in the United Kingdom.

Section 3.4 concerns the links, or supposed links, between vulnerable groups and radicalisation, and provides excellent clarity of what some respondents' claimed were widely held but erroneous beliefs. For instance, there is very little evidence to prove that refuges are more vulnerable to radicalisation than other groups in society. An important exception is the role of rejected asylum applications which can make individuals, under the right tutelage, seek revenge for what they consider grossly unfair treatment by their host society. However the agreement from respondents witnessed in their views on the refugee-radicalisation link is not seen in their views on the role of mental health in extremist movements. Our questions on the link between mental ill health and radicalisation polarised our respondents into two clear camps. The first considered that poor mental health is likely the key factor in vulnerability to radicalisation. Their views came from both personal experience working with such individuals and from an intimate knowledge of relevant literature. That one expert was able to assertively state that diagnoses of mental illness are prevalent amongst those who travel to conflict zones to join Deash was fascinating. Nevertheless, a minority of respondents who also have personal experience with radicalised people, including within prisons, equally assertively disputed such a perspective. For them, it is quite possible to understand extremists without resorting to labelling them as mentally ill. Religious and political extremist ideologies are coherent belief systems that motivate acts of violence to achieve discernible goals. The extremist has a different world view but he or she is usually not mentally ill. On the related issue of collaboration with health care services to evaluate risk in suspected radicals, all of our respondents stated that while some work is ongoing, funding deficits and overburdened health services prevent such collaboration from making a meaningful impact.

The section on Prisons and Spiritual Welfare also brought some surprising and nuanced insights. None of our experts claimed that radicalisation in prisons is as big a problem as many interested parties appear to believe. In the United Kingdom the number of identified radicals in the penal system is small, relative to the overall prison population. In Denmark conventional criminal gangs present a far bigger problem within prisons. Therefore the 13.9% of identified programmes aimed at prisons was not considered an insignificant number.

Regarding the role of the Internet and Media in processes of radicalisation, this report offers a window into the detailed considerations undertaken by experts in this field. One respondent gave a powerful account of his views of the power of Daesh videos in particular to affect young Muslim men and motivate them towards fighting for this corrupt ideology. However most respondents stated that while online propaganda is assumed to play a large role in radicalising people, this may not be the case. Regardless, as our respondents discuss, even if online propaganda was as powerful as many believe it to be, developing counter narratives and online anti-radicalisation techniques is a huge challenge that authorities are currently not equipped to meet.

At each step on the Staircase to Terrorism (Moghaddam, 2005) various personal and social factors exert pressure upon individual actors and can increase the likelihood of choices that lead to harm. For some individuals, one key factor, such as poor mental health or a rejected asylum application, can explain their vulnerability to radicalisation.

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