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Commission

High-Level Commission Expert Group on Radicalisation (HLCEG-R)

Final Report
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*Migration
and Home Affairs*

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Trends and challenges of radicalisation in the European Union

Europe is facing a high and evolving **terrorist threat**, as demonstrated by an increase in recent years in terrorist attacks, fatalities and terrorist convictions¹. In 2016, a total of 142 failed, foiled and completed attacks were reported. In 2017, 16 attacks struck eight different Member States while more than 30 plots were foiled.

Radicalisation leading to violent extremism and terrorism is not a new phenomenon but the process is now taking place at an alarming speed and scale. The phenomenon is not limited to a single Member State but extends to the EU as a whole. As a matter of urgency, the European and Member States' policies must evolve to match the scale of the challenge offering effective responses.

There is no official account of **how many radicalised individuals** are currently present in EU Member States and posing a potential security threat. Yet, various datasets collected at national level illustrate the magnitude of the problem: approximately 20.000 individuals have been reported in France; in the United Kingdom there are reportedly over 20.000 individuals having featured in previous security service inquiries; and the German security authorities have reported 11.000 Salafists, with a shift towards a more violence-prone and terrorist spectrum. Among those, a smaller fraction is considered as being particularly "dangerous".

In addition, available threat assessments indicate an increase in right-wing extremism promoting anti-democratic, intolerant and divisive messages fuelling violent extremism as well as polarisation. Attacks carried out by left-wing violent extremists have been of rising concern as well.

The **return of foreign terrorist fighters (FTF)** and their families, including children, **home-grown jihadist extremists** and lone actors is regarded as posing particular challenges also in terms of preventing as well as countering the radicalisation process.

As regards the **foreign terrorist fighters** in particular, their return and relocation remain a significant long term challenge requiring Member States to balance repressive and "soft" responses; their imprisonment may only delay the threat they pose.

Preventing **radicalisation in prisons** remains a significant challenge across the EU, and experts remain somewhat divided on the different existing approaches to tackle the phenomenon, in particular on isolating radicalised prisoners from other prisoners or not. Nevertheless, all of them agreed that investments in tailor-made disengagement trajectories, starting in prison but pursued long afterwards in a multi-agency cooperation, are strongly recommended.

Irrespective of the kind of radicalisation or country-specific circumstances, Member States are confronted with similar concerns such as the **use of the internet and social media by terrorist groups** or violent extremist organisations for propaganda and recruitment purposes, **radicalisation in prisons**, and risks of an increasing **polarisation** and – more broadly – the **undermining of societal peace and shared values**.

Despite significant setbacks on the ground, Daesh continues to devote considerable effort to its media operation and early this year saw resurgence in media production. The internet tended to feature prominently in almost every attack that happened in 2017, whether it was in using online instructions to prepare for the attack or glorifying in its aftermath, and it is clear that **terrorist groups continue to use the internet** to groom and recruit. In addition to Daesh propaganda, other terrorist groups similarly exploit the internet for terrorist gain. Al Qaeda, Boko Haram and a worrying rise of violent right-wing extremists are all prolific users of the internet, challenging the cohesion of Europe's societies.

Consequently, these **multi-dimensional challenges require multifaceted responses** drawing on all relevant policy areas and involving all relevant actors at local, regional, national, European and international level, with policies aimed at preventing and countering radicalisation whilst complementing other measures as part of a more comprehensive approach to counter terrorism. The Group highlights the importance of multiagency responses and support to initiatives on the local level. While Member States' specific needs differ, requiring the development of approaches addressing issues specific to their individual circumstances, there is a shared interest in further enhancing exchanges of practices and experiences and closer cooperation between the different national actors at European level. The HLCEG-R has explored concrete ways to strengthen these policies with a view to supporting Member States in their efforts.

¹ EUROPOL TESAT 2017 report: <https://www.europol.europa.eu/tesat/2017/>

1.2. The High-level Commission Expert Group on Radicalisation

1.2.1. Mandate

EU policies in preventing and countering radicalisation have been strengthened in recent years as reflected in a number of recommendations as well as in numerous EU initiatives and EU funding programmes and opportunities.² The **comprehensive assessment of EU security policies** confirmed the EU added value of these initiatives but also identified scope for improvement.³ It is against this background that, by decision of 17 July 2017, the Commission set up a **High-level Commission Expert Group on Radicalisation (HLCEG-R)** with the tasks to offer advice on 1) how to improve cooperation and collaboration among the different stakeholders and in particular Member States; 2) the further development of EU prevent policies, including by elaborating a set of principles and recommendations for the implementation of targeted and effective measures to prevent and counter radicalisation at both EU and national level; and 3) future more structured cooperation mechanisms at Union level⁴.

1.2.2. Composition

The HLCEG-R is composed of Member States' competent authorities, the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation, the European Union's Judicial Cooperation Unit, the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Training, the Radicalisation Awareness Network Centre of Excellence, the European External Action Service, and the EU Counter Terrorism Coordinator (as members); and the European Judicial Training Network, Research Executive Agency, the Council Secretariat, the Secretariats of the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE) and the Special Committee on Terrorism (TERR) from the European Parliament, the Committee of the Regions, the Economic and Social Committee (as observers). The European Strategic Communications Network (European Strategic Communications Network) participates as external expert.

The composition of the group allowed to gain a comprehensive overview of actions already undertaken by the different players and to identify areas where the different actors can make valuable contributions to the objective of furthering prevent policies at EU level. The different Commission services were closely associated providing detailed insights into the different initiatives (funding instruments) as well as concrete deliverables.

1.2.3. Working method and first outcome

The work of the group started with the high level **kick off meeting on 11 September 2017**, where members agreed a work programme based on the scoping paper⁵. This launch event was followed by two subgroup meetings at expert level held on 28 September and 9 November 2017 paving the way for the **adoption of the interim report at the high level meeting on 24 November 2017**.

The Group acknowledges the achievements of various EU initiatives and their contribution to the key objectives of EU policy on the prevention of radicalisation. The Group expresses appreciation for the different activities of the **Radicalisation Awareness Network**, including the numerous guidance papers and support on several crucial areas addressed not only to practitioners, but increasingly also to policy makers. In particular, these include on the challenge of returning foreign terrorist fighters and related issues, the rising phenomenon of an increasingly polarised society, and local multi-agency approaches etc. The Group stresses the importance and urgency of the work of the **EU Internet Forum** to reduce accessibility to terrorist content online and to increase the volume of effective counter narratives. The Group recognises the particular added value of the work of the **European Strategic Communications Network (ESCN)** assisting Member States in developing strategic communication strategies.

These achievements have set a solid basis for further work, but need to be further strengthened. Against this background, the interim report has set out preliminary findings and recommendations for further **action in priority areas** (such as radicalisation in prisons, communication and online propaganda, the cooperation at local level, education and social inclusion, groups which require particular attention (including in particular as regards youth radicalisation and child returnees), the external dimension, etc.).

The interim report also set out a number of **recommendations for the establishment of enhanced cooperation mechanisms at EU level**, advocating a gradual approach, which would entail 1) a significant strengthening of existing networks, facilitating more systematic exchanges between key stakeholders, 2) enhanced coordination at EU level of existing networks and initiatives and 3) a steering body making sure that EU actions in this field are geared towards needs and policy priorities within Member States and offering Member States the opportunity to be more closely involved in strategic decisions.

² Commission(2016) 379 final and Commission(2017) 354 final.

³ See the Comprehensive Assessment of EU Security Policies within the Ninth progress report towards an effective and genuine Security Union (Commission(2017) 407 final) and the corresponding Staff Working Document (SWD(2017) 278 final).

⁴ Commission Decision of 27.7.2017 setting-up the High-Level Commission Expert Group on radicalisation: <http://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regexpert/index.cfm?do=groupDetail.groupDetailDoc&id=34061&no=1>

⁵ See the Scoping Paper available in the Register of Commission Expert Groups under: <http://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regexpert/index.cfm?do=groupDetail.groupDetail&groupID=3552>.

This interim report⁶ was welcomed by the **Justice and Home Affairs Council on 7 December 2017** stressing the importance of adequate framework conditions to achieve operational results and tangible progress.

The two subgroup meetings at expert level on 28 February and 18 April 2018 focussed on the further development of concrete options for enhanced cooperation mechanisms at EU level while also addressing ways to facilitate the implementation of the recommendations.

A third HLCEG-R meeting took place on 18 May 2018 to endorse the final report, including recommendations on priority areas, enhanced cooperation mechanisms and next steps.

1.2.4. Structure of the final report

This **final report** encompasses recommendations for further action in priority areas (Chapter 2) as well as recommendations on cooperation mechanisms (Chapter 3). It also sets out proposals for implementation (Chapter 4). The conclusions to this report set out the next steps (Chapter 5).

This final report sets out the findings and recommendations resulting from discussions in the HLCEG-R. These recommendations fully respect the existing division of competences between Member States and the EU, in particular the provision of Article 4 (2) of the TFEU recognising that *“national security remains the sole responsibility of each Member State”*. The scope of the recommendations is limited to preventing and countering radicalisation and does not extend to areas such as intelligence sharing or information exchanges on individuals suspected of terrorism. The recommendations and findings seek to maximise the added value of EU cooperation in the area of radicalisation and avoid duplication with existing mandates and roles of other groups, such as the Terrorism Working Party in the Council.

The publication of this final report marks the **end of the HLCEG-R’s mandate**.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS ON POLICY AREAS

The Group has identified priority areas where further action at EU level could offer significant benefit. In these areas the Group recommends to **better support the ongoing efforts at Member State level** in particular through enhanced exchanges of practices and experiences, more targeted and tested guidance and training, more empirical research and improved pooling and accessibility of relevant research findings as well as a more systematic evaluation of prevent policies and interventions in order to strengthen the evidence base of EU and Member States actions. Against this background, the Group recommends further actions in a number of priority areas as detailed below.

2.1. Prison and probation, rehabilitation and reintegration

Recognising that prisons might be incubators for radicalisation and considering the increased number of terrorist convicts and in view of their eventual release, the Group stresses the need to further enhance Member States’ capacity to develop, implement and evaluate **risk assessment tools and disengagement programmes** to allow for targeted and effective rehabilitation and reintegration of terrorist offenders.

Recommended actions include **exchanges of experiences in specific areas** such as religious counselling in prisons, more broadly mapping and evaluation of relevant practices and guidance material, organisation of trainings and more broadly capacity building measures, including financial support.

In addition, the Group recommends Member States work closely with Eurojust as regards the work on possible **alternatives to prison**, particularly relevant as regards women and children.



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⁶ See the Interim Report available in the Register of Commission Expert Groups under: <http://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regexpert/index.cfm?do=groupDetail.groupDetailDoc&id=36235&no=1>.

Specific recommendations:

Exchange of experiences and identification of good practices:

- For the Commission – in close cooperation with Member States – to **map existing practices to prevent and counter radicalisation in the prison and probation context** (including exit programmes as well as risk assessment tools/methodologies) as well as more broadly **practices supporting rehabilitation and reintegration** of prisoners into society (taking into account age and gender sensitive mentoring programmes).
- For Member States with support from the Commission (in particular through the RAN) to explore the organisation of **voluntary peer reviews of exit, rehabilitation and reintegration programmes** in Member States and to step up sharing of already evaluated/audited programmes.
- For the Commission (in particular through the RAN) in close collaboration with Member States - to facilitate the **exchange of experiences on the provision of religious counselling** in prisons and to provide **guidelines on working with and training chaplains, particularly imams**, for the prison and probation setting.
- For the Commission (in particular through the RAN) to **increase relevant study visits** throughout the EU.

Research: For the Commission – in close cooperation with Member States – to facilitate the sharing of existing, and encourage further **research** (including evaluations) **into different prison regimes** and pathways into and out of radicalisation in prison.

Funding: For Member States and relevant actors in the Member States to use **EU funds** in support of relevant actions, including in particular funds available under **Internal Security Fund – Police** shared management funds for the development of exit programmes in the prison and probation setting as well as **European Social funds** for the development and implementation of programmes for the rehabilitation and job training of prisoners and reintegration of (young) offenders.

Training:

- For Member States to **encourage the organisation of trainings on radicalisation for judges and prosecutors** at national level as a follow up to European Judicial Training Network (EJTN) EU-wide testing of training modules.
- For Member States to pay particular attention to **prison and probation staffing and their on-the-job training** in radicalisation (for instance via e-learning) and to take advantage of the **EU-level trainings** (e.g. through CEPOL).
- For all Member States to **join the European Penitentiary Training Academies (EPTA) network** for it to become a forum where trainings for prison staff are shared, evaluated and further developed.
- For the Commission (in particular through the RAN in close collaboration with for instance EUROPRIS+CEP+EPTA+IMPACT⁸) to continue mapping and peer evaluation of trainings on radicalisation in the prison and probation sector.

Guidance: For the Commission to facilitate the establishment of a **repository of handbooks** relevant to prevention of radicalisation in prison and probation and ensure its proper dissemination.

Further policy development: For Member States to support the Eurojust work on monitoring and analysing terrorism related convictions, including the use of **alternatives to prosecution and detention** in particular by the **improved provision** of information and to explore ways of following up on findings.

⁸ Confederation of European Probation (CEP), European Organisation of Prison and Correctional Services (EuroPris), European network of Penitentiary Training Academies (EPTA), IMPACT Europe project.

2.2. Communication and countering online propaganda

The dissemination of terrorist propaganda on the Internet remains a primary concern and efforts to reduce the impact of such content through the swift removal, the development of counter and alternative narratives as well as the development of strategic communications remains a priority. In addition to the work carried out in the context of the **EU Internet Forum** and the recently adopted **Recommendation on illegal content online**, the Group calls for action as regards **traditional media and satellite television** misused to amplify the terrorist and extremist divisive narrative, and to promote responsible media reporting.



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The Group took note of the work under the Civil Society Empowerment Programme, including the trainings for civil society organisations throughout Europe as well as the subsequent EU call for proposals. To strengthen capacity and capability of Member States and civil society actors to support and develop **alternative or counter narratives** to violent extremism and terrorism, the Group advises to continue to provide (financial) support (such as through the Civil Society Empowerment Programme and corresponding programmes and initiatives at national level), exchange of lessons learnt, and insights into effectiveness and impact e.g. through the RAN, and to make use of in particular the support and consultancy provided by the European Strategic Communications Network.

At the same time, the Group recommends to further **analyse how disinformation and fake news influence terrorist and extremist groups' ability to impact audiences**, supplementing ongoing work in this area as set out in the Communication on disinformation⁹.

Specific Recommendations:

- For the Commission and Member States to continue their efforts within the EU Internet Forum to reduce terrorist and extremist content online and to support the development of alternative and counter narratives.
- For the Commission (in particular through the RAN and European Strategic Communications Network) to strengthen **exchanges of experiences and good practices** in the development and dissemination of alternative **and counter narratives** including insights, experiences and identified difficulties regarding their **effectiveness and impact**.
- For Member States to make use of the **European Strategic Communications Network expertise and consultancy services** to build capacity in developing sustainable strategic communications responses to counter terrorist and extremist narratives, by developing partnerships between governments, civil society and industry, with a focus on tailored and hands-on support to Member States and – subject to budgetary constraints – certain third countries.
- For Member States – in line with their policy priorities – to make use of exchanges within the **European Strategic Communications Network** to discuss and analyse developments in communication **strategies and tendencies of violent extremist groups** but also challenges in terms of **disinformation campaigns** and fake news and how they influence terrorist and extremist groups' ability to reach and impact audiences.

⁹ Commission(2018) 236 final, 26.4.2018

- For Member States, with support from the Commission, to explore further steps for **raising awareness** and facilitating a structured discussion with traditional media, which could include, where appropriate, work by the media industry and journalists' federations for the development of **guidance for journalists** about their possible contribution to preventing the spread of extremist narratives and understanding polarisation dynamics.
- For Member States with support from the Commission and expertise from European Strategic Communications Network to explore **the idea of hub(s) aimed at providing specialised communications support** to alternative- and counter narrative campaigns.
- For Member States and the Commission **to examine whether existing tools (including legislation) are sufficient** to effectively prevent the spread of violent extremist propaganda via traditional media including satellite TV as well as initiating a structured dialogue with media companies on illegal content.

2.3. Local and multi-agency approaches

First line responders at the local level, often best placed to detect and respond to signs of radicalisation, need skills, resources and an appropriate framework in which to operate in. The Group recognises the need for **local multi-agency approaches** involving all relevant actors, including local authorities, civil society organisations, social and youth workers, law enforcement and community police officers, (mental) health care practitioners and others.

Whilst some guidance on how to set-up local strategies and cooperation structures for prevent work at local level already

exist¹⁰, the Group recommends the further **evaluation of existing approaches and best practices** (such as mobile expert teams) and stresses the importance of helping local actors address particular challenges more specifically (such as the selection of relevant partners in communities and information sharing protocols.)

The Group encourages Member States to complement EU networks and initiatives with corresponding coordination and cooperation structures at national, regional or local level while it recommends to the Commission to gather all relevant actors to explore further initiatives (such as the closer engagement among cities).

Specific recommendations:

Analysis and research: For Member States to assess the radicalisation risks (e.g. radicalisation “hotbeds”) and specific prevention needs as a starting point for targeted interventions where most needed and corresponding allocation of resources and capacity building efforts at national and local level. At EU level, such an assessment could be supported by pooling findings and drawing on the expertise of existing networks bringing together researchers, law enforcement and - where applicable - intelligence agencies (e.g. as represented in the European Expert Network on Terrorism Issues, (EENeT)) in accordance with the relevant legal framework .

Identification of good practices and development of guidance:

- For the Commission – in close cooperation with Member States – to carry out **mapping and comparative analysis of existing multi-agency approaches and structures in Member States**, including experiences of national prevent authorities with mobile expert teams.
- For the Commission (in particular through the RAN) – in close cooperation with Member States – to facilitate the identification of **good practices and guidance for local cooperation** in the preventive work between local agencies and non-governmental organisations, including faith-communities.
- For the Commission (in particular through the RAN) and in close cooperation with Member States to **develop practical guidelines**, including advice on establishing **information sharing protocols** (building on the RAN handbook and relevant Member State expertise) or the selection and vetting of civil society partners.

¹⁰ RAN paper on “Developing a local prevent framework and guiding principles (https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/ran-papers/docs/policy_paper_developing_local_prevent_framework_guiding_112016_en.pdf).

- For Member States and the Commission within their respective powers to explore how to provide counselling services or peer reviews with experts from Member States, the RAN or other relevant experts.
- For the Commission to **bring together the main European and international organisations and associations** active at the local level (Summit of Mayors of the Council of Europe, Strong Cities Network, Nordic Council/Nordic Safe Cities, European Forum for Urban Security) and relevant EU wide projects. The organisation of such a conference would help identify the need for further action and support of, for instance, local CVE coordinators or other relevant experts and mayors, including the possibility to set up a small group of more advanced cities complementary to the efforts of existing groups.

Framework conditions and capacity building:

- For Member States (taking into account the specific circumstances in each Member State) to explore the setting up of **coordination and cooperation structures at Member State level as appropriate** (structures that could include joint expertise of researchers, law enforcement, economists, as well as social-, mental- and health care organisations, education, child protection services, etc.).
- For Member States to **support local and regional structures and interventions** to enhance **long term expertise** and **immediate and tailored support** where and when needed (e.g. through capacity building measures or deployment of mobile expert teams). At EU level this could be supported through the swift deployment of RAN experts (and European Strategic Communications Network experts where relevant), where requested by the competent authorities in the Member States concerned.

2.4. Sharing of knowledge about radicalisation phenomena and radicalisation pathways

Information and knowledge sharing is not only a challenge as regards multi-agency approaches. Common understanding of concepts, terminology, radicalisation indicators and risk categories could also be facilitated at EU level. As a first step, Member States are encouraged to share their (empirical) research findings on **radicalisation pathways, trends and risks**.



Specific Recommendations:

- For Member States, with support from the Commission, to **map and facilitate more empirical studies into radicalisation factors and pathways, trends etc.** (as they exist for instance on FTF returnees).
- For Member States with support from the Commission to explore the usefulness and feasibility of developing a **shared understanding of concepts and radicalisation indicators**.
- For the Commission in close cooperation with Member States to facilitate the sharing of experiences (including difficulties) and research findings with **identification, monitoring and evaluation of the signs and risks of radicalisation**, as well as analysis of the key factors for radicalisation, making use of expertise of EU networks where appropriate.
- For Member States with support from the Commission and other relevant EU bodies to explore **knowledge exchange** on for instance (radicalisation of returning) foreign terrorist fighters, home grown violent extremists as well as extremist groups and influences, within the existing legal framework.

2.5. Ideology and polarisation

The relevance of extremist ideology, its direct or indirect influence on the radicalisation process towards violent extremism and terrorism, as part of a comprehensive approach on preventing radicalisation, was recognised by the Group as an important aspect to explore further.

The Group recommends an overview of approaches and practices in Member States as regards the engagement

with religious leaders, communities and institutions as well as the funding and monitoring of those spreading **Islamist extremist ideology**, including mechanisms and safeguards to ensure that any measure is in line with fundamental rights standards and does not lead to stigmatisation or polarisation.

The Group recognises that attention should also be paid to the rise in **right wing extremism** and the broader tendency of **polarisation in society**.

Specific Recommendations

- For the Commission in close cooperation with Member States to facilitate further **exchanges of experiences and different approaches** in Member States including for instance as regards **working with communities**, setting up criteria for **identifying credible and reliable partners** for disengagement programmes as well as interventions tackling extremist ideologies.
- For Member States and the Commission to establish a joint **overview of the different approaches** and experiences in Member States and explore possible further actions in the relations with religious leaders, communities and institutions, including the training of religious leaders, pluralism, faith related dialogues, funding and monitoring of religious institutions spreading Islamist extremist ideology,
- For Member States and the Commission to **raise awareness** as regards extremist ideas and their dissemination on the internet and traditional media and to identify areas for **further research and analysis**.

2.6. Identifying and addressing risk of radicalisation of individuals belonging to groups requiring particular attention

The Group stressed the importance of further exploring and developing adequate responses in particular to the challenges posed by **children returning from conflict zones** or raised in a radicalised environment. Whilst some practical guidelines on how to deal with child returnees are already available¹¹, the Group stresses the need for better information about the scale of the problem as well as the importance of developing and/or maintaining a multidisciplinary and interagency approach, using existing child protection systems to inform, as appropriate, the development of tailored responses (involving work with role models, communities and family members and parents/families) as possible practical solutions to the problem.

Comparative analysis of the existing approaches in Member States in particular as regards risk and needs assessments for children would further help Member States to make better use of or establish the necessary

frameworks, give guidance on interventions, including by first line responders.

At the same time the Group stresses the need to develop and implement the necessary **trainings for practitioners**. Other groups of individuals regarded as requiring particular attention include individuals migrating to the EU territory, some of whom may be particularly vulnerable to radicalisation and be possible targets of recruitment.



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¹¹ RAN manual on Responses to FTF returnees (https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/ran_br_a4_m10_en.pdf) and UNODC handbook on children recruited and exploited by Terrorists and violent extremist groups (https://www.unodc.org/documents/justice-and-prison-reform/Child-Victims/Handbook_on_Children_Recruited_and_Exploited_by_Terrorist_and_Violent_Extremist_Groups_the_Role_of_the_Justice_System.E.pdf).

Specific Recommendations

Identification of good practices and guidance:

- For the Commission in close cooperation with Member States to establish an **overview and comparative analysis of existing approaches in particular as regards risks and needs assessment and tailored responses for children** (returnees or more broadly children raised in a radicalised environment) drawing on existing tools.
- For the Commission in close cooperation with Member States, and on the basis of evidence, to establish an **overview and comparative analysis of existing** good practices/toolkits for school teachers, social workers, child protection actors, judicial actors, practitioners working with migrants, etc., which are child-rights based and draw on expertise and experience gathered in preventing and responding to other forms of violence against children, with a view to developing new good practices/toolkits if needed or encouraging the implementation and further dissemination of existing good practices/toolkits.

Capacity building and framework conditions:

- For Member States to facilitate **effective coordination among existing actors, structures and processes** in key areas such as child protection, justice, social and youth care, health, education systems, to enable appropriate integrated interventions in full respect of the different actors' roles and responsibilities within the existing legal framework.
- For the Commission in close cooperation with Member States to support **training for practitioners** dealing with children at risk of radicalisation:
 - a) Basic awareness training/webinar for practitioners** in contact with children at risk of radicalisation to raise their awareness regarding detection of possible risks and trauma in children, child protection parameters, reporting protocols and referral mechanisms to request additional support.
 - b) In-depth specialist workshops** and shared learning sessions for practitioners directly involved in cases of children who are radicalised or at risk of radicalisation.
- For Member States to increase awareness and skills among first line responders and staff in asylum and refugee reception facilities regarding early detection of possible radicalisation risks, including inter alia the development of training modules.

Research:

- For the Commission and Member States to encourage and support further research into **detecting and assessing current risks of radicalisation and related facilitating factors** among those vulnerable to indoctrination or radicalisation.

2.7. Education and social inclusion

Education is a cornerstone for effective prevention of radicalisation by strengthening resilience against radicalisation and recruitment. Teachers, educators and youth workers play a crucial role in fostering **social inclusion, promoting common democratic values and managing controversial issues** with open discussions in safe classrooms.

Further efforts are needed to raise their **awareness and improve their skills** and confidence by facilitating access to existing EU practices and exchange and learning platforms.



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Specific Recommendations

- For Member States to **raise awareness among the education community**, and in particular aspiring teachers and teachers in schools to help them to prevent radicalisation through information campaigns or other channels as well as trainings.
- For the Commission to **map and improve access** of first line responders dealing with those young people who may be potentially vulnerable to becoming radicalised, **to existing EU practices or results** of EU funded projects in the area of education and social inclusion.
- For the Commission and Member States to **promote the use of opportunities** offered by existing platforms (such as eTwinning) to promote fundamental values, democracy and citizenship and help develop critical thinking, as well as to develop the awareness of teachers and their ability to work in the best possible way within the school if there are signs of radicalisation.
- For Member States to **increase awareness and skills among youth workers** and other professionals working with children and young people and involved in non-formal learning activities.
- For the Commission and the Member States to **encourage initiatives in the field of culture** to strengthen resilience against or help countering radicalisation.

2.8. External dimension

The Group recognised the importance of having robust external engagement in particular in neighbouring regions where the security situation and instability has direct impact on the EU's internal security. Acknowledging the nexus between internal and external security and the interest and demand of third countries to benefit from European expertise and experiences (including the RAN and European Strategic Communications Network projects) while recognising the value of benefiting from experiences in third countries, the Group supports **closer engagement with third countries and international organisations**, in accordance with the relevant legal framework.

The Group suggests further work and **enhanced collaboration** with a view to financially supporting third countries in the development of their prevent strategies and actions and in particular through an increased deployment of internal security instruments such as the RAN and European Strategic Communications Network in priority third countries and as regards priority issues such as returning FTFs or strategic communications.

Increased engagement in third countries could for example be supported by the establishment of a pool of experts for external deployments. Methods for a closer collaboration at EU level with regard to third country engagement, as well as the strengthening of the expertise and role of counter-terrorism experts could be further discussed.

Specific recommendations

Guidance and support:

- For the Commission in cooperation with Member States, European External Action Service and EU Counter-Terrorism Coordinator to **establish a list of EU experts** in different fields and backgrounds who are acquainted with the specific circumstances in priority third countries **for external deployment**.
- For the Commission, in cooperation with European External Action Service and EU Counter-Terrorism Coordinator, to support the **development and implementation of guiding principles in developing prevent strategies** and cooperation mechanisms and structures in partner countries, inspired by successful initiatives within EU such as the Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN) and the European Strategic Communications Network (ESCN) in particular through the participation in “standard setting bodies” such as GCTF working groups or Hedayah.

Collaboration mechanisms: *Discuss how to include the external dimension in a future more permanent cooperation mechanism for prevent work at EU Level including:*

- For Member States and the Commission, in cooperation with European External Action Service and EU Counter-Terrorism Coordinator, **to map national prevent initiatives**, projects and expertise complementing overviews of EU actions, to **facilitate coordination and synergies** in priority countries; to **share information** on implementing partners and identifying credible partners being able to effectively implement prevent projects abroad.
- For the EU to further strengthen the **expertise and role of CT experts** posted in EU delegations with a special focus on prevention.
- For the Commission, in cooperation with the European External Action Service, and the EU Counter-Terrorism Coordinator to increase support to partner countries and regions in enhancing **prevent-related research** capacities in order to develop the knowledge of the drivers for violent extremism in the specific context.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS ON COOPERATION MECHANISMS

3.1. Introduction

The implementation of the recommendations set out in Chapter 2 will require strengthened coordination and cooperation mechanisms at EU level.

These mechanisms will facilitate the development of more impactful responses. i.e. through the pooling of research findings and increased accessibility in order to strengthen the evidence base for further policy development and the design of concrete approaches and interventions. The Group sees particular EU benefit in the mapping, developing and evaluating - at EU level - of existing practices, approaches and practical guidance and trainings to better equip key stakeholders in Member States with the necessary skills and knowledge.

3.2. Objectives and Guiding principles

Taking into account the HLCEG-R scoping paper and the recommendations and findings of the HLCEG-R Interim Report, the Group emphasises the importance of establishing the necessary framework conditions at EU level to facilitate a more **systematic** exchange and collaboration between the main stakeholders, to enhance **capacity building measures and better pool resources, expertise and know how** at EU level to effectively support the different stakeholders in Member States.

Recognising the potential of existing initiatives, while stressing the need for better coordination between and increased capacity of existing initiatives, the Group favours a **gradual approach**.

To achieve this, the Group recommends as an immediate step to strengthen and foster synergies between **existing networks** and initiatives facilitating exchanges among relevant stakeholders, while enhancing Member State involvement in the steer of EU activities and initiatives at EU level, referred to as “EU prevent work” in the following fora.

The Group proposes to set up an **EU Cooperation Mechanism**, composed of a Steering Board and a reinforced support and coordination structure within the Commission (hereinafter called “the Task Force”) advising and governing existing EU networks and instruments. This Mechanism would offer a **sustainable but sufficiently flexible** setup, which would be **easily implementable within the existing legal framework** and **without excessive bureaucratic** burden. According to the Group, it would provide for **greater visibility, accessibility and transparency** of EU action in the field of prevention, **by taking into account the national dynamics and circumstances** and affirming the value of a **bottom-up**

approach. **Annex 1** provides a comprehensive overview of the rationale, the objectives, the structure and the tasks of this EU Cooperation Mechanism. The Group stresses the importance of assessing and evaluating the progress made under the proposed mechanism, notably against shared objectives and possible benchmarks, before the end of 2019.

3.3. Governance and organisation

The Group underlines the importance of Member States having a more active role. Against this background, it proposes to set up a **Steering Board** which would advise the Commission on **strategic priorities** for “EU prevent work”, ensuring that the relevant EU initiatives address the needs, requirements and priorities at EU level of the relevant stakeholders in Member States. It would be composed primarily by **Member States and chaired by the Commission**. The Group suggests that the **EU Counter Terrorism Coordinator (EUTC) and the European External Action Service (EEAS)** should be granted observer status. Other stakeholders offering valuable insights and being instrumental in the implementation of different actions should inform the Steering Board.

The Group suggests that the Steering Board adopt **annual strategic orientations** for EU prevent work in different areas as well as an opinion on the use of EU funding instruments.

The Group considers that the strategic steer of the Board should be complemented by a **Task Force** within the Commission to coordinate and steer actions undertaken at EU level.

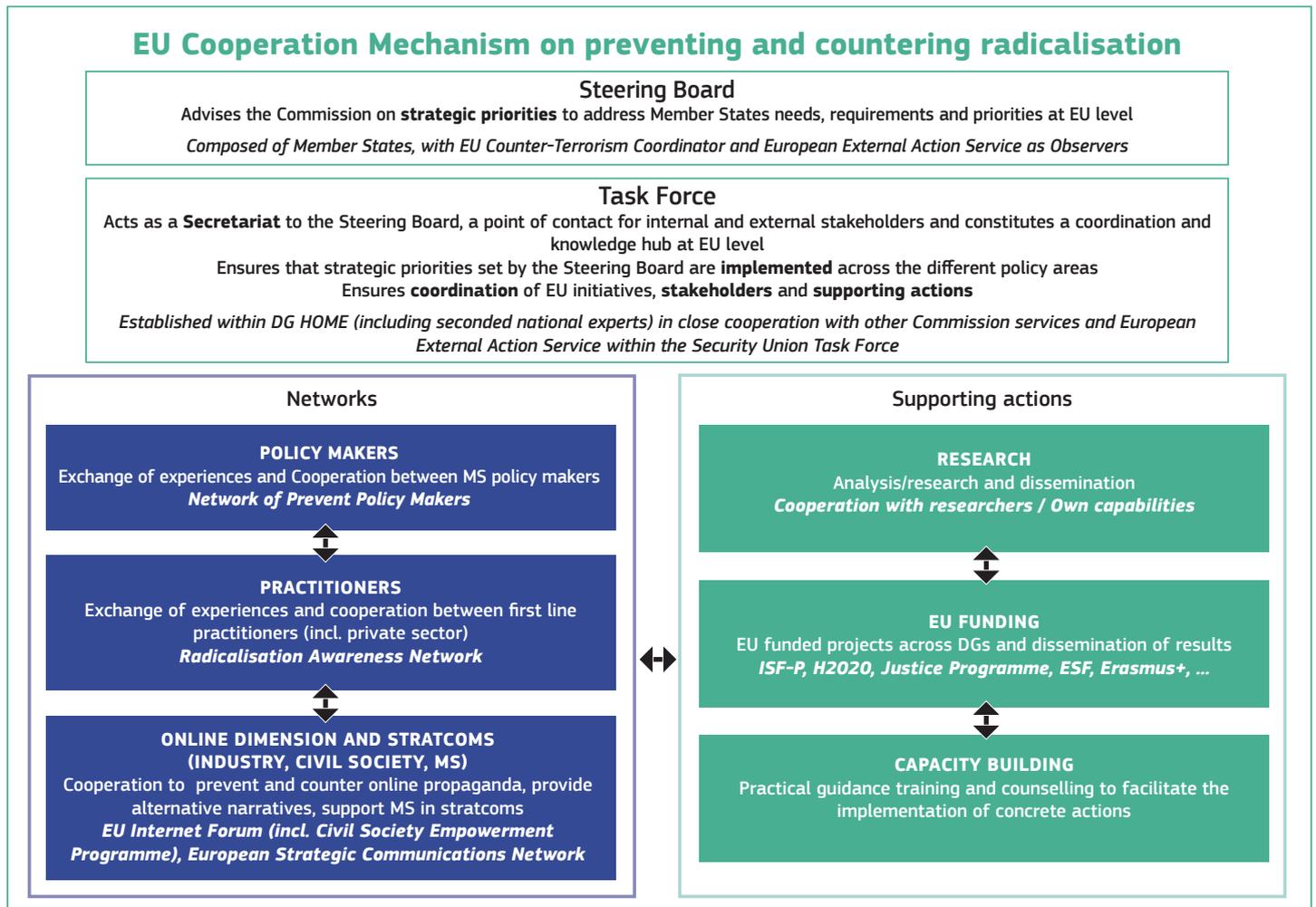
The Group recommends entrusting the **Task Force with a threefold role**: Its most prominent responsibility would be to act as a **coordination and knowledge hub** for activities at EU level. In this function, the Task Force should leverage on the experience, research and analysis resulting from various EU instruments (like the RAN, the EU Internet Forum, European Strategic Communications Network, but also EU funded projects) and other EU networks (such as the network of prevent policy makers or a network of researchers such as the EENeT) to stimulate increased exchanges and collaboration between the different stakeholders, networks and initiatives. At the same time, the Task Force would pool and better disseminate the relevant research findings, expertise and know-how at EU level (including on EU funded projects).

The Group underlines the importance of a dedicated Task Force also in terms of an enhanced visibility and coherence, and for the purpose of implementing this report acting as a **point of contact** for internal and external stakeholders.

Finally, the Group suggests the Task Force act as a **Secretariat**

to the **Steering Board** supporting and preparing its work. It is proposed that the Task Force informs the Steering Board of trends and developments as signalled by the relevant

stakeholders and networks and that the Task Force monitors the implementation of the strategic orientations.



3.4. Activities

The Group acknowledges that the **Task Force will be instrumental in the implementation of the recommendations at EU level and support Member States** (drawing on the expertise of the different networks and initiatives, but also from the Member States themselves) in their efforts in this regard. The Task Force will also contribute to disseminating more widely best practices of Member States.

The Group acknowledges that the **scale and scope of the precise tasks will also depend on the available resources**. The Group therefore encourages Member States to nominate Seconded National Experts to join the task force while encouraging the Commission to provide for additional financial resources and support.

The Group recognises that EU initiatives, such as in particular the RAN, the EU Internet Forum, or European Strategic Communications Network, have proven to be effective and well targeted. Building on this success, the Group highlights the

need for increased exchanges and actual collaboration between policy makers, practitioners, researchers, but also actors from the private sector in order to reap the full benefits of each other's experience and knowledge.

The Group suggests that the Task Force supports a **closer engagement** of Member States in the work of the RAN (e.g. through so-called Policy and Practice events bringing together policy makers and practitioners or facilitating the elaboration of joint analysis or guidance documents).

The Group recommends the Task Force **strengthens the evidence base** for EU prevent actions and intervenes at national and local level by pooling and compiling relevant research findings and relying on relevant research networks.

The Group considers it is important for the Task Force to **steer and facilitate the necessary training and capacity building in Member States** through the dissemination of relevant research findings, training modules and programmes and any other guidance documents.

4. ONGOING ACTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE IMPLEMENTATION

The recommendations foresee a number of actions ranging from exchanges of experiences and expertise in certain areas, the steer and sharing of relevant knowledge and research findings, to the mapping and analysis of approaches and interventions and the development of guidance material and trainings. These actions are instrumental to the main objective of supporting Member States and the EU in the development of effective interventions and policies. They are addressed to both the Commission and Member States and the Commission is invited to follow up and monitor the implementation.

4.1. Ongoing actions

The Group stresses the need for concrete measures and takes note of steps taken by the Commission contributing to the implementation of the recommendations of the HLCEG-R Interim Report. The Group welcomes the fact that the **Radicalisation Awareness Network Centre of Excellence** and the European Strategic Communications Network have reflected both the priority themes and the need for closer engagement with and support to Member States in their Annual Activity Plans for 2018.¹²

The Group expresses particular appreciation of the planned **policy and practice events** organised by the RAN Centre of Excellence (RAN CoE) in 2018.

Addressing the need for more in-depth evaluation of strategies and approaches, the RAN CoE and European Strategic Communications Network organise dedicated workshops for Member States on evaluation of interventions to prevent and counter radicalisation, as well as on the effectiveness of communication actions (European Strategic Communications Network).

With the aim of closer interaction between researchers and practitioners as well as policy makers, the RAN research conference is planned for the second half of 2018.

A more detailed overview of actions already taken under the different priority areas is provided in **Annex 4**.

4.2. Recommendations for future implementation

The Group stresses the importance of taking swift actions on the recommendations. The Group recommends Member States consider the possibility of **enhanced study visits with a voluntary peer review element and project-based collaboration** to facilitate the implementation of further actions.

The **enhanced study visits** aim at facilitating mutual learning, exchange of good practices and receiving feedback on applied approaches as well as identification of transferable elements (further details are set out in **Annex 2**).

Furthermore, a **project-based collaboration** would allow working in smaller groups of Member States sharing a common interest and a joint elaboration of solutions to challenges (further details are set out in **Annex 3**).

In addition to these optional working methods, the recommendations foresee a number of **mapping and comparative analyses** in different areas (e.g. existing practices and trainings to prevent and counter radicalisation in the prison and probation context, local multi-agency approaches, expertise in prevention and responses to youth radicalisation) which could build on the identification of promising practices or the elaboration of guidance by the RAN, and call for more transparency and accessibility of the results. The outcome of these activities will support targeted actions.

These endeavours would usefully be complemented by an increased sharing and steering of relevant **research** projects and findings (e.g. as regards approaches in prisons, radicalisation factors and pathways offline and online, evaluations of approaches and interventions), as recommended by the Group.

The Group suggests that the above working methods could be developed more in detail within the network of national prevent policy makers in the second half of 2018. The Group furthermore encourages the Commission to provide its support and ensure that the work takes into account the advice, priorities and recommendations of the HLCEG-R as well as any future advice from the Steering Board and to share results with all Member States.

The full implementation of these actions will depend on available resources. While the Commission is encouraged to explore the availability of additional resources, the Group calls on Member States to second national experts.

5. CONCLUSION AND WAY FORWARD

With the conclusion of the work of the HLCEG-R, the Group recommends that the following immediate steps are taken:

- Set up the Steering Board;
- Establish the Task Force;
- Re-convene the network of national prevent policy makers;
- Establish a roadmap for the implementation of the recommendations.

The Group recommends an evaluation of the progress made under the proposed EU cooperation mechanism in the course of 2019, notably against shared objectives and possible benchmarks. The results of this evaluation should be presented at the Justice and Home Affairs Council in December 2019.

¹² RAN Annual Activity Plan 2018 summary: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/ran-news/docs/ran_annual_activity_plan_2018_en.pdf



ANNEX 1:

Future cooperation mechanisms and structures

1. SCENE SETTER

In its Interim Report, the High-Level Commission Expert Group on Radicalisation (HLCEG-R) has called for a strengthening of EU cooperation on the prevention and countering of radicalisation leading to violent extremism and terrorism¹³, identifying a range of new policy priorities and emphasising the need to strengthen EU cooperation mechanisms and structures. The Group agreed to examine in 2018 concrete options for the “*possible further development [of these structures] into an EU Centre for the prevention of radicalisation, including future tasks and functions*”, and in the meantime called upon the Commission to “*urgently set up a reinforced support and coordination structure within the Commission*” as well as “*a steering body for EU prevent work*” and “*for Member States to explore the feasibility of supporting the Commission through the deployment of national experts*”.

The Group underlined the importance of flexibility, transparency and accountability as guiding principles, and re-affirmed the value of a bottom-up approach based on the exchange of good practices, networking and empowerment of first line practitioners, as well as –in general – the important role of civil society organisations

within an overall holistic approach to the prevention of radicalisation. At the same time, Member States’ authorities stressed the need for better involvement of Member States’ authorities “*so that EU instruments effectively address strategic priorities and needs identified at national level and that actions at national and EU level are complementary and reinforcing.*”

The role of the EU is one of support, facilitation and coordination of networks and initiatives at EU level, where the EU cooperation can bring an added value to interventions at the national level, emphasising that the evolving challenges of radicalisation “*must be addressed, primarily by the Member States, but also, in order to be effective, with a coordinated support at European level in accordance with the Treaties*”¹⁴. Moreover, activities at EU level are undertaken in full respect of the division of competences enshrined in the Treaties also regarding engagement with external partners and third countries. Member States are encouraged to share knowledge and experiences, join forces on this transnational challenge and build on existing instruments and approaches to improve the impact of Prevent work at national level.

2. OBJECTIVES AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Group identified **core objectives and guiding principles** for enhanced cooperation mechanisms:

1. To **enhance MS involvement** in EU actions in the field of prevention of radicalisation while maintaining the bottom up approach of practitioners and experts feeding their experiences and learnings into the policy process;
2. To **enhance coordination** between different prevent initiatives and stakeholders at EU level but also with regard to external engagement;
3. To create **stronger capabilities** at EU level offering demand-oriented support to Member States, including training, guidance and capacity building; and
4. To provide **greater visibility, accessibility and pooling of resources** at EU level, including analysis, research and knowledge sharing.

The Group advocates a **gradual approach**, which, in the short term, includes the following steps:

1. Setting up a “*steering body for EU prevent work*” ensuring that EU actions are geared towards needs and policy priorities within Member States;
2. Setting up of “*a reinforced support and coordination structure within the Commission*” (Task Force);
3. Strengthening and enhancing coordination of existing networks facilitating exchanges among policy makers, practitioners and researchers, but also the private sector.

¹³ Further references in the text to “radicalisation” are to be understood as “radicalisation leading to violent extremism and terrorism”.

¹⁴ High-Level Commission Expert Group on Radicalisation – Interim Report – December 2017, <http://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regexpert/index.cfm?do=groupDetail&groupID=3552>.

3. THE PROPOSAL: AN EU COOPERATION MECHANISM ON PREVENTION OF RADICALISATION

The proposed EU cooperation mechanism would offer a more **sustainable but sufficiently flexible framework** that is easily implementable within the existing legal framework and without creating unnecessary bureaucratic burden. It leaves the **respective competences of Member States and the EU (Commission)** unaffected: the Commission would continue to support and facilitate exchanges at EU level and ensure the steer and coordination of the relevant EU initiatives. While these actions may influence and complement actions taken at national level, the new framework would not directly govern actions at national level and there would be no oversight and monitoring of implementing measures at national level.

There are **different models for such cooperation mechanisms** in different policy areas. They reflect differences regarding the overall mandate and tasks (e.g. coordination and steer of EU funds and actions v Member State actions), the respective role and contribution of the Commission and Member States (e.g. use of EU funds versus financial contributions from Member States) and differences which are reflected in the function and composition of the relevant governance bodies. These differences can also be explained by the chosen legal basis (e.g. Commission Decision versus Council Decision).

3.1. Introduction

To ensure **closer Member State involvement** and that EU initiatives are geared towards Member States' needs and requirements, it is proposed to set up a **Steering Board** comprised of, in particular, representatives of Member States that would give advice on strategic priorities at EU level, taking into account national needs and priorities.

A **reinforced support and coordination structure** (Task Force) **within the Commission** would have a double role: on the one hand, it would act as a secretariat to the Steering Board and on the other hand, it would ensure that the strategic priorities set by the Steering Board are implemented across the different policy areas. In this function, it would ensure the necessary coordination of EU initiatives and stakeholders (including EU Networks), and ensure that supporting actions (including research, capacity building, EU funding) are made available in line with the strategic steer. It would more broadly function as a point of contact for prevent work at EU level in relations with Member States but also as regards engagement with external partners. It would also inform the Steering Board about activities and findings from the EU networks.

The existing EU networks and instruments will continue to operate under the new framework. Networks such as the Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN) or European Strategic Communications Network (European Strategic Communications Network) or fora such as the EU Internet Forum would continue their activities. The networks would proactively flag changes they note in the dynamic phenomenon of violent extremism and present

ideas and approaches to prevent and counter them. The Commission would make sure that feedback from the networks is channelled to the policy level, that activities under these initiatives are scaled up where necessary in order to implement strategic steer and that the different stakeholders are better connected.

- ▶ The **Network of Prevent Policy Makers** would take up its work again and be the forum in which Member States policy makers would exchange policy approaches and strategies at national, regional and local level and explore further work, for instance through project-based collaboration, study visits/ voluntary peer reviews. Where the Network finds it useful, the exchanges could be enriched by interventions from practitioners, academics and other actors such as EU Agencies and similar bodies on an ad hoc basis; they could also touch upon engagement with third countries and international partners where considered useful. Discussions that take place at strategic level within the Steering Board will be complemented by exchanges on prevent policies and interventions, and on how to implement them on a national and local level.
- ▶ The **RAN would continue to work as a platform for the exchange of expertise among first line practitioners and the development of recommendations and support material**. It would further enhance its current support to Member States' authorities and allow insights of practitioners to feed the policy debate at EU but also Member States' level. Its' activities would be aligned to the strategic priorities at EU level set by the Steering Board and subject to the (contractual) oversight by the Commission.

- ▶ Cooperation and exchanges in the area of online propaganda would continue to take place in the framework of the **EU Internet Forum** (subject to guidance and steer in the context of the annual ministerial meeting). Activities related to communication and narratives including the Civil Society Empowerment Programme (**Civil Society Empowerment Programme**) would be closely linked to the work of the RAN and European Strategic Communications Network, which are mutually reinforcing as they cater for the needs of different stakeholders (practitioners and Member States, respectively).
- ▶ The **European Strategic Communications Network** would continue to provide valuable support to Member States in the field of strategic communications and to further strengthen the European Strategic Communications Network Network.
- ▶ Closer engagement with researchers could be done through regular exchanges under the different initiatives but also by reaching out to existing networks such as the European Expert Network on Terrorism Issues (**EENeT**) or even creating a new network of EU researchers.

3.2. Steering Board for EU actions in the field of prevention of radicalisation

3.2.1. Role, mandate and responsibilities

The main purpose of the Steering Board would be to **advise the Commission on the strategic priorities in the area of prevent work at EU level**, ensuring that the relevant EU initiatives address the needs and priorities of the relevant stakeholders in Member States related to all forms of violent extremism, recognising that needs, requirements and priorities may differ among Member States. As such the Steering Board would give advice on overall policy orientations and priorities for actions to be taken at EU level to support Member States in addressing the radicalisation phenomenon as laid down in an annual strategic orientation document.

The Steering Board would also be tasked to give an **opinion on the strategic orientations** which could feed into the discussions relating to the “Police” component of the **Internal Security Fund** -and other financial instruments contributing to the fight against radicalisation (e.g. Erasmus+, Regional funds, etc.).

The Steering Board would be informed through the Task Force (and selected experts, whenever appropriate) of the most **important developments and trends in radicalisation** and the need for action identified by relevant practitioners or researchers.

The Steering Board would also **keep track of the implementation** of these strategic orientations and of relevant developments at the national level, and would **assess and evaluate progress made at EU level** (including the functioning of the EU Cooperation Mechanism).

3.2.2. Governance and composition

Given the primary purpose to give strategic orientations for EU actions, the Steering Board could be set up as a formal **Commission Expert Group**.

It would be composed of primarily **high-level representatives of Member States** as members with voting rights. In light of their institutional roles and given the proposed scope of the EU cooperation mechanism also comprising engagement with external partners, the Steering Board should also comprise the **European External Action Service and the EU Counter Terrorism Coordinator** as observers. There are, moreover, a number of other stakeholders (some of which are currently represented in the HLCEG-R) which provide valuable insights into the work on radicalisation or which would be ultimately entrusted to implement actions identified by the Steering Board. These stakeholders should continue to inform the Steering Board.

The Members of the Board representing the EU Member States would be appointed by Member States. At Member State level, the Steering Board should be composed of up to two high level representatives of Ministries responsible for the prevention and countering of radicalisation, and in particular prevent coordinators where they exist.

3.2.3. Rules of procedure

According to the horizontal rules for Commission Expert Groups¹⁵, the Steering Board would adopt **rules of procedures** on a proposal by and in agreement with the Commission. The horizontal rules set out the framework conditions for the operation of expert groups, e.g. the relationship with the European Parliament and the Council, transparency rules, voting rights, etc.

Given the proposed mandate of the Steering Board to focus on strategic orientations and considering that the network of prevent policy makers is pursuing policy work at technical level, meetings at least once a year, supplemented if necessary by further ad hoc meetings would seem appropriate. The Task Force would prepare such meetings and ensure a correct follow-up of the decisions taken by the Steering Board. Commission expert groups shall normally be chaired by a representative of the Commission.

The Steering Board meetings would usefully be preceded by **preparatory meetings for instance within the Network of Prevent Policy makers**.

¹⁵ http://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regexpert/PDF/C_2016_3301_F1_COMMISSION_DECISION_PLUS_ANNEXES_EN.pdf

3.3. Reinforced support and coordination structure within the Commission (Task Force)

Reinforced support and coordination structures would be set up within the Commission. The Task Force would include both **Commission staff and Seconded National Experts** to benefit from first-hand experience in Member States (this would also follow up on calls made by the Commission in the Committee of the Permanent Representatives of the Governments of the Member States to the European Union (COREPER) and the Justice and Home Affairs Council for secondment of experts).

The profiles of the expertise needed for national experts will be specified in a letter to Member States. The assignment of Seconded National Experts would be on a voluntary basis and would be subject to the rules set out in the Commission Decision C(2008) 688 final¹⁶.

The Task Force within the Commission will have the following **responsibilities**:

1. Act as Secretariat to the Steering Board;
2. Act as a Coordination and Knowledge Hub;
3. Act as a contact point at EU level.

Within the given responsibilities, the Commission services would carry out a number of tasks and activities. The following is an illustrative list. The **scope and scale of the tasks and activities** depends on the **available resources and the overall strategic orientations** proposed by the Steering Board.

3.3.1. Secretariat to the Steering Board

In its function as secretariat to the Steering Board, the Task Force would:

- a) **Convene meetings** and prepare the agenda and all background documents for the Steering Board meetings (and draft minutes);
- b) **Prepare a draft annual strategic orientation document** to be presented to and discussed by the Steering Board; this would be based inter alia on input from stakeholders of the different networks and EU initiatives as well as information on radicalisation trends from other Member States and other relevant sources;
- c) Make sure that the conclusions of the Steering Board are disseminated to the relevant stakeholders in the EU networks and initiatives and

oversee the implementation of actions in line with the strategic steer, including drafting reports on the progress of implementation.

The Commission could **regularly report to the Terrorism Working Party (TWP)** and other relevant Council Working Groups and the European Parliament on the annual strategy document and progress report.

3.3.2. Coordination and Knowledge Hub

The main function of the Task Force would be to ensure enhanced coordination of Networks and initiatives and pool resources and know-how at EU level leveraging on the experience, research and analysis of its instruments (like the RAN, the EU Internet Forum, European Strategic Communications Network, but also of other EU funded projects, of EU institutions and of relevant EU Agencies) and of Member States (through the Network of Prevent Policy Makers). When facilitating exchanges among stakeholders and between different initiatives, the **Task Force will provide its steer, ensure coordination and support the relevant actors to strengthen coherence, avoid duplication and identify synergies**.

In its function as Coordination Hub the Task Force would:

1. Facilitate exchanges among the different stakeholders within the different networks:

- a) Plan and organise the meetings of the Network of Prevent Policy makers;
- b) Outsource the operational management of the Radicalisation Awareness Network and steer, oversee and coordinate (as part of the contractual relationship) their actions inter alia through an annual activity plan and regular steering committee meetings;
- c) Plan and organise the meetings of the EU Internet Forum, and liaise with the internet industry and with national policy makers;
- d) Facilitate the exchange with researchers, building on the knowledge and possibly structures of existing Networks, such as the EENeT.

2. Facilitate interaction between the Networks and relevant stakeholders:

- a) Facilitate joint events (such as the current Policy and Practice events organised by the RAN bringing together practitioners and policy makers);
- b) Facilitate systematic exchanges (e.g. RAN experts or researchers invited to meetings of the Prevent Policy Network or discussions between policy makers, and practitioners at the RAN High-Level Conference, organisation of the RAN research conference);

¹⁶ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=ecli:ECLI:EU:C:2010:188>.

- c) Facilitate enhanced study visits for mutual learning drawing on relevant expertise and experience of policy makers, practitioners and researchers on a voluntary basis and upon request by a Member State willing to be visited-(e.g. one site visit to a certain practice/approach in a Member State by a group of Member State representatives, researchers, experts and practitioners from other Member States; see separate discussion paper on this);
- d) Steer, and support the elaboration of joint guidance documents involving Member States' feedback upon and before publication (e.g. in the context of Member States' led projects involving also RAN practitioners and academics; see separate discussion paper on this).

3. Enhanced coordination and policy steer (of internal EU funding instruments):

- a) Share findings of projects funded under EU funding instruments such as the Internal Security Fund - Police, Horizon 2020, Justice Programme, European Social Fund, Erasmus + and others and make sure that research provides the necessary evidence base for the further development of prevent policies (e.g. as part of discussions in the EU Internet Forum) and actions and that research findings and concrete deliverables support practitioners in the different areas of work (e.g. through closer linkages between EU funded projects and the work within the RAN);
- b) Steer research into areas where knowledge gaps have been identified by practitioners, policy makers and researchers;
- c) Guide and encourage the use of EU funds (including both central and shared management) to develop practical tools;
- d) Ensure coherence and complementarity with relevant activities at EU level, including relevant expert groups.

In its function as a Knowledge hub the Task Force would:

- a) Coordinate and make accessible the compilation of trends, challenges, relevant findings/reports, drawing on analysis and research carried out by relevant EU agencies and researchers (including e.g. EENeT).
- b) Overview and undertake comparative analyses of different approaches, practices and interventions in Member States through networks (such as the RAN or European Strategic Communications Network) and funded projects and initiatives;
- c) Steer, facilitate and support the development of relevant guidance material by the relevant stakeholders, experts and networks (such as the RAN

- or European Strategic Communications Network);
- d) Steer work on trainings; this could include support to the development or evaluation of training modules and programmes, the use of existing networks or agencies (such as the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Training (CEPOL), the European Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) or the European Judicial Training Network (EJTN)) for offering the necessary trainings
- e) Facilitate the access to information and encourage virtual exchange (for instance through an (interactive) Internet Platform with a public and one or more restricted areas where to store confidential information for the different stakeholders). Publicly available information could include links to other networks and initiatives, contact points at national level, featured research results, in particular of projects financed by EU instruments, upcoming calls at EU and, if of transnational relevance, national calls for proposals, conferences and workshops, studies etc.

3.3.3. Point of Contact for internal and external stakeholders

The Task Force would, in accordance with the respective competences of EU institutions and Member States, function as a contact point at EU level for Member States, third countries and local, national, European and international organisations/institutions, offering the following:

- a) Liaise with local, national, European and international institutions and organisations;
- b) Facilitate the exchange of best practices with third countries and relevant international bodies¹⁷;
- c) Help inform international standards in the field of prevention;
- d) Liaise regularly with the Council, in particular with the relevant Council Working Groups such as the Standing Committee on Internal Security (COSI) and the Terrorism Working Party (TWP)/Working Party on Terrorism - International Aspects (COTER), and the European Parliament and provide updates on major developments.

Cooperation with third countries (scale, scope of tasks and activities) and the coordination of support measures will need to be further defined in agreement with all relevant EU services (in particular Commission services and European External Action Service) and Member States and in full compliance with the respective competences in order to enhance synergies and complementarity.

¹⁷ For the Western Balkans, reference is made to the WBCTI.

4. HUMAN AND FINANCIAL RESOURCES

The Task Force could be administratively set up in the Commission Directorate General for Migration and Home Affairs (DG HOME). To manage expectations, the Group suggests the Commission assess resource requirements and include experienced Seconded National Experts. Seconded National Experts would bring valuable expertise and a better understanding of the challenges faced

in Member States, and the national approaches and strategies designed to address these challenges, and help develop effective policy options and responses at EU level, including training and more broadly capacity building measures.

5. LEGAL STEPS

To implement the EU Cooperation Mechanism, the Steering Board would be formally created through a Commission Decision. Such a decision could be adopted shortly after the adoption of the final report of the HLCEG-R.

6. CONCLUSION

An “EU Cooperation Mechanism” as set out above would allow establishing an EU framework addressing **immediate as well as medium term needs** identified by the HLCEG-R.

The proposed EU cooperation mechanism would offer a light structure for increased Member State involvement as well as closer interaction between the relevant stakeholders. At the same time the cooperation mechanism would enhance the capabilities at EU level to significantly scale up targeted and coordinated prevent policies and interventions and contribute to the implementation of effective measures at Member State level. It would facilitate the coordination, coherence and ultimately impact of different policy areas

and instruments addressing radicalisation on EU level in a holistic manner. It would enhance the visibility of EU actions and facilitate the EU’s external engagement in prevent matters.

The proposed “EU cooperation mechanism” would be implemented in the short term in line with the agreed gradual approach. The Group stresses the importance to assess and evaluate before the end of 2019 the progress made under the proposed mechanism notably against shared objectives and possible benchmarks. The results of this evaluation should be presented at the Justice and Home Affairs Council in December 2019.



ANNEX 2:

**Enhanced
study visits/voluntary
peer reviews**

1. SCENE SETTER

In its Interim Report, the High-Level Commission Expert Group on Radicalisation (HLCEG-R)¹⁸ called for “*Member States with support from the Commission (in particular through the Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN) to explore the organisation of voluntary peer reviews of exit, rehabilitation and reintegration programmes in Member States and to step up sharing of already evaluated/ audited programmes.*” In the area of local multi-agency approaches, the interim report asked “*Member States and the Commission within their respective powers to explore how to provide counselling services or peer reviews with experts from Member States, the RAN or other relevant experts.*”

Peer reviews are a well-known governance process used in different policy areas with different objectives. In the context of discussions within the HLCEG-R, members expressed a particular interest in strengthening formats for mutual learning going beyond a mere exchange of experiences and recognising the need for concrete follow up actions.

For the time-being, the RAN offers a number of formats to strengthen the exchange of experiences and expertise among Member States stakeholders, including Member State support through counselling or workshops. In addition, RAN has organised in the past so called study visits to allow RAN practitioners to visit a particular country to get acquainted with a particular promising practice or approach.

With the purpose of enhancing mutual learnings also at policy level, so called enhanced study visits could be organised specifically, but, where appropriate, not exclusively, for policy makers combining various elements of existing RAN offers.

This paper sets out how such enhanced study visits or possible peer reviews could be organised and offered to Member States on an entirely voluntary basis and upon request by a Member State willing to be visited. They should be seen as mechanisms that could help Member States in the implementation and possible review of effective prevent actions, as part of a broader toolbox of support measure that could be offered at EU level.

2. OBJECTIVE AND BENEFITS

Enhanced study visits could be organised for certain topics of interest signalled by Member States, including topics and actions identified in the HLCEG-R report. Such visits would facilitate **mutual learning** and **exchange of good practices** on the basis of specific approaches, programmes or interventions being implemented in a Member State.

Such study visits could serve different objectives. The visited country (host country) could share its experience with a certain approach, programme or intervention helping other Member States in designing and implementing their policies and actions. In addition to sharing its experiences

the hosting country could also benefit from **feedback (including possible suggestions for improvements)** on its programmes and policies based on experiences in other Member States. Where a Member State expresses interest, voluntary peer reviews could be organised that would put a stronger focus on assessment and possible recommendations. The voluntary nature of such reviews is key.

Participation in enhanced study visits would be on a **strictly voluntary basis** for both the host countries and the guest countries and upon request from a Member State.

¹⁸ <http://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regexpert/index.cfm?do=groupDetail.groupDetailDoc&id=36235&no=1>

3. SCOPE

Based on the findings of the HLCEG-R, possible topics for such enhanced study visits could include:

- **Exit, rehabilitation and reintegration programmes and interventions** with regard to all forms of extremism that have been developed and implemented in prison and after release with regard to violent extremist offenders. Member States would be encouraged to look into a variety of exit programmes conducted by state actors as well as by non-governmental organisations (NGOs), including (or not) interventions by religious counsellors, formers, being therapeutic (one-on-one) or socio-dynamic (in a group);
- **Exit programmes** tailored for non-offenders;
- **Local prevent frameworks and/or their components/elements** where participants could assess a whole local action plan from different perspectives (e.g. involvement of key stakeholders,

cooperation of all levels and perspectives (security, social, education, etc.) or focus on specific elements of the latter, e.g. information-sharing/confidentiality issues, helplines/hotlines, psychological support, family intervention, handling returnees, engaging with communities and civil society actors;

- **Existing approaches as regards risks and needs assessment and tailored responses for children** (returnees or more broadly children raised in a radicalised environment);
- **Approaches to prevention of radicalisation in the school system.**

This list is non-exhaustive and could include other policy areas and interventions regarding the prevention and countering of violent extremism. In general, the enhanced study visits would be primarily tailored to the needs of the participating Member States.

4. PARTICIPANTS

Participants would be mainly national (as well as regional or local) officials from ministries responsible, local authorities or specialised agencies, nominated by Member States. In the sense of a comprehensive approach, participation of practitioners or researchers should be considered where appropriate and in agreement with the Member State to be visited. The team of visiting participants could also therefore include independent experts from academic and scientific institutes as well as practitioners (including non-governmental organisations) who could be proposed by the RAN for Member States agreement.

All the experts would have relevant expertise in the field that is subject of the visit. Where appropriate, representatives from the Commission, the European External Action Service as well as the RAN Centre of Excellence, the European Strategic Communications Network (European Strategic Communications Network) and Civil Society Empowerment Programme could also participate as observers.

Participants from other Member States including experts could be in the range of 5 – 15 persons.

5. ORGANISATION

The **initiative** for enhanced study visits may come from the hosting country e.g. when expressing interest in benefiting from experiences in other Member States for the improvement of its own approaches, programmes or interventions or from any Member States expressing an interest in learning from

experiences of other Member States without yet having any measures in place.

The **scope and objective** of any such visit would be determined upfront by the relevant Member States with support from the Commission.

Where appropriate, a **preparatory session** could be foreseen to allow the participants to get better acquainted with the project itself and determine how best to deliver on the expectations of the host country/participating Member States.

The study visit could take place **over two days**, and could involve on-site missions.

The Commission would facilitate the organisation of these study visits. The Commission will explore how to offer financial, **logistical and content-based support to the host country**, including:

- Elaboration of a concept paper for the study visit;
- Preparation of the relevant background and preparatory documents (including background guiding documents for the on-site mission);
- Logistical support in the organisation of the study visits (including preparatory meetings);
- Support in drafting of a possible study visit report, if such a report is wished for by the visited Member State. The format of the report can be agreed in advance.

Pending the full roll-out of such enhanced study visits and availability of additional resources, it could be explored whether the existing RAN study visits programme could be used for more informal exchanges of best practices including policy makers.

6. FOLLOW-UP

Additional assistance to the practical implementation of the follow-up actions (recommendations for ameliorations, transfer of practices, etc.) could also be envisaged for the visited and/or visiting countries upon their request using the services available under the existing initiatives (like the RAN Member State support scheme or European Strategic Communications Network's consultancy services).

In close cooperation with the host country, a **workshop** in the host country could be organised to present and discuss the visit findings in a larger setting.

RAN Study visits planned for 2018 include:

- Youth involvement in the city of Leicester (6-5 June, Leicester (UK));
- Dealing with juvenile and young extremist offenders (7, 8 June, Hessen (DE));
- Prevention of radicalisation in asylum seekers and refugees communities (14, 15 September, Sweden (city to be confirmed));
- The Local approach of Hamburg (exact date TBC probably September/October), Hamburg, (DE);
- Learning from adjacent fields: exploring the link between hooliganism and extremism (25, 26 October, Poland (city to be confirmed)).

Based on inputs from participating representatives and depending on the objectives of the relevant study visit a **report** could be prepared in consultation with the member(s) of the visiting team and the Commission.

It could include a state-of-the-art analysis, identification of good practices and suggestions for improvement and specific recommendations. It should identify issues of special interest to the host countries and discuss the potential for transfer to other countries where relevant and appropriate. It would be policy oriented, comprehensive, evidence based, including also the relevant information from the desk and literature research. The report could also just consist of a summary of the take aways from the visit and the dissemination of the learnings to participating and interested Member States.

The amount of **publicity and confidentiality** given to the final report would be discussed between the host country and the Commission in advance and if wished so by the host country, appropriate communication actions could be planned (e.g. handing-over ceremony, press conference, etc).

If so agreed by the host country, the results of the study visit would also be **presented** in the TWP or other relevant policy fora. The visited practices and approaches could also be presented in relevant RAN working groups and included in the collection of inspiring practices for further dissemination.



ANNEX 3:

Project-based collaboration

1. SCENE SETTER

Within the High-Level Expert Group on Radicalisation (HLCEG-R) there was broad support to facilitate swift and flexible exchanges and cooperation allowing likeminded Member States to take forward the work on priority topics.

As stated in the interim report, as “regards the strengthening of existing initiatives, the network of national prevent policy makers should resume its work also exploring the possibility of establishing smaller working groups with **a limited number of Member States affected by or interested in specific topics**”.

Any such work by a smaller number of Member States can make a valuable contribution to the implementation of actions at Member State level addressing particular needs in Member States while making tangible progress on topics of common EU interest.

The envisaged closer collaboration could be carried out in the framework of a so-called **project-based approach**. It can build on the example of RAN Member State workshops or the European Strategic Communications Network’s (European Strategic Communications Network) Research and Analysis programme with a strong focus on working towards a very concrete result/end product.

2. OBJECTIVE AND BENEFITS

The objective of a project based approach to selected topics would be to facilitate the implementation in Member States of actions in agreed priority areas as well as of recommendations in the HLCEG-R which are primarily addressed to Member States. This could be achieved by allowing Member States to work collaboratively towards the development of policy responses, interventions and practical deliverables.

The **benefit** would consist in the possibility for a small number of participating Member States to have effective and targeted discussions while upholding the possibility of sharing the results of this collaboration with all Member States and contributing to the further development of effective prevent actions in the EU (and beyond).

3. SCOPE

Possible candidates for such project-based collaboration would be recommendations of this HLCEG-R final report addressed primarily to Member States.

- Identification of actions to raise awareness and facilitate the work by the media industry and journalists’ federations for the development of guidance for journalists about their possible contribution to preventing the spread of extremist narratives and understanding polarisation dynamics;
- Identification of actions to better support the development of alternative and counter narratives, e.g. exploring interest and feasibility of specialised communications support to campaigns from a central hub;
- Identification of possible actions to effectively prevent the spread of violent extremist propaganda via traditional media including satellite TV;
- Identification of methods and tools on how to map and

analyse violent extremist propaganda;

- Identification of tools to identify, monitor and evaluate the signs and risks of radicalisation and design intervention models (risk assessments);
- Support on setting up of cooperation and support structures and mechanisms [at local level] within Member States including information sharing protocols;
- Support on developing interventions for child returnees;
- Identification of good practices in, for example, prison regime choices and specific interventions in prisons as well as options for alternatives to prison.

The above topics are neither mandatory nor comprehensive. Member States are free and encouraged to propose also other topics taking into account the strategic orientations of the (future) Steering Board.

4. PARTICIPANTS

The team to take up a specific topic would typically consist of a few Member States that are particularly interested and/or affected, taking the lead in close coordination/ cooperation with the Commission. The European Counter Terrorism Coordinator (EU Counter-Terrorism Coordinator) and the European External Action Service (European External Action Service) – within their mandate – may be considered to be associated where the involved Member States find this appropriate and valuable.

The composition of the team members would depend on

the topic. The team could involve also other stakeholders, such as practitioners, researchers and representatives from the private sector taking into account expertise and work for instance done within the Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN) or the European Strategic Communications Network (European Strategic Communications Network).

Other interested Member States (with limited resources to participate actively) should be associated as closely as possible depending on their expressed interest.

5. ORGANISATION

The network of national prevent policy makers would be an appropriate forum where topics suitable for this method could be discussed, where expressions of interest to take part in the approach could be expressed, and results shared. Any such interest to take up a specific topic should be communicated to the Commission, which will inform the network of all suitable proposals (including those identified by the Commission with a particular EU added value).

Where topics have been identified and agreed on with the Commission, the team should be constituted with an agreement on the working modalities, final deliverables and timelines.

The Commission remains closely associated throughout the process.

The Commission would also ensure that all Member States are adequately informed about the work, progress and final results.

The Commission could provide **support** (where appropriate and feasible) e.g. in terms of drafting a preparatory or background document, facilitating the organisation of bi- or multilateral meetings and could also put the knowledge of the RAN Centre of Excellence and the European Strategic Communications Network at their disposal. Participating Member States would bear the costs. The Commission will explore ways to increase its (financial) support to such project based collaboration.

The duration would depend on its scope and depth, but would ideally be between six and twelve months but could be extended where necessary.

6. RESULT

At the end of the project, the findings, conclusions and possible recommendations (in terms of follow up work) should be reflected in a report. This report could include

an overview of and experiences in Member States, on the chosen topic, complemented by an analysis of the context/ situation.

7. Follow-UP

The report would be – in general – shared with all other Member States and relevant stakeholders, in the network of national prevent policy makers and where the team of Member States and the Commission find it appropriate, relevant Council working groups.

It should be seen as the **starting point for further actions**, such as follow up workshops, trainings or development of guidance material in line with the “recommendations” of the report.



Illustration of the ongoing work contributing to the implementation of HLCEG-R recommendations

PRISON AND PROBATION, REHABILITATION AND REINTEGRATION

In cooperation with the Bulgarian Presidency, the European Organisation of Prison and Correctional Services, the Confederation of European Probation and the Radicalisation Awareness Network, the Commission organised, on 27 February 2018, a conference on radicalisation in prisons. The participants including judges, prosecutors, prison and probation staff as well as leaders of 19 EU funded projects took stock of achievements so far, identified further challenges in the implementation of 2015 Council Conclusions and collected ideas on how to take the work forward. The participants concluded **that multi-agency cooperation and evidence-based evaluation** of existing programs are key and a more uniform approach to **risk assessment** terminology within and across countries should be a long-term objective. The topic of radicalisation in prisons was also discussed at the Justice and Home Affairs Council of 8 March.

Several EU calls for proposals were organised to facilitate the development of targeted interventions, to enhance skills in particular through targeted trainings; to facilitate the development of targeted exit programs enabling radicalised individuals to disengage and rehabilitate. The Commission published on 31 January a **3 million EUR** call for proposals. On 7 March 2018, the Commission opened a **2.9 million EUR** call for proposals to promote judicial cooperation in criminal matters, including radicalisation in prisons, which can include different types of activities such as research, study visits, exchange of best practices and training in this area.

In terms of organisation of trainings on radicalisation for judges and prosecutors, under the Justice programme's annual operating grant to the European Judicial Training Network, the latter organised a seminar for judges and prosecutors of all EU Member States jointly with the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Training on "Training on Counter-Terrorism, Foreign Fighters, Radicalisation and Violent Extremism - Common Risk Indicators" on 23-27 April 2018. Furthermore, a national seminar on "Extremism, its forms and Islamic radicalisation" taking place on 14-15 August 2018 will be opened to participation of judges and prosecutors of other Member States. Furthermore, to support the training of judges and prosecutors, but also prison staff and probation officers in the field of radicalisation, the Commission will open on 14 June 2018 a **5.35 million EUR** call for proposals for action grants to support projects on judicial training

covering civil law, criminal law or fundamental rights, including radicalisation issues.

The European network of Penitentiary Training Academies and the European Organisation of Prison and Correctional Services are also strengthening their cooperation in the area of **training on radicalisation** issues and will e.g. allow existing and future European members to profit for example from joint correctional training, good practices in the training of prison staff and management or joint training materials.

With a view to providing an overview of existing practices and approaches while gathering insights, lessons learnt and recommendations, the Annual Activity Plan 2018 of the RAN Centre of Excellence foresees a number of activities and in particular an updated guidance paper on "Approaches to violent extremist offenders and countering radicalisation in prisons and probation" covering different aspects, including in particular the **role of probation, risk assessment implementation, religious counselling in prisons and the training of chaplains, role of family support interventions and handling returnees.**



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COMMUNICATION, COUNTERING ONLINE PROPAGANDA, IDEOLOGY AND POLARISATION

Significant progress has been made under the **EU Internet Forum** to limit the accessibility of terrorist propaganda online. At the ministerial meeting of the Forum in December 2017, the industry informed about the implementation of the ambitious **action plan** agreed in July 2017 referring to the increased use of automated detection tools, the rolling out of tools such as the **Database of Hashes** to help stem the dissemination of terrorist content across platforms and improving response rates to referrals from national and EU Internet Referral Units.

Building on these efforts, the Commission adopted on 1 March 2018 a **Recommendation on measures to effectively tackle illegal content online**¹⁹. A specific chapter on terrorism calls upon companies to enhance their response to referrals (as a general rule within one hour of receipt of the referral), to develop specific proactive measures to detect and expeditiously remove terrorist content and prevent its dissemination. The Commission has launched a **monitoring exercise** to assess the impact of this recommendation, as well as an impact assessment looking into whether further action - including legislation - is required.

Both the European Strategic Communications Network and the RAN have foreseen in their activities for 2018, further work to increase the understanding and capabilities in developing counter and alternative narratives, including the evaluation of their effectiveness. The European Strategic Communications Network's activities for 2018 foresee workshops on monitoring and evaluation as part of the consultancy offer. A Network meeting on monitoring and evaluation as a key step in strategic communications methodology is planned for December 2018. The European Strategic Communications Network and the RAN will also explore how to develop partnerships between governments, civil society organisations and industry and **identify credible partners for interventions** tackling extremist ideologies. Together with the RAN, the European Strategic Communications Network will work on a policy paper on **cooperating with local communities** on changing the discourse of relevant audiences through alternative and counter narrative campaigns.

In addition, the European Strategic Communications Network explored the role of the **traditional media** in countering violent extremism that could feed into further work **raising awareness and guidance for journalists**.

Furthermore, the European Strategic Communications Network is looking within its research and analysis programme into **how disinformation impacts strategic communications on countering violent extremism working towards** an analytical paper to be issued in June. This work complements the broader endeavour of tackling disinformation and the work of the high-level group of experts dedicated to advising on policy initiatives to counter fake news and disinformation online.²⁰

In addition, the Commission has provided funding in a number of areas which overall aim at reducing while at the same time strengthening resilience against radicalisation and extremism, by addressing some of the root causes of social tension. One example is preventing and countering racism and intolerance and in particular hate speech online: targeted funding has been made available for projects in this area in 2018 under the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme, which includes a call for proposals to monitor, prevent and counter hate speech online.²¹ Under this thematic priority, the call specifically refers to projects focussed on the development of **online narratives promoting Union values, tolerance and respect to EU fundamental rights**. This call has a relevance also in relation to research and analysis on polarisation dynamics, as it also expresses interest for projects aimed at researching and analysing the sociological landscape relating to the origin and spread of hate speech on social media platforms, of current or new trends of forms of intolerance online and its path of dissemination, such as extremist ideas leading to violence or hatred against minorities.



¹⁹ http://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/dae/document.cfm?doc_id=50095

²⁰ See Commission Communication COM(2018) 236 final, 26.4.2018; Report from the Expert group: <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/final-report-high-level-expert-group-fake-news-and-online-disinformation>

²¹ <https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal/desktop/en/opportunities/rec/topics/rec-rrac-online-ag-2018.html>

LOCAL AND MULTI-AGENCY APPROACHES

The **EU Mayors' Conference** of 8 March 2018 stressed the importance of better connecting cities in their efforts to prevent and counter radicalisation. The Commission will explore further engagement with cities in close coordination and cooperation with other relevant EU project as well as other **European and international organisations and associations** to identify the nature and scope for further action in this field.

As outlined in the Annual Activity Plan 2018 of the RAN Centre of Excellence, the RAN will continue to identify best practices and develop guidance material to support the implementation of prevent strategies and action plans at local level, addressing issues such as how to organise work with local communities or how to ensure the necessary commitment at policy level while offering local actors concrete guidance. For instance, the RAN will organise **multi-agency table top exercise for local coordinators** who work for a local municipality or region which is at the beginning of developing **its local approach on countering violent extremism**. The RAN will also issue a short **practical handbook** on multi-agency approach with checklists and step-by-step guidelines.

IDENTIFYING AND ADDRESSING RISK OF RADICALISATION OF INDIVIDUALS BELONGING TO GROUPS REQUIRING PARTICULAR ATTENTION



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The Annual Activity Plan 2018 of the RAN Centre of Excellence foresees a number of activities to address the challenges related to certain individuals returning from conflict zones (and in particular women and children “returnees”) or to the risk of exploiting vulnerabilities among certain individuals migrating to the EU territory (e.g. adult and child refugees, persons seeking international protection, and unaccompanied children) with a view to collect good practices, experiences and to provide further insights and guidance.

A first such event took place in Sofia in April where policy makers and practitioners from the EU and Western Balkan

countries looked at a number of specific aspects such as care options for **child returnees** as well as **trauma-informed practice** facilitating the (re)integration of child returnees. A further event is scheduled for July looking at the radicalisation of children more broadly including child returnees.

The EU Counter Terrorism Coordinator launched a questionnaire on child returnees giving an overview of statistics as well as relevant measures taken by Member States, the results of which will be presented shortly.

EDUCATION AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

To promote common values through education, the Commission adopted on 17 January 2018 a proposal for a Council Recommendation inviting Member States to take further steps to strengthen critical thinking, media literacy and shared values to consolidate a stronger sense of belonging at local and national level and make use of the relevant EU funds. At the same time, the proposal indicates the areas where the Commission stands ready to provide further support to Member States, including through the development and review of practical tools and guidance material.

So far, the Erasmus+ programme has funded over 1200 transnational projects on citizenship education, inclusive education, intercultural understanding or critical thinking and media literacy.

The Commission is also working towards the establishment of a network of **positive role models** to operate in schools, youth and sport clubs and other settings to promote

social inclusion, prevent exclusion and radicalisation as well as encourage active citizenship and commitment to shared values. This initiative is being rolled out gradually by Erasmus+ National Agencies. To enable contacts and mutual learning between different role models initiatives, the Commission organised an EU networking event of role models initiatives on 11 December 2017. Projects submitted under the 2018 Erasmus+ call for proposals on “Social inclusion and common values: The contribution in the field of education, training and youth²²” also encourages to actively involve role models, where appropriate.

Under the Education and Training 2020 strategic framework, a policy framework²³ and compendium of good practices is being developed on how education can promote social inclusion and common EU values. Furthermore, a tool kit for youth workers offers guidance on working with people at risk of radicalisation and policy recommendations for public authorities, thereby contributing to improving the awareness and skills of the relevant stakeholders.



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²² Call N. 2018/C 106/08, OJ C106/10, 21.03.2018

²³ http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/strategic-framework_en

EXTERNAL DIMENSION

The Commission has, in cooperation with the European External Action Service, increased its support for the development of the prevent strategies and action plan and cooperation mechanisms in partner countries outside the EU as well as the exchange of best practice. Commission programmes and projects in the area of preventing and countering violent extremism prioritise the support to local research on drivers of violent extremism in priority regions and countries and contribute to increasing knowledge and understanding of violent extremism.

The Commission has already established a **civil society facility in the Western Balkans** and is currently working on the set up of an additional one with a global reach expected to be operational in the first quarter of 2019.

In complement, the Commission is working in **mirroring the RAN structure in priority regions** as identified in the June 2017 Foreign Affairs Council decision. The first steps in that direction is to establish in the Western Balkans a network of CT/PVE coordinators, in June 2018. All initiatives are embracing a whole-society and comprehensive approach to respond to identified gaps in priority sectors (including education, communication and counter-narrative, radicalisation in prison, rehabilitation, reintegration of Foreign Terrorist Fighters). In parallel, the Commission continues to implement context-specific long term programmes to prevent and counter violent extremism and deliver short-term support to our partners (e.g. workshops, expert visits and peer to peer reviews, while continuing to engage with both state and civil society actors).

Through several initiatives such as thematic evaluations and regional **training workshops** on how to prevent and counter violent extremism for **staff from EU Institutions and Member States, as well as representatives from governments and civil society in third countries**, the Commission contributes to knowledge sharing and to increasing expertise on preventing and countering violent extremism. In this context, the Commission translated experiences into a practical **guidance** “*Operational Guidelines on the preparation and implementation of EU-financed actions specific to countering terrorism and violent extremism in third countries*” aimed to improve the quality of EU security related interventions in third countries.

In an effort of contributing to the coordination in this field, the Commission has for the past three years compiled information and has just finalised a **2017 mapping** which provides a detailed **overview of the external EU-activities** to prevent and counter violent extremism. A similar exercise was undertaken for the years 2015 and 2016 allowing for an assessment of developments over the past three years.

There is scope to enhance the exchange of best practice with third countries and relevant international bodies as well as to enhance the EU’s coordinated input to the development of global standards for preventing and countering violent extremism. There is also interest in helping enhance the capacity of third countries, notably as regards the EU’s immediate neighbourhood. The regular Counter Terrorism Political Dialogues led by the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy help contribute to identifying such needs and in identifying synergies and pertinent information.

