



# Rehabilitation work with convicted offenders outside of prison

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In recent years, the numbers of people being incarcerated for terrorism-related offences and/or considered radicalised (or at risk of radicalisation) have prompted governments to focus on the need for related work on resocialisation. Due to the relatively short sentences and non-custodial measures imposed, the reintegration of radicalised people into society concerns (and will continue to concern) numerous countries <sup>(1)</sup>. Most terrorism-related convictions in the EU are related to jihadist terrorists, with several trials held of women and minors who had joined Daesh in Iraq and Syria. Additionally, a growing number of individuals returning from conflict zones who have been radicalised to violence may not serve time in prison <sup>(2)</sup>.

This paper builds on lessons learned in the EU context, and it is useful for first-line practitioners providing probation and community sanctions and measures (CSMs) services, as well as exit workers and community and family support workers involved in rehabilitation programmes for violent extremist offenders (VEOs) outside prison.

## Background, objective and differences to offenders in prison

### VEOs serving a sentence outside prison: the context

Many radicalised offenders will not spend a long time in prison, or in some cases, will not go to prison at all. Instead, they will receive a community service order or a suspended sentence: this potentially carries an increased risk of them reoffending or returning to extremist activities or groups. Moreover, due to the high number of EU citizens still being in conflict zones (such as Syria and Iraq), the number of returnees is expected to increase in the upcoming years <sup>(3)</sup>. This complex scenario calls for a well-structured organisation of long-term strategies and rehabilitation programmes for preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE) <sup>(4)</sup>. Although the radicalisation process in the prison setting has been broadly studied <sup>(5)</sup>, the probation field remains under-researched <sup>(6)</sup>.

The key targets for VEOs can be categorised as general and specific.

General targets are to:

- Ensure security and safety
- Prevent reoffending
- Support offenders' by offering rehabilitation and reintegration measures into society

Specific targets are to:

- Prevent radicalisation of other individuals and/or family members
- Prevent affiliation with existing terrorist groups

VEOs are likely to face additional problems such as double stigmatisation (as both criminals **and** terrorists) and lack of societal support for the **second chance principle** <sup>(7)</sup>. Governments must explain clearly, through a public forum and ad hoc documents, why rehabilitation of these offenders is the best solution for society overall.

However, positive outcomes can only be expected if the interventions are based on a tailor-made risk/needs assessment of each case and account for the interests and needs of the offender, alongside those of the community, through a multi-agency approach.

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<sup>(1)</sup> Europol, European Union Terrorist Situation and Trend Report (TE-SAT) 2020, p. 30.

<sup>(2)</sup> OSCE, Non-Custodial Rehabilitation and Reintegration in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization That Lead to Terrorism. A Guidebook for Policymakers and Practitioners in South-Eastern Europe, p. 12.

<sup>(3)</sup> Europol, European Union Terrorist Situation and Trend Report (TE-SAT) 2020, p. 48.

<sup>(4)</sup> Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN), Rehabilitation Manual, p. 12.

<sup>(5)</sup> Mulcahy et al., The Radicalisation of Prison Inmates: A Review of the Literature on Recruitment, Religion and Prisoner Vulnerability, pp. 4-14.

<sup>(6)</sup> Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN), P&P, Dealing with radicalisation in a prison and probation context, p. 4; Cherney, The release and community supervision of radicalised offenders: issues and challenges that can influence reintegration, p. 1.

<sup>(7)</sup> Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN), Ex Post Paper: Building Bridges, p. 4.

## Differences and similarities between VEOs in and out of prison: needs and challenges

**Table 1. Advantages and disadvantages of managing VEOs in and out prison**

	Disadvantages	Advantages
<b>VEOs inside prison</b>	<p>The prison environment (with its accompanying known problems) could facilitate radicalisation paths <sup>(8)</sup>.</p> <p>Depending on the prison regime (dispersal, concentration, combination <sup>(9)</sup>), VEOs could be in a position to radicalise other prisoners (e.g. proselytism).</p> <p>VEOs might acquire admirers in prison that pose a threat to their willing participation in deradicalisation or disengagement programmes.</p> <p>If the VEOs are also foreigners, they will encounter additional difficulties (as do most of the ‘mainstream’ foreign prisoners) in being admitted to prison activities, rehabilitation programmes, probation or other CSMs (due to, among other reasons, the fact they could be discharged to their countries of origin, or a lack of confidence in their reliability).</p> <p>VEOs’ motivation to follow a rehabilitation path might stem from an interest in having CSMs applied instead of finishing their sentence in prison.</p>	<p>VEOs can view the time spent in prison as a breathing space and an opportunity to reflect on their lives.</p> <p>Extremist/radicalised offenders are under permanent supervision; prison staff are in the position to identify possible elements of radicalisation.</p> <p>Multi-agency staff can initiate the rehabilitation path at the start of the prison experience and can monitor its progress daily.</p> <p>VEOs’ contact with radicalised groups is significantly limited (the prison environment restricts contact with the outside world).</p>
<b>VEOs outside prison</b>	<p>VEOs are not under 24/7 supervision by probation or CSM staff.</p> <p>VEOs can easily stay in touch with other VEOs or radicalised groups through the internet or other forms of contact.</p> <p>VEOs not sentenced to serve time in prison but placed directly under CSMs (or not sentenced at all) could underestimate the severity of their conduct.</p> <p>VEOs could commit new crimes related to terrorism, or common crimes.</p> <p>If the conditions attached to the applied CSM are too restrictive, there is a serious risk that the offender will be recalled/imprisoned.</p> <p>VEOs not under any judicial process are not easily reached and involved in the disengagement path.</p>	<p>Multi-agency staff can more easily stay in touch with VEOs’ families and social networks.</p> <p>VEOs can avoid the double stigmatisation.</p> <p>VEOs can provide relevant testimonials for P/CVE strategies and can offer good counter-narratives or alternative narratives to specific target groups <sup>(10)</sup>.</p> <p>VEOs’ rehabilitation garners a higher level of participation and support (or at least, not open opposition) from society, while seeking social and functional integration <sup>(11)</sup>.</p> <p>The participation of extremist/radicalised individuals in disengagement programmes can serve as a positive starting point towards a change in personal identity.</p>
<b>Elements in common</b>	<p>The need for strong personal motivation for desistance.</p> <p>The support of <b>significant others</b> and positive social bonding throughout the whole rehabilitation path is vital.</p> <p>Reintegration involves deradicalisation (disengagement, cognitive distancing).</p> <p>The reintegration process does not end on the last day of the prison sentence. Exit strategies are needed that consider the shift to offenders’ gaining independence.</p> <p>A multi-agency approach is key to stable reintegration <sup>(12)</sup>.</p> <p>Risk/needs assessments should be tailored to the individual circumstances of the VEO.</p>	

<sup>(8)</sup> Basra, Neumann, Brunner, Criminal Pasts, Terrorist Futures: European Jihadists and the New Crime–Terror Nexus, p. 29.

<sup>(9)</sup> RAN, Dealing with radicalisation in a prison and probation context, p. 7.

<sup>(10)</sup> RAN, Counter narratives and alternative narratives, p. 4.

<sup>(11)</sup> Among others, Psoiu, Radicalised and terrorist offenders released from prison: Community and family acceptance, p. 4.

<sup>(12)</sup> UNODC, Handbook on the Management of Violent Extremist Prisoners, pp. 44-62; OSCE, Non-Custodial Rehabilitation and Reintegration in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization, p. 80; Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN), Rehabilitation Manual, p. 7.

## Identifying different target groups among VEOs outside prison

### Preliminary remarks

Before identifying the different target groups, the following points must be considered.

1. The first step towards a successful rehabilitation path is developing a trusting relationship with VEOs.
2. VEOs can be influenced by ideological, non-ideological or mixed motivations. They do not necessarily have unique needs as compared to other types of offenders. Some criminogenic factors are similar to those of mainstream offenders (e.g. social isolation, antisocial associates, limited education, drug/alcohol/mental health problems and a lack of family support) <sup>(13)</sup>. The involvement of criminals in extremist organisations can often be opportunistic and self-serving rather than ideological. In fact, terrorist groups increasingly rely on previously convicted offenders engaged in common criminality <sup>(14)</sup>.
3. Tackling ideological beliefs from the beginning is not always optimal; dealing with the motivation for offending can yield better outcomes. Evaluating when and how to start work on cognitive distancing from extremist views will be supported by an analysis of the person's history, his/her main characteristics <sup>(15)</sup> and the context in which the individual extremism is generated.

**VEOs are the most important actors** of any rehabilitation process. Related studies <sup>(16)</sup> as well as work in the field of **redemption research** <sup>(17)</sup> indicate that personal decision-making and a sincere willingness for a change in identity are vital for the success of the rehabilitation process itself. Finding a way to inspire offenders to actively participate in their rehabilitation path can be the first challenge of multi-agency cooperation.

## VEOs outside prison for different reasons: needs and challenges

**Table 2 . Managing VEOs outside prison: relevant actions**

Serving the last part of their sentence outside prison	Directly sentenced to probation or to another CSM	Not sentenced at all
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider gender- and age-specific needs.</li> <li>• Involve as many relevant actors as possible in the rehabilitation process.</li> <li>• Involve probation and CSM officers as soon as possible, or at least in the last 6 months of the sentence.</li> <li>• Coordinate the work of prison, probation and CSM officers with that of exit workers.</li> <li>• Collect information about the background of VEOs and the possible elements of risk.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider gender- and age-specific needs.</li> <li>• Involve as many relevant actors as possible in the rehabilitation process.</li> <li>• Coordinate the work of probation and CSM officers with that of exit workers.</li> <li>• Evaluate whether VEOs pose a risk to themselves or society.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider gender- and age-specific needs.</li> <li>• Collect/share information about their experiences abroad, their participation in extremist networks and their personal motivation for violent extremism.</li> <li>• Understand the familial and societal links and identify possible current elements of risk.</li> </ul>

<sup>(13)</sup> Cherney, The release and community supervision of radicalised offenders: issues and challenges that can influence reintegration, p. 7.

<sup>(14)</sup> Rushchenko, Terrorist recruitment and prison radicalization: assessing the UK experiment of 'separation centres', pp. 295-314.

<sup>(15)</sup> Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN), Rehabilitation Manual, pp. 17-19.

<sup>(16)</sup> Hlavka et al., Exoffender accounts of successful reentry from prison, p. 4; Maruna et al., Looking-glass identity, p. 31.

<sup>(17)</sup> Blumstein & Nakamura, Redemption in the presence of widespread criminal background checks, pp. 327-360; Curcio et al., Gender Differences, pp. 182-204.

**Specific attention must be always paid to:**

- Gender aspects, age and the role played in extremist/terrorist group(s);
- Timing and any significant personal events that could be decisive (having a child, starting employment, getting married);
- The presence of a specific purpose in life for the individual (strongly linked to a successful rehabilitation path);
- The type of offence committed (e.g. violent/non-violent offenders, ideologically/non-ideologically motivated);
- The role of family and society.

## The need for a long-term multi-agency approach

### Why can a multi-agency approach make the difference?

When dealing with VEOs who are on probation, serving a CSM or non-sentenced social context can play a decisive role. The responsibility for continuing the work begun in prison, in probation or in another setting, on a voluntary basis, lies with different agencies, organisations and communities. In order to prevent an overlap in interventions or to uncover a crucial area of interest, cooperation among different stakeholders should start as soon as possible.

All the existing models of multi-agency cooperation (despite differing vastly across countries) suggest that the fundamental elements for an efficient collaboration system <sup>(18)</sup> are as follows.

1. Understanding each other's assessment tools and the meaning of the outcomes.
2. Clarifying the role of each partner according to their specific professional tasks, and developing mutual trust and motivation.
3. Sharing the objectives of the applied strategies and the interest in achieving them.
4. Initiating, implementing and ensuring continuity and cohesion in cooperation among prison, probation and exit services.
5. Sharing relevant information (it is necessary to distinguish between **classified** and **sensitive** information: for the latter, partners should develop an efficient sharing system).

### Composition of multi-agency networks

Research shows <sup>(19)</sup> that multi-agency teams should involve different practitioners from the following areas.

1. Professional: P/CVE specialists, social work, psychological services, religious counselling.
2. Institutional: judicial system, prison services, probation services, municipalities, law enforcement agencies, intelligence agencies, civil society organisations, schools.
3. Social environment: communities, families.

When people do not receive prison sentences, or are not sentenced at all, the prison services are not involved; judicial system involvement needs to be evaluated case by case.

Practitioners must participate in periodic and ad hoc training and capacity-building programmes, owing to the highly specific tasks they carry out daily.

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<sup>(18)</sup> Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN), Ex Post Paper: Building Bridges, pp. 2-6.

<sup>(19)</sup> Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN), Rehabilitation Manual, p. 17; Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN), Ex Post Paper: Triple P, p. 5.

## The specific role of the family

The family, one of the relevant actors mentioned above, plays a crucial role. As possible **significant others**, family members should be involved in the reintegration path, but certain advantages and disadvantages (set out in Table 3, below) must be taken into account.

**Table 3: VEOs' family: pros and cons of a possible involvement in the reintegration path**

Family involvement	
Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is easier to gather useful information about the offender's character and life.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It might be challenging to communicate with the family, due to language barriers.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thanks to family intermediation, it is easier to help offenders find employment.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The family might be suspicious and distrustful of the authorities</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For Islamist offenders, the family tends to play an important role for cultural and religious reasons.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family members can face some difficulties in accepting the involvement of the offender in a terrorist context.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Its involvement from the very beginning of the path helps the monitoring of the dynamics that regulate the relationships among the offender and the other family members.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some family member can be unable to offer stable and supportive help to the offender.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It helps the offender in maintaining/re-building of positive social networks.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The family itself can be the source of individual radicalisation.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family support can be a relevant motivation for a self-transformation toward desistance.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The involvement in the reintegration path can cause family members emotional strain/psychological distress.</li> </ul>

While the family can be a helpful partner in multi-agency cooperation <sup>(20)</sup>, there are certain circumstances which pose a risk:

- When there is a need to protect the offender from his/her family (or the family from the offender himself or herself);
- When family members are unwilling to participate in the rehabilitation path (for instance, due to non-acceptance of the relative's involvement in terrorism dynamics);
- When family members have been threatened by the offender in relation to such involvement.

In these cases, the creation of an alternative network appears to be the only option.

However, even when the family is willing to be involved, certain insuperable problems render its involvement impossible:

- When there is great geographical distance from the offender;
- When a visitation ban is in place for offenders in relation to family or relatives;
- When family members are linked to problems of drugs, alcohol and deviance (this calls for a restoration of healthy family dynamics before any involvement in the reintegration process).

Much of the available literature on this topic stresses the importance of societal and community involvement, although this is a dimension which may have disadvantages as well as advantages. In any case, an accurate

<sup>(20)</sup> Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN), Ex Post Paper: The role of family and social networks, pp. 5-6.

mapping of the available territorial resources will help practitioners understand which local authorities and relevant community representatives it is worth involving <sup>(21)</sup>.

## How should a multi-agency team work?

When developing a rehabilitation programme for VEOs outside prison, it is crucial that the multi-agency team clearly defines the goals and objectives of the cooperation, as well as the indicators of success and failure. The primary goals should be to prevent the occurrence of new crimes and to rehabilitate VEOs.

Actors seeking to achieve these goals must work on:

- **Deradicalisation** (described as a process that entails behavioural disengagement and cognitive distancing, and leads to the so-called **exit phase**);
- **(Behavioural) disengagement.**

These two goals are not necessarily inseparable nor should they necessarily follow a fixed order: they can be achieved at different times. The rehabilitation process involves multiple steps, each one indispensable to meeting the final target: to prevent reoffending.

## Promising practices

A large set of promising interventions to tackle P/CVE issues while serving a sentence outside prison is available in recent documents <sup>(22)</sup>. The following three general approaches are employed in these practices.

- Psychological support (individual sessions or group interventions).
- Religious and spiritual support (chaplains involved in the deradicalisation process should be trained for this task).
- Social support (the involvement of family and friends in the disengagement process can be useful – with the provisions mentioned earlier. The presence of an external mentor can help ensure the necessary conditions are in place for building a trust-based relationship with additional **significant others**.)

## Existing good practices

**Table 4. Main approaches for P/CVE in prison and probation**

Main categories of good practice for P/CVE in prison and probation	
<b>Training for first-line practitioners</b>	This kind of approach is employed most commonly in the EU context. Details can vary widely across countries: duration (from weeks to years), content (specifically focused on a single type of violent extremism or adopting a broader perspective), involved experts and selected methodology (plenary lessons, working groups, experience sharing, national and international seminars or conferences). The principal aim is to offer the targeted audience useful tools for P/CVE. Training can be focused on just a given proposed action (is the case of the French <b>Training of on-site referee trainers on violent Islamist radicalisation awareness in detention or of the Norwegian Basic Training for</b>

<sup>(21)</sup> European Forum for Urban Security, PREPARE, p. 20.

<sup>(22)</sup> Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN), Collection of Approaches and practices; OSCE, Non-Custodial Rehabilitation and Reintegration, Annex 2.

	<b>correctional officers</b> ) <sup>(23)</sup> or can form part of a wider strategy that is organised in multiple levels of P/CVE.
<b>Community engagement/empowerment</b>	This practice calls for strong support from local administrations and takes advantage of the presence of the offender's social network to tackle his/her specific needs. The support can be offered at different points: in pre-trial custody, before release or during probation or CSM. Multi-agency approaches and long-term projects are pivotal to success (an example can be found in the Austrian <b>Social Net Conferencing</b> ) <sup>(24)</sup> .
<b>Counter/alternative narratives</b> <sup>(25)</sup>	This practice adopts a double perspective (the use of counter-narratives or alternative narratives) and uses case-by-case evaluation to determine which is most suitable to obtain the desired outcome: <b>alternative narratives</b> are based on positive stories about fundamental social values such as tolerance, freedom, openness and democracy; <b>counter-narratives</b> challenge ideologies through a number of different approaches (emotional, theological, historical, etc.).  An interesting example is the Austrian practice <b>De-radicalisation in prison</b> <sup>(26)</sup> .
<b>Mentoring model</b>	The practice is based on the presence of a <b>significant other</b> who participates in the reintegration process. Their relationship with the offender must be based on mutual trust. The significant other actively participates in drawing up a plan with the aim to facilitate reintegration and avoid recidivism. The significant other can be from the offender's or the volunteer's social network. An example is the <b>Inclusion</b> practice implemented in the Netherlands <sup>(27)</sup> .

In addition to the approaches mentioned above, some practices are specifically designed to manage VEOs outside prison. These practices approach the issue from different perspectives, as shown below.

## 1. Participation of offenders in the programme

Participation can be voluntary or mandatory/based on judicial decision.

- a) **Voluntary.** Individuals who have been involved in extremist/radicalised groups autonomously decide to leave these groups, and they follow the programme.

This is the case for the Finnish **RADINET**, which supports disengagement from ideologically motivated violence through specific services such as mentoring. The fact that the programme is performed in collaboration with a non-governmental organisation (NGO) fosters participants' trust <sup>(28)</sup>.

- b) **Mandatory/depending on judicial decision.** The programme becomes a specific part of the enforcement of the sentence outside prison and is typically developed in collaboration with the probation service, outside the prison setting.

An example of this approach can be found in the French programme **Research and Intervention on Violent Extremism (RIVE)** <sup>(29)</sup>.

<sup>(23)</sup> RAN, Preventing Radicalisation to Terrorism and Violent Extremism – Prison and Probation Interventions, p. 678, p. 718.

<sup>(24)</sup> Ibid., p. 689.

<sup>(25)</sup> RAN, Counter narratives and alternative narratives, pp. 4-5.

<sup>(26)</sup> RAN, RAN, Preventing Radicalisation to Terrorism and Violent Extremism – Prison and Probation Interventions, p. 655.

<sup>(27)</sup> Ibid., p. 658.

<sup>(28)</sup> OSCE, Non-Custodial Rehabilitation and Reintegration, p. 123.

<sup>(29)</sup> OSCE, Non-Custodial Rehabilitation and Reintegration, p. 123.

## 2. The programme's general approach

This could be based on support from specific professionals, or on systematised multi-agency collaboration.

- a) **Support from specific professionals.** This tailor-made approach to VEOs and those concerned about VEOs is based on a risk/needs assessment. It analyses the most important drivers of the personal history of – or path towards – (violent) extremism/radicalisation, and relies on support from trained experts (such as psychiatrists, theologians and health workers).

An interesting example is the **Family Support Centre** in the Netherlands. The programme is applied on a voluntary basis and involves the local municipality, family members and the Dutch Exit Centre. It offers information, advice and support to those worried about a family member who has been radicalised. The Family Support Centre relies on the expertise of many professionals <sup>(30)</sup>.

- b) **Systematised multi-agency collaboration.** These programmes, based on existing/emerging networks, can involve various social services providers, the healthcare system and the educational system as well as the police, intelligence and security systems. The multi-agency approach is typically supported by **mentoring** and/or **counselling**.

### Mentoring

A good example is the Danish city of **Aarhus** <sup>(31)</sup>, which concentrates on returned foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) on a voluntary basis, if they are assessed to pose no threat to the community. Multi-agency collaboration is the operational matrix of the programme: trained mentors play the role of significant others in daily life, and also provide religious counselling where appropriate. Participants are supported in finding jobs and housing and can receive psychological help and medical care for free <sup>(32)</sup>. Other similar approaches are implemented in many EU countries such as Finland (**RADINET**) <sup>(33)</sup>, Germany (**Violence Prevention Network**) <sup>(34)</sup> and the United Kingdom (**Desistance and Disengagement programme**) <sup>(35)</sup>.

### Counselling

The German project **Hayat** <sup>(36)</sup> offers counselling support to several target groups (e.g. those already radicalised, those on the path to violent radicalisation and people travelling to conflict zones). Anyone in a relationship with a person potentially on the path of (violent) radicalisation can refer to Hayat for support.

## 3. The programme's target group

The target groups include VEOs in general, or offenders and returned FTFs.

- a) **VEOs in general (Exit Programme).** Some of the existing good practices address a general audience, in order to involve (violent) extremist/radicalised individuals who have not necessarily been (already) sentenced, but are seeking to reject extremist ideology and disengage from violence. Participation in this kind of programme is typically voluntary.

<sup>(30)</sup> Ibid., p. 127.

<sup>(31)</sup> Ibid., p. 122.

<sup>(32)</sup> Ibid., p. 122.

<sup>(33)</sup> Ibid., p. 123.

<sup>(34)</sup> Ibid., p. 126.

<sup>(35)</sup> Ibid., p. 129.

<sup>(36)</sup> Ibid., p. 125.

The French **Entr’Autres** works with radicalised individuals willing to reject jihadist ideology. The approach aims to strengthen the family bond and helps clients to take on daily challenges, to facilitate their reintegration into the community<sup>(37)</sup>. Other examples are the German **Hayat** programme (mentioned above) and the **EXIT Sweden** programme<sup>(38)</sup>.

- b) Offenders and returned FTFs.** These are good practices specifically addressing people who have been charged or convicted of terrorism-related offences or identified as radicalised in the pre- or post-sentencing phase. Typically, participation in these programmes is not voluntary, but strictly linked to judicial decisions. In some cases, non-compliance with requirements could lead to a breach procedure or a recall to prison.

Examples can be found in the French programme **Research and Intervention on Violent Extremism (RIVE)**<sup>(39)</sup>. The applied mentorship approach aims at the deradicalisation and social reintegration of people older than 18 who have been charged with committing terrorist acts or identified by probation services as having been radicalised in the pre- or post-sentencing stage. The programme is funded by the French Ministry of Justice and is developed in collaboration with the probation service. Other examples of organisations or programmes offering such support are the German NGO **Violence Prevention Network**<sup>(40)</sup>; the Danish programme **Back on Track**<sup>(41)</sup> and the British **Desistance and Disengagement Programme**<sup>(42)</sup>.

## Lesson learned and general recommendations

VEOs are the most important actors in any rehabilitation process: without their convinced and sincere commitment to the programme, rehabilitation is not achievable. However, even with VEOs’ active and positive participation, the expected outcomes should not be considered certain, because many variables can negatively and unexpectedly impact the process (e.g. offenders’ personal crises (depending on internal or external factors), interference of old criminal networks, or reintegration into hostile society).

Nonetheless, thanks to the experiences of rehabilitation work described above, some key recommendations can be formulated.

### Key recommendations

- 1) Programmes addressing all forms of (violent) extremism/radicalisation should exist.** Anyone seeking to disengage from any form of violent ideology should be able to find support.
- 2) Adopting cross-extremism approaches to rehabilitation can help practitioners** learn and benefit from adjacent field.
- 3) Apply a multi-agency approach to P/CVE and VEO reintegration.** Neither security agencies nor NGOs can succeed in this endeavour alone. All actors need to find respectful and effective structures for cooperation and information sharing.
- 4) Maintain the focus on behavioural disengagement.** Especially with VEOs, the first steps should focus on preventing them from committing acts of violence and other crimes in the future.
- 5) Ensure proportionality and continuity.** Interventions must be based on tailor-made risks and needs assessments and must consider the positive and negative consequences of all interventions

<sup>(37)</sup> OSCE, Non-Custodial Rehabilitation and Reintegration, p. 124.

<sup>(38)</sup> Ibid., p. 128.

<sup>(39)</sup> Ibid., p. 124.

<sup>(40)</sup> Ibid., p. 126.

<sup>(41)</sup> Ibid., p. 122.

<sup>(42)</sup> Ibid., p. 129.

on the individual and on the relevant community. Moreover, continuity must be maintained throughout the process, including during transitions from prison to probation programmes.

- 6) **Mitigate stigmatisation** by reducing the labelling of individuals and by raising awareness in the community about the importance of rehabilitation programmes. **Avoid reinforcing the perception that VEOs receive preferential treatment**, as this could provoke feelings of anger and frustration among community members.
- 7) **Train and engage communities, families, municipalities and local authorities** that they understand the importance of rehabilitation programmes and contribute to a conducive environment.
- 8) **Consider and plan for specific approaches focused on gender, age, religious and ethnic needs, from the beginning.**
- 9) **Enhance the existing capacity of all stakeholders and actors involved in rehabilitation programmes** and invest in the development needed to meet new needs as they arise and are identified.
- 10) **Implement the use of restorative justice and consider involving victims of VEOs (depending on their own needs).**

## Further reading

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