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PREPARE PROJECT

Preventing radicalisation through probation and release

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Belgium: an integrated approach implemented at each of the three levels of government

As a federal state, Belgium's integrated approach for dealing with radical prisoners is implemented at each of the three levels of the government.

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Probation allows for individualised follow-up for prisoners leaving prison and mobilises many services (prison administration, justice services, etc.). As a result, it is a key moment to act against the violent radicalisation of these individuals, whether it took place in prison or on release. Local authorities have a key role to play in coordinating these different institutions. They can also use their knowledge and know-how in the field of prevention of reoffending and disengagement.

PREPARE contributes to the prevention of radicalisation through disengagement and rehabilitation programmes during release and probation, notably through multi-agency partnerships that include local authorities.

Efus coordinates this project from 2017 to 2019 with a broad partnership of local authorities and civil society organisation: City of Malaga and Generalitat of Catalonia (Spain), Rotterdam and The Hague (Netherlands), Bagnolet (France) and Vilvoorde (Belgium), Violence Prevention Network and Denkzeit (Germany), Fryshuset (Sweden), European Forum for Restorative Justice (Belgium) and Fondation Agir Contre l'Exclusion (France).

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1. National strategy against radicalisation

>>>> *Background*

Belgium is a federal country and the competences with regard to radicalisation are spread over the different levels of government: the federal level is responsible of repression; the French, Flemish and German communities are competent with regard to prevention, social care and education; and the Regions (Flanders, Wallonia, Brussels) cover the cities and municipalities. Strategies to deal with radicalisation are developed at all levels, with a vision of an integrated approach, which implies coordination and cooperation. Cities and municipalities play an important role and have worked for many years now on the topic of radicalisation, notably because they were confronted with the issue of local residents leaving to go and fight in Syria. A federal plan (Plan M for Mosques) was developed in 2002, later renamed as Plan R (radicalisation), which has been updated over the years. It forms the general framework for an integrated and integral approach, together with the more general National Security Plan.

>>>> *Federal Plan R*

The federal Plan R² states that radicalism and extremism require a global approach by all governments and should not be limited to intelligence and security services. An integrated and integral approach of all services is key, with the Local Task Forces (LTF) as a tool to communicate with the local level, where judicial and administrative authorities sit together. The Plan aims to (1) detect individuals and groups with a radicalising effect on their environment and to (2) reduce the impact of radicalisation. Radicalism is defined in the Plan as “the readiness to accept the final consequence of a mindset and to act upon it.” Radicalisation is defined as “a process through which an individual or a group of individuals is mentally trained or ready to commit terrorist acts.”³

The coordination of the Plan lies with the National Task Force (NTF), under the presidency of the Coordination Unit for Threat Analysis (CUTA). The NTF is responsible for the general administration and continuous follow-up of the Plan. It gathers monthly and includes representatives of the different governments, the police, the General Direction Crisis Centre and the Service Immigration. Various working groups at the different governmental levels deal with certain aspects or phenomena of radicalisation, such as Prevention or Asylum and Migration.

At the local level, Local Task Forces (LTF) have a strategic and an operational component and are connected with the local administrative authorities and socio-preventive services. The LTFs guarantee the monitoring of radicalising individuals and groups. Concrete topics are furthermore discussed in the so-called Local Integral Security Cell (LISC) at the level of the cities and municipalities. The LISC was introduced as a possible tool to stimulate coordination at local level by the Circular Letter of 21/08/2015 of the Minister of Internal Affairs with regard to Foreign Terrorist Fighters (FTF).⁴ The Joint Information Box is an electronic working document that includes the radicalised individuals and groups that need to be followed up with priority. A dynamic databank with regard to FTF can be consulted at the local level.

² http://besafe.jdbi.eu/sites/besafe.localhost/files/u18/brochure_radicalisme_nl.pdf (accessed 15/06/2018).

³ This definition stems from the Law of 30 November 1998 regarding the intelligence and security services, art. 3, 15°

⁴ A draft law includes the obligation to start such a Cell in every municipality and city.

>>>> *Flemish Action Plan*

The Flemish Action Plan⁵ considers violent radicalisation as a threat to the fundamental rights and freedoms of the democratic state, which as such needs to be addressed through an approach combining prevention and repression. An integrated preventive approach through which every policy domain takes responsibility is the starting-point, while the existing structures are used and the competences of the first-line workers are strengthened. Municipalities are considered as first partners since radicalisation often occurs in a local context. Municipalities have the task to signal alarming developments and react to them. The Flemish Action Plan for the prevention of violent radicalisation and polarisation describes the integrated approach through five policy-lines:

- Coordination and cooperation
- Support for the local approach
- Organisation of a personal approach
- Strengthening knowledge and expertise
- Mobilising civil society

The specific measures to prevent violent radicalisation and polarisation are framed within the need for an inclusive society and thus the Plan is to be considered in the framework of the Integration, Equal Chances and Combatting Poverty policy plans.

At the Flemish level, the Flemish Radicalisation Platform, a network of contact points of the different policy areas, oversees the coordination. At European level, cooperation with the Network of Prevent Coordinators and participation in the Radicalisation Awareness Network's (RAN) working groups is envisaged.

The local approach is supported through financial support for municipalities with a high risk potential; financial support for some urbanised areas around Brussels; advice by VVSG (Flemish Association of Cities and Municipalities) and AGII (Agency for Integration and Naturalisation); strengthening the social integration at municipality level; initiatives for active and shared citizenship; and guaranteeing structural cooperation between the different actors.

>>>> *Wallonian Plan for the prevention of violent radicalism*

The Wallonian Plan⁶ refers to the context in which Jihadism emerges and people leave their country for Syria, noting that there are various background reasons for this phenomenon. Three lines are developed:

Coordination between the different actors by:

- Naming a reference person who will preside the network
- Putting in place a network
- Taking part in the Inter-federation platform and NTF
- Benchmarking via Wallonia-Brussels International⁷ to learn from experiences elsewhere

⁵ Vlaamse Regering, Actieplan ter preventie van gewelddadige radicalisering en polarisering. Overzicht acties en maatregelen, VR 2017 0206 MED.0211/2TER. Available at <https://www.vlaanderen.be/en/nbwa-news-message-document/document/09013557801df581> (accessed 15 June 2018).

⁶ Brogniet, P., Plan wallon de prévention du radicalisme violent. Power point presentation, Namur, 27 January 2017.

- Cooperation with federal services and working groups
- Collaboration with the French Community⁸

Prevention:

- Radicalisation as a topic is integrated in the Social Cohesion Plans
- 24 projects are subsidised
- Social integration of foreigners is strengthened, also at work level
- Recognition of religions
- Extra subsidies for prevention in bigger cities

Detection:

- 500 first-line workers are trained on the topic
- Their questions are collected

>>>> *Plan of the French Community*

The French Community has developed a plan to prevent radicalism and to support peaceful coexistence.⁹ Three transverse axes are developed:

- The creation of the anti-radicalisation network RAR (réseau antiradicalisme) in order to coordinate all efforts, raise awareness among first-line workers, develop prevention tools, strengthen the expertise and cooperate with other similar structures;
- Participation in the national prevention strategy;
- Strengthened action against racism, discrimination, anti-Semitism and Islamophobia.

As within the Flemish Action Plan, various actions are set up with regard to prevention policies in the domains of education, media, culture, equal opportunities, youth care and sports. Since the competences do not include municipalities, this level is not included in the Plan. Nevertheless, certain initiatives are taken in schools or to support individuals.

>>>> *Plan of the German Community*

The Plan of the German Community¹⁰ first explains the terms radicalism, radicalisation, extremism, terrorism, polarisation and Foreign Terrorist Fighters. It then sketches the context of the terrorist attacks and IS, in which the FTF return to their home country. The plan also takes into consideration right wing extremism. The Plan focuses on the topics of prevention, awareness, training, early detection and social guidance of radicalised people, since these are the competences of the Communities. It needs to be considered within the framework of both Plan R and the Framework Plan Integral Security. Various actors are at play in the German Community: a coordinator on prevention of violent radicalism is responsible for

⁷ WBI is the agency that deals with the international relations of Wallonia and Brussels. <http://www.wbi.be/about-us#.WyN-5akyXUI> (accessed 15 June 2018).

⁸ Now called "Federation Wallonia Brussels"

⁹ Since on the French-speaking side of the country, there are both a French Community and a Walloon Region, there are two plans, while on the Flemish side of the country, all competences are reunited in one Flemish government. Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles, Initiatives de prévention du radicalisme et du bien-vivre ensemble. <http://gouvernement.cfwb.be/sites/default/files/nodes/story/7066-pptpreventionradicalisme.pdf> (accessed 15 June 2018).

¹⁰ Regierung der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft Belgiens, Strategie zur Vorbeugung von gewaltsamen Radikalismus in der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft Belgiens. 2016-2020. <http://oliver-paasch.eu/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Strategie-zur-Vorbeugung-von-gewaltsamem-Radikalismus-DE-PUBLIC.pdf> (accessed 15 June 2018).

the implementation of the Plan and a security officer deals with security questions that the government of the German community may have. The Plan is based upon four pillars:

- Prevention: although the reaction lies with the federal government, it is considered to be important to detect and prevent radicalisation at an early stage. Therefore, schools, training and positive examples for youth are considered to be important.
- Deradicalisation: an individual path is needed since every radicalisation process has its own causes.
- Cooperation:
 - Within Belgium, cooperation is set at the Platform Radicalisation, the NTF's "Plan R", the coordination at the level of the German Community over the different policy domains (youth, schools, social sector, sports)
 - cross-border cooperation in the Maas-Rhein Euregio
- Communication:
 - External communication: in cooperation with the NTF's Communication working group as well as with regard to the development of counter-narratives
 - Internal communication between all actors within the security and prevention chain is a crucial asset to come to an efficient activation of an integral security policy.

2. Prevention of radicalisation in prison, release and probation

The federal Ministry of Justice has issued an "Action Plan against radicalisation in prison" in 2015.¹¹ Prisons are seen as a potential breeding ground for radicalisation and recruitment, while detainees are vulnerable to radical thinking due to their background and context. The central objectives of the policy are (1) to prevent the radicalisation of detainees and (2) to develop a specialised follow-up of radicalised people during their detention. Ten points of action are included, with a focus on information gathering and sharing. One of the most important is the "reinforced cooperation with the local level, the federated states and Europe". The cooperation between the prisons' psychosocial service "and the prevention officials of the cities and communes has to be developed. It is important to carefully prepare the detainees for the transition from prison to society and to ensure that they can build a new existence and social network in order to avoid recidivism and a return to extremism" (p.18). The federated states are responsible for education, culture and welfare, which may offer detainees a perspective on reintegration, while the so-called assistants of justice (probation officers) are responsible for the follow-up of judicial alternative measures.

In Flemish prisons¹², Islamist radicalisation in prisons became a priority in 2015 through a "reactive policy" foreseeing a specialised framework for radicalised detainees as well as a "preventive policy" since prisons are seen as a potential breeding ground for violent Islamist radicalisation and recruitment. The Belgian government opted for a dual approach: in first instance, detainees are integrated in general prison departments, after which a transferral to "satellite prisons" or a specialised department (called D-Rad, as for example in Hasselt and Ittre) is possible in case of further radicalisation or recruitment. The Ministry of

¹¹ <https://justice.belgium.be/sites/default/files/downloads/Pland%27actionradicalisation-prison-EN.pdf> (accessed 18 June 2018). Within the General Direction Penitentiary Institutions, a unit Extremism is established that will further develop the plan and coordinate its implementation.

¹² Because of the multitude of both actors and offers, it is hard to get a good view on what actually happens in practice (see also Colaert, L., 2017. Deradicalisering. Wetenschappelijke inzichten voor een Vlaams beleid. Brussel: Vlaams Vredesinstituut). We could not find concrete information on Wallonia and Brussels

Welfare hired two consultants to set up individualised pathways; to give professional advice to other services; and to co-develop policies. (De Pelecijn et al., 2018).

3. Role of local authorities

Local authorities are considered as crucial in addressing radicalisation because they are the policy level closest to citizens. Through the Local Task Forces (LTF) and Local Integral Security Cell (LISC) they are involved in the exchange of information and coordination between the different actors. As to the legal framework, the following elements are highlighted in a note by the Brussels Union of Cities and Municipalities.¹³ The mayor can issue an order with individual or general scope on the basis of the general administrative policing when public order is at stake, especially public security; commandeer the federal police in certain circumstances when the local police's capacity is insufficient; call for the help of Civil Protection; develop and coordinate local emergency plans; start up a Local Integral Security Cell; and prohibit certain performances in case of expression of racist, radical or extremist ideas.

A document by the Flemish Union of Cities and Municipalities¹⁴ states that the phenomena of radicalisation and Jihadism poses certain challenges for local governments, such as local tensions, polarisation and people potentially leaving to or returning from war areas. Local governments are considered as best placed to have a preventive role to play, because (1) they are closest to the citizens and (2) they are the first contact-point for the various local services and organisations confronted with the phenomenon. They are also the ones being confronted with the social and security-related consequences. A specific policy on radicalisation is considered as only doable within a broader policy for an inclusive society, which includes more general measures such as fighting against racism, supporting education, etc. In a local approach, a combination of prevention, intervention and aftercare are therefore crucial:

- Prevention; the local government has a directing role, but existing policies need to be used. Local authorities are responsible for:
 - Preventing polarisation and strengthening social cohesion
 - Designating a contact person within the municipality
 - Mapping out local partners and build a relationship of trust with social organisations and religious communities
 - Formulating a policy for a preventive and integral approach
 - Coming to agreements in the Local Integral Security Cell with regard to cooperation and exchange of information exchange with security and social partners
- Personal approach; when signals are received with regard to a person/group who is radicalising, the following measures can be taken:
 - Discuss signals in the Local Integral Security Cell
 - Design a person-oriented approach (always tailor-made)
 - Make a network analysis
 - Support families
 - Think about (crisis) communication
- Reintegration and after-care:
 - People returning: follow-up in the Local Task Force
 - Casualties: victim support for the family and practical advice

¹³ <http://www.brulocalis.brussels/nl/Publications/trait-dunion.html> (accessed 18 June 2018)

¹⁴ VVSG, Handvaten voor een lokale aanpak van radicalisering, december 2015,

<http://www.vvsg.be/radicalisering/Documents/Handvaten%20Lokale%20Aanpak%20Radicalisering%20met%20bijlagen.pdf> (accessed 18 June 2018)

4. Other initiatives

Within the Plan R and security plans, it is noted that general policies and initiatives can be used to tackle radicalisation, through which various initiatives are being implemented and subsidies granted. Apart from that, there are a series of concrete initiatives worth noting on the topic of radicalisation and cooperation at the local level.

>>>> *Federal level*

Mobile teams

A mobile team has been set up at the Ministry of the Interior to support and guide local governments. It entails four experts and offers a tailor-made answer to the questions and challenges the city/municipality is confronted with. The experts meet the local actors and analyse on the ground the context of the radicalisation problem. A detailed report presents the state of affairs and includes recommendations and action points. The team advises the cities and municipalities about the set-up of a Local Integral Security Cell or the organisation of a specific training for the municipality personnel.

CoPPRa

Within the European project “Community policing and prevention of radicalisation & terrorism”¹⁵ (CoPPRa), the Belgian federal police provided training on radicalisation. This example is also used within prisons. The CoPPRa project started during the Belgian Presidency of the EU in 2010 and was set up to develop tools to prevent terrorist acts through the early detection of signs of radicalisation by frontline police officers. The CoPPRa project is the result of the cooperation between 11 EU Member States with the Belgian integrated police as project leader (Jean-Pierre Devos).¹⁶

BOUNCE

The BOUNCE Support Office Team is part of the Local Integral Security Department of the Belgian Federal Public Service Home Affairs, the coordinating institution of the BOUNCE project. BOUNCE contains three training and awareness-raising tools for young people and their social environment. It is a positive answer to the challenge of preventing violent radicalisation at an early stage. The BOUNCE tools are developed as preventive measures when, or even better before, a situation of violent radicalisation arises. They offer youngsters and their entourage tools to deal with the challenges they encounter.¹⁷ BOUNCE helps youngsters and their entourage to emancipate and to develop resilience.

>>>> *Flemish level*

At the Flemish level, various initiatives are taken in the different policy domains in order to offer training and expertise on radicalisation.¹⁸ Here are some examples: .

¹⁵ <http://robotconsultancy.com/coppra/index.php> (accessed 19 June 2018)

¹⁶ <http://robotconsultancy.com/coppra/dl/exit.pdf> (accessed 19 June 2018)

¹⁷ <https://www.bounce-resilience-tools.eu/nl/downloads> (accessed 19 June 2018)

¹⁸ <http://www.vvsg.be/radicalisering/Paginas/Vormingsaanbod.aspx> and

<http://www.vvsg.be/radicalisering/Documents/HANDLEIDING%20VAN%20HET%20VLAAMSE%20SECTORALE%20AANBOD.pdf> (accessed 19 June 2018)

Training of the Association of Flemish cities and municipalities on the “Local approach to radicalisation”

Local governments, which are the level of governance closest to citizens, can signal and react as first instance when people or groups radicalise. They are often the first contact point for services and organisations that are confronted with this issue. The Association of Flemish cities and municipalities (VVSG according to the Flemish acronym) supports governments in developing a local policy with concrete tools, tailor-made coaching and trainings on the “Local approach to radicalisation”

Radix tool

The Radix Tool Antwerp was developed by the City of Antwerp and is meant to guide debates between different partners.¹⁹ The instrument allow to list an individual’s vulnerabilities and strengths as well as the structural factors that can lead to (violent) radicalisation. This in turn can be used to decide how to further the work with an individual and on what areas of life the intervention should focus on. The instrument thus ensures that all partners speak the same language, but also aims to build a relationship of trust between all the partners. The objective of the Radix tool does is not to estimate the security risk posed by an individual, but rather to develop an individualised approach whereby the individual receives the help they need.

CoPPRa “light”

Based on the expertise that police services have built within the CoPPRa programme for frontline local police officers, a package has been developed for all staff, especially local governments. The training focuses on all aspects of the radicalisation problem and on recognising signs of radicalisation.

>>>> *French Community*

Concerning the French Community, there is not much information available on the plans on radicalisation, nor on the trainings and tools available. We did not find concrete programmes that refer to the local level.

>>>> *German Community*

The Plan of the German Community refers to the BOUNCE project as well as various, more general programmes on prevention, communication and cooperation.

¹⁹ <http://www.vvsg.be/radicalisering/Paginas/Vorming-Radix-Tool-Antwerpen.aspx> (accessed 19 June 2018)