

RAN PRISONS

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DISCUSSION PAPER

RAN PRISONS Working Group Meeting

29-30 March 2023, Online

Information exchange between the 4 Ps – police, prosecution, prison and probation in the prison management and reintegration of VETOs: practical tools

Introduction

At the time a violent extremist or terrorist offender (VETO) enters prison, there is a wealth of information already held on the individual by different actors, including police, the prosecution service, the judiciary, but also social services and other agencies. Collaboration and exchange of information between different actors, including police, prison, probation, and prosecution can improve the management of security (within and outside prisons) and can enhance resocialization after release.

Although the value of multi-agency cooperation in the management and rehabilitation of VETOs is generally acknowledged, there are persisting gaps and challenges when it comes to information sharing and practical cooperation between different stakeholders within and outside prisons.

This two-day meeting will gather practitioners from prison, probation, police, representatives of the judicial authorities as well as other professionals involved in risk assessment, management and rehabilitation of VETOs inside and outside prison settings to jointly explore current challenges and possible avenues for enhanced cooperation.

Objectives

The goal of this meeting is to identify current challenges and working solutions for information exchange and improved cooperation between relevant actors working with VETOs in prison but also with external practitioners, especially police, probation and prosecution.

By approaching the main issues arising from information sharing, trust building, cooperation and rules of engagement between different actors¹ involved with VETOs in the prison context, the meeting will identify key elements and principles to be taken into consideration in information sharing and cooperation mechanisms between different professional groups.

The following core questions will guide the meeting:

1. What are the general rules and practices of engagement between different internal and external partners involved in the risk assessment, management and treatment of VETOs in the prison context?
2. What is the role of the prosecution services and judicial actors and what information should and can be shared between the judiciary and other actors at what stage?
3. Which information sharing protocols and tools are currently used by different actors in the different phases of VETO management? (e.g. risk assessment, prison (security) management and treatment/DDR interventions)?
4. What are the experiences of practitioners applying these protocols? What are gaps and challenges?

Context

In their journey within the criminal justice system, VETOs come in contact with different actors, from police and prosecution, involved in investigation and sentencing, to prison and probation, in charge of rehabilitation and reintegration into society. In addition, actors outside the criminal justice sector can play a key role in delivering VETOs disengagement, rehabilitation, and reintegration interventions before and after release. Multi-agency cooperation in the management and rehabilitation of violent extremist or terrorist offenders (VETOs) has become a buzzword in P/CVE, including along the prison-exit continuum. There are however persisting gaps and challenges when it comes to information exchange and practical cooperation between different stakeholders within prisons but also with actors on the outside, in relation to risk assessment, management and treatment of VETOs.

The Triple P (**police, prison and prosecution**) is a key triangle in the larger multi-agency cooperation environment with regard to managing security and promoting resocialisation. All three sectors perform risk assessments, but the tools and interpretation of outcomes might differ. Hence information exchange is key, but a key precondition is mutual trust and understanding of each other's tools, procedures and the relevance of outcomes for other actors. Furthermore, practitioners have constantly highlighted the need to strengthen exchanges with **prosecution and judicial actors**, as sentencing has a huge impact on the subsequent interventions in prison and beyond. Cooperation between the 4Ps (police, prison, probation and prosecution) is essential to support comprehensive assessments and properly feed the decision-making process. Also, harmonization of work can facilitate effective and prompt actions, both in terms of improved rehabilitation as well as for what concerns risk management, while minimizing overlapping and duplication of efforts.²

¹ Including prosecution and judicial actors, police, prison & probation staff, and exit workers.

² EX POST PAPER, Dealing with violent extremist and terrorist offenders: Formalising cooperation among police, prison, probation and prosecution, EX POST PAPER RAN POL – P&P, December 2018

In addition, actors outside the criminal justice sector play a key role in delivering disengagement and rehabilitation interventions and also reintegration support for VETOs before and after release. Practitioners need concrete tools and guidelines on how to set up such information exchanges, what to keep in mind, common pitfalls but also transferable working methods and practices.

In several EU Member States multi-agency collaboration has flourished in the past years, although in diverse forms and with different levels of formalisation, to address pragmatic and operational needs. In **Belgium**, for example, the Coordination Unit for Threat Analysis (CUTA) was created in 2006 to assess terrorist and extremist threats: CUTA receives data from different security services and provides a platform for information exchange.³ CUTA manages the Common Database (CDB), an instrument for real-time info-sharing containing unclassified information about individuals and organisations that need to be monitored in the context of terrorism and extremism.⁴ CUTA develops an individual threat assessment for every person included in the CDB, which informs risk assessments in prison, decisions on early release, and surveillance measures upon release. In 2021 the **Dutch** Custodial Institutions Agency launched the Multi-Agency Approach to Rehabilitation of radicalised detainees (MAR): within the framework provided by the MAR, the Custodial Institutions Agency, the probation service and the municipality develop individual assessments and resocialisation plans for detainees held on extremism or terrorism-related charges.⁵ In 2004 the **Italian** Minister of Interior officially established a coordination mechanism meant to strengthen the collaboration of the institutional actors dealing with terrorism. Such mechanism, known as the Counter Terrorism Strategic Analysis Committee (CASA), provides a permanent venue for coordination between the Central Director of the Prevention Police, the Carabinieri Corps, the Department of Information Security (DIS), the external (AISE) and internal (AISI) intelligence services and the Financial and Penitentiary Police.⁶

As demonstrated by the experiences listed above, and many others as well, in the past years different strategies and mechanisms for information exchange within prisons and with external actors have been developed to improve the management and reintegration of VETOs. Although different multi-agency cooperation models exist across Member States, common and recurrent factors might still negatively affect efficient collaboration⁷:

1. **Lack of mutual understanding** of assessment tools and related outcomes among actors involved in the cooperation framework: police, probation and prison, for example, all perform risk assessments, but the tools and interpretation of outcomes might differ.
2. **Poor coordination of roles and responsibilities** of actors involved in the multi-agency setting: roles and respective duties shall be clarified at the beginning of the cooperation and unambiguity shall be ensured throughout the process – this can be facilitated, for example, by one agency taking primary responsibility as the coordinating party.
3. **Generating competition** rather than achieving cooperation: it is important to initiate, implement and ensure cohesion, including identifying shared objectives and maintaining interests in pursuing them.

³ "CUTA receives relevant information from various support services: VSSE and SGRS, the integrated police, the Ministry of Finance (Customs and Taxes), the Ministry of Interior (Immigration office), the Ministry of Mobility and Transports, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the crisis centre, DG EPI, the Ministry of Justice's service of the cults, and the Ministry of Finance's treasury service" - y Réka Varga and Thomas Renard, 'Disengagement, Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Foreign Terrorist Fighters', March 2022, <https://drive-ontherightpath.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/drive-report-belgium-final-23-05-22.pdf>

⁴ [https://cuta.belgium.be/what-do-we-do/#The_Common_Database_\(CDB\)](https://cuta.belgium.be/what-do-we-do/#The_Common_Database_(CDB))

⁵ A RAN Practitioners Study Visit to the Netherlands on the Multi-Agency Approach to Rehabilitation of Radicalised Detainees (MAR) was organized on 22-23 February 2023

⁶ Silvia D'Amato, 'From BR to ISIS. The Italian domestic and international response to terrorism', *European Politics and Society*, 19:4 (2018), pp. 416-434

⁷ Luisa Ravagnani, RAN Expert Pool Member, [Rehabilitation work with convicted offenders outside of prison](#), 2021, p. 7

4. **Lack of continuity:** sometimes information-sharing occurs only in highly security-relevant cases, while all relevant cases would benefit from multi-agency cooperation, through the allocation of adequate resources and the establishment of permanent coordination platforms.
5. **Arbitrariness, privacy and data protection:** sharing, handing, and using information are delicate issues and a supporting legislative framework is needed to cooperate and share information with a clear set of binding rules defining modalities and procedures while combatting arbitrariness⁸ and ensuring that safeguards are in place with due regard to data protection laws.
6. **Lack of concrete tools and guidelines in some EU member states** on how to set up such information exchanges: poor information sharing can limit continuity, but oversharing can burden the activities and/or create biases, while in some states the systems are implemented and its effects on the collaboration⁹ It is unrealistic, for legal and organisational reasons, that all agencies involved in the cooperation can process all information: while agreements and protocols can be made to share guide the sharing of sensitive information, at operational level, information can be shared on a '**need to know**' basis¹⁰.

For more information on this topic, please read the following RAN papers:

RAN (2018) [Dealing with violent extremist and terrorist offenders: Formalising cooperation among police, prison, probation and prosecution](#)

RAN (2018) [Triple P: Coordination and collaboration between police, prison and probation services in dealing with violent extremist and terrorist offenders](#)

RAN (2019) Policy & Practice (Paris): Optimising Triple P (Police, Prison & Probation): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UcbkUOxYQz4>

RAN (2021), [Released violent extremist or terrorist offenders – Continuity between prison, probation and reintegration](#)

RAN (2021), [Rehabilitation work with convicted offenders outside of prison](#)

RAN PRISONS (2022), [The role of multi-agency cooperation in dealing with female returnees in prison and protecting the rights of children with imprisoned parents](#)

⁸ EX POST PAPER, Dealing with violent extremist and terrorist offenders: Formalising cooperation among police, prison, probation and prosecution, EX POST PAPER RAN POL – P&P, December 2018, p. 10

⁹ CONCLUSION PAPER, RAN Cross-cutting Thematic Event, 06 October 2021, digital, Released violent extremist or terrorist offenders – Continuity between, prison, probation and reintegration

¹⁰ EX POST PAPER, Triple P: Coordination and collaboration between police, prison and probation services in dealing with violent extremist and terrorist offenders, EX POST PAPER RAN POL – P&P JOINT EVENT, 20-21 September 2018 Prague, Czech Republic, pp. 3-4