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DISCUSSION PAPER

RAN Practitioners Study Visit to the Netherlands on the Multi-Agency Approach to Rehabilitation of Radicalised Detainees (MAR)

22 and 23 February 2023 (9.00 – 12.30 CET), online

The Multi-Agency Approach to Rehabilitation of Radicalised Detainees (MAR)

Introduction

The rehabilitation and reintegration of violent extremist and terrorist offenders (VETOs) remains a paramount challenge for frontline practitioners, policy makers and European societies as a whole. Terrorist activity in Europe and abroad in recent years (mainly Islamist and violent right-wing extremists) and the prosecution thereof has led to growing numbers of imprisoned VETOs, with over 1400 VETOs located in prisons in 10 European countries alone (Basra and Neumann, 2020). With many sentences being due in the months and years to come, a vast part of these individuals will be released back into society. The creation of a smooth and consistent transition management between prison, probation, and reintegration into society – the prison-exit continuum – is especially crucial in the rehabilitation process of radicalised and terrorist offenders.

RAN has addressed this topic in several meetings over the course of the past few years (see section on **RAN Papers**). These have highlighted the key role of multi-agency efforts between prison, probation, and follow-up care to ensure the continuity between detention and reintegration after release, and the need for a well-structured set-up of long-term strategies and rehabilitation programs.

Over the past years, the Dutch national Program Against Radicalization and Extremism (PARE) of the Dutch custodial institutions agency, has developed and implemented tailored approaches to the rehabilitation of VETOs and radicalised detainees, both right-wing and Islamist offenders, including returned foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) from Syria and Iraq. In response to the challenges posed by violent extremist radicalisation inside and outside of prison, the need for sustainable rehabilitation of detainees as a pathway for successful prevention of recidivism and promoting resocialisation has grown. In this vein, in cooperation with several organizations involved in counter-terrorism in the Netherlands, the Dutch Custodial Institutions Agency developed the MAR-approach – The Multi-Agency Approach to Rehabilitation of radicalised detainees, an approach for the rehabilitation of detainees held on extremism or terrorism-related charges.

During the two-day online study visit, participants will have the chance to learn in detail about the approach and the specific experiences of practitioners from the prison administration and the MAR programme.

This discussion paper forms the basis for the two-day event. It provides context and further information on the topic and sets out the objectives and questions that participants will address during the study visit.

Objectives

The study visit aims to create the opportunity for practitioners to learn from the Dutch experience and the missions of field practitioners in the management of the prison-exit continuum. It will offer practical insights as to how VETOs' reintegration into society can be jointly handled in a multi-agency setting and will facilitate exchanges with the practitioners who are directly working with the target group. It will also allow participants to learn about the assessment tools and procedures applied when working with inmates who radicalise during their time in prison. This way, the study visit will enable participants to get a comprehensive understanding of who is involved at what stage and in what role in the rehabilitation process. By doing so, they will receive an opportunity to reflect on their own work places and methods used, while thinking about lessons that can be learned from MAR.

The study visit will aim to address the following questions:

- What are the main principles and operational guidelines of the prison administration's P/CVE policy and the MAR programme?
- Which P/CVE practitioners and institutions are involved at which stage of the process? How is risk assessment conducted in prison and what criteria are used for decisions on which individuals to refer to MAR?
- What are the preparations made by transition management practitioners towards the release of a client?
- What are the practical challenges, experiences and lessons learned from case transfer between agencies and actors and from case management before, during and after release?
- How is information sharing between different actors arranged?
- How is the balance between security and rehabilitation ensured?
- How is long-term follow-up support provided after release and after completion of the programme, especially in the field of mental health?
- What capacity gaps and needs of practitioners exist in managing the prison-exit continuum effectively?

Context

Previous RAN meetings have highlighted that the first months after release are the most vulnerable for released offenders and the time period where they are most likely to reoffend or re-engage in their old (extremist) networks. This makes coordination and cooperation processes between the different actors in this period even more important. These challenges require multi-agency efforts between prison, probation and follow-up care to ensure the continuity between detention and reintegration after release, and call for a well-structured organisation of long-term strategies and rehabilitation programmes. Some exit programmes in the EU have built-in such long-term interventions that move alongside the client between settings, which is also the case for the MAR programme set up by the Dutch authorities.

The Multi-Agency Approach to Rehabilitation of radicalised detainees (MAR), organised by the Dutch Custodial Institutions Agency, is an approach for detainees held on extremism or terrorism-related charges. The key partners, such as probation service (specialised in radicalisation, extremism and terrorism), the municipality and the Custodial Institutions Agency plan, organise and evaluate individual case conferences for each detainee along the process of participation in the MAR programme. By bringing these organisations together in an early stage and exchanging information, practitioners are able to develop individual resocialisation plans. Each organisation brings their own unique information and perspectives on the case. The MAR provides the platform where risk profiles and opportunities for interventions are discussed and decided. For assessment, MAR practitioners use structured instruments such as VERA-2R, but also professional judgement from experienced and trained practitioners, ideological evaluation by an expert, psychological, psychiatric examination, and evaluation, as well as evaluation of a person's network. They look at opportunities for interventions on different factors, such as family, social network, ideology, mental health, personal identity, basic needs (housing, income) and responsibility. It is important to find the right balance between rehabilitation and security. Although formally advisory to the prison director, decision-making is usually based on common ground of mutual agreement and commitment from all involved organisations. Interventions can start in in detention and can be continued after by the local multi-agency approach (municipality and Safety Houses).¹

¹ Forthcoming: RAN Collection: Multi-Agency Approach to Rehabilitation of Radicalised detainees (MAR)

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

RAN Study Visit to Paris on '[The effective management of the prison-exit continuum](#)', 2021.

RAN Rehabilitation Manual – Rehabilitation of radicalised and terrorist offenders for first line practitioners, 2020. https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/system/files/2020-06/ran_rehab_manual_en.pdf

RAN Small-scale meeting '[Radicalised and Terrorist Reoffenders](#)', 2021.

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

RAN Collection [PAIRS - Individualized Support and Social Reaffiliation Programs](#), 2021.

RAN Mental Health WG Meeting '[Rehabilitation and reintegration of extremist offenders from a mental health perspective](#)', March 2021.

Insights

This is an online study visit that will be conducted in English without interpretation. The study visit will start by providing background on the topic and the structure of the meeting by the moderators (RAN staff) as well as a brief round of introductions among invited participants.

During the first day of the visit, Frank Borst, Head of Programme from the Dutch Custodial Institutions Agency – Programma Aanpak Radicalisering & Extremisme, will welcome the participants and set the scene by presenting the agency and providing an overview of the working structure. The second session of the day will be given by Maarten van de Leyenhorst (Senior Programme Worker and Training Supervisor for VERA-2R), who will introduce the MAR Approach, followed by a group discussion in a Q&A format.

After a coffee break, Maarten van Leyenhorst presents the program's contact point for "Identifying radicalisation in custodial settings". Following the presentation there will be a practitioners' panel where several experts from Dutch counterterrorism organisations take part in facilitating a group discussion, where participants can ask questions and share their own experience.

On Day two of the study visit, participants will reflect on what was learned, relating their insights to their own contexts, identifying challenges as well as potential solutions and drafting recommendations. The first presentation of this second day will be provided by Maartje Buter (Senior Programme Worker) under the title "Effectively managing the conception and transfer of interventions in a multi-agency setting", followed by a practitioners' panel. The participants will have the opportunity to ask questions and share their experience in smaller discussion groups. The day and the study visit will be concluded in a plenary session, where the participants and the presenters will draw conclusions from the past two days.

Key questions:

1. How is the prison-exit continuum managed in your own region and country?
2. What are challenges you face(d) preparing for the release of VETOs?
3. What are challenges you face(d) in the context of post-release reintegration and rehabilitation of VETOs?
4. What do you need to be better equipped to work with the target group?
5. What system is applied for identifying radicalisation in prison in your regional/national context? Who is performing it and how?

Relevant reading

Basra, R. and Neumann, P. (2020). *Prisons and Terrorism: Extremist Offender Management in 10 European Countries*, International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation, <https://icsr.info/2020/07/22/prisons-and-terrorism-extremist-offender-management-in-10-european-countries/>

Hecker, M. (2021). *Once a Jihadist, Always a Jihadist? A Deradicalization Program Seen from the Inside*, <https://www.ifri.org/en/publications/etudes-de-lifri/focus-strategique/once-jihadist-always-jihadist-deradicalization>

Lahnait, F. (2021). *Combating radicalisation in France: from experimentation to professionalisation*, https://www.cidob.org/en/articulos/revista_cidob_d_afers_internacionals/128/combating_radicalisation_in_france_from_experimentation_to_professionalisation

Counter Extremism Project, The Netherlands: Extremism and Terrorism
[The Netherlands: Extremism and Terrorism | Counter Extremism Project](#)

