

BRIEFING PAPER

Best Practices on PVE across
the Euro-Mediterranean Region





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Abstract

This paper brings together the best practices in the field of Prevention of Violent Extremism (PVE) across the Euro-Mediterranean region. Its aim is to provide a point of reference to conceptualize, design and implement PVE initiatives. After exposing a theoretical framework that operationalizes the key concepts such as violent extremism, radicalization or PVE, the paper focuses on the analysis of five 'areas of intervention,' discussing what are the best practices in research, advocacy, tra-

ining, intercommunity dialogue, and alternative narratives. Besides, it critically examines two models (Tunisia and Germany) as well as two anti-models (Morocco and France) in terms of PVE. Finally, it provides a set of policy recommendations in order to improve or promote best practices in the field of PVE.

01

Introduction

For the past two decades, numerous Euro-Mediterranean countries have been the target of terrorist attacks. The rise of home-grown terrorism (linked to Al Qaeda and the Islamic State organisation¹), the foreign fighters (FFs) phenomenon and the resurgence of the far-right has also placed a renewed interest on countering and preventing violent extremism (Maestro, 2016).

In this context, an increasing number of States, international organisations and civil society organisations (CSOs) have started to develop policies that aim at preventing violent extremism (PVE). While the traditional counter-terrorist effort aims at thwarting the existing threats by relying almost exclusively on security forces, PVE is a subset of policies and programmes that aim at preventing the violent threat from materialising. Originally developed by security institutions (e.g., PREVENT programme, as a strand of the United Kingdom's counter-terrorist strategy), PVE policies and programmes are increasingly implemented by a wide range of actors that include civil society organisations, NGOs and local authorities (Muro, 2017).

Regrettably, the lack of clear boundaries between Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) and Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) (definitions, actors, instruments, etc.) has generated a considerable number of unintended consequences (Kundnani and Hayes, 2018). This includes the stigmatisation of large segments of societies in Europe (e.g., Muslims and migrants) but also in the MENA region (Salafi groups), as well as the securitization of integration policies and the reframing of aid and development programmes in terms of their contribution to PVE. Despite of these unanticipated consequences, some promising PVE programmes and initiatives have proven to be effective in

certain contexts. This is the case of the so-called Aarhus programme developed in Denmark but also PVE initiatives

“ Be alert to the use of the words extremism and terrorism. ”

Timothy Snyder, *On Tyranny* (2017)

implemented in Germany, the UK and in South Eastern Asia (Singapore, Sri Lanka and Indonesia).

This report has been commissioned by the International Institute for Non-Violent Action (NOVACT), a civil society organisation committed to the prevention of violent extremism as indicated by its Plan of action of the Euro Mediterranean Civil Society to prevent all forms of Violent Extremism (2017) as well as its regional Observatory to Prevent all Forms of Violent Extremism (OPEV). The report brings together the Best Practices

1. According to UN estimates, over 40,000 foreigners from over 110 countries joined the conflicts in Syria and Iraq between 2011 and 2019. These foreign fighters travelled to the Middle East to join the Islamic State (often abbreviated as IS, ISIS, ISIL, or Daesh), a Salafist jihadist group that followed an ultraconservative branch of Sunni Islam. At its most powerful in 2014 and 2015, ISIS murdered, raped and enslaved thousands of Syrians and Iraqis, exploiting Syria's civil war and a weak Iraqi state to seize a swath of territory as large as Britain. It forced 8 million people to live under its brutal interpretation of Islamic law and marketed a religious utopia that only ended in 2019. By smuggling oil and levying taxes, it became the world's best funded terror organisation.

in the field of PVE with a view to promote them across the Euro- Mediterranean region. Ultimately, the report aims to be a point of reference for organisations which are part of OPEV when conceptualising, designing and implementing PVE initiatives.

This report on best practices on PVE is structured as follows. The first section provides a literature review of the field of violent extremism. This 'background' section defines the key terms of violent extremism, radicalisation, de-radicalisation and disengagement. It also identifies the key differences between CVE and PVE programmes and focuses on describing the most common component of PVE programmes. The second section on 'areas of intervention' discusses research, advocacy, training, intercommunity dialogue and alternative narratives. The third section on 'best practices' reviews the main programmes that proved to be effective, and extracts a series of practices developed by different implementing agents in the main areas of intervention. The section examines critically two models (Tunisia and Germany) as well as two anti-models (Morocco and France) before providing policy recommendations. Finally, a fourth concluding section provides a summary of the main findings and suggests ways forward.

02

Background

The terminological confusion in the area of violent extremism directly affects the effectiveness of prevention programmes. Very often, PVE programmes are implemented without having a clear definition of who is the target audience or what it is that the programme is trying to achieve. In the absence of a clearly defined goals, methods and tools, it is neither possible to evaluate programmes nor establish whether they have been efficacious (Muro, 2017). Programmes that are poorly designed are often discontinued because funding bodies refuse to finance public policies that cannot be evaluated in accordance to a set of standard evaluation criteria (e.g., effectiveness, efficiency, consistency, utility and relevance). **Thus, an obvious best practice entails defining precisely the goals and tools to be used in PVE programmes.** Practitioners in the area of PVE need to be terminologically precise and take stock of existing research in order to improve the performance of its programmes. **The relevance and efficacy of their work (not to mention its future continuity) depends on it.**

In accordance to the need to provide an adequate response to public problems, this background section discusses the definitional problems surrounding **the terms violent extremism, radicalisation, terrorism, CVE and PVE.** In addition to presenting the various definitional challenges and discussing the existing disagreements over the causes and solutions to violent extremism, the section provides working definitions of all these terms.

2.1 What is violent extremism?

There is a wide range of definitions of violent extremism. For instance, the UN Plan of Action to Prevent

Violent Extremism (2016: 1) focuses on violent extremism “when conducive to terrorism” and quickly concedes that defining terrorism and violent extremism is the “prerogative of

Member States”. Additionally, states and counter-terrorist institutions extend their definitions of violent extremism either to include a more ideological dimension (e.g., the USA’s Department of Homeland Security) or to oppose it to “core democratic principles or values” (as per the Council of Europe’s concept).

Violent extremism often refers to the use or support of the use of violence for political, religious or other ideological beliefs. In this sense, it helps to capture a phenomenon that is broader than terrorism as it entails a wide range of violent actions that go beyond terrorist attacks such as hate crimes, riots, etc. (Neumann, 2017: 19). Customarily, institutional programmes (i.e. EU, UNSC) aimed at countering or preventing VE do not actually provide a working definition of the threat they are trying to counteract. Even though VE is a category which lacks clearly defined parameters, practitioners often refuse to engage with the complications of definitions and methodology and prefer to take refuge in the colloquial expression ‘I know it when I see it’. Unfortunately, extremism is easy to see in the violent phase but much harder to spot in the non-violent phase, which is exactly the point when it can truly be prevented.

The literature on the subject also fails in defining violent extremism accurately, assuming it as a “self-evident and self-explanatory” concept (Nasser-Eddine et al., 2011:9). In their view, violent extremism covers all the violent actions perpetrated by different types of ex-

tremist groups – regardless of their ideology. A notable exception is provided by the EU, which has put considerable effort in defining the term “violent radicalisation”, which is preferred to the term “violent extremism”. In this vein, the **European Commission’s Expert Group on Violent Radicalisation considers violent radicalisation as the “process of socialisation to extremism which manifests itself in terrorism”, where extremism involves the “active subversion of democratic values and the rule of law”** (2008:7).

Taking these approaches and definitions into account, we will consider violent extremism as the use or support of the use of violence for political, religious or other ideological beliefs. It entails a wide range of actions - such as hate crimes or riots – that go beyond terrorism.

In addition, the report will now proceed to define: (1) radicalisation; (2) de-radicalisation; and (3) disengagement.

What is radicalisation?

While **radicalisation is commonly defined as a process** by which a person comes to support terrorism or forms of extremism leading to terrorism, there is no consensus on what this abstract concept truly means. Moreover, no consensus exists regarding the key drivers of this process, nor their exact sequencing. Within the European Union, the definition has been the result of a mostly political construct, conceived as a phenomenon at the “intersection of an enabling environment and a personal trajectory” that translated socialization into extremism and, eventually, terrorism (Coolsaet, 2016: 5).

In the framework of this report, we consider “radicalisation” as the process by which individuals first adopt extreme views and, on some occasions, perform radical acts of violence (“violent radicalisation”). This report is particularly concerned with radical behaviour, particularly the one that involves adopting non-sanctioned indiscriminate violence against civilians, also known as violent extremism and/or terrorism. Needless to say, it needs to be clearly stated that not all those who adopt radical ideas end up in a violent extremist

group. By contrast, most violent extremists justify their actions with radical ideas. Whereas it is uncommon to conduct legal proceedings against radical ideas, the use of violent extremism against civilians is (and should be) invariably prosecuted by state authorities. Hence, the main focus of this study is the practice of violent extremism or terrorism.

With regards to the process of radicalisation, there is no consensus on the exact role played by ideology. For instance, while some authors like Randy Borum (2011: 1) defend that cognitive radicalisation (the process of developing extremist ideologies) and behavioural radicalisation (involvement into violent extremist actions) should be analysed differently, other political scientists like Peter Neumann, claim that this separation impedes a holistic understanding of the process of radicalisation. In other words, it is not entirely clear whether ideology is an independent (that causes VE) or a dependent variable (which results from the radicalisation process).

Neumann (2017: 17) has also provided a summary of what he considers to be the recurring factors and dynamics: grievances, fed by existing tensions, conflicts and fault lines that translate into frustration, identity problems, marginalisation or social exclusions; individual needs such as the search for belonging, the desire for adventure or power, the need for being part of a community or project; ideology is the key element that connects in a satisfying way the first two elements, the introduction of a violent extremist ideology to a group and its legitimation, recruitment, or the decision to use violence for a given purpose; finally, the involvement in violent action such as terrorist attack or hate crime.

Given this combination of factors and dynamics, we will use the **working definitions** provided by the European Union in the framework of this report: **radicalisation** refers to a process by which individuals adopt extreme views and, on some occasions, a radical behaviour. In this vein, **violent radicalisation** refers to the process by which individuals adopt both extreme views and behaviours which manifest in acts of violent extremism.

Five models of radicalisation

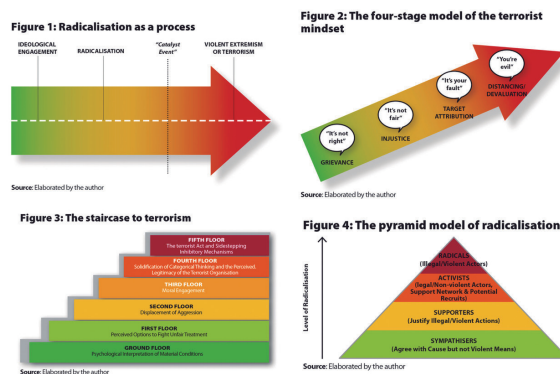
Due to the lack of consensus over the definition of radi-

calisation, a variety of models have been developed to visualise the process of radicalisation. In what follows, we will review five of the main models of radicalisation into violent extremism that cumulatively address the three levels of radicalisation: individual, organisational and societal level, which are also known as micro, meso and macro levels².

As Figure 1 indicates, the first model understands radicalisation as a process that starts with grievances that lead to an ideological engagement, which can eventually lead to violent extremism. Such a process can be accelerated by a “catalyst event” or “moral shock” (i.e. discrimination, humiliation, racism, torture or other shocking events such as war). The second one is Borum’s model: a four-stage model that begins with the existence of grievances; it is then followed by the framing of the grievances as unjust, according to a given narrative (religious, political, ideological, etc.); the blame is positioned onto a person, group or government; finally, the demonization of the target group which eventually justifies violent acts towards it. The third model is that of Fathali M. Moghaddam, who used a stair metaphor to reflect the radicalisation process from a micro to a macro perspective, whereby, depending on their situation, an increasingly small number of people move from a floor to another (the ground floor would reflect the majority of people who perceive injustice; some individuals would climb to the first floor to achieve greater justice; if no solutions were found, individuals will climb to a second floor where they would target an “enemy”; the third floor is where the engagement with the morality of terrorist organisations takes place, justifying violence; lastly, a fourth floor would be the place of recruitment for terrorist attacks. The fourth model is the two-pyramid model, by Clark McCauley and Sophia Moskalenko, which based on the stair model, adds two pyramids of stairs: one is the “opinion pyramid” (referring to cognitive radicalisation) and the “action pyramid” (which classifies people according to the support they give to the group and the mechanisms they consider best to defend it, from sympathisers to terrorists). Finally, the fifth model is the social ecology one, proposed by Lorne L. Dawson (2017), which entails a series of relevant factors at the micro, meso and macro level and tries to understand how their combination leads to violent extremism. To do so, Dawson considers five

units of analysis (late modernity, immigrant experience, youthful rebellion, ideology and group dynamics).

Figure 1: Four Models of Radicalisation



Source: Diego Muro (2016) What Does Radicalisation Look Like? https://www.cidob.org/es/articulos/monografias/resilient_cities/what_does_radicalisation_look_like_four_visualisations_of_socialisation_into_violent_extremism

What is de-radicalisation?

Like the concept of “radicalisation”, there is no universally acknowledged definition of “de-radicalisation”. For instance, John Horgan and Mary Beth Altier (2012: 86) have described de-radicalisation as “any effort to change or re-direct views that are supportive of – and thereby, the assumption goes, conducive to – violent action”. De-radicalisation can plausibly be either behavioural or cognitive. Behavioural de-radicalisation aims at preventing individuals from being involved in violent actions (which can be dealt through non-coercive instruments, from psychological counsel to socio-economic (re)insertion, while cognitive de-radicalisation is about challenging their ideological assumptions.

Research on the psychology of individual terrorists

2. Alex Schmid (2013: 4) has identified the three levels in which violent radicalisation takes place: micro-level, as the individual one; meso-level, in regard to the supportive social surround; and macro-level, which includes the role of government, society, socio-economic opportunities and majority-minority dynamics.

suggests that ideology does not systematically play a major role in explaining engagement (Clark McCauley and Sophia Moskalenko, 2008). Besides, as Andrew Silke (2011) stresses, the more successful programmes developed in prisons do not just involve dialogue but provide several benefits for prisoners who are going through these programmes (e.g., early release, support with employment and housing, etc.). As a result, bearing in mind that many de-radicalisation programmes have both an ideological and a material component, it is difficult to determine whether an individual is truly de-radicalised or merely disengaged.

Behavioural de-radicalisation can be implemented at the individual or collective level. Individual de-radicalisation relies on religious, psychological and ideological tools while collective de-radicalisation refers to behavioural de-radicalisation as long as its main aim is to “to obtain a type of change of behaviour (cease fire, de-commissioning of arms, etc.)” (Schmid, 2013: 41). Behavioural de-radicalisation programmes target people at three possible stages: individuals involved into a violent extremist group; those about to join it; or those who have left it. Behavioural de-radicalisation programmes aim at reducing the number of active terrorists and violence, and providing an exit from terrorist groups through measures that aim at social re-integration (socio-economic incentives).

What is disengagement?

Disengagement refers to a behavioural change that leads to withdrawing from a radical organisation and, quite often, also refraining from the use of political violence. Unlike cognitive de-radicalisation, **disengagement is a change of behaviour and does not necessarily imply a change in values or ideals.** Disengagement and de-radicalisation are two distinct processes that can occur independently and the former does not necessarily lead to the latter. The two are often ‘associated’ but there is no ‘causal relationship’ between the two. Disengagement can be individual, collective, or a combination of both. It can have a psychological dimension (i.e. disillusionment) or a physical one (i.e. apprehension by security forces). Disengagement from terrorism does not necessarily result in de-radicalisation, as the individual can still support the ideology or actions.

Disengagement as a process

Rabasa et al. (2010) proposed a model describing the trajectory of an individual exiting a radical organisation, where disengagement is described as a process initiated by a trigger: a traumatic event, an emotional crisis or the realization of the inconsistencies of the ideology. In the following stage, in which the individual weighs the costs and benefits of staying or withdrawing from the radical organisation, four variables should be paid attention: push factors, pull factors, exit barriers and benefits of membership. If the individual considers that leaving the group exceeds the expected utility of remaining in it, he or she may reach the “turning point”, where the individual physically disengages from it. The posterior reintegration process may be facilitated by the presence of one or several of the following variables: (1) the existence of a social network that encourages moderate behaviour; (2) finding a job; (3) inclusion in mainstream society; and (4) level of commitment to the organisation.

Although there can be links between them, de-radicalisation and disengagement are two distinct processes: de-radicalisation targets individuals’ beliefs while disengagement focuses on behaviour. In practice, it is very difficult to assess as one can pretend to be de-radicalised in order to benefit from material rewards (sentence reduction, amnesty, employment) while the latter does not imply that the individual’s views and fundamental preferences have been altered. This leads to a crucial question for policy makers: should government programmes aim at de-radicalisation or **should they rather focus on disengagement?** So far, there is no consensus over the answer to this question, and scholars’ preferences differ but there can be no doubt that, given the choice, **governments should concentrate on extremist behaviour instead of ideology.**

Summary of Section 2.1

The concepts described above show that research in the area of violent extremism and terrorism is faced with a key challenge, which is the need for conceptual clarity. Both experts and practitioners need to make explicit their working definitions in order to allow for both comparative research and a thorough evaluation of the programmes imple-

mented. The survival of PVE programmes depends on it.

1. In the framework of this report, we will consider violent extremism as the use or support of the use of violence for political, religious or other ideological beliefs. It entails a wide range of actions - such as hate crimes or riots – that go beyond terrorism.

2. We will refer to **violent radicalisation** as the process by which individuals adopt extreme views and behaviours which lead to acts of violent extremism, acknowledging both its cognitive and behavioural aspects. Yet, engaging in violent extremist action does not imply adherence to radical views. This is a crucial point for policy-making.

3. **Disengagement** is a process that has psychological and/or physical dimensions. On the other hand, de-radicalisation can be cognitive or behavioural. Cognitive de-radicalisation aims at changing individuals' beliefs and views while behavioural de-radicalisation rather focuses on the renunciation of violent means. In other words, disengagement refers to a behavioural change -such as leaving a group or moving from a role into another - while de-radicalisation implies a cognitive shift. This means that disengagement does not necessarily imply de-radicalisation.

4. The different **models of radicalisation** presented seek to provide a general framework within which to understand the process of radicalisation and suggest ways to prevent or counter it. Each model was either developed for a specific purpose (understanding suicide bombing, distinguishing cognitive from behavioural radicalisation, etc.) or focuses on one or several levels of analysis. In the framework of this project, particular attention will be paid to the three levels of analysis (micro, meso and macro) in the policies or programmes that aim at preventing viol

2.2 What are the differences between CVE and PVE programmes?

This sub-section discusses the evolution from CVE to PVE and examines its definition but also its objectives and strategies.

a. CVE as a pillar of counterterrorism strategies

In 2005, the EU institutions built the EU Counterterrorism Strategy on four pillars: prevent, protect, pursue and respond. Since 2011, four trends have placed a renewed interest on CVE with a focus on more preventive strategies (Maestro, 2016: 50): (1) the spread of ungoverned areas (e.g. Libya, Syria, Iraq) that has enabled the territorial expansion of terrorist organisations such as the Islamic State (IS) and Al Qaeda (AQ); (2) the foreign fighters (FFs) phenomenon; (3) the rise of home-grown terrorism; and (4) the resurgence of far-right movements. As a result, in 2014 the UN Security Council, while recognising that CVE was an “essential element” in addressing the FFs phenomenon (UNSC, 2014: 6), called for strategies that aim at “preventing radicalisation to terrorism” such as the promotion of religious tolerance, economic development and social inclusion, as did the UN PVE Plan of Action regarding more comprehensive and multi-actor approaches. CVE emerged as a new strand of existing counter-terrorist strategies. These strategies are either labelled as CVE or as PVE, even though these terms stand for different approaches.

b. Defining CVE and PVE

CVE remains a controverted concept in countries such as the USA, the UK, France or Egypt, to name a few. For instance, U.S. scholars and human rights organisations accuse the U.S. Government to use CVE as a tool to legitimate racial, ethnic and religious profiling to identify at-risk individuals or as a means to normalise massive surveillance, while many **European scholars** denounced the unintended consequences of CVE of the Channel programme³ implemented in the UK including the

3. Gov.uk, (2018). Case Study: The Channel Programme. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/case-studies/the-channel-programme>

creation of “suspect communities”, the deterioration of trust between government and communities or the government’s conflation of integration with counter-terrorism (Choudhury & Fenwick, 2011). Authoritarian regimes have used CVE to further restrict civil liberties and dismiss their political opponents (Anthony Dworkin and Fatim-Zohra El Malki, 2018).

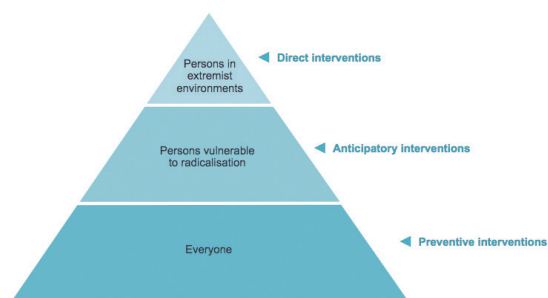
The concept of CVE reflects the idea that violent extremism cannot be fought only with military, police and intelligence means (also known as counter-terrorism) but also by addressing the structural causes of this phenomenon. Although there is no consensus on what these ‘root causes’ might be, many authors tend to emphasise grievances such as marginalisation, socio-economic exclusion or governments’ foreign policy, among numerous other elements (Frazer and Nunlist, 2015: 2). In contrast with CT strategies, CVE gives a role to a wide range of actors (such as teachers, mayors, religious leaders, community leaders or students) that are not traditionally involved in security issues. The aim of CVE is not to counter terrorism but rather intervene in the process of radicalisation into violent extremism with two main objectives: preventing individuals or groups from supporting/joining violent extremist groups (counter-messaging, building resilience) and assisting individuals who want to turn away from VE (de-radicalisation, disengagement).

c. PVE as a multi-level set of policies and strategies

In this view, CVE is a generic umbrella term referring to a wide range of measures that aim at countering the existing threats of violent extremism while PVE rather corresponds to a subset of policies, strategies and programmes that aim at preventing the extremist threat from materialising. In other words, as a subset of policies under the generic umbrella of CVE, PVE takes the form of preventive measures which address the drivers of violent extremism. They are deployed by governments and an increasing number of non-governmental actors. Measures can be classified into: Engagement and outreach (improvement of relations between states and CSOs); Capacity-building (e.g. leadership programmes and grant-making); Education and training initiatives and Messaging and counter-messaging.

Harris-Horgan et al. (2016) differentiate between three forms of PVE strategies: primary prevention (macro-level focus, emphasis put on education and awareness programmes of the whole society); secondary prevention (meso level, targeting individuals and at-risk groups); and tertiary prevention (micro level, applying to radicalised individuals). A visualisation of this three-level PVE strategy can be seen in Figure 2 below, which displays the prevention triangle developed by the Danish Action Plan for Preventing Violent Extremism (2016). The Danish plan has become a model for other European countries such as the Netherlands, Germany or France and the Prevention Pyramid below helps to visualise the three types of prevention, their target and gives an indication about the type of activity and the scope for each level of intervention.

Figure 2: The Prevention Pyramid



Source: Preventing and Countering Extremism and Radicalisation – National Action Plan (2016) p. 16 - https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/docs/preventing_countering_extremism_radicalisation_en.pdf

2.3 What do PVE programmes look like?

State institutions as the main implementing actors

In the early 2000s, PVE policies, strategies and interventions were initially designed and implemented by government and State institutions. In Europe, many States included a PVE component into their CVE strategies, and made it a pillar of their CT strategy (i.e. France, or UK). Some European States also developed PVE measures at local level (i.e. the Wijn-Am-

sterdammers programme). **In some MENA countries** such as Morocco, Tunisia or Jordan, governments also took action in the field of preventive strategies. As part of their counter-terrorism strategy, the main implementing agents were State institutions such as intelligence and security bodies or ministries of Interior. At the global level, and in relation to the rise of the Islamic State and the foreign fighters' phenomenon, the adoption of PVE strategies by States and international organisations became a priority (United Nations, 2016). Finally, some existing or **ad hoc global networks** act as multilateral fora for States to exchange information and best practices and to open ways of collaboration (i.e. "PVE Group of Friends", 2017, involving over 40 countries).

Towards multi-level and multi-actor PVE programmes

Two trends of PVE have developed in the past decade: national plans encouraging development of PVE policies at regional and local level, and an increasing diversification of implementing actors (Peter Romaniuk, 2015). The main reasons are: the uneven distribution of radicalisation in each country; the need to rely on actors that better understand local environments; and the need for credible voices to dismiss violent extremist beliefs. Two initiatives capture the shift towards local PVE policies: **The Strong Cities Network** (UN, 2015), a global network involving policymakers and practitioners; and the **Radicalisation Awareness Network** (EU Commission, 2011), an umbrella network to share and exchange best practices in PVE.

A different and wide range of actors such as cities, the media, NGOs, local associations or schools, among others, play an increasing role as implementing agents. Cities act either under national frameworks (i.e. "Prevent to Protect" French plan) or implementing their own plans following bottom-up logic (i.e. Amsterdam, Copenhagen). A second trend translates in stronger community-level partnerships between cities and CSOs. Other local actors (grassroots organisations, associations, sports clubs, etc.) actively participate in PVE efforts. Trust-based and decentralised networks can help to achieve a common understanding of the problems and solutions

to them (Anja Dalgaard-Nielsen and Patrick Schack, 2016). This trend towards multi-actor approaches explains in part the size of the budgets of PVE policies but also the difficulty to find accurate information on these budgets.

Summary of section 2

In this section, we described the gradual change of paradigm from counterterrorism to CVE, and from CVE to PVE. These distinctions between CT, CVE and PVE are fundamental for practitioners in the field of PVE. Undeniably, the lack of distinction between these three concepts may generate suspicion and even undermine trust between the implementing agents and the beneficiaries of PVE measures.

1. The emergence of CVE and PVE paradigms reflect the idea that **violent extremism cannot be fought only with military, police and intelligence** means but also by addressing the structural causes of this phenomenon. Unfortunately, there is no agreement on the 'root causes of terrorism'.

2. As part of broader counterterrorism policies, **CVE is a generic umbrella term describing a variety of non-coercive strategies and measures** that aim at countering the threats posed by violent extremism. PVE rather corresponds to a **subset of policies, programmes and measures that aim at preventing the extremist threat from materialising**.

3. PVE programmes are developed by States but also by non-State actors. Under the umbrella of PVE, we can find international programmes implemented for instance by development agencies (e.g., UNPD); regional fora bringing together practitioners (RAN Europe); national policies developed by States or policies at local level and projects led by CSOs and other local actors. Unlike CT and CVE, these programmes, policies and strategies are not mainly implemented by state actors and security bodies: they tend to involve a wide number of actors such as city councils, CSOs, schools, hospitals or grassroots organisations.

4. However, the imbrication of PVE within CVE policies – which are themselves pillars of counterterrorism strategies – poses many **conceptual and practical challenges such as definitional clarity or the need for multi-actor approaches and strategies.**

03

Areas of Intervention

As underlined in NOVACT's 'Action Plan of the Euro-Mediterranean to Prevent All Forms of Violent Extremism', few research efforts have been devoted to violent extremism in certain areas of intervention (2017: 13). With this statement in mind, the current section focuses on **five areas of intervention** of high relevance to PVE, namely **(1) research; (2) advocacy; (3) training; (4) intercommunity dialogue; and (5) alternative narratives**. For each area of intervention, we provide a set of policy recommendations for stakeholders on PVE – administration, civil society organisations, practitioners, etc. – with the aim to improve the design and implementation of PVE interventions.

3.1 Research

Research is of vital importance at all stages of the implementation of a PVE programme or plan. As a matter of fact, between 2007 and 2020 the European Commission devoted €30.8 million euros for the funding of research projects on radicalisation (Arun Kundnani and Ben Hayes, 2018: 25). And as of today, it is not clear that new programmes take into account any of the 'lessons learnt' from previous programmes. In this sense, the task of the Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN) is important because it helps take stock of what it is known in the field of PVE, disseminate existing knowledge to European stakeholders and foster exchange of ideas and practices between practitioners within Europe and across the Mediterranean.

Although radicalisation into violent extremism is a phenomenon of a global outreach (e.g., far-right and Jihadist-Salafist groups), the dynamics, factors and drivers of radicalization are often context-specific (David Stermann and Nate Rosenblatt, 2018). For example, while

socio-economic conditions appear to play a role in the process of radicalisation in MENA countries (high youth unemployment feeding relative deprivation); European countries are concerned with the diverse dynamics feeding political alienation (polarization, mechanisms of discrimination, etc.). In this regard, preliminary research focusing on local contexts is required whenever there are plans to implement a PVE project. Instead of pushing towards ineffective one-size-fits-all solutions, research can help to tailor a PVE intervention by looking at: i) specific drivers of radicalization in a given context; ii) measures or projects that have been implemented in this field and their impact; iii) actors who can be involved to make the project effective, and iv) successful PVE interventions in similar contexts.

In this regard, research in the field of PVE should rest on the following four pillars:

1. Comprehensive research on PVE needs to examine simultaneously the macro, meso and micro levels of analysis:

- a. **Macro level:** although radicalization is local, the ideology around which it takes form is often global. The success of far-right, or Jihadist-Salafists movements lies in their ability to connect individual or collective grievances in a broader framework (e.g., 'the war against Islam'). Research should take this dimension into account to understand how and why radicalized individuals end up identifying themselves and connecting with other individuals abroad. In other words, the ideological trans-national dimension helps to figure out how do individuals frame their own grievan-

ces as part of a broader issue (multiculturalism threatening their identity; global war on Islam) in order to justify the use of violence either against specific actors (migrants, religious minorities, police forces, etc.) or civilians indiscriminate people who supposedly represent these targets.

- b. Meso level:** radicalization is before all a process of socialization, i.e. a process through which some people radicalize others. The objective of research here is threefold: figuring out societal dynamics feeding individual or collective grievances (i.e. marginalization of neighbourhoods in peripheral areas); spotting places of radicalization (e.g., prisons, temples, deprived neighbourhoods) and exploring the potential role of local actors who are directly or indirectly involved in PVE (local community leaders, youth workers, etc.).
- c. Micro level:** research should focus on those individuals who underwent a process of radicalization and collect as much details as possible regarding the patterns of radicalization. Also, evidence needs to be collected about those individuals that could have radicalised but did not. In this regard, several research initiatives have been carried out to better understand the profiles of radicalised individuals: the Women and Extremism Network⁴ was established in 2015 by the Institute for Strategic Dialogue to studying the patterns of women radicalisation, while several think tanks such as the International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation (ICSR, London) or the International Centre for Counter-terrorism (The Hague) developed specific projects focusing on the profiles of foreign fighters who travelled to Syria and Iraq.

2. Research should privilege a multidisciplinary approach to radicalisation and PVE: to fully understand the root causes and drivers of radicalisation, instead of focusing on one dimension or the other (socio-economic, psychological, etc.) research should have a multidisciplinary focus. In other words, psychologists,

sociologists, political scientists and, when needed, theological experts should be involved in any research project to take into account the multifaceted aspects of radicalisation and design a PVE intervention accordingly. In this vein, the University of Maryland launched in 2005 the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (also known as START), a university-based research centre that brings together hundreds of scholars to study the causes and consequences of terrorism in the USA but also around the world. Scholars, experts and practitioners from different fields apply a wide range of research methods in order to explore these issues and delivers open-source evidence and data on terrorism. START dissemination goes beyond the academia: their outputs include material for policy-makers (e.g., policy briefings), training for practitioners but also teaching tools to raise awareness on terrorism amongst students. At the EU level, DG HOME funds several dozens of multi-disciplinary research projects on radicalisation and PVE (e.g., Dialogue about Radicalisation and Equality⁵, Pericles⁶, etc.). Other initiatives were deployed by specific research centres. This is the case of the Violence and Exiting Violence Platform⁷ established in 2015 by the Foundation Maison des sciences de l'Homme in Paris. This platform brings together over three hundred scholars worldwide from different disciplines (anthropologists, political scientists, psychologists, sociologists, etc.) in order to construct "exiting violence" as a new field of study. Likewise, since 2012 the International Centre of Excellence for Countering Violent Extremism⁸ (Abu Dhabi, U.A.E) brings experts on PVE from around to globe to promote a holistic understanding of radicalisation and PVE. Finally, the Radicalisation Awareness Network⁹ as well as the UNESCO offer regional and glo-

4. Women and Extremism Network (2019). Available at: <http://www.waenetwork.org/>

5. CORDIS Research Results (2018). Dialogue About Radicalisation and Equality, European Commission. <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/rcn/208416/en>

6. Pericles (2019). About. Available at: <http://project-pericles.eu/about/>

7. Fondation Maison des Sciences de l'Homme (2019). Violence and Exiting Violence Platform. Available at: <http://www.fmsh.fr/en/research/24279>

8. International Center of Excellence for Countering Violent Extremism (2019). Available at: <http://www.hedayah.ae/>

9. RadarEurope (2019). RAN Centre of Excellence. Available at: <https://www.radareurope.nl/themes/ran-coe/>

bal platforms¹⁰ that bring together experts, actors and scholars from different fields to promote multi-disciplinary and comprehensive approaches to radicalisation.

3. Comparative research is key for the success of PVE interventions: in recent years, the evolution of the violent extremist threat posed by jihadist Salafist and far-right groups presents a series of challenges to governmental and non-governmental actors in terms of PVE: this includes the foreign fighter phenomenon, on-line propaganda, the home-grown terrorism and so on and so forth. Yet, many countries concerned with this threat had been already exposed to other forms of violent extremism and, in some cases, carried out successful CVE or PVE interventions. For instance, Germany, Norway and Sweden have implemented Exit programmes to facilitate the disengagement from extremist nationalists and neo-Nazis groups. Based on collaborative and multi-stakeholder approaches, these programmes aim to promote a series of services (family support, psychological support, assistance to find a job) to radicalised individuals so they have a chance to reintegrate into society (Tore Bjørge et al., 2009). These countries drew lessons from these programmes and somehow adapted them to address Jihadist-Salafist radicalisation (e.g., HAYAT programme in Germany). Likewise, other countries drew lessons from other fields of prevention – such as drug addiction or crime – and adapted them to PVE. The Danish approach to violent extremism is heavily inspired by the country's experience in the field of violence prevention (Sieckelinck and Gielen, 2018: 4). As a result, comparative research is crucial in the design of PVE intervention as it allows the following:

- a. Drawing lessons from experiences of prevention in related fields;
- b. Taking stock of experiences and programmes to prevent other forms of violent extremism and see what worked and why;
- c. Looking at PVE experiences in other contexts that could be replicated under certain circumstances.

In short, comparative research is needed to analyse

what works, and under what circumstances, and what does not work.

3.2 Advocacy

Civil society organisations (CSOs) are often seen by State or government actors merely as assistance providers. According to this instrumentalist approach, governmental actors see CSOs as implementing actors for service delivery such as capacity building or technical assistance (healthcare, emergency, etc.). This perspective overlooks the diversity of CSOs, especially the NGOs that have become key players in public advocacy in a wide range of societal issues, including countering and preventing radicalisation (e.g., Amnesty international). In the field of PVE, two developments since the adoption of the UN Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (2016) have contributed to strengthening the contribution of CSOs to PVE efforts. First, the UN called upon Member States to support the development of local PVE policies and plans. Second, the UN insisted on the need to further involve CSOs in PVE strategies – as well as collaborating with actors which have 'credible voices' (2016: 17). In short, CSOs have an important role to play.

The participation of civil society organisations (CSOs) is crucial for the success of PVE initiatives. Firstly, CSOs have an important role to play because they have an acute knowledge of local contexts and can better inform policy-makers on context-specific drivers of violent extremism (i.e., grievances). Non-governmental actors are aware of the existing grievances in society and are well situated to spot early warning signs of radicalisation (e.g., tensions between different segments of the population; spread of a binary discourse, etc.). Secondly, CSOs play a key role when it comes to addressing problems arising from PVE, measures which are overlooked by the authorities such as restrictions on civil liberties or human rights violations as consequences of CT measures. In other words, their contribution is key to deal with the unintended consequences of

10. UNESCO (2018). Young leaders and UN join forces to prevent violent extremism, UNESCO. Available at: <https://en.unesco.org/news/young-leaders-and-join-forces-prevent-violent-extremism>

PVE programmes (e.g., stigmatising communities, human rights violations, restriction on civil liberties, etc.). Thirdly, when CSOs work at local level, their members and leaders constitute credible voices to the extent that they often have relations of trust with local communities.

CSOs are trust builders and credible voices and they can play a strategic role in the framework of PVE strategies for three main reasons:

1. Given the wide range of individual, societal and structural factors that lead to radicalisation, CSOs working in the areas of education, women's rights, human rights, peace-building, youth empowerment, freedom of speech, and interfaith dialogue **all contribute to PVE to the extent that they can influence the conditions conducive to violent extremism**. For example, the work of CSOs in these areas consists in offering a platform to allow people to express their grievances or to facilitate dialogue; stemming marginalisation; empowering young people¹¹, etc. To put it differently, civil society organisations carry out an infinite range of activities and projects which, although not PVE specific, actually contribute to PVE.

2. **Access to vulnerable or already radicalised individuals is easier for CSOs than for the authorities or security bodies**. CSOs provide "safe spaces" for communities so that they can express themselves and sometimes can be a reliable intermediary between the authorities and the communities. In this respect, CSOs are key to access remote or alienated communities and explore possible alternatives.

3. As credible actors, **they can play a relevant role in counter-messaging or alternative narratives**. State institutions often fail at delivering counter-narratives because of two main problems: their lack of legitimacy in the eyes of radicalised individuals and their real or perceived responsibility in feeding violent extremism (e.g., foreign policy, abuses committed by police forces, etc.). CSOs can build on trust and reliability to act in the field of alternative narratives.

Building on the findings mentioned above, this report suggests four ways in which CSOs can contribute more specifically to PVE:

1. **Civil society can be part of multi-actor and collaborative strategies**. Research on preventive policies has confirmed that multi-actor collaborative approach can help, especially if the implementing actors come together in trust-based networks (Anja Dalgaard-Nielsen and Patrick Schack, 2016: 137). This approach, also called governance networks, is based on non-hierarchical and decentralised networks and is typical of the non-governmental world. Relying on trust, these networks aim at achieving a common understanding of the problems and the possible solutions to them. In this respect, CSOs should get involved in multi-actor approaches as they have the capacity: (a) To identify and understand the drivers of radicalisation; (b) to propose context-specific responses or strategies; and (c) to establish trust between communities and the authorities.

2. **CSOs as awareness raisers of the unintended consequences of PVE**. According to David Cortright et al. (2011), "security policies in general and counterterrorism measures in particular are making the threat of violent extremism worse when they are developed and implemented without civil society participation and civic agency". Indeed, CSOs can be perceived as a risk factor or even a threat by the authorities in the field of terrorism and violent extremism. Several studies have shown that counterterrorism measures and policies have diminished the role and political space for CSOs in areas such as human rights, peace-building and conflict transformation (David Cortright et al., 2011: 5). As Bibi Van Ginkel has argued (2012: 3), "many governments have curtailed political freedoms and imposed restrictive measures against human rights defenders and civil society activists in various countries". In this view, CSOs play a crucial role by shedding light on the counterproductive aspects of some CT, CVE or PVE programmes and eventually help to refine them. For instance, Amnesty International, a NGO in the field of human rights, published a report in 2017 where it analysed the reaction of Western European countries to terrorist attacks, highlighting the risk of a securitisation of Europe. Likewise, Albert Caramés and

11. Calderó Delgado, C. (2018) "Young Voices. How working on Social Cohesion and Civil Society Empowerment with Youth can contribute to the Prevention of Violent Extremism". NOVACT. Available at: http://opev.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Young-Voices_.pdf

Júlia Fernández (2017)¹² shed light on the impact of new antiterrorism laws adopted by Euro-Mediterranean countries on human rights and civil liberties.

3. CSOs as credible voices. As mentioned above, various countries such as France, Morocco, Saudi Arabia or the UK got involved in the so-called “battle of ideas” (i.e., de-radicalisation). In the framework of their PVE policies, these governments intended to challenge extremist ideas, assuming that the adoption of extremist ideas (cognitive radicalisation) may lead, in some cases, to the adoption of a violent behaviour (behavioural radicalisation). Taking into account that radicalised individuals often put the blame for their grievances onto the “system” or the State, which they see as illegitimate, civil society organisations are better suited to task the challenge of ideological views as they are credible actors (Froukje Demant, 2008: 163). This is even more relevant in areas where the State is unwilling or unable to govern and where CSOs play an intermediary role between the State and remote communities. As recruitment is often localised in different regions (“hotbeds of radicalisation”), CSOs, with their acute knowledge of local drivers, can provide alternative narratives or even develop locally-driven initiatives to address the community needs¹³.

4. CSOs sharing their experience and lessons learnt. CSOs can bring and share their expertise in the framework of trainings targeting PVE practitioners. Their contribution, especially from a human rights based approach, can be particularly valuable in the following aspects of trainings:

- a. Raising awareness about the multiple forms of violent extremism and radicalisation. Whi-

le policy and decision-makers sometimes act according to a political agenda, CSOs’ presence on the ground can compensate the lack of knowledge and action in local contexts. For instance, there was a recurrent criticism that in certain countries such as France or the UK, the authorities were focusing almost exclusively on jihadist Salafist radicalisation, overlooking the threat from far-right movements.

- b. Sending clear messages about what PVE is and is not. Particular attention should be paid to the framing of activities, initiatives or projects that aim at PVE such as community cohesion, youth empowerment or education. All these activities can be supported and encouraged without being labelled PVE.
- c. Sharing information through their networks. Many civil society organisations such as Amnesty, NOVACT or Human Rights Watch are transnational and often have expertise from other countries that governments and states lack. In this respect, building on their existing networks, CSOs should engage with governmental authorities to share their thematic, regional or local expertise but also to create viable mechanisms for engaging with international and state authorities. This way, CSOs could better inform policy makers on the conditions conducive to violent extremism and recommend ways to overcome them.

3.3 Training

In response to the threat of Islamist radicalisation leading to terrorism, various Western governments developed or included trainings on radicalisation as part of their CT, CVE or PVE policies. The aim of these training sessions was mainly to provide a myriad of actors – e.g., teachers, doctors, police officers, youth workers, etc. – with the tools to be able to spot ‘early warning signs’ of radicalisation and take the appropriate measures (e.g., contact the family; refer an individual to the authorities, etc.). Yet, in many cases the guidance raised several theoretical and practical misunderstandings and suggested how such exercises can reinforce

12. Caramés, A. (ed.), Fernández, J. (2017). “Without rights there is no security. Human rights violations in the Euro-Mediterranean region as a consequence of anti-terrorist legislations”. NOVACT. Available at: http://opev.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/No-Security-Without-Rights.WEB_-1.pdf

13. Human Rights Council (2019). “Report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism on the role of measures to address terrorism and violent extremism on closing civic space and violating the rights of civil society actors and human rights defenders”, 18 February 2019. Available at: https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/.../A_HRC_40_52.docx

stereotypes, reproduce misunderstandings and divert public money on ineffective programmes.

More worryingly, these programmes suffered from theoretical confusion and conceptual imprecision. Firstly, there was a lack of definition of what “violent extremism” truly meant. Without any clear definition of what violent extremism is and is not, two main problems arise. On the one hand, up to thousands of civil servants are trained to understand and to detect a phenomenon which is not clearly defined. On the other hand, this lack of definition gives more room for trainer to train people according to their own view of violent extremism, and of the interrelated push and pull factors leading to it. Some beneficiaries will thus consider that VE has to do before all with religion while others may link it to integration issues. Secondly, a connection was made between cognitive and behavioural radicalisation, showing a poor understanding of existing research. Although research has not evidenced a direct relationship between cognitive and behavioural radicalisation (Clark McCauley and Sophia Moskalenko, 2017), some trainings given for instance by the authorities in France, Spain or Germany actually assume there is a link. A good illustration can be found in the use of indicators of radicalisation in European countries such as Germany, France or Spain. These indicators – which are not based in any scientific evidence - either correspond to religious practices (e.g., wearing the hijab, praying five times a day, beard, change in dressing habits, etc.) or to other attitudes that can characterise something else than radicalisation (e.g., rejecting the authorities, isolation, etc.). In short, training who is based on biased research can create more problems than it solves.

Defining clearly the threat or phenomenon the authorities are trying to prevent (e.g., radicalisation) as well as distinguishing between cognitive and violent radicalisation becomes essential when designing and implementing PVE programmes. In addition to avoiding the problems mentioned above, the following elements should be taken into account when performing training on preventing violent extremism:

- a. **Defining what violent extremism is and is not.** Characterising precisely the phenomenon that should be prevented is key. In this respect, a clear definition of violent extremism – as proposed in this report - implies distinguishing cognitive radicalisation from behavioural radicalisation.
- b. **Defining what PVE is and is not.** Many activities, initiatives or projects contribute to preventing violent extremism without being labelled as such. It is of vital importance not to label or frame each of these PVE relevant projects as “PVE”. Indeed, labelling any activity that aim at equality or community cohesion as “PVE” could lead the beneficiaries to think of themselves as “at-risk groups” or “potential violent extremists” and thus undermine trust between the authorities and some communities.
- c. **Focusing on all forms of violent extremism and radicalisation posing a threat.** Many governments and policy-makers develop policies according to political priorities. For example, since jihadist terrorist attacks shook Europe, many European countries developed plans that aim at countering and preventing this specific threat. Yet, although jihadist attacks have been the most lethal between 2014 and 2018, other forms of violent extremism also pose a threat to many Western societies. This is the case of far-right movements.
- d. **Favour multi-agency training programmes.** To fully understand the process of radicalisation and explain the concept of violent extremism, all stakeholders of PVE programmes – authorities, CSOs, schools, youth workers, etc. – should be involved in trainings on radicalisation. This way, the audience can benefit from different perspectives of the same phenomenon and understand the complexity to define it, to spot it and even to prevent it.
- e. **Empower all CSOs which have access to communities affected by violent extremism.** Violent extremist groups target specific communities and groups which are, in their view, vulnerable to their ideology. For example, the

Soufan Group (2014: 10) evidenced that foreign fighters who travelled to Syria and Iraq were connected to local hotbeds of radicalisation. Bearing this in mind, and as explained earlier, civil society plays a key role in PVE because of its PVE relevant activities; its capital of trust and its access to communities. In this regard, training should also be given to CSOs, especially to community leaders, women leaders and youth leaders to develop more localised, credible and inclusive strategies to prevent violent extremism.

3.4 Intercommunity Dialogue

Religion and ethnicity are often used by violent extremist groups in the framework of the Us versus Them rhetoric. For instance, white supremacists often use a racist, anti-Semitic and xenophobic conception of Christian identity (Jeanine Hill Fletcher, 2017); while some faith-based groups such as IS or the anti-Muslim movement in Myanmar justify sectarian atrocities (e.g., massacres of Shiites, enslavement of Yazidi minorities, terrorist attacks against Christian minorities, etc.) and the killing of innocents on the name of religion. In addition, both sectarianism in the MENA region and growing far-right parties or movements in Western countries translate into repeated violent extremist attacks against cultural, ethnic or religious minorities in both areas. In response to these threats, intercommunity dialogue is relevant as it brings together members or representatives of different communities with the aim to developing a mutual understanding and respect between different groups (OSCE, 2015: 1). Likewise, it can help gain knowledge on the ideological drivers of radicalisation and help to better address them. In short, intercommunity dialogue has the capacity to strengthen relations of trust and mutual understanding in plural communities/societies and thus contributes to social cohesion.

Although not framed in terms of PVE, some global initiatives enhancing interfaith dialogue were launched. For instance, the Royal Institute for Inter-Faith Studies (RIIFS) was established in 1994 in Amman (Jordan). RIIFS works as a platform bringing together scholars from various disciplines and theological experts from

all religions to study inter-religious issues, fight against religious stereotypes and promote mutual respect between all faiths. More recently, the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) was established in 2005. This organisation maintains a global network of multiple actors – governmental, CSOs, the private sector, etc. – and supports intercultural and inter-religious dialogue to promote understanding and respect between identity-based groups. Also, and in the context marked by a resurgence of terrorist attacks and violent extremist groups across the Euro-Mediterranean region, the Vatican and Al Azhar – a Cairo-based influential Islamic institution – launched an inter-religious dialogue specifically devoted to fanaticism, extremism and violence¹⁴.

Yet, when it comes to PVE, intercommunity dialogue is being questioned or criticised in several respects. Firstly, because it is often the result of top-down initiatives launched by States or International Organisations, which means by actors who may lack credibility. Secondly, they bring high-profile religious and public figures that, despite of their expertise, may not appear legitimate in the eyes of believers. Thirdly, interfaith dialogue can be the result of the instrumentalised use of religious actors by political actors. For instance, some authoritarian regimes – e.g., Saudi Arabia or Singapore – overemphasise the religious dimension of radicalisation while they overlook other dimensions such as politics or foreign policy. This use of religious actors by political actors can undermine the legitimacy of religious actors as they may be seen as permitting state interference in religious matters. The following elements should be taken into account when rethinking the significance of intercommunity dialogue:

1. Intercommunity dialogue can contribute to PVE at three levels of analysis. At the macro level, different organisations such as the ones mentioned previously, can contribute to improve the political environment, by sending key messages to wide audiences (e.g., Pope Francis' visit to Morocco in March 2019). At meso level,

14. Oasis (2017). Al-Azhar and the Vatican in Confronting the Phenomena of Fanaticism, Extremism and Violence, Oasis Center, 22 February 2017. Available at: <https://www.oasiscenter.eu/en/al-azhar-and-vatican-confronting-phenomena-fanaticism-extremism-and-violence>

intercommunity dialogue can open up new platforms and spaces for dialogue between people of different cultures and faiths and therefore contribute to reduce tensions or stereotypes between different faith and communities. Finally, at micro level, intercommunity dialogue can “provide both cognitive and emotional experiences with other groups or individuals that positively reinforce moderate views” (Brian J. Adams, 2015).

2. Intercommunity dialogue is relevant in the framework of counter-narrative and alternative narrative campaigns. Religious leaders can play an influential role when it comes to demystify the religious narrative held by faith-based violent extremists (e.g., jihadist Salafism). In this vein, interfaith dialogue can help to dissect the religious roots of VE but also to discuss on how to use different tools to promote alternative narratives (e.g., media, education, religious places, empowerment of women, etc.). For instance, since 2015, Morocco developed a training programme for women to become female religious guide (Murshidate). These female preachers are then tasked to work in communities, mosques but also prisons where they promote a peaceful interpretation of religion.

3. Inclusivity and approach: there are two challenges in the field of intercommunity dialogue. On the one hand, to have a societal impact, such a dialogue should involve all members of a community and not just their religious leaders. In other words, grassroots organisations should be involved so that citizens of different ethnic, religious or cultural background can interact with each other, share common values and reduce prejudice. On the other hand, this dialogue should be as inclusive as possible, i.e. it should include some targets of violent extremist groups (e.g., women and young people) but also hard-to-reach communities or individuals.

4. Intercommunity dialogue should be implemented at local level. Although global or regional initiatives can contribute to disseminate messages of cohesion; social cohesion is the result of dynamics taking place at local level. In this regard, religious and cultural institutions should be encouraged to organise local seminars with the aim of opening dialogue channels between individuals and communities of different faith. For example, Danmission, an independent Danish Christian

organisation, funds several programmes which aim at empowering local religious leaders to build trust in their religious institutions and to take part in initiatives promoting coexistence¹⁵.

5. Intercommunity dialogue initiatives should have their scope and target defined. Although religion and culture play a role in political life, any religious or cultural initiative can fully address the wide spectrum of drivers of violent extremism. In this regard, the scope of action (macro, meso or micro) as well as the target (e.g., vulnerable individuals, whole community, etc.) should be clearly established before any intercommunity dialogue initiative is implemented.

6. Demarcating the role of political and religious actors. As mentioned earlier, the role played by political actors in interfaith dialogue can undermine the legitimacy of religious actors in the eyes of communities. It can be seen as an attempt by the State to promote or impose a particular interpretation of religion. In this view, to safeguard the legitimacy of the religious actors involved, the role of State authorities and religious authorities should be clearly demarcated: while State authorities may foster interfaith initiatives or support them (e.g. providing a place where dialogue can take place; financial support, etc.), they should not be involved in the “battle of ideas” (e.g., seeking to influence religious doctrine). It is important to underline here that interfaith dialogue can (and does) take places without state involvement.

3.5 Alternative narratives

In the framework of PVE efforts, governments, international organisations and development agencies have allocated efforts and money to create and support ‘counter-narratives’. The objective of these narratives was to respond to the vast amount of online propaganda from groups such as Al Qaeda and IS. Needless to say, there is also a clear need to respond to extremist messages and campaigns from other ideologies.

These counter-narrative campaigns mainly suffered from three problems. Firstly, counter-narratives are in essence reactive. In other words, many of these campaigns were only reacting to the propaganda displa-

yed by violent extremist organisations, recognising in practice the terms laid down by their opponents. For instance, the counter-narrative section of the French government's campaign Stop-djihadisme¹⁶, was exclusively focused on demystifying the promises made by the so-called caliphate. Yet, no reference was made to non-ideological factors such as real or perceived grievances that can make violent extremism propaganda look reasonable.

Secondly, the overemphasis on the ideological dimension of violent extremist groups tends to reflect the lack of knowledge about the reasons why violent extremist groups are appealing to some segments of the population. Yet, as explained earlier, ideology is not the only factor that can initiate a process radicalisation: other factors (e.g., socio-economic and psychological rewards) should be taken into account to better understand what makes VE ideologies attractive.

Thirdly, many of these campaigns are often being carried out by governments' institutions (e.g., Ministry of Habous and Islamic Affairs in Morocco). Yet, little effect is to be expected from campaigns disseminated by official figures or institutions which are systematically dismissed by VE ideologies or made responsible for most grievances (e.g., governments as part of a broader conspiracy). In short, official actors neither have the credibility nor the legitimacy to carry out counter-narrative campaigns.

As underlined by Scott Atran (2015) in his address to the UN Security Council, instead of reacting to the main narratives and hopelessly try to demystify VE groups, counter-messaging efforts should rather be aimed at proposing an alternative (narrative) to individuals who find themselves vulnerable to VE ideologies. **By alternative narrative (AN), we mean all the means – both on- and offline – which directly challenge VE propaganda in order to either deter an individual from joining a VE group or at least to plant a seed of doubt in the minds of those undergoing a process of radicalisation (RAN, 2018: 10).**

In this context, the following aspects are of crucial importance in the field of alternative narratives:

1. Articulating any alternative narrative strategy around common goals and a common strategic approach. This implies defining and reaching consensus over the following:

- a. *Level of action*: the level can be micro, i.e. focusing on the individual level (e.g. face-to-face discussion); meso, i.e. relevant narratives and activities for communities vulnerable to VE ideologies and groups (e.g., open debate on sensitive issues); or macro, i.e. designed for society in general (e.g., government campaigns to end obesity).
- b. *Target audience*: although it depends on the level of action, it should be as precise as possible given the differentiated recruitment strategies used by VE groups. The target should be defined in order to define the most appropriate medium and strategy (format).
- c. *Communication strategy*: we refer here to dissemination channels to be used – both off- and online – as well as the messengers who will reach out to the audience. Both depend on the target of audience and the aim of that campaign (e.g., convincing one individual to disengage through face-to-face discussion or launching a campaign for the wider public through social networks).
- d. *Scope*: this means choosing between a campaign in the short run – for instance immediately in the wake of an incident- or if it aims at changing public opinion (e.g., campaigns on drug addiction).

2. Contemplating all medium, both off- and online.

Instead of old-fashioned generic campaign traditionally developed by governmental actors (e.g., TV advertise-

15. Danmission is an independent Christian-based organisation connected with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark, Folkekirken, as well as with churches, strategic partners and networks in Africa, Asia, the Middle East and Denmark. Further information can be found at this link: <https://english.danmission.dk/>.

16. Stop Djihadisme (2019). <http://www.stop-djihadisme.gouv.fr/>.

ment on racism), alternative narratives in the field of violence extremism should contemplate all dissemination channels, depending on the target and the goals. This includes traditional medium such as TV, radio, etc. but also other medium such as internet, blogs, chats, social networks, YouTube channels, etc. In other words, alternative campaigns should have an effective branding and be at least as sophisticated as the propaganda displayed by violent extremist groups (Hollywood-style cinematics, music, compelling stories, etc.).

3. Be as inclusive and credible as possible, at all stages of the communication strategy. As underlined before, VE groups used targeted recruitment as they refine their discourse depending on grievances affecting specific groups (e.g., youth and women). In this regard, to be effective, alternative narrative should include all stakeholders on PVE. This includes governmental actors, local authorities, political figures, religious figures, CSOs, grassroots organisations, practitioners, and the private sector (e.g., advertising agencies). Besides, AN should also include members of the communities or groups vulnerable to the extremist ideologies as they know their peers' grievances and can be particularly innovative and relevant when designing an alternative discourse. Finally, credibility and trust worthiness of the actors who are to deliver the message are crucial for the success of any campaign.

4. Contemplating the non-ideological dimension of radicalisation. As suggested earlier, the aim of an alternative narrative is not only to challenge the extremist ideas but also the series of rewards promised by violent extremist groups (e.g., status, money, project, etc.). In this regard, at the preparatory phase of an AN campaign, the grievances exploited by VE groups should be clearly identified and dealt with (e.g., foreign policy, police abuse, etc.). This preliminary phase is necessary before exploring any alternative way of addressing these grievances.

5. Alternative narratives are not exclusively based on rational arguments. Counter-narratives often use statistics and facts in order to dismantle the narrative held by VE groups. Yet, a successful campaign cannot be achieved by empirical evidence alone. Hard data and evidence can indeed always be countered. In this re-

gard, the same way VE groups use emotions, alternative narratives should also appeal to human emotions: using shocking campaigns similar to those in other fields (e.g., gender-related violence, alcoholism, drug addiction, etc.); the use of plays as done in many countries; using testimonials of victims or former extremists or resorting to humour are examples of the wide scope of possible strategies. For instance, EXIT Germany launched the "Trojan T-shirt" campaign: the organisation slipped t-shirts with an imprinted neo-Nazi logo to attendees of a right-wing rock festival. After being washed, the logo disappeared and revealed the following message "What your t-shirt can do, you can do too – we will help you to leave right-wing extremism behind. EXIT Germany"¹⁷.

Summary of section 3.

In this section, we explored the main challenges of PVE in five areas of intervention, namely (1) research; (2) advocacy; (3) training; (4) intercommunity dialogue; and (5) alternative narratives. In this vein, the following aspects were suggested to carry out more effective PVE strategies or projects:

1. Research: research is needed when it comes to prepare, design and evaluate a PVE intervention in any local context. For PVE policies, plans or projects, research is necessary to **i) identify the causes of this phenomenon, ii) design the measures needed to address it and iii) assess if the planned intervention delivered its results.** This research should simultaneously entail the three levels of analysis –micro, meso and macro. It should be multidisciplinary to fully understand radicalisation and design holistic responses accordingly. Finally, it should be comparative to open room for a constant improvement of implemented PVE interventions, policies or programmes.

2. Advocacy: in the field of advocacy, civil society organisations should be involved as actors of PVE and not as mere providers of social services. Civil

17. Grabarz & Partner (2012). Viral Campaign "The Trojan T-Shirt". Grabarz & Partner official website. Available at: <https://www.grabarzundpartner.de/en/work/exit/viral-aktion-trojanisches-t-shirt.html>

society organisations often meet three conditions that are key to the success of PVE programmes: i) their **acute knowledge of local contexts** (e.g., local drivers of violent extremism); ii) their access to hard-to-reach individuals and communities and iii) they are often seen as credible actors by local communities. Building on this, CSOs can further contribute to PVE in different ways: as local actors, as credible voices and as members of regional or global networks benefitting from the experiences and practices of other CSOs in other contexts.

3. Training: many countries developed trainings on radicalisation and PVE for civil servants and other implementing actors as part of their PVE policies. However, these trainings often lack conceptual clarity when it comes to define the phenomenon they try to address or the strategies they intend to implement on the ground. In this context, the following five aspects should be systematically taken into account: (1) defining violent extremism; (2) defining PVE; (3) focusing on all forms of radicalisation and violent extremism; (4) enhancing multi-agency training programmes and (5) engaging with CS

04

Best Practices

This section explores some of the key practices across the Mediterranean region with regard to PVE. The first section focuses on possible 'models' of PVE, or examples which other countries could follow or imitate. It details the cases of Germany and Tunisia. The second section focuses on probable 'anti-models', which are also useful from the policy perspective. The idea is to use these case studies in order to learn and avoid making similar blunders. The countries examined will be France, Germany, Morocco and Tunisia. Last but not least, the section will conclude with a brief sub-section on policy recommendations.

4.1 Effective Case Studies:

In this section, we present the main features of two 'models' of PVE, namely Germany and Tunisia.

4.1.1. Germany

A model of multi-actor collaborative approach to PVE

Germany is an interesting model for three main reasons. First, the country has implemented a variety of PVE programs designed to tackle violent extremism of all kinds. Given its historical past, special attention has been paid to neo-Nazi and far right groups, not only Salafi-Jihadism. Second, funding for PVE initiatives mostly comes from the federal government, which is now interested in evaluating the efficaciousness of these programs. Whereas governmental agencies dominate the field and NGOs clearly play a secondary role, there

are regular interactions (aka 'partnerships for democracy') between these two kinds of actors. Third, the level of decentralization and the diversity of government and non-government agents are largely due to the federal structure of Germany. Thus, the German model follows a well-funded multi-level approach to countering violent extremism.

Government-led Federal Programs

According to a study from 2016, the German Federal Criminal Police counted 721 CVE programs of all types and directed at all forms of violent extremism active in Germany (Lützing et al., 2016). Of these, about 47% were carried out by governmental agencies and the rest by non-governmental organizations (Lützing et al., 2016). Germany's policy of wide scale funding for civil society CVE programs, in addition to CVE governmental initiatives, has been the key factor in this unique diversity of programs, which came with benefits as well as with costs.

German authorities attempt to better coordinate federal funding and to avoid parallel structures, as well as to identify gaps in the current program landscape. This reflects Germany's unique brand of federalism, in which the 16 federal states enjoy a strong autonomy including policing, education and social measures. German CVE activities are heavily focused on the affective (and/or social) environments of at-risk or radicalized individuals. 59% of all German CVE programs are deploying methods designed to support moderate social networks around these individuals in order to prevent radicalization or induce deradicalization. 22% of the programs focus on ideological counter-radicalization and 19%

on individual counselling (ibid.). Regarding the governmental CVE programs, the majority are classified as community or state wide initiatives (48% of the 336 governmental programs are community oriented, 41% are state-wide), while only 11% of governmental initiatives are nation-wide (Lützing et al., 2016: 10). All in all, the field seems to be more geared toward catch-all approaches, rather than specializing in particular forms of P/CVE or deradicalization.

Preventing Far-Right and Islamist Violent Extremism

Since the early 2000s, almost every German state has set up its own governmental deradicalization program for right-wing extremists. One study from 2014 counted 18 identifiable exit programs for neo-Nazis, of which 12 were run by governmental agencies, mostly criminal police and intelligence departments (Glaser et al., 2014: 47). These deradicalization programs for neo-Nazis helped about 2,000 individuals to leave extreme right-wing groups during the last 17 years. Counselling cancellation rates during program participation reached almost 40% for some programs, while both governmental and non-governmental programs display in some periods either very high or very low cancellation rates. With a major share of deradicalization programs being run by governmental actors (i.e. police and intelligence agencies) Germany established a dedicated subgroup as exchange forum for these governmental deradicalization programs within the Joint Counterterrorism Centre in 2009, which since then has met regularly to discuss practical and theoretical questions with a wide array of implication for the practical field.

Regarding CVE and deradicalization programs focusing on jihadist-Salafism, the first significant governmental and non-governmental programs targeting it did not start before 2010, with a nationwide exit hotline initiative that proved to be a failure. As a consequence, in 2012 the “Federal Office for Immigration and Refugee Affairs” (BAMF), transformed the initiative into a public-private partnership with non-governmental counsellors. This counselling concept in which the initial contact is made between the family member and a government employee, following which the case is referred for management to a non-governmental counselling partner is widely regarded as highly successful in Germany, at least in terms of the stable demand and high number of case referrals. Between January 2012 and March 2017 the hotline has received 3,400 calls re-

sulting in 1,600 counselling cases (Horn, 2017).

Since the establishment of the BAMF hotline, other German states followed suit and created their own versions of that approach, oftentimes called “prevention networks”. Currently in 12 German states there exists some form of public-private-partnerships usually interlinked with the nationwide BAMF program. Exchange and coordination between these different networks and programs is being attempted to advance joint standards and definitions, but again the nature of German federalism sets strict barriers for responsibilities and coordinating powers in this matter are being taken over by Federal agencies. In addition, German privacy and data protection legislation also impedes the sharing of information and exchange on counselled cases across state borders and even between governmental and non-governmental partners.

One aspect characteristic of these state prevention networks is that they typically include a wide array of functions and components carried out by very few non-governmental partners, e.g. including educational talks in schools, prison-based counselling of inmates, training of teachers to spot radicalization, individual deradicalization or family counselling. In most cases, the German states using this model have outsourced and subcontracted one or two non-governmental partners tasked with these components and with running the CVE/deradicalization outfit. Only very few states have built coordination centres to establish some strategic guidance for the wider civil society prevention field beyond these few subcontracted NGOs.

Countering Violent Extremism: a Multi-actor and Multi-level approach.

In 2016, the Federal Government released the first national strategy for fighting extremism and supporting democracy as a joint product of the Federal Ministry of the Interior and the Federal Family Ministry. It identified, in a unique step unusual for the German federalism, six “operational fields” (i.e. political education, intercultural learning and building democracy; civil society engagement; counselling, intervention and monitoring; the press and internet; research; and international cooperation) and 18 strategic partners in the overall CVE field (i.e. local and religious communities, police, victim support organizations, counselling services, intelligence, governmental institutions, national networks, associations, prisons, universities, media and internet actors, youth services, families, job environment, friends of at

risk individuals, military and schools).

On the community level, the national strategy aims to establish the so called “partnerships for democracy” with a heavy focus on building coordination centres to guide the ground practitioners’ work. On the state level, larger “democracy centres” are tasked with coordinating victim support, exit and counselling service providers, while on the national level a few NGOs are selected to fulfill an essential role for the overall CVE field and are designated for extended quasi-structural funding. Additionally, special pilot projects in the field of preventing radicalization aim to test new methods and approaches to CVE. A special characteristic of this first German national CVE strategy is that it tries to balance financial support for local communities and municipalities on the one hand and on the other hand subsidize specialized NGOs as additional service providers. Special interest groups, e.g. families and children, are represented in the German P/CVE strategy and landscape through the key importance placed on family counselling networks and programs or political education for adolescents for example. In addition, a large number of non-governmental initiatives have specialized on specific methods, such as for example peer-to-peer counselling or approaching adolescents through subcultural elements (e.g. music and sports).

4.1.2. Tunisia

Enhancing collaboration between State and civil society organisations in the field of PVE

In the field of preventing violent extremism, significant progress has been made by Tunisia since 2015. Firstly, because the country’s PVE efforts were initiated and are coordinated at the government level. Secondly, because Tunisia has managed to react quickly to the growing threat of violent extremism after the terrorist attacks perpetrated in Tunis and Sousse (2015). Finally, PVE efforts are structured in a way that favours cooperation and coordination between government and non-government actors to address the threats posed by IS and the foreign fighter phenomenon¹⁸.

However, some challenges remain to make effective and sustainable the Tunisian PVE strategy. The main challenge lies in the funding allocated to PVE projects. The lack of government funding pushes CSOs to seek international funding. By doing so, some local CSOs end up as mere implementers of projects designed in

Western capitals, according to objectives and priorities that may differ from those set by Tunisian actors.

Legal and institutional framework of Tunisia’s PVE Strategy

The impulse to address the threat from terrorism and the root causes of violent extremism came in 2015 after the Islamic State claimed two high-profile attacks in Tunisia – the Bardo Museum attack in March and the Sousse mass shooting in June -, resulting in increased pressure on the government to deliver in the field of PVE. The attacks prompted donors to create the G7+ donor coordination mechanism for security cooperation. Although establishing this forum has not resulted in a fully joined up international response – as many key states often compete for access and influence over Tunisian governmental stakeholders - the G7+ working group on Preventing Violent Extremism has allowed for more systematic coordination and established a formal dialogue between the Tunisian authorities and their international partners.

The National Security Council – which is chaired by the President of the Republic – tasked the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with coordinating the counter-terrorism strategy development process in which five other ministries participated: the ministries of Defence, Interior, Justice, Finance and Technology. Adopted on November 2016, the National Counter-Terrorism Strategy expanded CVE and PVE to all ministries including those focusing on culture, education and the media. It assigned each ministry a task in the field of PVE to accomplish. However, most measures annexed to the strategy required cooperation with international partners, mostly UN agencies, which tends to show that the government’s priority was to secure funding to implement UN programmes.

Concurrently with the development of the national counterterrorism strategy, Tunisia adopted a new legislative framework enshrined in the Organic Law of 7 August 2015, highly relevant to PVE from an institutional perspective, which established the National Counter-Terrorism Committee (NCTC). Placed within the

18. Since 2014, many institutions such as the United Nations estimated that over 6,000 Tunisians left their country to join terrorist groups in Syria and Iraq. Yet, according to Aaron Zelin (2018), only 2,900 have effectively joined these warring zones. More information available at: <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/poli-analysis/view/tunisias-foreign-fighters>

Prime Minister's Office, the NCTC is an inter-ministerial structure made up of representatives of 13 ministries, including the ministries of Human rights; Youth and Sports; Women, family and childhood; Religious affairs; Culture; and Education. Its mission is to coordinate cross-ministerial efforts in counter-terrorism and PVE. Each ministry involved in the NCTC was in charge of developing a ministry-specific implementation plan. This way, the NCTC wanted to decentralise PVE efforts.

In 2016, the Counter-Terrorism Fusion Centre (CTFC) became the PVE research and analysis branch of the Ministry of Interior. It is now able to feed the NCTC and its members with analyses on current trends in violent extremist recruitment. Data of this kind can play an invaluable role in shaping governmental PVE interventions. In addition, the centre's efforts in mapping violent extremism helps government actors to better identify priority areas of intervention.

Another key PVE actor that emerged from the national strategy is the governmental PVE Strategic Communications Unit. Its aim is to harmonise messaging against violent extremism at the inter-ministerial level. In 2015, it launched the first government policy initiative aimed at addressing violent extremist propaganda: the "alternative narrative project". The aim was, instead of countering VE discourse, to enable alternative, positive and inclusive narratives. It paved the way for the creation of an "Alternative Narrative Platform" (ANP), under the the Ministry of Human Rights and Relations with Civil Society in December 2016. The ANP provides support and visibility to CSOs that disseminate positive messages, and works as a mediator between CSOs and governmental actors (e.g., to obtain a legal authorisation for filming). Aware of the limits to the government's capacity and legitimacy in the field of narratives, the ANP occupies a strategic space: it acts as a facilitator of alternative narratives rather than originator.

Civil society's role

Since the 2015 Tunis and Sousse terror attacks, Tunisian civil society has been at the forefront of national PVE efforts. Tunisian CSOs are heavily dependent upon international funding because Tunisian government funding is extremely limited. Whenever state funds are available, they are most likely to be awarded to large and well-established CSOs rather than smaller, youth-led associations.

A large number of civil society organisations - devoid of

any experience in PVE – which have grown dependent on foreign funding since 2011 were met with incentives to re-label pre-existing projects as PVE initiatives in order to capture funds. Most PVE projects therefore do not deal directly with the issue of violent extremism and focus on peripheral push factors. Another consequence of international funding for PVE is the difficulty for donors to identify adequate local partners. Priority is thus given to international NGOs which have the capacity to manage large amounts of money and can respond to their international partners' expectations. At the same time, these NGOs lack contextual knowledge and have not the ability to intervene in hotspots of radicalisation. This way, smaller grassroots CSOs, often seen as credible and legitimate, are being side-lined.

Another negative side of the international funding is related to the prominence of Western-centric approaches in the field of PVE. Many of these PVE projects are indeed designed in Washington, Brussels or London, according to the perspectives and priorities of the funders and not the beneficiaries. As a result, Tunisian CSOs end up being seen as the implementers of foreign projects.

To sum up, both Germany and Tunisia are interesting case studies when it comes to draw lessons for the implementation of PVE policies and initiatives. The emphasis put on multi-actor strategies, the existence of coordination mechanisms between governmental and non-governmental actors and the multi-level approach are some of the main features that should inspire other countries in the Euro-Mediterranean region. In the next section, we examine two other case studies that may help to inform on what should be avoided in the framework of PVE policies.

4.2 Anti-models: ineffective case studies

In this section, we analyse the main aspects of PVE policies as implemented in France and Morocco. The aim is to draw lessons from these cases in order to improve or design more effective PVE policies and strategies.

4.2.1. France

From detection to prevention?

Prior to 2012, France treated terrorism almost exclusively as a matter of law enforcement. Since 2015, and after the November 2015 Paris attacks that killed at least 130 people and wounded hundreds, the State started to adopt pre-emptive and reactive counterterrorism measures. The government established and repeatedly extended a national state of emergency, bolstered its counterterrorism legislation, conducted a series of arrests, approved the creation of a National Guard, and launched a de radicalisation centre in the country. In parallel, it launched several national plans to tackle and prevent the threat.

A counter-terrorist policy labelled as 'preventive policy'

In France, PVE focuses mainly on Islamist radicalisation despite the fact that other forms of radicalisation and violent extremism exist (e.g., far-right). In April 2014, an Anti-Terrorism Plan was adopted to prevent young French people from departing to Syria (e.g. a mandatory 'exit authorisation' for minors). Prevention campaigns were announced in cooperation with the Ministry of National Education and municipalities. A nationwide counselling hotline, called National Centre for Assistance and Prevention of Radicalisation and run by the Interior Ministry's Coordination Unit for Counter-Terrorism, with a toll-free number for reporting suspected radical individuals, was set up. An online platform to report illegal internet content was also announced and follow-up cells (prevention of radicalisation and families support) were set up under the supervision of French department prefects (first line state representatives) who assess the referrals. At-risk individuals were added to the national file of wanted people (FPR) and the Schengen information system (SIS). Although support for families by social workers and psychologists were part of the plan, it has not been implemented on a large scale. An anti-terror law promulgated on November 2014 included a travel ban on French nationals suspected to leave France to commit 'terrorist activities, war crimes or crimes against humanity' abroad. The law also allowed the authorities to block websites that glorify terrorism and jihadist ideology. The government allocated more human and financial resources (a total budget of €735 million) to monitor the jihadist threat

and fight terrorism.

In January 2015, the government launched its Stop-Djihadisme online campaign for the general audience – with a focus on youth- and practitioners (teachers, youth workers). This campaign included resources to raise awareness among citizens about radicalisation issues (video testimonies, informational posters, clips) and to provide them with tools to spot and prevent radicalisation. One year later, another plan was adopted: the Action Plan against Radicalisation and Terrorism. The main novelties included in this plan were the promotion of counter-narratives – along with members from Muslim communities and internet stakeholders- and the opening of a de-radicalisation centre in Paris. Yet, in 2017 it was deemed to have been a failed strategy.

The Prevent to Protect Strategy

"Prevent to Protect" is the latest national PVE plan adopted by the Government and launched in February 2018. It targets Islamist radicalisation but does not give a definition of the terms. It involves twenty ministerial departments including Justice, the Interior, Education and Youth, Health and Sports. This plan enhances psychological and social support for families and individuals identified in referrals, and emphasises the need for raising awareness and training on prevention of radicalisation.

Priority is given to detection but the process after the referral of a suspected radicalised youth is unclear. Detection implies registration of suspects in a list of people supposed to pose a security threat (the 'fichier S') for their scrutiny. Until December 2018, more than 25,000 individuals were recorded, 50% of which identified as radical Islamists. Individuals might then be added to FSPRT ('Fichier des Signalements pour la prévention de la Radicalisation à caractère Terroriste'), a database flagging extremists whose radicalisation has a terrorist dimension (more than 20,000 individuals as to December 2018).

This plan is the first strategy aimed at preventing radicalisation. It draws from the Danish Aarhus experimentation in terms of individual and multidisciplinary follow-up of radicalised people, and from the German plan for the mobilisation of families. 'Prevent to Protect' lists 60 measures divided into five pillars:

1. Protecting minds/shielding individuals from radicalisation through actions in schools, involvement of internet stakeholders, and the development of counter-narratives

2. Completing a detection/prevention provision in different areas (e.g. local governments, sport centres, universities, etc.). This includes involving local councils, local associations and social welfare centres in this strategy.

3. Understanding and anticipating the evolution of radicalisation through support the funding of research in this field.

4. Professionalising local field agents involved in health, social work and women's rights and evaluating practices.

5. Adapting disengagement (rehabilitation of minors back from conflict zones, follow-up and monitoring of radicalised inmates).

In France, PVE is organised at the central (government) and local (prefectures) levels and covers primary prevention, secondary prevention and tertiary prevention. The SG-CIPDR monitors the implementation of the plan and presents its conclusions every two months to the government. Yet, the evaluation process of the measures' impact is still to be defined. Up to November 2018, the CIPDR, through the prefectures, took charge of more than 3000 young people.

To sum up, there were important variations in terms of PVE policies in France. Until the adoption of the "Prevent to Protect Strategy" in 2018, France's policies were aimed at detecting radicalised individuals rather than preventing radicalisation. According to Special Rapporteur on counter-terrorism and human rights, Fionnuala Ni Aolain, France's counter-terrorism measures undermined fundamental rights and freedoms. These measures affected especially the Muslim community, which was subject to exceptional measures under the state of emergency and "constructed as a per se 'suspect community' through the sustained and broad application of a counter-terrorism law"²⁰ Additional human rights violations were analysed by Albert Caramés and Júlia Fernández (2017: 30)²¹.

Unlike the previous plans and policies focusing on de-radicalisation, the actual PVE strategy focuses on disengagement (i.e. on behavioural radicalisation). However, some challenges remain. Firstly, PVE remains highly centralised despite some efforts since 2016 to de-centralise these policies. Secondly, there is no common definition of radicalisation and violent extremism. As a result, depending on the location, training of civil servants may insist on one aspect or another of radicalisation (e.g., religion, lack of integration, etc.). Another

consequence of the lack of definition lies in the risk to single out the fight against Islamist extremism amidst other kinds of extremism. Finally, as underlined by Esther Benbassa and Catherine Troendlé (2016: 32), the lack of monitoring and evaluation of projects and activities funded in the framework of France's PVE policies contributed to create a "business of radicalisation".

4.2.2. Morocco

Confronting violent extremism through religious education

Morocco can exemplify an anti-model for radicalisation strategies for different reasons. Firstly, its counterterrorism and PVE efforts actually rely heavily on the criminal code. The chosen definitions -especially that of terrorism- pose a threat to human rights. Secondly, the Kingdom's PVE efforts are centralised and implemented from the top-down, which makes little or no room for non-governmental actors (e.g., civil society organisations). Finally, PVE efforts are almost exclusively focused on the religious dimension of radicalisation and often overlook other factors and drivers conducive to violent extremism.

Morocco's response in the field of counterterrorism

Until 2015, Morocco mainly took counterterrorist measures to respond to the threat of violent extremism. The first counterterrorism legislation was triggered by the 2003 Casablanca bombings: the provisions of the law Act 03.03 define terrorism as the actions that are "intentionally perpetuated by an individual or a collective enterprise for the purpose of causing serious public disorder through intimidation, terror or violence." Yet, such a definition is concerning to the extent that it does not contemplate any ideological motivation behind an act of violence. This may pose a threat to fundamental rights and civil liberties such as the right to protest. In October 2014, Morocco implements a security pro-

20. United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner (2018). 'France: UN expert says new terrorism laws may undermine fundamental rights and freedoms'. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/SP/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=23130&LangID=E>.

21. Caramés, A. (ed.), Fernández, J. (2017). "Without rights there is no security. Human rights violations in the Euro-Mediterranean region as a consequence of anti-terrorist legislations". NOVACT. Available at: http://opev.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/No-Security-Without-Rights.WEB_-1.pdf

gramme called Hadar (“vigilance”), which consists in deploying patrols made of the army, the Gendarmerie and the police across the country. In 2015, as the terrorist threat posed by the Islamic State organisation also affects Morocco (e.g., terrorist cells, returning foreign fighters, etc.), the Kingdom creates the Central Bureau of Judicial Investigation, in charge of prosecuting crimes and offenses under the aforementioned law. In parallel, amendments to the Criminal Code are made: they foresee sanction for any attempt to join a terrorist group, recruit or train other individuals. Between 2015 and 2017, the Central Bureau of Judicial Investigation dismantled over 50 terrorist cells. Although this data indicates that Morocco is equipped to face the terrorist threat, it also means that violent extremism continuously threatens the Kingdom. In this context, Morocco also developed a PVE strategy focused on the use of religious tools.

Morocco’s PVE strategy: an approach focused on religious

To articulate the kingdom’s efforts in the field of PVE, the Moroccan authorities relied on the Arrabita al-Mohammadia of Ulemas, a council of religious scholars established in 2006 that aims at promoting a tolerant Islam. In response to the terrorist threat posed by Al Qaeda and IS in the past decade, this institution was tasked to fight religious extremism by deconstructing fundamentalist interpretations of the holy texts (especially from the jihadist Salafi current). Within the Arrabita al-Mohammadia of Ulemas, two units are exclusively focused on these CVE and PVE efforts: on the one hand, the Centre of Studies and Research on Values produces material that aim at deconstructing fundamentalist religious discourse. To do so, the Centre issued a series of books which show that violent extremist organisations such as AQ or IS actually falsify or select incomplete quotes from the Qur’an and other holy sources (e.g., hadith) in order to recruit people and justify the use of violence. The Centre of Studies and Research on Values is also tasked with the promotion of a peaceful and tolerant interpretation of Islam. For this activity, they rely on the religious legitimacy of the King who is the Commander of the faithful.

On the other hand, the Rabita’s PVE efforts rely on the Control Unit of Risky Behaviours and Peer Education: this department engages with young people considered at-risk of radicalisation and promotes a ‘tolerant’ Islam in order to deter them from joining a violent extremist

group. Among other outputs, this unit launched an online platform²² thought as a space where youngsters can discuss sensitive issues such as sex, drugs, extremism or terrorism with mediators who are appointed and trained by the Rabita to deal with these topics. Besides, this unit organises regular training sessions to local organisations across the country so that they develop a religious counter-discourse. Finally, this Unit intervenes in prisons where they either train prison officials to develop a counter-discourse or engage in theological debates with selected convicts in order to de-radicalise them. Yet, the programme for prisoners has two major problems: on the one hand, it does not tackle the non-religious factors conducive to violent extremism. On the other hand, it does not include any programme that aim at reinserting prisoners once they are released.

Another significant pillar of Morocco’s PVE efforts specifically targets women. In 2004, Morocco launched its training program for women to become religious preachers (Murchidates). Since 2015, Morocco strengthened this programme and opened it to female preachers coming from other African countries (e.g., Ivory Coast, Guinea-Conakry, etc.). The aim of this training is to provide women preachers with the necessary religious knowledge in many fields such as sociology, family code, history or jurisprudence. In Morocco, the Murchidates’ mission is to promote a peaceful and tolerant interpretation of Islam in communities, mosques and prisons.

Finally, as part of its primary prevention efforts, the Kingdom launched a national scale programme to reduce illiteracy in mosques. This programme, overseen by the ministry of Habous and Islamic Affairs, was launched in 2016 and should reach out to 300,000 beneficiaries.

To sum up, Morocco’s PVE efforts are mainly – if not exclusively – focused on the religious aspect of radicalisation. The authorities assume that people undergo a process of radicalisation because of a misinterpretation of the religious texts. Yet, little is done regarding non-ideological drivers of radicalisation such as the socio-economic conditions, the feeling of political alienation, etc. In this respect, the overemphasis put on the religious dimension of radicalisation prevents the government from engaging with other stakeholders on PVE from fields of vital importance (e.g., youth, inclusion,

22. Chababe (2019). Available at: www.chababe.ma

etc.). Finally, this approach based on the institutionalisation and centralisation of the religious discourse also prevents the authorities from working in a more decentralised manner.

4.3 Policy recommendations

Suppressing violent extremism is an extraordinarily difficult task. Good intelligence and police work make a big difference, but preventive work is also vital. Both the tools of 'hard' and 'soft' power are needed to minimise the occurrence of violent attacks. And yet, all it takes is one significant lapse for the terrorists to get through. Such lapses are bound to occur, from time to time. Accepting that terrorist occurrences will occur in the future means acknowledging that the struggle cannot be pursued by security means alone. The world is going to have to contend with mass terrorist atrocities, possibly for decades to come.

Summary of Section 4

The models described above offer an overview of the main features of PVE programmes in different contexts. The first sub-section focused on the strengths of the German and Tunisian 'models' while the second sub-section highlighted the theoretical and practical implications of top-down centralised PVE policies. In this regard, both governmental and non-governmental actors should work towards better coordinated and multi-actor approaches in the field of PVE.

1. Definitional clarity is determinant for the success of PVE policies. As illustrated in the case of France and Morocco, the use of one-dimensional approach to radicalisation poses serious threats to human rights and civil liberties. In the case of France, several PVE programmes were adopted without any clear definition of 'violent extremism' and 'radicalisation' and CVE (focused on detection) was often labelled PVE in its official documents. Likewise, Morocco adopted a controverted working definition of 'terrorism' that allows the authorities to focus exclusively on the religious dimension of radicalisation.

2. Relations between state and non-state actors.

As seen in the case of Germany and Tunisia, relations of trust and coordination between governmental and non-governmental actors are crucial for the success of PVE programmes and strategies. In both cases, there are coordination structures at governmental level which ensure a 'partnership for democracy'. Governments dominate the field of PVE and substantially contribute to fund PVE programmes and activities, while civil society organisations play a key role in the implementation of these programmes at local level. Therefore, in line with the previously recommended multi-actor collaborative approach, coordination mechanisms should be included in the design of PVE policies to ensure complementarity between government actors and CSOs.

3. Decentralisation and diversification of implementing agents is necessary (multi-level approach).

As explained earlier, most PVE strategies should simultaneously entail a multi-level approach: the macro-level for primary prevention; the meso-level for secondary prevention (vulnerable individuals or communities) and the micro-level for tertiary prevention. Germany proves to be a successful model as its federal structure allows decentralised efforts in the field of PVE. In France, we observe the opposite: PVE remains too centralised, which prevents the authorities from implementing a multi-level PVE strategy.

04

Conclusion

The ultimate goal of this report is to provide a useful point of reference to members of the Observatory to Prevent all Forms of Violent Extremism (OPEV) when it comes to developing strategies and programmes of PVE. The report also aims to sensitize practitioners and elected officials to some of the dangers of designing public policies on violent extremism without taking into account existing knowledge in the area. In short, this report contributes to evidence-based policy in the area of PVE across the Euro-Mediterranean region.

The **main findings of the report with regards to best practices can be found below:**

1. Need for terminological precision and defining goals. The first background section clearly identified the lack of consensus on key terms (radicalisation, de-radicalisation, violent extremism, disengagement, etc.) and pointed out that practitioners in the area of PVE may be missing the obvious, which is to be rigorous, precise and methodologically sound. In addition, to defining clearly the terminology of PVE programmes, individuals and organisations in charge of implementation need to define the goals of the programme more accurately. Clearly defined goals make possible the evaluation of the programme in accordance to a set of standard evaluation criteria (e.g., effectiveness, efficiency, consistency, utility and relevance). It also makes it possible to fine-tune and revise existing practices in order to improve its effectiveness. In the absence of well-defined goals, NGOs cannot prove they are a posi-

ve force changing social reality for good, which affects their own funding and chances of survival in a competitive environment of third sector organizations. Needless to say, the room to manoeuvre of NGOs depends on the political environment in which they inhabit (e.g, regime type).

2. Need for multi-level and multi-actor collaborative approaches. The second section on areas of intervention highlighted the main challenges of PVE programmes in five areas of intervention: (1) research; (2) advocacy; (3) training; (4) intercommunity dialogue; and (5) alternative narratives. In all these areas, PVE should be systematically and simultaneously operationalised according to three levels of action: macro (or systemic), meso (or organisational) and micro (or individual). In addition to these three levels of analysis and implementation, multi-actor strategies are needed to engage with all the targets of PVE programmes: society (primary prevention), specific communities (secondary prevention) and vulnerable individuals undergoing a process of radicalisation (tertiary prevention). For each level of action, the implementing actors should agree on common objectives as well as the methods to achieve them. In this context, as pointed out in the case of training, intercommunity dialogue and alternative narratives, the participation of CSOs, grassroots organisations and community leaders could be encouraged given their knowledge of local context, their capital of trust and their credibility.

3. Need for decentralised PVE policies. The descriptive account of ‘models’ and ‘anti-models’ explored in the third section provide a series of lessons for multi-actor PVE policies. On a theoretical level, the coherence of PVE relies on a shared understanding of the key concepts and objectives set in this field. In practice, the success of PVE depends to a large extent on good relationships between all implementing actors and, more specifically, between governmental and non-governmental actors (e.g., CSOs). This requires effective coordination mechanisms between all the implementing actors. Finally, decentralised policies are needed to carry out prevention strategies at all levels.

4. Best Practices and policy recommendations. It is important to provide PVE programmes with the necessary tools and processes to evaluate rigorously their impact and, if any, its unintended consequences. The first goal of providing a cycle of policy evaluation is to increase the effectiveness of PVE. But there is also a second and less evident goal, which is to provide sound policies that help improve the quality of public debate on violent extremism. Needless to say, this fourth point is very much related to the initial point on conceptual precision and the explicit definition of goals of individual PVE programmes. Ultimately, only when scholars and practitioners are aware of the impact of their policies, will society be able to democratically support the policies that best represent their interests.

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