Good practice in – “policy making”

about preventing/ distancing of violent extremism – and group hatred

Brussels, European Parliament

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Some basics of good policy making
in the area of prevention of violent extremism
and group hatred

according to RAN practitioner experiences
(RAN/ Radicalisation Awareness Network)

And the IMPACT Europe project on CVE evaluation.
(1)

As **policy maker** or prevent **program maker**:

Never talk about **only one** sort of violent extremism!

(in conferences, national prevention programs, meetings etc.)
Why?

- Focusing one extremism has polarizing effects!
- It polarizes both the population and political parties.
- It also tends to stigmatize a certain group of population.
- It raises fear/resentment/hatred.

Extremism polarises/ radicalises – Prevention shouldn’t radicalise!

How to do this?
In our programs/ conferences/ meetings …
- let’s always include at least the main two sorts of violent extremism (e.g. neo-Nazi, religious)!
- Ideally, also include some others (also cults/ sectarianism, gangs/ organized crime)

When including two and more sorts of violent extremism …
- find a common denominator between them – and …
- find one key term which covers all phenomena.
Finding one key term for “the topic” means: the term is
- agreeable to all political fractions
- is helpful for field practitioners on the ground

What could that name be?
Appropriate terms for the topic could be:

Group hatred,
Hostile prejudice,
Anti-social attitudes,
(Self-)harmful styles of life,
...
Including all sorts of violent extremism – and having one key term – makes sense not only politically; but also academically and practically:

- All different sorts of violent extremism are strikingly similar in their basic phenomena anyhow.

- The principles of good practice methods in prevent/derad are the same anyway with all sorts of extremism.
(2)

As **policy maker** or **prevent program maker:**
De-politicize!

- Take the issue of extremism and prevention/exit out of the **party political rhetoric**.
- Stop the political blame game around extremism.
- Form bipartisan and all-partisan bodies for program development.
One political scandal currently in Europe is: Governmental and EU actors everywhere are talking about Islamism only, even those who are not really at risk of Islamism – as Eastern EU countries.

Massive right-wing terrorism is neglected or under-emphasized (also in the RAN).

Right-wing populist Eastern EU governments use the EU Islamism rhetoric to campaign against refugees.
(3)

As policy maker or prevent program maker:

When talking about violent extremism … … never stress ideology / religion.
Why is this?

- Focusing ideology/religions also polarizes/stigmatizes!
- The majority of religious/ideological groups is not violent extremist!

Extremism polarises/radicalises – Prevention shouldn’t radicalise!

- Ideology/religion is much less important in extremism than assumed. Stressing the Ideology/religion means missing the point – and foregoing windows of exchange with extremists.
What should we the focus on? – if not ideology/ religion?

Many additional, more important issues:
- Social / political grievances - geopolitical issues
- Personal grievances
- Personal values und future plans
- Community and peer group issues
- Biographical and family issues
- Traumas/ violent acts – other personal/ psychological challenges
- Ideology/ religion, too, of course – but secondary and in a personalized perspective
So, you should not single out one extremism! – and you should not focus ideology/religion!

How are we doing with our conference title!?  
“Antidotes to Islamism” ???

Oops, we messed it up – big time! One two accounts!

This always happens!
We messed it up – and this always happens!
Why does this always happen?

We all want to appear smart/ competent – “brief well” in meetings, i.e. say most people like to hear, and we want to please our superiors and the politicians. There is a “Want-to-brief-wellism” across the board.

But: “What briefs well in presentations to policy-makers likely won’t work on the ground”.

Hence, we need to avoid the “Want-to-brief-wellism” in policy making!!
Prevention cannot really be done by the government (primarily)!

Prevention should never be done top down!

Rather, prevention needs to come bottom-up – from civil society!
But: Of course you facilitate!
Prevention needs a non-governmental/ NGO base!
It needs to be owned by civil society – and local communities!
Methods need to be build together on the social ground.
Government needs to provide the frame, quality control and finance.
European Fair Skills
Exchanging good practice in strengthening community-embedded prevention of hostile prejudice/group hatred, hate crime and violent (right-wing) extremism
Bottom-up prevent designs also means: “First-line practitioners” need to lead!

Practitioners are the ones who know most about it!

The Radicalisation Awareness Network/ RAN: “First-line practitioners” from prevent and derad work.

Measures of “practitioner mainstreaming“ are recommended.
“It’s about emotions, stupid”

Emotions, impulses,
Pre-existing patterns of behaviour (aggressive, criminal),
Psychological issues.
What is preventing violent extremism about?

Its not about terrorists! – or extremists!
Or about chasing/ identifying would-be terrorists/ extremists!

But who then is it about?
Its about the **young people** (of a society)!

Its about **safeguarding** (vulnerable) young people – and about **safeguarding society itself** (free/democratic societies)

>> Hence, focus on **young people/ schools** and on **families**!
And have a wide, comprehensive spectrum of prevention!

What does comprehensive prevention mean?
Pursue a wide, comprehensive spectrum of prevention!

Do “social risk prevention” in a broad context!
and do PVE within this context,

including prevention of drug addiction, social addiction, .... .... mental health issues ..... domestic violence .... gender violence
De-securitize prevention!

Prevention does not “counter”, “tackle”, “combat” anything!

What then does prevention do?
Prevention is **not against** …. **it is for**!

It does not combat …. **it builds / creates** something!

Prevention builds **social skills** – it creates **resilience** in society!
Civil society based prevention needs to be financed/supported by government.

An all-government approach across all different sectors is needed, …

… which also is a multi-agency approach!
Principles of good practice in prevent/ exit mentoring

“RAN Derad Declaration of Good Practice – Principles of Sustainable Interventions in Disengagement and Rehabilitation (Deradicalisation) … ”

Published in: http://cultures-interactive.de/tl_files/publikationen/engl/Draft_RAN-Derad_Declaration-of-Good-Practice_Harald.pdf
Good practice …

- ... depends on personal *trust building*
- ... needs *safe space / confidentiality*,
- ... needs *external, non-staff practitioners*
- ... is *open-process no session plans*,
- ... is *participatory, peer-facilitated*,
- ... is *voluntary* (incremental buy-in)
... good practice ...

• ... follows a narrative mode, lesser so arguments, debate, counter-speech,

• ... focuses on social skills and emotional intelligence (conflict, anger, shame, and anxiety)

• ... prefers group settings as much as possible (accompanyed by one-on-one settings if needed),

• ... needs focus on gender identity conflicts, inter alia
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Further literature:
http://www.cultures-interactive.de/de/fachartikel.html