

**Should European NGOs withdraw from the EU
Radicalisation Awareness Network's 'Collection of Practices'
- and what does the planned German „Federal Agency
of Quality Control“ mean anyway?**

Extended Summary

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The European Commission's Directorate General Migration and Home Affairs (DG Home) is currently setting out to execute an unwarranted selection measure among European NGOs/ approaches, using the Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN) as an executive EU high-level evaluator. Each approach achieving a "positive outcome" in this selection will be declared a "best practice" by DG Home/ RAN, in case of negative outcome one would be "labelled" an "inspiring method" only in the RAN Collection of Practices. However, the RAN/ DG Home does not seem to have a sufficient legal and ethical mandate for such assessment measure, and it is unclear to what extent the procedures of informed consent could be sufficiently implemented under the existing circumstances. Furthermore, there is little to no transparency about procedure and criteria of the assessment ("best practice" vs. "inspiring method") - and there does not seem to be any awareness of the evident risks that such a governmental measure may have for a democratic civil society at large. The NGOs that are now invited/ subjugated to this procedure of assessment had, for the last ten years, put their full trust in the RAN and volunteered their work for its build-up. In the meantime, the RAN itself has avoided evaluation since its inauguration in 2011. In Germany, the recent call of the RAN selection measure coincides with the announcement of the recommendation that a „Federal Agency of Quality Control“ should be established under the Ministry of Interior (BMI). This has raised great concern among NGO practitioners, in Germany, since there has been an unfortunate administrative tradition (in the BMI and other ministries), to execute random and secret security checks on NGOs, among other similar measures.

The DG Home/ RAN measure is, however, just one symptom of a larger policy development, endangering trust and resilience within democratic societies throughout Europe, in particular the interaction between NGO and governmental actors. Another symptom being e.g., the RAN Rehabilitation Manual which demands "information-sharing" about exit work clients with

security agencies as prerequisite – and also abandons the established good practice standard of confidentiality and the do-no-harm principle in client work. The most recent RAN paper on Quality Management and Evaluation of P/CVE reinforces this. Yet another symptom being the DG Home “Internal Security Fund/ Police” inviting proposals to develop “mechanisms to assess the trustworthiness of NGOs”, in other words providing funds for distrusting civil society/ NGOs – which will presumably be welcomed by some Eastern European governments in particular. Hence, although all actors seem to have good intentions, inklings of some sort of prevention-police-state seem looming on the horizon and risks of significant ‘EU added damage’ emerge.

Therefore, Cultures Interactive intends to withdraw its RAN “practices” from the RAN Collection.

Thankfully, a silver lining of hope and innovative potential is visible when instead we turn **towards a truly civil society-based architecture of inter-agency prevention**. Here, the professional civil society practitioners and NGOs in the field are provided the means **to independently self-organize their work and quality management**, together with equally independent academic expertise, **aiming at the systematic build-up of an association or professional chamber** with solid methodology and ethics standards. This has basically already been under way in the German prevent program “Live Democracy!” – and should not be thwarted for political reasons now. If, at the same time, the basic design flaw within the logic of DG Home’s setup of the RAN is corrected – and the main administrative liaison of the RAN is shifted to ministries/ directorates of social affairs, health, family, education, inter alia – sustainable solutions will be in reach. Also, the plans for a „Federal Agency of Quality Control“ in Germany should be cancelled. Moreover, if the notoriously used “P/CVE” term, i.e., Preventing/ Countering Violent Extremism, will eventually be duly separated into different areas of activities – and thus key divisions of power and functions are kept which is so crucially important for resilient democracies – this then could well enable Europe to become a prime example of “best practice in policy making” on a global scale.