

Why are we still messing it up?

A new Marshall Plan for preventing violent extremism – youth work, gender, mental health

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How we mess up things in preventing violent extremism

The security/ legislation community and the prevent community, these two very different worlds, have begun to talk to each other, which is good; and which is why I, as prevent/ rehabilitation practitioner from the context of the Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN), have been given the opportunity to write here, in a publication of the George Marshall Center which seems to rather belong to the security than to the prevent community. Arguably this was not as likely to happen 10 years ago. However, in order to achieve effective and sustainable solutions for a societal challenge as complex as VE, the practitioners from the security and prevent community would have to exchange and cooperate even more intensely. In fact, legislation, law enforcement, and intelligence on the one hand and prevent practitioners from social work, schools, mental health etc. on the other may want to build tandems or small practice units which proceed in joint pilot and working group projects. These would aim at producing viable security strategies – which could, after a process of consolidation, be turned into legislation.

Clearly, in order for this to happen some significant readjustments of our security paradigm are needed, which in practice may amount to quite some challenge. In other words a new Marshall Plan for European security may be at stake – which is something that the George Marshall Center would have a historic legacy of promoting, as we will see further down.

In any event, if we don't succeed in bringing the security and prevent communities together and eventually change how we think and do security we run a high risk of continuing to spend billions – and still mess things up.

How do I come to this conclusion?

We prevent practitioners from social work, mental health and similar fields have often been asked to formulate the “criteria and methods of good practice” for working with (young) people who are at risk or already recruited into forms of violent extremism – a kind of work which practitioners prefer to call disengagement, rehabilitation, re-socialization or simply relational work (instead of

deradicalisation). (Lately this question is focused primarily on so-called foreign fighters¹ while losing sight of or distracting from other forms of violent extremism/ terrorism²).

Now, we prevention and disengagement practitioners have done so – i.e. we developed and formulated the “criteria and principles of good practice” in disengagement/ rehabilitation. We could do so in quite some detail and in a solidly evidence based way, especially through the enabling framework of the RAN³ and we articulated and presented these criteria, principles and methods in various instances⁴ – as they will also be resumed here beneath. In so doing we have also attempted to be very clear about the context conditions which are required if the intricate work of disengagement/ rehabilitation should be successful and sustainable.

To give but one example – which is quite timely these days: We practitioners have clearly stated that *one should not criminalize travel to Syria* (or to any comparable places, as Ukraine etc.) while joining a terrorist organization may well and should be criminalized. However, travel as such should not be criminalized because, being a free and human rights based society, we must respect people’s freedom to go wherever they want to; and if we don’t respect people’s freedoms then good practice disengagement and prevention cannot be done. Furthermore we stated that *one should not criminalize support for certain ideologies* – while you can and should sanction incitement of group hatred and violence against others (!) – because in a free society everybody is entitled to engage in any ideology s/he wants to.⁵ Once again, if we don’t respect this and others freedoms and civil liberties then good practice disengagement and prevention cannot be done really.

Yet, if we cannot employ good practice disengagement and further develop a sustainable prevention infrastructure, then European societies will soon be in pretty bad shape – because we will then probably just go on with what was once confidently called Global War on Terror and has, as we all

1 Here most policy makers think of ISIS foreign fighters only while there are and have always been rebel without cause young men, not so many women though, mostly from the extremist rightwing spectrum who have traveled to all sorts of war zones, as for instance Ukraine – and come back to home countries; cf. Miroslav Mares, soon to be published in the Avila report on:
http://www.bka.de/nn_216968/EENeT/EN/JournalEWPS/JournalEWPS__node.html?__nnn=true

2 US American media in the wake of the Charleston attack have become more aware of the known fact that the death toll of home grown neo-Nazi/ White supremacist terrorism is much higher than of any other form of terrorism, which is the case also in Germany: http://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/25/us/tally-of-attacks-in-us-challenges-perceptions-of-top-terror-threat.html?emc=edit_th_20150625&nl=todaysheadlines&nid=68315355&_r=0

3 http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/ran-best-practices/index_en.htm

4 For the first publication about this research see Harald Weilnböck: *The Narrative Principle: Good Practice in Anti-Hate Crime Interventions, within the Radicalisation Awareness Network*. In: Right-Wing Extremism in Europe Country analyses, counter-strategies and labor-market oriented exit-strategies. Ed. by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation 2013, p. 379-408, <http://www.cultures-interactive.de/publikationen-en.html>. Significantly more advanced in the first edition of the RAN Derad Declaration of Good Practice will be published in the same place and on the RAN website in the weeks to come, 2015.

5 Cf. On these issues the United Nations Human Rights Council states in a communication on the “effects of terrorism on the enjoyment by all persons of human rights”: “Freedom of opinion and freedom of expression constitute the foundation for every free and democratic society. Any restrictions on freedom of expression must be clearly and narrowly defined and they must meet the three-part test of legality, proportionality and necessity. Such offences as “encouragement of terrorism” and “extremist activity” as well as offences of “praising”, “glorifying”, or “justifying” terrorism or violent extremism, should be clearly defined to ensure that they do not lead to unnecessary or disproportionate interference with freedom of expression.”
<http://www.ohchr.org/RU/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=16173&LangID=E>

know, meanwhile turned into a quite desperate and futile War on Global Terror which is very costly and ineffective.

Hence, we did formulate this and other base requirements of good practice. Only, security and legislation did not listen to us, as can be seen with recent policy writing and legislation on travel to Syria. That is, in most countries we are not listen to – with telling examples like Denmark and Finland where prevent and rehabilitation strategies are outstandingly successful.⁶ So, security legislation do not pay attention. Most people from this area don't even understand what we prevent people mean. It's still an 'us versus them', security versus prevention – still far from understanding and cooperation, much more a polarization (which is a characteristic of violent extremism itself rather than of sustainable development). Therefore, we are still messing things up – instead of working together and producing viable solutions.

Let's therefore try to start this over again and do things right! To go back a few steps, maybe we practitioners need to explain better: Why is it that you must not criminalize travel to Syria (or any comparable places) or support for whichever ideology? And this basic question aims beyond the evident – but still very important – practical fact that criminalizing travel to Syria is highly counterproductive in that it keeps young people who went to Syria from returning home. Also and even more importantly, it keeps family and friends from seeking help from authorities and social services when a young person seems to be at the verge of traveling to a war zone; since they do not easily want to report on their loved ones and make them subject to law enforcement (already seeking help in such matters is very difficult psychologically anyhow).

Already these quite evident and easily anticipated effects make it very clear which negative effects criminalization may have not only on disengagement but on the overall objective to reduce radicalization towards terrorism.

However, even more interesting may be to explain why it is that, if you criminalize travel and/or ideologies this then basically preempts any sustainable prevent or rehabilitation work – even with those clients who happen to be referred to or otherwise enter our intervention settings. This is because the first-line practitioners who facilitate the quite sensitive work of prevention, disengagement and/or rehabilitation need to be able to offer a space which is maximally trustworthy. They need to have a maximum of integrity before their participants/ clients; and this means not only personal integrity but also *systemic integrity* – i.e. the integrity of the system and society which the practitioners (implicitly) stand for. This is so necessary because in the eyes of young people who are susceptible to or have engaged in violent extremism these practitioners always are – and need to be – representatives and potential role models of the society on the whole (not necessarily of the state!).

In speaking of trustworthiness, let us also be reminded that the practitioners in this kind of intervention have set out to work with the most hard to reach and difficult to engage young people – who are highly distrustful and feel very alienated from society (for various social/ political and personal reasons which become quite understandable once one gets to know them better). Moreover, the intervention process in which these distrustful and hard to reach young people would need to commit to – disengagement, rehabilitation, re-integration (generally referred to as deradicalisation) – is a very challenging and emotionally demanding process. All the more trust it requires, as well as personal dedication, sharing experiences, opening up, maximal honesty, exchanging ideas about sensitive issues of violence, victimisation, and gender as well as confrontation of deep-rooted beliefs (as will be resumed in more detail further down). This is not

6 <http://edition.cnn.com/2014/10/28/world/europe/denmark-syria-deradicalization-program/>

easy for anyone, particularly not for the young people we are most concerned about – which is why practitioners of these interventions have to have a maximum of trustworthiness and integrity – also systemic integrity (which they gain from the integrity of the system/ society which they stand for).

Needles to say, when a society through its security legislature criminalizes travel (to Syria/ Ukraine) or support for certain ideologies, this society visibly lacks sufficient respect of civil liberties and human rights. Hence, in the eyes of our young clients this society – and its practitioners – are not fully trustworthy. The young people will look at this and say: “They want to brainwash me!” They are all “brainwashers” in the service of “a corrupt system”.

Now, human rights and respect is only one factor of this issue which undermines the hard to gain trust on the part of our most at-risk young people and thus renders it almost impossible to put good practice disengagement on the ground. In addition there is the issue of sense versus nonsense. If we set out as practitioners to reach and engage the most distrustful and difficult to engage young people, we must make sense. However, as to criminalizing travel, ideology and similar subjects, not only is this not human rights compliant, it also does not make sense as an intervention. Criminalizing in general and criminalizing subjects around ideology and extremism (possibly also religion) in particular has never been effective. In fact, for the most part such criminalization seems to have been quite counterproductive. It has thus further radicalized and supported the forces that are bent towards violent extremism instead of contributing to sustainable solutions. Plus, many people know this – and our young people in particular are the first to know this from their first-hand experience. Hence, sanctioning travel makes no sense – in other words: it is nonsense. Now, the young people who we need to reach out to most urgently are very tough on nonsense. They will look at this, smirk, and say “are they stupid, or what?” And they will then not engage with us.

What may make things even more difficult: As is known by many, more often than not security policies are not primarily made to solve security problems. Rather sometimes such policies’ inherent purpose to a large part is to play up to certain constituencies (or simply conform to institutional traditions of ‘how things were always done’) – be these constituencies political parties and their electorates, or be they the media and how they play up to their targeted customer groups and advertisers. Occasionally these measures simply are about what “briefs well in presentations to policy-makers”⁷. In a word sometimes these security measures are about politics, anxiety and power – rather than about sustainable solutions to intricate security challenges; and, once again, most of our young people are smart enough to sense this. They then say: “that’s selfish and dishonest” – and this they say aside of stating that this is “nonsense” to begin with and means “brainwashing” in the service of a corrupt system”.

Clearly, under such circumstances it is virtually impossible to reach out to and engage those kinds of young people who we most urgently need to get in contact and work with – because they will not have sufficient respect and trust in order to commit to a deradicalisation intervention. Of course, as a practitioner one can still try to do one’s best – and one can try to distance oneself from this or that policy or, if necessary, from the current security paradigm altogether, even if that entails that practitioners are then criminalized and put under surveillance themselves by security legislation, as has happened in Germany quite recently during the time of the so-called “extremism clause”⁸. But that’s improvising, that’s not good practice. We need to be very clear on this. The most excellent

⁷ In its report on the White House Summit on CVE (in Feb. 2015) the authors from the Soufan Group (while cautioning high expectations about the internet and prevent) quite nonchalantly say: “What briefs well in presentations to policy-makers likely won’t work with the actual people” on the ground. Countering Violent Extremism: Challenges and Solutions, <http://soufangroup.com/tsg-intelbrief-countering-violent-extremism-challenges-and-solutions/?catid=3>. The Soufan Group, February 19, 2015, quoted March 2015.

practitioners can only do good practice in a good enough policy contexts which at least strives to observe the do-no-harm principle and/or the above mentioned no-nonsense, no-dishonesty etc. criteria and other good governance criteria.

Moreover, sanctioning travel has not been the only way in which security policies have made it virtually impossible to employ sustainable initiatives and programs of disengagement/rehabilitation, prevention and resilience building. By and large many security philosophies seem to have the natural tendency to preempt prevention – which calls for a more sophisticated mitigation strategy indeed.

What should be done now? – as to a new Marshall plan on global security

How can we overcome these adverse circumstances and eventually become able to employ good practice programs in prevention and rehabilitation – and build resilience on a European and global scale? We already were quite successful in finding out how good practice works on a micro and meso level; and I will resume the principles of good practice further down as they emanated from recent RAN work. What urgently needs to be done now is work on the macro level, i.e. focus on the overall security paradigm.

The Institute of Inclusive Security recently payed tribute to Hillary Clinton’s legacy “in promoting a new security paradigm”⁹; it hereby referred to Clinton’s work on women/ gender, prevention and peace building. The Institute states that “like Secretary of State George Marshall before her, she’s championed a bold new security paradigm” which will “bear fruit in seasons to come”. “Clinton’s unique contribution: the elevation of women as a powerful force for a more stable world” is undoubtedly most significant. For this “elevation of women” rests on the clear insight that any *polarization*, as for instance the gender polarization, while it may be the kernel of radicalization and violent extremism (once *polarization* embarks on a antagonistic or even hostile dynamic) it may also be the onset of impactful interventions – and I will come back to the issue of both gender-specific and gender-focused interventions further down (in reference to Cultures Interactive’s EU funded project ‘Women and Gender in Extremism and Prevention/ WomEx’; ISEC).

Yet, in the very spirit of the George Marshall’s plan for Europe, a new Marshall plan on global security should be built on top of what Clinton has promoted. This new Marshall plan would not only be inspired by Clinton’s usage of the gender polarization, but it would take it to yet another level and look at *polarization* in an even more comprehensive way: Hence, it would first and foremost take efforts to overcome the *polarization between security/ legislation practitioners and prevent practitioners*.

This, however, is a quite challenging task. As mentioned above this means bringing together two worlds and two mentalities which are quite different indeed. It seems fair to say that the professionals from these two quite polarized areas – security/ legislation and prevention/ rehabilitation – don’t know each other and tend to not understand each other; they rather tend to distrust, dislike and hold prejudices about each other. Hence, building intensive dialogue and cooperation between security and prevent people will be difficult and would need to be systematically prepared and facilitated and in sophisticated ways. It almost seems that methods of

8 The German invention of leftwing extremism – the importance of party-political narratives for radicalisation awareness (2012f). In: The Challenge Hate Crime project, Belfast/ Northern Ireland. vgl. www.weilnboeck.net, and: <http://www.niacro.co.uk/challenge-hate-crime/>

9 <http://www.inclusivesecurity.org/hillary-clintons-legacy-a-new-security-paradigm/>.

peace building and mediation could be useful in this – as they are in preventing and mitigating radicalization).

Be this as it may, a targeted high-level working group in a special setting would have to be build that allows for bringing key practitioners and experts from both security/ legislation and prevention/ rehabilitation into a process of intense exchange and cooperation. The overall objective of this working group would be to inaugurate a commonly created and owned security paradigm, then produce an action plan on sustainable national security – and formulate concrete policy recommendations to this effect. This working group would have to be assisted through manifold lines of inter-agency support by special resources and experts of other fields (as education, health care, local authorities etc.) also by external mediation and supervision – as needs occur and challenges arise. The group would thus also be tasked to continuously work on itself and its own setting in order to enhance the procedures. Most importantly, the group and its activities while operating under Chatham House rules, would also be as transparent as possible in terms of substance and regularly liaise with the media.

Methodologically, the group's working process would follow a synthetic bottom-up approach rather than moving analytically top-down. It thus would delve into the field(s) as much as possible, liaise with further first-line practitioners (while consisting mostly of first-line practitioners itself) and examine actual practice on the ground. Empirical practice research would thus play an important role; also the investigation of promising practices from different regions/ countries. Presumably, one of the most important subjects of investigation would be already existing inter-agency approaches which encompass practitioners from social work, schools, and mental health and also liaise with intelligence/ law enforcement (as for instance is the case in Aarhus and the current Finish police prevention pilot; cf. footnote 6); because such methods seem furthest developed in view of producing strategies and action plans which are co-created and commonly owned by both security and prevent professionals.

Most importantly this working group on formulating a new security paradigm would be given high political authority. This means that it would anticipate – and would be given the means to mitigate - the challenges of communicating its results and recommendations to politicians of different parties and to the general public. Thereby the group would take great efforts to work in a maximally inclusive way as a non-partisan practice expert body. Policy makers, politicians and key administrators would need to liaise regularly with the group. The party representatives, while remaining independent in their decision making, would, however, in some way be answerable to the group – with reference to whether, why and how they implement or not what was recommended by the group. Procedures and budgetary means would need to be provided to support these key lines of communication with the political and societal arenas. In any event and whatever form it takes, such working group arguably would be more sustainable than traditional ways of introducing expert knowledge into the political process – it would at a minimum be more productive than any one-time commissioned expert committee which ends by writing a report which may then not even be publically accessible.

Is this, however, not much exaggerated? Is such large effort really necessary in order to facilitate such kind of working group? Does it take that much to overcome the polarization and non-understanding between security/ legislation and prevention/ rehabilitation actors within a legislature? Is it then indeed appropriate to speak of a new Marshall plan for security? Some general observations seem to suggest that this is the case. One need only think of the intricacies of political and media discourses – and the automatism in which subjects like violent extremism have been abused by political discourses in many legislatures. One need only think of how issues like violent extremism mostly trigger political calls for stiffer sentences, criminalization (of travel) and so forth

while all available evidence suggests that stiffer sentences and criminalization are ineffective or counter-productive. Hence, in order to get beyond this kind of deadlock and successfully research and communicate on politically laden challenges as violent extremism, strong efforts and special settings do seem to be required – and the word about a new Marshall plan for security seems hardly exaggerated.

The principles of good practice in disengagement/ rehabilitation and prevention

Having highlighted the macro level issues of security policies' impact on prevention – namely having made evident how, for instance, criminalizing travel or certain ideologies undermines and may even preempt the possibility to put good practice disengagement/ rehabilitation on the ground, we can now resume in brevity what has thus far been found out on the micro level. The principles of good practice in disengagement/ rehabilitation have been established through practice research which was then substantially buttressed and further substantiated through recent activities within the Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN). The RAN allowed for intensive practitioner exchange and interviewing across many EU member states in an extensive way which would normally have been extremely expensive to finance (see footnote 4).

The conclusions which were drawn so far were: Good practice in disengagement/ rehabilitation (deradicalisation) and down-stream prevention ...

- ... depend on successful *trust building* between the participants and the facilitators and on constantly furthering and developing mutual *trust, confidence, and personal commitment*.
- ... need a *safe space of confidentiality* from which no personalized information or report writing may emit.
- ... are *open-process* in its intervention logic, i.e. do not follow a fixed curriculum or session plan. Open-process work is by definition maximally participatory, exploratory and self-directed by the clients; it requires methodological flexibility on the part of the facilitators.
- ... are *voluntary* while clients may be motivated beforehand through interviews (not so much by incentives) and join on the basis of incremental buy-in (dropout must not have any consequences for the client).
- ... proceed without *formally and openly assessing the participants* since this would hamper the process of building trust. While a risks (and needs) assessment may be necessary in many cases, it should not be done by the facilitators of the disengagement/ rehabilitation intervention but by other colleagues within the institution.
- ... follow a *narrative* mode of interaction, i.e. facilitates processes of personal story-telling which relate personally lived-through experiences and subjectively perceived actions. Narrative approaches steer away from (counter-)arguments, rational discussion and ideological debates; in fact *they do not counter*. First-line practitioners have often found that *good practice doesn't counter, it rather builds*.
- The facilitators convey a base habitus which combines being *accepting/ supportive and challenging/ confrontational* in a way which is sensitively adjusted to the person and the situation. This means that the facilitators accept, respect and support their participants as *individual persons* in their particular development. Where necessary or feasible, however, the facilitators address opinions and behaviours which pertain to violent extremism and group

hatred, signalling their personal stance as possible alternative attitudes, while not in any way insisting in them.

- ... are based on *face-to-face work relationships* while internet, videos or media can only play a little role. Contrary to the general belief, so-called counter-messaging campaigns are largely ineffective (also potentially counter-productive) in disengagement and prevention measures, while they may have merits in general awareness raising and societal resilience building.¹⁰
- If the context is a firmly delineated institution (as prisons, schools etc.) the interventions are ideally facilitated by *external, non-governmental practitioners* who have license to act independently within and across statutory institutions – and may thus provide a long-term, trust based mentorship.
- In so doing these *independent practitioners* rely on a good rapport and mutual understanding with the statutory staff of the institution; also they are embedded in an *inter-agency framework* and are supported by statutory staff, quality-assurance measures, and supervision which provides a space for reflection and debriefing.
- In this inter-agency framework the close cooperation of *intelligence and prevention* professionals plays a crucial role.
- ... focus on *social skills* and *emotional intelligence* – in particular in areas of conflict, anger, shame, and anxiety.
- Therefore, some good-practice interventions prefer (social) *group settings* as much as possible (accompanied by one-on-one settings if needed).
- Open-process and narrative (group-)work generally leads up to accounts of the clients' *actual life-world context, biography, family*, and topics around victimization and perpetrator, gender identity, power and violence, experiences of extremist recruitment; it will also look at personal resources and capacities.
- Furthermore, good-practice intervention will also on occasion touch upon political and religious issues – as well as on personal and social grievances, without however fostering too much argumentative discussion or ideological debate. Rather the personal and biographical aspects of these political, social and religious issues and grievances will be in the focus while not denying their societal and historical importance.
- These grievances may also bring up certain media narratives/films, fictional or documentary, which can be used as one element in the intervention.
- Moreover, such open-process group-work may also include representatives from the family, significant others, or suitable community and civil society members that are invited into the intervention from outside at certain instances.

What has gender got to do with this?

Among the subjects which may arise and are then deepened in the intervention process, *gender issues* have proven to be of particular importance. European practitioners' experiences throughout the

10 Cf. Harald Weilnböck: *Do we really need "counter narratives"? And what would that be anyway? – The narrative approach to audio-visual media in deradicalisation and prevention of violent extremism and hate crime* (2014). <http://www.cultures-interactive.de/publikationen-en.html>, also: Harald Weilnböck: *Confronting the counter-narrative ideology. Embedded face-to-face prevention – and youth (media) work*. In: Nico Prucha (ed.): *Religious Extremism in Insurgency & Counterinsurgency in Syria: A New Launching Pad for Global Terrorism?* in print 2015.

Radicalisation Awareness Network's working group on disengagement/ rehabilitation (deradicalisation) as well as from the Women/ Gender in Extremism and Prevention Network (cf. WomEx¹¹) and similar national practitioner networks have taught us that ...

- ... there is hardly any violent extremist, terrorist, or hate crime offender who is not also *sexist and homophobic*, i.e. does manifest highly conflictive gender identity issues (hyper-masculinity, sexism, homophobia etc.).
- ... these conflictive gender issues do not only coincide with violent extremist behaviours and group hatred but are a *key psychological driving forces* behind them.
- Therefore, women and LGTB communities are a *prime victim groups* of virtually all forms of violent extremism (right-wing extremist, AQ/ ISIS related, Christian fundamentalist etc.).
 - Also all violent extremist organisations are based on ideologies and practices of gender inequality – which is why they forcefully counter the emancipation of women (as in the neo-Nazi anti gender mainstreaming campaigns or in AQ, ISIS and similar organisations' enforcement of strictly discriminatory views of women and gender).
 - ... not only *men but also women* play a crucial role in violent extremism as perpetrators, ideologues and supporters.
 - ... both young men and women join extremism(s) mostly because of social and *gender related motives* (aside of ideological or religious issues).
 - ...violent extremist and terrorist organizations launch gender specific appeals in order to specifically recruit women – and also further recruitment of both women and men along specific ideas of being female and being male.
 - Yet, women/ girls tend to be overlooked by prosecution, law enforcement and prevention as potential or actual extremists.
 - It has often proven to be more effective to focus on personal *gender identity concepts* of manliness or femininity than engage ideological or religious debates in the narrower sense
 - Hence, besides *gender specific* approaches, and in combination with them, successful strategies of preventing and responding to violent extremism and group hatred also require *gender focused* approaches – in which men and women are lead to reflect on and work through what it means for their identity and behaviours to be male or female, both before joining any movement and thereafter.

The key conclusion of WomEx is that taking account of the gender perspectives in group hatred and violent extremism is not only about adding a missing piece to the picture. Rather this means to approach the matter in a more holistic way and, in so doing, secure the success and sustainability of the work which is done in the field. It is thus not only gender that needs to be mainstreamed, as always. Rather, it seems advisable that gender-sensitive methods for both men and women are introduced cross the board into prevent and response strategies in order to effectively defuse the strong affective charge which propels the highly gendered subcultures of violent extremism and group hatred.

Its all about our young people – the European Fair Skills approach for preventive youth work

11 Implemented by Cultures Interactive (NGO), Berlin: <http://www.cultures-interactive.de/womex.html>; also see womex.org.

What may arguable be the most important aspect – aside of all fundamental research about how good-practice works and what the role of gender and the other good practice elements may be – is the fact that whatever we employ as national and/or regional prevent strategy needs to be effective with young people. Not only should it be able to engage the youth in general (however we may perceive it from our middle class adult perspective) but it needs to have impact on those groups of young people who are of particular concern. These young people face multiple challenges (social/ familial, psychological, educational/ professional, existential) and as a result of this may tend to be afflicted by group hatred (group-focused enmity) and different sorts of violent extremism. We and our societal institutions often seem to have lost pretty much all lines of communication, rapport, and mutual trust with these young people. Many programs of prevent work, while being good-practice in principle, have not been able to reach out to and have impact on them.

One of the approaches which seems to have had a more successful outreach and yet corresponds with good practice guidelines is the 'Fair Skills' approach. 'Fair Skills' is presently tested in eastern European countries (<http://www.cultures-interactive.de/european-fair-skills-en.html>) and largely operates on a peer-facilitation basis and brings in youth cultures as a medium. Put briefly, the 'Fair Skills' approach combines (i) youth cultural workshops (rap, break dance, comics/ cartoon, digital music production, etc.) moderated by peers from youth cultural scenes with (ii) post-classical methods and exercises in civic education (anti-bias, human rights pedagogy, mediation and conflict transformation, gender awareness, communicational 'soft skills') and adds psychologically based self-awareness group work to allow space for exchange on personal and life-world issues as well as on social and political grievances.

Hence, if CVE manages to bring together the security and prevent world, focus its policy making on empirical evidence about good practice principles of disengagement and prevention work, within that emphasize gender issues, and finally succeed in reaching out to the young people of concern – then we will not any longer mess things up but be able to create an effective strategy for security and resilience on our societies.