

EX POST PAPER

RAN study visit on ‘PVE and CVE in and around asylum centres and within refugee communities’.

Summary

How can we incorporate lessons from the prevention of violent extremism (PVE) into the asylum sector? That was one of the main topics for the RAN study visit to Malmö (Sweden). Swedish practitioners and policymakers presented the Swedish approaches, lessons and challenges, and discussed these with their European colleagues.

One of the main conclusions of the group was that all over Europe there is room for more cooperation between the world of PVE and the asylum sector. There are individuals and groups amongst refugees with a higher risk of being radicalised or exploited by extremist recruiters. Without knowledge there is also a risk for stigmatisation of refugees from certain countries as potential terrorists.

The participants stressed the need to train professionals and volunteers working with refugees and to raise their awareness on radicalisation, which would also empower them to contribute to the safeguarding of vulnerable individuals. This paper aims to give an overview of the outcomes of this study visit.

This paper was written by **Jordy Krasenberg** and **Steven Lenos**, RAN Centre of Excellence. The opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the RAN Centre of Excellence, the European Commission or any other institution, or of participants from the Study Visit.

Introduction: why is prevention work needed in the asylum chain?

Looking at what is known about push and pull factors for radicalisation, it is evident that amongst refugees there are individuals and groups which are vulnerable to radicalisation leading to violent extremism. For example, refugees might experience disappointment or identity issues, or suffer from trauma and feelings of desperation, shame and failure. Moreover, perceived negative experiences with the system and/or government make people more susceptible to being misled by extremist recruitment. At the same time, we see that the arrival of groups of refugees and migrants meets with opposition and increasing societal tensions and hostility. Many people today are worried about terrorism, and lack of knowledge about violent extremism and terrorism can lead to stigmatisation of refugees, which can cause further tensions and problems.

The RAN Centre of Excellence approached the Swedish government to organise a study visit to look into these developments and to make it a combined effort to organise this study visit, which in turn involved the city of Malmö.

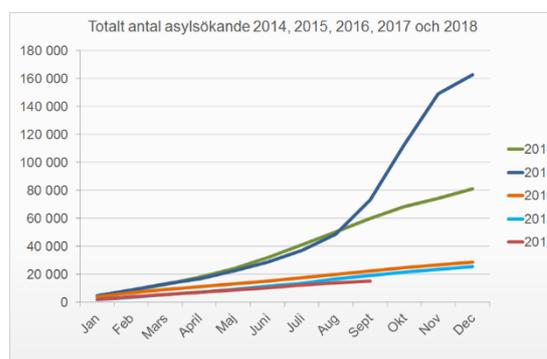
This paper aims to look at refugees and migrants from a safeguarding approach of PVE. Therefore, it should be stressed that we don't want to stigmatise or criminalise people fleeing violence and war in their countries. Unfortunately, the need for it was shown by several violent incidents perpetrated by people who have been in the asylum chain.

In this paper we'll cover several topics:

- 1) Sweden and the city of Malmö;
- 2) The need to train staff and others on radicalisation;
- 3) Groups at risk of being radicalised, the most vulnerable;
- 4) Managing tension and polarisation;
- 5) Examples from Belgium, Denmark and the Netherlands.

Sweden and the city of Malmö

Sweden accepted more refugees per capita than any other country in the EU in 2015 ⁽¹⁾, making it the logical choice to discuss and learn about prevention in the asylum chain. The main reason why a large number of people received asylum is the long-standing war in Syria, but also continued conflicts and difficult living conditions in countries such as Afghanistan, Eritrea, Iraq and Somalia. Malmö was deemed the best city to visit because of its multicultural identity and how it is portrayed by right wing media as a city plagued by (migrant) crime.



⁽¹⁾ According to Eurostat, the agency that collects statistical data from all EU countries, in 2015 Sweden had over 162 000 asylum applications, or 1 667 asylum seekers for every 100 000 citizens. A large majority of the 2015 asylum seekers – 114 470 – were male, 45 790 of them between 18 and 34 years of age.

The Swedish Migration Agency and Ministry of Justice set the scene on PVE and countering violent extremism (CVE) efforts in the asylum chain in the city of Malmö. Although prevention was considered the most important part – besides the security part – prevent policy in the asylum chain is still in its early stages. Actual ‘known’ and ‘unknown’ threats protocols are in place, but much can be learned from recognising and dealing adequately with emerging threats through preventing and safeguarding. Some measures were taken. This includes the start of:

- a national centre for preventing violent extremism,
- the national centre for unaccompanied minors, and
- work with faith communities.

Local police work more strategically within the area and around the reception centre, but no formal protocol or exchange of information system is in place at this moment. Unlike some other European countries, housing is offered by the Migration Agency in an apartment, in a normal housing area or at a centre ⁽²⁾. Then, it’s good to understand that, contrary to some other countries in the EU, refugees are not housed in large-scale facilities. In relation to distrust towards the police by migrant or refugee communities, it was mentioned that civil society is one of the most underused resources.

Different faith communities, role models and informal leaders can also play a vital role in integration in the new society but also with picking up signals of anti-democratic tendencies or violent messages spread out within their respective communities.

Although Malmö doesn’t have many current problems relating to violent extremism, it does have experience with gang violence and gang recruitment tactics. One crime lesson was shared that relates to gang grooming tactics. So, why are gangs successful in recruiting?

1. gangs give them opportunity to participate;
2. gangs give them the tools to succeed;
3. gangs create belonging and confirmation, you belong, a community that cares.

The question is, how can we use the successful ingredients used by gangs? Which of the above ingredients do we offer to young refugees?



Where can I get help and where can I leave my information?

Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz closely co-operates with the police authorities and the judiciary to protect you from the threats described in this leaflet.

However, in a lot of cases the authorities' sole attention will not suffice.

The help of all people living in Germany is of special importance to a democracy on guard ready to defend itself.

So, if you

- see any indications that persons in your environment have links of an extremist or terrorist nature,
- notice any activities carried out in or at a refugee accommodation centre by extremist individuals or groups,
- gain any information on former members of secret services or espionage activities carried out by foreign secret services,

we strongly encourage you to either contact the persons responsible in a refugee accommodation centre (its management), the nearest police station, or the Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz.

Figure 1: German leaflet for refugees

⁽²⁾ See: <https://www.migrationsverket.se/English/Private-individuals/Protection-and-asylum-in-Sweden/While-you-are-waiting-for-a-decision/Accommodation.html>

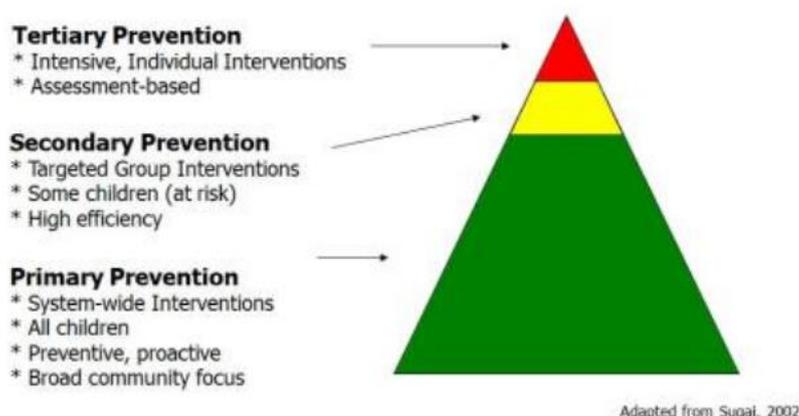
A final message was to “start with trust, not suspicion”. Only with trust will family, friends and important community figures efficiently cooperate to safeguard people from violent extremism, groomers and radical groups.

The city of Malmö presented its general view on prevention that could also be applied to PVE among refugees and asylum seekers.

It circled around three elements:

1) The prevention pyramid

The prevention pyramid is a model well known in youth care, crime prevention and PVE. Most of the budget is spent in tertiary intervention with a small group of clients, but with limited results. Malmö therefore will focus on primary prevention as more preventative results could be achieved if funds are allocated for primary prevention in the largest part of population ⁽³⁾.



2) Communities that Care

In primary prevention, the city of Malmö works with a prevention system, called the ‘Communities that Care’ (CTC) approach ⁽⁴⁾. This long-term approach provides a structure for engaging community stakeholders, a process for establishing a shared community vision, tools for assessing levels of risk and protection in communities, and processes for prioritising risk and protective factors and setting specific, measurable, community goals. CTC uses strategic consultation, training and research-based tools. CTC is designed to help community stakeholders and decision-makers understand and apply information about risk and protective factors, and has programmes that are proven to make a difference in promoting healthy youth development, in order to most effectively address the specific issues facing their community’s youth.

⁽³⁾ Malmö has also started a project against organised crime with increased cooperation between the city of Malmö, the Police, and the Prison and Probation Service. It is a model for cooperation developed in the USA, Group Violence Intervention: <https://nnscommunities.org/our-work/guides/group-violence-intervention/group-violence-intervention-an-implementation-guide>

⁽⁴⁾ See: <https://www.blueprintsprograms.org/factsheet/communities-that-care>

3) A role for civil society

In line with this approach there is a strong appreciation of civil society organisations. The city of Malmö advocates a bigger role and more responsibilities for civil society. This could include giving them specific tasks and possibly making contractual agreements on these tasks.

Staff training and awareness

The need to invest in staff training was raised by the human trafficking expert at the Swedish Migration Agency:

‘Without knowing what it is about, you don’t see it’.

You can only safeguard people if you know what to look for and what not to look for. The Belgian federal agency for the reception of asylum seekers (Fedasil) was one of the first to understand that training staff working with asylum seekers in signalling, safeguarding and preventing is crucial. This is not only about seeing the indicators of worrisome behaviour, but also about understanding the processes of radicalisation and the factors that influence vulnerability.

There is a need for tailor-made training. Furthermore, it needs to be cost and time effective, because for people working with refugees, radicalisation is not the main task. The package needs to be realistic and accessible. The stigma on the topic of prevention also needs to be overcome. It must be made clear that prevention is about safeguarding the individual from extremist and violent ideologies. The main question should be ‘how’ can the professional do his/her work better? We have to look into convincing the professionals of its usefulness. It needs to be part of the job description and made clear ‘what’ it is that we expect from the professional.

Training was recommended to avoid stigmatisation and alienation and to contribute to integration and the prevention of radicalisation. The Belgian experience was that after the training, the quality of reporting improved, despite some fears of the quantity of reporting increasing that existed amongst some of the participants; instead, the quantity became lower.

Some aspects regarding training and protocols to consider are:

- Invest in professional awareness (flyer, leaflets, etc.).
- Create guidelines and methods.
- Provide the professionals with tools.
- Knowledge, skills and attitude to start conversation with people from different backgrounds and experiences. Intercultural skills are key in building trust. Trust is built in different ways across cultures.
- Make a distinction on who you are training and for what task. Different types of interventions may be appropriate for different people and circumstances.
- Reflection on target group, roles and responsibilities before you tailor. Some more interpersonal skills, some more on picking up signals.
- Point of contact, knowing who to contact (who is specialised).
- People need to be educated on intercultural awareness and trauma awareness. Strategies and mechanisms on following up on the training.

Groups at risk of being recruited or radicalised

During the study visit, experts identified four groups that run a higher risk of being vulnerable to recruitment to violent extremism or radicalisation.

<p>Refugees with mental health issues</p> <p><i>Those suffering from mental health issues/illnesses and socio-psychological problems</i></p>	<p>As described by Magnus Ranstorp in the RAN Issue Paper <i>The Root Causes of Violent Extremism</i> ⁽⁵⁾, trauma and other mental health issues among refugees and asylum seekers are problems we need to address. These also are potential root causes of radicalisation. In most cases, refugees already fleeing traumatic situations like war or persecution experience other extremities during their flight to safety (e.g. human trafficking, sexual exploitation, assault, murder and rape).</p> <p>This arena is where militant groups may step in either online or offline and try to radicalise vulnerable populations with narratives of empowerment through violence. More information on trauma can be found in the RAN H&SC paper <i>PTSD, trauma, stress and risk of (re)turning to violence</i> ⁽⁶⁾.</p> <p>Although trauma and PTSD might be the most common, other mental health issues or socio-psychological problems might also need to be recognised in order to prevent radicalisation.</p>
<p>Rejected asylum seekers</p> <p><i>Those excluded from the asylum procedures and who are still in the country, for instance because they don't cooperate with their repatriation</i></p>	<p>The decision that someone is not allowed to stay can have serious negative consequences for the individual. By being placed outside the system of services, asylum seekers without legal status are in a particularly vulnerable position. Despite being refused legal status, some decide to stay and disappear in the dark numbers, while others cannot be sent back for other legal reasons.</p> <p>The overall European experience is that this group will have little access to all the services required to meet their basic needs (shelter, food, access to health services, education and a source of income). In fact, a strict policy is often justified as a way to motivate their return to their country of origin. It was mentioned by several practitioners that this system of exclusion entails many risks from a safeguarding and prevention perspective. To place these (often) already traumatised individuals outside the system might result in them directing their frustration towards that system. Although the causes and consequences may differ, without the right people in place to help them, prevention becomes extremely difficult. This is a group with a high risk of developing problems, from crime, to being</p>

⁽⁵⁾ RAN Issue Paper. *The Root Causes of Violent Extremism* by Magnus Ranstorp: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/ran-papers/docs/issue_paper_root-causes_jan2016_en.pdf

⁽⁶⁾ RAN H&SC ex post paper. *Trauma, PTSD, stress and the risk of (re)turning to violence* by Jordy Krasenberg and Maurice van der Velden: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/ran-papers/docs/ran_h-sc_ptsd_trauma_stress_risk_re-turning_violence_lisbon_10-11_04_2018_en.pdf

	exploited, to serious mental health issues (suicide) or anger directed towards the system of society.
Unaccompanied minors	<p>Unaccompanied minors are ‘children who have been separated from both parents and other relatives and are not being cared for by an adult who, by law or custom, is responsible for doing so’. They face greater risks of sexual exploitation and abuse, military recruitment or, for instance, child labour (including by their foster families). Unaccompanied and separated girls are at particular risk of sexually based gender violence, including domestic violence. In some situations, such children have no access to proper and appropriate identification, registration, age assessment, documentation, family tracing, guardianship systems or legal advice.</p> <p>Especially when unaccompanied, these children are highly vulnerable to becoming victims of violence and abuse during their migratory journeys ⁽⁷⁾. Once the unaccompanied minor has arrived in Europe, he/she still has to deal with other issues like loneliness, boredom, frustration and alienation. There is no question that militant groups often focus on recruiting amongst refugee “youth” either online or offline and that several trigger factors might set them on the path of violence.</p>
Unaccompanied minors turning 18+ (young adults)	<p>Many children are granted only temporary status, which ends when they turn 18. They are more vulnerable when they lose the protective system in place for minors, for instance right to education and youth care. Trigger factors like a rejection in the asylum procedure have already set several young men on the path of violence and crime. Narrowing opportunities appear to increase the risk for refugee youth to be susceptible to radical content. Furthermore, a youth’s personal experience with bias and injustice, or even perceived injustice, can increase his/her susceptibility to violent extremism.</p>

Good practices

Dealing with polarisation at a local level

Bart Brandsma’s polarisation management model is considered a good practice. For a short introduction, watch this 4-minute video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5R3gzMONDUI>. This model was previously

(7) See: [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2016/595853/EPRS_BRI\(2016\)595853_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2016/595853/EPRS_BRI(2016)595853_EN.pdf)

presented at several RAN events and it is thoroughly described in the *RAN Polarisation Management Manual* ⁽⁸⁾.

In short, a polarisation strategy is set up along four benchmarks; game changers ⁽⁹⁾.

- 1) Change the **target group**, **invest in and focus on the middle** instead of the poles.
- 2) Change **the subject**, from opposing and competing identities to a question/dilemma regarding the middle group.
- 3) Change **position**, from the bridge builder's position above to a position in the middle (connected and mediative).
- 4) Change **tone of voice**, do not moralise, do not ask who is guilty, and develop mediative speech and mediative behaviour.

Netherlands: national support for local approach of asylum seeker cases

Those working with refugees in the Netherlands can get support from and consult with the National Support Centre for Extremism. The centre is the hub for a number of Dutch capacities, namely:

- family support centre
- national intervention (team LIV)
- exit

The National Support Centre for Extremism works with a multidisciplinary pool of experts and case management team (radicalisation-religion-ideology, psychology, child and youth care, trauma, family support). There are many different cultural backgrounds and languages present in this expert pool.

The approach and role of the LIV

The LIV is the facility focused on immigrants (minors and of age) and *status holders* ⁽¹⁰⁾, who are suspected to have lived in ISIS territory; show signs of radicalisation; and possibly are in need of mental healthcare. The case manager of the LIV will respond to a request from a local centre and travel to the location to speak to the staff, the individual and, if possible, relatives.

The next step is that the case is matched with two experts of the national pool of experts who will do an assessment. Generally, one is an expert on radical ideologies and the other is an expert on mental health and care issues.

The team then looks to answer the following questions:

- I. What is the interpretation of the client's ideology? Is this radicalisation/extremism?
- II. Are there any traumas or mental health issues?
- III. What does this person need to prevent further radicalisation or violence?
- IV. Which intervention is advised?

⁽⁸⁾ See: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/ran-papers/docs/ran_polarisation_management_manual_amsterdam_06072017_en.pdf

⁽⁹⁾ See: <https://www.polarisatie.nl/eng-home/what-is-polarisation/game-changers/>

⁽¹⁰⁾ If the IND (Immigration and Naturalisation Service) establishes that an asylum seeker needs protection, they will be given an asylum residence permit. The term commonly used in the Netherlands is status holder.

This intervention plan needs to include four domains:

1. shelter/family system
2. security
3. care
4. education and work

This results in a plan that is handed over to the local authority responsible for the actual case management and persons-based tailored approach. This national support centre is an outcome for the local approach that cannot always have the necessary specialist expertise.

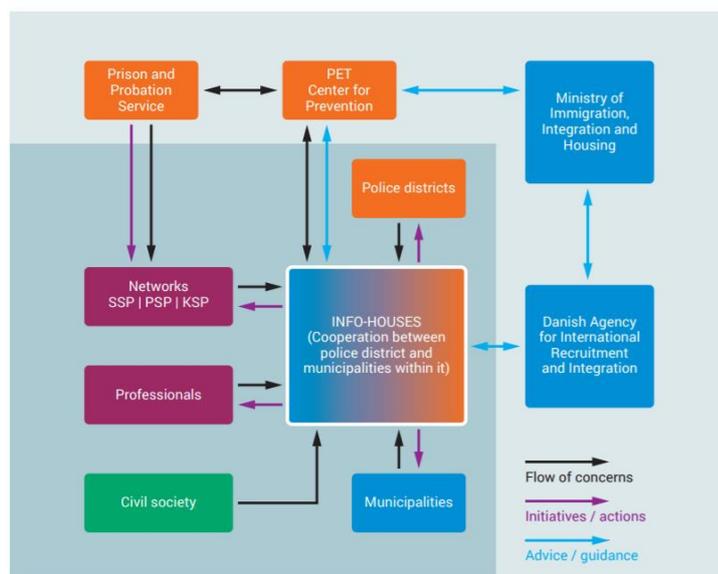
Denmark: the Danish approach

The Danish approach to preventing and countering violent extremism and radicalisation is based on extensive multi-agency collaboration between various social service providers, the educational system, the healthcare system, the police, and the intelligence and security services. Central to the Danish approach is the so-called info-house structure. Info-houses are not physical houses, but are perhaps most accurately defined as a framework for local cooperation between the police and municipal social service administrations and providers and as centres of excellence concerning extremism and radicalisation ⁽¹¹⁾.

Info-houses

The info-houses collect incoming concerns and assess whether they are warranted. If they find there are grounds for concerns, they assess whether these are primarily related to (and best dealt with as) social challenges or whether there are any security aspects. Concerns about extremism in the asylum system are reported directly to the immigration service as well as to the local police. The immigration service reports the concern to the PET (Danish Security and Intelligence Service). The local police can engage their info-house coordinator to look at the concern.

Having assessed the concerns, the info-houses decide if action is to be taken and if so by whom. If the concerns are rated as a threat to security, the case is passed to the Danish Security and Intelligence Service's Centre for Prevention. Cases may also be referred back to the info-houses from the Centre after its assessment. If there is no threat to security, the case is referred to the initiatives offered by the police or the municipality. These may be initiatives specifically designed for the prevention of extremism and



Procedures (T. Gemmerli & A. Hemmingsen)²⁹

⁽¹¹⁾ See: <https://www.ft.dk/samling/20151/almdel/reu/bilag/248/1617692.pdf> (pg. 26)

radicalisation, or more general ones that are available to all citizens, such as career counselling, assistance with housing or therapy.

Staff training

- The Danish Centre for Prevention of Extremism has trained personnel at all the asylum centres for unaccompanied minors.
- The PET has trained personnel at all the asylum centres in Denmark. They have received knowledge about what sort of risk behaviours and signs of concern they should notice.
- They have received introduction to the tools in the life skills training and motivational interviewing methods that mentors of the Danish Centre for Prevention of Extremism are trained in.

Key messages

- It is important to increase actions for faster and better integration in the new society through work and education.
- A risk-based perspective on prevention of radicalisation will result in four potentially more vulnerable groups amongst asylum seekers:
 - refugees with mental health issues
 - rejected asylum seekers
 - unaccompanied minors
 - unaccompanied minors turning 18+ (young adults)
- There is room for implementation of the longstanding expertise and approaches of PVE in the world of those working with asylum seekers.
- Key in implementing PVE in the asylum chain is training, focusing on indicators, vulnerabilities and safeguarding.
- Concerned mothers, informal leaders and other refugees can be partners in PVE.
- Civil society and its organisations can be of great added value in PVE.