

This is an update on the activities of the Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN). You receive this e-mail, along with more than 4 000 other people, because you have participated in a RAN activity, or because you have registered your interest in the network. If you do not want to receive such e-mails, please let us know. Feel free to distribute this RAN Update to colleagues and invite them to [subscribe](#).

Table of Contents

- RAN activities since the latest RAN Update
- Coming up
- New publications
- RAN Calendar
- Contact details

RAN activities since the last RAN Update

RAN C&N – A psychological/neuroscientific perspective on how extremist propaganda works, and how to counter it

The objective of this meeting was to find out what psychology and neuroscience can tell us about how people (and extremists) make up their minds, in particular in relation to sacred values, morals and identity. We discussed what ‘motivated reasoning’, ‘active information avoidance’, ‘confirmation bias’ and the ‘backfire effect’ are, and how and when to incorporate these insights in counter and alternative narrative campaigns in the PCVE field. The meeting, on 7-8 February in Vienna, included break-out sessions in which participants (psychoanalysts, cognitive behavioural psychologists, cultural anthropologists, youth and exit workers and communication and marketing specialists) exchanged experiences, ideas, tips and tricks on how to develop and promote effective alternative and counter narratives. The meeting was attended by 24 participants, covering 16 European countries. The ex post paper will present the outcomes of the meeting and will be intended to support practitioners in communicating more effectively in the PCVE context. It will also combine the meeting results with the [GAMMMA+ model](#).

RAN Steering Committee

Recent policy developments were on the agenda at the 20 February Steering Committee, with a special focus on the High-Level Commission Expert Group on Radicalisation (HLCEG-R). The need for more exchanges between policy-makers and practitioners was reiterated – this will be the main aim of the six policy and practice events scheduled for 2018. These events will cover the following themes:

- 4 April – Sofia (BG): ‘Common PCVE challenges in the Western Balkans and EU’

- 25 April – Madrid: ‘Involving young people in counter and alternative narratives: Why it is key to involve peers’
- 4 July – Prague: Resilience of children (aged below 12) against radicalisation’
- 28 September – Berlin: ‘Working with local communities in CVE’
- 23 November – Paris: ‘Optimising Triple P (Police – Prison – Probation)’
- Date TBD – Vienna (AT): ‘Leaving violent extremism behind’

The Steering Committee was also an opportunity for the RAN working group leaders to present their plans and events for 2018, and to review their constituencies.

RAN LOCAL & YF&C –Engaging with communities

What are the dos and don’ts when setting up collaboration between local authorities and communities for the prevention of radicalisation? RAN LOCAL and RAN YF&C working groups joined forces on 22-23 February to find the answer.

The meeting built on [previous lessons](#) learned on the [involvement of communities](#) in PVE, and involved 46 participants, including local PVE coordinators, community representatives and community workers.

The meeting discussed several stages of collaboration: 1) The mapping of communities and establishing contact 2) Dialogue and different forms of collaboration 3) Responding to a crisis. For each stage the group discussed challenges (and how to cope with these challenges) from both the community and local authority perspective. Collaboration between communities and local authorities requires a continuous effort, clear and shared objectives, and a relationship that is based on reciprocity. The ex post paper from the meeting will discuss practical guidance and examples on how this can be achieved.

RAN YOUNG – How to hold difficult conversations

Before discussing how to hold a difficult conversation, it makes sense to establish which topics could be considered difficult or taboo. The RAN YOUNG group agreed on a list of five taboo topics that was even tested by a young Swedish youth worker on a group of young individuals (aged 13-17) believed to be vulnerable to radicalisation. The top five taboo topics according to RAN YOUNG are: sexuality, mental health, unresolved historical issues, religion, and identity. It was interesting to see that these five topics corresponded with the topics selected by the Swedish youngsters.

The meeting drew up recommendations for dealing with difficult conversations, which were put together in simple videos, filmed on smartphones, and will be shared with the relevant working groups.

The youngsters also placed themselves in the shoes of youth workers, teachers and mental health workers, using acting sessions as a tool to come up with dos and don’ts for these kinds of situations. This meeting provided participants with new ideas on how to work with young vulnerable people

RAN POL – The role of the police online

A diverse group of 40 people, including representatives from the police, Europol, the ESCN and NGOs, gathered in Oslo on 1 and 2 March to discuss the role of police when it comes to preventing and countering violent extremism and radicalisation online. The importance of communication was discussed, along with how the police can play a part in this, either themselves – for example by being active on Facebook – or through partners, by building resilience in education,. Understanding and monitoring is a very important online activity for police. Internet Referral Units (IRUs) are essential for taking down online content. They cannot operate on their own, however, and need help from the industry (Facebook, Twitter, Google, but also Internet Service Providers). NGOs can help build resilience for the audience

through education, but can also operate where police cannot. This can be the case when content is unwanted but not illegal. Cooperation with NGOs and industry can cause challenges when it comes to confidentiality and knowing who to speak to. Points of contact can help solve this coordination issue, as can signing confidentiality contracts beforehand. Participants agreed that more interaction is needed between online and offline police action, as these can reinforce one another. Local police could visit and talk to an individual posting extreme content online to assess the situation and take precautionary measures where necessary.

RAN P&P – The role of families and social networks in the resocialisation and reintegration of violent extremist offenders

Scene-setting at the working group meeting took the form of a discussion on the dilemma around family support during time spent in prison and on probation by violent extremist offenders (VEOs). The meeting adopted two different perspectives: inside-out – prison and probation professionals working with families and social networks of VEOs, and outside-in – social and family workers engaged with the same target group. Some Member States shared their experiences of working with families and social networks with non-VEOs: the Czech Republic presented their 'Family Group Conference' method. Finland and Netherlands presented their experiences from the points of view of probation and prison service. In addition, United Kingdom, Austria, Belgium, Germany, Norway and France also shared their practices for working with family and friends in reintegration of VEOs. The meeting took place in Utrecht, the Netherlands, on 6-7 March.

RAN EDU - Free speech, extremism and the prevention of radicalisation in higher education

Safeguarding students against recruitment by extremists while at the same time maintaining academic freedom and freedom of speech is a complex problem. The RAN EDU meeting on higher education in Manchester (8-9 February) brought together 39 academics, student association representatives, policy-makers and management professionals to explore the issues involved. Participants discussed the different circumstances in different countries (e.g. controversial external speakers and events, the task of monitoring students versus student welfare, safety and violence within HE institutions).

All present agreed that HE institutions are knowledge builders, and that by focusing on these strengths and some of the core values (e.g. freedom of speech), they present opportunities but are aware of the potential risks. It was also agreed that institutes can take responsibility for these issues without stepping back from their core values. A more extensive ex post paper will follow and will elaborate on some of the insights gathered from this meeting.

The lessons learned during RAN working group meetings are shared in ex post papers. Papers are published on the [RAN website](#), usually around a month after the meeting date.

Coming up

European Remembrance Day for Victims of Terrorism

11 March, the date of the 2004 Madrid terrorist attack, is the European Remembrance Day for Victims of Terrorism. The ceremony of the 14th anniversary will take place in Brussels on 9 March and be attended by approximately 80 victims of terrorism. Commissioners King and Avramopoulos will be present, alongside government representatives from five countries. Victims of terrorism from 2017 and earlier attacks will speak about their experiences. The RAN Remembrance of Victims of Terrorism working group is organising this ceremony in close cooperation with the European Commission. On the same day, a RAN paper on resilience among victims of terrorism will be published.

RAN Policy and Practice: ‘Western Balkans and Child Returnees’

To deliver on the call by both practitioners and national policy makers to increase exchanges between the two groups, the Commission tasked the RAN Centre of Excellence to deliver six Policy & Practice Events in 2018. The main objective is to allow insights from practitioners to feed into national policies, as well as to have national policy priorities guide the daily work of practitioners. These events support the implementation of prevent policies and actions at national level, and in particular facilitate the implementation of recommendations by the High-Level Commission Expert Group on Radicalisation (HLCEG-R).

The first of these events will take place in collaboration with the current Bulgarian Presidency of the Council of the EU, on 4 April in Sofia. A balanced group of some 120 policy-makers and practitioners from both the Western Balkan and EU countries will target common challenges in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (PCVE). Many of these challenges are similar in both regions. Whereas the first part of the event focuses on effective and sustainable partnership between all actors involved (authorities, agencies, NGOs and communities), the second part highlights the vulnerability of young children (pre-teens) in extremist environments. Mutual learning on the responses needed is foreseen. Following the event, an ex post paper will capture the insights exchanged and present recommendations for the enhancement of both policies and practices.

PTSD, trauma, stress and the risk of (re)turning to violence

Experts, policy-makers and first-line practitioners in (mental) health and social care will gather on 10-11 April to discuss post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), trauma, stress and their impact, most notably the risk of vulnerable persons (re)turning to violence. The role of the health and social care professionals in signalling and treating PTSD on a wide variety of radicalised individuals, including victims of terrorist attacks, returning foreign fighters, and returning women and children will be addressed.

The choice of PTSD as a key topic follows on from assumptions about returning returnees and their families’ mental health. Taking a specific look at trauma, anxiety, stress and other factors, mental health professionals should become more aware – and ultimately equipped – to deal with them.

All those who have had combat experience or experienced trauma in conflict areas might suffer from PTSD or other forms of trauma. This leads to questions:

- Is there a link between PTSD and the desire to re-engage in combat/violence?
- Can non-ideological factors such as childhood trauma and PTSD influence an individual’s (future) involvement in violence and specifically violent extremism?
- Should trauma awareness be a key skill for all professionals working with returning foreign fighters, returning children, victims of terrorism, refugees, asylum seekers and others?

The role of police in preventing and countering left- and right-wing extremism

As left- and right-wing become ever-more manifest, so does the need for more focus on preventing and countering this type of extremism. Are there police approaches that have proven successful in preventing and countering violent jihadism that could also be used to put the brakes on reciprocal radicalisation in the form of right- and left-wing extremism? Can we ‘engage with communities’ in this context? What about awareness-raising and resilience-building? Who are the partners for engaging with these extremist individuals and milieus? And can police use the window of opportunity when a vulnerable or radicalised individual is in police custody? These are among the questions that will be deliberated by police experts

from across Europe when they gather in Rome on 12-13 April for the RAN POL meeting. Together, participants will share experiences and draft recommendations.

New publications

The following ex-post papers were recently published on the RAN website:

- [RAN C&N Guidelines for effective alternative and counter-narrative campaigns \(GAMMMA+\)](#);
- [RAN RVT ‘The power of victims of terrorism: how to give support’](#);
- [RAN EDU Dealing with fake news, conspiracy theories and propaganda in the classroom](#).

RAN Calendar

March 2018	April 2018
<p>RAN POL The role of families and social networks in resocialisation and reintegration of Violent Extremist Offenders (VEOs) <u>Date and location:</u> 6-7 March, Utrecht (Netherlands)</p> <p>European Remembrance Day for Victims of terrorism <u>Date and location:</u> 9 March, Brussels (Belgium)</p>	<p>RAN P&P Western Balkans and Child Returnees <u>Date and location:</u> 4 April, Sofia (Bulgaria)</p> <p>RAN H&SC How to deal with posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), stress and traumas as (mental) health practitioners <u>Date and location:</u> 10-11 April, Lisbon (Portugal)</p> <p>RAN POL The role of the police in preventing and countering extremists <u>Date and location:</u> 12-13 April, Rome (Italy)</p> <p>RAN EXIT Learning from adjacent fields: gangs <u>Date and location:</u> 19-20 April (Copenhagen, Denmark)</p> <p>RAN C&N How young people could and/or should use their voices to generate impact <u>Date and location:</u> 23-24 April: Madrid (Spain)</p> <p>RAN YOUNG and RAN C&N ‘Making the voice of young people heard’</p>

	Date and location: 25 April, Madrid (Spain)
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The full calendar for 2018 is available online

If you are interested in attending a forthcoming RAN meeting, please contact the appropriate RAN CoE staff member. Check the RAN website for a [full list of contacts by working group](#).

Contact details

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Would you like more frequent updates on RAN's activities? Get access to all public RAN papers as they are released, other RAN news and thought-provoking articles on the radicalisation process by following RAN on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#) or [YouTube](#).

Website: ec.europa.eu/ran