



Criminal Justice Platform Europe

Radicalisation and Violent Extremism – Barcelona 26th April 2016

Workshop 1: European Initiatives and Good Practice

Workshop 1: European Initiatives and Good Practice

Chair: Annemieke Wolthuis

Experts: Merel Molenkamp

Tim Chapman

Steve Gorman

Participants: 51

Notes: Jofre Bosch Buch

Impression: Good atmosphere: lively discussion and interaction, various questions to both experts.

Merel Molenkamp, Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN), explained that RAN is giving practitioners of prison and probation services the opportunity to share experiences and advise in the drafting of EU policies in the field of Criminal Justice. She also stressed that in dealing with radicalisation issues stigmatization of religious or ethnic communities should be avoided. She argued that offenders with leadership skills are the most difficult to deal with.

Tim Chapman, Board Member of the European Forum for Restorative Justice illustrated that most of radicalised offenders came from backgrounds with a lot of violence and the feeling of being rejected. After release from prison they often continue offending. Radicalised offenders often like to discuss about idea, and this helps to open up the reasons behind politically motivated violence which is part of a collective mind-set with a high level of discipline between radicalised offenders with the same ideology.

Steve Gorman the Head of Counter Terrorism Extremism Unit, of NOMS argued that terrorists come from marginalized groups where the sense of identity is similar to the one between gang members, but in smaller units. He explained that NOMS is launching an educational program for England and Wales' prisons service on how to better understand radicalized offenders.

The workshop continued with questions from the floor:

- What are the key factors for success to introduce restorative justice in the wings with radicalized offenders?



Gorman argued that there are no quick results, this is a long-term slow process. The key factors are: the prisoner volunteers to get in the program; prison officers are friendly and professional; the underlying principles of Restorative Justice can be adopted. Molenkamp also stated that much time is needed to make initiatives successful.

Mr Peter Van de Sande, former Director of the Dutch prisons and EuroPris Board member, argued that there are common elements in the approaches that different countries choose. Also, Molenkamp stressed that there are some interesting examples how countries that are different from each other still use a similar approach or similar elements in dealing with radicalisation. Also, a survey of the European Commission defends that the soft offenders (offenders that do not have strong views) are the most vulnerable of becoming radicalised.

- What is the difference between the specific assessment tools used for extremism compared to the ones for general violence?

Gorman answered that one could apply all the same features to both of them; it needs to be considered on a case by case basis. Molenkamp stressed the need to share different risk assessment tools and practices between agencies. Chapman explained the gathering of intelligence information in Northern Ireland was done by the prison service.

- Is there movement between the bands in the NOMS banding model? In what frequency?

Gorman explained that there is movement between all the different bands with a lot of flow. The higher the level, the more time the offender will spend in prison. It appears that charismatic individuals in lower levels are even more difficult to deal with than radicalized in high level.

- Is there a role for forgiveness?

Gorman said that of course there is a role for forgiveness. Chapman argued that the need for redemption is often seen but barely heard. Molenkamp stressed that forgiving is not an aim of the program, it should not be an objective in itself.

- Is it a better approach to disengage violence rather than de-radicalisation?

Chapman explained that the most important is disengagement from violence because that causes harm. Gorman stressed that not de-radicalisation is the issue, it is about disengagement from violence it is about not engaging in causing harm.

- Are government measures only repressive and not preventive?

In relation to prevention Chapman defended that it is very difficult that radicalised accept that they are victims themselves. Gorman argued that public bodies have the duty to prevent violent extremism with education. Molenkamp explained that the most difficult is to understand the thin line between faith and extremism. It is important to have international exchanges.