



# Criminal Justice Platform Europe

## Radicalisation and Violent Extremism – Barcelona 26<sup>th</sup> April 2016

### Workshop 3 : Religious care and Interagency cooperation

**Chair:** John Scott

**Experts:** Hans Kieserling  
Julio Zino  
Olivier Cauberghs

**Participants:** 45

**Notes:** Daria Nashat

**Impression:** Good atmosphere: thoughtful discussion and specific questions on religion and radicalization to the experts

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**John Scott** welcomed all experts and workshop participants and introduced the theme of religion and interagency cooperation. **Julio Zino** from the Catalan Prison Service explained that Catalonia believes that religious practice in prisons is a right of its own that is independent from the topic of de-radicalization. He underlined the need to focus on all religions and to avoid an exclusive link between radicalization and Islam. In his view, the problem lies in the interpretation of religion that encourages violent behavior and not in the religion itself. In addition, it is important to recognize that the focus on Islam provides right-wing organizations an excuse to attack Muslims of whom the great majority is non-violent. Spain faces 4000 hate crime incidents each year which is a worrying. More attention needs to be given to dialogue building.

The moderator John Scott asked the experts about the practical meaning of reintegration. **Hans Kieserling** from the Hessen Justice Ministry in Germany explained that after the release, ex-prisoners should not mix ideology and religion. He argued that while every religion needs to be respected, one cannot accept that religion is used as an argument to justify terrorist attacks. He also stressed that a clever religious care in prisons with a widespread religious offer can be an important element of de-radicalization in prisons and security. The positive experience we have made with the Christian religious care, we can use even for the religious care of Muslim prisoners.



**Olivier Cauberghs** from the Antwerp Police in Belgium highlighted the importance of treating ex-prisoners as human beings and individuals and not as a group. Rather than approaching a person as “radicalized”, one should apply the human approach of community policing.

The discussion continued with questions from the audience.

- *Q: Research indicates that the release from prison is a critical moment for relapse. What have we learned and how do we support ex-prisoners? Some European countries continue to support the ex-prisoner after release and through continued contact with prison staff and/or prison chaplains. Which role does inter-agency cooperation and information sharing play when dealing with prisoners with extremist views?*

Olivier Cauberghs explained that in Belgium, the police usually does not follow up with released persons. If the person was released under specific conditions, the police will visit the ex-prisoner every 1-2 weeks. Julio Zino explained that in Catalonia there is good collaboration with the different services but that in order to deal with radicalization it is critical to control the information flow from the prison to the community and vice versa. This is where the community plays an important role. Hans Kieserling explained that the secret service prefers not to share information but that this is finally happening - on a voluntary basis - in Germany. There was a follow up question from the audience about the role of the German Datenschutz (data protection laws) that may prevent the information exchange and whether this has been affected by the attacks in Paris and Brussels. Moderator John Scott underlined that it is up to the senior officials to take the lead in establishing protocols for information exchange and that they also have the responsibility to test them on a regular basis.

- *Q: What does “moderate” mean in the context of religion (referring to the EuroPris text presented in the plenary session)?*

Wouldn't it be better to use the word “non-violent”, which is the term used by the new Belgian anti-radicalization strategy. There was no final agreement on how to deal with this issue.

- *Q: How do you define a person who is recruiting others and how can prison staff detect and identify persons who are recruiting others?*

Olivier Cauberghs explained that radicalization is a complex process and one can only see indicators. Julio Zino agreed and pointed to the fact that radicalization signs are often hidden and that good prison-staff relations are crucial in recognizing changes. On this note, Hans Kieserling highlighted the importance of imams in recognizing the signs of radicalization. The discussion continued on confidentiality and the role of confessional privilege and the exceptional conditions (concrete danger) for informing on prisoners. It became clear that European states organize their prison chaplaincy differently. In the Netherlands, imams are employed by the state while in Germany and



Catalonia, chaplains come from the outside. Would state-employed chaplains be perceived as spying for the state?

- *Q: How are Imams for prisons selected?*
- Hans Kieserling explained that the Hessen Justice Ministry now employs an Islamic scholar who helps with this selection tasks. In Catalonia, there is an agreement with the Council of Muslims that represents the imams. In Belgium, the selection process of imams has not been developed.

