

Criminal Justice Platform Europe

Criminal Justice Summer Course

Barcelona, 2-5 July 2019

WORKSHOP REPORT

Workshop Title: Managing Violent Extremist Offenders in Prison Settings

Moderator: John Scott, United Kingdom

Leader 1: Katharina Schwarzl, Austria

Leader 2: Yola Wanders, Netherlands

Participants: [A list of participants has been circulated to the members of the workshop]

Note taker: John Scott

Impression: The Workshop was highly participative and completely practice orientated. The sessions involved many small group exercises with participants sharing their own experiences and perspectives, which allowed those with less practical experience to learn from those who had been in the front line. The workshop members developed a trusting and safe working environment and many expressed the view that they wished the course had gone on longer!

1. Introduction

The workshop leaders brought different skills and national roles to the event – Yola, as the Director of a high security prison in the Netherlands, which has inside it the only supermax prison for the maximum category of secure prisoners, and Katharina, as the lead in developing policy and programmes for offenders who are accused of and convicted of terrorist crimes in the Ministry of Justice in Austria. Their complementary experience meant that the wide range of participants were able to benefit from the sessions. The workshop did not avoid the hard questions about how to provide the highest level of security whilst retaining humanity and human rights. The leaders' starting point was that 'a positive living climate will have a positive impact on their wellbeing and behaviour during and after imprisonment'. The challenges in prisons are huge – how can prisoners' rights to work, education and contacts with their families be guaranteed? What are the experiences and impact on staff of working with violent extremist offenders in different European countries? The aim was to deal with these issues in an interactive way, with the leaders sharing their insights and enabling the participants to exchange learning through discussion and exercises.

2. Workshop Methods

- Ice breaker introduction of partner
- Small groups – exercises – society expectations – governor challenges – shaping the living environment
- Presentation – Regime of the Terrorist wings in the in High Security Prison, Vught, The Netherlands
- Presentation – Treatment Programmes and Activities in Austria
- Film – discussion about the issues around radicalisation and violent extremism.
- Case Study - discussion

- Pre-release multi-disciplinary case conference
- Review of Workshop

3. Summary of Presentations

- **Session 1** – Introduction of workshop leaders and each of the participants, their backgrounds, interests and expectations in relation to the workshop
- **Session 2** – What expectations does society have that prisons should achieve in dealing with Violent Extremist Offenders? What can we realistically achieve as professionals in dealing with VEOs in our different jurisdictions/prisons?
- **Session 3** – The Challenges of the Prison Governor in detaining VEOs + Case Study
- **Session 4** – How to shape a living environment in prison that reduces the adverse effects of detention and stimulates a responsible return to society
- **Session 5** – Input: The Prison System, VEO Treatment Programmes and Activities in Austria
- **Session 6** – How to prepare for return to society: case study + preparation in roles for case conference role play and debrief discussion.

4. Key Learning Points

- Society dumps VEOs onto prisons and wants to have miracles with no resources – information about what is happening and being open with public and media is vital to keep discussions and understanding reality based
- Relationship with police service and the public prosecutor is crucial, although information exchange may well not be two-way for operational reasons – work is always needed on having clear information protocols and a legal framework.
- Subtle discussion about religion requires trusted appointments of imams and advisors because the VEO's identity may not be as securely religious as assumed. It is important to have broad discussions.
- The climate/environment is as vital for a VEO as for any other prisoner. Six factors directly affect the living climate in a prison. These are: the contacts between staff and prisoners, the degree of autonomy, contacts with the outside world, safety, meaningful daytime and physical well-being.
- The conditions (determinants) to create a positive living climate for VEO's in prisons are the premises, the professionalism of the staff and the composition of the prison population.
- Work on new ways of de-radicalising offenders, in or out special wings to prepare the VEO for rehabilitation as a huge majority to return into the community
- Continued importance of communication, trust and sharing between professionals as probation, prison staff and the local government etc.
- The prison officer/guard can have vital information that must be used in the management of a VEO.
- Joint training across the disciplines is a good way of building working relationships and multi-discipline approaches.
- *We watched a compilation of photographs of people and achievements from inside the high security prison in The Netherlands and all of us were moved by the potential for excellent, humane work with the Violent Extremist Offenders which offered hope whilst acknowledging the horrors and risks of the crimes of the past and the fears that may exist in the future. Powerful learning, stories and pictures for the workshop participants indeed.*

5. Key Practice Issues for the Future

- Calibration of assessments
- Evaluation of programmes across jurisdictions to identify what works for VEOs because of low numbers in specific countries
- Need for meta-analysis of evidence-based practice for VAOs as data becomes available

- Continued data gathering about the 'to integrate or segregate' prisoners debate or have a mixed regime across different prisons to cater for different types of VEOs
- Continue to develop an international training agenda so RAN can exchange practitioner expertise for prison-based staff, if the Summer Courses are not going to repeat this focus between 2020 and 2022
- Women returnees and children are going to be a VEO problem over the coming period.

6. Annexes

Circulated to the members of the group:

- Yola Wanders – Presentation 1 'The Challenges of the Prison Governor' [Attach slides]
- Yola Wanders – Presentation 2 'How to shape a living environment for VEOs' [Attach Slides]
- The Living Environment – Summer Course 2019 Handout
- Katharina Schwarzl – Presentation 1 'The Prison System, VEO Treatment Programmes and Activities in Austria' [Attach slides]
- EuroPris Expert-Subgroup: Final Paper of Risk Assessment Tools
- BMJ-GD41721/0105-II 3/2015 – 'FOREIGN FIGHTERS'
- 'Conviction' – Film www.convictionfilm.co.uk
- Isa's Background – Case Discussion
- Case Study – Abou R., Dutch National

References – provided by the workshop leaders – for additional reading:

1. "Le ciel attendra" <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt5766118/>
2. Council of the European Union: Draft Council Conclusions on preventing and combating radicalisation in prisons and on dealing with terrorist and violent extremist offenders after release - Brussels, 16 May 2019 (OR. en) 9366/19 CT 54 ENFOPOL 254 COTER 67 JAI 531 COPEN 221
3. 'Recognizing signs of radicalization leading to extremism' – Custodial Institutions Agency, Ministry of Justice and Security
4. 'Austria's Approach on Dealing with VEO's' – Katharina Schwarzl
5. EuroPris Radicalisation Expert Group: Final Paper on Risk Assessment Tools – 10th July 2019, Vienna.
6. RAN Website – very useful for its collection of approaches to practice and current issues:
https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network_en