

SEMINAR ON RADICALISATION & REHABILITATION

30 March 2022, Cologne, Germany

22 participants (10 men/12 women) from 10 EU MS – probation officers, practitioners, researchers and academics.

Background

In the framework of the HELP project, CEP organized the third seminar on the topic of (de)radicalization and rehabilitation. The last seminar was focused on radicalization and rehabilitation after the release from prison.

Presentations and outcomes:

The last seminar within the framework of the HELP project covered the topics related to radicalization from the point of view of practice, training, emerging trends and developments. It also introduced a set of recommendations in the form of the conclusion paper of the RAN cross-cutting event.

Apart from delivering 4 outstanding presentations on the above-mentioned topics, Ms. Eva Massa, project coordinator for the HELP Course (CoE) provided participants with information on final stages of the project and implementation in EU MS and outside EU. A new project called EUTEX was presented as well.

CEP within the framework of the HELP project initiated producing the 20 minute ´ vodcasts on the topic of radicalization and violent extremism. Eight interviews with the specialists on radicalization and violent extremism will be released soon on the CEP YouTube channel. The videos are made in English with subtitles in 4 languages, and are to be used as educational as well as promotional materials for probation organizations and all actors involved in the rehabilitation and deradicalization process across Europe.

The countries hit by terrorist attacks in the recent years have been dealing with the issue of the near future release and rehabilitation of the VE offenders. In Italy, prison service and probation cooperate with various organizations (NGOs, religious organizations etc) and with volunteers in order to support the rehabilitation process. Amongst the challenges to successful rehabilitation there are: finding a way to inspire offenders, family involvement, avoiding double stigmatization (being an offender and terrorist). Multi-agency approach involving many actors as mentioned above is necessary. When dealing with VEOs under probation, serving community sanctions and measures or non-sentenced social context can play a decisive role. The responsibility for continuing the work begins in prison, in probation or in another setting, on a voluntary basis, lies with different agencies, organisations and communities. Three different promising practices are: psychological support (individual sessions or group interventions), religious and spiritual support (chaplains should be trained

for this task), social support (the involvement of family and friends in a disengagement path can be useful.

Creating a working alliance is the key to successful cooperation with offenders. Crucial strategies on how to set up working alliance were discussed. Those are: role clarification, empathy, optimism, humor and self-disclosure. More information on each strategy can be found in the presentation, yet, some significant aspects are: when setting up the working alliance, role clarification and boundaries must be clear. It has been proved by researches that empathy and so called "hope factor" are important, especially to the client. For safety reasons self-disclosure of the probation officer (or any other officer working with offenders) must be careful with moderation. The first interview and the start are crucial when starting a new cooperation. Some advice on how to approach these were discussed as well. Findings resulting from in-depths interview with 8 front line practitioners were presented. To demonstrate how the first interview should look like a role playing was part of the agenda. Practitioners attending the seminar were then asked to discuss which strategies were used during the interview, which of them were missing, what they would do differently and why, what to avoid etc.

Current challenges and trends in right-wing extremism were presented with a focus on the international perspectives on violent right-wing extremism. Examples of recent attacks were provided. Key challenges are the online space where it is much easier to recruit persons (especially those vulnerable), spread the ideology itself and materials. One of the key challenges for those working on rehabilitation are, among others, to keep balanced use between online and offline services. As for new trends, Covid-19 brought up the trend of accelerationism (those who want to instigate a race war to bring down liberal democracies).

Working group on Rehabilitation of the RAN presented the outcomes of the event that brought together policymakers, researchers and practitioners from different EU MS to assess the potential threats posed by released VETOs, develop targeted recommendations on how to improve continuity between prison, probation and reintegration, and identify follow-up actions to prevent recidivism and re-engagement.

Challenges discussed in general:

- Role of chaplains and religious communities
- Specific programmes in probation targeted at VE offenders
- Children – recruitment of child fighters X as victims (a parent in prison for committing VE-related crime, as a child born in the battle area etc)
- Multi-agency approach and specialists involved differ in each country
- Eligibility for online vs offline service and diversification
- Public awareness – raising public awareness, support on both European and local level
- War in Ukraine and related challenges (trends, fragmentation within the groups, near future challenges and issues to be solved for prison, probation, exit and others)