



# RAS MORAD P & P

*Raising Awareness and Staff MObility on violent  
RADicalization in Prison and Probation services*



C O - F O U N D E D B Y T H E C R I M I N A L J U S T I C E  
P R O G R A M M E O F T H E E U R O P E A N U N I O N



# RASMORAD: COMMON STRATEGY FOR VIOLENT EXTREMISM RISK ASSESSMENT IN PRISON & ON PROBATION

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P R O G R A M M E O F T H E E U R O P E A N U N I O N

# Why a Webinar?

- **Reach:** Potential for anybody to join from anywhere
- **Ease of repetition:** Compact learning content that can easily be repeated live
- **Long-term use:** Possibility to record for future use and dissemination

# Webinar – Limits & Difficulties

- **Technical:**
  - Audio and/or visual difficulties with some browsers
  - Internal security measures on internet use may not allow access
- **Format:** Limited contact with audience (chat only), visualization of Powerpoint only by audience
- **Suggestion:** Experiment with other webinar options such as audio for all participants and visual

# Learning Objectives

- To understand the use and importance of developing a risk assessment strategy
- To understand the principles that underpin promising practice in risk assessment strategy in P&P
- To understand the use and importance of risk assessment and screening tools in the criminal justice process (pre-trial, probation, prison, exit/transition, parole)
- To understand the importance of risk assessment cycles, evaluations, non-discrimination, respect for human rights, and right to privacy when doing risk assessments

# RASMORAD Webinars

5 webinars held in November/December, 2018

- 4 webinars for RASMORAD partners: 3 in English, 1 in Italian
  - Included country specific information
- 1 public webinar open to all: intended for community-based service providers that work with VEOs on probation or after release from prison

COMMON RISK ASSESSMENT  
STRATEGY – GUIDING  
PRINCIPLES

## WHY A COMMON STRATEGY?

- Countries differ in relation to traditions, experiences, needs and resources
- A one-size-fits all approach does not necessarily maximize the value and effectiveness in all EU Member States given their unique characteristics
- A common strategy enables countries to develop a risk assessment system utilizing specific tools based on country-specific characteristics that maximizes the effectiveness.

*It offers an **approach** to risk assessments that can be successfully utilized in different contexts.*



## COMMON STRATEGY ELEMENTS

1. Detection protocols in various settings
2. Risk assessment protocol in prison and on probation
3. Staff training
4. Internal and interagency cooperation
5. Collective, multi-disciplinary approach
6. Anticipates the offender's exit from the P&P setting and links with exit strategies
7. Evaluation policy

*The common strategy derives from a set of internationally based benchmarks and comprises a set of **guiding principles** for risk assessments.*

*It supports the development of optimal country-specific strategies in response to country-specific needs and problems.*

# Guiding Principles

1. Focus on Structured Personal Judgement (SPJ)
2. Specifically Target Violent Extremists
3. Broaden the Scope of Data Collection and Foster Interagency Cooperation
4. Foster Risk Assessment Cycles to Avoid Labeling Inmates and Probationers
5. Foster Multi-disciplinary Decision-making and Supervision
6. Ensure High Quality Training and Provide Peer Support
7. Design and Implement an Evaluation Policy of the Risk Assessment Strategy

# Principle 1: Focus on Structured Personal Judgement (SPJ)

## What this means

- Combines actuarial and unaided approaches
- Evidence-based risk factors guide the process of systematically identifying and interpreting risks
- Overall evaluation is based on a broad review of the individual context

## Why

- Reduces bias stemming from sole reliance on professional experience and knowledge
- Avoids limits of actuarial prediction instruments that make decisions in a pre-established manner
- Information collected helps build disengagement or de-radicalization strategies

## Available SPJs

- Available protocols include general protocols as well as those specifically designed to assess VE
- Non-VE specific protocols
  - HCR-20
  - SAVRY
- VE specific protocols
  - VERA
  - VERA II and II-R

## HCR-20

- **How it works:** integrates three main risk factors areas which are historical, clinical and risk management
- **What it does:** evaluates the propensity for violence “for adult populations in civil psychiatric and forensic psychiatric institutions, general inmates and mentally disordered inmates” (Pressman, 2009)

## SAVRY

- **Target group:** youth offenders (ages 12 to 18)
- **How it works:** encompasses items addressing changes during adolescence from an intellectual, social and emotional point of view

## Key Lessons from HCR-20 and SAVRY

- Need for integrated risk factors – factors must have a strong basis in research linking them with VE
- The **HCR-20** and **SAVRY** do **NOT** have enough salient items to serve as effective tools in assessing the risk of violence by violent extremists
- Violent extremists do not fit neatly within a given profile – need for a much broader and more nuanced assessment that allows for multiple profiles



# What Research Tells Us About violent Extremist Offenders (1)

- There is not a strong relationship between mental illness, psychopathology, or mental disorders and terrorism convictions whereas the correlation does exist for the population assessed with HCR-20.
- Violent extremist populations do not show a correlation between known violent incidents in youth and subsequent violent criminal activity

## What Research Tells Us About Violent Extremist Offenders (2)

- Violent extremists do not systematically experience problems with education, employment and unstable childhood. Many are well-educated with good employment histories
- Terrorists have not been observed to be subject to aggressive and impulsive behavior prior to their action. The perpetrators of violent acts motivated by political, religious and other ideologies have been judged in general, to be normal functioning members of society.

## What Research Tells Us About Violent Extremist Offenders (3)

- VEs come from different socio-economic backgrounds with many coming from the middle-class
- Socio-economic deprivation only accounts for a portion of radicalized individuals (notably in France)
- Factors related to identity and the quest for meaning generally have more explanatory power, especially for young people
- MH issues are more of an issue with radicalized individuals inspired by ISIS (lone wolves) rather than those directed by ISIS

*Clear thinking, precise plans, unimpeded concentration and commitment to the cause have been essential elements for the successful implementation of terrorist acts.*

GUIDING PRINCIPLE 2:  
SPECIFICALLY TARGET VIOLENT  
EXTREMISTS

## VERA – Violent Extremist Risk Assessment

- Developed to address weaknesses with HCR-20 and SAVRY
- Designed to be systematic, empirically grounded, developmentally informed, treatment oriented, flexible and practical
- Includes risk factors “relevant to the process of radicalization leading to violent extremism as well as committed political terrorist”
- Evidence based items
- Some partners currently use VERA-2R
- *Added value: integrates items associated with deradicalization, disengagement and protective factors*

# VERA: Factors Associated with De-radicalization

<b>DR</b>	<b>De-radicalization Factors</b>
DR.1	Rejection of rigid ideology
DR.2	Rejection of violence
DR.3	Evidence of replacement of non-violent goals
DR.4	Motivation to de-radicalize present
DR.5	Community support for de-radicalization present

# VERA: Factors Associated with Disengagement

DE	DISENGAGEMENT FACTORS
DE.1	Belief that violence is a failing strategy
DE.2	Disillusionment with spiritual leadership
DE.3	Shift in ideology
DE.4	Disillusionment with organization experiences
DE.5	Grown away from movement



# VERA: Protective Factors That Support De-radicalization

<b>P</b>	<b>PROTECTIVE FACTORS</b>
P.1	Family, girlfriend, spouse influence relating to rejection of violence
P.2	Community public opinion moved away from support for violence
P.3	Change of vision of enemy and desired outcome
P.4	Reversal of social alienation
P.5	Non-violent views of significant others

## Guiding Principle 3: Broaden the Scope of Data Collection and Foster Interagency Cooperation

- Collect as much information as possible
- Cooperate to ensure that all agencies provide information and communicate
- Use dynamic security information (mainly from prison guards)
- Include all frontline practitioners who have contact with the individual (e.g., teachers, cultural mediators, social workers)

*“It is absolutely necessary to have as much information before you can make a good risk assessment. Risk assessments solely based on the narrative of the offender are unreliable. You absolutely need collateral information (information about the network, family,...)” (D5, 2018, p. 18)*

## Guiding Principle 4: Foster Risk Assessment Cycles to Avoid Labeling Inmates and Probationers

- The fluid nature of radicalization and consequently deradicalization and disengagement means that risk assessments are not necessarily valid over time
- Cyclical assessments ensure that:
  - *Information is accurate and up to date (crucial for dynamic factors)*
  - *The assessed risk of recidivism as well as risk and protective factors are as accurate as possible*
  - *Individuals that de-radicalize or disengage are not subject to unnecessary measures that label and stigmatize, potentially reversing the de-escalation process*
  - *Measures need to be taken to protect human rights and privacy*

## Guiding Principle 5: Foster Multi-disciplinary Decision-making and Supervision

- Multi-disciplinary teams help ensure that assessments incorporate a broad spectrum of information and interpret it in a more informed way
- Teams should bring together prison/probation officers as well as psychologists, social workers, educators, religious leaders, and other relevant professionals
- Teams should use a common language, knowledge, understanding, tools, and coordinated data protection and privacy protocols

## Guiding Principle 6: Ensure High Quality Training and Provide Peer Support

- Make sure that staff have a thorough understanding of the assessment strategy
  - *In-depth training with a smaller number of practitioners*
  - *Risk-assessment training is generally longer than screening training*
- Psychologists and frontline practitioners need to be specifically trained to identify and analyze risk factors and to work in a multi-disciplinary team
- Key skills to be developed: consensus, communication and argumentation

# Contextualize and Debunk Myths

- Training needs to provide a context for understanding Islam and Muslims within a historical and geo-political context that includes a broader understanding of religion
- Staff need to understand what Islam is and what it is not in order to distinguish extremist views from moderate views

# What Training Should Cover

- Acquisition of knowledge about radicalization and Islam
- Training on the utilization and interpretation of screening and risk assessment tools
- Training on what to do once a risk has been identified
- Training on the use of screening tools should target all involved practitioners
- In-depth training on the use of comprehensive risk assessment tools may be better targeted to a small number of staff who conduct the assessment



# Trainer Characteristics

- Professionals providing training need to have:
  - Good knowledge of Islam
  - Good knowledge of the local context of the target audiences (living conditions, histories, grievances, quest for identity)
  - Good knowledge of geopolitics and politics
  - Good interpersonal and debating skills.

## Basic Types of Training Programmes

- Radicalization awareness and basic knowledge of Islam
- Continuing education to foster screening skills
- In-depth training on the use of risk assessments

## Key Elements for Success in Training Related to Screening

- Target all staff involved in screening (e.g., custodial staff, social workers, psychologists)
- Pass on key knowledge to efficiently screen inmates without discriminating against any given group
- Address knowledge about behavior/ideology as well as communication channels and interagency cooperation. *All frontline staff need to know which procedures to follow after identifying an inmate as a violent extremist.*

# Who Should Be Trained for Risk Assessments in Prison

## Frontline Staff

- Prison and probation staff such as prison guards, social workers, psychologist and others who collect data in prison/ during probation

## Management

- Prison governors and other decision-makers
- Each group should be aware of the other staff's roles and responsibilities

## Risk Assessment Training: Key Elements

- Only target frontline staff who conduct the assessment – no need for mass training
- Content/curricula should address the needs of the target audience: risk assessment protocol methodology and risk factors
- Make trainings operational and include essential professional skills (communication, consensus, argumentation)
  - Work to obtain an open and analytical mindset
- Make it part of initial and continuing training

# Support for Staff

- Working with VEOs is psychologically taxing
- Staff need the skills and knowhow to work with this population, as well as support in dealing with the impact on their well-being
- Support should include:
  - Debriefing
  - Stress management
  - Mentoring
  - Safety net

## Guiding Principle 7: Design and Implement an Evaluation Policy of the Risk Assessment Strategy

- Difficult to develop quality evaluations due to lack of control group
- Evaluations tend to rely on indicators that do not reflect the interpretive nature of assessments including SPJs pitting the need for flexibility against the actuarial component of the assessments
- Recidivism represents the main indicator post-release
- In prison indicators to be considered include extremist violent acts committed in prison, recruitment

# *Summing Up*



## SCREENING: KEY LESSONS (1)

- Screening strategy and organization: Efficient tools focus on a list of key items and avoid excessive detail
- Screening objective: Avoid a simplistic approach to Islam that could lead to stigmatization and exacerbation of feelings of marginalization
  - *Reductive interpretations can dramatically increase the number of inmates flagged for further assessment*

## SCREENING: KEY LESSONS (2)

- Regularly review tool items to integrate relevant information
- Need to foster interagency cooperation to broaden sources of information and ensure that information is shared with the relevant agencies
- Data from France and Italy show that the screenings are effective in identifying a level of risk and appropriate response including the creation of a protocol to conduct an in-depth risk assessment

# Risk Assessments for Offenders on Probation

- Limited capacity for observation
- Timeframe restrictions in the case of short sentences
- Greater potential and need to engage in *multi-agency work* including the involvement of NGOs for *mentoring*
- Probation services need to establish multi-agency agreements with other community service providers to enable information sharing

# Risk Assessments in Prisons: Challenges

## Need to:

- Understand risk factors
- Distinguish non-extremist violence from extremist violence and radicalization in a setting that tends towards violence
- Distinguish moderate Islamic practice from radical Islam
- Avoid discrimination and marginalization that may contribute to radicalization
- Select the appropriate level of security and restrictions

# Risk Assessments in Prisons: Opportunities

- “Constant” supervision and observation (direct and indirect such as video)
- Availability of a multi-disciplinary team including security personnel, social workers, psychologists and other prison staff
- Potential to move inmates to areas that foster observation and/or change interaction patterns with other inmates

# Risk Assessment in Prison: Keys to Success

- Combine actuarial information with personal and professional judgement and skills – Structured Personal Judgement
- Provide intensive training to a small group of staff
- Ensure that practitioners and management understand each others' roles and responsibilities
- Focus on professional skills including communication, consensus-building and argumentation - **WORK TOGETHER**
- Make continuity the end goal: work with probation, parole and community actors to ensure continuity in rehabilitation programmes/exit strategy and continued assessment as necessary

# From Prison to Parole

- Risk assessments are instrumental in the establishment of exit strategies and laying the framework for release, especially in activating the services and supports necessary to address the individual's needs, risk and protective factors
- Community re-entry plans need to consider the special challenges related to the stigma of being a VEO and potential for return to a radicalized mindset as a response to stigma

## The *Common Strategy* as the Basis for Innovation and Development

- National administrations can use the *Common Strategy* to select the most appropriate risk assessment tools to be utilized within a broader strategy that takes into account considerations both in other phases of the criminal justice process and within a given context such as probation and prison.
- Cooperation with other actors both within the CJ system and external agencies represents an essential element to ensuring that risk containment is not limited to within custodial settings.



THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!