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ISLAMIC MILITARY COUNTER TERRORISM COALITION

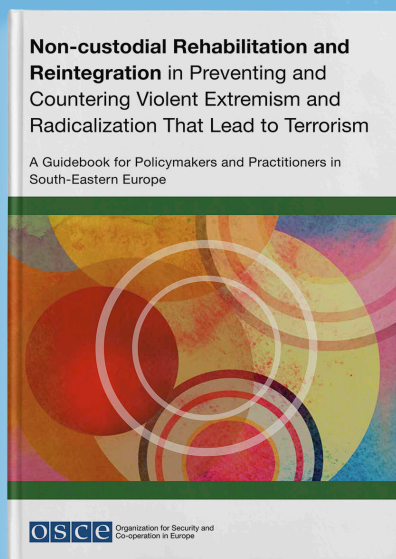


International Reports

17

Non-custodial Rehabilitation and Reintegration in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization That Lead to Terrorism

A Guidebook for Policymakers and Practitioners in South-Eastern Europe





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Non-custodial Rehabilitation and Reintegration in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization That Lead to Terrorism

A Guidebook for Policymakers and Practitioners in South-Eastern Europe

This comprehensive guidebook was published in January 2020, by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE); it focuses on rehabilitation and reintegration (R&R) programs outside prison and complements the existing tools that focus on the prison setting. It highlights the important role of communities and non-governmental actors in the process and includes a set of guidelines and recommendations to guide policymakers developing interventions to support radicalized individuals to disengage from violence and reintegrate into their communities. In addition, the guide includes an annex that contains useful examples of different non-custodial R&R programs across the OSCE area. Although it was written with the countries of South-Eastern Europe in mind, many of the ideas and policies included in the guidebook can be applied in countries around the world.

Commandments of the Guide

This guidebook recommends using a public health approach to tackle violent extremism, which has become more popular with those tackling violent crime generally. This approach focuses on developing interventions to primarily prevent violence instead of focusing on dealing with its consequences through addressing its causes. The public health model consists of three tiers:

1. Primary prevention focuses on preventing violence before it happens by developing community-level strategies designed to mitigate risk
1. Secondary prevention targets individuals identified at elevated risk
2. Tertiary prevention targets individuals who have already adopted violent extremist ideologies and focuses on long term rehabilitation.

In this model, non-custodial R&R programs fall into the tertiary prevention tier.

The guidebook stresses the importance of the continuity of these programs. Tailored support for the transition from prison back into society should start in prison (At least six months before release) and continue after release, engaging him/her in the process. Programs should also encourage collaboration among families, CSOs and the local community, in addition to raising awareness and engaging the community in order to reduce stigma and eliminate prejudices against the released prisoner, ensure their security, and impose proportionate post-release conditions to balance

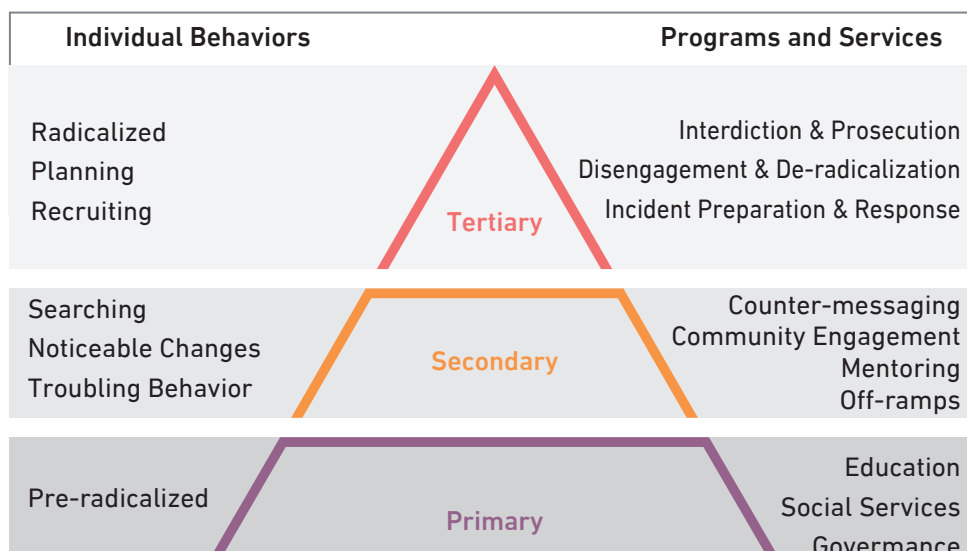
the need for community safety with opportunities for disengagement.

Furthermore, the concept of R&R should be embedded in relevant legal and policy frameworks, which should underline the importance of conducting a professional and objective assessment of each individual's needs and the risk they may pose to society; taking appropriate steps to address the unique needs of children and women; acknowledging the need for collaboration between government and non-governmental organizations; monitoring and evaluating the interventions' effectiveness; and ensuring initiatives are implemented in accordance with international human rights and humanitarian law.

Legal and policy frameworks should address all forms of violent extremism and radicalization that lead to terrorism (VERLT), including those related to the far-right groups, rather than focusing narrowly on that linked to ISIL-Da'esh.

In addition, governments should consider developing policies or guidelines aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of R&R initiatives, including provisions that: clarify the objectives of the intervention; outline the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders; allow for a variety of interventions to meet different psychosocial and practical needs of the beneficiaries; stress the importance of compliance with human rights; and enable information sharing among the various agencies involved in these programs while protecting the privacy of their beneficiaries.

PUBLIC HEALTH MODEL FOR CVE



DEVELOPING AND IMPLEMENTING R&R PROGRAMS

There is no one-size-fits-all solution to the R&R challenge, but there are several common elements to consider when developing and implementing such programs.

1. COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT OF RESOURCES

As a first step, it is essential to identify existing resources in order to understand the capacities of actors implementing the programs and what additional resources, expertise and training are needed. This should include the target audience (e.g., former violent extremist offenders and family members); professionals and community members (e.g., social workers, teachers and religious leaders) best placed and willing to join the initiatives; and relevant existing programs that focus, for example, on tackling gang violence that could be adapted for R&R purposes. However, when using existing prevention programs and providers for R&R (tertiary prevention) purposes, decision makers should be mindful of the political and national security sensitivities surrounding some non-custodial R&R cases.

The assessment should include three additional elements: trust levels among law enforcement and non-law enforcement professionals and among the police and the relevant communities; existing information sharing and data protection practices and protocols; and community attitudes towards rehabilitating and reintegrating individuals convicted of terrorism offenses or who have had some connection with terrorists.

2. COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT OF NEEDS

Comprehensive and individualized assessments of the risks and needs of the targeted individuals are important to avoid further radicalizing them or their communities. When developing assessment tools, the participant's age, gender, mental health and other relevant identity markers should be considered. Furthermore, specific assessment methods for violent extremism can be used to understand the individual's commitment and motivations to violence, level of adherence to an ideology that supports violence, capacity to commit violence, social context and intention and psychosocial and practical needs. In the case of those who have returned from the conflict zones in Iraq and Syria, their motives for leaving the conflict zones need to be understood.

Needs and challenges to be addressed often include post-traumatic stress, anxiety, loss of meaning in life, disillusionment, aggression, feelings of guilt or shame, lack of job opportunities, social stigma and contextual understanding of religion and/or politics. A few tested tools that focus on violent extremism have been developed. The EU's violent extremism risk assessment (VERA-2), for example, applies to different types of violent extremists, terrorists and violent offenders motivated by religious, political, or social ideologies. Other examples include the UK's ERG+22, the TRAP 18, and the well-known HCR 20 model.

3. INFORMATION SHARING AND COOPERATION

Information sharing when designing effective policy interventions is essential, yet not easy practically. This is because various agencies and organizations use different professional and ethical frameworks that might prevent information sharing, some information sharing might violate data collection and storage regulations, and the police and security or intelligence services may be unable to share sensitive or classified information.

While developing personal relationships can sometimes facilitate information sharing on an ad hoc basis, it is necessary to develop transparent guidelines or frameworks, including legislative ones, to enable information sharing while protecting client information to allow the different agencies to assess an individual case together systematically. Such framework should explain to both professionals and beneficiaries which kind of information is shared, when, with whom, and for which purpose.

4. DEVELOP A TAILORED PLAN THAT IS INFORMED BY THE ASSESSMENT

The next step is the development of a tailored plan based on the risk and needs assessment. This should be done in collaboration with all relevant stakeholders and in close cooperation with the intended beneficiary. Where possible, those with trusted relationships with the individual (e.g., teachers, family members) should be involved. The support provided should be proportionate to the needs of the individual and might include one or more type of interventions: mental health support, skills building, basic education, healthcare, accommodation and employment assistance, economic and social support, and local community dialogues.

5. IDENTIFY A LEAD ACTOR

Where multiple actors are involved in a particular case, it is important to identify a lead that can coordinate the different activities involved and serve as the contact point with the beneficiary, his/her family and community. This leading role should not be assigned to the police or other security actors for two main reasons. The first reason is that this can risk undermining efforts to build trust with members of the community, who may be reluctant to engage with the police; the other reason is that the individual targeted may have had negative experiences with the police or other state agencies, and thus have limited trust in state institutions. Instead, this role can be better played by a social worker or a civil society organization.

6. COMMUNICATE THE GOALS AND BENEFITS OF THE PROGRAM

A key component of the success of any intervention is to develop and implement a communication plan to communicate the program's goals and benefits to the a public that may regard them too "soft" for dealing with terrorism and, on the other hand, to the targeted individuals and communities that may see them as potentially stigmatizing. Thus, a communication strategy needs to convince the public of the importance of investing in R&R to prevent and counter terrorism; rather than helping "terrorists", it represents a clever way to reduce the risk of recidivism and to avoid violence in the community. Concurrently, it should aim at reducing the stigma that normally surrounds released extremists and those supporting their re-integration, including community members and practitioners involved in delivering the R&R intervention.

7. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Despite the difficulty of measuring the impact of non-custodial R&R programs, appropriate monitoring and evaluation of any intervention is crucial to understand what works and what does not. Given the lack of evidence-based knowledge in the field, most interventions are implemented on a trial and error basis; to help build a much needed evidence base, evaluation mechanisms should be incorporated into the design of the intervention, and the resulting evaluations should be made publicly available, where possible.

The design of each non-custodial R&R intervention should be driven by a "theory of change" that

explains how the planned approach relates to the intervention's objectives and outcomes. It is also important to assess progress on an ongoing basis to ensure the intervention continues to address the possibly changing needs of the individual. In addition, it is crucial to acknowledge the potentially significant societal, cultural, and other barriers facing those hoping to disengage from violent extremism and radicalization that lead to terrorism (VERLT) when assessing the impact of any interventions.

STRATEGIES AND PROGRAMS

Support in R&R programs can be divided into five categories.

1. SOCIO-ECONOMIC SUPPORT

Socio-economic support might include assistance with education, housing, vocational training, skills development, job placement and medical care. Although education, vocational training and skills development can be vital, the intended beneficiary may experience significant frustration if these do not lead to a job.

This kind of support can be delivered by the relevant local authority in cooperation with prison authorities, probation agencies, or other relevant stakeholders. Partnering with the private sector and local businesses should be also considered in order to evaluate the needs of local economy and offer beneficiaries training and job opportunities. However, care should be taken to avoid creating the perception that the beneficiaries are receiving preferential treatment in relation to law-abiding members of the community.

2. PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT

Although there is no direct causal link between mental illness and violent extremism, there is growing evidence that poor psychological adjustment contributes to the radicalization and violence among the youth. Psychosocial support can be especially important for individuals traumatized by violence (e.g., as a result of having lived in a conflict zone) and those suffering from anxiety or depression.

Some of the effective types of psychosocial support include facilitating behavioural change, enhancing coping and emotional management skills, promoting critical thinking, problem solving, and decision-making skills, building self-esteem and addressing identity issues.

3. THEOLOGICAL OR IDEOLOGICAL SUPPORT

Even though a number of different interventions and strategies focus on theology or politics because they have been used as part of a multidimensional approach to R&R, such strategies should only be used if an individualized assessment demonstrates that the individual's mindset needs to be addressed; no attempt should be made to coerce someone to change their beliefs or ideology as this constitutes a breach of their human rights.

Religious interventions should avoid focusing on a specific theological doctrine; instead, they should focus on teaching broad principles of diversity, peace and tolerance. Some of the promising elements of religious interventions include interventions that address practical and psychosocial R&R needs; one-on-one sessions that aim to expand the beneficiary's worldview to include different perspectives and interpretations, inviting them to critically think about violent extremist ideologies; and group sessions explore their differences in views and opinions.

4. FAMILY SUPPORT

Family engagement is a core component of a post-custodial R&R programs; it usually involves parents, relatives, or peers of the relevant individual. Family counselling can be provided by non-governmental organizations, children protection or other social workers, community police officers, or mental health workers. It includes advising on how to develop a positive relationship with the individual, deal with the psychological challenges he/she is facing, and manage any shame or security risks.

5. RECREATIONAL AND CULTURAL SUPPORT

Recreational and cultural opportunities, such as sports, theater, arts or music, can play an important role in non-custodial R&R interventions. They provide avenues for individuals to express themselves, boost their confidence, and create positive relationships with others. They can also provide an alternative form of support when traditional psychosocial support services are unavailable. In addition, drama and the arts can provoke critical thinking, while sports can be a powerful way to connect those delivering the interventions with young people who are detached from their communities and schools, offering opportunities to engage with and ultimately educate radicalized individuals.

WHO ARE THE SUPPORT PROVIDERS?

1. "FORMERS"

Individuals who have been through the R&R process can act as mentors; their credible experience with those who wish to leave violent extremism and radicalization that lead to terrorism (VERLT) behind, together with their ability to "speak the same language," can make them effective in building trust with the individual and the wider community. They also understand the processes associated with the progression into and out of violent extremist organizations and are thus often well-placed to identify and accurately assess indicators of risk as well as the needs of the individual. Nonetheless, caution should be exercised when involving them; they should be carefully vetted and well prepared before any engagement.

2. RELIGIOUS MENTORS

Trained religious mentors and counsellors can provide psychosocial and spiritual support, build trusting relationships with the individual's family, and identify contacts within their networks to assist with employment, housing, or educational opportunities. More importantly, they can start the re-inclusion of ex-offenders into faith communities and foster forgiveness and hope in both the receiving communities and ex-offenders.

3. PSYCHOLOGISTS AND SOCIAL WORKERS

Psychologists, psychiatrists, or trauma counsellors can assist by offering mental health treatment of depression and anxiety. In addition to assisting individuals in developing critical thinking skills and moving away from an extremist worldview, social workers can help individuals fulfil their practical needs, such as finding accommodation and securing a job. They can also help the individual's family coping with the situation and handling the stigma and security risks that may be involved and offering guidance on how best to interact with and support the individual.

4. CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

Civil society organizations play a crucial role in implementing government policies and interventions, and they often receive government funding to do so. Thus, they have a unique role to play in the R&R process, partly because they can often gain individuals' and communities' trust since they are not part of the government. They can offer various types of support such as religious counselling, legal aid,

vocational training, and educational opportunities. CSOs can also facilitate a smooth transition of ex-prisoners back into society. Moreover, women-led CSOs are also critical to addressing the unique needs of women involved in the R&R.

5. FAMILY MEMBERS AND CLOSE FRIENDS

Family members and close friends of the individual can help with designing and delivering R&R interventions. They can, for example, help individuals identify and build their strengths and skills, challenge individuals' rationales for supporting violence, offer a continued sense of belonging, and address grievances that can be a barrier to the long-term reconciliation that R&R requires. Before involving family members in R&R initiatives, careful attention should be paid to ensuring that they were not part of the reason for the individual's radicalization and that they are in a position to support rather than undermine the process.

6. POLICE OFFICERS

Police officers have a critical role in managing the risks associated with the individual and facilitating his/her resocialization process. They can contribute to the assessment of the individual's needs and mitigating the risk he/she may pose to the community. It is important, though, to find the right balance between mitigating risk and building trust. Police officers can also work with the individual before and after his/her release, so they can facilitate the transition process.

7. PROBATION WORKERS

Probation workers are often involved with offenders around the time of their release, so they can serve as a bridge between custodial and non-custodial R&R initiatives. Their work is important to initiate R&R programs in prison and to prepare for the post-prison transition. Their contribution to these programs vary and may include: developing and supporting re-entry plans; monitoring compliance with release restrictions; securing resources to fulfil the offender's basic needs upon release; and providing offenders with the tools to adjust to their post-release environment and to ultimately reintegrate into the community.

8. LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Local authorities can be key players in the design and implementation of non-custodial R&R initiatives as they are often responsible for most services required by beneficiaries. For instance, a local authority might be able to help an individual

find employment or accommodation even though jobs and housing might otherwise be hard to find. Local authorities can also coordinate multi-actor programs in their areas, serving as a bridge between the local community and the police and other security actors and also between local practitioners and the national government.

ENABLING EFFECTIVE MULTI-ACTOR INFORMATION SHARING AND COLLABORATION

Given that non-custodial R&R efforts involve a variety of actors, it is important to adopt an approach that allows for collaboration and information sharing. Achieving this, however, can be challenging. Below are two interesting examples on how to enhance collaboration between various agencies:

- **The Info Houses in Denmark:** This initiative brings together representatives from different agencies, such as the police and local government, who consider and assess cases on a bi-weekly basis. The team determines whether the individual may have committed a criminal offence and whether to continue to monitor or to intervene and what type of intervention, if any, to follow. The platform is publicly funded and because all team members have decision-making authority, decisions are taken and implemented swiftly.

- **Center of Excellence for De-radicalization, Germany:** The Center consists of a team of 10 experts, including ones in theology, politics, psychology, and sociology, as well as police officers. They conduct risk, needs, and threat assessments of potential clients, including those returning from conflict zones, identify service providers to address the identified needs, and then produce a management plan for each case, which is shared with the relevant local police officer assigned to work with the Center, who then oversees the implementation of the plan.

CAPACITY BUILDING

Developing and implementing non-custodial R&R initiatives requires investing in specialized training and tools and the strengthening of participating institutional capacities. This includes:

1. PRISON AND PROBATION SERVICES

A prison environment that is professional, secure, and not overcrowded is critical to reduce the risk

of an inmate being radicalized to violence and to facilitate the disengagement process beginning in prison. In addition, governments need to provide adequate funding and specialist training for probation workers to enhance their understanding of VERLT and help them manage the exceptional needs of terrorists upon their release as well as media scrutiny.

2. PSYCHOSOCIAL AND HEALTH WORKERS

Training may need to be provided for mental health workers on how to deliver trauma-based interventions, engage with “dangerous” individuals and collaborate with other professionals from different agencies. One of the most ambitious training programs is a comprehensive training course focused on R&R counselling being designed by the German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees; the course includes both theoretical and practical elements and will be mandatory for anyone who wishes to engage in R&R initiatives in partnership with the German government. In addition, steps need to be taken to address any capacity shortcomings in the health and care sector and to lower the cultural barriers to seeking help from mental health professionals that exist in certain cultures.

3. CIVIL SOCIETY

Civil society organizations (CSOs) need to be equipped with the relevant skills, knowledge, and resources if they are to maximize their contributions to R&R programs. For example, religious mentors may need some basic training in social work and psychology, or they need to have knowledge of relevant terrorist organizations or violent extremist ideologies.

Governments can enhance civil society’s involvement in R&R initiatives by building CSOs’ organizational capacity in relation to project management, financial administration, and monitoring and evaluation; facilitating knowledge sharing among CSOs and among CSOs and other practitioners; providing training on communication and outreach strategies; and supporting efforts to apply expertise from related fields.

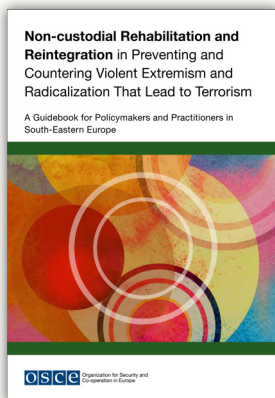
NEEDS OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN

When designing non-custodial R&R programs, the unique needs women and children have and the specific challenges they present should be considered. Women and girls, for example, are often viewed as victims. Thus, most of them are being treated outside the criminal justice system and often receive limited rehabilitation and reintegration support. Furthermore, those who have been victims of sexual violence face additional stigma from their communities and have distinct psychosocial and health needs; many have children, who may have been born of forced marriage and/or rape. Returning women may also suffer economic consequences as they need to provide for their households after a husband’s death on the battlefield.

Therefore, it is recommended that risk and needs assessment tools should be gender-sensitive and that practitioners should be trained by governments to identify and reduce unconscious bias in assessments. Interventions should also include elements tailored for women and girls to address, for example, sexual violence, parenting, and socioeconomic empowerment. Furthermore, female representatives, including law enforcement, psychosocial service providers, religious counsellors, and women leaders of CSOs should be involved in the design and delivery of the proposed interventions.

Children may have experienced severe trauma as a result of being witnesses to or victims of violence or because they may have committed violent acts. Therefore, a tailored and comprehensive support plan should be provided. This may include the development of a children-specific risk and needs assessment tool; a mental health and broader medical evaluation; educational support with the aim; and collaboration with local police and social services to balance the need to take into account the best interests of the child with the need to ensure public safety. Finally, special attention should be paid to the potential negative influence of social media and the Internet on disengagement from violence and reintegration.





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