



Final paper of Risk Assessment Tools

EuroPris Radicalisation Expert Group
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Introduction

Screening tools such as Risk Assessments are one of several instruments in the prevention or disengagement/deradicalisation process in dealing with (possible) violent extremist offenders.

According to various international recommendations, Risk Assessments as such should be carried out in multidisciplinary teams:

- to guarantee a multiple-check principle
- to avoid blind spots and
- to find common grounds in further decision-making

Risk Assessments applying to (conceivable) violent extremist offenders are quite new and the opinions about their effectiveness among experts, practitioners and public authorities differ. There are Member States working with Risk Assessments combating violent extremism and radicalisation, such as VERA-2R, ERG22+ and RADAR. Some Member States are still in the process of the implementation of screening tools, checklists, etc. whereas others doubt the need of further instruments.

Due to the fact that Risk Assessments for (potential) violent extremist offenders are fairly new, ongoing evaluation and research are essential to obtain more in depth insight in these issues. Among some Member States there is the idea of data pooling through international cooperation in accordance with data protection to validate and develop existing Risk Assessments as the target population of violent extremists is too small in every single country.

Risk Assessments Regarding Radicalisation and Violent Extremism

A. Scope

Bearing in mind the Guidelines for prison and probation services regarding radicalization and violent extremism adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 2 March 2016/ Recommendation CM/Rec (2014)3 of the Committee of Ministers to member States concerning dangerous offenders/ICCT Policy Brief December 2015/ Dealing with radicalization in a prison and probation context (RAN P&P) the use of risk assessment tools should include the following procedures:

- I. People at risk, pre-trial detainees and prisoners are the primary subjects of risk assessments.
- II. Psychologists and social workers, experts and researchers, prison staff as well as public authorities receiving specific training on screening tools are eligible for the use of risk assessments.

B. Basic Principles and General Considerations

- III. Preventing and tackling radicalisation and violent extremism shall be based on the rule of law and comply with international human rights standards. Failure to comply with these, is one of the factors which may contribute to increase radicalisation.
- IV. Risk Assessments in conformity of national procedures shall be based on professional and ethical standards and shall be reviewed and updated on a regular basis.
- V. Where there is exchange of information related to radicalisation and violent extremism between public authorities, experts and researchers, non-governmental institutions, prison and probation services, strict and clear procedures shall be agreed and respected in terms of privacy and data protection.
- VI. Risk Assessment instruments should be used to develop the most constructive and least restrictive interpretation of a measure or sanction. They are not designed to determine the sentence although their findings may be used constructively to indicate the need for interventions.
- VII. Risk Assessments should be conducted in an evidence-based and structured manner, incorporating appropriate validated tools and professional decision making.
- VIII. Practitioners carrying out Risk Assessments shall receive support from multidisciplinary teams as well as public authorities and prison services.
- IX. A clear distinction should be made between the offender's risk to the outside community and inside prison. These two risks should be evaluated separately.

C. Risk Assessment as a tool of monitoring a disengagement/deradicalization process

- X. In principal Risk Assessment is the process by which risk is understood: it examines the nature, seriousness and patterns of offences; it identifies the characteristics of the offenders and the circumstances that contribute to it; it informs and gives opportunity for appropriate decision making and to take action with the aim of reducing risk.
- XI. Assessments should be based on multiple sources of information to increase reliability:
 - 1) Personal data: about the individual and the offence
 - 2) Dynamic factors: such as employment, housing, mental health, family support, daily structures, etc. Changes in these factors in particular may form triggers to increase risk or mitigating circumstances that reduce risk.
 - 3) Clinical factors: professional judgement and experience, using the personal and professional experience to assess the information collected through interviews and file reading.
 - 4) Information from partners in a multi-agency framework: bringing together information from social workers, psychologists, prison staff, the police, intelligence services etc. about an individual's case.
- XII. Underlining the above Risk (and Needs) Assessments require interdisciplinary views. When initial and subsequent Risk (and Needs) Assessments of people at risk or offenders are carried out, special attention shall be paid to identify their vulnerability to radicalisation. In conformity with the existing national procedures regarding Risk Assessment the perspective of the individual should be recorded in relation to this. The person should be given the opportunity to challenge such Assessments.
- XIII. When developing indicators of radicalisation, staff shall be warned that such indicators are not to be considered in isolation but in the context of personal features and specific circumstances of a given case in order to avoid arbitrary conclusions.
- XIV. Risk Assessments should be seen as progressive and be periodically reviewed.
 - 1) Risk Assessments should be repeated on a regular basis by appropriately trained staff to meet the requirements of further tailor-made treatment programs or sentence planning. But also if otherwise necessary, allowing for a revision of the circumstances that change during the execution of the sentence
 - 2) Assessment practices should be responsive to the fact that the risk posed by an individual's offending changes over time: such change may be gradual or sudden.
- XV. The ongoing process of interventions as well as the adaption of Risk Assessments needs to be measured on their effectiveness. Outputs of Risk Assessments shall be passed on to relevant actors.

- XVI. Assessments should be coupled with opportunities for offenders to address their special risk-related needs and change their attitudes and behaviour. Therefore, offenders should be involved in these Assessments and should have the information about the process and access to the conclusions of the sentence planning.
- XVII. In order to establish individual sentence planning aimed at the successful rehabilitation of prisoners, educational and rehabilitative programmes must cover multiple factors, such as social, vocational, psychological and religious elements. The effectiveness implies a combination of individual intake and Risk Assessment tools.
- XVIII. Sufficient resources shall be allocated to carry out scientific research and evaluation of existing programs tackling radicalisation. Any of such programs shall be knowledge-based and shall be regularly reviewed.

D. Consideration of how to implement Risk Assessments

- XIX. Before adapting risk assessments following considerations should be taken into account:
- 1) Defining the risk population
 - 2) On which level should the Risk Assessment be carried out and by whom (prevention/disengagement/deradicalisation process; public authorities, social workers/psychologists, experts, prison staff, prison service authorities, intelligence services, police, non-governmental institutions)?
 - 3) Who should receive the necessary training of Risk Assessments (including group size)?
 - 4) When should the risk assessment finally be implemented?
 - 5) Are there various tools of Risk Assessments and which of these should be taken into consideration
- XX. After defining these reflections a mutual and accepted proposal with the providers of Risk Assessment should be undertaken defining the purpose, the duration of the implementation, the budget and further aspects. The possibility of ongoing consultations after the implementation might be useful and offered by the providers.
- XXI. Risk (and Needs) Assessments in line with the requested organisation or authority and on certain national standards have to be carried out on the basis of desk research, study visits and further consultations between the receiving organisation/public authority and the provider to refine the tools and to allow that the Assessment can be tested by practitioners focussing on linguistic and cultural sensitiveness.
- XXII. If the needs could finally be addressed, a training curriculum for practitioners can be prepared by the providers tailored to the institutional and national context.
- XXIII. The providers will accompany the requested organisation or authority implementing the Risk Assessment where needed (differ from the need of the requested party): from the conduction of the training, the general introduction into practice, further coaching and long-term evaluation.

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