Criminal Justice Summer Course

Barcelona, 3rd to 6th July 2018

WORKSHOP REPORT

Workshop Title:	**Exploring Alternatives to Detention**
Moderator:	John Stafford, United Kingdom
Leader 1:	Professor Ioan Durnescu, Romania
Leader 2:	Oomar Shariff Mulbocus, United Kingdom
Participants:	24 participants from 12 countries
Notes:	John Stafford

Impression: A very successful workshop with two leaders whose knowledge, expertise and backgrounds complemented each other extremely well, working together with a highly motivated, talented and committed group of participants from a variety of backgrounds ranging from researchers to practitioners. Attendance, punctuality and dedication to task was first rate. The group bonded extremely well, supporting and learning from each other which produced a synergy and a future network being established. Attention was paid to learning styles: the materials, presentations, group discussions, small group work on case studies all integrated well and powerfully. Stimulating, challenging and a privilege to be part of.

Introduction

The differing styles and the roles of the two workshop leaders worked well in tandem. Ioan Durnescu, a Professor at the University of Bucharest and a leading academic on the subject of desistance, expertly presented a comprehensive overview of radicalization and violent extremism. This was based on the most up to date research, consultation with experts and case studies, and then linked to practice theory. Ioan also presented an analysis of the differing structured assessment tools and interventions available for use by practitioners.

Oomar Mulbocus works as a Prevent Co-Ordinator in the UK, is a member of the Radicalization Awareness Network, an international speaker, facilitator and trainer with sixteen years of experience of working in this field, including face to face interventions with radicalized and extremist offenders. Oomar brought a powerful personal experience to the subject of recruitment, joining and leaving extremist networks.

John Stafford as a former Chief Probation Officer and head of a multi-agency criminal justice partnership was able to contribute his own operational and managerial perspective.

Workshop Methods

The aim of the workshop was to deliver a deeper understanding of deradicalisation and disengagement, with a particular relevance to Probation Services and a focus on practice. This included how to assess and determine risk and the main programmes and interventions available

in Europe. The workshop was delivered using presentations (based on evidence, lived experience, European guidelines and expert views) in combination with role plays, case study exercises, group discussions and working in small groups in order to accommodate different learning styles. It was highly interactive and enabled participants to share their particular national and professional work issues, experiences and diverse knowledge bases, stimulating an effective problem solving approach. The workshop investigated risk assessment and rehabilitation programmes using real life case studies.

Summary of Presentations

Session 1 - Professor Durnescu presented a comprehensive overview of radicalisation and deradicalisation/disengagement, based upon the most up to date scientific literature and case studies of deradicalised offenders. Participants introduced themselves and shared their experience either as victims of terrorism and/or as professionals working with this group.

Session 2 - The focus was on assessment led by Professor Durnescu:

- Understanding the importance of structured assessment
- A comparison of VERA2 and ERG22+
- Case Study
- Discussion on strengths and weaknesses, applicability

Session 3 - Themed "Experiencing being an Extremist". Oomar Mulbocus gave a powerful personal testimony of his involvement in radicalized and violent extremist groups, illustrating the main recruitment strategies employed by such networks, including cognitive opening, religious seeking, frame alignment etc. This was reinforced by group exercises and case study.

Session 4 - Oomar presented on Experiencing Desistance; opportunities, obstacles and resources. In this session he gave his personal and professional experiences in this area of work, followed by further exercises.

Session 5 - Professor Durnescu made a presentation followed by a discussion on the main principles of effective practice with violent extremists (CoE Guidelines 2016), linking them to other more general principles required in effective work with offenders (Dean 2016). What makes violent extremists differ from main stream violent offenders was explored. The most well-known deradicalisation and disengagement programs (Back on Track, Entre and HII), were described, discussed and then explored using case study exercises, identifying the limits and opportunities of the programmes.

Session 6 - Entitled Maintaining Change and Plans For The Future, Professor Durnescu introduced strategies to maintain change and disengagement. Mechanisms to support change were identified in the natural systems of ex-offenders. Ensuring social inclusion and the prevention of recidivism requires a multi-agency approach. This was explored and discussed following a case study and role-play.

Finally, participants identified personal action plans for implementing their new knowledge and skills on return to their workplace.

Key Learning Points

The workshop's key learning points were:

1. There is no single profile of a terrorist. There are predispositions in terms of worldviews, mindsets or psychological propensities:
    a. Authoritarianism.
    b. Dogmatism.
    c. Apocalypticism.
    d. Fundamentalist Mindset.

    But no distinguishing profile.

2. Webber and Kruglanski's '3 Ns' – needs, narratives and networks provides a helpful framework on why people become terrorists.

3. Borum's integrated model 2011:
    *   Predisposing life experiences.
    *   Activating situations.
    *   Predisposing vulnerabilities (e.g. needs).
    *   Social and group dynamics (access to a network).
    *   Ideology/narrative – collective narrative about the grievance and who is responsible.

4. Precht (2007):
    *   Pre-radicalistion – frustrations.
    *   Conversion and identification with radical Islam.
    *   Meeting other like-minded individuals.
    *   Indoctrination and other group bonding.
    *   Acts of terrorism.

5. Most people who join extremist groups eventually leave. It is a long, distressing and difficult process. Disengagement from a radicalised network is not enough. There has to be engagement in something else and practical help.

6. Ideas and ideology are important and professionals need to learn how to respectfully question or express them.

7. Probation Services and others should provide resources for new social relationships, reconnecting the ex-offender to society, provide new role models, enhanced coping etc.

8. Risk assessment tools are essential in structuring the assessment process, but require further validation on different populations and different cultural contexts as well as training in them for proper use and copyright. Two tools are appropriate for violent offenders and should be used together with other assessment tools. Sometimes access to non-open source data is required.

9. Assessment tools should be used for structuring the assessment process rather than actuarially – professional judgment is also necessary.

10. As a professional beware unconscious bias.

11. Also be aware of superficial compliance because the offender maybe in the "land of war" and will say what s(he) wants you to believe.

12. Principles of effective practice with violent extremists are contained in the CoE Guidelines 2016 and should be used together with other mainstream principles for effective practice e.g Dean 2016.

13. Violent extremists differ from mainstream violent offenders:
    *   Action for glorification, not personal gain.

- Selective empathy, not absence of empathy.
- Education or employment failure, not notable.
- Childrearing abuse not normally relevant.
- Less mental illness.
- Psychopathy not typical.
- Impulse control problems minimal.
- Attitudes ideological.
- Strategic lying, not pathological lying.
- Purposeful, planned not impulsive.
- Accepts responsibility.

14. The programmes developed for use with this offender group are all complex, resource intensive and require good individual risk assessment to individualise the intervention.
15. Change is hard. Maintaining it is even harder. Relapse prevention work is absolutely necessary as the ex-offender has to change their whole life. There are no shortcuts.
16. A network has to be established around the offender on a multi-agency basis for him/her to engage in.
17. The work requires resilience on behalf of the worker(s) as well as the ex-offender.

Key Practice Issues for the Future

1. There needs to be further development of assessment tools to better assess risk for this group of offender.

2. Resources must follow risk as this is a very resource hungry practice area.

3. Existing intervention programmes are in urgent need of evaluation regarding their targeting and effectiveness.

4. The EU should create a project on radicalisation which is not subject to the restrictive practices of current programmes and more open to practitioners across Europe.

5. Work needs to be undertaken to improve the resilience of staff working in this field and this should be included in future summer courses.

References – provided by the workshop leaders – for additional reading

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