



Workshop Report

National Workshop on Effective Implementation of Security Council Resolution 1624 (2005) and 2178 (2014)

Tunis, Tunisia, 3 - 4 November 2015





Introduction and Workshop Objectives

A two-day workshop took place on 3 and 4 November 2015 in Tunis, Tunisia, with the purpose of discussing an effective implementation of UN Security Council Resolutions 1624 (2005) and 2178 (2014). The meeting was aimed at the development of an effective, comprehensive and multi-stakeholder implementation action plan of the National Strategy Against Extremism and Terrorism that had been developed by the National Commission against Terrorism and Violent Extremism in Tunisia, that was established by the High Council for National Security on 12 February 2015. The workshop, facilitated by the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED) and co-organised by the Government of Tunisia, the International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague (ICCT) and the Human Security Collective (HSC), brought together representatives of various ministries and security agencies of the Tunisian government as well as a few representatives from civil society. The main objective of the workshop was to find openings for dialogue and engagement between both government and civil society representatives in order to implement the National Strategy Against Extremism and Terrorism.

Background Information

In June 2013, CTED together with ICCT and HSC hosted a regional workshop for member states from North Africa on the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1624.¹ The aim of the regional workshop was to raise awareness in a regional context of the issues of incitement to terrorism, the legal measures that need to be taken in full respect of human rights, and the need for prevention strategies and close cooperation with civil society organisations. This national workshop took place from 3-4 November 2015 and focussed on the situation in Tunisia, analysing and drafting policies that would address the threats and problems that Tunisia is facing with regard to violent extremism and foreign (terrorist) fighters. The programme of the workshop built on the National Strategy Against Extremism and Terrorism that had been drafted by the National Commission against Terrorism and Violent Extremism, with a main focus on action planning of the prevention pillar of the strategy.

Meeting Overview

The workshop was opened by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Tunisia, Mr. Taïeb Baccouche, who emphasised the complexity of terrorism and the need for the implementation of the National Strategy against Extremism and Terrorism to be multidimensional. Other statements in the opening panel were made by the Resident Coordinator of the UN office in Tunisia, Mr. Mounir Tabet, who noted that the Tunisian National Dialogue Quartet, who were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, was a good model to be followed. Mr. Jean-Phillippe Morange, on behalf of UN CTED, pointed out the importance of regularly revisiting the National Strategy in a multi-disciplinary and multi-stakeholder way and Mr.

¹ See http://www.un.org/en/sc/ctc/news/2013-07-15_Algers.html and <http://icct.nl/event/implementation-of-un-security-council-resolution-1624-2005/>.



Fulco van Deventer, on behalf of the facilitators, congratulated the National Commission with the Strategy and their willingness to discuss the contents with representatives of various ministries and security agencies of the Tunisian government, as well as a few representatives from civil society.

The workshop took place over the course of two days and was divided in four sessions. The sessions offered ample time for inter-active discussion, also building on the outcomes of several break-out sessions during which participants would develop concrete proposals in smaller groups for the implementation of the National Strategy Against Extremism and Terrorism, after which these proposals were presented to the plenary and discussed by all participants.

Action Planning Session of 1624 Workshop

Introducing Tunisia's National Strategy Against Extremism and Terrorism During Session I, representatives of the National Commission presented the National Strategy Against Extremism and Terrorism. The rationale to place the coordination within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was explained; the terrorist threat not only concerns Tunisia at the national level but is perceived as a global threat and therefore collaboration is required with international experts and institutes such as the UN. The need to develop a National Strategy was highlighted, noting that 2013 was a very tough year for Tunisia and the government had to look critically into the capacity of institutions to counter terrorism and how to balance freedom of expression with preventative measures.

As illustrated in table 1 on page 3, the Strategy consists of four pillars dealing with prevention, protection, prosecution, and response mechanism. Pillar I on prevention deals with the underlying causes of terrorism and violent extremism, includes the prohibition by law of incitement to terrorist acts, highlights the importance of promoting a culture of dialogue, tolerance and promotion of respect of different cultures and beliefs, and acknowledges the importance of the prevention of radicalisation in prisons. The problem of foreign (terrorist) fighters also takes central stage in this pillar. Pillar I also focuses on



the protection of vital infrastructure, and stresses the importance of exchange of information and coordination of activities. Pillar II on Protection mainly deals with the fight against terrorism, the development of CT protection plans, the cooperation between various intelligence agencies and the set-up of up-to-date information and a communication system. It also aims to put in place better border control mechanisms and control on the financing of terrorism. Pillar III on Prosecution, emphasises the strengthening of the national capacities to fight terrorism through the use of legal measures and underlines the importance of enhancing international legal cooperation. The focus of Pillar IV, the Response, is on the putting in place of a crisis response and management mechanism that

is aligned regionally and globally. Pillar IV also deals with victims of terrorism, the role of protected witnesses and the rights of detainees.

Furthermore, it was explained that the Strategy consists of eight tables that relate back to the crosscutting themes of the four pillars. The eight tables deal with: deradicalisation, police and intelligence, financing of terrorism, border control, cyber space, foreign fighters, justice, and finally international cooperation. Each table identifies the objective, the measures, the responsible stakeholder, the partners and the exchange mechanisms per topic.

Table 1: Overview of Focus of Pillars in Tunisia’s National Strategy against Extremism and Terrorism

Pillar I: Prevention	Pillar II: Protection	Pillar III: Prosecution	Pillar IV: Response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Addressing root causes •Prohibition by law of incitement •The role of education •Promoting a culture of peace and dialogue •Tolerance and respect of different cultures and beliefs •Prevention of radicalisation in prisons •Protection of vital infrastructure •Importance of exchange of information and coordination of activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Fight against terrorism •Development of CT protection plans •Cooperation between intelligence agencies •Setting up up-to-date information and communication system • Setting up Border Control mechanism • Control on the financing of terrorism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening of the national capacities to fight terrorism through use of legal measures •Enhancing international legal cooperation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Globally and regionally aligned crisis response and management mechanism •Victims of terrorism •Role of protected witnesses •Rights of detainees

Conditions Necessary for Effective Engagement Strategies

In **Session II**, the conditions necessary for effective engagement strategies were discussed. The speakers stressed that “counter-terrorism” or “countering violent extremism” is not the title used by civil society organisations when they execute programmes that strengthen resilience in society, yet these programmes are beneficial to those goals. The different language is used to ensure they preserve the trust of the constituencies in which they work. Trust is key to the kind of work that needs to be done in the communities. In order to ensure effective engagement between government and civil society, all stakeholders need to invest in trust building. This should be a long-term investment towards equal partnerships with respect for each other’s unique role. Civil society organisations offer both a bird’s eye view as well as a ground-level view, meaning they have the ability, depending on



their role, to keep an eye on the trends and effectiveness of policies as well as recognising the early-warning signals of communities and individuals at risk. The engagement process entails a balancing of different ideas and bringing on board multiple agendas. It will also be very important to engage women in this process and to let them take the lead in activities. Working towards effective engagement starts with a common understanding of the security challenges the society is facing. Developing a common security concept that is shared by all stakeholders in this process is therefore key. Especially reaching out to the communities that are most at risk in terms of radicalisation and infiltration, means stepping out of the comfort zone to ensure this category is not overlooked when implementing an engagement strategy.

Box 1: Steps Identified for Effective Engagement between Government and Civil Society

A number of steps were identified that could help this process along:

- information sharing;
- consultation;
- involvement;
- collaboration;
- and empowerment of the partners.

Finally, a precondition for any effective strategy is solid research into the root causes of the problems.

During the discussion, participants pointed out that guidelines are needed to distinguish reliable civil society partners from spoiler organisations. It was also mentioned that there is a need to set up a network of civil society organisations that can engage with the government. It might also be necessary to invest in capacity building of civil society in order to improve their effectiveness in countering violent extremism (CVE) activities. Civil society organisations can contribute in the areas of development, promoting democratisation and respect for human rights, rehabilitation and reintegration of detainees, and working with families. It was pointed out that civil society could offer good practices, for instance as credible messengers working according to the principles of community policing. Finally, the point was made that a system for follow-up and evaluation of policies is needed.

Implementation of Pillar I of the National Strategy

Since the focus of this workshop was on the implementation of pillar I of the National Strategy, in **Session III** the participants discussed the main objectives of pillar I.

Box 2: Main Objectives of Pillar I

- promoting a culture of peace and dialogue, and the role of education;
- countering incitement to terrorism and other legislation;
- addressing the root causes of violent extremism;
- development of a strategy on preventing violent extremism;
- counter-narratives and communication strategies;
- reintegration and rehabilitation of former fighters; and a definition of violent extremism.

On the **objective of promoting a culture of peace and dialogue and the role of education**, participants emphasised that dialogue is key, and should be something that is respected and practiced from the start. The focus should be on the youth. Peace dialogue should become an intrinsic part of the culture which should start in the family. It was therefore recommended to include it in the education curriculum. The elements of diversity should also be part and parcel of a culture of peace. Special attention needs to be paid to religious education. There might be a need to change the content of religious discourse through special channels. In order to effectively promote a culture of peace and dialogue it is important to analyse the fundamental causes of extremism, and unify the perspectives of experts to be incorporated in the elements of a CVE strategy. Finally on this objective, participants advised that also the mass media plays a role in promoting a culture of peace and dialogue.

On **the objective of countering incitement to terrorism**, participants stressed that legislation that criminalises 'incitement to terrorism' should be clear on the scope and the definition. It was suggested

that also indirect incitement should fall within this scope. Legislation on criminalising incitement to terrorism should go hand in hand with defining what uncivil or violent extremism entails. In addition to legislation, participants emphasised that anticipation and prevention is also necessary. The government could contribute by



stimulating a rationalisation of the religious discourse and by training imams and religious personnel in a moderate interpretation of Islam, which clearly distinguishes between religious interpretations that advocate hatred, intolerance or violence, and those that distance themselves from these interpretations and are rather more open to diversity. People who are in charge of religious discourse in certain institutions should be kept accountable, and if necessary mosques need to be closed. Participants also stressed that this is not only a responsibility of the state, but of the whole society.

On **addressing the root causes of violent extremism**, participants discussed the need for a comparative analysis of the root causes of violent extremism. It was emphasised that if there is a real gap, this needs to be filled before extremists take advantage of it. One needs to invest in a mind-set that rejects extremism. Mosques that mobilise extremists need to be neutralised. Erroneous ideas about religion and erroneous school curriculum need to be prevented. Additionally, they stressed the need for equality of opportunities and social justice. Finally on this objective, participants stressed the need to dry up the financial sources that facilitate the spreading of extremist ideas.

On **developing a strategy on preventing violent extremism (PVE)**, participants underlined the need for a multi-level strategy. It is considered important to also focus on the inland regions. As part of a PVE strategy, public-private partnerships need to be developed with internet companies to control the discourse on the internet. Media could play an important role by promoting a moderate religious discourse, which clearly distinguishes between religious interpretations that advocate hatred, intolerance or violence, and those that distance themselves from these interpretations. In the analysis



of the participants a religious identity is missing on a national level. In general, participants stressed the need to reinforce a communication strategy.

On **counter-narratives and communication strategy**, the participants emphasised that the discourse is shaped by the whole of society, and not only by imams. The mass media could play a role by launching a sensitisation campaign. In general, what needs to be communicated is a soft and moderate religious discourse, which takes a stand against the religious interpretations that advocate hatred, intolerance or violence, and counter-balances the extremist discourse. It was suggested that a website could be created for anti-extremist propaganda.

On **rehabilitation and reintegration of former fighters and detainees**, participants first of all stressed the need to identify who they are and how they have passed the borders. Participants also underlined to recognise that returnees are still human beings, and that a wrong response might have a negative impact. It was submitted that it might be necessary to separate different categories of prisoners in order to prevent further radicalisation. Participants recognised the need to create deradicalisation programmes. These programmes could go hand in hand with rehabilitation centres. These programmes should be based on a multi-disciplinary approach, including psychological support and based on a moderate religious discourse, which clearly distinguishes between religious interpretations that advocate hatred, intolerance or violence, and those that distance themselves from these interpretations and are rather more open to diversity. These programmes would be beneficial during detention or outside detention.

Box 3: Top 3 Objectives

Finally, the participants decided on a prioritisation of the objectives.
The top 3 objectives according to the participants are:

1. the promotion of a culture of peace and dialogue
2. the reintegration and rehabilitation of former fighters
3. addressing the root causes of violent extremism

On the second day, **session IV** started with a summary of the main findings of Day I. Interventions were made on behalf of the Ministries of Education, Social Affairs, Cultural Affairs, Communication and Religious affairs. It became clear that many relevant programmes are being developed, but that an exchange in information and experiences is missing. Participants noticed that there is a need for a mechanism to better coordinate these activities and even to facilitate cooperation.



The Ministry of Education emphasised the need to include the sense of citizenship into the curriculum: How to work in your community; how to be proud of your identity; principles of citizenship, critical thinking; and constructive criticism. Moreover, the need to work with other institutes that take care of drop-outs, emphasising sport and cultural activities and organising festivals and expositions to make them feel part of society is important. The Ministry of Education called for a unified approach in which all ministries

could work together. The Ministry of Social Affairs stressed the need to coordinate with the Ministry of Education on the phenomena of drop-outs.

Action Planning

Session V was a break-out session, during which the participants worked in small groups on action planning for five of the main objectives of Pillar I of the National Strategy. Each group worked on one particular objective. The main questions that needed to be addressed in these small groups included:

- What are the most relevant activities you are going to implement in order to support a particular objective of Pillar I?
- What are achievable goals for the first and second year?
- Who is the target group for each activity?
- How are you going to implement the activity?
- Who are the partners?
- Who takes the lead?
- What engagement mechanisms are in place or need to be set up?
- What are the necessary conditions that need to be fulfilled to facilitate this process?
- What (financial or technical) resources are needed?

After the break-out session, the small groups reported back to the plenary.

Group I on the *root causes of violent extremism* first presented their analysis of the root causes of violent extremism in Tunisia. They highlighted four main causes. First, they went back to the far remote underlying causes, explaining the impact neighbouring countries had on Tunisia in the 1980s as people fled (into Tunisia) from Algeria and Libya. Marginalisation of the rural regions in the north and the south has in particular impacted education. Centralisation is considered a problem and has an impact on the way of thinking and the mentality of people. This goes back to the period of independence. Particularly, tribal problems emerged after the revolution in different sections in the south. These tribal conflicts have even pushed people to pick up arms.



Secondly, the break-out group elaborated on the changing notion of family. What used to be a source of warmth and connection and functioned as a mechanism of resilience, is no longer fulfilling that role. Conflicts occur more and more within the families. Internet was perceived to play a large role in this process of further isolating people, since young people are no longer educated by their parents but rather by the internet. It was suggested though, that the internet could also play a positive role. Thirdly, Tunisian society is split between religious and liberal people. This gap is getting bigger. People seem to miss the skills to debate religious notions and rather choose to ignore religion. It seems young people are lacking an alternative culture with which they can identify. Fourthly, there is an absence of job opportunities. The break-out group suggests that one of the causes is related to the high unemployment rates. After the revolution, people seem to feel particularly hopeless, and deceived by the government for not following through on the promises made.

In developing an action plan, the break-out group stressed the importance of working with civil society and targeting different age categories. They suggested that a survey should be distributed to understand the motivation behind extremism in the different regions. After an assessment of these motivational factors, the report could be made public. They advised to print a booklet in which underlying factors are explained, in order for first line practitioners or anyone else to recognise the early-warning signals. Clear criteria should be developed on what defines a terrorist or violent extremist and this should be communicated as well. This information could also raise awareness among families of the risks their own children are running. They advised to expose the atrocities of terrorism to everyone, and call on everyone to take responsibility. The group recognised this must be a long-term effort in which debate and communication are key elements.

TEXTBOX I: Good Practice of an Engagement Strategy

Implementation of a CVE Strategy with Civil Society in Nigeria

In Nigeria the Office of the National Security Advisor (ONSA) introduced in 2014 a 'soft-approach' to counter violent extremism in 6 pilot states where the impact of Boko Haram is felt most. Civil society organisations working and residing in these states are acknowledged as crucial implementers and strategists of this approach as they are closely linked to the community level where recruitment and attacks take place on a daily base.

Over the last year a core group has been formed of more than 40 NGOs and CBOs that share among themselves and with the Nigerian government the same understanding of the root causes and the necessary actions to be taken to address these causes. The group is institutionalised in a multi-stakeholder network with the name PAVE (Partnership Against Violent Extremism) in which civil society and government at state and federal level take place. At this stage PAVE is building its own capacity on CVE and designing common projects to be started early 2016. An important result of PAVE has been the increased level of trust that has been built between government and CSO since the start of the network.

Group Table II on *rehabilitation and reintegration of former fighters and/or detainees*, first of all stressed the need to keep recognising these individuals as human beings with rights. This break-out group identified several steps that need to be taken in order to set up an effective rehabilitation and reintegration programme for former fighters and detainees. Firstly, it will be crucial to understand the profile of individuals, in order to know who we are talking about, what their particular needs are, whether they are in the process of being tried. Minors and women might have different needs. Although, the Ministry of Justice through the directorate of prisons needs to be in the lead of the



process, various other stakeholders will need to play a role as well. These include the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Religious affairs, families and civil society organisations. The overall objective of the programme that needs to be designed is to build the self-confidence of the former fighters and/ or detainees. The individualised intervention programme should include psychological support, rehabilitation activities, sensitisation sessions to religion, sports activities, and other skills training in order to prepare them for reintegration into society. An individual will go through different phases and his progress will need to be monitored.

The break-out group suggested that these detainees should be separated in the prisons with intense observation, but not to the extent that they will feel too much excluded, since that might have an undermining effect.

The break-out group estimated that Tunisia would need both technical and financial support of international partners to set up a proper rehabilitation and reintegration programme and build the necessary competences with the various stakeholders.

TEXTBOX II: Good Practices on Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Violent Extremist Offenders

Abstract from Global Counterterrorism Forum's [Rome Memorandum on Good Practices for Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Violent Extremist Offenders](#)

Good Practice Number 1: In developing a rehabilitation program, it is important to first clearly define the program's goals and objectives and identify indicators of success and failure. In developing a successful rehabilitation program, the first questions that need to be answered are what the goals of this program, and how success can be defined and measured. Measurable objectives could be formulated that define which actors are involved in the initiative, what the desired results are, how progress is measured, and which specific outcomes are expected as a result of the intervention. In defining the goals and objectives for a rehabilitation program, countries could first conduct a comprehensive risk and threat assessment. Perhaps most important is defining from the outset whether the goal of the program is to change the views or merely the behavior of the inmates (deradicalisation vs. disengagement). A rehabilitation that aims for the latter is likely to be more successful in achieving its goals, but this approach may be less effective in the long-term in reducing the appeal of violent extremist ideologies and reducing the potential for further violence and terrorism. A second question for countries to consider, as appropriate, is whether the program will focus on lower and mid-level violent extremists or those in leadership (i.e. individual or collective disengagement) or both. Focusing on the leadership may have a more significant impact in the longer term, but may be more difficult to achieve. As appropriate, States could also consider establishing a broad set of metrics to gauge success, particularly those that help determine the longer term effectiveness of the programme. Recidivism has been the most commonly used statistic to judge the success of the programs. While this is clearly an important measure, there are several limitations. Not all re-offenders will be caught and prosecuted, and there are also many cases where countries lose track of the individuals who have been through these programs. As appropriate, States could consider developing a wider set of metrics which look not only at whether those individuals who have participated in the programs are caught reoffending, but also on whether they are serving as a negative influence on others to join the terrorist cause, and on the extent to which they have successfully reintegrated back into society.

(...)

Good Practice Number 3: An important first step can be developing an effective intake, assessment & classification system for new inmates. The important first steps in correctional management begin when a new inmate enters the prison facility. Target populations of rehabilitation programs could thus be narrowly and unambiguously defined according to set criteria. Knowing as much as possible about the inmate's personal background, criminal history, personality traits, ideology and behaviour in prison is important for making sound classification decisions and in designing effective individual rehabilitation programs. Studies have shown that there are a wide variety of motivations and factors that have pushed individuals towards violent extremism. Understanding why individual inmates have gone down the path of

violent extremism is critical to the design of their rehabilitation program and should be an integral part of the intake and assessment process. Accurate, on-going assessment of individual needs and risks is an important element in rehabilitation. While these types of risk assessment protocols can be administered at the outset – and can be used to shape the initial classification decisions regarding individual inmates -- it is particularly important that this be done on an ongoing basis. In fact, the assessments performed later in the process may be more accurate as correctional officers will have had more time to interact with and observe the inmate. Re-administering risk assessment protocols at regular intervals is important to inform risk assessment and management decisions including placement, program progression and security classification. The results of these periodic assessments will also assist prison officials in estimating the impact of the intervention strategies, detecting changes in prisoner attitudes, and deciding whether the particular intervention strategies need to be adjusted. The bottom line is that different categories of prisoners may require different intervention strategies according to the risk indicators identified in the course of their assessment.

Rehabilitative programs could also be tailor-made to fit the unique characteristics of individual inmates. For example, convicted terrorists may need a different type of program than individuals incarcerated for non-terrorism offenses who are suspected of having violent extremist views. A different approach may also be required for long-term versus short-term inmates, and for extremist leaders versus followers. For instance, whereas rehabilitative efforts for low-risk prisoners might involve extensive engagement of fellow inmates and external communities, programs for high-risk prisoners may need to be adapted to a more extensive security context and may require less involvement of third parties. Similarly, some individuals might radicalize or improperly influence other inmates, including non-terrorists. In some cases, it might be appropriate to segregate such individuals by assigning them to separate housing units in order to deny violent extremists the opportunity to influence vulnerable prisoners in the general population. In addition, prisons could also assess during the intake process which individuals are suitable candidates for rehabilitation programs and which are not. Rehabilitation and reintegration programs have a greater chance of success when inmates are willing participants. Since some individuals may be reluctant or unwilling to cooperate, relevant national institutions can make careful evaluations of who should be included in these programs and assess the necessary prerequisites according to relevant, fair and transparent criteria.

See also ICCT Paper [*Designing Rehabilitation and Reintegration Programmes for Violent Extremist Offenders: A Realist Approach*](#)

Group III on *countering incitement to terrorism and violent extremism*

proposed to deal with this objective through an intensive training session with imams, religious leaders and civil society, and concentrate these activities on all regions in the country. The proposed training programme would take 2 years. The first year would entail an intensive training, followed in the second year with the evaluation of the imams. With respect to legislation, the break-out group argued that the concept should be clearly defined in the criminal code and that the scope should also include indirect incitement.



The participants of this break-out group furthermore stressed that countering incitement also entails prevention activities. This should start with awareness raising among vulnerable young people and their families and communities in order for them to recognise the first symptoms of radicalisation. These capacity building activities could entail training sessions or public events such as culture activities to bring the message across.



TEXTBOX III: Good Practice on Legislating

Abstract from ICCT-paper: Incitement to terrorism: A matter of Prevention or Repression?

There are 5 elements that should be taking into account when legislating incitement to terrorism:

1. Target conduct: It concerns inciting *terrorism*, so a definition in criminal law is needed to define the scope of that conduct (terrorism).
2. Content of speech: Should that concern incitement or also apologise? Should direct or indirect provocation also fall under the scope? What about glorification or denigration of victims? One can assume that it includes a direct call to engage in a terrorist act, but does it also include other forms of speech that vocalise a more indirect support for terrorism? For instance in the sowing and nurturing in their audience the ideological foundation from which the willingness to act then emerges. In this category, one finds an element of accumulation until a certain threshold is passed.
3. Public versus non-public speech? And how public? Are statements in a madrasa public? In a living room where a meeting of like-minded people take place? One could use as an indicator that the speech needs to be directed at a non-specific audience rather than a private communication to an individual or a specifically defined group, but than anything on a special blog or closed forum would fall outside the scope. For this, it is important to take the totality of the circumstances into account.
4. Double intent (mens rea): There needs to be an intent to commit the criminal act of incitement and the specific intent of terrorism to be committed as a result of it. One would therefore require to have knowledge of the impact of the speech.
5. Causal link: this is again a question of threshold. It is advised to proof imminence and likelihood, and direct and immediate connection between the speech and the likelihood or occurrence of such violence. These criteria have been set in various judicial cases as requirements that will prevent premature restriction of the freedom of speech. Yet the terrorist attack itself does not need to have taken place. In considering the significance and the credible nature of the danger, the author and the address of the message, as well as the context in which the offence is committed, should be taken into account.

Group IV on *counter-narratives* presented a plan on how to define a moderate religious discourse. The participants explain that such a discourse should be related to reality, in harmony with the national identity and based on the national heritage. Moreover, religious experts should explain how the moderate enlightened interpretation of Islam relates to modern live and the cultural heritage. Such interpretation should furthermore be in line with respect for human rights and make a distinction between religious interpretations that advocate hatred, intolerance or violence, and those that distance themselves from these interpretation and are rather more open to diversity. Since part of the problem with the spreading of extremist mainly wahabist messages is perceived to origin from the satellite channels from the Gulf region, that are broadcasting hate preachers and politicians from islamist parties allied with these channels, the government needs to take action against these channels; and the mass media should play its role in spreading a moderate narrative and educating on the interpretation of the Islam.

Apart from using the mass media, in particular schools and institutes specialised in religion where young people and university students are coming, should be targeted.



TEXTBOX IV: Good Practice on Counter Narratives

Abstract from ICCT paper: [Responding to Cyber Jihad: Towards an Effective Counter Narrative](#)

Counter-actions against cyber jihad can be repressive measures and soft measures. Repressive measures are focussed on denial of access to the extremist narratives that are spread by terrorist organisations and their supporters, by taking down websites or blocking messages, as well as the prohibition of communicating and spreading radical content, and henceforth criminal prosecution of those behind it. The effectiveness of these repressive, negative and punitive measures is highly debatable. For instance the removal of content on the internet by governments ('take down strategy') has a limited effect, since it is very easy to set up new –as yet unknown to authorities- websites to repost the content. (...)

While 'take down measures' target the open-access websites, effective 'take downs' should also aim to take down the different (hidden) levels of platforms used for communication. However, this policy might deprive intelligence services of a surveillance opportunity, if they lose the point of entrance to vital information about the extremist organisation. (...)

In the category of soft measures, (...), there are four different categories of strategic communication. The first three categories relate to the ways in which actors can respond to the narratives of jihadist organisations. The fourth category is distinct, and deals with the manner in which the activities of jihadist organisation are reported and discussed in the public domain of the regular media. The first category concerns public information campaigns with regard to Western involvement in conflict zones, the explanation of the foreign policy position with regard to sensitive topics, and a narrative of one's own with regard to Western values. Public information campaigns could also take shape if government authorities would consistently share fact sheets with regular media desks, in order for them to report on those in their news bulletins and newspapers. This category seems obvious, but is often taken for granted, and therefore not carefully considered. It furthermore only contributes effectively as a positive instrument against the cyber jihad, when it is perceived as a genuine message. This implies that a message in itself is not enough, if there aren't any actions showing for it, or –worse- if actions are contradicting what is being proclaimed. (...)The second category concerns the *alternative narrative*. Here, it is important to challenge the extremist narrative, and to sow seeds of doubt in the minds of those who are on a quest for guidance in their lives. It might also contribute to the ability of critical thinking, and educating those who are religious illiterates.

An example of such an alternative narrative is the programme called 'Radical Middle Way', which was founded in the UK after the 7/7 attacks on the London transport systems. The programme is supported by the Home Office's Research Information and Communication Unit (RICU). It is a network aimed to connect moderate Islamic scholars and other credible community leaders with other Muslims in order to discuss the role and place of religion in the 21st century. (...)In order to be able to produce an effective alternative narrative, it is vital that one understands the motivational factors of those who are radicalised towards an extremist interpretation of Islam. In response to some of the motivational factors, especially the ones that relate to grievances, it is possible to point to alternative (non-violent) ways to address these grievances. (...)

A counter narrative [the third category] should directly counter the (stream of) extremist messages that are sent around. This could include debunking myths, responding to misrepresentation of facts, showing the atrocities committed, and piercing the aura of heroism and camaraderie. Formulating and communicating effective counter narratives start also with an in-depth understanding of the various aspects of the extremist narratives. An effective counter narrative campaign furthermore requires a long-term commitment of a variety of stakeholders and commitment to pro-actively search for the narratives that need countering. They should thus be timely and responsive to events.

An example of a counter narrative programme is the 'Say No to Terror' online campaign 'Noise'.

'Say No to Terror' is a communication campaign which uses a variety of mechanisms including short videos and posters for communicating a counter narrative to selected elements of the terrorist narrative to be communicated via various media outlets. The website is entirely in Arabic and hosts information content as well as videos, posters and links to social media platforms. The narrative that is countered is the master narrative of Al-Qaeda which claims that the West is waging war on Islam, that the West is the major enemy, Muslim rulers are the agents of the West, the establishment of Israel is a humiliation and an injustice that Muslims must rectify, Muslims have a duty to wage violent jihad, self-sacrifice is the route to victory, and ending injustice and suffering requires restoring the Caliphate. In the message to counter the extremist narrative this campaign emphasises that those who join terrorist groups are misled and that the terrorist lifestyle is damaging. It moreover stresses that terrorism destroys individuals and families. It thus communicates that terrorists are the real enemy, the real oppressors who attempt to brainwash children and youth. Muslims are suffering at the hands of terrorist criminals who kill other Muslims.

It also aims at undermining the heroic image of terrorist leaders, claiming that they are liars and manipulators, who use Islam to serve their personal agenda. In the campaign, there is also focus on the obligation of all Muslims to be vigilant against terrorist manipulators and to protect themselves and their families from the scourge of terrorism. In contrast with the master narrative of al-Qaeda which imposes on Muslims a religiously sanctioned moral obligation to contribute to a violent jihad, the 'Say No to Terror' campaign communicates moral obligation that follows from an interpretation of the Quran to protect themselves from extremism and terrorism. (...)

A counter narrative should directly counter the (stream of) extremist messages that are sent around. This could include debunking myths, responding to misrepresentation of facts, showing the atrocities committed, and piercing the aura of heroism and camaraderie. Formulating and communicating effective counter narratives start also with an in-depth understanding of the various aspects of the extremist narratives. An effective counter narrative campaign furthermore requires a long-term commitment of a variety of stakeholders and commitment to pro-actively search for the narratives that need countering. They should thus be timely and responsive to events.

Group V on *dialogue and culture of peace and tolerance, and the role of education* presented their

idea to establish an observatory, which would be an independent state institution to monitor extremism. This observatory should create a database with the relevant information on hot spots of extremism and international experiences with counter measures. The observatory will define the road map to train experts in research and create a knowledge network



with international experts. Additionally, dedicated programmes could be developed through this observatory that should target parents and young people. They should be engaged in disseminating the knowledge and participate in public campaigning activities to raise awareness.

TEXTBOX V: Good Practice on Organising Research and Dissemination of Practitioners' Experiences

The **Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN)** was established by the European Commission of the European Union in 2011. RAN functions as a network that connects first-line practitioners, field experts, social workers, teachers, NGO's, civil society organisations, victims' groups, local authorities, law enforcement, academics and others involved in preventing radicalisation and violent extremism throughout Europe. Recently, the RAN Centre of Excellence was established, which has nine different working groups:

- RAN C&N: Communications & Narratives
- RAN EDU: Education
- RAN EXIT: Exit strategies
- RAN LOCAL: Local authorities
- RAN P&P: Prison & Probation
- RAN POL: Police & Law Enforcement
- RAN H&SC: Health & Social Care
- RAN YF & C: Youth, Families & Communities
- RAN RVT: Remembrance of Victims

The RAN working groups gather good practices on the various topics and present policy recommendations to the EU and the Member States. See [this link](#) for more info.



During the **closing session**, many participants expressed appreciation for the two-day workshop, as it provided space to discuss ideas for the implementation of the National Strategy with representatives from many ministries and few civil society representatives. There was a genuine appreciation of the many new ideas shared as a result of this multi-stakeholder approach. Therefore the need for follow-up engagement mechanisms was stressed by the participants. In order to ensure that the National Strategy would be implemented in an inclusive, multi-stakeholder and multi-disciplinary manner, the participants underlined the fact that such mechanism is not yet in place and that they would benefit from third party facilitation to organise themselves in defining the kind of mechanism that would fit their needs and the overall objective.

Concluding Remarks and Moderator's Recommendations

The main objective of the workshop was to find openings for dialogue and engagement between both government and civil society representatives in order to implement the objectives of Pillar I of the National Strategy Against Extremism and Terrorism. The main objectives of Pillar I are:

- promoting a culture of peace and dialogue, and the role of education;
- countering incitement to terrorism and other legislation;
- addressing the root causes of violent extremism;
- development of a strategy on preventing violent extremism;
- counter-narratives and communication strategies;
- reintegration and rehabilitation of former fighters; and a definition of violent extremism.

The participants decided on a prioritisation of the objectives. The top 3 objectives according to the participants are:

1. the promotion of a culture of peace and dialogue
2. the reintegration and rehabilitation of former fighters
3. addressing the root causes of violent extremism

In order to ensure effective engagement between government and civil society, all stakeholders need to invest in trust building. This should be a long-term investment towards equal partnerships with respect for each other's unique role. It will also be very important to engage women in this process and to let them take the lead in activities. Working towards effective engagement starts with a common understanding of the security challenges the society is facing. Developing a common security concept that is shared by all stakeholders in this process is therefore key. A number of steps were identified that could help this process along:

- information sharing;
- consultation;
- involvement;



- collaboration;
- and empowerment of the partners.

A precondition for any effective strategy is solid research into the root causes of the problems.

A start with action planning of the objectives of Pillar I was made based on a series of leading questions. However, follow-up and implementation of the proposed concrete measures still needs to be secured. The moderators recommend the establishment of a multi-stakeholder mechanism with the participation of all relevant actors to assess the next steps that need to be taken. A third party could facilitate this proces, and make an assessment of the mechanism(s) that suits the wishes of the different stakeholders best and which ensures an effective implementation of the National Strategy.