# Prevention of Radicalisation

## Proceedings of the joint Policy Lab of the EUKN
## in Belgium, France and the Netherlands

*Report of the Policy lab organised on 20 September 2016 in Brussels*

Prepared by the EUKN Secretariat
Date: 28 April 2017

# Table of contents

# 1. Summary

On 20 September 2016, the European Urban Knowledge Network (EUKN) organised a Policy Lab in Brussels in cooperation with its French, Belgian and Dutch partners on the prevention of radicalisation in France, Belgium and the Netherlands. This report details the main findings of the meeting. The discussion is summarised in the report in 10 statements and recommendations.

## Statements and recommendations

1. A global approach aimed at preventing violent extremist acts from being committed requires not only anti-terrorism measures centred around security, but also preventive policies focusing on the conditions in which radicalisation develops and the causes behind it. Although preventive policies are difficult to assess and are often more costly than repressive policies, they are widely acknowledged as being essential and should be strengthened. This Policy Lab was dedicated to the prevention of radicalisation. Effective preventive policies should in fact pay attention to towns and cities and play a central role for local authorities in the development of measures that go on to be upheld at all territorial levels.

2. An integrated approach that is aimed at countering radicalisation should include measures aimed at preventing the radicalisation of vulnerable individuals, the broader radicalisation of people at risk and at reintegrating radicalised people that, among other things, leads them to renounce violent acts. These challenges are receiving increasing attention in Belgium, France and the Netherlands, although there are substantial differences between national and local policies. These can mainly be explained by differences in the distribution of competencies and powers between national, regional and local authorities, and also through the difference in social contexts within which the radicalisation process emerges.

3. Aside from these differences, many similarities exist. The three countries attach great importance to knowledge and to spotting radicalisation at an early stage, to different parties and networks working together and to strengthening the resilience of, and expanding opportunities for, vulnerable groups in society. Young people who have a history of petty crime, for example, appear to have less protection against Jihadist propaganda.

4. There are many obstacles in the way of implementing a preventive approach to radicalisation, mainly because it requires professionals and officials from a variety of backgrounds and institutional environments to work together. These obstacles include problems for some groups of professionals to exchange information (due to professional secrecy), and interpretations of secularity

that prevent the potential of communities and religious institutions from being harnessed.

5. It is not possible to prevent radicalisation without close collaboration on the part of everyone concerned. Not only professionals, but people in civil society, families and parents also have to get involved in raising awareness of radicalisation, identifying risky situations and providing support for people—especially young people—who are in danger of radicalisation.

6. The radicalisation process is complex. It is also subject to many influences, each of which will differ from one individual to the next. Training for officials and professionals is crucial. The three countries that took part in the Policy Lab offer training to tackle radicalisation, social tensions and identity issues among young people. This training often takes in the bigger picture to ensure that the subjects understand the reality of the use of religious speech for criminal ends by some individuals so that this does not result in the stigmatisation of all members of that religion. This training must be reinforced, improved and made available to as many groups of professionals and officials as possible, and to individuals from communities that present a risk of radicalisation.

7. Prevention should be based on a policy of inclusion for people vulnerable to radicalisation, which in turn requires greater understanding as to the causes and various dimensions of radicalisation, as well as of the connections that exist between radicalisation and the social fragmentation and exclusion process. An integrated approach of preventive policies, including support for deprived areas and people at risk, is needed to exploit them to their full potential and to strengthen social cohesion. Multidisciplinary analyses with professionals, managed by individual towns, are effective ways of working.

8. Any policy to prevent radicalisation must use existing preventive and security policies, as well as general urban and social integration policies. The 'politics of the city' targeting deprived areas, safe houses in the Netherlands and local safe units in Belgium are examples of this. To counter radicalisation, young people at risk also need to be provided with support for their education and for their inclusion in the world of work.

9. The radicalisation process changes constantly and very quickly. Recently, we have seen an increasing number of women and converts becoming radicalised. Preventive policies therefore need to fully consider these changes, while paying attention to specific local matters.

10. A lot of local authorities work to mobilise their resources to encourage mutual understanding between groups, through which various forms of freedom of conscience can manifest themselves. Countering alienation, promoting

solidarity and intercultural dialogue are crucial for this purpose. The sharing of knowledge between local authorities in these areas needs to be developed further.

## 2. Introduction

Avoiding and combating radicalisation, extremism and polarisation is one of the most pressing contemporary challenges for national and local authorities across Europe. Following numerous attacks and many threats, the authorities in a number of countries have developed a solid security policy. However, the fight against radicalisation and extremism requires not only suppression, but also prevention.

On 20 September 2016, the EUKN organised a Policy Lab at the Residence Palace in Brussels devoted to the prevention of radicalisation in France, Belgium and the Netherlands. This Policy Lab offered support to these three EUKN members in the development of effective policies for the prevention of radicalisation at the local level through shared knowledge and experiences and through the possibility of benefiting from a network of collaboration and dialogue. More than 130 representatives from the local and national authorities, centres of expertise and other relevant organisations attended the meeting.

The EUKN organised the Policy Lab in association with its partners in Belgium, France and the Netherlands: in Belgium, the Federal Public Department for Social Integration, Combating Poverty, the Social Economy and Policy for Major Cities (SPP IS); the General Commission for Equality in Territories in France; and the Ministry for the Interior and Relations in the Netherlands. These bodies are responsible for urban and social policy at the national level.

Following the various parts of the Policy Lab, this report presents the main observations, findings and recommendations from the presentations and discussions. The general conclusion summarises the main statements and the lessons drawn from the Policy Lab.

## 3. Launch and opening speech

### Welcome and opening, Mr Julien van Geertsom

*President of the SPP IS (Belgium)*

Mr Julien van Geerstsom reminded participants of the fact that the Policy Lab had initially been intended to take place on 23 March 2016, but it was cancelled at

the last minute due to the terrorist attacks of 22 March in Brussels. One of the attacks took place just a hundred metres from the location scheduled for the Policy Lab. Over the course of the six months that had passed between the original and actual dates for the meeting, a number of attacks had been carried out in Europe while even more had been thwarted by the police. This serves to underline the urgency of the issue.

To counter the threat of radicalisation and violent extremism, repressive measures will naturally be needed. But a policy of preventing radicalisation is equally necessary in order to combat radicalisation at an early stage and to eliminate the causes and the breeding grounds that enable it to flourish.

To do this, **policies in favour of an inclusive society** need to be drawn up and implemented, with the following key elements:

- A **multidimensional and integrated approach** focusing on the many causes and on the diversity of the processes of radicalisation.
- The **elimination of situations conducive to the development** of radicalisation.
- An **emphasis placed on the role of towns and cities**, because radicalisation is mainly a product of these environments.
- **Collaboration** with everyone concerned and the cooperation and exchange of **cross-border** knowledge. The EUKN Policy Lab is an example of this.
- Defending and promoting the **fundamental values of freedom, equality and fraternity** and placing them at the **heart** of the response to radicalisation.

**Belgium** uses an inclusive, multidimensional and integrated approach. Politics and projects in major cities play a major role in producing an inclusive society.


## Opening speech: Radicalisation in France, Belgium and the Netherlands, by Dr. Bibi van Ginkel

*Senior Researcher at the Clingendael Institute (Netherlands)*

Bibi van Ginkel applauds the **emphasis placed on towns and cities.** The fight against radicalisation has for too long been considered the sole responsibility of national governments, even though the approach requires a local vision. Islamic radicalisation in Europe is also typically an urban problem. Studies show[1] huge

---

[1]      Bibi van Ginkel and Eva Entenmann (2016) The Foreign Fighters Phenomenon in the European Union; Profiles, Threats & Policies. ICCT Research Paper, The Hague.

differences in the anti-radicalisation policies of European countries. These relate to the differences in national and local situations.

The **situation in terms of security** in France, Belgium and the Netherlands differs but, across all three countries, the threat of extremism is palpable, and terrorist attacks have taken place. Concerning these three countries, in quantitative terms, Belgium has experienced the largest proportion of departures for Iraq and Syria, the largest numbers of such people in absolute figures have come from France, and the Netherlands sits between the two.

The development of an effective policy requires work on understanding radicalisation. The radicalisation process is complex and subject to many separate influences that differ from one person to the next, combined with different issues. Generally speaking, one can distinguish among different **factors, mechanisms and stages of radicalisation.** Radicalisation often begins with a so-called cognitive opening via online recruiters or contacts. Then come the phases of interest, understanding and support to individuals, even a commitment to action. Certain **factors** can make individuals vulnerable to radical ideologies. There are also conditions (triggers) that can put them on the road to radicalisation, such as a traumatic event or mental issues. The **many push and pull factors** can vary based on the context and the individual. They act at the **micro, meso or macro level**. We can cite feelings of discrimination and exclusion, criminality, seeking an identity or simply a desire for adventure, pressure from a group of friends – all of these aspects can play a role. The so-called Islamic State (IS) exploits the factors that make these individuals vulnerable to radicalisation and **offers a response to feelings of injustice and to the need for an identity.** IS offers young people an attractive global solution, the possibility of becoming a hero out of nothing ('**from zero to hero**') and to have a new goal in life.

The **role of religion** varies but is often limited. Young people who become radicalised do not always act for deeply religious reasons, and they often have little understanding of Islam. Social networks and group dynamics often play an important role. Individuals radicalise themselves, strengthening their relationships with people they find in the same state of mind as them, while cutting off ties with family members and friends.

The phenomenon of **radicalisation is constantly changing,** and it must remain under constant scrutiny. The process of radicalisation is becoming faster today. The Internet and social networks play an important role in it. The **profile of people who leave to join IS** is also changing. We are witnessing an increasing number of women, converts and young middle-class people. It is striking that many have a record of petty criminality and street violence, which can lead to a radical break.

There are **big differences in the number of young people becoming radicalised** between countries, regions and cities. There are fewer people leaving for Syria and Iraq from southern Europe than from the north-west regions of the continent. North-western Europe now has more young people of immigrant extraction who were born and grew up in these European countries but who do not always feel accepted. There are also major differences from one city to the next in the number of people leaving for Syria based on demographic and historical characteristics, and probably based on the political context.

**What makes for an effective policy for the prevention of radicalisation?** In our three countries, we are attaching increasing importance to a local, customised approach. A **security policy** is essential, but this must be **balanced by a preventive policy**. Not all EU Member States are as advanced in terms of preventive policies. Repressive measures that are effective in the short term may have more harmful effects over the long term.

National and local authorities need to develop a general **preventive policy** and have a **wider range of tools** at their disposal to be capable of providing a customised approach. It is also important to extend the policy to other areas, using a strategy against radicalisation and paying attention to communication. The authorities need to take care in their use of labels that can stigmatise groups and messages that are not received by other groups. The government needs to demonstrate its openness to the people in terms of the policy it employs, but it also requires sufficient openness to learn from its mistakes.

*The video registration of the keynote Dr. Bibi van Ginkel can be watched on YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dn9dvYQdZwU*

## 4. Results of the two panels

Over the course of two consecutive panels in the presence of mayors and representatives from national and regional authorities, moderated by Mr Mart Grisel, Director of the EUKN, discussions were held on the policy of prevention.

## Panel of mayors from Vilvorde and Amsterdam Nieuw-West

Participants on the first panel:

- Mr Achmed Baâdoud, Chairman of the Administrative Board for the Amsterdam Nieuw-West district (Netherlands)
- Mr Hans Bonte, Mayor of Vilvorde (Belgium)

The mayor of the French town of Lomme sent his apologies. Two representatives from the French cities of Strasbourg and Arras replaced him and provided a brief explanation of the approach used in their cities.

During the discussion, the issue of understanding how these cities were able to develop an integrated policy for the prevention of radicalisation was tackled, as was the issue of how their respective national or regional governments were able to provide support.

In both Amsterdam (with the murder of Theo van Gogh in 2004) and Vilvorde (where there are a lot of people trying to join IS), there was a clear reason to develop a local policy to counter radicalisation. Vilvorde and Amsterdam Nieuw-West are at increased risk: Vilvorde has had a relatively high number of people travelling to Syria, while Amsterdam Nieuw-West has developed a policy aimed at countering radicalisation since the murder of Theo van Gogh by an Islamic extremist in 2004. Amsterdam Nieuw-West is one of the most multicultural neighbourhoods in the Netherlands.

The starting point for the policies in both countries was fairly similar. In Vilvorde, the key word is '**relationships**', whereas Amsterdam Nieuw-West emphasises the **fight against alienation** and the chances offered to groups at risk. Young people at risk are exposed to radicalisation because they are seeking an identity. Waiting for them to **adapt spontaneously on their own is counterproductive**. The policy in both areas stresses the importance of **inclusion.** Young people who get radicalised do not feel that they are seen, understood or valued (Mr Baâdoud). To prevent them becoming radicalised, vulnerable young people who seek to benefit from public policy are selected and are offered opportunities, a project based on the principle that if you give people the opportunity to take part, you give their talents a chance to flourish. Members of street gangs who continue to pose problems are then taken seriously.

**Communication** plays a crucial role: to build bridges, develop mutual understanding and foster an understanding among young people at risk that their future lies here and not elsewhere (Mr Bonte). On this specific point, the local authorities regularly tolerate political discourse from certain quarters that feeds polarisation by making blunt statements.

Vilvorde and Amsterdam provide an **integrated and customised approach.** Mayor Bonte acknowledged that this is not easy to achieve because of the number of people involved and the differences between specific cases. In both cities, **work is performed collaboratively by all stakeholders**, including professionals, community and Islamic organisations (mosques) and parents to align and exchange information and signs for concern. For example, this collaborative work revealed that young people who left for Syria had been arguing with their parents about their experience of religion (Mr Bonte), and that

they had found no answers to questions surrounding their identity from local religious leaders (Mr Baâdoud). It is also important to pay attention to new developments. Young people in Vilvorde are no longer leaving for Syria, and the town is currently preparing for the return of those who went off to fight.

Representatives from Strasbourg and Arras briefly mentioned the policies implemented in their two cities. Both cities have developed a preventive approach, using initiatives aimed at promoting social cohesion, fighting intolerance and supporting young people at risk along with their parents. In Arras, the three areas of focus for the policy are mobilisation, reflection and networking. Strasbourg targets the feeding ground for the development of radicalisation.

## Panel of representatives from national governments

Participants on the second panel:

- Ms Muriel Domenach, Secretary General of the Interministerial Committee for the Prevention of Crime and Radicalisation (France)
- Mr Jamil Araoud, Managing Director of Bruxelles Prévention & Sécurité, Région de Bruxelles Capitale (Belgium)
- Mr Jürgen Wander, programme manager for the Ministry for Social Affairs and (Netherlands)

The central issue was to determine how national and regional governments could help towns and cities develop and implement their own preventive policies.

The presentations by the panellists revealed differences in national and regional policies to prevent and combat radicalisation, to share responsibilities and to show how the various authorities provide mutual support.

The emphasis placed on security in **France** is, according to Ms Domenach, understandable owing to the tense situation in that country following a number of major attacks and numerous threats. Security has been beefed up since May 2016, the budget expanded, the introduction of 'deradicalisation' centres (Centres for Prevention, Integration and Citizenship) made a priority, and prevention and the strengthening of national values are receiving more attention. Ms Domenach criticised the concept of 'deradicalisation', as it is impossible to simply 'deprogramme' Jihadists. The rehabilitation programme for Jihadists is a long process of reintegration, and it does not always work. The government has also drawn up partnerships aimed at developing collaboration with stakeholders from the fields of education and security in order to counter radicalisation.

In the **Netherlands** too, the national government plays an important role in combating and preventing radicalisation and extremism. The national policy is coordinated by the National Coordinator for Counter-terrorism and Security (NCTV). The policy is based on a publication called 'Integrated Approach to

Jihadism' (2014),[2] in which the issue was tackled both as a security issue and a societal problem. Working exclusively on repression is stigmatising. The Ministry for Social Affairs and Employment (SZW) supports towns with the NCTV, and the Ministry for the Interior and Relationships of the Kingdom in the development of a preventive policy. The specialist unit for social stability (ESS from the Ministry for Social Affairs and Employment) offers practical knowledge, training and advice to towns, professionals and communities. Communication strategies and non-polarising messages are being developed. There are also study circles where towns learn from each other. The national government also subsidises 'deradicalisation' initiatives across 20 areas.

In **Belgium**, the division of responsibilities has changed since the implementation of the sixth reform of the Belgian State, as the Brussels region now has jurisdiction for coordinating security and prevention policies. To perform its duties, the Brussels Government established Bruxelles-Prévention et Sécurité in May 2015. Mr Araoud explained that the service plays the role of facilitator, coordinator and mediator between the various partners present across the region. There is currently a need for greater knowledge and expertise to draw up a generalised, effective approach for prevention, reducing the contexts that foster the development of radicalisation and for the prevention of polarisation.

Members of the panel recognised that the **EU** has an important role, owing to the transnational nature of radicalisation and extremism. The EU already plays a role in **exchanging knowledge and best practices** among front-line workers (with the RAN network, which aims to draw attention to the challenges posed by radicalisation and contributes to the training of officials from the various Member States), but there is also a need to share and consolidate knowledge about the policy among local authorities.

# 5. Workshops

## Workshop 1: How to flag, analyse and monitor the radicalisation of individuals

Presentations by:

- Mr Olivier Vanderhaeghen, Prevention Official in Molenbeek-Saint-Jean (Belgium)
- Ms Wendy Hendriks, International Affairs Advisor, Ministry for Security and Justice (Netherlands)

---

[2] Ministry V&J and SZW, NCTV (2014). Integrated Approach to Jihadism. The Hague.

- Mr Bruno Michon, Head of Research and Development at the Higher Education Establishment for Education and Social Work in Strasbourg, also a member of the Administrative Body for the Regional Monitoring Centre for Integration in the City of Strasbourg

The three presentations on local and regional policies in the Brussels district of Molenbeek-Saint-Jean, the metropolitan area of Strasbourg and in Dutch towns showed that the towns face **similar challenges**, but there are also **major differences** between the local situations. The approach to the three presentations differed. Mr Michon examined policy with the critical detachment of a researcher, Ms Hendriks presented a general snapshot of the policy in Dutch towns and cities, while Mr Vanderhaeghen showed how the Brussels district of Molenbeek-Saint-Jean was seeking the most suitable possible approach.

Mr Michon raised the fundamental issue of understanding whether **a society gets all the extremists it deserves.** He made reference to a recent article in which William McCants and Christopher Meserole[3] noted that in Europe, most militants—in relative terms—going to Syria came from French-speaking countries such as France and Belgium. According to the authors of the policy, this is linked to what they consider to be an aggressive form of secularism in French-speaking political culture. This hypothesis has been the topic of controversy. However, it is safe to say that the various forms of Islamic radicalisation are partially determined by local and national contexts.

The three presentations showed that uncertainties surrounding the **distribution of responsibilities and the difference in opinions between the national and local authorities** were hampering effective prevention. One problem in the Belgian Federal State, according to Mr Vanderhaeghen, is in fact that everyone is responsible, and so no one is. Mr Michon believes that, in France, there are tensions between national and local responsibilities and that a local approach regularly comes up against national security policy. In Strasbourg, the prefectoral authority is generally reticent to provide preventive interventions. It prefers to leave this policy to the local authorities. Multidisciplinary training of officials, without being focused on Islam, is necessary so that local authorities can carry out preventive initiatives alongside 'combat and treatment' initiatives from the prefectoral authority.

There is **no model** for a local approach, owing to differences in contexts. As for good practices, this begs the question: good for whom? There are as many governments and other stakeholders as there are different disciplinary

---

[3]    William McCants and Christopher Meserole, 'The French Connection: Explaining Sunni Militancy Around the World', Foreign Affairs, 24 March 2016, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2016-03-24/french-connection.

perspectives. However, local and regional authorities are seeking answers to **similar questions and challenges**, and there are numerous agreements over the policies developed. Prevention is still in its infancy in many towns and cities, and deradicalisation is still underdeveloped.

The complexity of the issue requires expertise in the various disciplines and collaboration with all stakeholders. According to Mr Michon, the multidisciplinary nature of the issue makes effective collaboration more complicated. As a consequence, a single approach is often the dominant one. Strasbourg, for example, concentrates on a psychological approach to radicalisation, which has recently seen positive developments. Both Molenbeek-Saint-Jean and several Dutch towns have opted for a **multidisciplinary approach,** and the **parties directly involved**—educators, social workers, neighbourhood police officers, social organisations, Muslim communities, families and parents—act to flag issues, raise awareness and combat radicalisation, and assist in the reintegration of radicalised young people. One example is the Dutch approach to **multidisciplinary cases** under the management of the district. These serve as an early-warning system for discussion as a group, making case-by-case assessments. The case-by-case analysis has the advantage that everyone involved exchanges information in order to develop an approach to which they are committed. Professional secrecy can sometimes prove to be an obstacle to this. Front-line workers are the eyes and ears of towns and districts, and their expertise needs to be improved through training.

Mr Michon mentioned certain **obstacles** to a preventive policy in the metropolitan district of Strasbourg. **Training for officials, key local individuals** and outreach workers to receive intelligence and analyse it raises a number of issues. How do we tell the difference between radicalised young people and young people who are simply very religious (orthodox)? What skills do we need to pass on to officials, and what are the most suitable tools to give them to pass on information and analyse it? There is a need for multidisciplinary training for officials and professionals alike, for the inclusion of prevention in existing policies and institutions and for the development of an overarching approach that is not limited to Islamic radicalisation.

It is important to create a local policy **in line with the initiatives deployed in civil society.** Major investment from the authorities is needed to gain trust. This was the clear message of the presentation by **Steunpunt Sabr** during discussions. This support body enables parents in two of the most disadvantaged districts of The Hague to gain accessible support in approaching young people who are being radicalised, through training and a support and monitoring system. Care must be taken over cultural sensitivities. Within the Muslim community, there appears to be an enormous taboo about asking for help of out fear that doing so could lead to police action and rumours being spread in the area.

## Workshop 2: Training and support for officials and people involved in civil society

Presentations by:

- Ms Marjan Cochez, Radicalisation Centre in the Flemish Ministry for Interior Affairs (Belgium)
- Ms Morgane Petit, Director of IREV (Regional City Institute - Institut régional de la Ville) and Ms Florence Bobot, Director of APSN (Northern Specialist Centre for Preventive Resources) (France)
- Ms Jessa Wegman, Associate at the Specialist Unit for Social Stability (unité d'Expertise pour la Stabilité Sociale - ESS) in the Ministry for Social Affairs and Employment (Netherlands)

During the course of the workshop, Dutch, Belgian (Flemish) and French initiatives for providing support for officials and professionals at the local level through training, support and advisory services were presented.

The **Flemish Regional Government** unveiled its Flemish Plan of Action for the prevention of radicalisation processes that could lead to extremism and terrorism in 2015. The political approach wants there to be **no separate sector for radicalisation.** Front-line workers, however, are trained, and the main organisations are backed up with the necessary expertise.[4] There is also a **central point of contact** set up by the Flemish Government. The Flemish Government supports **officials** at the local and regional level with, among other things, an 'intervision' working group, which consolidates and shares knowledge and expertise, provides seminars and training courses, a manual and customised advice. Front-line workers such as people who work with young people, support services and educators are provided with (1) sector-based support with seminars and points of contact, and (2) inter-sector support through training from recognised training bodies. This training may, for example, relate to identity development and radicalisation, interview techniques and case studies. The starting point is to train the trainer, says Ms Cochez. Anvers, Vilvorde, Malines and Maaseik are pilot towns for this scheme.

Ms Wegman presented the aims and the working methods of the **Specialist Unit for Social Stability**[5] from the Ministry for Social Affairs and Employment. The aims of the ESS are to enhance skills among people tackling radicalisation and to improve early detection rates. The ESS works with towns, professionals and

---

[4]     To read the Flemish policy, see: http://lokaalbestuur.vlaanderen.be/preventie-radicalisering/preventie-van-radicalisering.

[5]     Specialist Unit for Social Stability (unité d'Expertise pour la Stabilité Sociale - ESS), Ministry for Social Affairs and Employment: www.socialestabiliteit.nl.

stakeholders in civil society, providing them with knowledge (practical) about radicalisation and social tensions, and joint work to determine causes. One successful example is **training on 'tackling extreme ideas'**,[6] which teaches people how to view radicalisation **from a pedagogical standpoint.** The advantage here is a preventive and comprehensive approach at the beginning of the process, focusing on the core concept of relationships with young people. Training is intended for, among others, officials, youth support services, youth workers, educators and neighbourhood police officers. Training will be developed in a training-for-trainers module, with close attention paid to the extreme right.

Ms Petit, Director of IREV, and Ms Bobot, Director of APSN, presented an initiative called 'What can we do together?' This project was introduced in northern France, with help from the City of Lille and the State. This is a bottom-up project, which takes into account the needs of social workers facing the challenges posed by radicalisation. Following the terrorist attacks of January 2015 in Paris, these professionals identified the need for a project that would help them deal with the issue of radicalisation. A group was therefore created. Aside from ASPN and IREV, a number of associations, non-profit organisations, training bodies, Sciences Po Lille, the City of Lille and the Département du Nord all took part in the project. It provides a space for dialogue, for sharing experiences and for training, and it provides direct contact with inhabitants living in deprived areas. It provides professionals with the necessary resources to approach identity issues among young people.

The **discussion** highlighted issues that are sometimes encountered by the ESS in the support provided for certain categories of professionals such as teachers, regarding the term radicalisation and the ESS association with policies aimed at combating radicalisation. This is resolved through cooperation with an association that sends education advisors into schools with a motive other than radicalisation. Ms Petit insisted on the need to avoid creating a stratum of society. The priority should be to support and train officials and professionals who work directly with young people and who are confronted with their issues over identity, along with cooperation and dialogue regarding experiences between officials and professionals. One important mission for a resource structure such as ASPN is to encourage professionals to continue carrying out actions for which they are competent. Following the attacks in January 2015 in France, a lot of professionals and officials became discouraged. All the speakers stressed the importance of the notion that we should all be talking with young people. The Flemish Government, APSN and ESS oversee certain projects for young people. Young people lacking education and radicals who avoid all contact with front-line workers are more difficult to reach.

---

[6]    ESS training 'Tackling extreme ideas': https://www.socialestabiliteit.nl/onderwijs/inhoud/training-omgaan-met-idealen.

# Workshop 3: Developing an integrated local approach to combat radicalisation

Presentations by:

- The Brussels Capital regional coordinator for polarisation and radicalisation
- A representative from the SPF Interior Radicalisation Unit (Federal Ministry) (Belgium)
- Mr Joël Mathurin, prefect appointed to equal opportunities in Essonne (France)
- Mr Michael Geuzinge, associate for public order and security, Association of Dutch Administrative Areas (Netherlands)

The speakers at the workshop explained how Belgian and Dutch towns, the Brussels region and the French region of Essonne are working on an integrated approach to preventing radicalisation. Prevention is linked to, among other things, the **global communal policy for inclusion and social cohesion.** Mr Joël Mathurin explained that, in France, the policy of prevention is linked to the 'Policy of the City', which relies on partnerships between towns, the State and various partners, with the aim of reducing differences in the economic and social development between different districts and improving living conditions for people who live in deprived areas. For example, there are local security and prevention committees whose role is to improve coordination among professionals. These committees enable knowledge to be shared regarding the needs of inhabitants, taking into account the specific needs of each district. Support is provided for activities to boost the feeling of belonging to the national community, such as educational activities about national values for young people both in and out of school.

Dutch towns already have experience with an integrated approach in security units, where institutions work together and consult one another. This cooperation can be used for a customised approach to the prevention and fight against radicalisation. Comparable units have been set up in Belgium as part of a political initiative: **local integral security units**, within which numerous social services and local prevention professionals and the administrative authorities exchange information and coordinate their approach.

Numerous **opinions and lessons** for an integrated approach were highlighted during the presentations. It is therefore important to pay attention to **differences in viewpoints over radicalisation**, for example, among police officers and teachers, in order to come to an agreement. Experiences have been positive in the Netherlands with the **customised integrated approach** (work, accommodation, support) during the reintegration of people in the initial radicalisation phase. Regional cooperation has been deployed in both Belgium

and the Netherlands (for example, in the Charleroi region), so that **small towns** have access to sufficient expertise. In Belgium, **mobile teams** were set up to provide small villages with advice suited to their approach to people coming back from Syria. **Neighbourhood police officers and controllers** in the Netherlands and **peacekeepers** in Belgium are the eyes and ears of the town and can play a significant role in the prevention of radicalisation and the fight against social tensions. All the speakers emphasised the cooperation involved in building **mutual trust** and that the development of this trust requires time and effort. Trust and good relationships also need to be developed with communities of young people at risk. A connection can then be made between the activities and the **potential within the community.**

Some **good practices** for an integrated approach were raised:

- With funding from the European Commission, the Belgian Federal Government (SPF Intérieur) has developed the **BOUNCE project - tools for resilience,[7]** a prevention programme against the radicalisation of young people, their parents and front-line workers. This is now being put into action not only in Belgium, but also in other European cities.
- Amsterdam has had good experiences with the recruitment, selection, training and placement of **key individuals** within the community. These are people who are respected to a certain degree within the community and who have a wide network. They are used to flag any radicalisation and to promote resilience.
- **Schools** play a central role in preventing radicalisation. The **citizenship** scheme (réserve citoyenne)[8] in France aims to involve ordinary people and civil society in the transmission of national values to schools.

Despite these inspirational examples, there are still a lot of **obstacles** to an integrated local policy for the prevention of radicalisation. The Dutch and Belgian speakers therefore reminded people to be careful regarding any issues when exchanging information with professionals, such as **professional secrecy.** Passing on information is crucial for an integrated policy, but it is sometimes difficult, given requirements for professional secrecy that can arise with people working in a social capacity. As part of this, the distribution of roles and procedures should be determined and made as clear as possible in order to encourage dialogue and so that social workers are not negatively perceived by society. Schools also need to be careful because of their **image** and because they do not want to damage the **relationship of trust** with their pupils (Mr Geuzinge). Key individuals and teachers must not be turned into inspectors. This would erode trust among pupils (the regional coordinator for polarisation and

---

[7]     Project BOUNCE - tools for resilience: https://www.bounce-resilience-tools.eu/nl.

[8]     La réserve citoyenne: http://www.lareservecitoyenne.fr/.

radicalisation). Specific interpretations of secularity could constitute barriers to the potential use of religious communities. These standpoints not only vary between countries, but also between cities. Some Dutch towns and cities therefore develop their projects alongside Salafist communities to boost resilience, while other towns dismiss this idea. The representative from the Radicalism Unit in the Belgian Federal Government stressed the more general issue surrounding the **difficulty of demonstrating the effects of prevention** and that preventive policies are generally more expensive, require more energy and are more time-consuming than repressive measures (such as blocking accounts). According to them, this explains the increase in repressive measures following the attacks carried out in Brussels.

Finally, **obstacles to cooperation between authorities** were discussed. The cooperation between districts in the Brussels Capital region is a case in point. The relationship between towns and the national government can also sometimes be difficult as a result of diverging views on the balance to be sought between prevention and suppression, and because the various ministers concerned have their own view on prevention (Mr Geuzinge). **National political debate sometimes increases polarisation** and comes up against the local policy of inclusion and prevention. Some national measures taken to combat terrorism act as a barrier to local policies aimed at deradicalisation and the reintegration of radicalised young people (Mr Geuzinge). However, national policy can support and facilitate a local approach, as has been seen in France, with the 'Policy of the City' and the policies aimed at promoting national values (Mr Mathurin). A better, fairer alignment between the various policies is something that is still needed.


# 6. Conclusion of the Policy lab

**Mr Emmanuel Moulin, Director of the Secrétariat URBACT, and Mr Mart Grisel, Director of the EUKN** announced at the end of the Policy Lab that the two organisations would join forces to identify good practices in the field of the prevention of radicalisation, in cooperation with Member States. Cities could choose whether to sign up to a network of five or six cities for a collaborative project to last around three years aimed at exchanging experiences on the ground between European urban professionals on the implementation of action plans. URBACT will undertake an effort to enter into dialogue at the city level, while the EUKN will facilitate dialogue between Member States.

**Mr Julien Van Geertsom** closed the Policy Lab with a few quotations taken from the event. Finally, he stressed that there were reasons to be optimistic. Openness, resilience and tenacity will be required to combat radicalisation, and these values are already present, as can be seen in many citizen initiatives, including those originating from at-risk groups.

# 7. General conclusions

The Policy Lab showed that Belgium, France and the Netherlands work hard towards developing and strengthening a local policy for the prevention of radicalisation. Different approaches are being taken between countries, regions and cities, partly due to the different social and administrative contexts. But there are also many similarities among the challenges and the prevention policy. An effective prevention policy and the inclusion of at-risk groups requires a focus on towns and cities, attention paid to the causes and forms of radicalisation, better opportunities for young people in at-risk groups and joint work with everyone involved.

One important element of a local anti-radicalisation policy is the rapid detection, analysis and monitoring of signs. Officials and front-line workers (professionals) play a fundamental role. They therefore need to be given training. Consulting over signs, professionals can jointly discuss signs and develop suitable actions to be taken. Communities, families and parents of young people in at-risk groups also need to get involved in providing information and in combating radicalisation. It is necessary to invest a great deal over a long time to earn the trust of the target public.

Cities face the challenge of improving the expertise of officials and professionals. Training courses should look at the bigger picture so that issues concerning identity and Islam are not unilaterally associated with radicalisation. The need for dialogue and training within at-risk communities also deserves some attention. Parents (and above all mothers) can play an important role in fighting against the radicalisation of their children. They deserve support.

The complexity of the issue and the existence of many stakeholders requires an integrated preventive approach. An effective local prevention policy will focus on the many forms and causes of radicalisation and on working together in all the sectors involved. Preferably, existing structures and institutions should be used, including urban policies for (major) cities, safe houses and integrated security units. Communication with the local population is an important part of the policy. All messages and communications must be non-polarising. Cities must also show that they are open and willing to learn from their own mistakes and from those of others.

The Policy Lab clearly showed that there is a need to exchange knowledge and experiences between the cities, regions and countries of Europe. Many good practices were discussed during the meeting. URBACT and the EUKN stated that they wished to play a role in supporting the exchange of these best practices.