

icommit

WALK A MILE

A practice-rooted guide to P/CVE collaboration & casework

icommit Project Manual



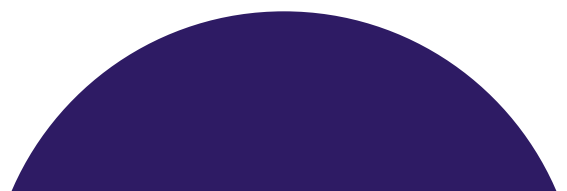
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The icommit project aims to strengthen local P/CVE collaboration and support caseworkers engaged in CVE-related distancing processes. All project outputs can be found at multiagencycooperation.eu.



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1 Improved Commitment of Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration through Model and Interactive Training Development

BACKGROUND

The two tracks of *icommit*

The impact of violent extremism is most strongly felt at the local level. While national governments have a responsibility to develop policies to address extremism, cities have an urgent need to prevent and respond to extremist activity in an immediate and direct way. To do so comprehensively and effectively requires the participation and collaboration of multiple stakeholders from a range of different professional and organisational backgrounds. This however is not an easy feat, as collaboration is a skill to be learned and the prevention and countering of violent extremism (P/CVE) is a particularly sensitive and securitised policy area.

The two-year *icommit* project was funded by the *European Commission's Internal Security Fund* to accomplish two interconnected goals with regards to furthering multi-stakeholder collaboration (MSC). Firstly, to build and strengthen collaboration within local multi-stakeholder networks across all three prevention levels². And secondly, to support P/CVE caseworkers within MSCs to bring in the client's perspective when it comes to case-based interventions in the context of secondary and tertiary prevention. These goals were achieved along two distinct yet complementary project Tracks, which is why this document consists of two separate yet supplementary manuals. Track I specifically aimed at providing a diverse group of eight MSC city teams with training and mentorship to further develop their collaborations, whether new or long established. Addressing all prevention levels, Track I covered a range of different P/CVE activities, including efforts to improve media literacy or foster social cohesion as well as case-based work in non-judicial contexts (for example in schools, youth or sport clubs) but also *within* judicial contexts (prison or probation). Accordingly, the Track I manual is relevant to all stakeholders who want to start or improve an MSC in the field of P/CVE, including from institutions such as the local municipality and law enforcement, the health sector, schools, community-based organisations, and others. It may also be of interest to stakeholders engaging in MSC in adjacent security-related fields.

When it comes to case-based interventions, we rely on professionals who are equipped to work with individuals who are radicalising towards or holding extremist views, showing extremist behaviour, and/or have been convicted of extremist or terrorist crimes³. *icommit's* Track II therefore focused on casework, primarily within the context of tertiary prevention, to support caseworkers in reflecting on and structuring their cases as well as communicating about the counselling process in a structured manner to other stakeholders. The *DesistKit*, which has been specifically developed for this purpose in project Track II, therefore first and foremost addresses caseworkers. However, by offering crucial insights into the factors playing into the distancing process, any stakeholder working in the P/CVE context will benefit from considering the *DesistKit's* resource-oriented and gender-focused perspective.

Overall, *icommit* addressed various ideological phenomena but was primarily focused on Islamist and right-wing extremism, reflecting the needs the cities presented during the application process as well as the case-load of participating caseworkers.

2 The three prevention levels refer to primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention, whereby primary prevention refers to activities such as the promotion of social cohesion, while secondary prevention refers to interventions with individuals at risk or already on the pathway of radicalisation. Tertiary prevention means interventions with radicalised individuals, including convicted extremist and terrorist offenders.

3 As the concerned individuals generally do not participate in case conferences themselves.

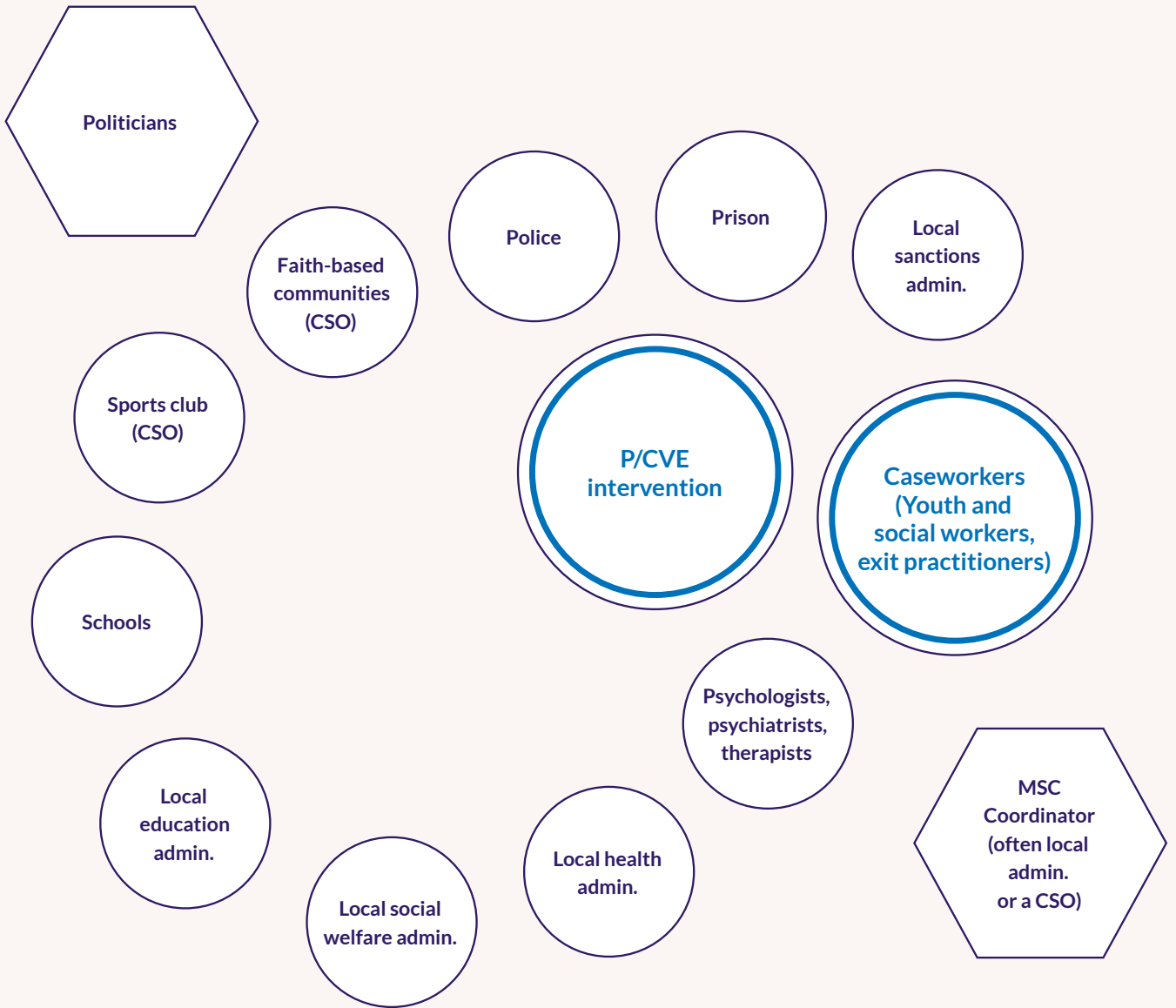


Fig. 1: Exemplary multi-stakeholder network and complementarity of the two icommit tracks

INTRODUCTION TO TRACK I

This manual provides a wide range of tools and methods to help stakeholders in developing and strengthening local multi-stakeholder collaboration in the field of P/CVE.

In a previous project on MSC, *EMMA*, we found that the needs of strategic collaboration varied relatively to the local context, the range of partners involved, as well as to the depth and objectives of the collaboration. Consequently, the modules and exercises in the manual are designed to be useful for you regardless of whether you seek to start an MSC or whether you want to strengthen and consolidate an existing collaboration.

The following tools and exercises have been applied and tested in comprehensive trainings over the course of the two-year project. During the implementation, we affirmed our assumption that the most productive learning in seeking to strengthen MSC is *best done in practice*. Activity-based learning thus lies at the core of the project and is what we want to convey to you, the reader.

The two consecutive trainings that *icommit* provided in Track I involved eight different city teams from across Europe, at different stages of establishing a local MSC and 20 caseworkers and P/CVE stakeholders from across Europe in Track II. During the trainings, the city teams not only learned from and collaborated with the representatives of their own city, but also across cities. The presentation of group work and exercises in plenary thus created additional room for learning and exchange. Beyond the face-to-face training, *icommit* also provided mentorship to the city teams. Each city received the support of a subject expert mentor over the course of six months between the trainings, consisting of three virtual mentoring sessions to help support with a specific challenge or task the city teams wished to work on. These built on the themes identified in the first in-person training and included working on an introduction package with a P/CVE component for newly elected local politicians, the design of awareness sessions concerning right-wing extremist risk pictures, the development of a risk assessment framework, strategies to embed P/CVE work in community safety plans and securing of a mayoral mandate for MSC.



Fig. 2: Participating city teams

WHAT IS MULTI-STAKEHOLDER COLLABORATION?

COLLABORATION

Collaboration occurs when a group of people come together to work on a project in support of a common objective, meaning that everyone participating shares ownership of the goal being pursued. Interpersonal ties and the capacity to exchange relevant information are essential to the effectiveness of collaboration.

COOPERATION

Cooperation on the other hand occurs when an individual or a group of people work together to further the objectives of another. Cooperation does not require a shared vision or ownership but merely distribution of work processes.

THE SHAPES OF MSC

Multi-stakeholder collaboration comes in different shapes and sizes. They can be formal or informal, inter-institutional or organisational, consist of bilateral partnerships or involving wide and disparate networks, as illustrated in fig 3. Depending on the prevention level and the respective intervention, the proximity of the involved stakeholders to the case will vary, as will the position of the MSC to the intervention and all other actors as well as of the involved stakeholders to each other. All these factors will determine the MSC's composition. MSCs also differ with regards to the phenomena they address, the mandate they have received or taken upon themselves, the resources that can be dedicated to the collaboration, the frequency in which the participating stakeholders meet, as well as the quality of interpersonal relations. Some cities are much larger than others and thus have a lot more ground to cover. Some have designated coordinating bodies, while others do not. The cities that participated in the project varied in their collaborations. While some participated with long-established multi-stakeholder teams, others were just getting started and used the training to undertake a first mapping of relevant stakeholders to reach out to. Some established MSCs had originally not been created to address P/CVE but have in the past collaborated in adjacent fields such as reduction of domestic or gang-related violence. The profiles and roles represented in the project included everything from local government and law enforcement to civil society organisations (CSOs) and social workers.

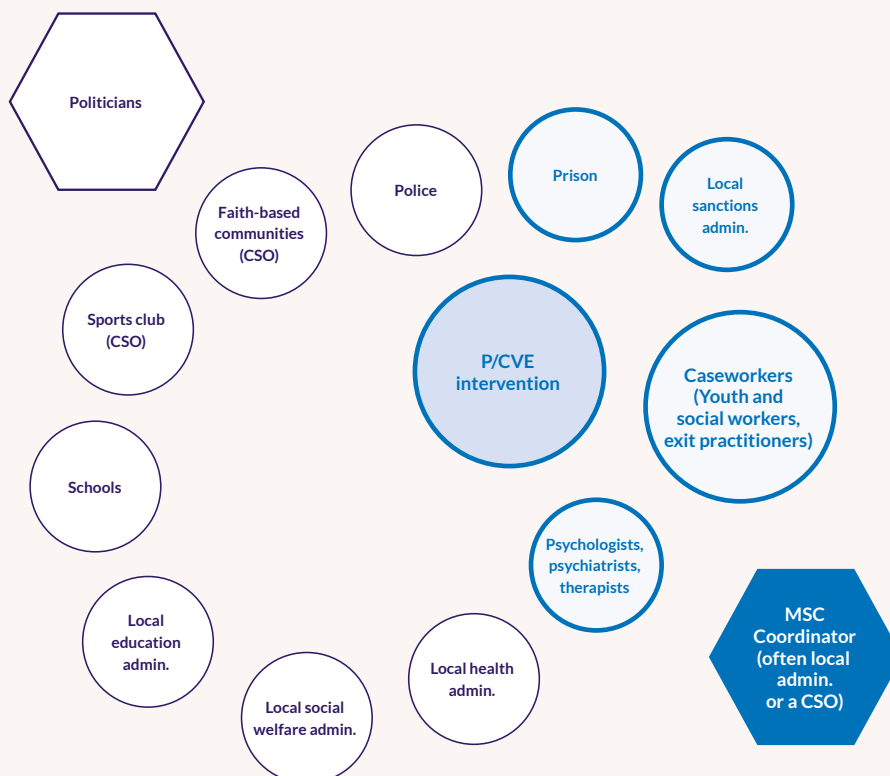


Fig. 3: Exemplary multi-stakeholder collaboration

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF MULTI-STAKEHOLDER COLLABORATION?

Collaboration offers many analogical images. Whether pieces of a puzzle that come together, stones forming a mosaic or individual lines creating a drawing, while such analogies may feel somewhat overused, when P/CVE stakeholders from different professional backgrounds come together it *does* ultimately lead to a deeper understanding of the situation. Collaboration inherently creates multiplier effects, not only in skills and knowledge, but also when it comes to effectiveness of practice. Cross-institutional exchange on assessments of specific cases (within the framework of information sharing agreements) or on local developments is a useful sounding board. Even if the establishment process of collaborative network structures can be resource-intensive, it can offer relief in concrete casework and in facing relevant local developments.

Multi-stakeholder meetings or roundtables initially mean additional work for individual stakeholders. However, in the medium to long term such efforts will provide each institution with a more holistic understanding that will allow them to better focus on their core tasks. Generally speaking, MSC may serve as a credible response to increasingly securitised approaches in P/CVE. Growing securitisation can lead to over-intervention and secondarily to stigmatisation of targeted groups, which in turn can be a driver for radicalisation processes. Hence, multi-stakeholder teams consisting of a variety of actors (including civil society partners) will ultimately be more successful at preventing radicalisation in local contexts.

“I could not do my job without the support and insights of our contact points at the schools, the psychologists and social workers and the good relationship we have with the police department. We have developed rules of procedure for decision making processes in case the stakeholders at the table disagree about an intervention plan. However, ever since we established them, we did not have a real disagreement and always reached consensus at the end of each roundtable.”

“The person who will spend the longest time in the multi-agency relationship is always the client.”

“I also think it is important for police to put up with critical questions from time to time. Police should not only talk among peers. A lot of my colleagues said right from the start [after the multiagency network got together for the first time]: A network with social workers and social pedagogues - what do they actually do apart from talking? So there are a lot of stereotypical assumptions to overcome. My impression with civil society actors is that they are constantly understaffed and work way beyond what they are paid for. And you can be as heroic a fighter for peace and justice as you like. At some point, the day is over.”

Fig. 4: Feedback about MSC from a focus group conversation at the start of the project

THE FOUNDATIONS OF COLLABORATION

Over the course of the project, several overarching themes emerged that appeared important for successful MSC. We refer to these as the foundations of successful collaboration which underpin the modules and exercises covered in the manual. We suggest that these can be used as a checklist to help guide the process of forming and sustaining a collaboration. Of course, not all these points - such as empathy - are tangible or easily measurable, so it is helpful to think of them as guiding principles to adhere to as closely as possible rather than as quantitative outcomes.

Empathy is commonly understood as the process of perceiving, being conscious of, and sensitive to another person's emotions, thoughts, and experiences. In an MSC, it is crucial to be able to relate to the perspectives, role understandings, intentions, professional and institutional limitations of the other stakeholders in your team. The role of empathy as a tool is explored in the module *Walk a mile in your colleague's shoes* and also plays a crucial role when it comes to considering the perspective of the individual at the centre of a distancing process, as addressed in detail in Track II.

In any professional collaboration, how we understand and perceive specific terms can vary depending on the different operating logics and professional roles of the people involved. This is especially true in such a contested area as P/CVE. The terms radicalisation and extremism may mean different things to someone in law enforcement compared to a caseworker. When stakeholders from different professional and institutional backgrounds collaborate, they need to develop a **shared understanding** of the terms and language they use to describe the problems they seek to address. A theme we explore in the module *Speaking the same language*. Collaboration does not mean that stakeholders need to give up their own professional vocabularies, social workers do not need to speak the language of law enforcement and vice versa. The crucial part is that stakeholders understand what partners mean when using a specific term.

Our collaborations, whether in P/CVE or in other fields, can inadvertently replicate the institutional, professional, and individual biases that reflect the power structures of the societies we inhabit. This can affect the decision of who we seek to include in our collaborative efforts in the first place, as well as the roles and responsibilities they are assigned. Inequalities in power relations can also play a role in radicalisation processes and failure to acknowledge this fact limits the depths of our responses. For this reason, it is important to reflect on our position in society and ensure we **include under-represented perspectives** in collaborative projects. As a step in this direction, we address these issues in our modules on *Looking through a gender lens* and *Working with communities*. Under-represented perspectives can also refer to professional roles, for example in MSC settings, social workers are often perceived as too emotional to provide neutral assessment. Strengthening their perspectives helps to develop a more informed picture of progress as well as concerns.

Besides developing a shared understanding of the terms we use to describe radicalisation and distancing processes, it is also important to be able to **see the bigger picture**. Being open and willing to actively develop a more holistic understanding of radicalisation as well as distancing processes that extends beyond our professional and societal boundaries, as opposed to mono-causal explanations, allows us to intervene in more effective and creative ways. We address this theme in more depth in the modules on *Understanding your local risk picture* and *Walk a mile in your colleague's shoes*.

Finally, one of the things that can make or break successful collaboration is whether the relevant stakeholders are **working towards a common (or multiple) goal(s)**. If your team is not working towards the same outcome, stakeholders may question the value of their involvement. Confusion over objectives and desired results makes it harder to gain buy-in from communities and the political leadership needed to sustain collaboration. While consensus on goals is the ideal outcome, it is not always realistic given professional constraints. Therefore, we suggest that for a collaboration to be successful then at a minimum, all stakeholders need to be pulling in the same direction. If consensus is not achievable, maybe there can at least be alignment. A theme we explore in our module *Introduction to Theory of Change models*.

HOW TO USE THIS MANUAL

This manual provides a set of tools and exercises for local stakeholders to build and strengthen their own collaborations and teams at different stages in the process. As a result, the manual is not designed to be read cover-to-cover, but each section provides bespoke exercises tailored to specific needs or challenges. These can vary depending on the local context. In *EMMA*, we had found that factors such as the length of time a team has been established or whether it involves civil society organisations as well as state agencies, will have an influence on and present different challenges to successful collaboration.

In this sense each module represents a way for teams to work through some of the challenges linked to achieving effective collaboration. To jointly work on bringing them together is a way to build your collaboration. While relevant to all, broadly, the modules 1 to 4 speak to those just getting started on their collaboration and team-building journey, while modules 4 to 8 provide exercises to deepen and consolidate existing collaboration within established teams. However, it is important to stress that all modules are relevant to stakeholders at any stage of their collaboration, as to sustain collaboration over time takes adaptability to change whether that is a change in the composition of your team or a changing risk picture.

METHODS

As stressed in the introduction, we found that the most productive way to work through some of the challenges associated with MSC was in addressing them practically and based on fictional cases or scenarios. While it is an obvious point, it is one that is often forgotten: If you want people to collaborate better, make them work as a team. Consequently, we employed a range of methods designed to do this. As our participants reported, a major outcome of the *icommit* training was how it promoted cohesiveness within their teams.

There are some general thoughts related to the techniques used in the exercises. First, on the exercises themselves: The manual provides a basic set of exercises as tools for teams to work through to improve their collaborative practice. While each exercise deals with a particular theme, they are easily adaptable to meet specific needs and local contexts.

The two consecutive trainings that were offered brought together 35 participants from eight different cities who, beyond their respective local contexts, had no prior contact with each other. The trainings were intensive and delivered over two and a half days each. For some participants meeting new people and having to take in large amounts of information can be intimidating and tiring. For this reason, ice breaker exercises were used to help attendees become acquainted. Two examples can be found in the appendix. We would recommend using them in combination with the modules.

Several of the exercises use scenarios and case studies to demonstrate how the learning can be applied. The scenarios are heuristic tools which represent fictional cases of potential radicalisation (or not). They are not real-life cases although they do draw on (and combine) elements of real-life examples and are designed to allow P/CVE stakeholders to work through the challenges they may face in their work. The scenarios are woven throughout the exercises, and some are used repeatedly across several modules. When first used in an exercise, the scenarios are outlined in the text. Although we offer these as ready-made tools to use in exercises, they may lack the context to make them relevant to local stakeholders. For this reason, we encourage teams to create their own scenarios using themes relevant to their local risk picture.



Three points need to be borne in mind when writing scenarios:

They need to tell a story - as stories are simply more engaging - which usually involves some element of jeopardy or dilemma important for creating discussion. In this sense, scenarios work well when they are open-ended, when a decision can produce different outcomes. They also need to be believable and relevant, otherwise people digress on whether the scenario would play out this way in real-life. Lastly, they need to be simple and only detailed enough to give people enough information to make an informed decision.

Several of the modules use visualisation and mapping techniques. Module 5 on working with a Theory of Change uses logic maps, module 4 on mapping the local risk picture, and module 7 using community asset mapping. While the exercises are explained in the respective modules, there is a general point about the advantage of using exercises that involve visualisation and mapping. The use of these techniques promotes discussion between team members not just on substantive themes, i.e. where risk lies but also on their respective relationship to that risk. Maps imply a relational dimension - it matters where you position yourself on a map. Change your position and you also change your perspective. This insight also informs other sections of the manual, including the modules connected to building empathy and working with communities. Another advantage of using visualisations is their use as communication tools. To this end, we used city spotlight maps with the city teams at the start of the first training. These can be found in the appendix. They can be used as tools for self-reflection or to communicate where you currently are in your collaboration. Visualisations can be especially beneficial when you need to communicate messages or findings in an accessible and succinct way to stakeholders who are time poor such as is often the case with elected representatives (see module 8).

FIRST STEPS IN MULTI-AGENCY COLLABORATION

MODULE 1 – WALK A MILE IN YOUR COLLEAGUES' SHOES (SCENARIO-BASED)

Why is this important? The result of collaboration between different stakeholders is more or different than the mere sum of individual activities. The interplay between and synergies resulting from different activities may produce entirely new outcomes, a process referred to as emergence. As objectives and operational logics behind different interventions and approaches can be contradictory, they can trigger unintended effects. Especially in cases of secondary and tertiary prevention, restrictive security interventions may interfere with social work efforts to create open and trustful relationships with individuals targeted by these interventions.

Each member of your multi-stakeholder collaboration is influenced by their own institutional logics and personal (working) experiences which inform their individual approach to the field of prevention. While there may seem to be general ideas of the work and responsibilities of other stakeholders at the table, to get closer insights into the daily hurdles, assignments, and priorities of external partners is nearly impossible. However, you and your network partners are required to collaborate despite differences in working hours and styles or strategic and operational priorities. To avoid frustration and to work together effectively and meaningfully, network members need to be able to empathise with the perspectives of other partners. Furthermore, it is important to keep reassessing whether the interests of the target groups of interventions are taken into account.

Key messages:

- Being able to switch perspectives with your network partners is the basis for meaningful collaboration. Collaboration then describes the process of integrating these different perspectives and finding consensus rather than assimilation or unification.
- Networks need a motivated stakeholder (institution) to coordinate local collaboration. This is a crucial role to ensure sustainable work, continuous joint meetings, and communication among participating stakeholders. The coordinator can also take a moderating function between different actors.
- Reflecting on different ways of approaching P/CVE will ultimately help to better understand each of your stakeholders' tools and limitations and will carve out more clearly which role each member can realistically take on within your network. This will also help to reduce potential unintended effects as described above.
- MSC is in many cases not 'visible' to the individuals it is targeting. There is quite a big divide between what your network partners experience as working reality and what clients experience as everyday reality. If the goal of secondary and tertiary prevention is to achieve behavioural (and attitudinal) change, perspectives of the stakeholders, namely the caseworkers, who work closest with these individuals need to be included.

Exercise: Role Play Case Conference (15 - 20 mins plus approx. 40 mins for analysis)

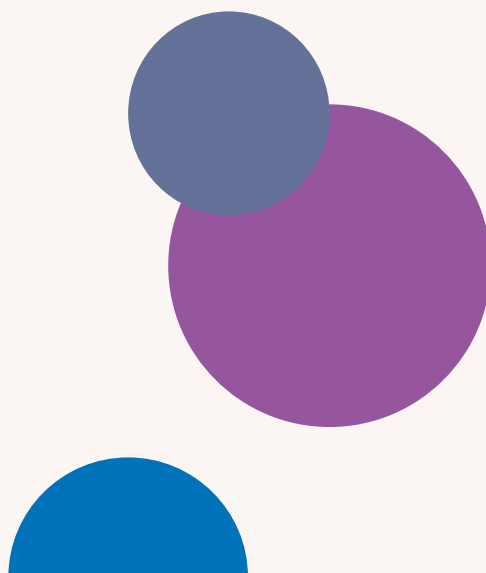
Role plays are a common methodological approach to challenging pre-existing stereotypes, practicing a change of perspective, and reflecting on dead angles in your assumptions. While there may be reluctance to participate in an exercise like this (as it requires a willingness to play and puts people in the spotlight when playing a role, they may not necessarily know much about), it turned out to be one of the most insightful and entertaining exercises of the trainings we conducted. To get the most out of an exercise like this and have a meaningful joint analysis of the role play afterwards, it is necessary to prepare some guiding documents in advance.

Steps to be considered:

1. Hand out instructions to everyone who will participate in the exercise. An example for a one-page instruction sheet can be found on the next page.
2. Assign roles to participants beforehand and hand out role description sheets to everyone who is playing. When assigning the roles, it is important that stakeholders do not play a character who is working for the same institution/organisation as them but rather have a police officer play a social worker or municipality staff play a probation officer. An exemplary short role description can be found on the following page.
3. Start with a role play after a coffee or lunch break, so stakeholders can already return in 'character'. This has proven to be useful to ease into a role.
4. Role plays are a useful method to try out even when working with larger groups. In fact, the 'observers' are very crucial to the success of a role play as well.
5. To facilitate the discussion afterwards, let participants think along the following guiding questions:
 - What was one thing that surprised you when observing the situation?
 - What were your key observations (e.g. body language, discussed topics, conversational development, etc.)? In what way may these factors be connected to the institutional background of a specific role?
 - If you were the police officer, teacher, social worker, etc., how would you have felt?
 - Who took up the most time?
 - How did you reach consensus? Why did you not reach consensus? Why was it easy/ difficult?

For the participants who acted:

- If so, when did you feel like your limited knowledge about that profession was giving you a hard time?
- Did you feel like you were taken seriously by the other stakeholders? Did you feel like you had enough time to express your perspective?



Role Play instructions (Example)



Dear [insert name of participant],

We kindly ask you to take part in a small role play after the coffee break. The role play is based on the description of a real but adapted case example. More details on the setting and the topic to be discussed in the role play are described below.

The scenario

A city-level case conference involving **6 stakeholders** from different institutional backgrounds. Most of the stakeholders taking part in the case conference do not know each other very well and some have actually never met before. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss a **plan for prison release** for the following case:

Marc is a 29-year-old man who works as an electrician in his uncle's company. He is an avid gym-goer and occasionally socialises with friends from the gym in bars. Marc associates his personal and financial problems with immigration. One of his friends introduces him to far-right Telegram groups in which immigration is prominently discussed. During the Covid-19 pandemic, Marc decides to join anti-lockdown protests in his city. He is sceptical about the protests in the beginning but feels frustrated with the restrictions implemented by the government during the pandemic, as they require him to work out at home and he does not see his friends that often anymore. One night, he is hanging out in the park, listening to white power music and physically assaults an older man walking by. Marc is arrested and serves three years in prison.

Your tasks:

- Take your time to read the case description above and the role description assigned to you. Try to empathise with your role. Think of personality traits and mannerisms your character might have. Think of a name and age.
- Try to think of one objective/goal from the perspective of your role you will enter this case conference with.
- Come back from the coffee break 'in character'.

Role description (Example)

Role: Social worker/ caseworker

Name :

Age :

You are a social worker with many years of professional experience. You have been working for a civil society organisation for the past five years with individuals who hold extremist views and/or have committed violent extremist attacks inside and outside of prison.

You have been working with Marc for about nine months and you meet him once a week in prison. While he was very guarded and reserved in the beginning, you now feel like you have established a good relationship with him. From your point of view, Marc is doing relatively well in prison, but you are concerned about the influence of his social environment once he is released again.

From your perspective, it is crucial that you continue working with Marc.

You found out about the case discussion through your contact point at the municipality.

Learning outcomes:

The purpose of this exercise is for participants to develop a better understanding of their own and their colleagues' professional roles, tools and limitations. This is key to creating functioning multi-agency work with complementary roles and responsibilities, coordinated approaches and development of trust.

MODULE 2 – SPEAKING THE SAME LANGUAGE

Why is this important? Just as described above, each member of your MSC network brings their own institutional and personal (working) understandings of the problems being addressed, which correlate with their institutional lexicon for addressing these problems. However, network partners are required to collaborate despite differences in understanding and in terminology, as well as collaborate with wider actors in the field of prevention, perhaps across municipalities or even countries.

Therefore, the importance of a shared understanding of terminology becomes apparent, to ensure effective collaboration across MSCs. Efforts to prevent and counter violent extremism are inherently complex in their need to address a multitude of contributing factors. Therefore, clarity between MSC network partners around differences of terminology is essential and a shared language and understanding is needed to underpin situational responses and prevention efforts.

For example, the concept of *terrorism* is complex. It does have a legal definition, but that legal definition differs across countries and even across institutions within those countries. Different professions might attach different meaning to that word, with *terrorism* sparking within police the need for protection measures for crowded places, within the judicial system the need for evidence of criminal activity and within social workers the need for desistance or distancing efforts. When these different professions are brought together in an MSC network, the assumption cannot be that they are all on the same page as to what this term means to them conceptually and operationally, or regarding what their most predominant terrorism-related concerns are. Therefore, action needs to be taken to ensure all MSC network members are speaking the same language.

This becomes even more complex when moving to the less concrete concepts of radicalisation and extremism, which are often the focus of prevention efforts. Extremism has no legal definition, and so is entirely up to the interpretation of institutions and individuals in this space. Where the line of extremism, which does not usually indicate illegality, meets violent extremism is increasingly blurry and difficult to define. Therefore, it is essential that partners in an MSC network have a shared understanding of what they are addressing, the assumptions they hold in reference to these terms and the subjects of their efforts as well as their preconceptions about what constitutes - both conceptually and practically - effective responses.

Key messages:

- The importance of having shared and agreed definitions of key terms. Most the concepts in the P/CVE space do not hold clear legal definition. Therefore, it is essential to ensure that all MSC network members are working from shared understandings and language regarding their collaborative efforts to avoid confusion and cross-purposes within the network and its efforts and ensure effective collaboration.
- Consideration of the differences in understanding of key terms across borders, institutions, and professions is crucial. There is a lack of common definitions in the international arena, across institutions within the same country/municipality, as well as across professions. Consideration of these differences and their importance to preventative efforts of the network can help to increase perspective and capacity of all partners.
- Examination of the differences between conceptual and programming terms is important to capture the perspectives of all MSC network partners. Different partners might come to the MSC network with more conceptual or practical definitions (e.g., the differences between how the police might consider something in an operational situation versus social workers working through desistance processes). It is enhancing to all partners, as well as the network, to consider each perspective and to work to blend them into a shared understanding and approach.
- This process of developing a shared language and understanding is also a key moment to raise awareness among network partners of the importance of mainstreaming gender and intersectionality⁴ across under-

⁴ Intersectionality is the consideration of intersecting identities that people may hold (e.g., gender, race, class, religion, etc.) and recognition of how discrimination or disadvantages based on these identities may be intersecting and mutually reinforcing each other in their impact on a person's perceptions of and choices in life.

Exercise 2: Breakout scenarios (30 mins)

It is worth considering the dynamics of participants and how to allocate them into groups either based on similarities or perceived usefulness of differences. It would be useful to have a mix of professions/disciplines, etc. represented within each small group.

Participants are divided into small groups and each group is given a scenario. Groups are asked to prepare a multi-stakeholder response to the situation, and to consider the conceptual challenges they are facing based on the learning from the introductory terminology session.

For example, in the situation of a local protest in the community there are many dynamics to consider, including the operational response and preventative efforts to ensure peaceful protest, but also conceptually if the protest is utilised or exploited by extremists therefore bringing in ideological challenges to respond to. Each group will then present back to the plenary their scenario, the conceptual challenges raised within it, and their response. This will allow a wrap up session, where facilitators can return to the terms from the initial session and consider how they were used in practical applications.

Learning outcomes:

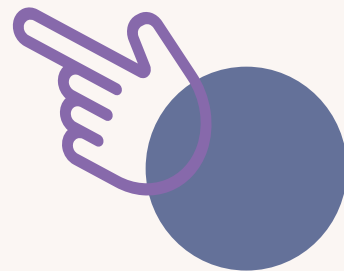
This session highlights the importance of a common language and shared definitions, or the understanding of differences when a single definition is not possible. It illustrates, through examples of contextually common words and phrases, the difference in definitions and understandings across countries, cities, professions, etc.

Further resources:

<https://rusi.org/explore-our-research/projects/prevention-project>

<https://www.icct.nl/publication/defining-terrorism>

<https://rusi.org/podcast-series/decoding-counterterrorism-podcasts>



MODULE 3 – LOOKING THROUGH A GENDER⁵ LENS

Why is this important? As indicated above, radicalisation, recruitment, and participation in violent extremism and terrorism are all highly gendered and intersectional. Therefore, effective prevention must be responsive to these dynamics and seek to mainstream gender and intersectionality across understandings of and responses to violent extremism. However, in order to look through a gender lens, a MSC network must also ensure to look inward and begin the mainstreaming of gender within the MSC partnership or network building itself.

Each member of an MSC network or partnership brings to the collaboration their own institutional and personal (working) understanding of gender and intersectionality, as well as a judgement on their importance to effective solutions. This can cause confusion and discordance if some partners are approaching preventative efforts in a gender-blind fashion while others are implementing gender-responsive programming.

Additionally, it can be challenging if the institutional gender dynamics of MSC network partners are not considered as part of the MSC network building process, as the differences in gendered perspectives and dynamics might be linked to differences in goals. Therefore, a coordinated gender mainstreamed approach is necessary amongst MSC networks partners. For example, police and other security focused agencies have historically been male dominated spaces, while social work and other community-focused efforts are often female dominated. This is often due to socially/culturally constructed gender expectations that men are geared to fill a protective, action-oriented role and women a caring, passive role. Addressing these gendered institutional dynamics and understandings can improve cooperations in MSC networks, as it can help to account for assumptions regarding roles and goals of network members and perceived importance or ranking of associated goals. Looking through a gender lens and mainstreaming gender and intersectional understanding of identities across MSC networks and partnerships can build a firm foundation to better assess potential threats through a gender lens and design more effective P/CVE solutions that are addressing all the inequalities that might be driving violent extremism in particular contexts.

Key messages:

- Looking at the MSC network and its work through a gender lens will improve effectiveness of not only the network collaboration but also its P/CVE efforts. Gender mainstreaming can encourage common understandings and goals across network partners, as well as improving effectiveness of these networks in threat assessment and design and implementation of preventative efforts.
- A gender mainstreaming strategy must be comprehensive, including looking inwards at individual and institutional perspectives of network members, as well as looking at terrorism and violent extremism challenges through a gendered lens.
- A shared understanding of the concepts of gender and intersectionality need to be developed and fostered between MSC network members. This needs to be achieved through a collaborative process of acknowledging differences in perspectives and goals and encouraging common understanding of benefits and necessities of looking through a gender lens.
- The local terrorism and violent extremism challenges need to be analysed through a gender lens, considering how inequalities may be driving recruitment, how gender role expectations impact radicalisation and the roles that people play in violent extremist organisations, and how understanding of gender dynamics can improve effectiveness of desistance efforts.
- Accounting for the complexity of gender, avoiding gender stereotypes and essentialisms, and accounting for the intersecting nature of people's identities (including their gender, race, class, religion, etc.) will improve effectiveness of MSC network efforts.

⁵ Intersectionality is the consideration of intersecting identities that people may hold (e.g., gender, race, class, religion, etc.) and recognition of how discrimination or disadvantages based on these identities may be intersecting and mutually reinforcing each other in their impact on a person's perceptions of and choices in life.

Exercise: Considering gender-related factors (45 – 60 mins)

Engagement is encouraged throughout this module. In the introductory portion questions are posed to the group, encouraging responses from participants on what their understandings of gender and intersectionality are. This is then used by the facilitator to work through these concepts and develop a common understanding for the remainder of the module. This can be done with simple group discussion or through word cloud type software as in the previous module.

Two scenarios can be used for this module, one example of a male with concerns of ties to violent extremism and one of a female. This choice is made to highlight similarities and differences across genders, but also to emphasise that gendered dynamics apply to all individuals, not just women. We suggest that people create their own scenarios which capture their local dynamics, but we have included two scenarios included in modules 1 and 6 as examples.

After the facilitator has worked through an initial presentation period of how and why gender mainstreaming is important to the MSC network itself, it can be presented how gender dynamics impact people's radicalisation to and participation in violent extremism. A gender analysis framework is established that could be employed by the participants in relation to the scenario.

They are then divided into small groups, this can be done considering whether it is useful to keep MSC networks together to encourage these discussions as they can help the group, or by mixing across networks to encourage sharing of perspectives.

Using the scenarios, they are given short breakout sessions (15-20 minutes) to apply the gender analysis framework to the scenario and see if they can list out several examples of:

- Gendered radicalisation processes or drivers of violent extremism
- Gendered recruitment strategies
- Gendered roles and participation

These can be fed back in a plenary session and discussed across groups. Following this, the facilitator can work through a second portion of the session discussing the mainstreaming of gender and intersectionality across the planning of the response. This can include deeper examination of the different institutional strategic and operational goals of the members of the MSC network. For example, responses need to account for the fact that police's and security organisations' primary goal is public safety, whereas social works' primary goal might be individual safety of a person in question.

The participants can then be sent back to their same breakout groups to discuss how the goals in responding to the scenarios, the methods and approaches they might take, and how the mainstreaming of gender might improve effectiveness of these responses, asking them to define several examples for each of the following:

- Institutional Biases
- Strategic Impact
- Operational Effectiveness

Finally, these can be fed back and discussed in the plenary. Wrapping up the session with emphasis on the importance of looking at MSC network efforts through a gendered and intersectional lens.

Learning outcomes:

Due to the different professional and personal backgrounds represented in multi-agency networks, looking at the network itself through a gender lens is needed to ensure common commitment to gender mainstreaming and intersectionality. Starting by looking inwards will then ensure that the network members can be on the same page when applying a gender analysis framework to assessing the radicalisation, recruitment, and participation of individuals in violent extremism in their context.

It is impossible to fully understand and address violent extremism in any preventative or desistance efforts without accounting for how gender role expectations and other intersecting inequalities are contributing to these processes. Therefore, a comprehensive gender mainstreaming strategy is outlined to encourage gender-responsive and -transformative MSC network approaches.

Further resources:

<https://rusi.org/podcasts/decoding-counterterrorism/episode-1-examining-multi-faceted-impacts-gender-counterterrorism>

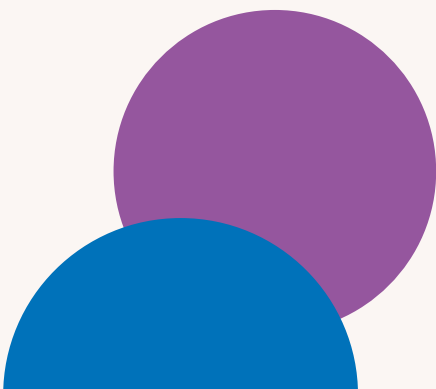
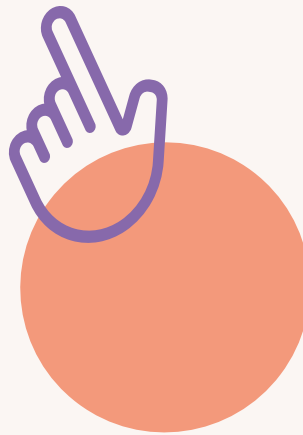
<https://www.dcaf.ch/gender-preventing-violent-extremism-and-counterterrorism>

<https://www.routledge.com/Gender-Mainstreaming-in-Counter-Terrorism-Policy-Building-Transformative/White/p/book/9781032048826>

<https://www.ipinst.org/2022/06/masculinities-and-violent-extremism>

<https://www.globalcenter.org/resource/gender-and-preventing-and-counterterrorism-policy-toolkit/>

https://www.unodc.org/documents/Gender/Thematic_Gender_Briefs_English/Terrorism_brief_23_03_2020.pdf



MODULE 4 – UNDERSTANDING YOUR LOCAL RISK PICTURE

Why is this important? For your collaboration to effectively address radicalisation, it is important to develop a rich, holistic and granular picture of radicalisation pathways within your local context. While the individual factors that can push and pull individuals towards (and away) from violent action, such as thrill seeking, searching for identity, and sense of grievance are similar across different localities: these factors can combine with specifically local factors to form radicalisation pathways which interact to form a unique local profile, much like the different parts of a puzzle.

One way to capture how individual factors can interact with the local/regional context and wider structural trends is by using a multi-level model as shown in fig. 6. In the multi-level model of radicalisation, we can think of three different levels within which the drivers of radicalisation operate.

1. At the **micro or individual level**: for example, perceived injustice or need for sense of belonging
1. At the **meso or social level**: for example, socialisation into extremism by friends at a prayer study group or by a group of football fans
1. At the **macro or structural level**: for example, de-industrialisation, demographic change, crime, institutional racism or structural deprivation.

In practice, no one level dominates, it is how they interact that shapes radicalisation pathways. Use of the multi-level model encourages a holistic understanding of radicalisation that acknowledges how different factors contribute to radicalisation pathways rather than mono-causal explanations, e.g. deprivation, lack of belonging, etc. If we return to our example of Marc, we met in module 1, he feels a sense of frustration and isolation, and experiences financial hardship (individual factors) because he cannot see his friends at the gym and bars (social factor), is involved in far-right music scene (social) and Telegram groups (social). His sense of frustration is exacerbated by lockdown restrictions and concerns over demographics (structural).

We should also note the places where he may become exposed to extremist ideas: the gym, digital space, music scene, etc. Disclaimer: This does not mean that these places should be collectively securitised, but you need an awareness of the specific places in your area where people may get in contact with extremist ideas.

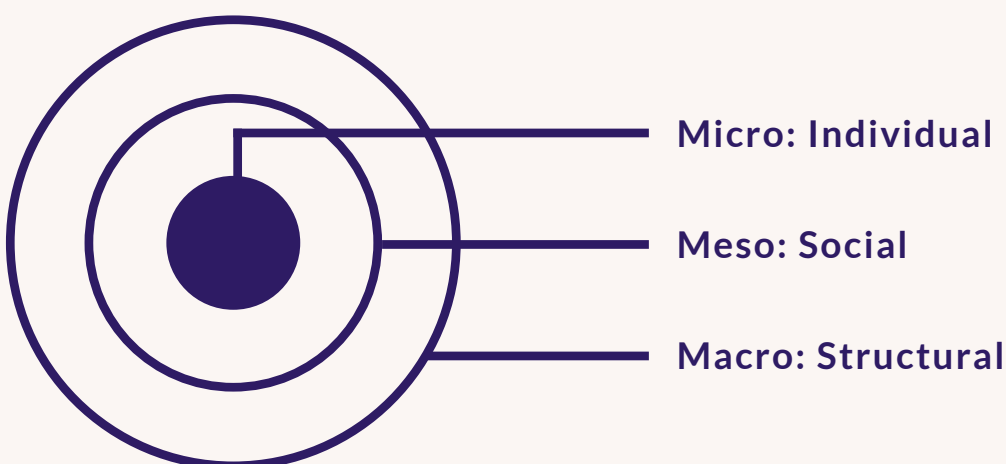


Fig. 6: Multi-level model of radicalisation by Marc Sageman

Key messages:

- There is no single profile or process that leads to violent extremism: Just as one individual who has extremist views may act on those views, another who has the same views may not. The majority do not.
- To understand the complexity of the processes that can lead to violent behaviour then we need to understand how individual characteristics/traits are situated within the local context and wider structural trends. The when and where as well as the who. This means seeing the bigger picture.
- The implication of understanding violent extremism in this way is that the pathways to violent extremism can vary depending on place and time.
- The use of a multi-level model of violent extremism allows us to better identify where best to focus our energies, who is best suited to deliver appropriate interventions, who we need to involve in collaboration, and what further resources we may need.

Exercise 1: Brainstorming the drivers of radicalisation (15 mins)

Ask participants to brainstorm the drivers of violent radicalisation in their multi-agency teams. The exercise is meant to be quick, intuitive, and meant to generate a large number of answers. Write down each driver on a post-it note and put them on a large sheet of paper. The aim of the exercise is to demonstrate the range of drivers that people identify as motivating or leading to radicalisation and how these interpretations may vary across different stakeholders within the team. If there is sufficient time, the team members can rank the answers by those they think are the most important.

Tip: Brainstorming is a technique to produce a large number of ideas quickly. To brainstorm: encourage creativity, ask people to think beyond the conventional, work quickly, do not judge but remain focused on the question that is being asked.

Exercise 2: Mapping your local context and radicalisation pathways (30 mins)

1. Review the drivers the team has identified in exercise 1. Reject any that the team does not feel fit or add those that the team may have missed. Now draw three concentric circles on a large sheet of paper. As shown in fig. 6, the smallest circle represents individual factors, the next circle is for meso-level factors, and the final circle is for macro or structural factors. Now place the drivers that have previously been identified in the appropriate circle on your chart. For example, if the driver is 'identity conflict', place it in the individual circle: If it is 'poverty/foreign policy' then place it in the structural circle, and so on. See fig. 7 for an example of a local risk picture.
2. A second stage of the exercise would be to draw arrows between those factors that you think interact together. If we return to Marc, then you could have put feelings of isolation and victimhood as an individual factor, his circle of friends in the RWE music scene as a social structure, and demographic change as structural factor. In doing so, you start shifting from the idea of factors to pathways to radicalisation. A useful analogy is of Google Maps: the app will depict a journey between A and B, it's rarely a straight path but has a combination of turns, just as a radicalisation pathway. Equally, there is more than one way to get between A and B, some might take different times but just as in radicalisation, there are multiple pathways. The advantage of thinking about radicalisation as pathways is that it shows multiple points for intervention and just as there are routes to radicalisation there are routes away from radicalisation.

DEEPENING COLLABORATION AND STRENGTHENING RELATIONSHIPS

MODULE 5 – INTRODUCTION TO THEORY OF CHANGE MODELS

Why does this matter? Once you have decided to work collaboratively, identified the appropriate stakeholders and addressed your risk picture: a shared and clear understanding between partners of the overall goals and long-term outcomes is essential to the success of collaboration. This module offers an introduction to *Theory of Change* models as one method to broker consensus or at a minimum, alignment (if consensus is out of reach) on shared goals. *Theory of Change* (ToC) models are useful for teams who are just starting their collaboration to set common goals and agree upon outcomes but are equally apt for established teams as a benchmark to monitor their progress, and to evaluate their performance against their stated goals.

The literature on ToC models is vast (see further resources) but at its most basic a ToC is a logic map that traces the route from what you do (activities) to the social change you want to make (goal and long-term outcomes). To demonstrate, fig. 8 shows a ToC model of a fictional project called Community Conversations (CC) that seeks to reduce the influence of right-wing extremism (goal) by holding community discussion groups (activities) in areas experiencing community conflict. The logic map demonstrates the outcomes that the project will deliver to achieve its goals and long-term outcomes. Often, there can be multiple pathways between what we do and what we hope to achieve. In our example, we have one pathway capturing citizen voices and empowerment (on the left) and another that seeks to change attitudes to difference and stereotypes (on the right). Both pathways lead to the same goal and long-term outcomes, and both have hidden assumptions. Namely that citizens' empowerment and openness to difference will lead to less community conflict. One of the benefits that ToCs bring to collaboration is collective discussion of the logic that connects higher and lower outcomes. It can surface or make overt hidden assumptions which may not be shared by or clear to all team members.



Fig. 8: Example of a ToC for a prevention project

The basic building blocks of a ToC or logic model are:

- **Goal** refers to the ultimate aim of a project and the highest-level change that it intends to contribute to but may not be able to bring about single-handedly (but with the help of other projects and networks). In our example, to reduce the influence of a right-wing extremist group. The project may add to this overall goal but to achieve this fully, other external inputs are needed.
- **Long-term outcomes** are the highest-level change that a project can realise by itself. This can include changes in behaviour and attitudes. For our fictional project, the long-term outcome is to reduce community conflict in ethnically and culturally diverse areas which involves both a change in behaviour and attitudes. As with all outcomes, for the purposes of evaluation or monitoring this can be attached to a measurable indicator, i.e. the reduction of community conflict could be captured by hate crime statistics.
- **Intermediate outcomes** refer to the medium-term results of a project that are to be expected to be obtained by the end and which lead to the long-term outcomes. These can be thought of as the logical steps that need to be taken to reach the long-term outcomes. In the example, increasing people's sense of their voices being heard, and them being more comfortable with difference is assumed to reduce community conflict.
- **Mediate outcomes** are the short-term effects of a project. These can include changes in capacity such as increases in knowledge, skills or attitudes. Mediate outcomes are what needs to be in place or to happen for the higher-level outcomes to occur.
- **Activities** refers to what a project actually does. These are the actions that are taken, or the work performed. In this case, the delivery of community dialogue sessions where people have opportunities to have their voices heard and challenge stereotypes about others. It is important to note that this should include all aspects of the project, including administration and communications and not just delivery of results. *(Adapted from Resilient Cities: Diego Muro)*

Key messages:

- ToC models at their simplest are a way of conceptualising the logical connections between what you are going to do (activities) and what you want to achieve (goals). Outcomes are the logical steps in between your activities and goals.
- Having a clear idea of what you want to achieve is essential to the success of any collaboration and negotiates some of the difficulties around different professional perspectives and roles (see module 2).
- The process of developing a ToC is a collaborative exercise which helps promote a shared understanding of a project's goals between partners and the outcomes needed to achieve them.
- ToC models can provide internal and external benefits. Discussing goals and outcomes collaboratively promotes team bonding and clarifies team members' roles, responsibilities, and what is expected of them. To external stakeholders (funders/politicians), ToC models can provide a benchmark to judge the project's success and a tool to clearly communicate to others the project's goals (see modules 8 and 7).

Exercise 1: Establishing goals and outcomes (20 mins)

The aim of the exercise is to provide a basic introduction to creating a ToC model. The task appears simple but one of the hardest parts of drafting a ToC is to determine your overarching goals and outcomes and to be able to distinguish between them. There are several tips to help this. One is to think about the change you want to make. For example, if your project wants to prevent young people from radicalising then you may want to ask yourself *why?* By asking why, you will move to higher-level goals, such as in this case to prevent harm to society and the individual. Keep on doing this until you go no higher and that is your ultimate goal. Another useful way to identify goals is to use a problem statement: Identify the problem that your collaboration seeks to address, i.e. the radicalisation of young people, flip it on its head and determine your goal/long-term outcome, i.e. to improve young peoples' sense of participation and citizenship. At this stage, quantity is more important than quality. Brainstorm as a team by writing your desired goals and outcomes on post-it notes and put them on paper.

Exercise 2: Differentiating goals, long-term and intermediate outcomes (30 mins)

You should have a number of goals and outcomes from exercise 1. Now as a team you need to structure your goals and outcomes in a hierarchical structure as shown in fig. 8. Goals should be at the top and the outcomes that lead to those goals below in a logical chain. Think of outcomes as the logical steps to achieve those goals. The exercise should be undertaken by opening a space for discussion and with input from all team members. The objective is to secure consensus on the logical route between your goal and activities. Open discussion may surface differences in goal setting and the connections between outcomes and goals. As far as possible, aim at consensus or at the minimum, complementarity or alignment: You may agree to disagree whether disengagement or rehabilitation is the goal of your project but what is important is to feel that you are pulling in the same direction. Only by surfacing difference teams can successfully negotiate the different perspectives that stem from a variety of professional roles.

Accept that there might be multiple pathways to the same goal. For example, if your goal/long term outcome is to prevent young people becoming involved in violent extremism, one pathway might be called increased sense of citizenship with outcomes such as increasing democratic engagement, better understanding of how democracy works, increased sense of belonging as intermediate and mediate outcomes leading to it. A second pathway (to the same goal) might be increasing young peoples' resilience to extremism with improved awareness of radicalisation risks, critical thinking and digital literacy as outcomes.

Learning outcomes:

The exercise provides the following benefits:

- A basic introduction to ToC/logic models
- A shared understanding of the change that your collaboration is seeking to achieve and an outline of the logical steps that need to happen to achieve those goals
- The surfacing of differences in perspectives, goal setting and the means to achieve those goals between partners

Further resources:

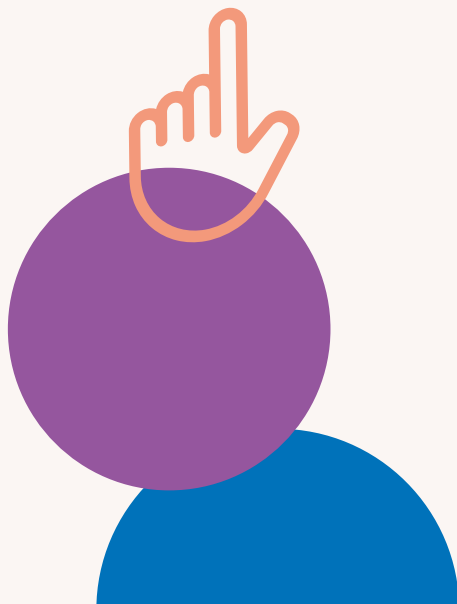
Centre for Theory of Change: Source Book for Facilitators leading Theory of Change Development Sessions

Centre for Theory of Change: Theory of Change Basics

New Philanthropy Capital: Theory of Change in 10 Steps

Grassroots Collective: Linking Goals and Outcomes

Strong Cities Network: Chpt.5. Developing & Implementing Local Action Plans for P/CVE in E. Africa



MODULE 6 – PUTTING THINGS INTO PRACTICE (SCENARIO-BASED)

Why does this matter? This module differs from the previous modules as it is wholly exercise-based. The objective is to put the learning from part 1 into practice. By doing this you will be able to assess how well equipped your team is to meet the challenges in designing collaborative intervention processes into radicalisation. In real life, when network members come together in collaboration, they have access to different levels and depths of information. In this case, all stakeholders have equal amounts of information. In conducting the exercise, it is worth noting how breaking up the imbalances in knowledge/information break up the traditional dynamics within a network.

The previous modules have covered the foundations of collaboration, in this module you will put what you have learnt into practice in a scenario-based exercise. By using a dynamic and evolving scenario, your team will need to consider if you have the right people to respond to a changing risk picture or whether to bring new people into your collaboration. As the context changes and the case progresses, thought also needs to be given on how you define roles and responsibilities, and who has overall co-ordination for the process.

Exercise: Working through a scenario (60 – 90 mins)

The exercise uses the scenario of Jörg. The basic scenario is split into three stages. Each stage involves an additional input of information which mimic the progression of a case as new information is gathered. At each stage, different questions are asked of the team which broadly cover the following themes, assessment of risk, working together and responsibilities. To run the exercise, the three parts of the scenario need to be printed on separate pieces of paper. The exercise starts with the first part of the scenario without the participants having seen the additional inputs. The questions are to be used to structure discussion and the discussion summarised on a sheet of flipboard paper.

There are several terms that may (or may not) be familiar.

Die Linke: A German left-wing political party

Azov Division: A unit of the Ukrainian military that has been linked to extremist nationalist groups

Zigger: A racial slur directed at Russians used by RWE

Shitposting: The posting of content that is deliberately ironic or provocative to create a reaction - maybe devoid of substance

CAD file: A Computer-aided design file is a digital file format that contains blueprints, instructions for 2D or 3D designs as used by a 3D printer

Part 1: Assessment (20 mins)

The team should start by reading the following scenario and then use the questions below to structure the discussion on how they judge the risk of radicalisation in Jörg's case, whether they have the necessary information and the right skillsets to make an informed and accurate judgement.

Jörg is a 17-year-old high-school student in a medium size town in Germany. He is a quiet boy and a bit of a loner, the teachers don't know him so well as he doesn't cause problems, has average grades but struggles with his grammar and spelling. He tends not to speak much in class and only has 2-3 friends. Out of school, he likes making military models, watching videos and spends a lot of his time online. Jörg lives with his mother and father in an apartment. His mother works as a secretary and his father works for the municipality. They both have left-wing worldviews, and his mother is an active member of Die Linke. He has a 23-year-old brother who lives away from home and works as a sports physio.

His teacher notices his growing interest in the Russian aggression war against Ukraine and his support of the Ukrainian side. In another talk the teacher has with him, he praises the volunteers who go fight in Ukraine saying more people should do the same. The teacher asks him where he finds information and he shows her publications about the Azov Division, social media channels promoting them and profiles of its fighters. A week later, Jörg ends up in a heated argument with another student who points out links between extreme nationalist groups and the Azov Battalion. Jörg becomes abusive, calling the other student 'a Zigger lover' and ends with a physical altercation. As a result, the teacher makes a call to his parents and asks for a meeting.

The team should be given 5 minutes to read the scenario and then have 15 minutes to discuss the following questions as a group:

- Is there a risk?
- What are the risks and why?
- Do you have all the information you need to assess the risk?
- Do you have the right people to assess the risk?

Part 2: Working together (15 mins)

Part 2 of the scenario should be given to the team without them having seen it before. The input provides additional information that gives them a better idea of Jörg's risk picture which should accordingly change their perception of risk. As much of the risk stems from Jörg's digital activity, it may be the time to involve new partners with the relevant skillsets.

After the meeting with the teacher, Jörg's parents ask him to give them access to his phone. Although reluctant at first, he gives them the passwords to his accounts. They look at his social media accounts and are shocked to find that he has been exchanging gore videos featuring combat footage from Ukraine in a Telegram chat group called 'Blutwaffen' with 45 subscribers. While many of the chats in the channel are humorous if not a little puerile, some are overtly racist, antisemitic and sometimes pornographic. When his parents confront him about the chat groups, he's part of, Jörg laughs it off saying that 'they're just shitposting', the comments are not meant to be taken seriously and that his parents are overreacting. They ask him about who the other people in the chat are and Jörg says they are 'just people he met online'. Concerned over what they have found, they get back in touch with the teacher.

- What's changed? Revisit the first questions.
- Who are the agencies involved now?
- How do you know them?
- Are they in your current network?
- If they're not, what is your relationship to them?

Part 3: Post conviction (15 mins)

Part 3 reveals the full extent of Jörg's radicalisation moving from a pre-criminal space to a criminal space and subsequent conviction. Jörg's release from prison should raise questions for the team on who has responsibility and accountability for mitigating Jörg's radicalisation risk post-release and how to manage the involvement of different partners whose roles relate to post-conviction supervision.

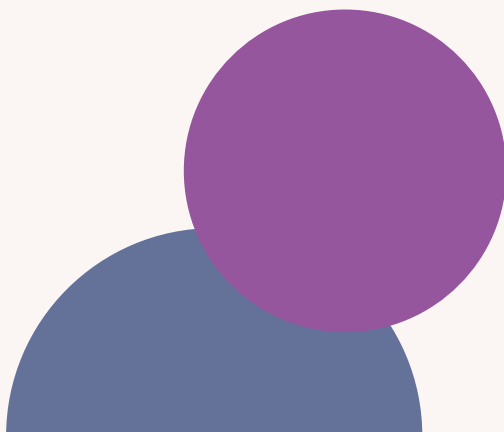
After the teacher informs the police about his concerns, the police take away Jörg's computer and he is convicted of six terrorism offences after a search of the hard drive reveals that he was in possession and had shared video footage of the Christchurch terrorist attack and had downloaded CAD files for 3D printed firearms. He is sentenced to six months in a young offenders' institution. He is released after serving four months of his sentence. He returns to live with his parents though he's 18 now and would rather live with his brother.

- What is your plan to manage Jörg's release?
- What partners need to be involved?
- Who will coordinate and have oversight of the process?
- Are there challenges around working together, i.e. info sharing, protocol, trust, etc

Learning outcomes:

By doing the exercise the team should gain the following outcomes:

- An assessment of where you currently are in your collaboration, whether you have all the relevant partners/skills to determine the level of risk in individual radicalisation cases
- If needed, to identify additional partners to assess risk: Who could be involved in your network on a formal or ad hoc basis?
- A framework/protocol to bring in new partners as needed
- An idea of who has responsibility for overall coordination



although engaging with a Salafi Mosque could be considered problematic in some countries, but you would certainly want to engage with faith institutions or faith representatives, your local council of mosques, local Islamic centres. Since the activity is taking place in the shopping district, engaging with local business board could help guide your intervention.

A second example: An extremist right-wing (XRW) group is campaigning in the community against a decision to site accommodation for asylum seekers in a former church school. They have joined a local residents' Facebook group that was set up by residents to campaign against the decision. They are using leaflets contrasting the plight of homeless army veterans to the services provided for asylum seekers. You know there are XRW groups who are exploiting residents' concerns for their own agendas, who would you engage with? In our training, lack of clarity over who to engage with over radicalisation concerns was particularly acute when it came to the audiences that the XRW seek to recruit from. In this case, a starting point might be local tenants' associations, the local church, veteran's charities, the community Facebook page, etc.

One way to identify which civil society organisations to engage with is through community asset mapping. Community mapping is a technique that can be used to identify the resources or assets that exist in your area. Cities can have many types of assets:

- **Individual:** Credible voices, activists, influencers, connectors
- **Environmental:** Parks, buildings, public spaces
- **Institutions:** Schools, social care, public health
- **Organisational/group/associations:** Neighbourhood associations, youth clubs, sports associations, support groups, etc

Community asset mapping is a useful method to identify what organisations, institutions and individuals can provide connections to the communities that you wish to engage with. An asset-based approach brokers several of the challenges that can provide barriers to community engagement such as stigmatisation and powerlessness: It starts from a perspective of seeing communities as part of the solution rather than a problem, focuses on a cities' strengths rather than weaknesses, and promotes an ethos of 'working with the community' rather than 'doing to the community'.

Key messages:

- Meaningful engagement with communities provides powerful operational and normative benefits to P/CVE.
- While the benefits are clear, state agencies face many challenges in engaging with communities within such a sensitive policy area as P/CVE. Especially when communities perceive themselves as being targeted/stigmatised by P/CVE.
- A potential solution is to 'do with' communities rather than 'doing to'.
- Civil organisations whether informal or formal can provide 'bridges' to communities with whom you wish to engage.
- Community asset mapping is a useful tool to identify the CSOs that can provide the above function.

Exercise 1: Community asset mapping (45 mins)

The exercise is a basic community asset mapping which can be used to map the organisations that can help to connect you to the communities that you want to engage with. For the exercise, we will mainly focus on CSOs although if wanted the exercise could be broadened to include individuals (credible voices)/institutions (schools) if thought they provide a better link to communities.

Using a large sheet of paper, draw a series of concentric circles as shown in fig. 10. Think of the centre of the circle as your team and the further away from the centre, the more distant from your team.



Fig. 10: Example 1 of a community asset mapping

1. Think about the CSOs that you already have a relationship with. Write them down on post-it notes and place them on the sheet with the concentric circles. The closer to the centre, the closer they are to your team, the further away the more distant.
2. Now think about the communities that you do not have a relationship with and which civil society organisations you could work with to connect you with those communities. Again, write them down on post-it notes and place them on your chart relative to how distant they are to your team. Fig. 11 represents the chart for the two examples used earlier of a city where an Islamist group is holding dawah stalls (in orange) and where an RWE group is campaigning against asylum accommodation sites (in blue).
3. A final step would be to draw connecting arrows between the CSOs and your team showing the direction of engagement (do you engage with them or do they come to you or is it equal) and the strength of the relationship (the bolder the line the stronger the relationship).
4. You can use the chart to structure a discussion on what relationships you might want to initiate if you do not already have them and which relationships you might want to strengthen. Think about those groups that are currently outside your circle of engagement.



Fig. 11: Example 2 of a community asset map

Learning outcomes:

- An understanding of why it is important to have communities 'on your side' in P/CVE work and of the challenges in gaining their buy-in
- An overview of what we consider to be communities and the different ways to connect with them
- An appreciation of the benefits of community asset mapping
- An overview of the local CSO landscape and what communities they can help you engage
- Identification of where community engagement is strong and where it could be strengthened

Further resources:

Preston Council: The Community Mapping Toolkit

Nesta: Asset Based Community Development for Local Authorities

Sustaining Communities Blog: What is Asset-based Community Development?

Seminal piece on meaningful engagement: Sherry Arnstein. Ladder of Participation

For good discussion of Ladder of Participation: Organising engagement



MODULE 8 – GAINING POLITICAL BUY-IN

Why does it matter? Besides civil society organisations, local politicians also help engage communities in P/CVE work. At the most fundamental level, they are community leaders representing and advocating for the communities they are elected to serve and can help us to engage with communities as outlined in the previous module. More prosaically, especially in such a sensitive policy area, elected representatives can play a critical role in negotiating the trade-offs between the need to deliver at the local level, sometimes unpopular national policies securing the resources (funding) that MSCs need to be effective and negotiating the bureaucratic structures that can be a barrier to collaboration across different institutions and organisations. The slow pace of decision-making in bureaucratic and hierarchical organisations was cited by almost all the project’s participants as a major challenge in effective MSC. A point that was also addressed in the mentoring programme. Notably, the cities which had dealt with these issues most successfully were those who had gained a mayoral mandate for their MSC. In simple terms, securing political leadership at the highest level can help initiate MSC by providing resources (time, personnel, and funding) and critically drive it forward once the groundwork has been done.

The main technique used to gain the interest of local politicians is through lobbying. While the term lobbying can carry a negative connotation, it is used here to refer to influencing politicians to support MSCs for the purpose of P/CVE. The aim of this module is to develop strategies to gain that support. There are basic principles to achieve this aim:

- Make sure that you get your facts right on what is going on in your local area.
- Use those facts to create a simple coherent story/narrative. Stories are an essential part of communication and how we mediate human experience. They also resonate at an emotional level, which is crucial.
- Have a clear idea of what you need and are asking for your project to succeed. Elected members have very tight schedules, above all they value clarity and succinctness.
- Identify the best person for you to engage with. What portfolios do they hold, does their political leaning matter, what influence do they have?
- Once you know who you want to engage with, gain an understanding of what motivates them. Are there specific causes and issues they champion or feel strongly about? How does the legal and political system they work in operate?
- Once you understand what drives the politician you want to engage with, refine your story to their goals and ambitions. Know and research the local politicians you seek to appeal to. Focus on their perspective and look for common ground between your aims and theirs. What value/advantages can your project provide for them?
- Above all do not be afraid to work with emotion. Emotional content touches people deeply in a way a simple presentation of facts never does. The key is not to be manipulative but to utilise emotions in a way as to provide someone with a feeling that they can relate to and work with. As we all know, P/CVE is an emotive subject that resonates on an emotional level with regards to, for example, safeguarding from harm (especially young people), social justice, use of violence, etc.

Exercise 1: Strategies for managing political engagement (45 – 60 mins)

The exercise provides an opportunity to test your lobbying skills in practical application to a range of scenarios you may potentially face, which pose a challenge to the success of your MSC. Take a selection of the scenarios outlined below (min. 3) and spend 15 minutes in using some of the points highlighted above to discuss with your team a strategy to respond to the situation.

1. There has been a terrorist attack in a nearby city. There is a lot of anger directed towards the community from which the perpetrators derived. Your politician is coming under pressure from activists to take a hardline approach to the community in your city. This is not the direction of your current strategy. How will you respond?
2. Some politicians in your city have been asked to support a local campaign seeking justice for victims of sexual assault by immigrants. You have concerns about the actors and true motives behind the campaign and hold that the politicians' involvement should be avoided. How might you approach this?
3. Some of your politicians are concerned about expressing support for your strategy, for fear of being targeted by activists with abuse or harassment, particularly online. What can you do to help mitigate against this and provide reassurance?
4. You have developed a local P/CVE strategy for your city. Your city does not have the issues of some other cities in your country, and as a result there has been very limited P/CVE activity. Politicians are looking at the budget and are contemplating reducing the P/CVE budget as they do not see a threat. How do you respond?
5. You do not have a local strategy to tackle P/CVE in your city and politicians seem uninterested and unaware. How do you convince them that you need a strategy? What should it contain?
6. You have a strategy to tackle P/CVE. However, your politicians believe that there should be a greater emphasis on protecting public spaces and working with the security services to identify violent criminal offenders with an ideological background to identify "terrorism" rather than to rely on your current social model. What do you do?
7. In order to maintain electoral success, your politician has courted a particular social group amongst the electorate. It is this group the largest P/CVE risk comes from in your city. As a result, the politician is not keen on supporting any work which actively targets that community, even if it is to build resilience and change attitudes within that community. How do you approach this situation?
8. The national strategy in your country has been imposed by the national government. However, the national government is of a different political persuasion to your politicians, and as a result they are not keen on supporting the implementation of the national strategy in your city. What do you do next?

Exercise 2: Role play managing political engagement (45 – 60 mins)

The final part of the exercise is to take one of the scenarios you have discussed and do a role play (on things to think about when using a roleplay see module 1) where one of you is the politician and one of you is the person trying to lobby for your collaboration. Take 5-8 mins trying to persuade the politician to support you. Try and understand the issue from the perspective of the role you are playing. If you are the politician, imagine what does and does not motivate them. If you are a stakeholder within the MSC, think what arguments might persuade the politician.

Learning outcomes:

- To identify the relevant politicians who might be able to help support you in your MSC and help you achieve your goals
- To understand what might motivate them to do so
- To develop practical strategies to gain the support of local politicians for MSC
- To practice basic lobbying skills

REFLECTIONS AND OUTLOOK

While it was clear from the outset that there were **no easy and one-size-fits-all solutions** to the challenges encountered by MSC, the training raised several further questions beyond the project's remit. We believe these themes would be profitable for future projects to pick up on.

First, all participating cities cited the need to explore the impact of the digital world and the pervasive influence of social media on their local extremist landscape. At the training, the Swedish city of Malmö presented an overview of their approach to monitoring their local digital space which can be found [here](#). **Acknowledging the influence of the online sphere** in local MSC efforts not only has implications for your team's composition – who you might need to bring to the table – but also for the skillsets and awareness of your current stakeholders. In the case of Jörg (see module 6) it might be necessary to **bring in expertise** to judge between someone being ironic or promoting extremist content on social media. It may also require additional expertise on where to look for that content in the first place. The need for adaptability and to constantly refresh our understanding of the online extremist environment is clear.

Two points similarly related to an evolving risk picture were highlighted by participants. A concern with the **growing influence of right-wing extremism and anti-democratic extremism** linked to conspiracy narratives. The priority accorded to both was greater than previous projects organised by the consortium partners. Most of the participating cities identified right-wing extremism as a significant concern when creating their local risk pictures. At the same time, the majority of MSCs in the field of P/CVE were initiated in response to high-profile Islamist attacks. It is an open question whether MSCs can be ideologically agnostic, i.e. equally applicable to different forms of extremism or have sufficient adaptability to accommodate a shifting risk picture that encompasses RWE as well as new forms of anti-democratic/hybrid extremism (for further information on these new forms see ISD 2021). At the very least, addressing different forms of extremism requires the input of different subject experts. What became clear throughout the training was that a particular gap exists on how to engage the communities that RWE seek to recruit from, compared to who we engage with when we are dealing with Islamist extremism. The lack of obvious points of contact, with the audiences that extremists seek to appeal to is equally pressing when it comes to anti-democratic/hybrid extremism which can draw from a highly diverse and varied demographic.

Another significant challenge cited by participants was the **pace of decision-making when working with bureaucratic and often hierarchical organisations and institutions**. Working with such organisations means that decision-making can move at a glacial pace, especially in such a sensitive and contentious policy area. When several inherently hierarchical organisations collaborate, it can create a multiplier effect further slowing the pace of decision-making. This effect may be mitigated by a strong coordinator role within your MSC. Another potential solution to making decision-making more responsive to what can be a rapidly evolving risk picture is to secure political buy-in at a level as high as possible (module 8). Having a political leader on board with your collaboration can help drive through decisions. However, this is likely to be an imperfect solution – even political leaders encounter bureaucratic inertia – and it would be beneficial to look more deeply at how collaborative decision-making can be streamlined.

A **difference in understanding emerged in the use of the term community** in the module on working with communities between Anglo-Saxon and Francophone countries. Whereas in the former, the term community is frequently utilised in reference to a group with specific ethnic or religious attributes, for example, a civil society organisation might be perceived as belonging to 'the Muslim community', the term did not carry the same connotations for the Francophone countries. One cause for the difference in understandings may stem from the approaches of multiculturalism and assimilation towards migrant-heritage communities adopted by different countries. There was insufficient time to dig deeper into the implications of how this directly affected collaboration, but it is reasonable to assume that these differences have an influence on the selection of community partners and who they are presumed to represent.

A NEVER-ENDING STORY...

Collaboration is not a linear process with a definite end. It takes active work to maintain and sustain collaboration over time. People move on and things change. Consequently, your collaboration should be adaptable to the changing context around you. A shift in the risk picture may mean that you need to bring in new stakeholders with the relevant skills requiring you to think again about some of the questions which the modules seek to address.

We brought together eight cities with different risk pictures and needs to strengthen their MSC teams and identify the factors that enable effective collaboration. All were at different stages of their collaborative projects, some have engaged in MSC for a long time, others were at the start of their journey, and others were experienced in running MSC in other fields but not yet in P/CVE. Over the course of the project we used the insights and experiences the cities provided during the trainings to further develop the tools and exercises used. The ambition was to collect everything deemed helpful that others can take away and use at whatever point they are in their collaboration.

For those just starting their MSC, the tools in the manual can help them get their collaboration off the ground. For those with more established networks they can help adjust projects to a changing context. Many of the cities found that by learning from and hearing how other cities had approached MSC, they gained reassurance and affirmation that what they were doing is on the right track. In highlighting what we refer to the foundations of MSC, we are offering a checklist against which to guide the choices involved in collaboration. If you are thinking of involving a new stakeholder or formalising a protocol for information sharing, ask yourself: Does it take account of empathy or include perspectives that have traditionally been excluded? Are we using terms that are understood by all partners in the same way? If not, work through the relevant modules to help address those concerns.

There is a question on the wider application of this manual. Certainly, we believe that any collaborative project would benefit from taking account of the building blocks of collaboration and the modules that are contained in the manual. However, an argument could be made that although the basic principles of collaboration are the same across any field, the level of contestation within P/CVE makes it a qualitatively different sphere and brings specific challenges which may not be as acute in other fields. In practice this means certain elements contained in the modules may require more respective weight than in other fields.

In the first part of this manual, we have offered a set of tools and exercises to support those seeking to create MSC within the field of P/CVE that is relevant at all levels of intervention whether your team is designing an intervention with an individual (tertiary), their family or social circle (secondary) or at broader swathes of society, such as a project to improve digital literacy aimed at young people (primary). In the second part of the publication, we now zoom in to the tertiary level to offer a toolkit to support caseworkers who are working with individuals who display extremist views or behaviour.

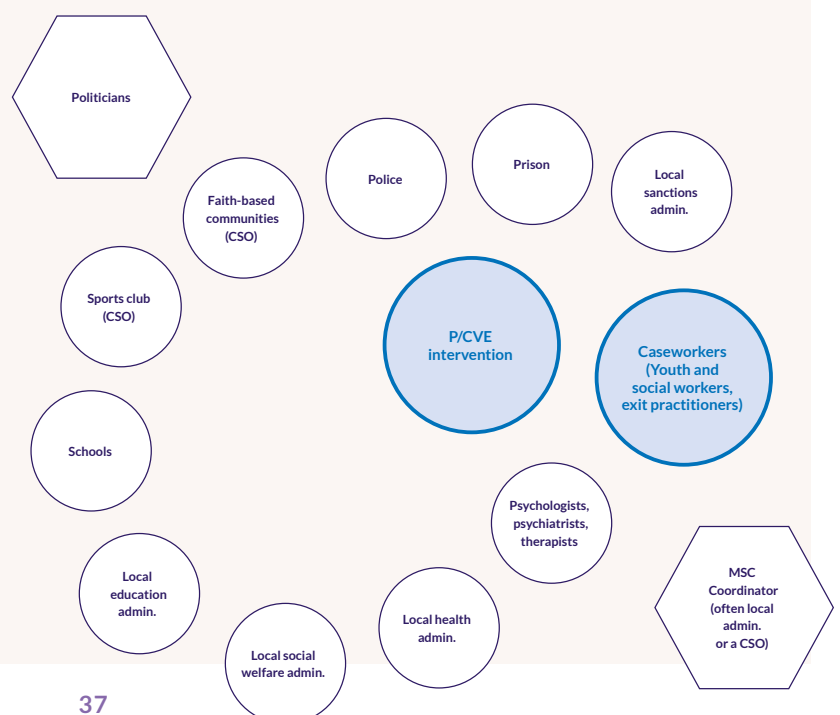


Fig. 12: Visual representation of Track II focus

INTRODUCTION TO TRACK II

THE *DESISTKIT* – RESOURCE-ORIENTED AND GENDER-FOCUSED DISTANCING

The purpose of this part of the manual is to introduce and explain the *DesistKit*. While the first part of the manual is directed towards all stakeholders involved in P/CVE cases, the *DesistKit* is especially designed for professionals working closely with individuals holding extremist views or showing extremist behaviour. This can include social workers, counsellors, or caseworkers meeting with individuals on a regular basis with the aim to support them in moving away from extremist thinking and behaviours and thus better their life. The *DesistKit* aims to strengthen caseworkers within MSCs and to support them in structuring distancing processes.

Within MSCs, the perspectives and interests of the individual at the centre of a P/CVE intervention are often missing. However, among all involved stakeholders, caseworkers are often the ones who have the most insight into the individual's own perspectives and about what helps them go through a successful and sustainable distancing process. Yet, in the context of MSC, common underlying documents are often only risk assessment tools developed by security authorities. These tools primarily aim to assess the level of potential threat an individual presents to society by analysing various risk factors. The professional task of caseworkers, however, must be to see the individual in their entirety and therefore to also consider their resources and strengths. In creating the *DesistKit* we wanted to provide a toolkit that builds a resource-oriented perspective on distancing processes. When applied as a foundation in MSC-settings, it can help other stakeholders to better understand the approaches and perspectives of caseworkers while simultaneously gaining a more nuanced understanding of the complexity of an individual distancing process. To this extent the *DesistKit* focuses on topics relevant for the individual who is distancing. The individual and their needs are at the centre of the distancing work and process. The *DesistKit* recognises the complexity of distancing processes, considers the societal context the individual is living in, and aims to assist practitioners in navigating the path of distancing.

The following chapters of the manual give an introduction on how to use the *CaseReflector* and the *DesistCards*. Before explaining them in detail we highlight the approaches and characteristics that shape the *DesistKit*: It has a focus on present and future. It tries to be language-sensitive and gender-responsive. It focuses on resources and is based on the latest research findings on distancing. In the following paragraphs we give an introduction on several concepts that influenced the development of the *DesistKit* and play a role in using it. First, we explain what we mean by distancing and offer some related research results from the *modus|zad – Centre for Applied Research on Deradicalisation* project *DISLEX3D*. Second, we summarise the desistance approach and showcase why we consider this approach helpful in distancing processes. We also highlight the importance of the working relationship between practitioner and individual. Thereafter, when discussing concepts of human agency and intersectionality we consider the social context and its structures of discrimination within which the distancing work takes place. Finally, we explain how to apply the two items of the *DesistKit*, starting with the *CaseReflector* and continuing with the *DesistCards*.

The *DesistKit* consist of three items:

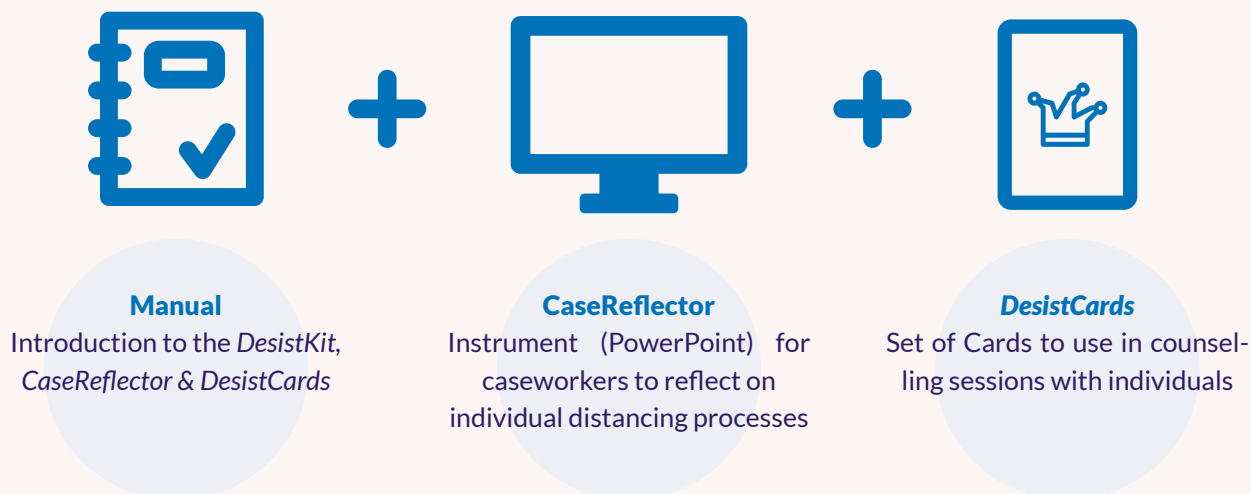


Fig. 13: The three Items of the *DesistKit*

MANUAL

The manual gives an introduction on how to use the *CaseReflector* and the *DesistCards*. Additionally, it outlines the approaches, characteristics, and concepts that shaped them.

CASEREFLECTOR

The *CaseReflector* tool supports caseworkers to reflect on their cases. The instrument is in the format of a PowerPoint-presentation that allows caseworkers to customise it for their use in documentation and reflection. The heart of the *CaseReflector* is a list of **distancing factors** covering all relevant topics for distancing processes. 'Distancing factors' describe certain aspects of life (e.g., family of origin, identity, employment) that can play a significant role in individuals' distancing processes. The slides of the PowerPoint-presentation offer guiding questions to reflect on each distancing factor. Additionally, there are questions that encourage users to consider the impact of inequalities (gender norms, etc.), on the pathways and processes of individuals. The instrument allows caseworkers to summarise and prioritise the topics that are important for their work. This can be helpful in multi-stakeholder settings to show the progress in distancing as well as to indicate areas that need further work.

DESISTCARDS

The *DesistCards* are a set of cards that can be used in counselling sessions to help start a conversation and strengthen the working relationship. Reflection questions that refer to the distancing factors are listed on the cards. The cards can also serve to identify which topics the individual wants to work on or talk about and assist in jointly setting goals for the counselling process.

You can download the *CaseReflector* for your casework here.



APPROACHES AND CHARACTERISTICS

The *DesistKit* is based on specific commitments and characteristics that shaped its development, showcase the embedded values, and are important to reflect on throughout the distancing process. The characteristics and approaches did not only influence the structure of the *DesistKit* but are also relevant for its usage. The *DesistKit* is:

- focused on present and future
- language-sensitive
- gender-responsive
- resource-focused
- research-based

FOCUSED ON PRESENT AND FUTURE

The focus of the *DesistKit* is squarely focused on the current and future life situation of the individual, rather than lingering on the past radicalisation process. This allows for a more change-oriented point of view. The goal is for individuals to take responsibility for the present and their future. However, reappraising past events can play an important role once distancing processes have been set in motion. By addressing the distancing factors, memories and events from the past will naturally come up. It is important to allow space for this. Specifically, the distancing factor of 'Reflectivity' is about reflecting on oneself and one's past, and potentially recontextualising it. However, the *DesistKit* consistently aims to refocus on the present and the changeable future. This focus becomes apparent when looking at the specific questions that are raised in the *CaseReflector* and the *DesistCards*.

Example:

The questions that are raised on the *DesistCards* regarding the distancing factor 'emotions' focus on the current situation and the future:

- In which situations do you have strong emotions?
- How do you deal with these emotions?
- How would you like to handle your emotions?

LANGUAGE-SENSITIVE

The *DesistKit* is a language-sensitive tool, meaning it prioritises an increased sensitivity and awareness towards language and its impact. Language sensitivity recognises the power and influence of words and acknowledges that language affects thinking, perceptions, and relationships with others. Words not only convey information but also carry meanings, biases, norms, and values. This can be especially relevant in a context of preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE) when individuals are ostracised and/or experience discrimination. The *DesistKit* attaches great importance to choosing language that does not stigmatise, alienate, or demotivate the individual and aims to refrain from a security-oriented use of language. In practice this means the individual is seen as a person with multiple identities and characteristics and is not confined to a single role. Words like terrorist or extremist are avoided. Different languages offer various ways of expression, nuances, and perspectives. Within the EU context it is important to keep in mind that specific words can carry different meanings depending on the spoken language.

Example:

- avoid: extremist, terrorist
- favour: person, who has shown extremist behaviour and a vulnerability or commitment to violent ideologies and/or has been active in an extremist scene

GENDER-RESPONSIVE

The *DesistKit* has a gender-responsive approach. Gender responsiveness is a framework that considers an individual's different needs, experiences, and priorities based on their gender. It recognises that gender roles, norms, inequalities, and expectations impact people's lives and that programmes and practices should therefore be designed to address gender-specific factors. The field of P/CVE has often failed to consider the ways in which gender influences both radicalisation and distancing processes. A focus on gender-responsiveness in the *DesistKit* aims to remedy this common blind spot.

Within the *DesistKit*, gender is seen as a social construct that influences the assumptions, motivations, decisions, and perspectives of every person, and affects the distancing process accordingly. The *DesistKit* supports both the professional and the individual to reflect on their gendered perspectives. Practitioners are encouraged to constantly think of gender norms as influential factors in their work, affecting not only the individual's perceptions and experiences but also their own.

The impact of gender is mainly considered within the *CaseReflector* and is meant to be an example of how all intersecting identities should be considered across the use of the tool. For each distancing factor, 'Reflective Questions' are raised concerning the impact of gendered norms on that factor. Additionally, one distancing factor refers to the 'gender lens' to reflect the individual's development regarding their general perceptions on how their gender identity impacts their life. The inclusion of a gender lens in the *DesistKit* is only a starting point and, as mentioned above, should encourage consideration of other important identities like age, class, race, etc. and how discrimination or disadvantage based on these identities intersect and mutually reinforce each other in impacting an individual's pathway.

Example:

The distancing factor 'friends' has the following questions reflecting on gendered impacts:

- Do you know whether the individual tends to spend more time with people of their own gender identity?
- Does the individual feel comfortable with people with other gender identities?
- Are there differences in the way that the individual responds to people with different gender identities in the friends group?
- Which gender roles and expectations exist within the friends group?

RESOURCE-FOCUSED

The *DesistKit* focuses on resources. This means the *DesistKit* supports a way of working with individuals that emphasises identifying and mobilising existing strengths and assets and supports positive change and well-being. It shifts the focus from solely addressing problems or deficits to recognising and utilising the resources that individuals possess. By adopting a resource-focused approach, professionals aim to foster resilience and self-efficacy and to promote sense of empowerment and self-determination.

The *DesistKit* strengthens the individual by making them more aware of their potential, skills and capabilities and helps them tap into their social networks and resources. Distancing work is a collaborative process, where practitioners are working in partnership with individuals, respecting their knowledge and expertise, and involving them in decision-making.

Example:

The individual decides which topic they want to focus on when applying the *DesistCards*. The questions on the *DesistCards* are directed towards the individual and focus on their future goals and the steps to take for reaching them. For the distancing factor 'educational/vocational training' these include:

- In which educational/vocational programme are you enrolled and what do you like about it?
- In which educational/vocational programme would you like to be enrolled?
- What steps do you need to take to reach your goals regarding your educational/vocational training?

RESEARCH-BASED

The *DesistKit* is based on empirical data, taking the latest research findings on distancing into account. The core of the *DesistKit* is the identification of distancing factors, grounded in empirical evidence. Data was gathered mainly through the research project *DISLEX3D3* and has been calibrated by experts in the field via interviews (Ohlenforst et al. 2022). Furthermore, detailed insights into casework were gathered through an impact-oriented evaluation of a counselling centre. As part of this evaluation, a dimensional model was created, which depicts relationships and interdependencies among individual distancing processes (Karliczek et al. 2023). Other theoretical foundations include further literature on deradicalisation and distancing processes, including push and pull factors (Bjørngo 2002; Altier et al. 2017) and different steps and phase models (Logvinov 2021).

Additionally, the *DesistKit* is influenced by these concepts: Desistance, distancing, working relationships, human agency, gender, and intersectionality. The reasoning and their specifics are explained in the following section.

CONCEPTS

The concepts described in the following chapter were important for the development of the DesistKit. To understand and use the DesistKit we are introducing the term and idea of distancing as well as the desistance approach. Furthermore, we are explaining the importance of the working relationship and what we see as crucial within the DesistKit and thereby in distancing work. Afterwards we are giving an introduction of the concept of human agency that is a fundamental part of social work. As the DesistKit tries to consider gender and its impact throughout the DesistKit, we outline the concept of intersectionality and its relevance within distancing work.

DISTANCING

Research offers several ways to describe the process of leaving an extremist group and/or ideology. We would like to briefly explain why we decided to use the term distancing instead of deradicalisation and what we exactly mean when using it within the *DesistKit*.

The term deradicalisation is probably the most common term for this process. However, deradicalisation implies the reversal of the radicalisation process, as an “ex-negativo” process to radicalisation (Bächlin 2023, 16). This understanding includes the assumption that individuals would return to the point before their radicalisation, which is inconsistent with key findings of *DISLEX3D*. Within the research literature, deradicalisation is divided into two processes. A binary distinction is made between behavioural disengagement (which refers to the individual’s spatial segregation from scene members, their activities, and most importantly violence) and cognitive distancing (which refers to the rejection of extremist thought patterns, narratives, and the ideology as a whole).

In order to indicate that the process of leaving an extremist group and/or ideology is in no way linear or a simple reversal of the radicalisation process that occurred, we use the term distancing. In our understanding, the term distancing is more suitable since it allows to acknowledge small successes, does not assume a causality with the radicalisation process, and emphasises the long-lasting, complex, and non-linear process, that involves behavioural disengagement as well as cognitive dismantling of extremist belief systems. Distancing processes include various reflection processes and are highly individual.

As part of the research project *DISLEX3D* we analysed 16 distancing processes from Islamist extremism and sampled items that were important for the process from different perspectives. We asked people from three groups about their observations and perceptions regarding the distancing process of an individual. In total, 39 interviews were conducted with either (1) the individual themselves, (2) the practitioner who supported the distancing process, or (3) a person of the individual’s social environment (fig. 14).

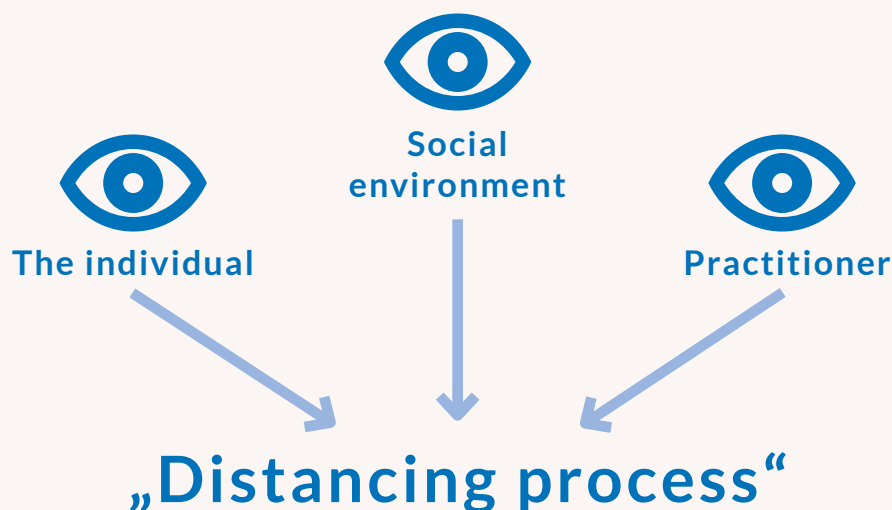


Fig. 14: Research project *DISLEX3D*

The following shows a list of all named items that played a relevant role during distancing processes according to the interviewees. The items are ranked according to frequency of mention during interviews.

Code system and frequency of named codes

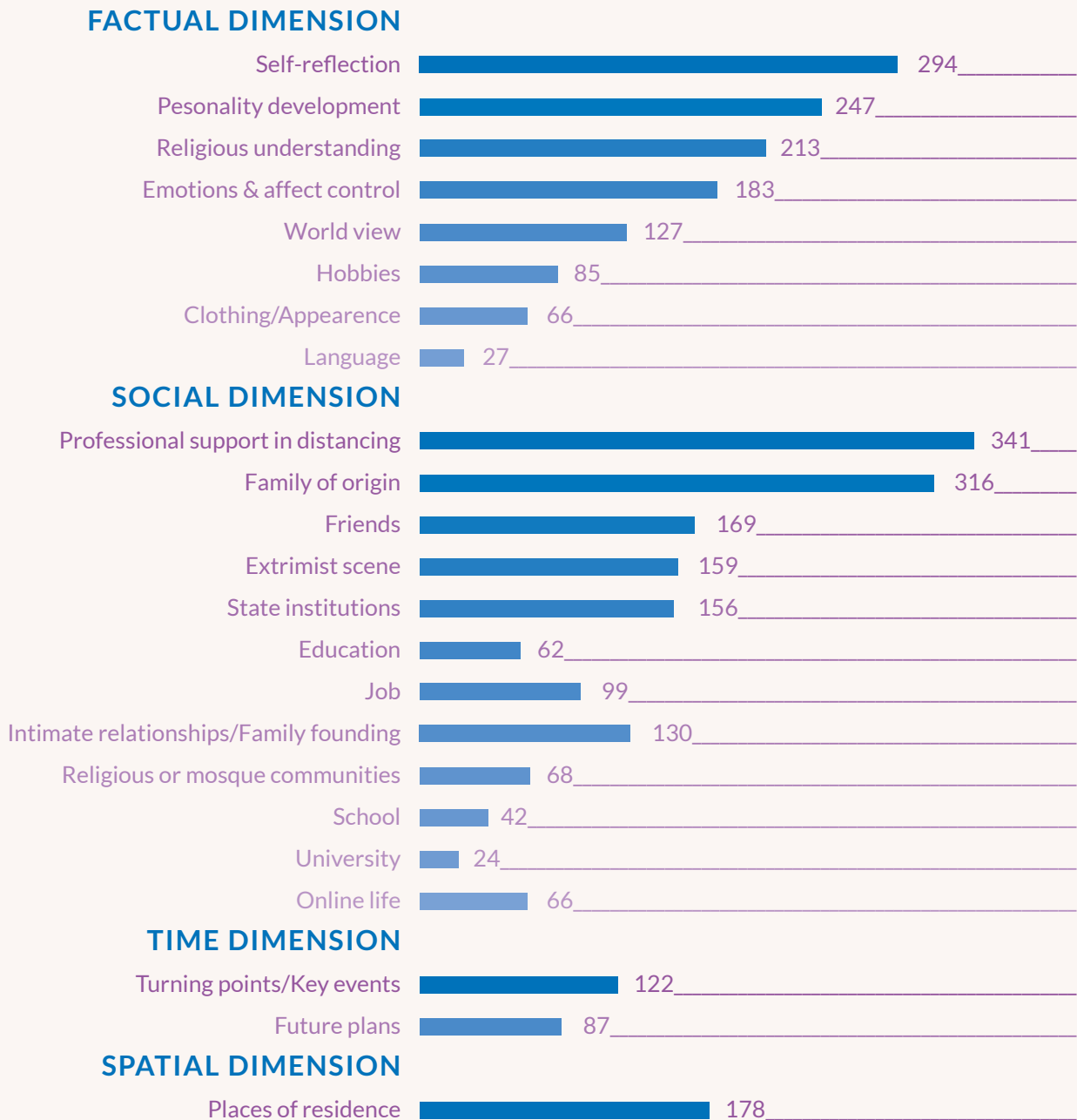


Fig. 15: Code system and frequency of named codes of all interviews

During our qualitative study we gained deeper insights into different pathways and divergent perceptions of distancing processes. The results of the three interview groups (individual, person from the social environment, practitioner) were then analysed and compared. Although, similar topics were frequently chosen during the interviews, they were highly individual regarding their importance and what were meant by them. The items in fig. 15 form the basis for the distancing factors of the *DesistKit* and shape our understanding of distancing. By building on this research, the *DesistKit* aims to provide evidence-based support and resources to help individuals seeking to distance themselves from extremism.

DESISTANCE

Desistance describes a “phenomenon of previously actively delinquent people permanently dropping out of their criminal career, where dropping out implies a development”.
(Rocque 2021)

The ideas and findings of desistance research influenced the development of the *DesistKit*. We see many parallels between desistance from criminal behaviour and distancing from extremist behaviours and/or ideologies. Find here a short introduction to desistance research⁶:

Desistance research is looking into factors that initiate or uphold an individual’s exit from criminal behaviour. This is contrary to the common approach of justice systems that focus on the risk factors that increase criminal behaviour. Even though there is no uniform definition or operationalisation of desistance, there are a few meaningful attributes:

- Desistance is seen as a process.
- Desistance is a combination of social, cognitive, and behavioural development.
- Desistance is an individual process with different causes and relapses – a “zigzag journey” (Philips 2017)

■ I Exit from Crime

■ II Development of an (offence-)free (Narrative) Identity

■ III Sense of Belonging to and Acceptance of a Community

Fig. 16: Three relevant dimensions of desistance

Desistance consists of **three dimensions** that are relevant for moving away from criminal careers. For desistance to be successful it is important to consider all three dimensions. These three desistance dimensions are transferable to distancing. Besides leaving the extremist thinking, scene, and behaviour behind it is important to develop an identity outside of the extremist scene. Furthermore, it is essential that the individual has a sense of belonging to and feels accepted by a community. These three dimensions are interdependent. For example, a person does not find a job. Therefore, they get stigmatised and do not feel accepted by the community. They end up in the criminal or extremist scene, that further excludes them from the community. Their actions and behaviours shape their identity away from the values and principles of the community.

Within **distancing work**, mostly the first and second dimension are tackled. The third dimension is often not considered. It highlights the responsibility of society and raises questions about the ways societal structures allow extremist behaviour to happen and enable extremism. The contribution of desistance research is to emphasise these three factors, the third of which is frequently ignored or forgotten in the field of P/CVE. And yet urging society and communities to reflect on themselves and the ways in which the values and or expectations of the larger society might be inhibiting distancing processes.

6 The content on ‘Desistance’ is drawn from the seminar titled “Desistance from Crime: What we know about exiting criminal careers” by Susanne Beier, hosted by DBH e.V. – Fachverband für Soziale Arbeit, Strafrecht und Kriminalpolitik.

There are three main theories that explain desistance from crime (Ghanem et. al. 2020, Rocque 2015; Maruna 2001; McNeill et. al. 2010).

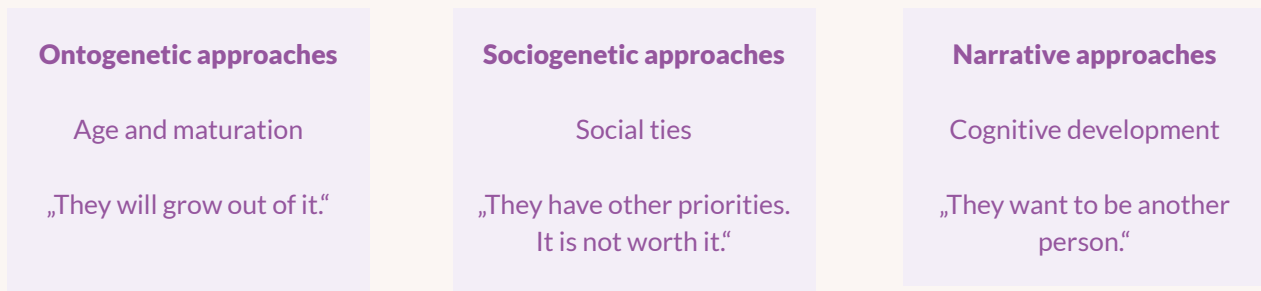


Fig. 17: Main theories on desistance from crime

The ontogenetic approaches focus on age and maturation as primary reasons for ending criminal behaviours.

The sociogenetic approaches explain desistance with social ties and social turning points in adult life (e.g marriage, work). New situations are often accompanied by social control, support, and growth. They go along with changes and new structures of daily routines and a change of identity. But the simple fact of marriage or a new working relationship does not necessarily lead to desistance. What matters most is the quality of the relationships.

The narrative approaches draw the focus on the change in thinking. Psychological and cognitive changes are necessary for the release of criminal careers to last. Essential is the belief in a positive future self, meaning believing in a change and not feeling tracked or stuck, and thereby being open to change and development.

The distancing factors of the *DesistKit* show clear overlaps with the sociogenetic and narrative approaches. The idea of sociogenetic approaches can be primarily found in the main *DesistKit* category 'Relationship and Belonging'. The importance of the narrative approaches is reflected in the main category 'Individual Development'. Maturation and age (ontogenetic approach) are not directly represented within the distancing factors of the *DesistKit*; however, the age of the individual does play a role in the counselling setting and affects ways of interacting. It is one of the intersecting identity attributes that need to be reflected on alongside others like gender or race. Furthermore, the main target group of distancing work are youth and young adults. It highlights the relevance of the age groups in which development and maturation processes are happening.

Factors that pave the way for desistance:

- strong ties to family and society
- fulfilling work
- recognition of one's own value by others
- sense of hope and self-efficacy
- life goals and experience of meaning

Implications for the practical work:

- Working with a desistance-oriented approach means to see people as individuals with their own abilities to change and develop.
- The role of the professionals is to accompany and promote the process of development and support them in overcoming obstacles. The working relationship is based on a trusting and participative cooperation.
- Positive professional and personal relationships are essential for change.
- The focus is on strength, resources, and development.
- Professionals enhance agency and self-determination of the individuals.
- It is important that individuals can expect a positive outcome when they stop criminal behaviours. This is often not a given because individuals struggle to reintegrate into society.

- Desistance processes are often linked to “something of significance.” This might be a child, partner, or a job.
- It is important that professionals avoid labelling, believe in the individual’s capability to develop, and highlight their potential.

We see the findings of desistance research as highly relevant for distancing work. Not only because professionals in the field of CVE are often working with individuals that have committed crime and therefore are embedded in the justice system; but also, the logic of desistance goes along with the understanding of distancing. Instead of centring the individual’s criminal behaviour or individual radicalisation process, the focus is shifted towards the process of change and development.

WORKING RELATIONSHIP

The relationship between professionals and individuals serves as a foundation for effective distancing work. This connection is crucial due to its significant impact on therapeutic/counselling outcomes. A meta-study (Asay et. al. 1999) examining the key factors influencing therapeutic success revealed that 40% of the positive results can be attributed to the clients themselves. Furthermore, approximately 30% of the outcome depends on the relationship formed between the client and the therapist. The study also found that 15% of therapeutic success is associated with the “hope” factor, while only 15% is influenced by specific conversation techniques and interventions. These findings are consistent with the desistance approach, which highlights the belief in a positive future to leave criminal behaviours behind. Consequently, the practitioner’s attitude and their ability to establish a stable, professional relationship with individuals play a vital role in determining success. Regrettably, establishing a stable professional relationship with people who have been involved in extremist scenes poses a major challenge in prevention work. The process of getting to know each other and gaining trust takes time. It is important to note that creating a stable relationship goes beyond merely employing effective methods. Without the appropriate professional attitude, these methods would not yield successful outcomes. Professional working relationships share similarities with personal relationships, particularly when it comes to establishing trust. They benefit from personal life experiences and soft skills. Moreover, it is essential to reflect carefully on the underlying power structures and imbalances of privilege in these relationships.

The role of caseworkers in the field of CVE encompasses several key elements:

- Knowledge about violent extremism, radicalisation, and distancing processes
- Ability and willingness to engage in self-reflection
- Clear self-positioning regarding one’s own experiences, values, and societal position within specific settings
- Familiarity with different approaches and perspectives in working with individuals

The results of the *DISLEX3D* project also emphasise the importance of a stable working relationship. Important aspects of this stability are commitment, reliability, regular contact, meetings, and the establishment of trust. Emotional openness towards professionals and discussions about personal experiences of radicalisation, as well as independent daily life and lifestyle choices are also integral aspects.

The role of caseworkers working directly with individuals differs from that of other stakeholders in the field. While other stakeholders may advocate for the interests of society, caseworkers in distancing work primarily focus on advocating for the individual and on supporting them. It is important to note that this does not neglect the need to consider the protection of society.

The *CaseReflector* encourages the professional to reflect on the relationship with the individual. The questions raised regarding the distancing factors ensure that the professional reflects on their knowledge, assumptions, and own objectives. In this reflection, their focus is on strengths, resources, and development. Within the counselling sessions, the individual determines which topics they want to work on and thereby the direction they wish to take.

HUMAN AGENCY

Human agency refers to the capacity of individuals to act intentionally and make choices that influence their own lives and the world around them (Houston 2010). It is the belief that individuals have control over their actions and can exert their will to achieve desired outcomes. Working towards expanding agency can be seen as a fundamental part of social work. It recognises that people are not simply passive recipients of circumstances, but active participants in shaping their own destinies (Parsell et. al 2016), which shapes the way professionals are working. Caseworkers support individuals in finding ways to expand control over their lives, while at the same time acknowledging external circumstances that are limiting or hindering effective action. Human agency highlights the dynamic relationship between personal autonomy and the constraints of the social and cultural context. Within the context of CVE this could mean that a professional encourages their client to further educate themselves in their field of interest knowing that upon release from prison after several years they are likely to struggle with finding a job because of stigmatisation. The individuals are not victimised but are seen as persons who must take responsibility for their actions in the extremist scene, although the circumstances that led them to do so are also acknowledged. Social work that orients towards human agency not only advocates for marginalised, discriminated and excluded groups and individuals (Healy 2015), but also aims to change social institutions and systems (Adams et. al 2009). In the CVE context, it means that caseworkers have a critical view of restrictive government measures that come from a security agency perspective, which may serve to protect the society but does not necessarily consider the needs of the individual.

INTERSECTIONALITY

Intersectionality is the consideration of intersecting identities that people may hold, and recognition of how discrimination or disadvantages based on these identities may be intersecting and mutually reinforcing each other in their impact on a person's perceptions of and choices in life. Building on the concept of human agency and the advocacy of social work for recognition of inequalities in society and within social institutions and systems themselves, it becomes essential to consider intersectionality, to ensure that the complexity of individual identity is being fully captured. Intersectionality as an analytical framework encourages analysis of all identities and related inequalities together, as they cannot be individually understood (Wilson 2013).

Social structures can reinforce inequalities in intersecting ways, with gender discriminations often compounding or mutually reinforcing inequalities related to age, religion, race, etc. Discrimination or disadvantage can be based on any identity, including, but not limited to gender, race, religion, age, class, ability, etc. Discrimination exists on a spectrum of reaction to perceived difference all the way to systematic and targeted enforcement of inequality. All individuals experience and reinforce discriminations, either consciously or unconsciously. Therefore, it is essential that caseworkers working with individuals to alter their pathways in life consider their own identities, as well as how intersecting inequalities might have impacted the individuals they work with.

GENDER

The focus of this project on gender is two-fold in purpose. First, gender is an important identity, the social construction which impacts all individuals, the roles they take up, the expectations they face, etc. It is an identity that applies commonly across everyone's experience of life. Discrimination and disadvantage based on gender identity is at the forefront of social interaction. It is most definitely impacting the experiences of individuals and should be considered when applying the *DesistKit* (White 2022). Additionally, evidence shows the prominent role of gender in the ways extremists formulate and enforce their ideologies; recruit, monitor, and retain membership; and, in how they formulate and spread their narratives. Therefore, it is essential that caseworkers use the *DesistKit* in a gender-responsive manner (Phalen et al. 2023).

Second, as gender is such a central identity and common point of discrimination and disadvantage, it provides a good reference framework for how other identities can be considered in an intersectional analytical framework. While the *DesistKit* could not include example references for every identity factor an individual might hold, the examples of gender-responsive questions are meant to provide guidance and encourage further exploration of other intersecting identities.

APPLICATION OF THE *DESISTKIT*

CASEREFLECTOR

The *CaseReflector* is a digital tool that provides the opportunity for caseworkers to reflect in detail on one case and its counselling course. It supports the caseworker to structure, reflect, and document a resource-oriented and gender-focused distancing process away from extremist behaviours and ideologies of the individuals they are working with. This chapter of the manual helps to navigate and understand how to apply the *CaseReflector*.

You can download the *CaseReflector* for your casework here.



The core of the *CaseReflector* is the overview table (fig. 18) consisting of 29 factors that can play an important role in the context of distancing processes and relate to important topics in counselling sessions (hereafter called distancing factors). The distancing factors are based on *DISLEX3D* research, along with the outcomes *modus|zad* identified through providing scientific monitoring and support to organisations in the field of CVE. To make sure we involved all relevant factors, the findings were also evaluated by outside experts. The 29 distancing factors were distributed among four main categories: Relationship & Belonging, Individual Development, Practical Life, and Challenges.

Overview of Distancing factors

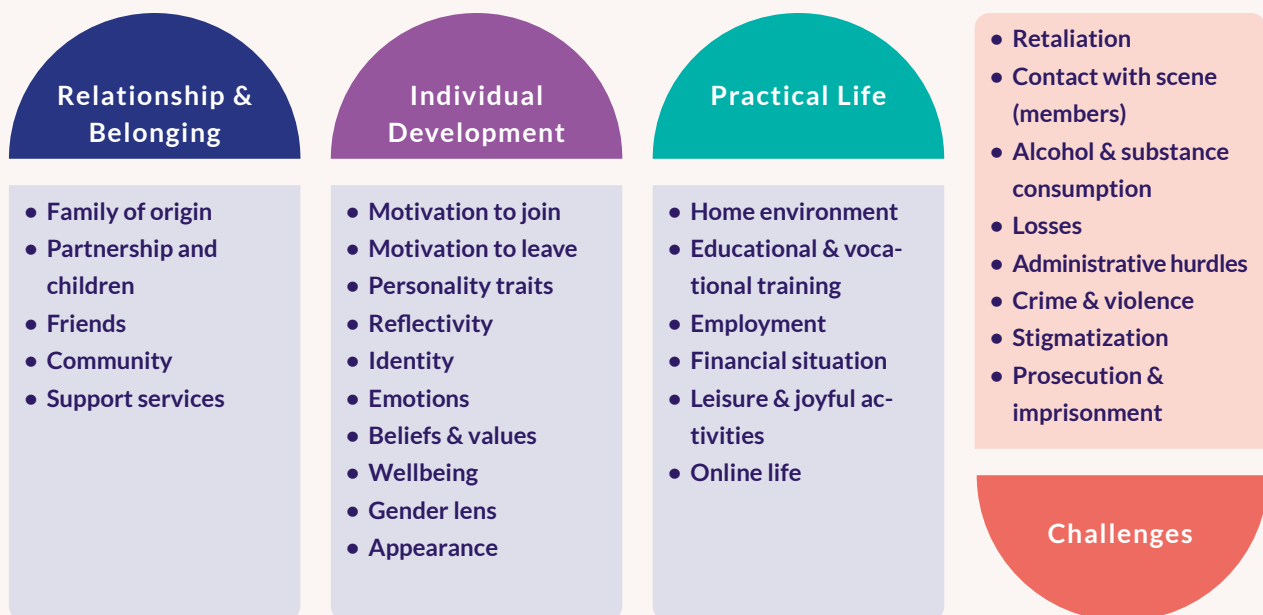


Fig. 18: Overview table of 29 distancing factors and their four main categories

The fourth main category, 'Challenges', is placed upside-down to indicate the fact that it lists distancing factors that can hinder distancing processes. Since the toolkit is resource-oriented, it is designed to focus on resources rather than risks. In counselling sessions, it is essential for the negative factors not to dominate or overwhelm the process. Nevertheless, certain challenges that often occur in distancing processes should not be ignored, therefore they are also listed within the tool.

AIM OF THE CASEREFLECTOR

The overview of distancing factors provides at a quick glance several relevant topics and can help caseworkers remember certain topics they may not have addressed yet, uncover blind spots, and help to prioritise topics to work on in counselling sessions. In addition, it allows caseworkers to take a step back from their casework to reflect on (1) what they already know about the individual's situation, feelings, and desires; (2) what they only suspect or may be projecting onto the individual; and (3) what they do not yet know and would be helpful to talk about with the individual. Intertwined with the reflection process is the working relationship and building it up is a key goal of each counselling session. Another relevant objective at the end of the instrument is the opportunity for goal setting, ideally together with the individual. Finally, the *CaseReflector* supports caseworkers in communicating about distancing processes with other stakeholders while not disclosing any personal data.

The goal of communicating with other stakeholders about the distancing process is for them to gain a more nuanced understanding of the important work and its underlying approaches. The *CaseReflector* can help summarise observations, thoughts, hypotheses, and developments in the distancing process; prioritise the individual's needs and reflect on structures of discrimination that the individual may face. For the caseworker and individual to reflect together on what structures of discrimination may apparently or actually inhibit the individual's agency is, counterintuitively, empowering. From this place, individuals can proactively reframe their interpretation of certain experiences and gain new insight on areas of their life with potential for change, and aspects which are beyond their control (e.g., certain instances of institutionalised racism and discrimination).

STRUCTURE OF THE CASEREFLECTOR

The tool was built with PowerPoint. This programme was chosen because it is very easily accessible, and many different professional groups are familiar with it. In its current version, the *CaseReflector* consists of 79 slides, which are nonetheless easily manageable and navigable once the outline and structure is understood. The underlying structure consists of the following phases:

- Phase 1: Reflecting
- Phase 2: Counselling
- Phase 3: Communicating

The toolkit starts with three short introductory slides, followed by Phase 1 *Reflecting*. This phase (slides 5-75) is the most extensive and includes the overview chart of the distancing factors (fig. 18) as well as a set of two slides for each of the 29 distancing factors. Each of the distancing factor slide sets begins with a slide containing two boxes of reflection questions. The first box offers reflection questions on the distancing factor and the individual and the second box provides questions, examples, and information regarding the distancing factor and gender (fig. 19). The toolkit has a strong focus on gender and its implications for distancing processes, as the paragraph on gender in the concept section explained. Here we note again the importance of considering other discrimination structures the individual may be affected by. The second slide of each distancing factor is for personal notes, thoughts, and hypotheses according to the distancing process of the individual (fig. 20).

In addition to the division into three phases, the tool consists of different colours that group the distancing factors by content. By scrolling through the slides, you will notice that each main category and its associated distancing factors are the same colour. For example, the slides on 'Relationship and Belonging' and their associated distancing factors are coloured blue. 'Individual development' is coloured orange, 'Practical Life' green, and 'Challenges' are coloured red. Moreover, the overview slides 6, 8, 19, 40, and 53 are equipped with hyperlinks which allow faster navigation to the individual slides and relevant distancing factors. Each word that is underlined in the overview will guide you with a right-hand click to its reflection slide.

FAMILY OF ORIGIN

Refers to relationships and contacts to members of family of origin

Reflective Questions

- What do you know about the family of the individual in general?
- What do you assume regarding the relationships between the individual and their family (members)?
- Which developments regarding their relationships would you consider as helpful?

Reflection on Gender

- What do you know about the role the individual plays in their family? In what way is the role related to gender? (E.g. is there a division of labour over childcare responsibilities, care work, financial responsibility, etc.)
- Do you know anything about the gender norm expectations emanating from this familial relationship? E.g. do family expectations shape their access to socio-economic opportunities (public life, employment, education, etc. - men = providers/women = carers)
- What roles does the individual want to play within their family of origin and in what way is this connected with gender?

Fig. 19: Example of the distancing factor slide 'family of origin' with reflection questions

NOTES ON FAMILY OF ORIGIN

Guiding questions (an be adjusted in the PowerPoint):

- **What is the current situation?**
- **What is the aim of the individual?**
- **How can I support the individual to reach their goals?**
- **Which developments have I noticed?**
- **Which resources and skills does the individual have?**

Fig. 20: Example of a slide for taking notes

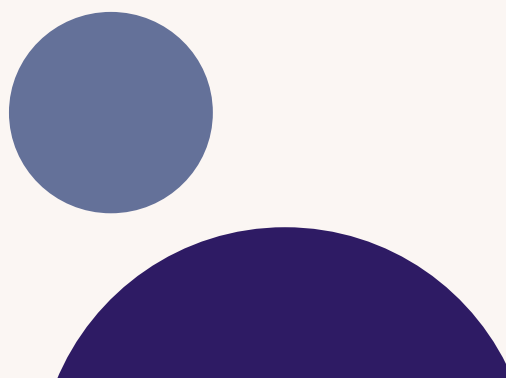
To test the *CaseReflector*, we invite you to imagine the following scenario: A caseworker has had one or two introductory meetings with an individual and has received some background information about the case from a probation officer. In preparation for their next meeting, the caseworker begins with Phase 1 of the *CaseReflector*, checking their current knowledge of the individuals (“What do I know? What knowledge am I missing? What factors might support the distancing process?”) After gaining an overview, the case worker might take note of a few questions that seem most important to ask the individual at their next meeting. At the end of the reflection process (Phase 1), it can be helpful for caseworkers to summarise their thoughts and prioritise certain topics they want to address (slide 71).

With the benefit of new understandings, insights, and perhaps a clearer sense of missing topics in mind, the caseworker and the *CaseReflector* arrive at Phase 2: Counselling. Here the caseworker returns to working directly with the individual and may consider applying the *DesistCards* during the counselling sessions. Slides 73 and 74 provide the opportunity to (jointly) write down goals that the individual likes to achieve, together with ideas on how the caseworker can support achieving those goals.

Phase 3: Communication empowers caseworkers in connecting with various stakeholders. This can involve a case presentation to other counselling teams and key stakeholders or reflect on the case with colleagues in case supervisions. Slide 76 provides some questions to remind you of the progress and approaches that the work is based on. Slide 77 again shows the overview chart of distancing factors. The idea behind this is to show the overview to others and to either delete or highlight certain factors individually. This can help to explain which topics are especially relevant or particularly challenging or sensitive topics for the individual. This allows multiple stakeholders to communicate about the casework without going too far into personal details of the individual.

APPLICATION

It has already been indicated that the use of the *CaseReflector* is very individual. Each distancing process is unique, and the use of the tool is also individually adjustable through the editing mode in PowerPoint. If topics relevant to a case are missing, new slides can be added and conversely, topics/slides that do not matter can be hidden. However, we would like to advise not hiding slides too quickly as this could lead to overlooking topics that seem unimportant at first glance, but which may become relevant in the future. The individual use of the tool also affects the sequence of the different steps. Distancing processes are never linear so there is no strict order or progression to follow; the three phases can be understood as circular and repetitive phases. Another advantage of the digital tool is that no data collections is saved online or must be uploaded somewhere. All documents can be saved at the level of the users own digital devices. For data protection reasons we also suggest using a code name for the individual in the tool and a password protecting the document to control access. If preferred, slides can also be printed out, for example, to talk about goal setting together with the individual.



THE 29 DISTANCING FACTORS

The distancing factors describe specific topics relevant for distancing processes and based on current research findings. This includes *modus|zad*'s previous research project *DISLEX3D* (Ohlenforst et al. 2022) and insights we gained from providing scientific monitoring and support to organisations in the field of CVE. Especially important to mention here is the dimension model, which depicts relations and interdependencies of individual distancing processes (Karliczek et al. 2023). Experts in the field evaluated the 29 factors to ensure the *DesistKit* covers all relevant topics. Distancing processes are an interplay between different factors that can influence and condition each other. Which factors are relevant depends highly on the individual. In the following section we describe the meaning of each distancing factor.

RELATIONSHIP & BELONGING

This main category looks at the social network and relationships the individual has and/or would like to have and consider their meaning. This is especially important as individuals find or develop a strong sense of belonging in the extremist scene. Individual relationships do mainly have positive effects when they are perceived as meaningful and good to the person (Maruna 1999). The feeling of belonging to a certain group or community can additionally be helpful for distancing. That's why it can be relevant to look into group processes on individual trajectories (Lynch 2014).

FAMILY OF ORIGIN

The distancing factor 'Family of origin' refers to relationships and contacts to members of the family the individual is born into and/or grew up with. Who is considered family can go beyond the biological family. Talking about family of origin is often connected with a lot of memories and emotions. Therefore, it can be a sensitive issue and challenging to open up and talk about. Our research indicates that during distancing processes relationships with family members have the potential to experience enhancement. One contributing factor to this can be the reduction in conflicts and disagreements. Notably, some individuals derive considerable benefit from family members taking a genuine interest in their beliefs. Additionally, it becomes apparent that individuals express heightened appreciation for their families. Overall, the family of origin assumes an ambivalent role, offering both support and strength while also sometimes acting as a hindrance or even causing harm to distancing processes. Depending on these dynamics, it could prove advantageous to either nurture these relationships or to create some distance from specific family members.

PARTNERSHIP AND CHILDREN

The distancing factor 'Partnership and children' refers to intimate relationship(s) and the individual's own children. This includes the desire for a partner, all types of love relationships, and children the individual cares for. A partner can give the individual hope, stability, and emotional support. This occurs especially when the partner believes in the individual and their ability to change. Additionally, starting a family of their own has the potential to give individuals a new purpose and feeling of security.

FRIENDS

The distancing factor 'Friends' refers to relationships with individual friends and peer groups. A diverse friend group can be helpful for distancing processes as can friends the individual had known before the involvement in extremist ideologies and scenes. Previous research showed that this factor was often overlooked by case-workers and therefore important to keep in mind.

COMMUNITIES

The distancing factor 'Communities' refers to involvements in or connections with a certain community that is united by a common interest or characteristics. This term can be interpreted very broadly and include sports

and music clubs, religious and ethnic communities as well as online communities (e.g., gaming scene). The individual does not necessarily need to be in direct or personal contact with people from the community, just a feeling of belonging to a certain group might be relevant. Based on the research findings of *DISLEX3D* case-workers are often lacking knowledge of individual involvement in certain communities. Therefore, it can be useful to address this topic within counselling sessions.

SUPPORT SERVICES

The distancing factor 'Support services' refers to the professional support system. This includes institutions, organisations, local authorities, and people working in these areas. For example, doctors, psychotherapists, social workers, lawyers, youth welfare services, etc. Support services can be a resource for the individual as well as for case workers in the distribution of tasks and collaboration.

INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT

This category refers to thoughts, feelings, and characteristics of the person, focusing on the individual and their personal development. A good understanding of the factors listed in this category requires a good working relationship and a fair number of conversations. The willingness of the individual to reflect on their own thoughts and behaviour is essential.

MOTIVATION TO JOIN

The distancing factor 'Motivation to join' refers to the individuals' reasons for getting involved in an extremist scene or following an extremist ideology. Reflecting on the motivation to join can be helpful for understanding the radicalisation process and therefore support distancing. However, the motivation to join does not necessarily coincide with the motivation to leave.

MOTIVATION TO LEAVE

The distancing factor 'Motivation to leave' refers to the individuals' reasons for leaving the extremist scene or extremist ideology behind. Their personal life situation may have changed since the individual joined the extremist scene; new priorities can lead to the decision to begin the distancing process.

PERSONALITY TRAITS

The distancing factor 'Personality traits' refers to the characteristics, behaviours, and attitudes of the person. It is possible that individuals will show changes in their character throughout distancing processes. These are often long-term processes that take time for the individual to recognise. The characteristics may stand in contrast to those present during the radicalisation process. For example, the individual is more open, communicates in a more respectful way or shows more empathy. Here it can be beneficial to reflect on how the caseworker perceives the individual and how the individual perceives themselves.

REFLECTIVITY

The distancing factor 'Reflectivity' refers to the individual's ability to reflect on their own (past) behaviour and thinking. This category is more about the realisation and perception of one's own thoughts and behaviour than about the ideology and behaviour itself. Within this factor it is necessary to take a retrospective view and look at one's past. During distancing processes individuals often start to see and interpret things in a different way than before. It can be a part of distancing to realise this change in thinking and acting. Indications of reflectivity can be that the individual expresses doubts, questions their involvement in the scene, or is able to accept criticism.

IDENTITY

The distancing factor 'Identity' refers to the way the person perceives and understands themselves. It is closely linked to the narrative approaches of desistance, where believing in a positive future self and the potential for growth and transformation becomes crucial. The presence of supportive individuals such as case workers, who also believe in the person's capacity to change, can significantly influence this process. Moreover, exploring one's past, seeking explanations and understanding, and even reinterpreting past experiences play vital roles in shaping identity.

EMOTIONS

The distancing factor 'Emotions' refers to the person's emotional range, reactions, and handling of emotions. Engaging in distancing processes can lead to a deeper understanding of and connection with one's own emotions. This becomes evident when individuals are comfortable speaking about their emotions. Some still have to learn to access their emotions. Being aware of and effectively managing one's emotions can be significant. Our research reveals that people experience feelings of increased positivity and life satisfaction through distancing processes.

BELIEFS & VALUES

The distancing factor 'Beliefs & values' refers to the person's values and belief systems. Distancing processes can go along with recognising the complexity and diversity of the world, accepting plurality and being open to different life concepts. This stands in stark contrast to the beliefs and values found in extremist scenes and ideologies. Our research indicates that individuals who have been involved in extremist scenes often undergo a transformation: rejecting violence and dichotomous thinking while fostering a desire to promote goodness, harmony, and balance instead.

WELLBEING

The distancing factor 'Wellbeing' refers to the individual's emotional wellbeing and health situation. A feeling of general wellbeing can positively influence distancing processes. It is crucial to be mindful of the person's current health situation and emotional state. For example, if there are indications of mental health issues such as trauma or depression, it is advisable to collaborate with mental health specialists.

GENDER LENS

The distancing factor 'Gender lens' refers to the individual's capability to reflect on their own gender, gender role(s), gender norms, gender bias, gender expectations, and the influence of gender on their behaviour and thoughts. Both extremist scenes and society as a whole can adhere to rigid and constricting gender roles and expectations. However, acknowledging and understanding these gender norms can lead to a sense of empowerment. Recognising how gender shapes perceptions and aspirations can increase a sense of agency, as it allows people to distance themselves from limiting stereotypes and societal expectations.

APPEARANCE

The distancing factor 'Appearance' refers to the individual's look and feel. Within distancing processes some people contemplate their appearance and how others perceive them. It can be essential to be aware that certain clothing choices can express one's personal opinions and attitudes. For some individuals, it can be relevant for their distancing process to make a conscious and self-determined decision about how they wish to dress and present themselves. For certain individuals, clothing holds a deeper significance in shaping their identity. A typical example for this factor within the field of CVE is when organisations provide support with removing tattoos that display extremist content.

PRACTICAL LIFE

This category refers to the daily life of the person and the fulfilment of their basic needs. It can be relevant for distancing processes to understand the degree to which an individual is successfully managing the ins and outs of daily life. Additionally, to consider the daily structure of the individual and their contentment with it may be relevant.

HOME ENVIRONMENT

The distancing factor 'Home environment' refers to the living situation of the person. It can be essential to consider who the person lives with and how these relationships contribute to their overall wellbeing and distancing. Ensuring that the person feels comfortable, safe, and at ease in their living environment can be important. Additionally, it can be helpful to ponder the geographical location where the person stays. In certain circumstances, a change of city or moving out of the parental home can be beneficial. Evaluating whether the person is able to live independently is also a relevant aspect to consider. If individuals are imprisoned, it may be relevant to consider the ambivalent role of prisons. While some individuals experience violence and discrimination within the prison system, others may surprisingly feel safer and calmer compared to their previous experiences in, for instance, war or conflict zones.

EDUCATIONAL & VOCATIONAL TRAINING

The distancing factor 'Educational & vocational training' refers to any type of programme that furthers the persons education or skills. This can involve attending schools or universities, taking part in a vocational training, doing internships or being an apprentice. These places of learning can be beneficial because they can offer opportunities for personal growth, building new friendships and new perspectives. Furthermore, being a part of certain schools or training programmes can provide individuals with a daily structure and enable them to visualise their future career plans.

EMPLOYMENT

The distancing factor 'employment' refers to a job the person is making their living with. Having a job and making a living can enable a person to be independent and self-sufficient. Besides financial independency, being employed can foster a positive self-image and make them feel accepted in society. Feeling trusted, responsible, and valued at work can also play a constructive role in distancing. Furthermore, having a job can redirect the focus and interests of an individual, steering them away from involvement in extremist scenes.

FINANCIAL SITUATION

The distancing factor 'Financial situation' refers to the financial situation and the ability to provide for themselves. It can be important to understand how an individual supports themselves financially. Sometimes, individuals also have the responsibility of providing for their families. It can be beneficial if someone earns their own money as it grants them independence. However, this is not always possible for instance when a person is still going to school or cares for their children. Having a stable income is advantageous. If someone is facing financial challenges, it can make sense to take a closer look at their earnings and expenses. In addition, it can also be beneficial to get a sense of whether there are financial connections by participating in certain scenes.

LEISURE & JOYFUL ACTIVITIES

The distancing factor 'Leisure & joyful activities' refers to activities and hobbies the individual pursues in their free time. Hobbies e.g., can be valuable resources that can provide the feeling of belonging and making new friends, positive experiences that are very relevant to strengthen the individuals in their process of distancing.

ONLINE LIFE

The distancing factor `Online life` refers to all passive and active digital activities (e.g. social media, gaming) of the individual. Following previous research, we observed a wide range of digital behaviours during the distancing processes. The online world posed a significant challenge for some individuals, leading them to delete their social media accounts. They indicated that they preferred to turn their backs on the online world for fear of being exposed to extremist content again. Others pointed out that their online activity had changed to using other platforms and using them for other reasons (e.g., instead of posting propaganda, they were now reconnecting with old friends). Overall, a significant number of case workers interviewed did not know about individuals' online activities, although most of them had online contact with the scene or ideological content. Therefore, we strongly recommend that caseworkers work on individuals' media literacy by reviewing postings, videos, and other content together to illuminate hate speech and divisive narratives.

CHALLENGES

This main category refers to (known and common) challenges people are dealing with regarding their distancing from the extremist scene/ideology. As those factors can hinder people from distancing, they are important to consider.

RETALIATION

The distancing factor `Retaliation` refers to the potential aggressive response of the extremist network in relation to the intention or action of the individual to leave the network. The fear of facing consequences can make it challenging for people to leave the extremist scene. Additionally, it involves the individual's own retaliatory fantasies against the extremist network. They can become especially an issue if the person plans to act on them.

CONTACT WITH SCENE (MEMBERS)

The distancing factor `Contact with scene (members)` refers to the relationship and contacts the person still has with people related to the extremist network. Sometimes individual's entire social network relates to the extremist scene. Scene contacts, however, are not always perceived negative, e.g., if a scene member is supporting an individual to leave. However, old and strong contacts should be discussed critically.

ALCOHOL & SUBSTANCE CONSUMPTION

The distancing factor `Alcohol & substance consumption` refers to the (mis)use of alcohol and other drugs. Consumption behaviour becomes an issue when it leads to suffering and hinders the person's ability to function. In certain instances, this consumption may prevent the individual from participating in counselling sessions due to their limited cognitive abilities or even cause them to miss them. In such cases, it is essential to address the consumption in a non-stigmatising manner and eventually consider engaging professionals in drug counselling as part of the support process.

LOSSES

The distancing factor `Losses` refers to all the losses a person experiences as a consequence of leaving the extremist lifestyle. This can include the profound impact of losing a friend due to their involvement in extremist activities, possibly leading to significant emotional distress. Distancing can also result in relinquishing certain advantages, such as positions of power that provided respect, confidence, and a specific social status. Furthermore, important friendships, social networks, and even financial stability might be sacrificed in the process of distancing from the extremist scene. It may be important to try to replace these losses outside of the extremist scene.

ADMINISTRATIVE HURDLES

The distancing factor 'Administrative hurdles' refers to all administrative or legal issues that can impact the individual's life negatively. Administrative institutions can both support and hinder distancing processes. A common problem is uncertain residency status, which may even be revoked, leading to far-reaching consequences for the individual's situation. It can make it difficult to secure employment or find housing, resulting in a decreased quality of life and adversely affecting the distancing process. Another example involves intervention from the youth welfare office. In contrast, a respectful and appreciative interaction between individuals and representatives of state institutions can have a positive influence on distancing processes. In the context of counselling, it can be beneficial to address administrative hurdles and strive to find ways of coping with them. Additionally, accompanying the individual to appointments with certain administrations can be beneficial.

CRIME & VIOLENCE

The distancing factor 'Crime & violence' refers to the criminal and violent behaviour of the person. Criminal and violent behaviour can deter individuals from leading a prosocial life. In extremist networks, violence and criminal activities are often prevalent, and the motivation to distance oneself from such behaviour may be low, especially if it continues to yield perceived success. In this context, it becomes crucial to maintain a hopeful and positive outlook on the future. Engaging in criminality and violence can furthermore lead to prosecution and imprisonment.

STIGMATISATION

The distancing factor 'Stigmatisation' refers to the labels attached by the family/community/society that can lead to social exclusion and psychological degradation. Stigmatisation is the process of attaching negative beliefs, stereotypes, and social disapproval to a specific group, individual, or characteristics, leading to marginalisation and discrimination. Individuals involved in the extremist scene can be stigmatised on various levels, either due to being labelled as extremists or terrorists, having a history of imprisonment, or facing discrimination based on their class, race or appearance, among other factors. Stigmatisation can especially have a negative influence on the distancing factor 'identity', impeding the person's ability to change or integrate into society.

PROSECUTION & IMPRISONMENT

The distancing factor 'Prosecution & imprisonment' refers to pending and ongoing legal proceedings as well as imprisonment. Individuals who are under criminal prosecution and/or whose court proceedings have not been concluded yet find themselves in a situation that makes it difficult to take steps towards a prosocial life. Similarly, imprisonment presents social challenges as life in prison differs fundamentally from societal life outside of it. Incarcerated individuals have limited opportunities for personal growth and development, and imprisonment can discourage individuals from believing they can change their lives. Particularly, stigmatisation and experiences of discrimination within the prison environment can exert a negative influence.

DESISTCARDS

The *DesistCards* are a set of cards designed specifically for professionals working in the field of countering violent extremism (CVE). The cards can help start conversations or set goals in counselling sessions with the individuals vulnerable to or already committed to extremist ideology. The topics covered by the cards have been research validated as relevant for distancing processes. Ideally, the cards are used together with individuals who are undergoing a transformative journey away from extremist ideologies and behaviours. Most of the cards emphasise available resources and are focused on the present and future. In addition, the flexibility of the *DesistCards* goes beyond the CVE context as they can be useful in other counselling settings as well.

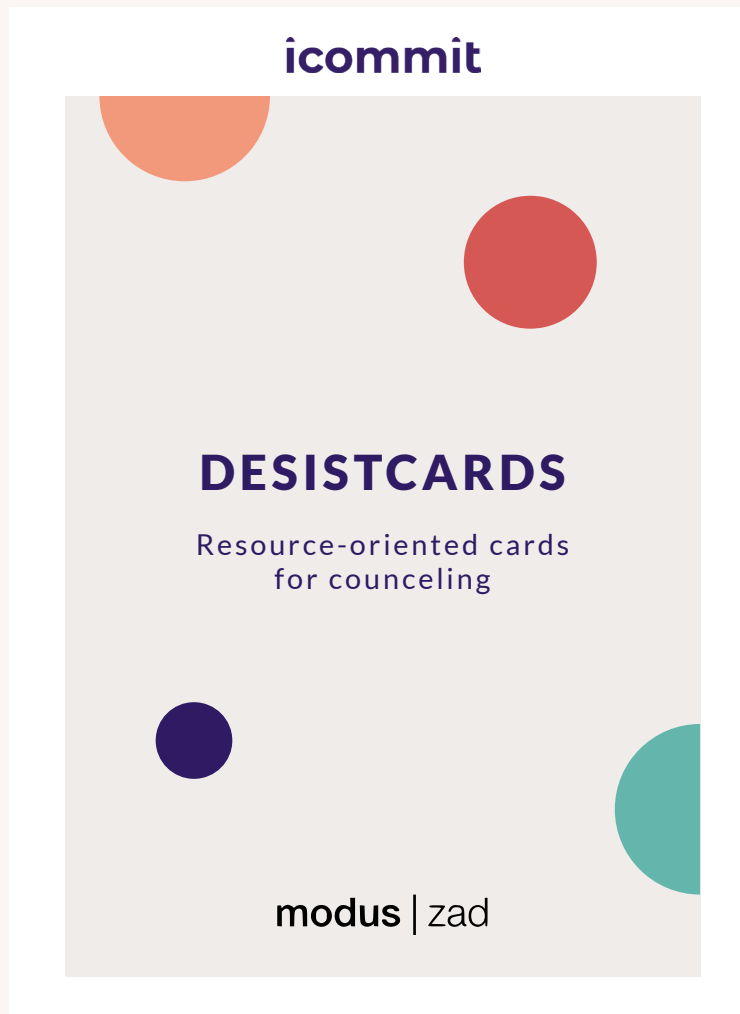


Fig. 21: Cover of the *DesistCards*

You can find the set of cards in English on the website of [modus|zad](https://modus-zad.eu).



The cards are also available in the following languages:

- German
- Macedonian
- Slovak
- Romanian
- Polish

PURPOSE OF THE CARDS

- Find out which topics/themes are (currently) important in the individual's life
- Find out which topics/themes the individual wants to work and focus on
- Get to know the individual better and deepen the working-relationship



Fig. 22: Example of the card 'emotions'

MATERIAL⁷

36 CARDS

4 main categories (four different colours):

- Relationship and Belonging
- Individual Development
- Practical Life
- Challenges

28 distancing factors

- The 28 distancing factors are distributed under the four main categories
- Front page: Name of the distancing factor (e.g. friends)
- Back page: Topic-related questions for the individuals

4 blank cards

- to identify and write down other relevant topics not covered by the distancing factors.

1 figure

The figure represents the person's perspective, that is relevant during the application of the cards (primarily the individual).

⁷ In contrast to the CaseReflector, which lists 29 distancing factors, the DesistCards consist of only 28 distancing factors. The distancing factor 'Online Life' in the 'Practical Life' category is missing, as it was only added after the design of the cards was already made. To supplement this, one of the blank cards can be used.

PREPARATION

- Make yourself familiar with the cards.
- The cards that list the four main categories can be removed since they only serve to provide an overview and keep the cards sorted by category.
- Sort out cards that do not seem relevant or appropriate for the individual's situation or are inappropriate to the level of trust that has been established with the individual so far.

APPLICATION

The cards can be used in a variety of ways depending on your preference and the needs of the individual. You are welcome to use the cards as they fit your work context.

Option I:

The figure that symbolises the individual can be placed in the centre of the table. The cards can then be spread out on the table. Ask the individual to look at the cards. Make sure you can explain the meaning of the cards in case the individual does not understand them. Then ask the individual to place some of the cards either close to or far away from the figure, depending on how important the topics are to them.

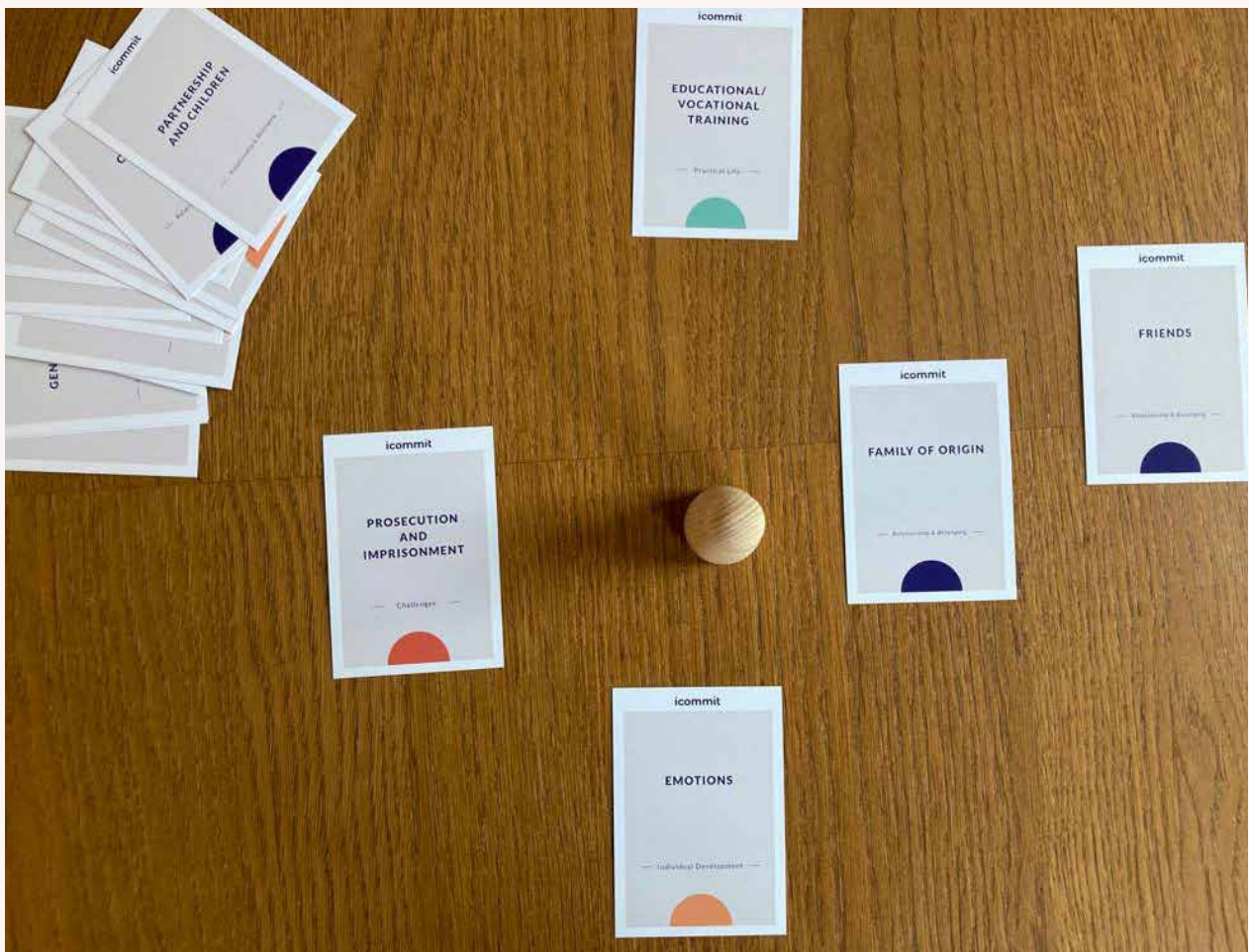


Fig. 23: Exemplary layout of the DesistCards.

Example A: The individual picked five cards. They classified the Family of origin as the most important topic, followed by Emotions, Prosecution and imprisonment, Educational/vocational training, as well as Friends. This layout also serves as an overview showing which topics the person is currently dealing with.

Allow the individual to choose the topic they would like to discuss first. Flip the cards over and present the corresponding questions, ensuring that you adjust them to suit the individual's specific situation. If the individual finds it challenging to answer a question, try offering alternative explanations, rephrase the question, or just discard and pick another card. It is important that this feels somewhat playful and voluntary and does not take on the feeling of a questionnaire or deposition. Generally, the questions can be a starting point for deeper conversations. However, it is completely fine if the individual decides not to answer a particular question. Although most of the questions pertain to the present and future, it is highly likely that past events and memories will arise. This is perfectly normal and can be beneficial. However, remember to redirect the focus towards available resources, the present, and the future when appropriate. If you don't know the individual very well, it is wise to avoid questions that you suspect may bring up memories of traumatic events, especially if not equipped to deal with the ensuing conversation in a trauma-informed way.

Option II:

Lay out all the (suitable) cards on the table. Ask the individual to put the figure on top of the card currently most on their mind. Initiate a conversation by presenting the questions on the back of the card. Once you've talked enough about this topic, ask the individual to pick a new card.

Option III:

Let the individual choose the cards depending on:

- CONTROL | Which of these topics do you have control over?
- WORRIES | Which of these topics worry you the most?
- WISHES | Which of these topics bring up big hopes and dreams?
- Etc.

Option IV:

The figure can also represent someone significant or currently involved in the individual's life (such as a partner, parent, child, or social worker). The individual answers the questions on behalf of the significant person. This option helps to switch perspectives and foster empathy towards another person. Additionally, it can aid in uncovering the individual's true desires and needs, as well as shedding light on any potential influences from the other person that the individual might not be fully aware of.

Example B: The figure symbolises the individual's partner. The topic that affects the partner is the distancing factor Personality traits. The questions on the back of the card are reframed: Which positive Personality traits does your partner see in you? Which Personality traits would your partner like to change?

Additional questions can be asked. E.g., how does the perspective of your partner affect you? An additional question that can be asked would be e.g. how does your partner's perspective affect you?

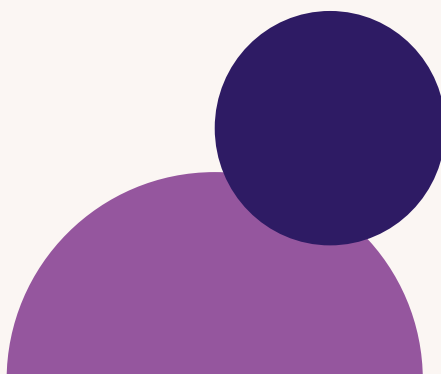
Option V:

One way to strengthen trust and the working relationship can be to turn the tables and hand over the cards to the individual so they can ask you about the topics and questions first. In a second round it will be their turn to talk. This alternative allows both participants to switch perspectives and helps strengthen the working relationship.

Most important: Be flexible and creative while using the cards in a way that fits the individual and your way of working. There are no strict rules to the use of the cards!

With this guideline, we conclude both manuals. We hope that both parts of the manual will provide new MSCs, as well as those that have been in place for some time, with helpful tools that will professionalise collaboration and help you better understand each other's perspectives. In addition, it was our intent that the tools provided in Track II are just a starting point that may spark your creativity in working with individuals and empower caseworkers in MSC settings.

In case of any questions or uncertainties, please feel free to contact us. We wish you success in your work with various stakeholders and in your casework.



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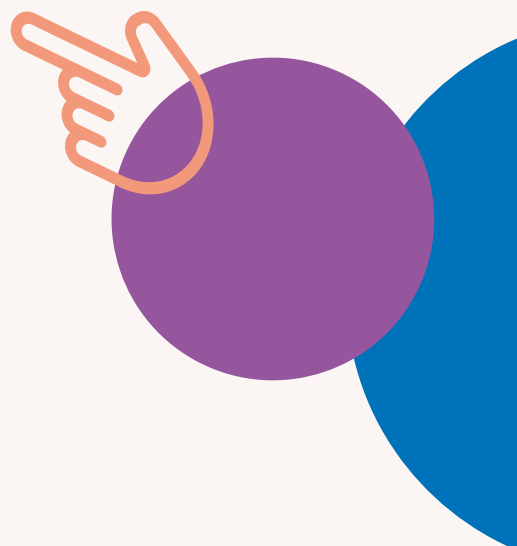
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APPENDIX

ICE BREAKERS

Exercise: Speed dating carousel (15 – 30 mins)

Split the group into 2 and create 2 circles, where each person stands in front of another to create an inner circle and an outer one. One circle moves every two minutes (inner circle moves right and two minutes later the outer circle moves right). Every round, participants receive a new question to answer with the person standing in front of them.

Exercise: Dating clock (20 – 45 mins)

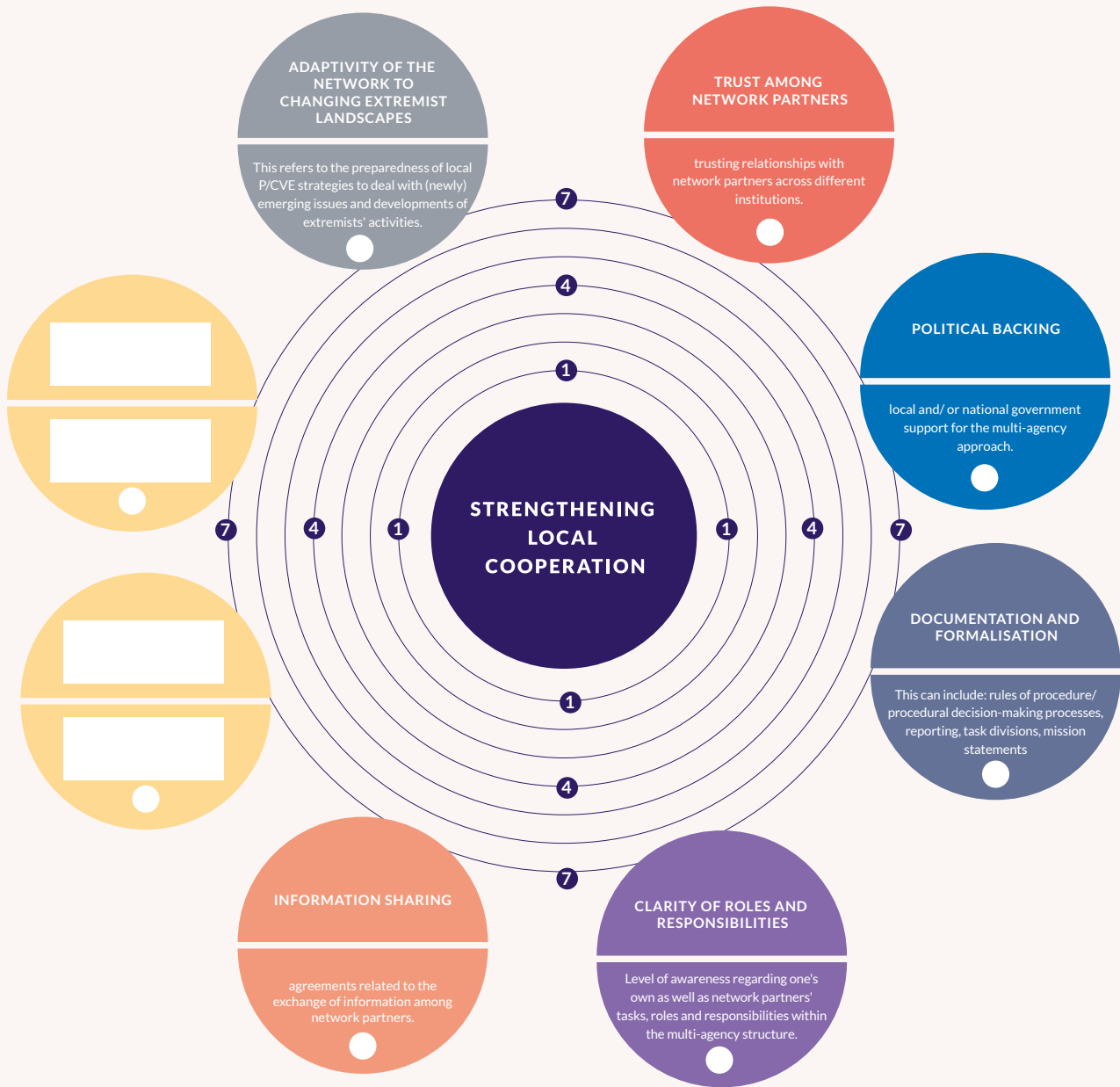
Each participant receives a clock printed on paper, and on it 6 time slots: 12, 2, 4, 6, 8, 10. They have 8 minutes to invite people for dates at these times before the dating time starts.

Every date lasts 3 minutes and will have a new question:

Exemplary questions:

1. How was your way here? How did you spend the evening yesterday?
2. What is your profession? What do you like and dislike about your profession?
3. What motivates you to work in P/CVE?
4. Where do you currently live and what do you like about it?
5. What is the main target group of your P/CVE interventions? Who would you like to work with? (referring to network partners)
6. What is your favourite book or movie and why?
7. What was the best meal you have had in your life?
8. What was your previous job and what did you think of it?
9. What is your favourite travel destination?
10. What would you like to learn in this training?
11. What was the most interesting thing you have learned in this question carousel?
12. What would help you to improve your work?
13. What brought you to work in your profession and current job?
14. What was your dream job as a child?
15. My perfect day off would look like...
16. How do you drink your coffee? How many cups do you drink a day?
17. What are your main challenges at work?


CITY SPOTLIGHT MAP



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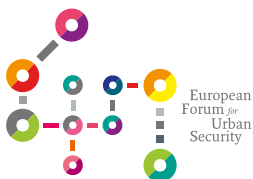
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