

A Review of Transatlantic Best Practices for Countering Radicalisation in Prisons and Terrorist Recidivism

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Abstract

Counter terrorism practitioners in Europe and North America have long considered radicalisation within prison systems and the release of incarcerated terrorist offenders as major challenges. The problem has worsened during the past half-decade, as the number of extremist offenders in Western prison systems has metastasised, and previously incarcerated extremists were responsible for attacks that rank amongst Europe’s deadliest. Significant barriers remain to developing effective radicalisation prevention and disengagement programmes in prisons, jails and parole systems, as well as inculcating prison authorities within the counter terrorism infrastructure. Nonetheless, some innovative programmatic responses, albeit on a small scale, are currently in effect. This paper reviews efforts in the European Union and the United States of America to combat extremism in prison and parole systems, highlighting the guidelines, methods and practices which have proven effective or ineffective in certain circumstances.

Introduction

During the past five years, a series of attacks in Europe inspired or directed by the so-called Islamic State (IS) involved previously incarcerated jihadist perpetrators. Of note are the November 2015 attacks in Paris and the March 2016 attacks in Brussels, representing two of the most lethal jihadist attacks in the West since 2014.¹ Several members of the cell responsible for both attacks spent time in European prisons, where some of them first met and established the network.² This trend is by no means an anomaly: a 2017 joint study by the Program on Extremism, the International Center for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague (ICCT) and the Institute for International Political Studies (ISPI) found that 57 % of all perpetrators of jihadist attacks in the West between 2014 and 2017 had criminal records, with 34 % serving time in prison before conducting the plot.³

As a result of these attacks and related factors, the issues of extremism and radicalisation in prison systems re-emerged on the forefront of countries' counter extremism policies, media reporting and scholarly analysis. Some consider "prison radicalisation" to be a *sine qua non* of the recent wave of jihadist-inspired terrorism in the West.⁴ Seasoned analysts and practitioners note that, while the scope of the problem has grown, today's discussions about responding to extremism and radicalisation in prisons are a continuation of a dialogue that is already decades old. Many recall notable cases of radicalisation in prisons from earlier waves of jihadist terrorism in the West – such as the failed 9/11 hijacker Zacarias Moussaoui, several members of the group responsible for the 2004 Madrid train bombings and the "shoe bomber" Richard Reid – all of whom reportedly radicalised during stays in prisons throughout Europe.⁵

This is not to suggest, by any means, that the issue today is unchanged from its previous iterations. First, in both the United States of America (U.S.) and the European Union (EU), the number of incarcerated jihadists has drastically increased during the past five years. Europol's 2018 Terrorism Situation and Trend Report (TE-SAT) notes that between 2014 and 2018, over 4 000 individuals were arrested for terrorist-related activities in the EU, the majority of whom were jihadists.⁶ In the U.S., the trendline is similar despite a difference in scope: in the same period, 170 individuals are known to have been charged with IS-related activity alone, a drastic increase in terrorist offenders from the past decade.⁷ Estimates suggest that since 11 September 2001, over 412 individuals with a nexus to designated foreign terrorist organisations are serving or have served sentences in U.S. federal prison.⁸

Second, the demographic makeup of incarcerated jihadists changed. In both the U.S. and the EU, the average age of the jihadist population in prisons decreased. Officials note that younger prisoners, many of whom serving sentences for crimes unrelated to terrorist activity, are the most likely to adopt jihadist ideology behind bars.⁹

Third, and arguably most importantly, Western nations face a newer problem in responding to the pending release of a critical mass of extremist inmates from prison. By 2023, over 100 convicted jihadists will have been released from federal custody in the U.S.¹⁰ These include inmates from the "first wave," sentenced to 15-20 years for material support in the early 2000s, and inmates convicted of lesser sentences during the past five years for supporting IS.¹¹ In EU countries, where the average sentence for a convicted terrorist is approximately five years, the bulk of the currently incarcerated jihadist offender population will be released by 2023.¹²

Responding to these notable trends – changing scope, demographics and release/recidivism – are the current major policy concerns facing prison and justice systems in their efforts to counter extremism in prisons. This paper reviews efforts in the EU and the U.S. to combat extremism in prison and parole systems, highlighting the guidelines, methods and practices which have given signs of effectiveness or ineffectiveness. It covers four stages that are especially important areas for terrorism prevention in cus-

tody: strategic management of prison systems, targeted interventions in the post-conviction and sentencing period, deradicalisation and disengagement programmes in prisons and jails and post-release counter recidivism measures in the probation and parole space.

The first two stages, covering the management of prison systems, sentencing guidelines and risk reduction, have longer histories of implementation in the U.S. and the EU. Policies in these areas are more top-down in implementation, and their best practices are designed to create environments that are conducive to rehabilitation rather than radicalisation. The final two stages, including deradicalisation/disengagement and counter recidivism programmes, are still largely in their development stages in Western countries. To conclude, this paper highlights strategic principles learnt from the successes and failures of various programmes across the four stages.

Managing Prison Regimes: Structural, Bureaucratic and Management Concerns

Effective management of prison systems is a prerequisite to effective disengagement and deradicalisation programming. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) assesses that “stand-alone disengagement interventions, which are implemented in isolation of the broader prison context are unlikely to yield positive results, in particular if the latter fails to adhere to international standards and norms.”¹³ Among management responsibilities in managing violent extremist offenders, prison, probation and parole authorities must effectively:

- 1/ maintain the safety and security of their institutions while upholding human rights;
- 2/ collaborate with other counter terrorism authorities and non-governmental stakeholders;
- 3/ ensure that institutions are staffed with appropriate personnel, with expertise in the management of violent extremist offenders; and
- 4/ implement the effective regime(s) for the management of violent extremist offenders.

The first concerns are structural and are fundamentally important in preventing radicalisation in custody. Human rights and security concerns are much more than restricting torture and inhumane treatment. They also concern whether violent extremist offenders have access to similar rights as other prisoners, such as contact with the outside world and access to medical, legal and religious professionals.¹⁴ One major challenge in this regard is prison overcrowding. Overcrowding decreases the capacity of a prison system to adequately allocate resources, short-circuiting their ability to manage the prison and detect emerging threats.¹⁵ In addition, it can create the close personal contact and development of grievances that are necessary for the spread of violent extremism behind bars.¹⁶

Keeping institutions and communities outside prison walls safe and secure from violent extremists require effective bureaucratic solutions, including constructive collaborations between prison authorities and others tasked with counter terrorism responsibilities. It is therefore a necessity for prisons authorities to be integrated into bodies designed for information sharing between law enforcement, intelligence and police services.¹⁷ The development of prison intelligence gathering wings like those within many jurisdictions, including the France, Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom (UK) and the

U.S., can assist in these efforts. However, barriers to multi-agency cooperation are plentiful: confidentiality and privacy issues, as well as the “siloeing” of information, can disrupt information sharing between prison authorities and their partners, potentially leading to the failure to interdict emerging threats.¹⁸

Staffing, and training existing staff, are also necessities for developing an environment in prisons that is conducive to countering extremism. This entails recruiting specialist staff with enhanced competency in areas of importance for terrorism prevention, including social workers, religious officials and mental health professionals, and ensuring that all staff, including guards and administrators, are up to date on identifying signs of radicalisation and determining appropriate responses.¹⁹ Vetting staff is also an important responsibility for prison officials. Authorities must make certain that staff who interact with extremist offenders are not ethically compromised by their work – this includes ensuring that staff do not harbour sympathies towards or severe personal bias against a specific group of extremist inmates.²⁰

Finally, prison systems must develop effective regimes for incarcerating extremists. Regimes frequently include one of three methods: *isolation*, wherein extremists are separated from the prison population and each other and placed in single cells; *co-location*, wherein prisons contain specialised extremist units or wings designed to concentrate extremists within a specific area of the prison; and *dispersal*, spreading out the extremist offender population throughout a prison or multiple prisons.²¹ Several European states, including France, the Netherlands and the UK, have experimented with co-location at various points during the past five years.²² Other countries, including the U.S., use a blended method.²³

Trial, Sentencing Guidelines, Risk Reduction

While many policy prescriptions separate sentencing decisions from the broader process of incarceration, decisions which take place at the sentencing stage can be critical to intervention-based counter radicalisation programmes in prisons and jails. Indeed, the earliest period during incarceration – when the offender is first jailed, becomes acclimated with the prison system and interacts with other offenders and prison staff for the first time – can be critical periods in the radicalisation process.²⁴ In developing targeted intervention programming, some countries implemented alternative sentencing, risk reduction and early stage risk and needs assessments (RNA) with the hope of interdicting radicalisation as early as possible.

One of the most important procedures to determine whether interventions are appropriate for extremist offenders is RNA. RNA tools, designed for a variety of offender types, measure static (e.g., age, gender, race, previous criminal history) and dynamic (e.g., education level, substance abuse, criminal affiliation) factors.²⁵ In different prison systems, with different tools, RNA assesses different types of risk. Some tools evaluate the potential for an inmate to commit violent acts, some measure whether they pose a threat to themselves or to institutional security, and some are designed to measure the recidivism risk.

The past half-decade has witnessed the development of violent extremism-specific RNA tools. Two of these guidelines are used most frequently. The Extremism Risk Guidelines (ERG) was developed by the National Offender Management Service in England and Wales, and has since been trialed by other prison systems, including in the U.S.²⁶ It is a psychological, interview-based assessment tool that evaluates 22 unique factors which precipitate violent extremist activity.²⁷ The second tool, the Violent Extremism Risk Assessment (VERA), was originally developed in Canada and adopted by a range of European countries, including Belgium, France and the Netherlands.²⁸ Differences between the two tools are generally minor, but unlike ERG, VERA is commercialised and has been translated into multiple languages, making it easier for prison systems worldwide to adopt the tool.²⁹

While developing extremism-specific RNA tools represents an important step in developing effective risk reduction practices, substantial gaps remain. Wide disparities in the makeup of extremist offender populations in various countries limits the transferability of tools like ERG and VERA.³⁰ Training non-specialists in the use of the tools is difficult, especially in prison systems with a variety of offender populations.³¹ Finally, less data exists about ERG and VERA’s applicability for different sub-categories of extremists.³² Yet, as more countries adopt and apply these tools, feedback allows their developers to modify their guidelines to reflect new concerns.

While the topic of when and how frequently RNA should be conducted is an ongoing debate, early assessments can be critical if countries pursue alternative sentencing. A relative of “exit programmes,” which provide pre-arrest intervention and often a path away from extremism that does not involve the criminal justice system, alternative sentencing and risk reduction occur after an extremist offender has already been convicted of a crime.³³ It requires judges to make decisions about sentencing that include not only evaluations of the seriousness of the offence and the standard sentencing guideline, but also the individual’s risk of recidivism, their potential to radicalise or be rehabilitated in prison and the potential effect of targeted interventions.³⁴ Using this model, judges may decide to default to lesser prison sentences for convicted extremists, and instead mandate participation in a recognised counter extremism intervention programme.³⁵

To make such a decision, judges need accurate determinations from RNA tools. There are clear political disincentives and security concerns with sentencing convicted extremists or terrorists to shorter prison terms; evaluating whether a particular offender is well suited for such an intervention is a time-consuming and resource-intensive affair, requiring consultations with experts, practitioners, community members, victims of crimes and other stakeholders.³⁶ The resulting caveat is that it is difficult to scale alternative sentencing and risk reduction – by default, it is likely to remain a case-by-case decision.³⁷

Due to its lengthier average prison sentences, innovative, small-scale alternative sentencing programmes are more drastic departures from the norm in the U.S. as compared to the EU. Two district-level programmes in the U.S. are especially pertinent. Due to its relatively high frequency of terrorism cases, the District of Minnesota “has become both a training hub and experimental lab” for alternative sentencing.³⁸ In 2016, a federal judge launched the Terrorism Disengagement and Deradicalization Program (TDDP), one of the first programmes of its type in the U.S.³⁹ TDDP directed prison and probation officials in Minnesota to undergo trainings on radicalisation and violent extremism, the use of RNA tools and, most importantly, include risk and needs assessments in pre-sentencing reports.⁴⁰ Using these determinations, a judge in Minnesota sentenced a young man who was convicted of providing material support to IS to one year in a residential re-entry facility, where he underwent a unique disengagement programme developed by the district.⁴¹ Other co-conspirators in the case, who were assessed to be high-risk from a radicalisation perspective, received sentences of up to 35 years in federal prison.⁴²

The method of alternative sentencing used in the U.S. may carry less weight in the EU, where prison sentences for terrorism are comparatively short, and conviction rates lower. It bears noting that the alternative sentencing programmes in effect in the U.S., while still in their trial stages, are based largely on the experiences of European states (in particular Germany and the UK) and their pre-conviction exit programmes.⁴³ But the development of alternative sentencing and risk reduction bears mention as an important practice for early interdiction and prevention of prison radicalisation. When practiced effectively, programmes like these can serve as a check on the number of violent extremists entering the prison system and the length of time they spend, potentially limiting key factors that drive radicalisation in custody (especially overcrowding, high concentrations of violent extremists and contagion).

Deradicalisation and Disengagement in Prisons

For some European countries, counter extremism programmes in prisons have been part of the counter terrorism architecture for decades due to longstanding issues with terrorist prisoners prior to 2001.⁴⁴ Others, faced with a groundswell in the extremist prison population, unveiled new strategies for disengagement and deradicalisation during the past five years. In most contexts, these efforts are either still in their infancy, limited to a local or regional level, focused on a small sample of prisoners and/or are limited in the areas that they cover.⁴⁵

Where applicable, prison authorities' dominant line of thought about counter extremism is that deradicalisation, which involves attitudinal shifts by prisoners, is too lofty of a goal. Critics argue that prison staff (especially non-Muslim staff for jihadists) may never be equipped well enough to successfully convince inmates that they should reject extremist ideas altogether, that steadfast believers in extremist ideology are impervious.⁴⁶ Indeed, the prison systems with overarching deradicalisation strategies are, for the most part, Muslim-majority states (e.g., Indonesia, Malaysia and Saudi Arabia), and even in these cases the track record is not always positive (or clear).⁴⁷ It is unclear which, if any, lessons from these programmes could be beneficial to Western European and North American states.

Shifting away from deradicalisation, many programmes in the West now are focused on disengagement – convincing terrorist inmates to leave their group or reject violence, while not necessarily aiming to change their underlying extremist viewpoints or ideology.⁴⁸ These programmes draw on a wider body of literature for prison management, including by incorporating lessons from fields like violent gang rehabilitation and disarmament, demobilisation and rehabilitation (DDR), a peacekeeping strategy for post-conflict environments.⁴⁹

Supporters of disengagement of violent extremist offenders view behavioural change as more measurable than changes in ideas. One of the difficult aspects of deradicalisation – incorporating an ideological component to programmes – is generally absent from disengagement programmes, which provide a host of services, from vocational training to access to former extremists, to convince them to leave violence behind.⁵⁰ It is important to note, however, that studies of disengagement generally find that a wide range of factors can influence an offender's decision to disengage from violent extremism, and programmatic interventions generally only have an effect on a few of those factors.⁵¹

As Western countries develop terrorism prevention programming in prison systems, completely abandoning deradicalisation may amount to throwing the baby out with the bathwater. James Khalil writes that “debates often rest on the flawed premise that it is necessary to choose between deradicalisation and disengagement ... many programmes effectively incorporate both by aiming for behavioural change to be achieved both directly and indirectly via attitudinal change.”⁵² Taking into account criticisms of deradicalisation approaches, it should be understood that deradicalising extremist offenders is fundamentally difficult, but that does not mean that programmes should reject deradicalisation as an end goal altogether. The overcorrection rejects the premise that ideology and ideas matter in influencing violent extremism.

A European programme that shows an example of using the behavioural change of disengagement to reach the attitudinal change of deradicalisation is the Network for Deradicalisation in Corrections (NeDiC), run by the Ministry of Justice in the German state of Hesse.⁵³ NeDiC “views disengagement and desistance from violent extremism as the primary goal of correction, the long process of deradicalisation being of secondary concern.”⁵⁴ During voluntary, intervention-centric programming conducted by the Violence Prevention Network, extremist inmates receive services that assist them with reintegration alongside classes in civics, democratic responsibility and social values.⁵⁵

Regardless of which measures states choose to employ, a plethora of barriers exist to successful implementation of prison deradicalisation and disengagement programmes. The first issue, arguably the most structural, is the lack of evaluation and measurement metrics for prison-based terrorism prevention programmes. It is understandable, due to security, legal and ethical concerns, that prison systems are reluctant to allow independent evaluators to measure effectiveness of programmes. The result is that only a handful of studies measure the effect of intervention programming on violent extremist offenders under different conditions.⁵⁶ There are few opportunities for administrators to review evidence of a programme’s successes or failures while making the decision to adopt a particular regime or intervention.

Complicating this factor, no two prison systems are alike. A type of intervention programme that exists in one prison or prison system may not be applicable, permissible, or effective in another. In considering these policies in the U.S., where freedoms of expression, speech and religion are engrained in the Constitution and in the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA), some options that are available to other countries (e.g., mandating interventions for violent extremists) would be unconstitutional.⁵⁷ The diversity of regimes between countries and differing demographic makeups of violent extremists also complicate the landscape. The result is that little consensus exists between countries on which prison disengagement or deradicalisation programmes are likely to be effective.

Re-Entry, Rehabilitation and Recidivism

The last area of notable importance in designing effective terrorism prevention for violent extremist offenders occurs in the post-release space, after offenders leave prison. Arguably, this is the area of least policy development amongst states in Western Europe and North America. While much attention was devoted to preventing prison radicalisation, countries have been stalling on developing strategies for violent extremists after they served their sentences. In the coming years, countries will likely be forced to respond as currently incarcerated violent extremists are released. In these efforts, it is important to realise that time served in prisons can have an indelible effect on an offender’s propensity to re-offend after release. Separating terrorism prevention policies into “prison” and “parole,” or “pre-release” and “post-release,” are unlikely to be helpful conceptualisations.⁵⁸

One notable area of progress in this space is intelligence sharing, notably, designing effective models for prison authorities to communicate with probation officials and law enforcement when known violent extremists are released from prison. Italy’s prison agency (Department of Penitentiary Administration, DAP) provides reports to judges, law enforcement and other authorities in advance of an extremist’s release, which helps structure decisions about allocating additional police resources or, in some cases, deportation on national security grounds.⁵⁹ In the U.S., legislation that mandates a national database of terrorist offenders pending release to local and federal law enforcement is currently being debated in Congress.⁶⁰ The Bureau of Prisons already issues bulletins for federal counter terrorism authorities on this subject.⁶¹ While important for situational awareness, these programmes should not be confused with rehabilitative efforts to reintegrate extremist offenders.

The lack of policy movement, and as a result, empirical studies on reintegrating convicted extremists into society leaves several questions unanswered about recidivism outcomes. Very few studies tackle unique recidivism factors or recidivism rates for violent extremist offenders versus the general offender population. The influence of counter extremism programming in prisons on offenders’ decisions after they are released is also not fully understood.⁶² Absent longitudinal studies with empiric evidence

on terrorist recidivism, a vicious cycle emerges: researchers need programmes to evaluate and generate evidence, but policymakers are reluctant to implement programmes without evidence of their effectiveness.⁶³

Nevertheless, some countries have been early movers in counter recidivism strategies, albeit on a limited scale. In 2012, the Netherlands' National Coordinator for Security and Counterterrorism (NCTV) and the Dutch Probation Service developed an initiative to provide aftercare and rehabilitative services for extremist offenders.⁶⁴ Starting with convicted extremists while they were finishing prison sentences, the programme split the population into two groups – those suspected of extremist activity and those convicted of terrorist offences. In consultation with a team of experts and independent monitors, they trained probation service staff on appropriate interventions for both groups of offenders and asked the independent evaluators to track progress.⁶⁵

Studies of the Dutch experience find mixed results.⁶⁶ The major successes of the programme included its one-on-one approach to targeted interventions and the training modules for probation service staff.⁶⁷ However, Schuurman, Bakker and van der Heide found that organisational differences between the NCTV and the probation service created obstacles to project management, and that the lack of pre-established baseline rates for violent extremist recidivism made it difficult to establish the project's success rate.⁶⁸ Notably, two of the five offenders subject to its guidelines failed to reintegrate and travelled to Syria to join jihadist groups.⁶⁹

These mixed track records should not discourage states from innovation in counter recidivism efforts, but they do highlight important obstacles to incorporate in programme management and design. Incorporating probation services – historically not a part of the counter terrorism architecture in most countries – into the fold may entail a learning process in reconciling disparate organisational structures, opinions about effective responses and developing rapport between staff. These programmes must be trialed before they can be applied to a broader population and should rely on effective data to establish what can be considered a “success.”

STAGE	RESPONSIBILITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS
MANAGING PRISON REGIMES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage safe, secure and humane institutions • Collaborate with governmental/non-governmental stakeholders • Hire and train staff • Implement appropriate regime(s)
TRIAL SENTENCING GUIDELINES RISK REDUCTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine appropriate risk and needs assessment tools • Conduct frequent risk and needs assessments • Evaluate whether alternative sentencing is necessary
DERADICALISATION/ DISENGAGEMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disengagement is primary goal; deradicalisation is secondary • Evaluate successes and failures of intervention programming using measurement tools (e.g., RNA) • Readjust intervention programmes based on results of data
RE-ENTRY, REHABILITATION, RECIDIVISM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share intelligence between prisons authorities, probation services and law enforcement • Incorporate probation services into counter terrorism infrastructure • Assess recidivism rates and factors among violent extremist offenders • Structure post-release interventions into broader architecture during pre-trial and prison stays
BEST PRACTICES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Countering radicalisation in prisons and terrorist recidivism is a process, not a product • Develop a toolbox of potentially effective interventions for violent extremist offenders • Promote the laboratory of ideas by trialing programmes in individual prisons and prison wings • Strengthen multi-agency and multi-disciplinary collaboration • Build effective data measurement tools for interventions

Best Practices: Countering Radicalisation in Prisons and Terrorist Recidivism

While developing a complete counter extremism framework in prison and probations systems remains a substantial endeavour for many countries in Western Europe and North America, the last five years heralded significant progress. In this period, prison authorities across the West developed small-scale but innovative policy designs for addressing these issues, borrowing concepts from past experiences and similar fields. Moving forward, as some countries face these problems on a historically unprecedented scale, it is important to take stock of practices and general concepts which showed promise.

Few easy answers exist to addressing extremism in prisons and rehabilitation of violent extremist offenders. Drawing from the above review of practices that states designed to address radicalisation in custody, the following principles reflect what have been, to date, ideas behind some of the more promising initiatives.

First, effective approaches focus on the *process over product*. Recognising that a range of interactions can shape an offender's radicalisation process and their views on the criminal justice system, effective approaches integrate structured interventions from the beginning to the end of their time in custody. Conceptualising radicalisation in custody as a long process, during which an inmate experiences thousands of interactions with prison officials, staff, other inmates and the broader prison regime that can either push them towards or away from violent extremism is important for devising interventions and holistically evaluating the effect of each factor.

Second, similar to other counter extremism efforts outside prisons and jails, *developing the toolbox* of potentially effective approaches is imperative. Developing top-down frameworks and guidelines can be important for countries' prison systems, but this effort must take into account the fact that practitioners operating in different prisons and environments require leeway. An intervention which is effective in one prison, or even one wing of a prison, may not be effective in another. Thus, it is important to train prison staff on a variety of options within the toolbox of interventions and incorporate the perspectives of practitioners within prison authorities' broader strategies.

Relatedly, some of the most innovative programming devised during the past five years came from individual prisons, or authorities at the local or regional level within Western European and North American countries. Trialing programmes at sub-state prison systems can help develop the *laboratory of ideas*, especially in countries with non-monolithic prison management. Examples used in this paper from districts and states in the U.S. and Germany demonstrate that sub-state entities can tailor their programmes to unique situations within the confines of a geographic area, developing insights that can be effective for nationwide or even multinational strategies for countering violent extremism in prisons and rehabilitating terrorist offenders.

Fourth, programme design and implementation require *multi-agency and multidisciplinary collaboration*. Many countries with intervention programming now require the services of an array of subject matter experts and practitioners, from prison and probation officials to counter terrorism authorities, clergy, social workers, psychologists and former extremists. Incorporating these oftentimes disparate perspectives requires effective frameworks for collaboration at two levels: both at the inter-agency level between government authorities, and at the interdisciplinary level to ensure that experts and practitioners are able to effectively provide their insights.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, countries who are considering the implementation of interventions for violent extremist offenders need *effective data and measurement tools*. Within this field, this effort requires the greatest lift for many countries, and is perhaps the most underdeveloped pillar of counter extremism efforts in prison systems. Without the empirical and longitudinal evidence necessary to examine the effects of interventions, it is impossible to know whether an approach is truly effective. During the next few years, as a substantial number of violent extremist offenders are released from custody in Western Europe and North America, developing evidence-backed programming will become even more important.

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