



Experiences and Suggestions on de/radicalisation of First line Practitioners:

Researchers from the EU funded Champions project have collected the views, suggestions and experiences of those dealing with radicalisation professionally on a daily basis.

The faces of those at the forefront in the fight against “radicalisation and extremism” differ, from policemen to teachers and psychologists. However, research conducted under the Champions project has analysed what experiences unites these individuals and what shared suggestions they can give us. To uncover their stories, the Champions project has conducted over 50 interviews with first line practitioners in the area of radicalisation, in four different EU member states (Poland, Hungary, Germany and Romania).

Inter-Institutional Cooperation

In the light of the various backgrounds of those interviewed it may come as no surprise that there is a unanimous agreement over the importance, even necessity of collaboration to address radicalisation. As such, the changing and multidimensional characteristics of radicalisation can only be fully understood and addressed by combining the perceptions and experiences gained in a specific area by the work of first line practitioners. Through this, the scattered fields of expertise could produce a holistic picture of radicalisation and how to address it. Thus, the interviewees reported that in the cases in which cooperation occurred the results and experiences were largely positive.

However, several factors have hindered the process and/or have prevented the inclusion of some actors in this cooperation process from the beginning.

As such, while there was a general agreement that the struggle against radicalisation can only be addressed through a long-term strategy, cooperation mainly occurred on a short term basis. Others reported a level of mistrust towards NGOs, due to the politicised nature of the topic, preventing cooperation altogether.

Schools

However, the biggest obstacle identified by a majority of those interviewed was cooperation with teachers. Schools struggle with the topic of radicalisation and rather seclude themselves from such activities, also not to make the impression of having any problems with extremism in the first place.

This is particularly problematic, as the interviews revealed a general consent that the role of teachers in addressing radicalisation is of paramount importance. They could have the biggest effect on prevention and intervention but lack support in fulfilling this



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role. As such, the interviewees called for better legal but also financial support to address this situation.

Improvements could lead to a better detection of polarisation and radicalisation. As especially the early detection of those at risk or already radicalised remains a key problem.

Support needed

However, this need for support extends beyond teachers and includes most if not all of those engaged in the area of de-radicalisation. For instance, the interviews revealed language barriers, reducing the universal application of existing sources and tools designed to tackle the problem.

Moreover, first line practitioners call for greater cooperation beyond national boundaries. Best practices and approaches to tackle the phenomena employed in one state could be useful for others, or prevent the repetition of old mistakes. Further, as the topic still remains elusive, more research into radicalisation needs to be conducted to equip those at the forefront with the information needed. Finally, the interviewees suggest, that reaction to cases of radicalisation, especially in schools, need to be brought up to speed. Through this, processes radicalisation could be identified early on and dealt with before they spread or transforms into a more serious issue.

Hence, the CHAMPIONS project has identified several areas in which first line practitioners could be supported to enhance the efficiency of their work. First, there is a real desire for more cooperation between institutions, also over national boundaries. Schools have been identified as vital but sometimes reluctant partner and cooperation with them needs to be increased. To enable this, language barriers need to be addressed, especially in the provision of information material, as well as support for reluctant partners provided.

