

VORTEX NEWSLETTER

Welcome to the first 2026 edition of our newsletter! We have just returned from our last official consortium meeting in Cluj-Napoca (March 23-26) and are excited to share new blog posts and updates from our doctoral candidates.

Along with news from the beginning of the year, we continue giving you a glimpse into our doctoral candidates' workspaces, where their doctoral projects are increasingly being polished to perfection.

2026 also marks the final year of VORTEX and, with it, an exciting final phase for our doctoral candidates. The next two issues of the newsletter will therefore focus on reflection. We want to invite everyone to make the most of this opportunity, and therefore, we may ask you individually to share some reflective thoughts soon.

But for now, we hope you enjoy reading this March issue.

Your editorial team

Anna, Laura and Lotta

VORTEX News



VORTEX Network Meeting in Cluj-Napoca (March 23-26, 2026)

From March 23 to 26, 2026, the VORTEX consortium met at Babeş-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca (UBB) for a final exchange before the final conference in September. Accordingly, the theme of 'the future' and career development took centre stage: What opportunities are there for the DCs' next career steps? And for the Doctoral Network? Prof. Dr Radu Silaghi-Dumitrescu from UBB provided further food for thought with his presentation on 'current trends in the interplay of academic freedom with career choices'. In addition to the usual agenda items on exchange and supervision, the development of a Vortex student and practitioner handbook was also

a key focus. The meeting was rounded off with a reflection on ethical issues during the doctoral projects, led by the Vortex Ethics Advisors. Many thanks to the Cluj team for organising everything, including the sightseeing.



VORTEX Research at MOTRA-K: Exploring Trust Networks in Prevention (March 4-5, 2026)

Trust is omnipresent in the prevention of extremism: social trust in the effectiveness of prevention efforts, trust between prevention actors, and trust between counsellors and clients. But how are these different relationships of trust interconnected—and how might they shape or even limit the scope of action for those involved? This question was explored by [Laura Stritzke](#) and [Lotta Rahlf](#) during their presentation “Trust Networks in Prevention” at this year’s MOTRA-K. Engaging both researchers and practitioners, the session explored what helps trust networks remain stable in different contexts and what role dialogue and perspective-taking can play in sustaining them. The lively discussion provided many valuable insights from the audience. The VORTEX study draws on cross-national data from several European countries. Co-authors are [Camilla Gissel](#) from the University of Oslo and [Violette Mens](#) from the Philipps University Marburg.



Small writing retreat in Sweden (January 2026)

In January, four members of the VORTEX doctoral network - [Lotta Rahlf](#), [Laura Stritzke](#), [Violette Mens](#), and [Camilla Winde Gissel](#) met in Stockholm for a small writing retreat to work on our joint article. Over a few wintery days, we shared drafts, debated ideas, and worked through the final stages of the manuscript. Walks through the snowy streets and coffee breaks with cinnamon buns offered welcome pauses where conversations continued and new ideas emerged. Bringing together our different disciplinary perspectives made the retreat both productive and inspiring, and it reminded us of one of the strengths of the VORTEX programme: the chance to collaborate closely and learn from one another across disciplines.

The VORTEX Blog Series

VORTEX has its own blog series where our doctoral candidates regularly publish short pieces related to their work. Check it out at: <https://vortex.uni.mau.se/blog/> . The following blog posts have been published since the last VORTEX newsletter:

What Potential does a Mental Health Perspective have for P/CVE?

by Anna Thaler



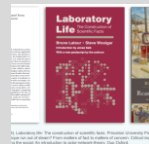
A Plea for Reflexive Engagement in Radicalisation Research
by Corinne Torrekens



Recognizing the Political in Acts of Violence - Reflection on Current Approaches
by Laura Stritzke



The Critics vs. the Conspiracy Theorist (Seminar on Bruno Latour)
by Heidi Campana Piva



What potential does outcome harvesting have for evaluating P/CVE?

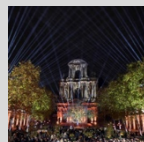
by Lotta Rahlf



“Performative Male”: A Conflict of Patriarchy
by Violette Mens



Ten Years Later - Memory, Ceremony, and the Symbolic Construction of Security
By Violette Mens



Workspaces from VORTEX doctoral candidates

For many of our doctoral researchers, the writing phase continues and the submission deadline is fast approaching. Just like in the last Newsletter, we would like to give you a small insight into the phase of the writing process that is currently central. We have asked our doctoral candidates to send us pictures of their workspaces so we can get a glimpse of their everyday work environment.



News from VORTEX doctoral candidates



[Rohan Kit Bains Stevenson](#) just started their two-month secondment at Utrecht University on March 2nd and will be there until April 25th. They are based in the Department of History and Art History with Prof. dr. Beatrice de Graaf. While there, they are focusing on writing the second article on their PhD, which is an analysis of narratives of racist and

misogynistic radicalisation amongst UK political elites. They have participated in various events and seminars hosted by the Security History Network, and plan to present their current work at their international seminar in April. Outside of work, they have been enjoying biking along the beautiful canals in the spring sunshine.



[Marzena Oliveira Ribas](#) is currently on secondment at the International Centre for Counter-Terrorism (ICCT) in The Hague in February and March 2026. During her stay, she presented her research on far-right and Islamist Telegram channels and shared preliminary findings.



Since the last newsletter, [Violette Mens](#) spent several weeks organizing the "2nd Day of discussion on radicalization" in Liverpool, which took place on the 29th of January 2026. This event allowed an in-depth discussion between academics and practitioners on the challenges of PCVE in general and more specifically in the UK. She is currently working on a small policy-brief which summarizes the discussions that have taken place there, to broaden the audience.

Research Output

Stevenson, R. K. B. (2026). Filling in the blind spot? Problematisations of 'right-wing extremism' in German federal-level P/CVE policy. *Critical Studies on Terrorism*, 19(1), 85-111. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17539153.2025.2609379>

Ajjoub, O. (2026). Legitimizing the Prohibited: Interactive Framing Processes in Intra-Jihadi Violence in Syria. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 1-25. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2026.2623891>

VORTEX at Conferences

- ‘Vertrauensgeflechte in Prävention‘ MOTRA-K, Hochschule Fresenius Wiesbaden, March 4-5, 2026 (Lotta Rahlf and Laura Stritze)
- Discussions on radicalisation, Liverpool, January 29th, 2026 (Violette Mens)

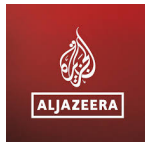
Other News

The Washington Post

Orwa Ajjoub spoke to the [Washington Post](#) about ISIS recent activities in Syria.



At [Middle East Eye](#), Orwa Ajjoub discussed the recent security and political developments in Northeast Syria, the deal between the Syrian government and the SDF, ISIS prisoners, and the regional and international involvement in the region.



Orwa Ajjoub joined [Al Jazeera English's](#) Inside Story to discuss the killing of three American soldiers in Syria and the broader repercussions for Syrian-American relations.



In [DW Arabic](#) Orwa Ajjoub discussed Syria's new leaders and their jihadi past.

Stay updated on our social media channels!



Project: 101073440 - VORTEX - HORIZON-MSCA-2021-DN-01
REA.A - Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions & Support to experts
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**Funded by
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