



Funded by
the European Union



Project 101073440 – VORTEX.

Policy Brief

INSTITUTIONAL CONTINUITY AND COOPERATION IN P/CVE

BACKGROUND

Structures of Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE) are often built in crisis mode and dismantled when public and political attention shifts elsewhere. Evaluation is often commissioned project-by-project, so that what a programme learned can disappear when its funding cycle ends. Whole-of-society approaches have gained popularity but putting them into practice and facilitating cooperation among multiple actors often remains a challenge. Local actors frequently lack procedural guidance, and legal ambiguities around information-sharing compound the uncertainty. Across the field, the gap between what is known and what is done will not close through goodwill alone: it requires dedicated roles, time resources and structures to translate research into policy and practice.

FOUR AREAS TO TAKE ACTION

1. Structures built reactively, dismantled when attention shifts.

In many countries, P/CVE structures have been funded and created following specific events or attacks. Yet, often, when they become less present, P/CVE structures get dismantled or replaced by new structures with a completely different approach. At European level, threat and risk assessment together with secondary prevention falls awkwardly between two professional fields — law enforcement and social work — and there is currently no standing body that brings these competences together on equal terms.

2. A funding culture that penalises the experimentation it needs.

Extremism, radicalisation and our knowledge of them evolve continuously, and practitioners must keep pace — currently, above all, in digital and gaming spaces. The binding constraint is rarely naming these needs but rather being able to act on them: scarce information on new online phenomena, technical equipment that often cannot be applied for, and funding logics that tend to penalise failure and discourage experimentation.

3. Whole-of-society cooperation stalls on unclear roles and legal uncertainty.

While whole-of-society approaches have gained in popularity, putting them into practice and facilitating cooperation among multiple actors often remain challenges. Local actors such as schools, employment services, or health authorities come into contact with a wide variety of individuals and opinions, yet often lack procedural guidance or resources on how to act on concerns about radicalisation processes. Similar uncertainty arises from legal ambiguities about information sharing with other authorities when cases involve violence. The result is uncertainty, inconsistent practice and preventable inaction.

4. Knowledge transfer and translation is nobody's assigned job.

Being an academic is conceptualised as one job, yet in reality it encompasses very different prerogatives such as researching, teaching, managing and translating one's work to a diverse crowd. For the latter, academics are not always well-trained. Policymakers, meanwhile, often rely on a small body of advisors who have been in place for many years but are not necessarily the most specialised in the specific topic. In both directions, the gap between what is known and what is done will not be closed by itself, but requires dedicated roles and structures.

RECOMMENDATIONS

A. To EU institutions

- Favour long-term funding and institutionalisation of structures.

In many countries, P/CVE structures have often evolved in response to specific events or attacks. However, these structures are not always sustainable on the one hand to keep up with new developments and learning from previous practices. Long-term funding and institutionalisation of structures (which also limits class and gender inequalities) should be favoured, with funding conditioned on regular evaluations of the P/CVE structure by actors both inside and outside.

- Build the conditions for practitioners to keep pace with new developments.

Extremism, radicalisation and our knowledge of them evolve continuously, and practitioners must keep pace. Digital and gaming spaces currently require specific attention. The binding constraint is rarely naming these needs but rather being able to act on them: scarce information on new online phenomena, technical equipment that often cannot be applied for, and funding logics that penalise failure and so discourage experimentation. Given the shared endeavour across EU countries, funders and policymakers at the EU and international level should provide for the necessary knowledge and equipment, foster a funding culture that permits experimentation and treats a documented “this did not work” as valuable knowledge rather than grounds for withdrawing support.

- Establish a standing European Task Force on Targeted Prevention.

The more targeted focus of secondary or tertiary prevention directed at people with signs of radicalisation or manifestations of extremism falls awkwardly between two professional fields. Law enforcement holds the mandate and tools to assess threats but operates within a security realm. Social work and civil society hold crucial prevention mandates and skills where security can work counter-efficiently. At the European level, there is currently no standing body that brings these competences together on equal terms. A standing European Task Force on Targeted Prevention, composed of 50% social work and 50% law enforcement, would ensure expertise is structurally balanced, rather than subordinating one to the other.

B. To national governments

- Increase the diversity of voices before law-making.

Although political structures differ across countries, law-making is often assumed to be the prerogative of politicians. Policymakers often draw on academic advice which frequently comes from a small, long-established group of academics. National governments should increase the diversity of voices before law-making, bringing in more researchers, especially early-career researchers.

- Clarify roles and increase know-how for whole-of-society cooperation.

While whole-of-society approaches have gained in popularity, putting them into practice and facilitating cooperation among multiple actors often remain challenging. Local actors such as schools, employment services or health authorities regularly encounter individuals with a wide range of opinions and behaviours. Yet, they often lack procedural guidance or resources on how to act when concerned about cases of radicalisation or extremism. The result is often uncertainty, inconsistent practice and preventable inaction. National governments should provide clearer guidance on roles and possible courses of action for everyone involved in a ‘whole-of-society’ P/CVE approach, in ways

that preserve their autonomy and community trust. This requires investment in training, resources and context-sensitive guidance that enables appropriate responses.

→ Review legal frameworks for cross-sector cooperation.

Alongside unclear roles, similar uncertainty arises from legal ambiguities about information sharing with other authorities. Governments should review and clarify legal frameworks, particularly those governing confidentiality and information sharing, through a participatory process. The goal is to reduce legal uncertainty and enable responsible cooperation across sectors without compromising the trust relationships on which effective prevention depends.

C. To civil society and practitioners

→ Strengthen continuous internal reflection and evaluation.

As both the phenomena of extremism and radicalisation and our knowledge about them continue to evolve, practitioners are under pressure to adapt flexibly to such changes. Currently, there is a particular need to develop programs for digital spaces and for older people. Continuous internal reflection processes and evaluation in that regard can facilitate the identification and documentation of such emerging needs. Given the provision of adequate resources, they help to clarify what works, for whom and under which conditions.

→ Support supervision and local multi-agency workshops for practitioners.

More telling than the prevention measures themselves are the ways in which they are implemented, which can range from open-educational to targeted-relational or even regulatory forms. Regardless of initial intentions, practices can shift during implementation or come under external pressure, which can produce unintended and often counterproductive effects. Supervision and local multi-agency workshops (e.g., ‘Walk a Mile – A practice-rooted guide to P/CVE collaboration & casework’) can support practitioners to explore their prevention role, professional capacities and the personal and contextual factors that shape how prevention measures are implemented in everyday practice.

D. To researchers

→ Appoint research-to-practice fellows.

Being an academic is often conceived as one coherent mandate. Yet it encompasses very different prerogatives such as researching, teaching, managing and translating one’s work to a bigger crowd. For the latter, academics are not always well-trained, meaning that the outreach of their work mostly depends on personal dispositions and preferences rather than scientific interest. Research centres should appoint ‘research to practice’ fellows who are trained in translating academic research into policy recommendations (see e.g. CREST). These individuals would be responsible for communicating the recent findings of the centre to the political and practitioner spheres as well as to the media.

SUMMARY

Actor	Timeline	Recommendation
EU institutions	Mid-term	Favour long-term, institutionalised funding conditioned on regular evaluation
	Mid-term	Build the conditions for practitioners to keep pace with new developments
	Long-term	Establish a standing European Task Force on Targeted Prevention
National governments	Immediate	Increase the diversity of voices before law-making
	Mid-term	Clarify roles and increase know-how for whole-of-society co-operation
	Mid-term	Review legal frameworks for cross-sector cooperation
Civil society/ practitioners	Mid-term	Strengthen continuous internal reflection and evaluation to identify emerging needs
	Long-term	Support supervision and local multi-agency workshops for practitioners
Researchers	Mid-term	Appoint research-to-practice fellows

CONCLUSION

Too often, P/CVE structures rise after attacks and are dismantled once attention shifts. Evaluation is commissioned programme-by-programme, so hard-won lessons vanish with each funding cycle. Breaking this pattern calls for long-term, institutionalised funding tied to regular evaluation. Evaluation should be resourced independently of programme cycles, and continuous internal reporting should replace one-off terminal reports. It also calls for a funding culture that no longer penalises failure. In fast-moving digital environments, a documented account of what did not work is itself a finding, and should be treated as one.

However, resources and goodwill alone will not close the gap between what is known and what is done. That gap requires dedicated roles and structures: research-to-practice fellows within research centres, wider circles of academic advisers consulted before legislation, a standing European body that places social work and law enforcement on equal terms, and clearer roles and legal frameworks for everyone within whole-of-society prevention structures.

This brief is based on the “White Paper on Radicalisation into Extremism and Terrorism”. It is part of a series of four policy briefs: “Towards Improved Knowledge Infrastructures in P/CVE”, “Gender, Radicalisation and Prevention”, “Rethinking Monitoring and Threat Assessment for Terrorist, Violent Extremist, or Radical Groups or Individuals”, and “Institutional Continuity and Cooperation”.



MORE INFORMATION ABOUT VORTEX

<https://vortex.uni.mau.se/>

IMPRINT

Kristian Steiner | Malmö University | kristian.steiner@mau.se
Julian Junk | Peace Research Institute Frankfurt (PRIF) | junk@prif.org