

Challenges to policy makers and prison staff

1. What is the profile of the radicalised offender?
2. What are the competences of the prison staff?
3. Is the behaviour – religious or radicalised?
4. What barriers exist for multi-agency co-operation?
5. How do we balance public protection with integration?

Identification and Risk Assessment

1. Invest in training for staff
2. Develop a 2-step procedure for risk assessment – first screen and second a more intensive risk assessment to determine radicalisation
3. Assessment based on multiple sources of information
4. Give support to persons carrying out risk assessments
5. Avoid labelling, through continual assessment cycles

Environment and risk management

1. Running a well organised prison
2. Prison regime – Concentration, dispersal or combinations
3. Rehabilitation intervention

Resettlement

1. Using a desistance-based approach
2. Tools
3. Barriers to resettlement

ITALY: Training course for staff working with violent extremist prisoners

The Office of Training of the Penitentiary Department of the Italian Ministry of Justice identified, in 2010, the need to introduce a training course for existing staff on how to manage Muslim violent extremist prisoners. The course had two objectives: to help staff avoid behaving in a way that might offend the religious sensitivity of Muslim prisoners; and give staff sufficient knowledge about Islam to ensure that prisoners did not exploit the lack of knowledge. The three-day training course consisted of sessions on: cultural and religious aspects of Islam; Islamic religious practice; international terrorism, ideological background and its diffusion; proselytization and radicalization; penitentiary management of international terrorists; and operational techniques.

A six-month follow-up evaluation found that 80 per cent of staff who completed the course noticed a significant improvement in the quality of their daily duties in the prison; felt more aware of aspects related to the culture and religious practice of Muslim prisoners; and were therefore better able to establish constructive relationships with those prisoners.

Office of Training, Penitentiary Department, Ministry of Justice, Italy.

BELGIUM: The CoPPRa staff training module

CoPPRa is a training project which was initially designed for police officers in Belgium, but which has since been used to train prison staff and other criminal justice professionals. The programme aims to improve the capacity of frontline criminal justice staff to prevent radicalization to violence. It rests on the assumption that while frontline staff have a key role in prevention, they do not always have a good understanding of radicalization to violence, how to recognize the warning signs, or understand what to do in response. This project has aimed to help to remedy this through the spread of relevant knowledge and training

FRANCE: Accommodation of violent extremist prisoners

The creation of dedicated prison wings for violent extremist prisoners (VEPs) in France is one of the principle measures adopted by the prison administration in the context of the fight against terrorism. The selection of prisons where these measures are implemented is made according to the architecture, the location and the capacity of the sites. Staff assigned to work in these prison wings follow a three-week training course. Of the five prison wings, two are dedicated to the assessment of radicalized prisoners or prisoners on the path of radicalization to violence, whereas the three other prison wings are dedicated to the management of violent extremist prisoners.

Only adult male prisoners are allocated to dedicated prisons wings for VEPs. The selection of prisoners is made during a meeting involving prison directors, as well as the directors of social reintegration services, and the probation service. Allocation decisions are based on the prisoner's profile/background and receptiveness.

As a general rule, allocation in dedicated prison wings for VEPs is in individual cells, most notably in order to respect the principle of separation between pretrial detainees and sentenced prisoners. The treatment of prisoners in the dedicated wings is in line with the regular prison regime as far as rights and obligations of prisoners are concerned, including the right to maintain contact with family, access to constructive activities, etc. The management of prisoners in the dedicated prison wings for VEPs varies according to the prison wings.

- In some prison wings, programmes are compulsory, meaning that prisoners have to participate in general training activities (courses delivered by teachers from the Ministry of National Education), discussion groups and all other necessary activities that address identified risks.
- In other prison wings, the management of detainees will be individual, i.e. professionals from different disciplines will provide services / conduct interviews on an individual basis.

The management of VEPs comprises three phases: (a) gaining the prisoner's trust; (b) work on ideologies and beliefs; and (c) self-appraisal and projection into the future. The work performed in the dedicated prison wings is multidisciplinary. At a first level, there are prison guards, prison staff in charge of social reintegration, probation officers as well as psychologists and teachers. At a second level, there are other relevant partners working with prisoners, such as from the national education system, health-care units, etc.

Case study submitted by the Directorate of the Prison Administration, France, in the course of the two UNODC Expert Group Meetings on the Management of Violent Extremist Prisoners (Vienna, Austria; 16-18 December 2015 and 1-3 June 2016).

SPAIN: Different strategies for dealing with specific terrorist groups

The Spanish terrorist prisoner allocation policy represents a distinctive case, as the country has adopted different strategies for dealing with specific terrorist groups. Historically the main terrorist threat in Spain since the 1970s has come from the Basque separatist group, ETA [Euskadi Ta Askatasuna]. Initially, the Spanish authorities operated a concentration policy for ETA prisoners, holding them in a small number of facilities. In the late 1980s, this policy was changed to a dispersal policy to spread ETA prisoners throughout the prison system. In contrast, as violent Islamic terrorists emerged as a significant threat in the 2000s, Spanish policy was to keep these prisoners concentrated and to avoid dispersing them throughout the system. Thus, the Spanish prison service operates two distinctive allocation policies simultaneously.

The decision to disperse ETA prisoners was based on an analysis of the group. ETA is a relatively large terrorist group which has a highly structured organization and has adopted a military-style hierarchy. Prior to 1986, ETA prisoners were concentrated. The authorities noted that this allowed the group to retain close control over its members and kept the prisoners very cohesive and organized. In order to undermine this, after 1986 the Spanish authorities started to distribute the ETA prisoners more widely throughout the Spanish prison system. Initially, this involved sending the prisoners to 54 different jails where the number of ETA prisoners varied from anywhere between 1 to 41. Some prisoners were sent more than 4,000 km away from the Basque region to a prison in the Canary Islands. A further motivation for the dispersal strategy is that it provided the Government with a bargaining issue for negotiations with ETA. The ETA prisoners would prefer to be located in prisons closer to their home region, and the dispersal strategy allowed the Government an issue to potentially make concessions in return for other concessions from ETA or the prisoners.

Violent Islamic terrorists, however, represented a quite different challenge as judged by the prison authorities. In contrast to ETA, the 75 violent Islamist terrorist prisoners did not belong to a single cohesive organization, and do not possess a clear hierarchy or chain of command. Thus, the training and organization seen with ETA prisoners is not a feature of the violent Islamist prisoners. Further, there were significant concerns that the violent Islamist prisoners might be more likely to attempt to radicalize other prisoners, compared with ETA. As a result, the Spanish authorities have not implemented the dispersal strategy used for ETA with the violent Islamist prisoners.

While most of the violent Islamist prisoners have been held in isolation wings, some have been allowed to mix with other prisoners and this has been linked to instances of radicalization.

Compilation of management practices related to violent extremist prisoners prepared by Andrew Silke, Professor of Criminology, University of East London, for the first UNODC Expert Group Meetings on the Management of Violent Extremist Prisoners (Vienna, Austria; 16-18 December 2015).

TURKEY: Prison vocational training, workshops and education

Teachers in prisons hold an “interview” with prisoners who are received into prison in order to identify their educational needs. At the end of the interview, an education plan is prepared covering educational activities that will take place with the prisoner until his or her release. A range of educational provision at different levels is made available within the prison including: basic literacy; elementary school; high school and an education faculty. Use is made of distance education and examinations take place within the prison.

The workshop system in prisons in Turkey was established in 1997 in order to help unemployed prisoners to gain a profession and to improve their current professions. In 2015, approximately 47,000 prisoners gained a vocational profession while working in 262 prisons across Turkey. Prisoners are able to earn an income and also have insurance. There are three separate systems in workshops to provide prisoners with an occupation. In the first system, prisoners may work in workshops that are in prisons; in the second system, prisoners in open prisons may work in public institutions such as municipalities and courthouses; in the third system, prisoners may work in workshops that are established by the private sector within the open and closed prisons.

Contribution submitted by the Directorate General for Prisons and Detention Houses, Turkey, in the course of the two UNODC Expert Group Meetings on the Management of Violent Extremist Prisoners (Vienna, Austria; 16-18 December 2015 and 1-3 June 2016).