

Seminar on Radicalisation Prevention

Opening remarks by Humbert de Biolley
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I would like to welcome participants to this seminar on Radicalisation Prevention organised under the joint EU-Council of Europe Project on ‘Radicalisation Prevention’, funded by the European Union (EU) and implemented by the Council of Europe.

I also want to **thank the co-organisers** of this seminar, the Belgium Judicial Training Institute (IFJ/IGO), a HELP partner with whom HELP has already organised a successful seminar on bioethics 2 years ago, also funded by the EU.

The **Council of Europe**, with its 47 member States including all EU countries and protecting human rights of 830 million people, has had a **fundamental role in the fight against terrorism, its financing and countering radicalisation, developing legal standards** in these fields for the last 40 years. It has been one of the main international organisations to tackle these two phenomena from the angle of prevention.

Since terrorist attacks, risks to public security and the rise of radicalisation leading to violent extremism have hit hard EU countries, including our host country today, Belgium, we need to deepen our **alliance with the EU** to tackle those scourges.

This is why the EU entrusted the Council of Europe the implementation of the project entitled **“HELP Radicalisation Prevention”** under which we are organising this seminar. The joint **EU/CoE project** aims at improving the criminal justice response in the EU to prevent radicalisation leading to terrorism and violent extremism by increasing the capacities and mutual trust of primarily justice practitioners dealing with radicalisation prevention through training, inter-agency and cross-border cooperation. This 2-year project is implemented by the CoE under the HELP Programme and will target legal professionals (judges, prosecutors and lawyers), prison and probation staff. Most of you are aware that HELP is the Council of Europe’s Programme on Human Rights Education for Legal Professionals. You will hear more from my colleague on this project later.

Let me briefly talk about the **European legal arsenal**, which has also been reinforced in the last years both in the Council of Europe and the EU.

The **CoE’s main international legal instrument** in the counter-terrorism field is the 2005 [Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism](#) with the objective of further strengthening the efforts

to prevent and suppress terrorism in all its forms, while respecting human rights and the rule of law.

Then, in 2015, an **Additional Protocol** to this Convention was adopted addressing, among others, criminal law aspects of the phenomenon of **foreign terrorist fighters and returnees**. It requires countries to criminalise taking part in an association or group for the purposes of terrorism, receiving terrorist training, travelling abroad for the purposes of terrorism and financing or organising travel for this purpose.

The EU has actually ratified both the Convention and the Protocol, which will enter into force concerning the European Union on 1st of October 2018. Then, aligning the EU law with this Additional Protocol of the CoE, the **EU Directive** on combating terrorism, particularly foreign fighters was adopted. By now (September 2018) this Directive should have been incorporated into national law.

Regarding the work of the Council of Europe, first of all we also need to highlight the **case law of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR)** and the general principles applicable to the fight against terrorism resulting from each particular case. We are convinced in the CoE that “Human Rights foster democratic security”.

Furthermore, the **Council of Europe Committee on Counter-Terrorism (CDCT)**, formerly called the [Committee of Experts on Terrorism \(CODEXTER\)](#), has as primary objectives to oversee and ensure the successful implementation of relevant Council of Europe legal instruments while also providing a means for international experts to analyse and respond to developments in the counter-terrorism area, including through international standard-setting. This Committee also oversees a 24/7 network to facilitate the rapid exchange of relevant police information.

Apart from this, the Council of Europe has renewed its **counter-terrorism strategy** for the period 2018-2022 based on prevention, prosecution and protection, including assistance to victims. In parallel there are areas where the CoE is particularly active: [the use of special investigation techniques](#), [the prevention of attacks by lonely terrorists](#) or the [#NoHateNoFear](#) campaign, which is aimed at online hate speech conducive to terrorism and violent extremism.

The **topic of today’s seminar is Radicalisation Prevention**. While there is no universally agreed definition of radicalisation, according to the Council of Europe Guidelines for Prison and Probation Services regarding Radicalisation and Violent Extremism that were adopted in, 2016 “**radicalisation** represents a dynamic process whereby an individual increasingly accepts and supports violent extremism. The reasons behind this process can be ideological, political, religious, social, economic or personal.”

According to the same Guidelines for Prison and Probation Services, “**violent extremism** consists in promoting, supporting or committing acts, including acts which may lead to terrorism

and which are aimed at defending an ideology advocating racial, national, ethnic or religious supremacy and opposing core democratic principles and values.”

Today we start the **second of the three seminars planned under the EU/CoE project**. It will cover interventions on **de-radicalisation (or rather disengagement) or preventive programmes** and strategies; role of the authorities involved (with a focus on prison, probation and judiciary); challenges and the human rights dimension. Indeed, the respect of the rule of law, courts’ independence and individual rights are crucial. The principles of proportionality and lawfulness of any measure are also paramount. The Seminar is also the perfect platform for presenting the **HELP course on Radicalisation Prevention** (which is in its final stages of development) in order to gather your feedback as justice professionals and potentially integrating it the course. A specific module on **“Gathering and use of evidence in counter-terrorism cases”**, that will also be presented, can either complement the course or be taken separately.

A presentation by my colleague will provide more details on HELP. Let me only recall that the unique HELP pan-European coverage and its **unrivalled human rights courses** - developed with CoE expertise including ECtHR lawyers and, since 2015, merging the CoE and EU legislation- adds value to any intervention by the Council of Europe to enhance the capacity of MS to prevent violent radicalisation. Educating and training the judiciary and law enforcement agencies, including probation and prison leadership and staff, on these matters, is of the utmost importance in order to provide a holistic and coherent response to radicalisation and to help preventing it.

For the last years, the Council of Europe has raised the alarm regarding the surge in extremist violence that Europe faces, showing the damaging effects of hate speech, incitement to hatred and most particularly against the Muslim community. In this regard, back in 2017, the CoE Secretary General highlighted the **importance of human rights education** as a “fundamental component of any measure taken to address discrimination, prejudice and intolerance, thus **preventing and combating violent extremism and radicalisation** in a sustainable and proactive way”.

Since you come from various professional environments and different countries, let me conclude **encouraging you to intervene** and share your work experience during the Seminar while keeping in mind the delicate balance drawn between society’s need for protection and safety on the one hand, and the respect for individual rights and freedoms on the other.

Thank you for your attention.