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REPORT
RAN CoE Study Visit: Challenges of Prevention of Radicalisation
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The RAN Centre of Excellence has an increasing focus on field visits in EU Member States in order to exchange good practices, develop new approaches and share lessons learnt. The final study visit under the AAP 2016 (though taking place in 2017) discussed the counter-radicalisation strategy in Bulgaria, and more widely discussed challenges and approaches to introducing prevention elements in such strategies, specifically focusing on the experiences of EU Member States that joined in 2004 and after. It seeks to bring together both first line practitioners and representatives of relevant Member State authorities.

The focus of the visit in Bulgaria was the new counter-radicalisation strategies and challenges for policy-makers and practitioners. It was also delved into developing risk indicators and monitoring tools for practitioners, designing training for policy officers, the role of schools in early prevention and addressing radicalisation in prisons. RAN brought together practitioners from around Europe to specifically discuss challenges in South-East Europe.

The Deputy Minister of Interior of Bulgaria, noted that the strategy reflects the will and vision of the Bulgarian government for policies to counter radicalization and terrorism with - a strong focus on prevention without underestimating the importance and role of reactive measures.

It was noted that there are some specifics in Bulgaria related to the historical background and geographical location of the country. In particular the facts that several large ethnic groups are situated in different regions - roma and ethnic Bulgarian Muslims and the "role" of the country as external border of EU. Some social and economic characteristics of the society reflect in the situation of roma population and they could be regarded as potential target group for conversion and radicalization. However, manifestations of extremism and radicalization are not currently observed in Bulgarian society. Nevertheless Bulgarian authorities place emphasis on prevention and information sharing between different agencies.

A discussion and presentations were held during the meeting (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Estonia, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Romania and Slovakia). **Norway** informed of the progress made on national level and the Action plan sign by nine ministers as a good example of multiprofessional cooperation. 21 measures on early prevention are stipulated. **Representatives of RAN Health** one of eight RAN Working Groups informed about the Lithuanian practice regarding the current situation of first line physicians empowered in recognition the individuals who are at risk of radicalisation towards violent extremism increasing: the pilot study. Threatening and protecting factors have been identified. The results show that the ability of first line physicians to identify social vulnerably patients in primary health and primary mental health care services is high and may increase after growing the knowledge's about threatening and protective factors and other additional information associated with radicalization, violent extremism and terrorism processes. **The Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre** presented the topic "Hate and discrimination: How to prevent it". The research shows that by the age of age of 11 almost 93.6% of children are online (national representative study in Bulgaria, end of 2016). They are exposed to extreme violence, hate speech, discriminative and racist messages which they are not able to assess critically so the heavy exposure "normalizes" hate and violence. Contrariwise parents and schools are not prepared to develop digital media literacy. **The Czech Republic** informed about the situation in their prison system. It was noted that that they have challenges with Right wing extremism and Left wing extremism. They have developed list of three categories of factors regarding the risk: White - basic informations about inmates, brown - middle dangerous, red - high dangerous. According to the data, recently 5-10 inmates are tipped as potencial dangerous not only for other inmates and staff, but for society too. In cooperation with the Police acedamy of the CZE in Prague, Masaryk university and other security services they provide three days training course for staff with topics on extremist right wings (ERW), extremist left wings (ELW), radicalization process in prisons, the influence of religion, case studies - cognition of symbols, specific tattoos, speech, behaviour. **General Directorate „Execution of Sentences“ (Bulgaria)** informed about radicalization in bulgarian prisons. Challenges in detecting and preventing radicalisation in Bulgarian prisons were presented - bad material conditions and overcrowded prisons, lack of sufficient numbers of staff on first line, lack of well - trained staff on first line, lack of tools for recognizing and detecting signs of radicalisation/violent extremism, lack of research and evidence-based studies. The pilot modular training program for staff was presented.

In conclusion the participants shared the opinion for the importance of mutual cooperation and exchange of practices and information.