



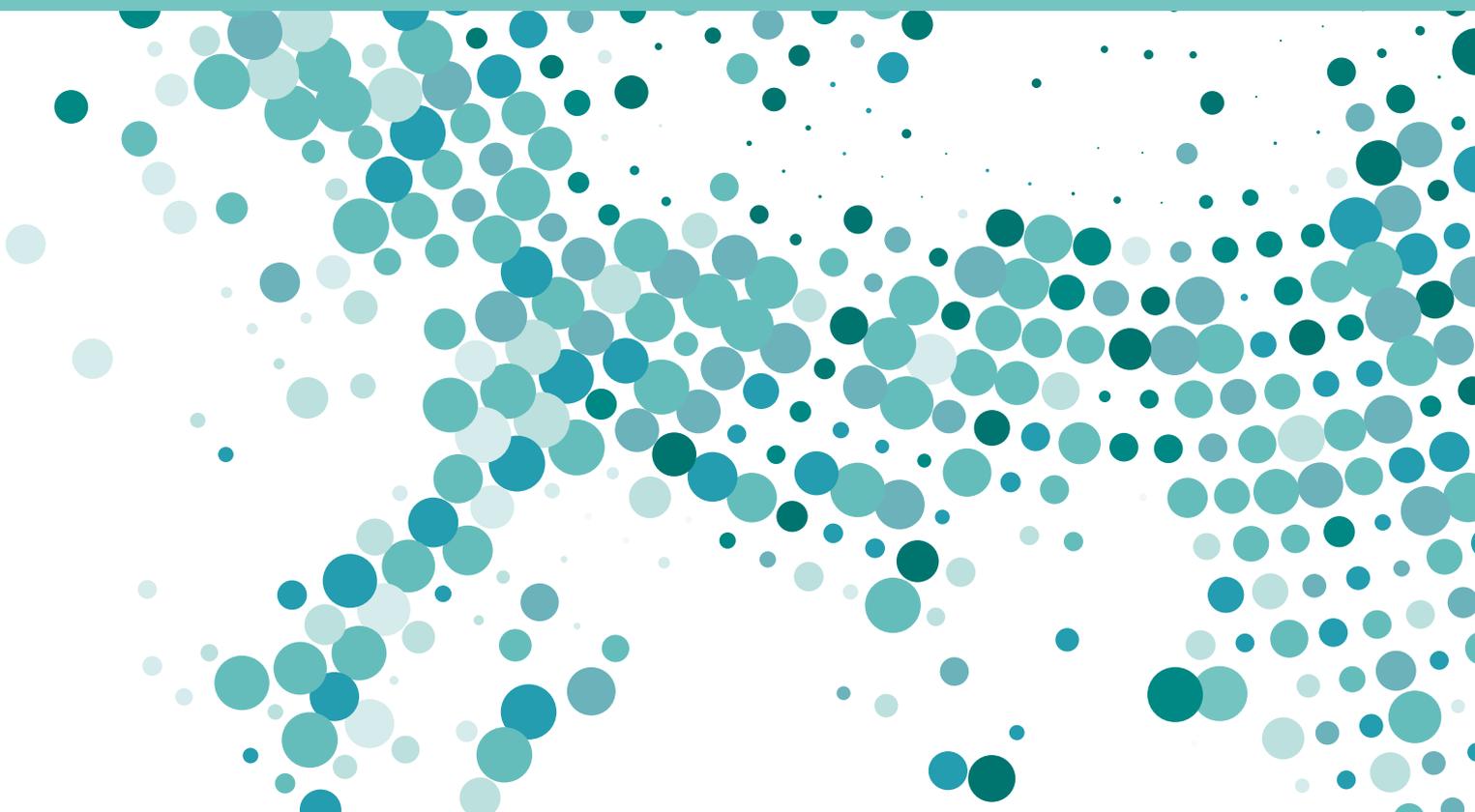
MINISTRY
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Proposal for Arranging Cross-sectoral Cooperation on Managing Returnees from Conflict Zones

including a proposal for combining NGOs' services with the action of the authorities

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<p>Abstract</p> <p>An exceptionally high number of people from inside and outside Europe and from Finland have travelled to the conflict area in Syria and Iraq. While some have travelled to the area to participate in armed combat, others, at least at the time of their departure, may have had other motives. Some of the travellers are 'foreign terrorist fighters', but even women, children and entire families have travelled to the area. The returnees addressed by the report are Finnish citizens, people possessing both Finnish and another country's citizenship (dual nationals) or those holding valid residence permits in Finland. There are no legal grounds to prevent such people from returning to Finland. The report presents an operating model which aims to reduce the risk of violence associated with the returnees from the conflict zone and which is based on using criminal law measures and other means. The reasons for the risk of violence are diverse. Some of the returnees have received training for and participated in armed combat or have lived in a violent environment and witnessed violent action. Some may be traumatised or suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder. Children may have been indoctrinated into a violent ideology. The model is based on cross-sectoral cooperation which also includes the services provided by non-governmental organisations. The risk of violence regarding each returning individual will be assessed. Following this, the appropriate measures will be implemented.</p>			
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BACKGROUND

On 20 August 2016 the Ministry of the Interior appointed a working group to prepare a proposal for arranging cross-sectoral cooperation to minimise and control the security concerns posed by returnees from the conflict zone in Syria and Iraq. The proposal includes a description of the operating model and the principles to be followed in managing the challenge mentioned in the title. Practical details need to be agreed locally, taking into account the already existing work and local conditions.

More people from Europe and other parts of the world travelled to the conflict area in Syria and Iraq than did so in previous similar conflicts. At the end of 2016 their number was estimated to be 42,000¹. The authorities have identified 80 people who travelled to the area from 2012 to the end of 2016 from Finland; the number of returnees is approximately 20. The numbers do not include children that travelled to, were born in or returned from the area. While the number as such is small, compared to international per capita it is not, however, insignificant. Its societal significance exceeds its numerical value. Travelling to the conflict zone is an internationally noteworthy phenomenon which, among other things, affects relations among different groups of the population, trust in the Muslim community, their social participation as well as the status of Islam in western societies. Terrorist attacks in Europe connected to the conflict in Syria and Iraq have exacerbated the situation. The increasingly tense situation in Finland is also illustrated by the fact that the number of hate crime reports grew by more than 50 per cent from 2014 to 2015. The volume of religiously motivated hate crime increased by more than 80 per cent². The consequences of civil wars and armed conflict have been studied and the results show that they may have long-term security effects on the safety of people and on society if the situation of the parties involved or those affected is not recognised and their social reintegration is not supported. For example, countless people from the area of the former Yugoslavia left for the conflict zone in Syria and Iraq and many of them have backgrounds scarred with

1 Foreign fighter returnees & their reintegration challenge, RAN issue paper November 2016

2 Tero Tihveräinen: Hate Crimes Reported to the Police in 2016. Police University College reports 10/2016.

traumatic and difficult experiences from the Yugoslav Wars. Finland has seen it prudent to prepare a model for managing returnees, despite their low number.

The task of the working group was to prepare an operating model for cross-sectoral cooperation which could mitigate the returnees' risk of violence and radicalisation and which could advance their reintegration into Finnish society. The working group also addressed the work of the third sector and a manner for combining NGOs' services with the action of the authorities. The situation with the children returning from the conflict zone was looked into separately. The study focuses on situations where a person becomes the target of criminal proceedings as well as cases where such measures have not been invoked because of, among other reasons, lack of evidence or if the authorities know that the person did not commit any crimes in the conflict zone in Syria and Iraq. The most important thing is to ensure the flow of communication and cooperation among the relevant authorities and service providers. By doing so, it is possible to prevent a situation in which the returnee totally remains outside the action of the authorities and ends up in a gap between the different authorities at some stage and then finds himself outside of the services provided by society or NGOs.

Municipalities play an important role in dealing with the returnees. For the time being health and social services are still the responsibility of municipalities. Education and youth work will continue to remain the responsibility of municipalities in the future as well. Municipalities have regional and local differences, their environments are dissimilar and differences also exist in their operating cultures and, for example, in the way they organise their cooperation with other actors. Because of these things, and owing to municipal autonomy, it is not possible to issue any specific guidelines to municipalities in this proposal. It is important that the local and regional authorities agree on their own mutual cooperation and on how to apply the model presented in this report within the area of their municipalities.

The report focuses on people returning to Finland from the conflict zone who are Finnish citizens, people possessing dual citizenship or those permitted to return to Finland by virtue of valid residence permits. The report addresses situations in which there are no legal grounds to prevent a person from returning to Finland. The report does not address questions associated with preventing travel between Finland and the conflict zone.

The working group was tasked to:

1. determine a model for the present on how to manage returnees from the conflict zone, including what the greatest shortcomings and challenges are,
2. evaluate different countries' practices in dealing with the returnees,
3. prepare an operating model for dealing with the returnees which can be introduced in Finland and which takes into account the returnees' distinctive circumstances, such as their families and close friends, and
4. draft a proposal for its implementation. The proposal should also include a plan for informing the different authorities and other relevant actors regarding the model.

People have already returned from the conflict zone in Syria and Iraq and, therefore, the model portrayed in this report is already to an extent being used at some locations. The report describes the situation and the problems of the returnees to which the action should respond in order to minimise the security threats. Moreover, the report presents a complete operating model as such that, in a perfect world, could be achieved by further developing the work already in place. The purpose of the report is to systematically illustrate the efforts already in place by pointing out their prospects for development. Even though the proposal focuses on questions associated with those returning from the conflict zone, the goal is to expand the use of the model to also deal with people associated with the threat of violence.

Even though the action is well organised, specifically with those not being prosecuted, some of the returnees still desire to remain outside of it. Excluding statutory grounds, people cannot be forced to participate in activity that promotes social reintegration. Nevertheless, this report presents measures which, for their part, advance voluntary activity as well.

The structure of the working group was quite limited for a number of reasons. One of them was that if all interested parties had been included the working group would have become quite large. The challenges associated with returnees are topical issues, nonetheless the deadline for the report was tight. In the future, all participating actors will have the opportunity to contribute to the development of the activity.

In addition to the action of the law enforcement authorities, the operating model proposed by the report includes measures that are within the purview of other authorities, such as the health and social and the education authorities. The model also requires the participation of NGOs. The report of the working group will be widely disseminated among participating actors and other relevant entities with the goal of promoting the introduction of the model.

The working group was chaired by Head of Development Tarja Mankkinen, Police Department of the Ministry of the Interior. Its members were Chief Superintendent Ari Ewwaraye, secretary (Ministry of the Interior/Police Department), Ministerial Adviser Mika Appelsin (Ministry of Justice), Senior Planning Officer Mika Junninen (Ministry of Justice, substitute member), Superintendent Sami Anttila (Finnish Security Intelligence Service), Superintendent Topi Koskinen (Finnish Security Intelligence Service, substitute member), Chief Superintendent Timo Kilpeläinen (National Police Board), Chief Superintendent Pekka Heikkinen (National Police Board, substitute member), and State Prosecutor Tom Laitinen (Office of the Prosecutor General).

The working group interviewed the following experts: Project Manager Kati Kaarlejärvi and Project Coordinator Oussama Yousfi (Vuolle Settlement's RADINET (exit) project), Head of Child Protection Social Work Riitta Vartio (City of Helsinki), Chief Inspector Jarmo Heinonen (Helsinki Police Department), Senior Planning Officer Sami Peltovuoma (Criminal Sanctions Agency) and Detective Superintendent Tero Haapala (National Bureau of Investigation). The report also widely tapped into information generated by the European Union and its Radicalisation Awareness Network Centre of Excellence³.

The goals for engaging the returnees

The goal is to reduce the possible security concern posed by the returnees, which is both individual and complex. The security risk may be self-targeted (e.g. self-destructive behaviour, suicidal tendencies, mental problems expressed through violent behaviour, and post-traumatic stress disorder, PTSD). It may also target the returnee's family and friends (e.g. domestic and intimate partner violence) or surface in violent behaviour in other social contexts (e.g. street violence, school violence). The most serious and extreme threat involves a massacre or a terrorist attack against the state, which may include connections to international terrorist organisations and individuals. The threat may also constitute violent extremism against some communities or individuals or appear in the form of radicalising and recruiting others to have them join in violent, ideologically motivated action. The threat of violence may materialise quickly or it may only appear at a later date, for example, as regards children or traumatised adults who have been left without proper care.

Owing to the above, in order to mitigate the risk the ones returning from the conflict area in Syria and Iraq must be actively engaged. Successful results require that the different ac-

³ Information on the RAN network's activities, publications included, can be found on the European Commission's web page: www.ec.europa.eu.

tors taking part in the action are able to see the overall picture from a larger perspective than from their own field of responsibility alone. The action necessitates tapping into society's existing resources and capabilities. In practice, this means close cooperation among local, regional and national authorities and between the authorities and NGOs, all of which the action in communities supports.

No single participating authority has the power to force others into wide-ranging cooperation. Success entails identifying the common goal and combining the action associated with the returnees into the work that is already underway. It is also important to recognise the fact that different actors emphasise different things in their approaches on the 'wellbeing vs security' scale. The law enforcement authorities' point of departure is to identify and minimise security threats. Other authorities, such as health and social authorities, as well as many NGOs place more emphasis on issues affecting the wellbeing of the individual. Successful action with the returnees requires that all perspectives receive their due share.

Terms and concepts used in the report

The report uses concepts that are widely used but whose content can be interpreted differently owing to, for instance, the speaker's background, context or past experiences. The following explains the meanings of the terms and concepts as they are used in this report.

Prevention or crime prevention

The report uses the term prevention⁴ to mean such action which, in the different phases of the process, aims to hinder an act of violence. Prevention can take place in the early stages, prior to the onset of the problem, or it can also take place when the problem has already appeared, in which case the goal is to mitigate its harmful consequences. The first phase in preventing the 'foreign fighter' phenomenon is to try to dissuade the person from travelling to the conflict zone. However, if the person in question decides to go, one must try to engage in the situation in a preventative manner to mitigate the possible negative consequences. This, for example, can be done by providing support to the traveller's family and friends in order to inhibit wider radicalisation⁵, and by hindering the traveller's possible efforts to manipulate his family and friends or spread propaganda. When it comes to returnees, the principal goal of prevention is to mitigate the effects that result from

⁴ Prevention is a widely used term. The Police Act uses the term crime prevention.

⁵ According to studies, radicalisation occurs in social networks and, therefore, the family and friends of the one having travelled to the conflict zone run the risk of becoming radicalised. This risk can also be exacerbated if the family and friends feel harassed and negatively labelled by the authorities as individuals posing a security risk.

them having received training for and participated in armed combat, having lived in a violent environment, having been targeted by violence or seen violent action being targeted against acquaintances and strangers.

A violent event or environment may traumatise a person. Psychological trauma is a long-term state which impacts mental health that can be triggered by, for example, a person being or believing him or herself to be in mortal danger. Many studies have been done on the effects of violence on children and adolescents, and the results show that the impacts are both direct and indirect. Violence reduces the self-esteem of children and adolescents, distorts their self-image and causes them problems in controlling their lives. The problems may, however, only surface years after the events. The effects of violence have been explained in, for example, the Handbook for Child Protection, which can be found on the web page of the National Institute for Health and Welfare (www.thl.fi).

Foreign fighter and foreign terrorist fighter

Research defines the term foreign fighter as follows, for example: A non-citizen of a state experiencing civil conflict who arrives from an external state to join an insurgency (Malet 2013). An agent who has joined, and operates within the confines of, an insurgency, lacks citizenship of the conflict state or kinship links to its warring factions, lacks affiliation to an official military organization, and is unpaid (Hegghammer 2010).

United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSC) 2178, the counter-terrorist action of the European Union and Finnish legislation on travelling with the intent to commit terrorist crime use the term foreign terrorist fighter (FTF) to mean people who travel abroad to commit terrorist crimes or to promote such activity. Often the goal of the individual is to join an organisation designated as a terrorist organisation.

This report acknowledges the fact that there are diverse underlying motives for travelling to the conflict area in Syria and Iraq. All travellers do not set out to participate in violent action. For example, humanitarian motives and the desire to help were the most important causes for some to travel to the area, especially in the early days of the conflict. The reasons for travelling have been explained in, for instance, the research paper 'Syyrian ja Irakin konfliktikentälle suuntautuva liikkuvuus' (mobility from Finland to the Conflict Zone in Syria and Iraq)⁶, publications of the Government's analysis, assessment and research activities 43/2016. Nonetheless, one must point out that there may be differences between the publicly stated reasons and the real ones. When the conflict draws on and violence

⁶ Marko Juntunen, Karin Creutz-Sundblom, Juha Saarinen: 'Syyrian ja Irakin konfliktikentälle suuntautuva liikkuvuus' (mobility from Finland to the Conflict Zone in Syria and Iraq). Publications of the Government's analysis, assessment and research activities 43/2016. Finland. October 2016.

spreads and becomes more brutal, it is very difficult for people to steer clear of, or remain non-supporters of, violent action. Particularly in the areas controlled by Daesh it is unlikely that people can determine their own roles. As regards those who travelled to the area in 2012, the early phase of the conflict, their situation is different compared to those who travelled to the area in a later phase.

While the motives of men and women for travelling to the area are dissimilar, there are also similarities. The motive for travel, for both men and women, can be ideological. The motives of men have been stated as defending the 'Caliphate' and helping other Muslims, which also entails the justification for participating in armed combat. The motives also comprise excitement and adventure as well as earning income. After all, especially in the past, the 'Caliphate' paid good money to the people in its service. According to the ideology of Daesh women serve in very traditional roles, and are primarily co-opted to travel to the area to become wives for fighters, and to bear and raise children to be the next generation. An important motive for women to travel to the area can be the desire to 'join a higher cause'. For this reason, particularly young girls are an easy target for female recruiters. Also, frustration in the lack of gender equality may have resulted in radicalisation⁷. According to preliminary studies⁸, women seem to play a more central role in spreading violent jihadist propaganda and in recruitment. Even entire families have travelled to the area. In such cases the motive may have been to live and raise children in an environment in which, according to Daesh's propaganda, Muslims can live the proper life of a Muslim. For the most part, however, those who travelled to the area have been forced to acknowledge that reality does not match the rosy picture painted by the propaganda.

Travelling to the conflict zone — the phenomenon in Finland and generally

Travel to conflict zones and questions associated with returnees are topical in Finland and around the world. The 'foreign fighter' phenomenon is not new. Historically, people have travelled from Europe and Finland, as well, to conflict areas with the purpose of participating in a conflict in the ranks of one of the parties or to at least advance their efforts. The degree of the perceived threat resulting from such behaviour has varied throughout history and in different situations. From 1936–1939 approximately 32,000 people from outside Spain travelled to participate in the Spanish Civil War. Most of them saw action in the Republican forces or the International Brigades, and a little over 3,000 of them served in field hospitals. More than 70 people travelled from Finland to Spain, 56 of them returned. As a rule, the returnees did not pose any threat in Finland. People have also travelled from Fin-

7 For example: Women in International Security, President Chantal de Jonge Oudraat. More on the subject can be found in the report: Women in Violent Extremism. Lessons learned from Kosovo. KCSS 2/2017.ESSONS LEARNED FROM KOSOVO

8 Pedro Manrique etc. Women's connectivity in extremist networks 2016.

land to conflict theatres in Bosnia, Afghanistan and Somalia, to name but a few. The travel to the conflict zone in Syria and Iraq, which began in 2012, differs from previous travels because it has widely attracted different ethnic groups as well as both men and women, and the number of the travellers became remarkably high within a very short period of time. Daesh (aka ISIS or ISIL), the terrorist organisation affecting the area, has systematically and effectively recruited westerners into its ranks. However, people have also travelled to the region to join other groups operating in the area. One key difference to previous similar situations is the central role that the internet and social media play in spreading propaganda and in recruitment.

In April 2016 the International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague (ICCT), operating in the Netherlands, published a research paper on foreign fighters who travelled from Europe to the conflict zone in Syria and Iraq. According to the report the number of travellers was estimated to be between 3,922–4,294. Approximately 30% of them had returned and 14% had died. Seventeen per cent of the travellers were women and 6–23% were converts⁹ to Islam. Most of them came from metropolitan and urban areas. The most recent estimates of those that have travelled from Europe to Syria and Iraq give a total of approximately 4,000–5,000 people. The highest per capita figures can be found in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Albania, Belgium, Sweden, Denmark and France.¹⁰

Travel to the conflict zone in Syria and Iraq started in 2012 and accelerated at an unprecedented rate. Those that departed to the area represent increasingly diverse and wider population segments of their countries. The use of social media, peer-to-peer recruitment and high-quality propaganda tailored to the social situations of the countries of departure and appropriately targeting the focus groups, have resulted in more people, men, women and even families, travelling to the area. It is also more commonplace that fewer and fewer of those who travelled to the conflict theatre were radicalised as members of violent extremist groups or networks in their country of departure.

Studies show that, especially, the male travellers often have a criminal background as well as other problems, for example with substance abuse. Women differ a lot in this respect and rarely have a history of crime. Mental health questions have received quite a lot of attention in the search for motives for travelling. While there is a connection between mental health issues and the inclination to travel to the conflict zone, it is not clear-cut. Travellers to the conflict zone that have been identified as suffering from mental health problems rarely possess a medical diagnosis of their illness. The Danish 'Dignity' centre that rehabilitates returnees into society has said that a large number of them had previously

⁹ According to the doctrine of Islam one does not convert to it. Rather, one returns to Islam. However, for the sake of clarity, this report uses the term 'converts'.

¹⁰ Statista 2015.

unrecognised mental health issues. Furthermore, 90% of the returnees came from families in which at least one of the parents was traumatised¹¹.

Since 2015 travel to the conflict area has visibly diminished. The reasons for this include Daesh's military setbacks in the region as well as the fact that westerners are increasingly aware of the true conditions of life inside the 'Caliphate'. Daesh has lost large parts of its territory and is now experiencing a military decline. The flow of returnees from the area has almost dried up. The most important threat scenarios are associated with a situation where Daesh collapses, resulting in a mass flight of refugees from the areas under its control. The challenge is to be able to screen and identify the foreign terrorist fighters who are still committed to the mission of Daesh and are ready and capable to carry out attacks in their own countries or to identify those who have been sent to carry out terrorist action in Europe. Only time will tell how Daesh will continue to exist, who its successors will be, and how Daesh's changed status will impact other terrorist groups such as al-Qaida and its regional affiliates.

According to the ICCT research paper the biggest concerns, along with travel to the conflict zone, are associated with: the threat posed to Finland and other EU countries by the returning foreign fighters who have acquired basic military training and battlefield experience; the impact of issues on society (negative discourse, the fear of terrorist attacks, Islamophobia) associated with the foreign fighter phenomenon such as social cohesion and social exclusion tendencies; and the threat posed by 'wannabe' foreign fighters to society and other people. The propaganda of Daesh has changed as a result of territorial losses. It no longer urges people to travel to the conflict area. Rather, it exhorts them to make strikes in their own area.

Travel from Finland to the conflict area in Syria began in 2012. To date, the authorities have identified 80 individuals that have travelled to the area, but the actual number is probably much higher. So far, approximately 20 of them have returned to Finland. At least 15–18 have been killed in action. Scores of Finnish citizens or people having lived in Finland continue to reside in the area. In addition, there are people who shuttle back and forth between Finland and the conflict area. The travellers represent approximately 20 different ethnic groups and their ranks also include converts from among 'ethnic Finns'. The share of women and girls among the travellers is significantly higher compared to previous conflicts. Also families with children have travelled to the region and Finnish children have been born there.

11 RAN Radicalisation Awareness Network High Level Conference on Radicalisation 9.11.2016.

Fundamental questions associated with the returnees

The number of returnees and the countries they will settle in

The most important question is: how many of the travellers will eventually return to their countries of departure, how many of them will remain in or around the conflict area, how many of the ones having left, for example, Finland will attempt to return to some other European country and how many of the ones having departed from other countries will try to come to Finland. Society's views and policy guidelines regarding the returnees vary from country to country. All countries set out to punish those who have committed crimes. Emphases on the importance of social reintegration vary from country to country. Generally speaking, the Nordic countries lay much emphasis on it.

The ones dwelling in the conflict area, and their families and relatives in the countries of departure, ponder whether it is safe to return to Finland, and what will happen to them if they do so. They have said that it is difficult to find this out. Some authorities have stressed that it is always better to return to one's home country and, if need be, suffer the punishment for crimes at home, rather than to remain in the conflict zone in an uncertain situation where there is a high risk of serious injury or death. However, there are also those who think that the authorities should by all means possible prevent their return to Finland.

We can learn from international experiences that returnees often strike fear and raise suspicion in the communities they return to as well as among the main population. The news about brutal acts of violence and crimes committed in the conflict theatre of Syria and Iraq, including the propaganda of Daesh, has increased people's fear towards those who have travelled to and lived in the conflict theatre. It is often difficult for communities (e.g. schools, workplaces, social circles) to trust people who have been in violent areas, regardless of their motives for travel and what they have done there.

The security concerns associated with the return and returnees are different. When it comes to the safety of society and people, the foreign terrorist fighters who are committed to the terrorist ideology of Daesh and are ready to continue their action and carry out attacks once back in Europe are the most dangerous. They maintain contacts with terrorist organisations and individuals. Also, their goal is to recruit people who are still committed to the ideology of Daesh, but disappointed in the living conditions in the areas occupied by Daesh. In addition to their threat of violence they can carry on with their activities following their return by, for example, recruiting new members and by spreading propaganda. Some returnees may be disenchanted with Daesh's ideology and life in the areas controlled by Daesh. Their goal can be to just forget about this phase in their lives and move on. Just staying in a violent environment can lower one's threshold for violence. Returnees may suffer from traumas that, especially when left untreated, also increase the risk of violence in the long run. Those having participated in conflicts may be proficient in using

weapons and explosives, among other things. The returnees may serve as examples to others and, hence, promote violent radicalisation.

There are also risks involved in remaining in the conflict zone, or moving in droves to a new one. According to previous experience, the emergence of such areas where people remain in close interaction and approve of the use of violence, want to advance terrorist action and possess combat experience may, based on their previous experience, increase terrorist activity in the short or the long term. There is also always the danger that those who left Finland for the conflict zone and choose to remain there or move to new areas will stay in contact with the home country and, in this manner, radicalise people living here and incite them to violence.

Punish, monitor and reintegrate

When it comes to dealing with the returnees from the conflict zone in Syria and Iraq, the basic questions involve criminal responsibility, deradicalisation, reintegration and monitoring. Experts have widely¹² pointed out that effective, correctly-timed and concurrent employment of these measures would achieve the best results in terms of security of society and individuals.

In accordance with the rule of law principle, which Finland complies with, *the exercise of public powers shall be based on an Act. In all public activity, the law shall be strictly observed.* The individual is protected by virtue of the rule of law principle. At the end of the day, the entire functioning of the central government is governed by the Constitution which lays down provisions on the basic rights. In line with the rule of law principle, in order to hold returnees criminally liable for their acts, the state must be able to present evidence on suspected terrorist crimes or other such crimes which are punishable even when the offences were committed outside national borders¹³.

Experts have pointed out that the security concerns associated with the returnees cannot be solved by criminal law measures alone. According to studies, the penal system and the fear of punishment are weak deterrents to violence¹⁴. This is particularly highlighted in connection with ideologically motivated violence because, in its extreme forms, even the perpetrator's own death will not prevent engaging in the act. When criminal law processes are used it is imperative to obtain reliable information on what the defendant has done in the conflict zone which can then be presented during a trial. This is often quite difficult

¹² For example, the expert seminars of the Radicalisation Awareness Network.

¹³ War crimes, crimes against humanity.

¹⁴ For example, Nagin, Daniel 2013: Deterrence in the twenty-first century. Crime and Justice. Petersilia, Joan 2009: When Prisoners Come Home. New York: Oxford University Press.

because in failed states the government authorities are not as capable as those of Finland. Even when people are being prosecuted, they may be released on their own recognisance while waiting for the trial and if they do receive a sentence of imprisonment they will very soon be released back into society. Radicalisation in prison has been recognised as a serious problem because some of the people who committed the recent terrorist attacks in Europe were radicalised in prison. Factors that increase the risk of violent radicalisation in prison include a closed, hierarchical environment where strong personalities have a prominent role, experiences of marginalisation and social exclusion, and the lack of any positive future prospects¹⁵.

There are projects underway in many countries that aim to disengage people from ideologically motivated violent radicalisation and extremism. In Finland such 'exit' action goes by the name of RADINET, and it started at the beginning of 2016. Exit action can target an individual with the purpose of preventing radicalisation in the different phases of the process. The key difference to other action promoting disengagement from violence is mentoring in which the person is supported in renouncing violent ideology. In Europe, prisons also administer this action with the goal of preventing violence when prisoners are released and return into society. The Vantaa prison in Finland is presently implementing a project aimed at developing methods for identifying radicalisation in prison and violent extremism. Any tools or programmes for preventing radicalisation in prison are yet to be developed in Finland.

According to international experiences the results of deradicalisation programmes vary and the reasons for the variance are diverse. The action can be run by NGOs, then the particular challenge involves obtaining and securing permanent resources. The challenge for the exit action run by the authorities entails committing the client to the programme. The authorities' action may be viewed as having instrumental value, and the person may not really intend to renounce violent extremism. This is the case especially when participation in the programme is compulsory and/or a condition for gaining some benefit. Deradicalisation programmes require individual approaches where the person's background and distinct characteristics such as the level of education, gender and age are taken into consideration.

The greatest challenge associated with deradicalisation and reintegration is uncertainty concerning the person renouncing violence and disengaging from violent ideology and success with social reintegration. No clear-cut answers can ever be found. It is, however, notable that action that supports reintegration always reduces violence more than the alternative of not engaging the person with any violence-reducing measures.

¹⁵ For example, Ari Juuti wrote a web essay about countering violent radicalisation in prisons. Haaste 2/2015.

If the number of returnees and violently radicalised persons in country is small, it is possible to monitor them more effectively. As their number keeps growing, much more resources are needed. Different countries' security and intelligence services have studied how much resources would have to be expended on counter-terrorism target persons, within whom the returnees can be included, if the goal were to prevent possible acts of violence by means of intelligence alone. According to the reports it is obvious that Finland should have much larger resources than its present ones. Even large countries that possess abundant resources are unable to accomplish this. For this reason it is important to establish what measures can be achieved in conjunction with traditional intelligence processes and police surveillance. The goal is for the families and the individuals to not be marginalised by society.

The returnees' need for services and the availability of services

People tend to find it unfair if returnees are permitted to jump the queue to society's services. This especially applies to situations where people have to wait for a long time for an apartment or other services in conditions of high unemployment, among other things.

When it comes to the returnee's social reintegration it is imperative to set straight the basic things in their lives such as a residence and income security. This will promote the emergence of a new social network and circle of life. If the practical matters are not in order and cause continual concern, it is very difficult for a person to successfully renounce a violent ideology. While the best aids for reintegration are employment, residence and a place of education, it is often very difficult to arrange them. One reason is that the service providers do not recognise the specific risk of violence or terrorism associated with the returnee or the consequences of their materialisation to society in a wider sense. It is also often believed that a special status provided to a group is undeserved favouritism.

Returnees are a heterogeneous group

In the general discourse the returnees are depicted as young men that departed for the area with the intention to participate in the conflict. However, they comprise a very heterogeneous group of men and women of different age as well as children and infants born in the conflict zone. The motives for departing for the area may also vary. Individual travellers may have been motivated by the desire to help other Muslims. But when the conflict draws on and violence spreads and becomes more brutal, it is very difficult for people to steer clear of or remain non-supporters of violent action. Some of the returnees are personally guilty of criminal and terrorist activity or have supported violent terrorist action which extends to all sectors of society. When people having participated in terrorist activ-

ity have been interviewed, differences in their stated motives and their real motives have quite often been noted¹⁶.

When there is not enough information on the returnees and one only operates on the basis of preconceived ideas, it serves as an impediment to recognising the diversity of the returnees which, in turn, may rule out effective action. In order to successfully engage the returnees, they must be treated as individuals, taking their personal situations comprehensively into account.

Children have travelled to the conflict zone with their parents and children are also born in the area. These children have had no say as regards the decision to leave. Children are always loyal to their parents, even when parents act in a way detrimental to their interests. It is internationally known that some of the parents dwelling in the conflict zone have voluntarily assigned even very young children to combat training where they are acclimatised to violence and brutality. They are raised to embrace the ideology of the terrorist organisation and are acclimatised to violence as a part of everyday life. Even boys younger than ten taken to the area run a great risk of ending up as child soldiers. Child marriage looms on the horizon for girls. As part of their 'education' the children are forced to carry out corporal punishment and the organisation takes advantage of them in its propaganda and as suicide bombers. It is also of central importance to work with the family.

Action at present and its development prospects

Intelligence

Traditionally, phenomena associated with travelling to and returning from conflict zones have constituted the core of intelligence gathering as part of the authorities' counter-terrorist action. The goal of intelligence collection has been to maintain up-to-date situational awareness regarding the people in Finland that have connections to terrorism and on the kind of threat they present.

Intelligence gathering is within the purview of the Finnish Security Intelligence Service and criminal intelligence gathering during the criminal investigation phase is the responsibility of the National Bureau of Investigation or the local police. When the intelligence shows that the person or group targeted for surveillance has had the probable intention to commit an act threatening safety in Finland, the authorities have intervened. The means of intervention are strongly guided by the fact of whether there is reason to suspect that

¹⁶ For instance the research of Marc Sageman.

an offence will be committed. The preparation of offences to be committed with terrorist intent and aggravated endangerment of health are already criminalised in the Criminal Code. This being the case, it has been possible to intervene in the situation through criminal law measures even before the actual offence is committed. In cases where there is no cause for criminal suspicion, the instruments available to the authorities to intervene have been much more limited. This shortcoming is now recognised and the police have developed a 'National Threats' utility which, together with healthcare experts, makes it possible for them to intervene in the action of people posing a risk.

On the basis of the collected information it is possible to continue and refocus intelligence gathering in a manner which provides the authorities with the best possible means to intervene at a stage when there is sufficient cause to suspect that the targeted person, for example, is preparing to commit a criminal offence. Alternatively, the authority can try to halt the threatening activity by revealing the intelligence-gathering operation to its target with the purpose of convincing the target to abandon his effort. Intelligence collection has also been partly responsible for exposing other crimes or transgressions of a target. In such cases, interventions through, for example, criminal law measures have indirectly affected the targets' abilities to carry out acts of violence in Finland.

Along with the developments in the conflict in Syria the situation has changed so much that the previous operating model, which was only based on the action of the law enforcement authorities and especially that of the Finnish Security Intelligence Service, is no longer sufficient to control all security risks associated with the phenomenon. Along with the mounting volume of information the requirements for intelligence analysis also grow. Internationally, post-terrorist attack assessments focusing on the authorities' action and intelligence activities have, in hindsight, revealed that sizeable intelligence resources were able to collect sufficient advance information of the undertaking. Nonetheless, the information was so fragmented that it did not trigger any interventions. Often there also exists corresponding simultaneous information on multiple operations, people and groups which did not result in attacks.

Criminal investigation

As a rule, the activities of all returnees in the conflict zone will be determined as thoroughly and as early as possible. If there is reason to suspect that an offence has been committed, a criminal investigation will be launched.

Chapter 34a of the Criminal Code of Finland lays down provisions on terrorist offences. The offences specified in Chapter 34a, section 1 can be terrorist offences, so long as they were made with terrorist intent. Terrorist intent is defined in Chapter 34a, section 6. Also an at-

tempt and preparing for an offence to be committed with terrorist intent are punishable. Directing a terrorist group or promoting the activity of a terrorist group is also punishable.

The act criminalising travel with terrorist intent entered into force in Finland on 1 December 2016. The legislation is founded on the obligations of UNSC Resolution 2178 (2014). Also an attempt to travel and the financing of travel are punishable. This penal provision is secondary to the ones that apply to other terrorist offences. It does not apply to the returnees from the conflict zone. A European Directive is presently being prepared which aims to harmonise the criminal codes among the Member States. This will make the assessment of comparable cases, such as women and children returning from the conflict zone, more coherent in the area of the Union.

It is also possible to commit war crimes in conflict zones. These mean the most serious violations of humanitarian law which, among other things, include acts associated with conflict determined by the Geneva Conventions. War crimes can target military personnel or civilians. Conventions provide for the treatment of military personnel, the wounded and sick and wartime prisoners as well as for the protection of civilians during war, international armed conflicts and non-international armed conflicts.

Under criminal law, the returnees can be divided into three categories. The first group includes those for whom there are no grounds to suspect crimes or, even if there were grounds to suspect criminal activity, the crime is of such a nature that it falls outside the jurisdiction of the Finnish authorities. Offences made with terrorist intent, crimes against humanity, torture and war crimes are international crimes over which the Finnish authorities have jurisdiction irrespective of the place where they were committed. The second group involves people for whom, among other things, intelligence information alleges that crimes have been committed, except that it would be difficult to obtain sufficient evidence. However, if the possibility of crime cannot be excluded, a criminal investigation must be launched. As a result of the virtually non-existent government authorities' action and the collapse of state structures it may prove impossible to obtain any evidence. The third group of people entails those that have committed crimes and for whom sufficient evidence can be found for prosecution. The reduction of risk associated with the returnees requires sufficient means and instruments to proceed in all of the above-mentioned cases.

Many people returning from the conflict area belong to the first or second group. In 2016 the National Bureau of Investigation recorded approximately ten criminal cases with terrorist connections. The number includes cases that proceeded to an actual criminal investigation or to a preliminary investigation. They also include cases where the suspect is not a Finnish citizen returning from the conflict zone nor a dual national of Finland and some other country nor someone living in Finland by virtue of a residence permit. Rather the

person has arrived in Finland as an asylum seeker and the suspected crimes were committed while living in Syria and Iraq.

The returnees' status in the criminal law process rarely has much relevance to the risk of violence they pose in Finland. People who have not committed any crimes in the conflict theatre may still have, however, been subjected to such influences that make them willing and able to resort to violence once back in Finland. They may have been violently radicalised and received such training and experience which improves their capacity to carry out acts of violence in Finland. They may also be traumatised as a result of their experiences, which increases their risk for violence in the short or the long term. The latter specifically applies to children that have been in the conflict zone.

Even if a person could become the target of criminal law measures, the loss of liberty for the duration of the criminal process or imprisonment has only limited impact on the degree of the threat posed by the person. The loss of liberty during the criminal investigation or imprisonment is only transitory. As the processes in extensive cases drag out, the loss of liberty may have ended before the sentence is read, in which case, from the standpoint of security in society, other measures alongside the criminal process must be implemented, such as intelligence gathering or preventive measures targeting the subject. According to international experiences imprisonment for terrorist crimes does not generally reduce the perpetrators' willingness to partake in violent action; they will continue their activities once released from prison, at the latest.

When subjecting people to a criminal process there is the risk that the targets and their families and friends may view the authorities' action as biased. This is especially true in the early phases of the criminal investigation processes when the grounds for coercive measures, among other things, are kept confidential. The authorities are not in a position to reveal the grounds for their action and, consequently, clear up any misunderstandings or views calling their objectivity into question without compromising the criminal investigation. In such a case, in addition to the subjects, those close to them and the communities they represent may consider the authorities' action as arbitrary. This may promote and spread violent radicalisation. Nevertheless, at the end of the judicial process when the material of the criminal investigation typically becomes public information, transparency increases. Also, with the help of effective communication, hostility towards the authorities can be reduced, even if in the early stages their action was regarded as negative. It is important to operate in an active and goal-oriented fashion during the process, so that the authorities' action is seen as justified, lawful and acceptable. The subject's family and friends are especially important in this context.

Preventing the threat of violence posed by the returnees

Early intervention has recently been developed in Europe and in Finland. It prevents ideologically motivated violence by focusing on individuals and supporting the communities' own resources. European efforts to prevent violent radicalisation and extremism began in 2005 as an outcome of the 7/7 London bombings. In Finland the topic was first raised in 2008 in the ministerial working group for internal security, and in 2012 the first National Action Plan for the Prevention of Radicalisation and Extremism was adopted. The second Action Plan was approved in April 2016. Together, the authorities, NGOs and communities plan and implemented preventive action. The national cooperation group comprising members from different authorities and NGOs, set by the Ministry of the Interior for the purpose of coordinating and developing the action, plays the central role nationally. Locally, the multi-professional Anchor model which operates at police departments and the local cooperation networks¹⁷ that support the action carry out early intervention.

Early intervention is done nationally, under the auspices of Nordic and EU cooperation and globally. The RAN Radicalisation Awareness Network Centre of Excellence can be raised as an example of European cooperation which brings together European actors at the local and national level to develop practical early intervention processes by disseminating experiences and examples. The Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, prepared by the Secretary-General of the UN, was published in January 2016. Also the OSCE and the Council of Europe facilitate the prevention of violent radicalisation. At present, dealing with returnees from conflict zones, as well as developing the process, is one of the most important focus areas, both at national and international levels.

Measures aimed at preventing violent radicalisation concentrate on ensuring practical intervention in tackling radicalisation, improving awareness and skills, increasing research, enhancing communication and fostering the participation of different groups such as young people and women. Prevention emphasises influencing the individual vulnerabilities of violent extremism, voluntariness and confidentiality independent of the authorities. The significance of the target person's family and social circle is increasingly emphasised both as a resource and a factor which can expose one to radicalisation. All of the above-mentioned require intense collaboration.

There are many action items mentioned in the National Action Plan for the Prevention of Violent Radicalisation and Extremism which can engage the returnees from the conflict zone. These include, for example, expanding the Anchor model to different parts of the

¹⁷ All police departments run Anchor model activities. The local multi-professional cooperation networks, which also often comprise representatives of organisations, operate in Helsinki, Turku, Tampere and Oulu. The last three mentioned are led by a city official.

country with the goal of increasingly working with returnees under the auspices of the model. In autumn 2016 the Government allocated additional financing to the police to be used within the Anchor model in 2017 for the purpose of preventing the action of violent extremist movements. Measures that focus on spreading skills and information increase the competency and awareness of the authorities as regards working with the returnees. The RADINET (exit) service and support for families promote the reintegration of returnees into society. The preparation of the proposal presented in this report is one of the measures included in the National Action Plan for the Prevention of Violent Radicalisation and Extremism.

According to the experiences of those that work in the field, surprisingly many of the returnees, or other possible risk persons espousing violent extremism, are ready to participate in action that helps them disengage from violence, so long as they feel that the action is trustworthy. NGOs' services are felt to be more dependable than those of the authorities. The central factor for trust is the matter that participation in the action is not considered to jeopardise one's own position, i.e. topics discussed during meetings will not result in self-criminalisation or that the person would be required to provide intelligence information or to collaborate with the authorities when the subject is not a witness. Nevertheless, everyone is liable to report preparations of aggravated crimes to the police. The authorities, however, remain responsible for providing these services, irrespective of the actual provider. Therefore, the action depends on trust and cooperation between the authorities and NGOs. Finland's RADINET service is organised along these principles. The steering group is led by a representative of the Ministry of the Interior, and its members comprise representatives of religious communities, research institutions and NGOs. The project group which develops the action includes representatives of the organisations that act as service providers.

When it comes to supporting families, the action in Finland is still in its early stages. However, the need for such action has already been established. According to lessons learned, families feel completely abandoned in a situation where one family member has departed for the conflict zone without warning or the family's endorsement. The matter is often so painful that it is not mentioned at all, not even among family and friends or the community. A family member is almost always important to the rest of the family, even when the family disapproves of their actions.

Proposal for an operating model on dealing with the returnees

The report proposes an operating model which requires regional and local cooperation among different authorities and NGOs to be implemented into practice. Differences between municipalities and regions are great in action, arrangements of cooperation and in the challenges they face with regards to the returnees. For this reason it is not appropriate, or even possible, to draw any detailed and identical plan for all municipalities and regions to carry out without taking regional and local differences into account. It is also important to adapt the action into the already existing work. Regardless of practical details, the goals of the model are the same for everyone.

The goal of the operating model is to:

- ensure that the returnees to Finland are meticulously identified and screened, and directed to the care of the authorities or other services which can minimise their potential for violence,
- recognise the specific characteristics associated with the situation for men, women and children, including their possible consequences,
- base the model on close and properly managed cooperation because individual authorities do not have the wherewithal, skill or competency to engage all returnees,
- connect the work of the NGOs and communities to the authorities' action under the principles of cross-sectoral cooperation, and
- ensure the needed exchange of information as required by law.

A hypothetical situation, and the manner in which different authorities and NGOs should handle it

Journey from the conflict zone to Finland

The action begins, at the very latest, when the authorities learn that a person who originally departed from Finland for the conflict zone in Syria and Iraq is about to return. It is not possible to prevent Finnish citizens or people possessing valid residence permits from entering Finland. Citizens of third countries with valid residence permits enter the area of the European Union through border checks. The application of a person who has to apply for a visa abroad to enter into Finland can be denied for a number of reasons. An earlier prohibition of entry into Finland or into another Schengen country may be the cause of the prohibition. Yet another cause may be the fact that the person does not have the right to return to the country of departure, or to continue to a third country, or that the person may be considered a danger to public order, national security or international relations.

Quite many of the ones who have travelled from Finland to the conflict area in Syria and Iraq are Finnish citizens or hold dual citizenship.

When it comes to persons allowed to return to Finland on the basis of valid residence permits, the authorities should always ascertain whether they can be removed from the country on account of an associated security risk. If an authority is aware of a person having lived in the conflict area, they propose this to the competent authority, when necessary.

The terrorist organisation often confiscated the passports of Finnish citizens that had travelled to the conflict zone in Syria and Iraq. For this reason it may be that a person tries to leave Syria without the necessary travel document and then applies for one after crossing the border, for example, into Turkey. In such a case the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the Embassy become the primary actors. Practice has shown that it is almost impossible to cross the Turkish border without a note from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs to the Turkish border authorities explaining that the person in question has an appointment at the Finnish Embassy for the purpose of obtaining travel documents.

Establishing whether or not a person is suspected of having committed an offence over which Finland has jurisdiction

The Finnish Security Intelligence Service, together with the National Bureau of Investigation and the local police, evaluates the risks of a person arriving in Finland. The primary task is to ascertain, on the basis of available information, whether the person committed an act in the conflict zone that meets the essential elements of some international offence. The goal is to determine if there is sufficient cause to initiate a criminal investigation on the person. In addition, the person's risk factor for some kind of violence or terrorist activity must be established. Following this, the authorities will impose measures on the person in accordance with the risk assessment and on the basis of a pre-agreed division of duties.

Only some returnees will face the authorities' actions. The loss of liberty during the criminal investigation is only temporary and the process may take so much time that the person is already released before the sentencing. Therefore, also those under criminal investigation should be included under the umbrella of the following other measures. If a person receives a prison sentence, his background as someone having lived in the conflict area should be taken into consideration and attempts must be made to mitigate his radicalisation and influence on the other convicts. In practice, this means taking the threat of violent radicalisation into account in prisoner placement and implementing such action which reduces radicalisation in prisons (exit action in prisons). Radicalisation in prisons is a serious risk and many terrorists that carried out attacks became radicalised in prison. The situation in Finland's prisons is depicted in the Ministry of the Interior publication 'Violent extremism in Finland — situation overview 1/2017'.

Returnees not suspected of offences

The returnees that exhibit a low risk of violence but who, without proper support, may become marginalised and socially excluded constitute a particular challenge. Their violent radicalisation may continue or their risk of resorting to violence for other reasons may increase and turn into a serious threat. They may suffer from trauma requiring treatment or have had other experiences which might make them mentally unbalanced. This group also comprises children whose parents took them to the conflict zone and who may have resided in the area for years. The local police, other authorities and NGOs must engage this segment with violence-reducing measures. They also need varied forms of support, depending on their individual situation. The situation of the family, in its entirety, should be considered in this work.

The police authorities have agreed on the practices that ensure that the authorities are able to focus measures on the above-mentioned people; the intention is to support their social reintegration and disengagement from violent ideology. The multi-professional Anchor model is at the core of the activity. It enables smooth cross-sectoral cooperation.

Local cooperation

The local police may engage the returnees with measures such as voluntary interviews, criminal intelligence gathering or criminal investigation, or they may assign the case to the Anchor model or collaborate with the local authorities and NGOs.

The multi-professional Anchor model operates within police departments. It was launched in the Häme region in the 1990s. In keeping with the model the police, a social worker, a psychiatric nurse and a youth worker will systematically intervene in a young person's crime cycle with the goal of thwarting and preventing the young person from spiralling into a life of crime. The Anchor model operates at nearly every police department and in recent years, thanks to the action of the National Police Board, it has expanded considerably. The National Action Plan for the Prevention of Violent Radicalisation and Extremism 2016 tasked the Anchor model with the prevention of violent radicalisation and extremism. This being the case, returnees are also a focus group of the Anchor model. In the 2017 supplementary budget the Government granted additional financing for the Anchor model. The National Police Board distributed the funds to the police departments and it monitors the use of the funds as well as the results.

Through the operation of the Anchor model it is possible to comprehensively evaluate the returnee's situation within cross-sectoral cooperation and to decide on future measures. It is not the purpose of the Anchor model to create long-lasting client relationships. The client comes in contact with the Anchor model either as a result of the Anchor's own efforts or at the request of some other entity. The Anchor completes the initial measures, an eval-

uation of the situation, and then shows the way to the appropriate service. When needed, the Anchor can also monitor the progress of the situation and meet the client again after some time.

A situation where there are problems in all areas of life constitutes a special challenge for returnees. They may lack a residence, work or a place of education. Their judicial process may still be ongoing, which impacts the prospects of receiving services. Even when found not guilty, they may feel that they have been treated unfairly and this can increase their risk of radicalisation. The risk is particularly high when there is no close circle available to provide support and their safety networks are weak. They may be in financial trouble and their contacts with family and friends may have been broken. In such a situation there is a great danger of the person returning to the social circles where they originally became radicalised, and where they will only further radicalise. The possibilities of the Anchor model to intervene in the above-mentioned situation depend on resources and the closeness of cooperation with the other authorities as well as the extent of the services available.

The Anchor model can show the way to the required services, such as health and social services, and ensure that the person will not find himself outside the sphere of services. The Anchor model can also contact the RADINET service and direct the person to them. RADINET is a national exit model, based on cooperation among NGOs, intended for people who want to renounce violent extremism and violence. It is intended for people who are radicalised or about to become radicalised in such a manner that they may resort to violence. The unique feature of the RADINET service is that it supports disengagement from ideologically motivated violence through mentoring. When it comes to returnees it is of prime importance that, through RADINET, they can be assigned mentors with whom they can contemplate issues associated with violence and ideologies that aim to justify violence. A network of NGOs coordinated by the Vuolle Settlement provides the service. The authorities also participate in developing the activity.

Local cooperation groups

In accordance with the National Action Plan for the Prevention of Violent Radicalisation and Extremism, local cooperation groups led by the city operate in Turku, Tampere and Oulu. In addition, the Safe Helsinki network, set up by the police, operates in Helsinki. It also carries out tasks associated with preventing violent radicalisation and extremism. The cooperation groups support the Anchor model in the prevention of violent extremism. The groups comprise authorities (health and social, education, Defence Forces, etc.) and representatives of NGOs. On the whole, the Anchor model and the local cooperation groups work closely together. This is a fundamental precondition for the Anchor model to be able to fully utilise the NGOs' services and expertise.

Issues associated with the returnees that address individual cases and people must not be handled in the cooperation group on account of privacy concerns and provisions on the processing of personal data. Instead, it is important that the group is aware of the practices that apply to dealing with the returnees and that they, in this way, can promote cooperation among different authorities and NGOs to deal with matters.

Special concerns associated with children and adolescents

There are no precise statistics on the number of children who have travelled to the conflict zone. In November 2016 the EU Radicalisation Awareness Network published a document according to which the number of children that left from European countries varies from country to country. The Netherlands has estimated that at least 80 Dutch children are still in the conflict zone¹⁸. It is not precisely known how many children have been born in this area to parents who departed from Europe. Children have also travelled from Finland to this area, Finnish children have been born there and children have returned to Finland. Children and adolescents are also taken, and have travelled, to other conflict areas or regions where they run a great risk of becoming the victims of violence or mistreatment. Even so, it is important to recognise the special conditions under which the children lived in the conflict zone in Syria and Iraq.

The situation for children in the conflict zone of Syria and Iraq is exceptionally difficult. According to the UN Security Council children carry and move weapons, they are used as sentries, they apprehend and punish civilians and operate as suicide bombers. The youngest child known to have executed a human being was a three-year-old. The children are raised to embrace the ideology of the terrorist organisation and are acclimatised to violence as a part of everyday life. Even boys younger than ten that are taken to the area of Daesh run a great risk of ending up as child soldiers. Girls as young as nine are under the risk of being forced into child marriage. As part of their 'education' the children are forced to carry out corporal punishments and the organisation takes advantage of them in its propaganda. Children become emotionally crippled, may sustain physical injuries and may even be killed.

Children that may possibly return from the combat zone, having grown up in an environment of violent ideology and traumatised by violence, need special support for social reintegration. There is only a small amount of research data on children having grown up in a terrorist, violent environment or in extremist families. Judging by existing information it seems that children require a different approach to break free from violent ideologies than

¹⁸ Focus on Returnees. General Security and Intelligence Service. Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations. February 2017.

adults do. For example, the lessons learned from child soldiers and other abused children show that the actions and the moral compass of children along with their understanding of violence are guided by their innate need for a close relationship with adults, even when the adults are destructive to their welfare and development. Finn Church Aid, among others, has knowledge and competency on dealing with child soldiers and this can be utilised in training child protection personnel, for example.

When it comes to children returning from the conflict zone in Syria and Iraq it is important to comply with the articles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Pursuant to the Convention *a child means every human being below the age of eighteen years*, therefore, they are within the sphere of the Convention. The Convention lists the human rights that belong to children and places the primary responsibility for ensuring them on the States Parties. According to the Convention, the rights belong to each child *without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child's or his or her parent's... race, colour, sex... political or other opinion... national, ethnic or social origin... or other status. In all actions concerning children... the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration, and States Parties shall... ensure the rights set forth in the present Convention to each child.*

Pursuant to the Convention *every child has the inherent right to life... States Parties shall ensure to the maximum extent possible the survival and development of the child*, and the child must be protected from *all forms of physical or mental violence... abuse... negligent treatment... or exploitation. States Parties shall refrain from recruiting any person who has not attained the age of fifteen years into their armed forces, and they must not take a direct part in hostilities.* Children must be protected in armed conflict. According to the Convention, *States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to promote... recovery and social reintegration of a child victim of any form of neglect, and every child... accused of, or recognized as having infringed the penal law [is] to be treated in a manner... which takes into account the child's age.*

Children have travelled from Finland to the conflict zone in Syria and Iraq with their parents, and minors have often departed for the area without their parents' knowledge. Following their return to Finland, it is also often necessary to establish the conditions they lived in and what they did in the conflict area. Children having reached the age of fifteen are criminally responsible. Situations where even younger children than this who are found to have committed serious offences may arise. Then the degree of the child's responsibility must be evaluated against the backdrop of the situation in which they were taken to an environment where violence is part of the everyday routine and to which the adults around them resorted, regarding it both justified and normal. Moreover, a clear plan must be prepared for disengagement from violent ideology and violent action, taking into account the child's age and stage of development. It is also possible for children who have not carried out violent action, or who appear composed, to be severely traumatised.

As regards children and youths, one must also try to find out whether they have become the victims of crime while living in the conflict zone. According to the Save the Children organisation, the situation with children and youths in Syria is extremely difficult. For instance, the volume of sexual abuse and sexual violence against children has risen dramatically.

When dealing with a child, one must always engage the family as well. The family may be a resource or the cause of the child having grown up among a violent ideology. The parents' mental health problems are always detrimental¹⁹ to the child's growth and development, especially when there are no protective factors. When families return from the conflict zone often the entire family suffers from some kind of trauma associated with violence. NGOs are developing services to support families. An example is the Finn Church Aid's support activities, developed together with parents whose children have departed for the conflict zone in Syria and Iraq.

Families with infants will return to the sphere of the child health clinics and children under school-age will go to early childhood education and care. Child health clinics and early childhood education provide preventive services to children under school-age.

Children under school-age will participate in early childhood education and pre-primary education. School-age children will return to the comprehensive school. The children that are somewhat older will return to their educational institutes, provided they have retained their study rights. From the perspective of the future of the children and adolescents it is of primary importance to make certain that they do not drop out of education merely because they have lived in the conflict area. Pupil and student welfare plays a key role in the lives of children and adolescents returning to school from the conflict zone. It is important for teachers to recognise and appreciate the situation with the children who have been in the conflict theatre and to act appropriately when, for example, they exhibit abnormal behaviour.

Recommendations for introducing the model

The following presents recommendations that support the implementation of the above-mentioned operating model.

The introduction of the model requires local and regional agreement on how the model's action will be carried out, taking into account local conditions, practices and culture as well as the already existing activity. Municipalities operate in different ways, and the point

¹⁹ For example, THL research 'Kansallinen syntymäkohortti' (National birth cohort) 1987.

of departure for their action is municipal autonomy. Therefore, the only way to steer and implement the action in detail is to have the local authorities carry it out.

Working with the returnees always requires linking the action into the already existing basic services and adapting it into the local environment and needs. In addition, the areas of the action that need to be considered must be identified so as to properly take this group's special situation into account. Moreover, cross-sectoral dialogue and harmonisation are necessary to promote shared situational awareness and to coordinate the authorities' action. Also, cooperation and interaction with NGOs is needed to make the authorities aware of the NGOs' services and to seamlessly direct the clients to their services. NGOs must also ensure that they, too, are sufficiently aware of the authorities' actions in dealing with the returnees. Islamic organisations and communities play a significant role as experts and they are also important partners in developing mentoring and collective support. Knowledge-based action is very important in handling the matters associated with returnees because, owing to the topic, there is much ignorance, prejudice and misinterpretation. It would also be valuable to gain more research data on the subject as well as the effectiveness of action and its impact.

Cases where the returnee faces criminal investigation proceedings and prosecution are not addressed in this context. The reason for this is that the phases of and cooperation within the criminal law process are established and the questions associated with the returnees can be dealt with as part of this entirety.

Law enforcement authorities

Law enforcement authorities generate information about the returnees and disseminate it in accordance with a pre-agreed division of duties and the instructions of the National Police Board. The goal is to control and mitigate the security concerns and threats associated with the returnees. Cross-sectoral cooperation among the law enforcement authorities has markedly increased during the past year. This cooperation should be further developed and it should be made certain that all police units are sufficiently informed about their own tasks and responsibilities as well as those of the other police units as regards handling the returnees' issues. It should also be ensured that all participating actors have the same information and that collaboration among police units proceeds without problems.

- Continue developing cooperation among the law enforcement authorities so as to provide relevant information to those expected to act in reducing the risks and threats associated with the returnees.
- Agree on where and how to process questions and the exchange of information associated with the collaboration on the returnees among the authorities and NGOs.

Local police and the Anchor model

There are differences in police action among police departments regarding people having returned from the conflict zone. The differences also arise from the success of the Anchor model's local organisation, including its preparedness to act in questions associated with violent radicalisation and extremism. During 2016 all police departments received training in the prevention of violent radicalisation and extremism. Challenges in the flow of information are often brought up within the Anchor model. Different authorities operate different information systems and data can be entered into these systems on varying grounds. Legislation lays down provisions on the cross-sectoral exchange of information.

Municipal borders may constitute a barrier for effective cooperation in dealing with the returnees' issues. Specifically, in the Greater Helsinki region and other growth centres the problems are shared to a great extent; people move and their social contacts extend beyond the administrative boundaries of municipalities. For example, social workers may contact their colleagues in another municipality on questions associated with returnees, but they may not necessarily receive any help. Often the rule is that municipal authorities only serve the residents of their own municipality. This is a challenge because, should the potential security risk associated with the returnee materialise, it would not only be limited to the boundaries of the municipality in which the person in question lives. Following the completion of the health and social services reform this problem will most likely disappear.

It is not the purpose of the Anchor model to create long-lasting client relationships. When it comes to effectiveness and results in the Anchor model, the key factor is the functioning of its cooperation with other services. This is promoted by having different authorities participate in the model, such as social workers and psychiatric nurses who provide a natural bridge to the other services. In addition, collaboration with NGOs is vital. For example, the RADINET service and family support services are critical to the success of the Anchor model.

- Police departments, together with the National Police Board, will see to it that the Anchor model operates in the area of each police department and that the Anchors have the capacity to handle issues associated with violent radicalisation and extremism, including dealing with returnees from the conflict zone.
- The Ministry of the Interior (police), together with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health (health and social services), the Ministry of Education and Culture (youth work) and the National Police Board will establish the questions associated with the exchange of information within the Anchor model and propose solutions for them.

- Prepare instructions for the authorities on how to refer people to the Anchor model for assessment, and how to coordinate their affairs in the long term as well. The instructions can be appended to the Anchor manual, provided that the project for drafting one is launched.
- The social authorities and the police will agree on joint practices and their approach before making contact with a family that has returned from the conflict zone or has been touched by the issue.
- According to Action 4 in the National Action Plan for the Prevention of Violent Radicalisation and Extremism 2016, cooperation in the prevention of violent radicalisation and extremism will be increased in the capital region²⁰. See to it that this action item is implemented and that attention is paid to cooperation in practical matters that improve the capability of working with the returnees with the goal of promoting social reintegration and the prevention of violent radicalisation and extremism among the returnees and their social circles. The best practices developed in the Greater Helsinki region will be disseminated around the country.
- Ensure that all Anchors have well-functioning cooperation relationships among the regional and national NGOs that provide key services for the returnees in their area. One of the most important of these is the RADI-NET (exit) service.
- Establish a contact point at all Anchors, known to all regional authorities and NGOs, through which it is possible to relay information regarding the need for support to other authorities and NGOs.

Foreign Service

The Foreign Service and Finland's Embassies abroad play a key role when a returnee is about to cross the Syrian border into Turkey. Daesh routinely confiscates the travel documents of Europeans staying in its area with the goal of preventing them from returning to their countries of origin. Often the ones desiring to return to Finland contact their friends and families for the purpose of booking an appointment at Finland's Embassy in Ankara to obtain travel documents. Many times, in order to cross the border from Syria to Turkey the Turkish border authorities must be notified of these people and of the fact that they are on their way to the Embassy for the purpose of applying for travel documents. Practice has shown that it is not easy to relay this information.

²⁰ Action 4: Cooperation in the prevention of violent radicalisation and extremism will be increased among the cities in the capital region and their police departments to ensure that a radicalised individual living in the region, or one about to become radicalised, will not be left without the appropriate support merely because of red tape. (Responsibility: National Police Board, the cities and Police Departments of Helsinki, Espoo and Vantaa).

The challenge for the Foreign Service is to decide how to act towards the people attempting to flee Syria. Should their return be facilitated or should they be left to their own devices, and then they either succeed or not in crossing the border. This question is not unique to Syria and Turkey because similar situations also occur in the vicinity of other conflict areas or failed states. Also, when it comes to adults, one must remember that they voluntarily departed for the area in the first place.

However, children should be treated differently, taking into account the obligations of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The state carries a unique responsibility for seeing to the welfare and safety of children. Children cannot be held responsible for the fact that their parents have taken them to the conflict theatre. Taking into consideration the children's precarious situation and the obligations of the Convention, the authorities should help get the children out of the conflict zone.

The Foreign Service does not have independent powers in matters pertaining to child protection. On the one hand, pursuant to the Consular Services Act, the Foreign Service can temporarily provide support to children if the guardians request it or consent to it. On the other hand, they can provide executive assistance to the competent child protection authorities when requested. The most notable limitation to the operating prospects of the Foreign Service is the fact that the local authorities in the conflict zone are normally unable to provide executive assistance for the purpose of taking the child into care. It is also challenging to get the region's authorities to contribute to assisting underage paperless children across the border, away from the combat zone, for an appointment at Finland's Embassies accredited to the countries in question.

- Taking into account the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Foreign Service, together with the other authorities, will try to assist in getting children away from the conflict zones.
- Establish, together with the competent authorities, whether the Finnish Passport Act should be amended so that when an undocumented applicant applies for a passport a DNA test would be a requirement to establish their identity. The test would be carried out at the applicant's expense.

Social services, and the health and social services reform

Social services play a key role during the phase when efforts are being made to socially reintegrate returnees with the aim of mitigating the security concerns associated with them. When it comes to reintegration, it is vital to get life's practical matters under control. These include questions associated with residence, work and income security. It is difficult to help someone renounce violent extremism if they have no connections to society that

would promote them breaking away from the social circle within which they became radicalised in the first place. When it comes to families, it is imperative to get practical matters sorted out in order to normalise the lives of children.

The challenge is how to support this kind of person without the general public interpreting it as unfair. The specific question is: can this kind of special support be viewed as society's reward to those that have acted against it? As regards the safety of society and individuals it is essential to remember that the social reintegration of returnees reduces security risks, especially when it is timed correctly. Social workers have to encounter these questions in their daily work.

The health and social services system is being reformed: their services will be the responsibility of counties in the future. The reform could provide many opportunities for the development of multi-professional services. For example, it would become easier to assign social workers and psychiatric nurses to the Anchor model when the services are provided within larger entities. This, however, would require that the law also enact obligations on health and social services for participating in the promotion of security and multi-professional services such as in the Anchor model. According to advance information from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, alongside the promotion of health and wellbeing, Chapter 2, section 6 of the Counties Act will include support to the promotion of safety and security in municipalities. Legislative guidance is also important for the reason that in the future private companies will provide services as well. At the moment, however, the situation is quite uncertain and there does not seem to be information yet on what the future of multi-professional activity will be following the health and social services reform.

- Increase the awareness of the social welfare sector in questions associated with returnees, especially with the purpose of being able to reduce their risks in the short and the long term through better information.
- Together with the different authorities, create local practices for supporting social reintegration of the returnees through already existing social welfare services.
- Safeguard the status of multi-professional services in conjunction with the health and social services reform.
- The social authorities and the police will agree on joint practices and their approach before making contact with a family that has returned from the conflict zone or has been touched by the issue.

Child protection

At the moment it appears that the authorities are not sufficiently aware of the children returning from the conflict zone in Syria and Iraq or of their specific situation. Child protection services say that they are not exposed to the phenomenon even when children and adolescents from their area have departed for or returned from the conflict zone.

During the preparations the representative of child protection services pointed out that child protection in Finland has been developed for a mono-ethnic society and, as such, does not take into account the situation of minorities. This was seen to be the key development requirement, especially in areas populated by ethnic minorities. Mistrust, even fear, of child protection services is a commonplace challenge for the child welfare authorities. This often stems from the false perception that the involvement of child protection services will always result in taking the child into care. Ethnic minorities are even more mistrustful of the child protection services than the main population. This can arise from a great deal of ignorance on all sides.

The Handbook for Child Protection contains instructions for cases where suspicions arise on account of parents taking their children to or are leaving for a combat zone, a child is about to be taken to the zone, or when children have already been taken or have left on their own for the combat zone. Corresponding instructions should also be written for dealing with children returning from the combat area. Even though the situation in Syria and Iraq is in focus at the moment, similar situations will almost certainly be encountered in the future as well. Questions associated with children returning from the combat zone are now widely addressed in all EU Member States and awareness of the subject will most likely increase at a rapid rate. A synopsis on the key questions can be found in the paper 'Child returnees from conflict zones' (RAN issue paper November 2016), published by the EU's Radicalisation Awareness Network.

- Prepare instructions for dealing with children and their families returning from the conflict zone.
- Increase awareness of violent radicalisation and its effects on the status and situation of the family by, for example, utilising the training and materials of the Radicalisation Awareness Network.

Health services

Returnees may suffer from physical injuries requiring treatment. Nevertheless, mental health problems which are the result of living in the conflict area and having been surrounded by violence are the greatest challenge. Whether they themselves carried out acts of violence or only witnessed violence being targeted against their loved ones or other people does not make much difference in this respect. There is plenty of research data

available on the effects of violence and on witnessing it. Traumas of war to military personnel and civilians have been researched as have the effects of violence in families where spouses act violently towards each other or even towards their children. When it comes to security in society, it is vitally important to treat traumas associated with violence in order to prevent future violent acts or other security problems. Untreated traumas may linger for decades.

- Increase the awareness of healthcare professionals on the situation of the returnees from the conflict zone in Syria and Iraq; the goal is to recognise traumas and the people who need treatment and to direct them to the appropriate services as comprehensively as possible. The recognition of, especially, children returning from the conflict zone will be improved, and competency associated with mental health problems will be enhanced to improve the services of patients coming from different cultural backgrounds.

Pre-primary education and the education services

With regard to the future of each child and adolescent, it is important that they are not excluded from education. Children and adolescents born and raised in a conflict zone participate in pre-primary education, schools and educational institutes after returning to Finland. It would be of the utmost importance to provide information to pre-primary education personnel and teachers of the children and youths who have lived in a conflict zone so as to be able to properly relate to them. This would be a good way to support the child and adolescent in integrating into normal life. Achieving the rights of the child requires that the key persons from the perspective of the child and adolescent are aware of the issues which matter greatly to their well-being, learning and development. This information is also important to pre-primary educators and teachers when they are cooperating with the family. By doing so, pre-primary educators and teachers could, for their part, support and guide the children and youths returning from the conflict area. They could also prevent their problems, support their return to normal life and prevent their feeling of not belonging or possible violent radicalisation. The Ministry of Education and Culture and the Finnish National Agency for Education participate in the Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN), including its sub-group for education, where information and lessons learned are also exchanged with the returnees.

- Increase the awareness of pre-primary education and education services' personnel, including that of pupil and student welfare personnel, on radicalisation and associated phenomena in general.
- Organise training for pre-primary educators and teachers on how to meet and approach children, youth and families returning from the conflict zone. Also, organise training on the different authorities' roles and responsibilities as well as multi-professional cooperation among different authorities and experts.
- Draft a manual which comprehensively deals with questions associated with children and youths, and their families, returning to the sphere of pre-primary education or school, also taking into account issues associated with transparency and the media. The manual should provide instructions for challenging situations which go beyond the capabilities of pre-primary education or which could be dealt with in the school.
- Establish the pertinent legislation that applies to disclosing and receiving information on children and adolescents returning from the conflict zone. Then, create regional and local practices for pre-primary education and the school to meet and support the child or the adolescent from the conflict zone who is about to return to pre-primary education or school. Also establish the practices for organising cooperation with other entities.

The national 'Threats' utility of the police

The police have identified the challenge of dealing with people associated with the threat of 'targeted violence'. This means intentional acts in which the perpetrators select specific targets for their act of violence. Their violence is deliberate, planned and it does not express any particular emotion. It differs from violence committed in a reckless fit of rage. The acts carried out by perpetrators of targeted violence do not resemble normal violent crime, where factors associated with substance abuse or criminal gain are the most important motives. It is rarely possible to intervene in the action of these people under the Criminal Code (attempt or the preparation of an offence) or under the provisions of the Mental Health Act, despite the fact that they constitute a serious threat of violence. In order to deal with such people the police have developed the national 'Threats' utility at the National Bureau of Investigation and contact persons have been assigned to each police department. The utility requires the use of shared operating models at different administrative branches, legislative support for the action as well as seamless functioning between preventive processes and the operational chain. At best, the progression from identifying the individual expressing worrisome symptoms to launching police or possible healthcare action operates without delay and all participating actors are aware of their

own roles and those of the others. The 'Threats' utility can be an instrument for evaluating and controlling the security concerns associated with the returnees.

- Continue developing the national 'Threats' utility of the police by creating shared operating models, and continue the legislative review which the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health launched in summer 2016.

Local cooperation groups

According to the National Action Plan for the Prevention of Violent Radicalisation and Extremism local cooperation groups led by the city operate in Turku, Tampere and Oulu. They support the Anchor model in the prevention of violent extremism. In addition, the Safe Helsinki network, set up by the police, operates in Helsinki. It also carries out tasks associated with preventing violent radicalisation and extremism. The local cooperation groups should emphasise the resolution of concrete issues in concert with the authorities and NGOs, despite the fact that these groups do not handle individual cases. Yet another important task for the groups is to increase awareness of matters and models associated with violent radicalisation.

- Increase the knowledge and awareness of local cooperation groups on issues associated with returnees from the conflict zone, taking into account local conditions.
- The local cooperation groups will strengthen cooperation among the authorities and NGOs to deal with and control questions associated with the returnees.

RADINET (exit) action

The RADINET (exit) action was launched in the beginning of 2016. The goal is to support individuals' disengagement from violent extremism and extremist groups through the means of social work. RADINET differs from other programmes that promote disengagement from violence in the sense that it also provides support to renouncing violent extremism by means of mentoring. The service is provided to those that seek it on a voluntary basis. NGOs provide the service by working together with each other; and the authorities lead the steering group and participate in the programme. Those who have participated in the action of violent right-wing extremism and religiously motivated violent extremism constitute the focus group. The Vuolle Settlement is in charge of practical work and the other actors include the Via Vis in Oulu as well as the Aggredi Kuopio and Aggredi Helsinki programmes.

The service has reached nearly 20 people, who also include returnees from the conflict area. RADINET has increased its cooperation with the Anchor model. The service is financed by Finland's Slot Machine Association (RAY), which provided financing for the next three years. The grant did not meet the requested level. The challenge is that the demand for the service is increasing more rapidly than the resources. The RADINET service directly supports activity associated with the security of society and the authorities' action in this sector. Therefore, a situation in which the RADINET cannot meet its tasks or expectations is also challenging for the authorities.

The challenge for RADINET is that the returnees have many problems that stand in the way of social reintegration. Without cooperating with the municipal authorities it is impossible for RADINET to solve these practical problems. The collaboration should be carried out on the basis of predetermined practices that are to be followed in these cases. At this time the meagre resources of RADINET and the authorities have to be applied on an ad hoc basis. Proper cooperation demands that awareness regarding the conditions and the challenges associated with the returnees increases among the municipal authorities.

- Create local practices for easing the means of cooperation between the authorities and the RADINET service and for making the action more effective.
- Study the possibilities of strengthening the financing of RADINET, taking into account the increasing demand for the services.
- RADINET will develop an activity to help children disengage from violent ideology.
- RADINET will develop and standardise mentoring in a manner which also takes into account the specific needs of adolescents and women.

Finn Church Aid's 'Reach Out' family support model

In autumn 2016 Finn Church Aid launched the 'Reach Out' programme that aims to increase cooperation among the authorities, religious communities and NGOs in preventing violent radicalisation as well as to disseminate information about the phenomenon of violent radicalisation. The project supports collaboration and networking among the authorities, different religious communities and NGOs. Its goal is to increase awareness and coordination in order to provide appropriate support from local actors and basic services for families touched by the phenomenon.

By increasing the volume of information, awareness and cooperation it is possible to strengthen society's ability to support the families and communities suffering from violent radicalisation and to develop actions to help prevent the spread of the phenomenon.

The project charts the need for family support and provides information to the authorities and NGOs on violent radicalisation and travel to the conflict theatre, and the need for family support. It also supports the relevant religious communities and authorities in strengthening their mutual cooperation in order to establish well-functioning local cooperation.

- Disseminate information through local cooperation groups and networks about the significance of family support and about the locations where support is provided.
- Establish whether the Reach Out activity should designate support persons for people and families needing support. For example, they could provide help with issues related to services and other assistance.

Islamic communities

Islamic organisations and communities play an important role in dealing with the returnees, both as experts and as partners. From the perspective of successful action on the part of the authorities they possess indispensable knowledge and skills. For example, mentoring and communal support are functions difficult to implement in a successful manner without the support and skills of Islamic organisations and communities. The challenge is the often meagre resources of these organisations, which limits their possibilities to participate in the collaboration. It is also beneficial to engage in cooperation with organisations representing ethnic communities.

- Support the Islamic organisations and communities in gaining more resources for collaboration.

Proposal for implementing the operating model

The biggest challenges to implementing the model are how to disseminate information to all concerned parties about the issues, models and goals associated with the returnees.

As repeatedly stated in this report, people have already returned to Finland from the conflict theatre, the return process is ongoing and work is being done with the returnees. Therefore, this does not involve new, about to be launched action. The efforts already in place provide a good point of departure for implementing and further developing the model.

The Ministry of the Interior will send the report to all key actors for comment. Following this, it will be handled by the ministerial working group on internal security and administration of justice. The report will be circulated as widely as possible among all concerned parties. Meetings will be organised with the authorities, NGOs, cooperation networks and communities: the topics of the report and the implementation of its proposals will be presented and discussed in these meetings. In order to properly manage the questions associated with the returnees from the perspective of society, individuals and their families and friends, all parties must be able to trust that the action is deliberate, balanced and appropriate. Transparency will support this goal, both among the immediately concerned parties and the general public.

The national cooperation group on the prevention of violent extremism and radicalisation, set by the Ministry of the Interior for the purpose of coordinating and implementing the National Action Plan, monitors the progress of the actions and the recommendations presented in this report. It also accepts feedback and recommendations for further improvement.

Practices in other countries

In autumn 2016 the preliminary working group preparing the operational model for dealing with returnees transmitted a survey through the EU working group to the Member States. The survey polled how the Member States deal with questions associated with returnees from the conflict zone. While the Member States' responses are not public information, the following presents certain details that can be inferred from them.

The Ministry of the Interior asked the following questions:

1. Is there a national, regional or local multi-agency system for assessing, countering and preventing the threat of violence posed by returning foreign fighters? If so:
2. How and what information about the returning foreign fighters or other individuals coming back from the Syria/Iraq conflict zones is shared
3. How have issues regarding sharing classified and/or privileged information been solved in cases where preventing or countering the threat of violence from an individual have necessitated sharing information with a non-authorised party? (i.e. legislation, permission of owner of data, etc.)
4. What is the role or responsibility of the municipality authorities to be aware of the activities of these individuals? How is the cooperation on the local level organized, by whom and who has the main responsibility?
5. How is the threat regarding the individuals not being prosecuted assessed? Is the assessment done by one authority or by a multi-professional team?

6. Do criminal proceedings against the individual exclude the possibility of other measures of prevention (exit programs, counseling, coordinated multi-agency interventions, etc.)?
7. What is the role of the prosecutor in evaluating the threat of violence posed by these individuals and is there interaction between conducting investigations and/or prosecuting and preventive interventions? (i.e. consideration)

The responses reveal that different countries view the threat of the returnees differently and, hence, awareness of the security concerns associated with them varies. Some respondents flatly stated that no fighters had travelled from their area to the conflict zone in Syria and Iraq and, therefore, they have no reason to worry about returnees. For the most part these were eastern European countries. Still, the majority of the respondents had acknowledged the threat and the need to focus measures on the returnees.

The first question asked whether the country already applied a multi-agency system assessing and influencing the threat of violence posed by the returnees. Based on the answers, the most commonplace practice is that the intelligence service, either alone or together with the other law enforcement authorities, evaluates the threat. Recently, some countries had instituted reforms which assigned more authorities to the risk evaluation process. One respondent said that when a child of 10–13 years of age returns from the conflict zone the social welfare authorities are immediately connected to evaluate the situation. Another respondent said that, when necessary, and taking into account the provisions of law, other authorities are involved in the action.

Question number two addressed the sharing of information on the returnees from the conflict zone in Syria and Iraq. The most commonplace response was that the security services and the police can exchange mutual information. One response stated that this procedure had produced good results. Two respondents brought forward the question on also disseminating information among the other actors. One of them considered this to be a challenge. The probable reason for this is the recognised need to exchange the information more broadly. One response stated that the police, at their discretion, can disseminate the information more widely, which makes it possible to focus similar measures on the returnees as on those contemplating travel to the conflict zone in Syria and Iraq. One response stated that the security intelligence service will inform the appropriate municipal authorities of the returnees who are not being prosecuted and who will settle in the municipality. The reason for this is that the municipal authorities, together with the police, are responsible for controlling the risks associated with these people.

Question number three asked how the issues with sharing information had been solved in cases where preventing the threat of violence necessitated it. For the most part the responses said that, since it involves intelligence information, it cannot be shared. The own-

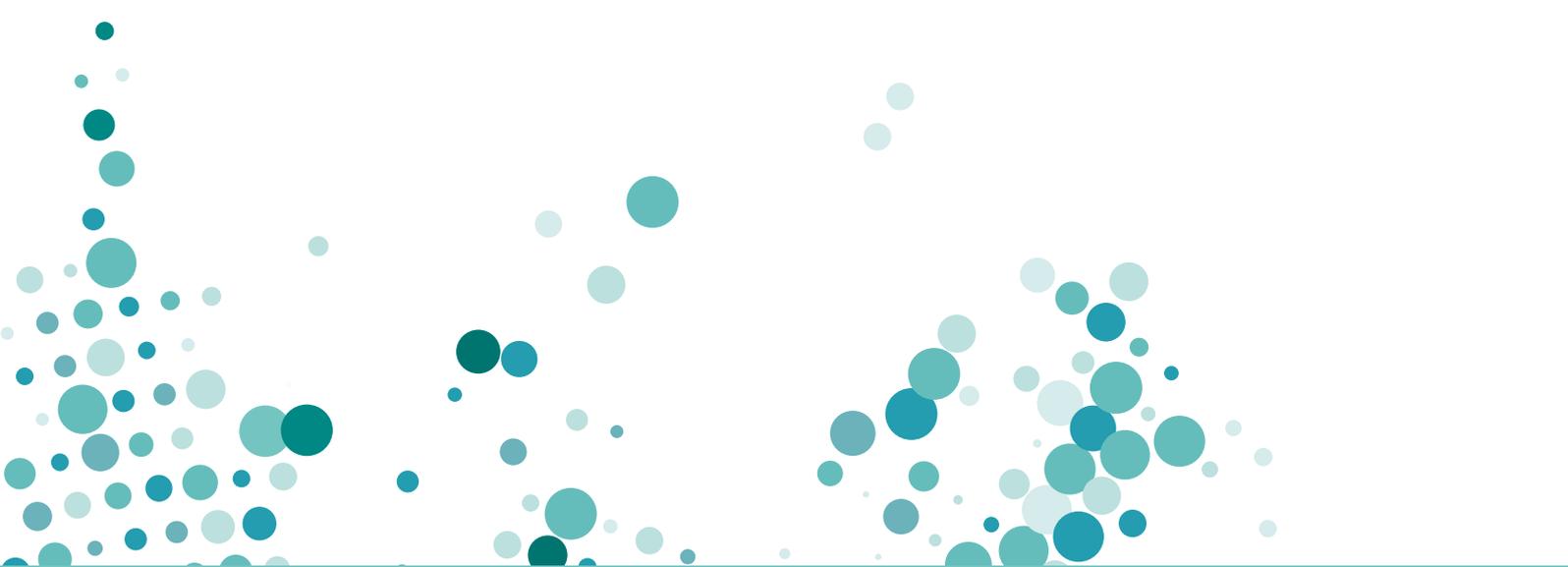
er of data decides on the usage of the information in accordance with law. Some answers noted that they were yet to encounter cases where such consideration would have been necessary. One response recognised the problems associated with sharing information, but also noted that practical action at some level has been possible through, for example, social welfare cooperation groups.

The fourth question addressed the responsibility of the municipal authorities in preventing and countering risks associated with the returnees. Some respondents stated that municipalities have no role whatsoever. In these countries the task of assessing and countering the risk was assigned to a single state agency operating nationwide. Others said that the cooperation was organised in a manner such as through regularly convening cooperation groups. One of the respondents said that their legislation permits the authorities to assign the place of residence to a returnee for a limited period of time. This also included the responsibility of the subject to regularly report to the police and the prohibition to meet certain individuals. The Nordic countries emphasised the role and significance of municipalities in dealing with the returnees, and in some countries this was the statutory task of the municipality. Cooperation between the local police and the municipality was highlighted. The task of the intelligence service is to support municipalities.

The fifth question queried the assessment of the threat regarding the returning individuals not being prosecuted. Some of the responses revealed that the threat assessments only used traditional intelligence service instruments, international cooperation included. One country's answer brought forward a Hotline service and centre to which people concerned about an individual's situation could call for advice. This is the first step on the way to a possible intervention. One response noted that while the risk associated with children was assessed through their social situation, among adults the focus is on the risk of violence and on establishing whether they committed crimes. Judging by the responses it seems that the Nordic countries base their assessments on wider cooperation.

Question number six asked whether the criminal proceedings against an individual included any other support measures, such as exit programmes. According to the response of one country, their counter-terrorist agency was also directed to employ other instruments alongside the criminal law process. Another country replied that any other measures were strictly forbidden. The average response was that the criminal proceedings do not prevent the employment of other instruments.

The seventh question addressed the role of the prosecutor. All responses stated that no new tasks were assigned to prosecutors as regards the foreign fighter question.



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