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Research interests: public perception of security and surveillance and the societal dimension of resilience, integration and radicalisation in migration contexts

Policy recommendation and improved communication tools for law enforcement and security agencies preventing violent radicalisation

Under the intense strain caused by violent extremism, western policy makers have struggled to deliver viable options that not only boast successful results, but truly deliver LEAs and security agencies the tools they need to properly manage security risks, protect the public and prevent the emergence of terrorism. In the last decade, governmental responsiveness has given birth to an array of proposals which offer impressions of change and progress towards curtailing terrorism and related activities. Unfortunately, many of the suggested solutions are not grounded in reality and do not incorporate some key approaches. These insufficiencies are then further outpaced by an ever increasing spread of violent extremism, through large-scale social engineering and technological advancements (especially web based).

Our multi-agency project, *Pericles (Policy recommendation and improved communication tools for law enforcement and security agencies preventing violent radicalisation)*, picks up where other counter-violent-radicalisation projects leave off. Here, practical tools are developed for the needs of law enforcement agencies and other end users. *Pericles* does not start from scratch but rather combines established solutions with new developments is aimed. It strongly builds on previous approaches, further sharpening specific aspects, so as to avoid unnecessary duplications. *Pericles* aims to:

- Deepening the understanding of the risks and indicators of radicalisation through the inclusion of former extremists and individuals who are in the process of being radicalised.
- Addressing not only the individual needs, but also the needs of families and social networks of radicalised individuals and national / cultural differences.
- Creating a toolkit that is to be tailored to the individual and end users.
- Using a multi-agency approach with professionals in the field of radicalisation and LEAs.
- Invention of new tools to provide solutions to the latest challenges.

Pericles not only focuses on end-users but also places emphasis on the individual and the community from which he/she emerges. By shifting the focus from known terrorists onto the empowerment of vulnerable individuals and their milieu, this project hopes to strengthen the resilience of communities against the influences of potential radicalisation narratives and ideologies.

Online radicalisation (also called cyber extremism and cyber hate propaganda) is a growing concern to the society and also of great importance to governments and international security organizations. The aim of Law Enforcement and Intelligence Agencies is to discover/monitor these radical individuals and groups and predict violent extremist actions, allowing time for stabilization strategies and

counter measures to be devised. However, current counter-radicalisation strategies that target media propaganda often yield inconclusive results due to small sample sizes and usage of generalisations as the backbone of their tools. Pericles address this a dynamic understanding of the full range of challenges that LEAs are faced with, via close working relationships and ongoing toolkit development and adjustments based on the end user preference and needs assessments.

At present, end user challenges have only been partially targeted by the action plans of current preventative initiatives. Most 'policy-making' in Europe have neglected the use of specific instruments that can identify individuals at risk of radicalisation and which provide a guiding framework to decisions addressing this vulnerability and subsequent provisions to support the individual's needs. Hence, it is critical and necessary to develop forms of "intelligent" technologies than can scan and categorize web and multimedia, detecting radical speech on public flows, in order to achieve "early prevention". In terms of preventing and countering the phenomenon, usual police practices principally rely on gathering information from open sources, using the conventional keyword based approaches which have been proven to be highly unsuccessful. In particular, for the purposes of monitoring online extremist behavioral patterns, an Open Sources Unit (OSU), with trained staff, constitutes the quintessential of the organizational architecture of the Hellenic Police Intelligence Division (HPiD). Nevertheless, the online monitoring activities of the OSU are highly situated on modified versions of common online service tools, and heavily rely on the ability of the human factor to properly evaluate the collected information. The development of an online tool for the detection and prevention of radicalization is therefore essential to upgrade the aforementioned time consuming and outdated practice. This multidivisional treatment of radicalisation serves to weaken the transitional processes of radicalisation.

Overall structure of the work plan

Pericles has a structured methodical framework comprising of eight targeted work packages (WPs). The WPs will be carried out seamlessly, with clear inter-linkages and continuous exchange of information. This will ensure that the results and conclusions of the various WPs are incorporated at appropriate stages throughout the lifetime of the project, enabling the gradual refinement and advancement of the concept. Each WP consists of tasks, which draws on the combined expertise of the consortium partners. The WP overview is detailed below:

Work package 1: Workup of existing tools and policies towards a holistic understanding of prevention.

Contemporary prevention and counter-radicalisation measures are evaluated in terms of their 'effectiveness'. Highlighting a collection of these tools is important to provide a working basis for WP 4 on which enhancements from this project can be applied to, in order to progress current measures to a state-of-the-art level. Firstly, a detailed gap analysis will be conducted in order to identify the gaps existing in modern prevention and counter-radicalisation policies. Such an analysis is critical to raise awareness of which tools/measures the actors require in order to better enable their ability to tackle radicalisation. For example, the role of the media and internet and its absence in current prevention policies will be focused upon. This will address the need for advance monitoring of speech using newly developed tools, specifically the darkweb, to search for possible signs of radicalisation.

Secondly, a criteria analysis using interviews with professionals from a number of contributory and competing disciplines. The consortium will engage with key stakeholders involved in the field of

prevention and counter-radicalisation, to extract knowledge that may not be available in the literature. The criteria analysis will provide a structure indicating the preferred methods to be included in this project. The consultation process will include the utilisation of qualitative research methods. These primary methods will encompass questionnaires and/or semi structured interviews with key informants, which will serve to augment the literature review study.

Work package 2: Needs assessment and case studies.

Here, a need assessment will be conducted with networks amongst European LEAs, former radicals and affected sample families. A kick off meeting will be organised to provide an opportunity for the relevant stakeholders to initially brainstorm and map out what exactly those needs are. A design phase will follow, during which three questionnaires will be drafted. The first questionnaire targets LEAs throughout Europe and will be circulated via the LEAs which are taking part in this consortium. The Pericles project will aim to receive responses from at least 150 LEA participants with different functionalities in the radicalisation and extremism domain.

The questionnaires for those convicted of terrorism related activities and former radicals will be of a very different design, intended primarily to be delivered through semi structured qualitative interviews, delivered in person. It will be designed to elicit detailed descriptions of the respondent's background and lifestyle, factors which motivated him/her to join a radical group and, where appropriate, factors prompting him or her to disengage and/or become de-radicalised. These respondents will be drawn from the extended ARQ network and from LEAs involved in the consortium.

The questionnaires for family members who have seen a child, sibling, relative or spouse radicalise will be designed to form a direct basis for the tool which we will develop for families. Again, it will be a qualitative questionnaire, created to form the basis of a semi structured interview or a self-reporting questionnaire and will be delivered in person. It will capture the radicalisation process, document the contact which these families had with LEA personnel, focusing on both the positive and negative aspects of it, and offer the families the opportunity to share their view on how this contact should be structured, and what other needs they had and have which could be (better) met by authorities. Following the pilot and adjustment phase, the three questionnaires will be presented to the consortium, and their agreement on their design sought.

The results of these three questionnaires will be compiled, analysed and formulated into three separate reports. These reports will act both as standalone product of our project, and as a detailed scientific basis for the development of the tools in WP4.

Work package 3: Modelling.

A series of models will be developed to provide the technical backbone for the tools developed in WP 3. This will ensure a match to the reasonable and predictable requirements of the end-users. Specifically, the task will map the relevant stakeholders associated with de-radicalisation concepts implementation across all political, societal and law enforcement sectors and levels and will identify actors and their objectives.

Work package 4: Tool development.

Five tools will be developed by the Pericles project. These tools were designed to follow a continuum from radicalisation detection to handover of the Pericles tools.

The first tool which is the Cyber Space Detection system, aims to support the detection of radicalisation candidates. It is targeted for use by LEA and other relevant stakeholders for the detection of violent or hateful content on the web. Furthermore, an additional novelty of this tool is its use to assess the potential radicalisation impact of the web/online content aimed at radicalisation. The Cyber Space Detection tool methodology is based on the application of a metadata analysis and incorporates a model of the violent and hate speech and other radicalisation content on open Web-space (a taxonomy) and an evaluation radicalisation model. A software will be designed that detects and records such content in cyberspace.

The second tool is the PERICLES Enhanced Platform which is an interactive web-based visualisation tool which maps the relevant actors in the radicalisation domain, their objectives, roles and relationships. The tool aims to afford a visual identification of key players and a prompt identification on the limitations facing such groups, hence supporting policy makers with knowledge on current user profiles and also how best to improve the effectiveness of such groups to meet de-radicalisation targets. The development of the tool will employ the use of a criteria elicitation methodology which provides the mapping of the desired qualities on the basis of a shared criteria. The tool will therefore be based on domain model (ontology format) where the different stakeholders and their objectives and relationships are modelled. Initially this mapping will be restricted to the case study regions/ communities and actors associated to the PERICLES project, to establish the proof of a working concept. Mechanism to expand this tool coverage to other EU regions/environments will then be applied after the successful testing and validation of the tool.

The third tool is the vulnerability assessment tool (VAT) which aims to assess the risk of radicalisation and provides support to the stakeholders regarding the identification of vulnerable individuals in their environment, as well as approach choices which can be considered and implemented on identification. It combines different types of qualitative indicators, such as behaviour, school results, mental health issues, police records, and social contacts in order to assess vulnerability of an individual or group to (further) radicalise. With regards the methodology supporting the VAT, it uses input from PERICLES tools Cyberspace Detection Tool and Enhanced Platform as well as relevant academic research findings and expertise from other projects such as FP7 project SAFIRE and TERRA. The tool implements the existing methodologies of specific stakeholders, who observe different indicators of radicalisation in an individual or group. The VAT will therefore also use and build on existing vulnerability indicator sets and the assessment tools for radicalisation that are now being used by, among others, the Dutch National Police. These indicators are taken from stakeholders' experience and expertise, from state-of-the-art knowledge that is built in WP1, from the interview data in WP2, and from previous EU projects such as SAFIRE, IMPACT Europe and TERRA, Combining the indicators should lead to a red flag, indicating certain level of radicalisation, and appropriate actions to be taken to intervene. By combining indicators from previous work, different organisations, such as LEAs, schools, and social work, cooperation between these organisations is stimulated and a multi-agency perspective is promoted.

The fourth tool, Family Care Package is a tool dedicated to families and aims to serve as a useful instrument to support, inform and advice families who suspect or know of a relative in the process of radicalisation or that has been radicalised. The family care package therefore covers a spectrum of radicalisation stages from pre-radicalisation, to early radicalisation and post-radicalisation stages. The tool will also provide a means to educate and alert families on radicalisation signs, raise awareness of their potential role in combating it (with practical tips) and the relevant actors to contact.

The Family Care Package (which will consist of several component tools) will be designed using a similar blueprint as the TERRA toolkit, published in 2014, which was enthusiastically received by professionals within Europe and beyond. Based upon the already existing TERRA toolkit, a framework will be provided, within which families can inform themselves about the process of radicalisation, feel supported in judging whether or not their family member is in a process of radicalising, and be able to orientate, if this answer is affirmative, where along the continuum of radicalisation their family member is currently located. Information which is currently available – based upon the TERRA toolkit and the research which supports it – will be further augmented by the information provided as a direct result of the research undertaken under WP2. The Family Care Package tool will be developed as an easily accessible web based interactive apparatus. The methodology underlining the tool will be based on a model which represents the needs of practitioners, characteristics of effective interventions and gaps between current preventative and counter-radicalisation policies and actual methods. The model will also include up to date contact agencies and will be initially developed for the PERICLES case study environment.

The tools will be translated into French, German, Spanish, Dutch, Arabic and Urdu. Should it transpire that other non-European languages would be especially helpful in supporting its dissemination, translations will be made into these languages as well.

Work package 5: Validation.

This work package concerns the validation of the five Pericles tools, as developed in WP4, by engaging end users. The team will identify the extent to which the tools address practitioners' needs, are plausible to be effective in the shorter and the longer term, and can be implemented in national policies. By contrasting all required characteristics and the tools' compliance with the requirements with end users' input and national policies, the following results will be achieved: a description of the feasibility of each of the five Pericles tools for the end users included in the consortium and suggestions for end users on how to implement the tools in their daily practices. Two methods will be used to achieve these results:

- Workshops will be carried out in which the four Pericles tools will be presented to a group of end users, e.g. law enforcement agencies. Feedback on the content and practical implementation of the tools will be evoked.
- The results of the workshops will provide the basis for the development of a framework to analyse and identify effective interventions strategies based on the application of the developed tooling.

Work package 6: Legal and ethical supervision.

The introduction of tools to deal with radicalisation is a task which raises questions to an individual's liberty, privacy and security. This is especially important in the EU, and to improve the acceptability and efficacy of the Pericles outputs. As such, this work package will be a combination of (a) ethical review of other work package deliverables for ethics, and advice to consortium participants and (b) ethics research and writing. To analyse the legal and ethical aspects of all technologies to be developed by the project in order to modify or remove any questionable feature at design time, and to ensure that the developed counter-radicalisation tools can be legally deployed in the studied jurisdictions, to start its exploitation as soon as the project is completed.

Work package 7: Communication and dissemination.

To maximize the impact of Pericles project WP7 will develop and implement an extensive communication and dissemination strategy. This will include:

Development of dissemination tools.

Preparing, launching and maintaining generic project dissemination tools (including the development of logo and identity guidelines) and rolling these out in the required forms, including website, social media, information materials and others as described in Section (add section here) on a multilingual basis.

Workshops with security end users.

Preparation and execution of validation workshops in different EU locations aimed at two-way exchange between PERICLES, key security stakeholders identified during kick-off event in in WP2 and the advisory board.

- Exploitation of the results after project's lifetime.
Development and execution of public relation activities in relation to the newly developed fivetool platform ranging from awareness to implementation by security end users. The main activity here will be ensuring that PERICLES five tool platform becomes potential de-facto de-radicalisation learning and operational tool for LEAs use.
- Liaising with EU policy making communities.
Taking leadership in communication with EC and other policy making communities including the development of policy briefs and policy recommendations and organisation of specific bilateral meetings to align project goals to the policy community.

Work Package 8: Project management.

Management of the project is necessary to ensure the smooth running of daily operations and the maintenance of internal consistency needed for the realisation of deliverables.

WP 1 – First results

Below are the first results relating to WP 1 – Workup of existing tools and policies towards a holistic understanding of prevention.

1) Training for first line practitioners

- Differences in practitioners' understanding of key terms (extremism, radicalization, intervention, prevention etc.)
- Insufficient understanding of radicalization and how to respond

Recommendations:

- A common terminology containing key words linked to radicalization
- Courses should use effective training materials:
 - Interactive and practical approach
 - Case studies and sharing experiences between first-liners

- Using latest material
- Using e-learning to reach a larger audience
- Asking open and provocative questions to prompt reflection

2) Exit strategies:

- Relatively little support is available for vulnerable individuals after rehabilitation/ counselling programmes
- Interventions focusing on internal processes, such as creating positive identity and reducing negative emotions, are more effective than interventions focusing on external symptoms and solutions
- Programmes differ from each other and are adapted to the individual

Recommendations:

- Widespread aftercare programmes are needed to help reintegrate individuals back into society
- Dedicate an holistic support to vulnerable individual's – this includes helping with socio-economic strains (achieved by organising basic social services)
- Although tailored approaches are effective, programmes could benefit from general practices such as:
 - Clear and realistic objectives: difference between de-radicalization (change in values) and disengagement (change in behaviour)
 - Including former extremists (in theological discussions). Interventions performed by former radicals are associated with higher effectivity than other types of front-liners.
 - Programmes should begin by focusing on building trust, confidence and safe environment with the client

3) Educating young people

- Schools and childcare providers are increasingly involved in prevention efforts
- Radicalization awareness of teachers remain underdeveloped

Recommendations:

- Schools and childcare providers can strengthen their approach through:
 - Updating curriculum to incorporate online materials
 - Promoting critical thinking through open dialogue on sensitive/difficult topics
 - Introducing experiential learning through interactive activities
- Create safe-spaces for pupils to discuss sensitive issues
- Educators should watch out for signs of social exclusion and establish contact with these individuals
- Build networks with other educators and use helplines to raise concerns in the classroom in relation to potential radicalization

4) Community engagement and empowerment

- Communities are not always open to share information with institutions (community police, local authorities)
- Projects/programmes developing a community engagement approach often do not involve the full range of actors

Recommendations:

- Trust is important in developing community engagement and can be built through:
 - Introducing community policing to engage and respond to public concerns
 - Engaging in sustained efforts to create long-term relationships
- Realistic budgets and timeframes enable consistent, long-lasting contact with the community
- Inspire participation of religious communities through:
 - Open dialogue on sensitive issues and taboos
 - Increase visibility of positive interfaith work
 - Additional training for religious leaders

5) Family support

- Cases of violent radicalization are often linked to family dynamics
- Families have different needs – there is no one-shoe-fits-all- approach
- Challenges to a family's social and economic standing (poverty, low education, and poor physical health) can influence the rehabilitation impact on radicalization processes
- Family support services often operate during business hours

Recommendations:

- Interventions should use a holistic approach focusing on the family as a whole
- Tailor-made interventions should be utilized
- Indirect support should be available for socioeconomic problems (e.g. housing support of officers, schools, social workers) as this also has a rehabilitative effect
- Communities should offer family support services with a 24/7 support hotline

6) Delivering counter-narratives

- Counter-narratives are somewhat counter-productive as they can reinforce extremist arguments on a micro-level
- General lack of evidence supporting the effectiveness of counter-narratives

Recommendations:

- Counter-narratives could be better implemented on a macro level (targeting the public)
- Narratives appealing to human emotions or utilizing humour could be particularly effective
- Using former radicalized individuals to produce narratives could be more convincing and therefore beneficial
- As an alternative, resources should be provided which facilitate open dialogue (particularly with children and youth). This should include dealing with taboo or sensitive topics

7) Multi-agency structures

- Multi-agency structures variably involve practitioners across public and private sectors
- Practitioners do not always share information with each other (local authorities, GPs and health, the police, housing, care providers)
- Barriers to information-sharing exist due to insufficient knowledge of the legal framework

Recommendations:

- Interventions should work with a wider range of organisations (local communities, NGO's, housing centers, charity workers etc.)
- All professionals dealing with vulnerable individuals should share information effectively

- Improve understanding on what is confidential (and what is not) and what information can be shared lawfully
- All professionals involved should receive awareness training

8) Evaluations

- Majority of evaluations often use cross-sectional designs
- Little to no evaluations on the economic impact or financial costs of interventions
- There is an absence of comparative analyses which give insight into effective programming

Recommendations:

- Longitudinal evaluations are needed to focus on the long-term impact of programmes
- More knowledge on the costs of existing interventions plus economic impact evaluations
- Evaluations should be based on quantitative data to allow for meta analyses