POLICY ADVICE
LOCAL GOVERNMENT

**A Community Approach
to Radicalisation**

POLICY ADVICE
FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

This document has been written for local government workers, and suggests tackling problems of radicalisation at local level, through a community approach. It contains guidance on how to implement such an approach, the professionals who can best be included in it, and on what this approach hopes to achieve.

CONTENTS

1 AIMS AND BACKGROUND: DEALING WITH RADICALISATION

The benefits of addressing the problem of radicalisation at a local level are clear. It's a problem whose impact is first felt at local level. If a young person is radicalising, this process will, most likely, at first be noticed by family members, and then by the broader community – friends, teachers, perhaps a religious leader, or a trainer at a local sports club. Local health care professionals or social workers may become involved and local police. If the process of radicalisation proceeds unchecked, the individual may even pose a threat to local security. In addition, recent events seem to show that radicalisation can take place on a geographically specific level. There are numerous examples from the Netherlands in which several young people from the same city council area have radicalised towards extreme Islam and travelled abroad, either as combatants or as jihad brides.

Taking a preventative approach to radicalisation can enhance security within your council area, and help to protect and support the citizens within your care.

The purposes of this document are:

- To raise awareness about radicalisation, its origins and impact at local level;
- To suggest that the best approach towards prevention of radicalisation is a community based one;
- To provide a practical framework upon which such a community approach can be based.
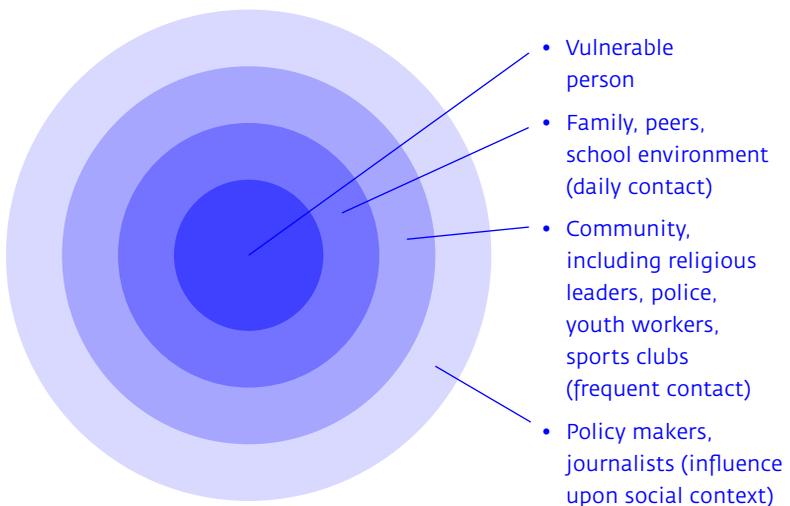
2 WHY YOU?

Your support in setting up a community approach which can combat radicalisation at a grass roots level is vital.

TERRA proposes using a community based approach, in which professionals from very different disciplines come together on a regular basis to discuss radicalisation in their area. They might for example share concerns about a particular individual or social group, discuss how they can take a shared approach, or decide how best to communicate with a family which has raised concerns about a family member. Without your initiative and support, the contact between these professional groups will be difficult to achieve and maintain.

An integrated approach which promotes communication between families and front line professionals who come into contact with vulnerable individuals can provide support and protection to these individuals and their families, and contribute positively to local and national security.

3 THE BENEFITS OF
A COMMUNITY APPROACH

The principle goal of adopting a community approach is to protect the security both of the vulnerable person who is radicalising, and that of their immediate and broader context. When we talk about families and front liners, we can see that these family members and professionals will come into contact with this vulnerable person with varying degrees of frequency.

- Vulnerable person
- Family, peers, school environment (daily contact)
- Community, including religious leaders, police, youth workers, sports clubs (frequent contact)
- Policy makers, journalists (influence upon social context)

Each ring within this circle model has a different kind of contact with the vulnerable person. Changes in behaviour, peer group or ideology are more obvious to family members or professionals in the innermost circle than the outermost. A young person's parents, for example, are able to see that their son has made drastic changes to his appearance and has a new set of friends. A police officer, who is seeing the boy for the first time will not be able to see how much he has changed within the last year – and this change is crucial. That's why it's so important to realise that in order to really grasp what might be going on, contact, communication and transparency between and within the respective circles is vital.

*Fear is an important element in radicalisation
and it is experienced on both sides.*

4 PROFESSIONALS TO INCLUDE IN THE COMMUNITY APPROACH NETWORK

The scientific literature about radicalisation has a lot to offer when it comes to suggestions about who to invite. An approach which includes a broad spectrum of professionals is recognised as highly valuable (Schmid 2013). Police officers, especially community officers, play an obvious role. In some regions, police personnel with a special responsibility for counterterrorism are already appointed. Other law enforcement personnel, for example prison warders and parole officers, could also usefully be included, as prisons can be an incubation point for radicalisation (Neumann and Rogers 2007).

TERRA focusses its attention on young people. Research shows that young males between the ages of 15 and 25 are the demographic group most likely to radicalise (Silke 2008 and Christmann 2012). Teachers and other youth workers, such as social workers, professionals involved in addressing youth unemployment or school dropout rates, those working at youth clubs, social centres or sports clubs may all be interesting for a community based approach. As a search for identity and citizenship is also proven to be crucial in a radicalisation process (de Wolf and Doosje 2010, de Koster and Houtman 2008, Moghaddam 2005) teachers of certain subjects, such as history, mother tongue and foreign language, comparative religion and personal and social education or any other subject dealing with citizenship can be especially relevant (Staub 2007).

While political groups play a significant role in radicalisation in Europe, religious extremism must also be taken into account. As a result, religious leaders can very usefully be included in this community network.

Smaller scale initiatives which can also play an active role may also exist in your area. Examples of these may include organisations based around demographic groups or active groups already involved in anti-violence or anti-racism campaigns.

PROFESSIONALS WHO
YOUR NETWORK COULD INCLUDE:

- Police officers
- Prison warders
- Parole officers
- Teachers
- Other youth workers
- Social workers
- Religious leaders

BERTJAN DOOSJE
PROFESSOR OF SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY
CHAIR OF RADICALISATION STUDIES
UNIVERSITY OF AMSTERDAM, NL

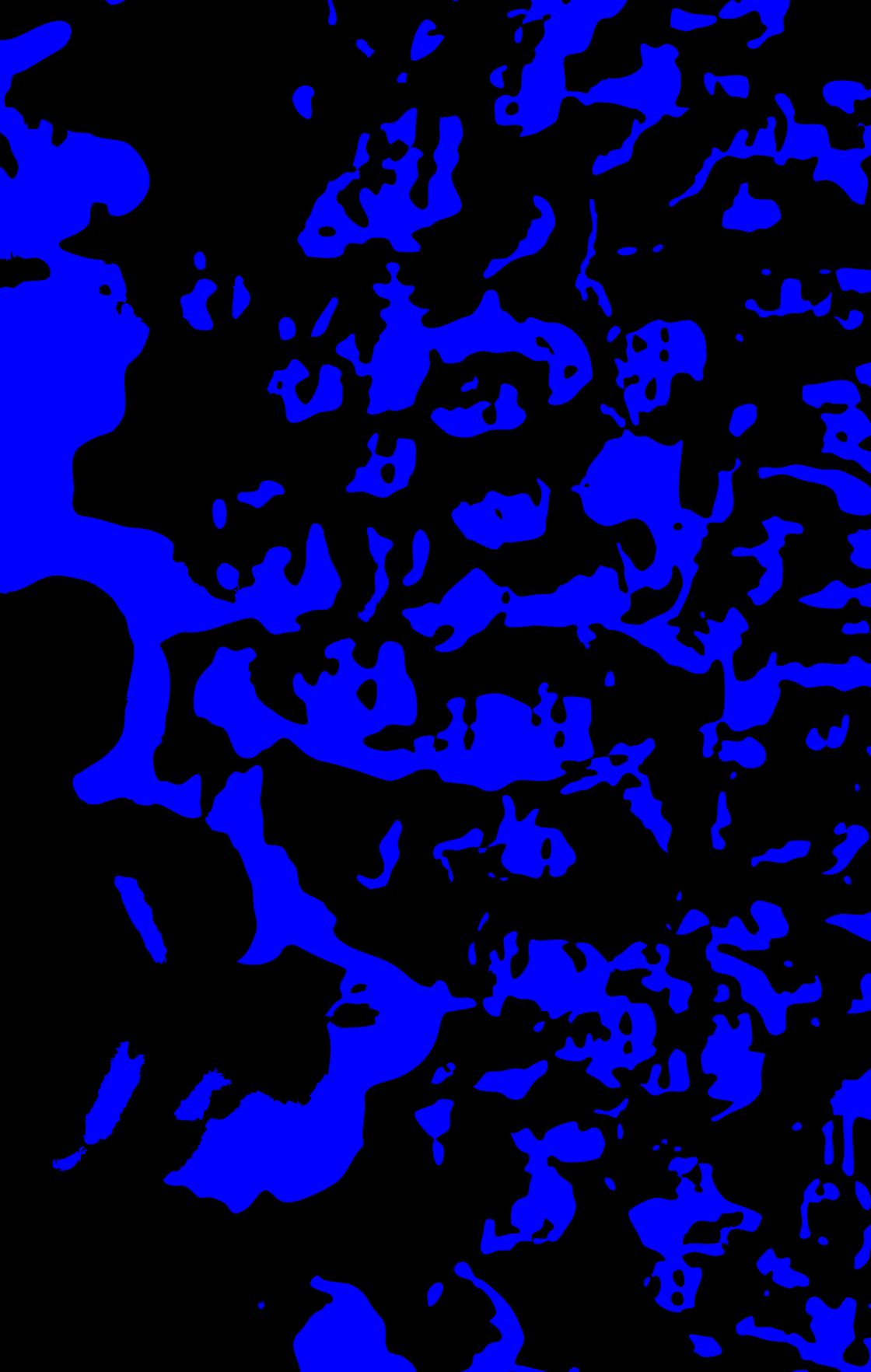# 5 SETTING UP
A COMMUNITY APPROACH SYSTEM

We advise that local governments take the following steps:

- Inventorise whether a network – either formal or informal – already exists within your area. If it does, check that the profiles suggested below are represented within it. In many cities, networks are already in place to deal with youth criminality, troubled neighbourhoods, or comparable problems. These networks could be vital in supporting an initiative to recognise and address radicalisation.

- If no such network exists as yet, act as the initiator.

- Identify whether, within the area under your jurisdiction, there are "hot spots" for radicalisation. This may be a school, place of worship, or residential area in which a racial, ethnic, religious or political divide is acutely felt. If such a "hot spot" does fall under your jurisdiction, ensure that it is well represented from all of the professional groups within your network meetings.

- Identify key figures that are well placed to identify vulnerable individuals. Try to embrace as many disciplines which may be connected to this process as possible, and include projects which may be specific to your area. Example of the profiles of professionals you may want to include is given below.

- Be prepared to act in a facilitating role. Initiate contact between these key figures, and invite them to an opening meeting. TERRA's video materials and presentation might provide you with some assistance in presenting the aim of the initiative.

- Check the law around the exchange of professional information in your country. Is it legally viable for the network to operate in this way? What are the restrictions?

- Request that participants in the group respect the confidential nature of the information exchanged there.

- Ensure that this group continues to meet on a regular basis. Where possible, facilitate this as much as possible with practical support, such as providing a location for meetings to take place.

- Function as a facilitator at these meetings. Ensure that any reports of concern about an individual or group are clearly communicated to all of the professionals involved in the initiative, so that efforts to support that individual in an effort to formulate a positive identity through attention, communication and help can be coordinated.

SUBJECTS WHICH CAN USEFULLY BE DISCUSSED DURING NETWORK MEETINGS

- Individual cases which may be a cause for concern;

- How the family of this individual can best be supported;

- Social groups which may be potentially vulnerable to radicalisation;

- Radical elements in the area, for example a recruiter or criminal group who may be connected to radical ideology;

- Incidents of racism, discrimination or targeted violence which nourish grievances within a community and can feed radicalisation;

- Reintegration of former radicals;

- Awareness raising and the use of victim narratives in education, as a means of prevention.

In order to recognise and address the problem of radicalisation, a broad and holistic approach is needed. A network which can share its concerns about a vulnerable or radicalising individual will be well positioned to address the problem in your community.

The material you can find in this Toolkit and online on www.terratoolkit.eu has been designed for professionals who come into contact through their work with a population which may be vulnerable to radicalisation. It explains why this subject may be of relevance to you, how you might notice if this issue was developing, and what you can do about it. Manuals which contain a fuller picture of this problem and an approach to solving it, and short fact sheets, can both be downloaded from the website free of charge.