



# Participation

Evidences from the field on  
risk assessment methodologies  
and practices

Deliverable D6.5

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# Deliverable Information

<b>Grant Agreement No.</b>	<b>962547</b>
<b>Project acronym</b>	<b>PARTICIPATION</b>
<b>Project title</b>	Analyzing and Preventing Extremism via Participation
<b>Project timeframe and duration</b>	1.12.2020–30.11.2023 (36 months)
<b>WP</b>	<i>WP6- EARLY DETECTION AND SITUATION ANALYSIS</i>
<b>Task</b>	T 6.4
<b>Deliverable</b>	<i>D6.5 Evidences from the field on risk assessment methodologies and practices</i>
<b>Status</b>	<i>Final version</i>
<b>Version number</b>	3.3
<b>Deliverable responsible</b>	<i>Claudia Annovi - CeSI</i>
<b>Dissemination level</b>	
<b>Due date</b>	August 2023
<b>Date of submission</b>	30 August 2023

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## Version History

<b>Version</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Description</b>
1.1	12/06/2023	Markos Shangoyan	Submission to Task Leaders of Report on Polish Social lab
1.2	23/06/2023	Nina Czyzweska, Magdalena El Ghamari	Submission to Task Leaders of Report on Polish Social lab

1.3	14/07/2023	Claudia Annovi	Submission to University of Catania for revision of Report on Italian Social lab
2.1	3/08/2023	Dana Dolghin	Submission to task leader of the final version of the report on the results of the survey and on the International Social lab
3.1	9/08/2023	Claudia Annovi	Creation of the final deliverable and submission to EFD for final revision
3.2	25/08/2023	Claudia Annovi, Davide Lauretta, Francesco Farinelli	Final Deliverable
3.3	30/08/2023	Claudia Annovi	Submission of the deliverable to project leaders

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# Summary of the Project

The overarching objective of PARTICIPATION is to identify future perspectives and trends of polarisation, extremism and radicalisation as well as the social composition of the group at risk in Europe by a participatory and provisional methodological strategy, that permits to co-create with social actors, stakeholders and policy-makers effective strategies for prevention. So, the specific objectives of PARTICIPATION are:

**1. Multidimensional modeling to understand current and future trends of extremism, polarisation and radicalisation:** to develop a holistic multidimensional model based on participatory fieldwork and mixed-method approaches, in order to better understand the different drivers of violent radical ideologies, how these are organized in different pathways and, complementary to that, which mechanisms, factors and strategies contribute to support non- radical attitudes and behaviours, nowadays and in the future.

Sub-objective (a): targets: analysing and discussing, using a strategy based on the principles of action research involving young people in different parts of Europe, the socio-psychological mechanisms, such as social marginalization, alienation and polarization, that lead to radicalisation, with a special focus on gender, sexuality and regional differences. These objectives will be achieved by milestones M2 ("requirement of analysis and methodologies") [month 6], and by M6 ("Models on radicalisation and extremism") [month 35].

**2. Communication dynamics:** to develop an analysis of extremism, polarisation and radicalisation on-line dynamics by ICT tools (as semantic analysis) and to co-create with the involvement of civil society strategies to contrast and preventing these phenomena. This goal will be achieved by milestone M3 ("Communication analysis") [month 9] and D.4.5. ("Analysing different communication strategies against extremism and radicalisation") [month 25], D.4.6. ("Projecting counter-narrative campaigns involving young people") [month 33], D.4.7 ("Methodological tools for evaluating counter-narrative campaigns and validation") [month 35].

**3. Co-creation:** field-work to analyse and to generate with the involvement of the social actors in different social spheres, strategies of contrasting polarisation, extremism and radicalisation. Thus, the research processes supporting the achievement of the following sub-objectives:

Sub-objective (b): Resilience: developing communicative tools, education approaches and community-based strategies, with the involvement and cooperation of practitioners, stakeholders and young people (with particular attention to gender balance), in order to improve the resilience of the communities and people at risk.

Sub-objective (c): Empowerment: to improve the awareness of young people and communities as well as the society at a whole, toward the risks of extremism, hate discourses and radical ideologies, contrasting the processes of marginalization, self-marginalization and alienation of ethnic, religious, gender and sexualities minorities.

4. **Tools:** to develop methodologies and policies recommendations for improving the action of policy-makers also on the basis of the previous field-work.

Sub-objective (d): Methodologies for supporting decision-makers: to realize databases and a systematic set of indexes and early-warnings, based on previous holistic multidimensional model and fieldworks as well as a testing phase on its practical usability involving decision-makers, in order to support them in decisions, improving effectiveness and social acceptability.

Sub-objective (e): Policies recommendations: developing a set of policies recommendations with the participation of stakeholders, policy-makers and targets, in order to optimize strategies and interventions against extremism, hate cultures and radicalisation, at micro, meso and macro- level of the governance process.

# Contents

<i>List of abbreviations.....</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Executive summary.....</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>Introduction.....</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>Methodology.....</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>Ethics .....</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>Results of the survey on Risk Assessment Tools.....</i>	<i>16</i>
Introduction .....	16
Complex definitions of RATs .....	17
Targets of existing RATs: environments, target groups, etc. ....	18
Types of institutional existing RATs in European countries.....	19
Experts/First-line practitioners involved in RATs in prison and in society .....	21
RATs targeting young people: strengths and weaknesses.....	22
RATs focusing on virtual environment: strengths and weaknesses .....	22
Main gaps and challenges of RATs .....	23
<i>Results of the national and international social labs .....</i>	<i>24</i>
<i>Italian social lab on Risk Assessment Tools.....</i>	<i>26</i>
Introduction .....	26
Main challenges of Risk Assessment Tools: insights from participants .....	28
The importance of considering the context in RATs .....	28
The issue of ideological biases and stereotyping in RATs .....	29
Main gaps and challenges of Risk Assessment Tools .....	29
Main challenges for first-line practitioners in charge of assessing the risks .....	31
Examples of best practices .....	32

List of 5 main challenges or weaknesses of RATs participants agreed on.....	33
New pathways for improving Risk Assessment Tools .....	33
Design and Implementation phase .....	33
5 actions to improve Risk Assessment in prisons.....	34
Conclusions.....	35
<i>Polish social lab on Risk Assessment Tools .....</i>	<i>36</i>
Introduction .....	36
Main challenges of Risk Assessment Tools: insights from participants.....	37
The importance of considering the context in RATs .....	38
The issue of ideological biases and stereotyping in RATs .....	38
Main gaps and challenges of Risk Assessment Tools .....	39
Main challenges for first-line practitioners in charge of assessing the risks .....	39
List of 5 main challenges or weaknesses of RATs participants agreed on.....	41
New pathways for improving Risk Assessment Tools .....	41
Explanation of the Design and Implementation phase .....	41
Actions to improve Risk Assessment in prisons .....	41
Conclusions.....	44
<i>Greek social lab on Risk Assessment Tools.....</i>	<i>45</i>
Introduction .....	45
Main challenges of Risk Assessment Tools: insights from participants.....	46
The importance of considering the context in RATs (in prison) .....	47
The issue of ideological biases and stereotyping in RATs .....	48
Main gaps and challenges of Risk Assessment Tools .....	48
Main challenges for first-line practitioners in charge of assessing the risks .....	48
Examples of best practices .....	49
List of 5 main challenges or weaknesses of RATs participants agreed on.....	49
New pathways for improving Risk Assessment Tools.....	51
Conclusions.....	52
<i>International social lab on Risk Assessment Tools .....</i>	<i>53</i>
Introduction .....	53
Complex definitions of RATs .....	54

Targets of existing RATs: environments, target groups etc. ....	55
Types of institutional existing RATs in European countries.....	55
Experts/First-line practitioners involved in RATs in prison and in society.....	56
RATs focusing on virtual environment: strengths and weaknesses .....	56
Main gaps and challenges of RATs .....	57
<i>Conclusions</i> .....	59
<i>Annex I</i> .....	62



# List of abbreviations

Acronym Description	
ARIS	Religious Fundamentalism Scale
CAW	Centre for General Welfare
CLB	(Student Guidance Center, Centra voor Leerlingbegeleiding
COMPAS	Correctional Offender Management Profiling for Alternative Sanctions
D	Deliverable
DRAVy	Herramienta para la detección de la radicalización violenta de etiología yihadista
ERG22+	Extremism Risk Guidelines
FLP	First-Line Practitioners
IR46	Islamic Radicalisation Model 46
IVP	Identifying Vulnerable People
LEA	Law Enforcement Agency
MEM	Militant Extremism Mindset
MLG	Multi-level Guidelines
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NIC	Nucleo Investigativo Centrale
PARTICIPATION	Analyzing and Preventing Extremism Via Participation
P/CVE	Prevention and Countering Violent Extremism
PHA	Preliminary Threat Analysis
QPIRP	Activism and Radicalism Intention Scales Questionnaire
R2PRIS	Radicalization Prevention In Prison

RADAR-Ite	Radar of Islamist Extremism
RADAR-REX	Radar of Right-Wing Extremist Milieu
RAT	Risk Assessment Tool
RRAP	Radicalisation Risk Assessment in Prisons Toolset
RWE	Right-Wing Extremism
S.M.A.R.T.	Specific, Measurable, Assignable, Realistic and Time-related
SAVE	Structured Assessment of Violent Extremism
SAVRY	Structure Assessment of Violence Risk in Youth
SPJ	Structured Professional Judgement
SQAT	Significance Quest Assessment Test
T	Task
TRAP-18	Terrorist Radicalization Assessment Protocol
UPJ	Unstructured Professional Judgement
VAF	Vulnerability Assessment Framework
VERA-2R	Violent Extremism Risk Assessment 2 Revised
YASI	Youth Assessment and Screening Instrument
YLS/CMI	Youth Level of Service / Case Management Inventory

# Executive summary

The present report collects the work done within task 6.4 *“Assessing the risk on the field: a survey involving experts and practitioners”* of PARTICIPATION Project from January 2023 to August 2023. The main goal of this task was to qualitatively refine the research done in D6.1 (*“Report on methodologies for risk assessment”*) regarding Risk Assessment Tools and methodologies in various European countries by adding a comparative perspective, primary data, and a critical set of best practices and lessons learned from the field. With this purpose, the task partners have gathered the perspectives and insights from different types of experts both through surveys and social labs, organised both at national and international levels. This final deliverable hence attempts to fill the gaps of deliverable 6.1 by providing new insights and recommendations from those experts that study, implement, or create Risk Assessment Tools and methodologies for radicalisation and extremism.

The present report is structured in four main parts. The first part consists of a preliminary introduction that explains how the work has been carried out and the linked ethical issues that have been considered throughout the task. Secondly, the first chapter is devoted to the analysis of the results of the international survey that have been submitted to experts in various European countries from January 2023 to March 2023. The third chapter hence includes the results of four different social labs with experts that have been carried out both at national level – in Italy, Greece, and Poland – and international level from May 2023 to June 2023. Finally, the fourth chapter gathers the conclusions of the entire deliverable.

Broadly speaking, the activities point at some common problems in different parts of Europe and the survey and the social labs confirmed them. During the first survey several participants insisted on the lack of trainings of first-line practitioners working with Risk Assessment Tools, especially in prisons, as well as the significant problem of ideological biases of these methodologies themselves. These features appeared to be recurring in the subsequent social labs. In all the workshops, experts stressed that the quality of the training of those in charge of implementing RATs is rather low – both for financial issues and time constraints – and that stigmatisation and ideological biases, especially towards Muslim people, are still common and prevent to consider properly other types of contemporary extremism.

At the same time, it is interesting to notice that the great majority of respondents to the survey and participants to the social labs focused on proper education and trainings, a more holistic and multi-level approach to risk assessment (hence including different types of professional figures) and a perspective based on “dynamic security” as key elements that might help improve risk assessment in various settings.

# Introduction

The aim of this deliverable is to collect the results of the activities carried out throughout task 6.4 *“Assessing the risk on the field: a survey involving experts and practitioners”* of PARTICIPATION Project from January 2023 to August 2023. The main goal of this task was to enrich and refine the literature review conducted in D6.1 (*“Report on methodologies for risk assessment”*) regarding Risk Assessment Tools (RATs) and methodologies for radicalisation and violent extremism with the insights, perspectives, and recommendations of different experts and stakeholders that use, study, or create these instruments.

As pointed out also in deliverable 6.1, assessing the risk of violent extremism represents a fundamental step to avoid violence to escalate, and risk assessment methodologies specifically allow the stakeholders involved in the process of early detection and management of violent extremists to prevent possible violent attacks faster and better.

Broadly speaking, risk assessment is the process of identifying the main variables empirically known that might lead individuals or groups to commit violence (Cornwall & Molenkamp, 2018; Cook, 2014). The purpose of risk assessment is hence to detect radicalised or violence-prone people and avoid them engage in violent offenses. Consequently, Risk Assessment Tools consist of a set of indicators and methodologies aimed at detecting behaviours, ideologies or mindsets that might reveal the tendency or will to commit violence.

Against this backdrop, PARTICIPATION partners that have taken part to this task drew on the results of task 6.1 literature to create a set of activities aiming at collecting the perspectives and insights of different experts on Risk Assessment Tools, their strengths and weaknesses and how they might be adapted to new challenges. With this purpose, task 6.4 consisted of two main sets of activities:

- *An international survey for experts and stakeholders to explore their perspectives on Risk Assessment Tools and methodologies;*
- *3 national social labs (Italy, Greece, and Poland) and 1 international social lab to validate the results of the survey and discuss together with various types of experts the main gaps and weaknesses of Risk Assessment Tools and methodologies in different settings.*

The international and national nature of these activities had the objective to investigate the issue both from an international perspective and within specific countries and create complementary conclusions and results.

# Methodology

Project's partners selected potential participants both for the survey and the social labs from the following categories:

- Institutions;
- Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs) and prison staff;
- Prevention and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE) experts;
- Representatives of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) working with/on RATs;
- Scholars and researchers.

The goal of including different types of first-line practitioners and experts was to provide different perspectives on the same issue and foster a dialogue that, besides the objectives of this project, might also produce new forms of cooperation and collaboration.

The survey included 20 open-ended and closed questions that were collectively elaborated by PARTICIPATION partners drawing on the results of the literature review carried out in task 6.1. These questions mainly focused on Risk Assessment Tools, the positive and negative effects of multi-agency and multi-level governance approaches in RATs, their effects on programs of prevention and deradicalisation and how they should be improved.

The results of the survey were fundamental to elaborate three social labs (2.3 hours each) that might investigate further these topics and gather new recommendations from experts and first-line practitioners. The social labs were based on the guidelines provided in D3.2 "Social labs: A shared participatory methodology for fieldwork" of PARTICIPATION project and should have included 10 to 15 participants. Therefore, partners agreed on developing the workshop into the following steps:

- Discussion and diagnosis phase (1 hour)
- Design and Implementation phase (1 hour)
- Reflection and feedback phase (20 min.)

(15 minutes break + 10 minutes introduction)

According to the work plan created by the partners, the “Design and implementation phase” should have been envisaged splitting up participants in two groups according to their professional field – namely, experts working on RATs in prison facilities and those working in society. However, in the majority of cases the limited number of participants and their similar professional background have prompted partners to keep the group together.<sup>1</sup>

## Ethics

In this task, partners have complied with two types of ethical requirements.

In the case of the survey, partners included an explanatory introduction focusing on the general objective of the project, of the task, and of the survey. Moreover, consent to use the answers was asked and partners insisted on the anonymity of this phase – hence, when contacting the experts, they were informed that their names would not have been present in the final deliverable, but only their job and their nationality.

In the case of the social labs, informed consent forms were sent before the workshops and participants were asked to fill in and sign them (see Annex 1).

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<sup>1</sup> Further information regarding the methodology used in the survey and the social labs is provided in the short introduction to each part.

# Results of the survey on Risk Assessment Tools<sup>2</sup>

## Introduction

This section expands and consolidates findings outlined in the deliverable 6.1 “Methodologies and tools for risk assessment on radicalisation and violent extremism”, a desk-research on Risk Assessment Tools (RATs) at national level in Greece, Poland, The Netherlands, United Kingdom, and Romania. It does so by incorporating findings from a survey on RATs that was distributed among practitioners and experts in the first half of 2023 (January-March). The purpose of this methodology was to corroborate the information on how Risk Assessment Tools (RATs) addressing extremist individuals and incidents are conceived and implemented in different European countries and different environments (prisons, workspaces, schools, etc.) with the insights and recommendations of experts, first-line practitioners, authorities and other stakeholders from different environments and fields. The assessment of risk for violence has two objectives. The first objective is to evaluate an individual to determine the risk that they will commit acts of violence. The second objective is to develop appropriate interventions to mitigate risk.

PARTICIPATION partners selected potential respondents for the surveys selecting them from the following categories:

- Institutions;
- LEAs and prison staff;
- P/CVE experts;
- Representatives of NGOs working with/on RATs;
- Scholars and researchers.

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<sup>2</sup> The part on the results of the questionnaire is authored by Dana Dolghin (PATRIR).



The focus of the survey was Risk Assessment Tools, the positive and negative effects of multi-agency and multi-level governance approaches in RATs, their effects on programs of prevention and deradicalisation and how they should be improved. Twenty open-ended questions and closed questions were addressed to respondents. The consortium drew up a long list of approximately sixty experts across Europe, primarily those working in P/CVE, conflict resolution, research on these topics. Based on initial invitations, we have set a pool of thirty-one experts. These come from Belgium (3), Denmark (1), Greece (7), Czechia (1), Germany (1), Italy (6), Poland (3), Portugal (2), and Romania (7). Questions were formulated in order to understand where initial conclusions of D6.1 were justified, how these can be explained in practice and what is the reach of these insights.

## Complex definitions of RATs

The findings confirmed many of the issues pointed out by experts in the field elsewhere in literature, namely that the definitions and the terms used are often fluid and interchangeable and that this affects the design and functioning of RATs.

Answers show that the dimensions and the structures of RATs are perceived both as processes and tools. One respondent in Poland mentions that RATs are a process that can «identify potential hazards, one that entails needs assessments AND tools». One of the respondents refers to «qualitative VERA 2R after legally binding sentencing as a qualitative tool for risk AND NEEDS assessment informing the regular rehab/social reintegration planning». Another respondent from Poland discussed «A systematic, automated or even Specific, Measurable, Assignable, Realistic and Time-related (S.M.A.R.T.) based process that involves identifying, analyzing and controlling hazards and risks, performed by competent persons, to determine measures to eliminate the risk for Violent Extremism and to develop prospective/appropriate interventions to attenuate risk». Similarly, one respondent argues «the assessment model is supported by a thorough analysis and holistic assessment of both the person and the concern reported - including an analysis of risk and threat as well as an analysis of well-being and resilience».

The other categories of definitions looked only at functionality. A minority of the answers (5/25) pointed out that RATs should be quantitative and qualitative or only qualitative, «or risk assessment, state police uses its own quantitative, phenomenon-specific tools». In the same line of functionality, one respondent mentioned risk

assessment techniques include what-if analysis, failure tree analysis, and hazard operability analysis».

Another element of the definition that some respondents focused on (5/25) is that of the span/reach of RATs. These are different scales: one answer mentions «tools for risk assessment gather and organise data on P/CVE in a way that aids professionals in the rehabilitation and reintegration of offenders». Other answers point to the necessary broadness of the definition of RATs, as they are «method[s] ideally used during different stages of the legal process to evaluate the risk a certain individual poses to society». In fact, the answers point to RATs in the context in which they operate - namely their specificity for probation services. One respondent made the case that this is valuable to be able to classify risks and use a «tool that allows the identification of a risk level (usually as the result of information from multiple dimensions) of committing an extremist act. The outcome will usually consider three risk levels (low, medium, high)». At the same time, the responders strongly agreed or agreed (20 out of 25) with the notion that prejudice and stereotyping of minorities is a serious risk in the development, testing and implementation of Risk Assessment Tools.

## Targets of existing RATs: environments, target groups, etc.

The environment of RATs was the primary focus of the survey. Eleven, so 35% of the participants in the survey, responded to the question about the environment in which RATs are implemented. Out of these 35%, 63% indicated prisons, and 36% find them applicable for schools and other types of public environments. Most answers also do not recognise the existence of relevant RATs in the online environment. The one example listed by one respondent is the Multi-platform Hate Speech Monitoring. No answers flagged social media or the digital space as areas of interest.

In relation to the target groups of RATs, most responses of the survey referenced youth (62%), 58% referenced individuals in prisons, and 58% radicalisation and extremism. One respondent in Belgium indicated three main targets of such projects: young people in society at large, extremist individuals in societies at large, extremist individuals in prisons. In Italy, most of the responders singled out potential violent Islamist individuals (in prison), potential violent far-right/far-left individuals (in prison), extremist individuals at large (in prison), extremist and radicalised individuals. In Czechia, the respondents indicated that tools are used for potential violent Islamist individuals (in prison), potential violent far-right/far-left individuals (in prison), extremist individuals at large (in prison), young people showing first signs of radicalisation (in prison), extremist and

radicalised individuals, individuals at large (in society), young people showing first-signs of radicalisation (in society), potential violent Islamist individuals (in prison), potential violent far-right/far-left individuals (in prison), extremist individuals at large (in prison), young people showing first signs of radicalisation (in prison), extremist and radicalised individuals.

At the same time, the majority of answers (17 out of 25) agreed with the assessment that information is often 'classified' and not always available to facilitate collaboration between different institutions and law enforcement agencies. To the question whether prison officers and practitioners working with extremist detainees (e.g., psychologists) are not adequately prepared and supported. 9 out of 25 answers showed strong agreement, 6 out of 25 answers showed agreement. Only a minority disagreed with the statement. A majority agreed with the statement (15 out of 25) that effective risk assessment methodologies can imply violation of privacy as a frequent side effect. A minority, 3 out of 25 disagreed with this statement. A slight minority (11 out of 25) answered affirmatively to the question on evaluation biases regarding specific individual cases is very frequent, both in the construction of the RATs (Risk Assessment Tools) and its implementation.

## Types of institutional existing RATs in European countries

Regarding the most used RATs, during the survey, 5 out of 25 answers refer to TRAP-18, VERA-2R, ERG 22+, which were mentioned as the main RATs in Europe. Similarly, 11 out of 25 referred to +2R, ERG 22+ and mentioned them specifically for prisons. One expert in Poland argues there are no assessment tools looking at radicalisation. The expert mentions VERA2R, R2PRIS, and TRAP as good examples. The reporter from Portugal mentions Structured Assessment of Violent Extremism (SAVE) in Australia; Terrorist Radicalisation Assessment Protocol (TRAP-18) in the US; Radicalisation Risk Assessment in Prisons Toolset (RRAP) developed by R2PRIS Consortium (it's a toolset of RA instruments which are applied in some EU MSs, but not all of them); Violent Extremism Risk Assessment (VERA-2R), which is the most widely-used; Radar of Islamist Extremism (RADAR-iTE) in Germany; Multi-level Guidelines (MLG) in Canada; Tool for the detection of violent radicalisation of jihadist aetiology [Herramienta para la detección de la radicalización violenta de etiología yihadista (DRaVy, by its acronym in Spanish)] in Spain; Monopoly on Truth Scale in Spain; Militant Extremism Mindset (MEM); Religious Fundamentalism Scale; Activism and Radicalism Intention Scales (ARIS); Questionnaire on the Perception of Islamist Radicalism in Prisons (QPIRP) in Spain; Islamic Radicalisation Model 46 (IR46) in The Netherlands; Vulnerability

Assessment Framework (VAF) in the UK; Significance Quest Assessment Test (SQAT) in the US; The Radar in Australia; Radar of Right-Wing Extremist Milieu (RADAR-Rex) in Germany; Identifying Vulnerable People (IVP) in the UK. One respondent from Portugal also mentions PREVI-A in Spain as an instrument to monitor youth radicalisation.

For RATs used in prisons, the same reporter in Portugal mentions Terrorist Radicalisation Assessment Protocol (TRAP-18), Radicalisation Risk Assessment in Prisons Toolset (RRAP), Violent Extremism Risk Assessment (VERA-2R), Extremist risk Guidelines (ERG22+), Multi-level Guidelines (MLG), Tool for the detection of violent radicalisation of jihadist aetiology [Herramienta para la detección de la radicalización violenta de etiología yihadista (DRaVy, by its acronym in Spanish)], Activism and Radicalism Intention Scales (ARIS), Survey on the Perception of Islamist Radicalism in Prisons (QPIRP), Significance Quest Assessment Test (SQAT), and The Radar. In Czechia, the SAIRO analytic tool which is used in prisons in CZE for detection of extremism and radicalisation process among inmates. It is used by specific prison staff (e.g., tutors, Prevention and complaints unit members, psychologists etc.).

One respondent in Germany referenced RATs used in prison to be the main area of intervention of RATs. In Germany, the respondent singles out ERG 22+ concerning informal actors actively using RATs, and references psychologists, which, following the SPJ approach, is exclusively preferred. For Italy, answers indicate the existence of informal RATs. In Brescia, one respondent refers to «pilot programmes to address inmates' feelings of mis-inclusion and vulnerability that may give way to radicalising paths». One respondent argues that «prison operators are provided with risk indicators developed within the European project TRaInTRAINING in order to detect any radicalization processes». He describes the process according to which after identification, a team of penitentiary experts evaluates and analyses the situation in-depth, before results are shared with the Central Investigative Unit of the Penitentiary Police. For the Netherlands, one respondent names the standing working group of experts working on terrorism and violent extremism who share views and meet regularly to address potential cases of violent radicalisation inside the prison system. The respondent in Belgium mentioned Radix (developed by the city of Antwerp in context of youngsters departing to Syria and Iraq). With this specific respondent, the tool referenced was Echelle d'inquiétude. Young offenders' programs were outlined as Youth Level of Service / Case Management Inventory - YLS/CMI in Portugal.

## Experts/First-line practitioners involved in RATs in prison and in society

During the survey, 48% of respondents answered 'yes' when asked if they are aware if RATs are used in their national contexts, while 24% argued there is a probability that this happened but were not aware of the specificities for their country. For example, one response from Belgium points to social and public spaces (e.g., schools, workplace, etc) where RATs are used, specifically targeting youth at risk of radicalisation. In relation to the type of actors involved in implementing Risk Assessment Tools in society at large (schools, workplace) the respondent referenced mobile services or teams. The respondent in Belgium indicated penitentiary services (including penitentiary psychosocial services), federal police, intelligence agencies using RATs in prison. In the case of post-release, also general psychosocial services and judicial secretaries were staff singled out as relevant for the use of RATs. About actors that are informally part of the response to P/CVE and using RATs, the respondent in Belgium points to a relative freedom of engaging various partners, such as Centre for General Welfare (CAW), education professionals (Student Guidance Center, Centra voor Leerlingbegeleiding - CLB), youth workers, civil society organisations, religious representatives. For Greece, one respondent mentions informal RATs implemented in different settings, in education and other social settings, in Greece and other countries, because the professionals have received similar training and capacity building activities. There are therefore reports of using it as such. In Greece, psychosocial professionals are those involved in implementing Risk Assessment Tools in society at large (schools, workplace). Also in Greece, one respondent flagged correctional officers, prison governors, psychologists, social workers, criminologists as the ones equipped to use such tools although he did not know to name any implemented. In Poland, Risk Assessment Tools in prison are used by psychologists, educators, first-line practitioners, teachers, and community workers. One respondent in Poland mentioned RRAP tools, with participation of NGOs and further trainings for people working in the prison system. The same respondent in Poland mentioned first-line prison officers and management, all with different kinds of content and perspectives, working in prisons. For personnel working in the social system, education and the society as a whole, the respondent in Poland mentioned teachers and management all with different kinds of content and perspectives. In Portugal, the same reporter refers mainly to psychologists, but the respondent in Portugal argues it depends on the tool (SPJ or UPJ/Non-SPJ). There are actuarial tools following an UPJ/Non-SPJ approach which can be used (and are being used) by any professional (incl. prison officers). The only aspect pertaining to its use is

taking part in mandatory training (i.e., no specific background required). Prison staff, professionals were nominated as working in Italian prisons. In Italy, Mental Health professionals, LEAs, Security Agencies were nominated as active actors in social, educational sectors at large. In Greek prisons, one respondent flags professionals using these tools as psychologists and/or psychiatrists. However, the same respondent points out that trained professionals with frequent contact with inmates (social workers, prison officers) should also be involved as well as managers (because of the organisational factors that also play a role). In Italy, Risk Assessment Tools are developed for most categories analysed: potential violent Islamist individuals (in society), potential violent far-right/far-left individuals (in society), extremist. In Denmark, in relation to programs targeting the society at large, the respondent mentioned Municipalities (department of social service, employment services, children and youth, etc.), prison, psychiatry as main target groups.

One respondent in Greece mentioned that apart from a dedicated task force (Center for Security Studies, also comprising training programs) in the competent Ministry of Citizen Protection, there are ad hoc/empirical initiatives of public organisations and individuals, no holistic approach is in place.

## RATs targeting young people: strengths and weaknesses

The category of youth did not stand out during the survey. However, concerning training prison staff, one respondent in Greece mentions there is training using RATs in projects implemented by NGOs and that specifically targets engaging youth, Research Center and international organisations have designed the training to be focused on how to recognize the risks of radicalisation in prisons and what to do for preventing it in terms of segregation, risk behaviours. In Greece, RATs used for youth are Youth Assessment and Screening Instrument (YASI) and Structure Assessment of Violence Risk in Youth (SAVRY).

## RATs focusing on virtual environment: strengths and weaknesses

Online environments are the focus of RATs, but few respondents provided data on this. However, when discussing managing privacy in prison environments – where staff is at risk of radicalisation but also the main observers of red flags of radicalisation - a concern was expressed about maintaining issues of privacy in the context of this overlap.

## Main gaps and challenges of RATs

Main challenges have been identified during the survey and during the validation workshop, and most of them are common to all European countries investigated.

- **RATs focus on jihadi extremism preponderantly.** This is a major challenge because it does not recognise the extent of the far-right or hybrid phenomena of radicalisation.
- **Lack of training of professionals in prisons and other categories of First-line Practitioners, which also leads to increased biases.** Officers seem unprepared to recognise a red flag, and also they lack cultural sensitive information to prevent biases and stigmatisation. The preparation of officers is adequate. Not all institutions have the possibility to properly train staff. In Italy, there are active steps taken to provide information awareness and cultural sensitivity curriculums of training, also by teaming up with organisations that also represent other cultural backgrounds.
- **Biases.** Some of the issues identified is that subjects (especially Jihadi) are treated as foreigners to a context, although otherwise socialised in that national context and factors such as cultural background and context (systemic racism, inequality etc) are often ignored. Biases are instrumentalised politically, can be manipulated and employed with nefarious purposes by various actors.
- **Lack of research and consolidation of definitions.** Lacking scientific evidence demonstrating advantages.
- **Lack of cooperation between relevant agencies,** diverse and hybrid actors who can be employed in these responses.
- **Securitisation approaches continue to aggravate biases,** with restrictive perspectives in available resources and programming. Primarily, it means that focusing on inmates' strengths and opportunities towards their rehabilitation and (generally) not being applied longitudinally (i.e., prison, probation, community) due to many factors (e.g., information sharing concerns; lack of trust by governmental orgs in NGOs/CSOs - of course depending on the country).
- **Lack of in-depth understanding of the prison system and local context,** which potentially also leads to more positive bias towards Right-Wing Extremism (RWE), and thus not measuring Islamist and right-wing extremists by the same



standard. Problematic standards of prison as a prevents focuses of radicalisation or anti-radicalisation. Prison overcrowding and the poor conditions of inmates, thus the emergency conditions of prisons in Italy do not facilitate prevention or de-radicalisation paths. This is also connected with the lack of focus on rehabilitation efforts. Multidisciplinary approaches are needed.

- **Lack of data**, for instance a system of index cases – nationally and transnationally (affected by the nature of indicators) and missing monitoring systems.

## Results of the national and international social labs<sup>3</sup>

As explained in the Introduction, the national and international social labs were designed to foster the discussion among experts from different professional fields that work with, study, or implement Risk Assessment Tools and gather their insights and recommendations on this topic. All four social labs followed the same structure, corresponding to:

- Discussion and diagnosis phase (1 hour)
- Design and Implementation phase (1 hour)
- Reflection and feedback phase (20 min.)

After a brief presentation of the results of the survey, the goal of the first phase was to foster the discussion in order to identify, state and agree on specific challenges of Risk Assessment Tools. For this reason, the first phase took the form of a guided discussion among moderators and participants.

The second phase was mainly about designing pilot actions and thinking together about potential recommendations. In the designing phase, project partners initially agreed to split up the participants into two groups according to their professional background (experts working with/in prison facilities and those working in society). However, in light

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<sup>3</sup> The Introduction to the section on Social Labs and the report on the Italian workshop are authored by Claudia Annovi (CeSI), the report on the Polish workshop was written by Nina Czyżewska and Magdalena El Ghamari (PPBW), the report on the Greek workshop was authored by Markos Shangoyan (KMOP), and the report on the international social lab was written by Dana Dolghin (PATRIR).



of the fact that in the majority of the social labs participants belonged to one professional field, partners agreed to keep them together for the “Design and Implementation Phase”. This phase involved identifying ideas and concepts from the discussion about challenges and discussing potential innovative solutions for confronting them.

Finally, the third phase served to summarise the main challenges and potential recommendations provided throughout the social lab.

# Italian Social lab on Risk Assessment Tools

## Introduction

The Italian Social lab was held online on 16<sup>th</sup> June 2023 from 14.30 to 17.00 (Italian Time) and was jointly organised by CeSI (Centro Studi Internazionali) and University of Catania. The aim of the Social lab was to discuss together with experts, first-line practitioners and institutions Risk Assessment Tools (RATs) to assess the risk for radicalisation and extremism in the Italian context, taking into consideration both

prison and non-prison environments. The main goal was hence to collect their insights, perspectives, and recommendations in order to understand better how Risk Assessment Tools are used and implemented in Italy, their strengths and their weaknesses, and how they should (or might) be improved.

The online form was chosen to facilitate the participation of experts, first-line practitioners and institutions from all over the country. The invitations were sent during the month of May and project's partners selected potential participants among the following categories:

- Representatives of NGOs working with/on RATs;
- Scholars and researchers.



 Participation

**6.4 Social Lab – Italia Approfondimento dei Risk Assessment Tools tramite il coinvolgimento di esperti e practitioners**

**Moderatori**  
Claudia Annovi, CeSI – Centro Studi Internazionali  
Augusto Giuseppe Gamazza, Università di Catania

14:30-14:45 Presentazione PARTICIPATION, attività del workshop, roundtable dei partecipanti  
14:45-15:45: Discussione dei risultati del questionario: i limiti dei Risk Assessment Tools  
15:45-15:55: Coffe Break  
15:55-16:35: Divisione in gruppi e discussione delle azioni da intraprendere per migliorare i Risk Assessment Tools  
16:35-16:50: Plenaria e confronto sulle raccomandazioni raggiunte  
17:00: Chiusura dei lavori

**16 Giugno – 14:30-17 CET (online)**  
Teams Link: <https://bit.ly/3CluxRy>



Per ulteriori informazioni o per iscriversi al workshop contattare Claudia Annovi o Cristina De Stefano.  
[annovi@cesi-italia.org](mailto:annovi@cesi-italia.org)  
[destefano@cesi-italia.org](mailto:destefano@cesi-italia.org)



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 962547.

Although nine people were expected to participate, only five of them were able to join the social lab eventually. The participants hence were:

- Researcher on radicalisation in Italy and international expert on radicalisation in prison;
- Educational trainer in Italian detention facilities and international expert on radicalisation in prison;
- Local representative of the National Guarantor of the rights of detainees (Garante dei diritti delle persone private e della libertà civili);
- Representatives of the Central Unit for Investigations of the Penitentiary Police (*Nucleo Investigativo Centrale – NIC della Polizia Penitenziaria*) working with prison facilities.

The social lab consisted of two main parts. After a brief presentation of PARTICIPATION Project and, specifically, of the goals and activities of task 6.4, the participants were presented with the results of the international survey that project partners have submitted to experts and stakeholders at European level from January 2023 to March 2023. The aim of this first part was to point at the main challenges of Risk Assessment Tools identified by the respondents and foster the debate among the participants regarding the strengths and weaknesses of Risk Assessment Tools in Italy.

The second part was initially thought as a further discussion among participants divided in two groups according to their professional background – hence, a group of participants working in the social sector and one with those working with prisons facilities. The aim of this second session was to identify new ideas and concepts from the previous debate and translate them into concrete pilot actions targeting different environments. However, since all the participants that managed to join the social lab worked within or with the prison system, the moderators decided not to divide the attendants into two groups, but to continue the discussion with one single audience.

The social lab was led by Claudia Annovi (CeSI) and Augusto Giuseppe Gamuzza (University of Catania). Claudia Annovi is Analyst in charge of the Radicalisation Desk at CeSI and a PhD Candidate at La Sapienza University working on conspiracy theories, populism and extremism. Augusto Giuseppe Gamuzza is Associate Professor in Sociology at University of Catania (Department of Education Sciences) and a Researcher in various projects focusing on identity dynamics, international cooperation and globalisation, extremism, and polarisation.

## Main challenges of Risk Assessment Tools: insights from participants

The topic of radicalisation and extremism in prison has been widely debated over the last two decades at the Italian level. Some concern has been expressed over the fact that prisons may be used as a breeding ground for radicalisation, especially following various terrorist acts committed in Europe in 2015 and in 2016, as a number of the major perpetrators seem to have passed through the criminal justice system. For this reason, Italian penitentiary authorities took action over this issue and integrated some Risk Assessment Tools and indicators to monitor at-risk detainees. A significant step was the establishment, in 2007, of a Central Unit for Investigations in charge of analysing the phenomena of radicalisation in prison.

The Italian social lab has hence revolved around the use of these tools and indicators in Italian prisons, their strengths and weaknesses, the actors that resort to this set of tools and the improvement that might be made. Broadly speaking, the monitoring conducted by the NIC in Italian detention facilities is rooted in a three-level monitoring system to classify the stage of radicalisation of inmates:

1. High – *monitoraggio*: this category includes detainees charged with international and national terrorism as well as political extremism. These individuals are hence closely monitored, as they had conducted proselytising or recruitment activities;
2. Medium – *attenzione*: this category refers to offenders charged with minor crimes whose behaviors suggest they share, to a greater or lesser extent, some parts of extremist ideologies (specific attention is given to jihadist ideology);
3. Low – *segnalazione*: this category involves inmates charged with minor crimes but that are recognised by prison institutions as “vulnerable” to extremist ideology.

Against this essential backdrop, it is possible to report the main insights and concepts that have emerged throughout the social lab by the participants.

### The importance of considering the context in RATs

Before exploring the debate regarding the contextual factors, it is worth mentioning some clarifications provided during the social lab regarding the indicators used to assess the risk of radicalisation within Italian prisons. The overall indicators in Italy are 44 and are divided into four macro-areas: 1. personal history of the detainee; 2. behaviour in prison; 3. emotional dimension; 4. value dimension. These indicators are

useful not only to monitor detainees charged with terrorist offences, but also address the whole prison population that is constantly observed.

During the social lab, participants were asked to discuss together if Risk Assessment Tools in Italy suffer from a lack of adaptation to specific contexts. One of the participants highlighted that the activity of monitoring of detainees includes various professional figures that observe and relate to the individual from different perspectives and take into consideration the context in which they live and the challenges thereof. From this point of view, the multi-disciplinary action allows to provide the clearest possible assessment of a specific case, taking also into consideration the contextual factors.

However, as it was pointed out by some participants, there are some contextual challenges that prevent a proper and adequate risk assessment. Among these, the overcrowding of many Italian prisons, the limited prison staff, the lack of resources, and the absence of important educational figures undermine both an effective monitoring and the capacity to properly considering the context.

### The issue of ideological biases and stereotyping in RATs

One of the main problems that have been raised both in the survey and in the social lab is the issue of ideological biases of Risk Assessment Tools. Indeed, several respondents to the survey pointed out that ideological biases and stereotypes are rather frequent in RATs, and that many of them consider only Islamism-based forms of extremism. Concerning this point, one of the participants to the social lab confirmed this issue, highlighting that «there are stereotypes in the use of these tools related to the fact that they were used by prison administrations in response to the increased number of prisoners accused of jihadist terrorism» (e.g., VERA). The same participant also stressed that this unbalanced attention, focusing more frequently on the «usual suspects», might represent a challenge to risk assessment at European level, as the more recent trends showed a significant rise of right-wing and left-wing extremism in the continent. However, another participant replied by pointing out that the multi-disciplinary approach used to assess the risk within Italian prisons and the wide range of professionals working on this issue are meant exactly to avoid any type of bias, hence can adapt to various type of extremism.

### Main gaps and challenges of Risk Assessment Tools

A significant part of the discussion of the first session of the social lab was devoted to the exploration of the challenges and gaps of Risk Assessment Tools in Italy. In this

framework, participants have brought about several problems regarding the implementation of RATs in the Italian context.

First of all, a participant highlighted that several Italian prisons are severely understaffed – especially in the legal treatment of detainees – and hence the risk assessment in detention facilities is undermined. Indeed, as pointed out by other participants, the lack of personnel frequently means that those in charge of risk assessment cannot carry on their work properly, hence producing potentially biased evaluation. In this sense, a participant maintained that the indicators produced and used in Italian prison to carry out this task are adequate and all-encompassing, while the real problem is the lack of trained staff that have also enough time to closely evaluate each at-risk detainee.

Interestingly enough on the issue of observation and risk assessment within prisons, a participant stressed that the number and quality of activities that are offered in detention facilities to prisoners are directly connected to the efficacy and quality of the risk assessment itself. Indeed, when considering the still limited activities that detainees can explore within Italian prisons, one of the experts insisted on the fact that the more the prison detainees are given the opportunities to try out experiences that might be potentially useful for their re-integration, the more chances exist that the prison staff can observe correctly the individual in different situations and carry out adequately a risk assessment. On the contrary, as was pointed out, «the fewer possibilities, the more observation is undermined and the risk assessment is flawed, hence contributing to problems to reintegration and safety».

Moreover, when discussing the issue of risk assessment of a released detainee, a participant highlighted that the lack of an all-encompassing legal framework that coordinates civil society and probation services in the observation of the former detainee potentially hinders long term results. On this issue, it is worth mentioning that a participant recalled that the Italian legal framework previously had a specific assembly, the Social Aid Council (Consiglio di Aiuto Sociale), whose aim was exactly to carry out the post-release risk assessment and help the social reintegration in the community of the former detainee. The Social Aid Council was hence composed by magistrates, public representatives of regional and province authorities, as well as a designated doctor, the head of the provincial labour office, and various social workers. However, when the penitentiary regulation system was revised and changed, this assembly was not preserved.

Another interesting topic that was brought about by participants was the frequent excessive length and complexity of some Risk Assessment Tools based on questions and tests to detainees. Despite not referring specifically to the Italian context, a participant stressed that these types of tools can be problematic, as it can be difficult for detainees to answer, hence providing biased answers and undermining an effective evaluation. In addition to this, the participant that mentioned a Risk Assessment Tool in Mali also said that because «the two prisons housing the terrorist offenders suffer from severe overcrowding, the prison staff struggled to use a long and complex tool. It was necessary to significantly reduce the questions and keep the tool to a single page length». Therefore, the issue of the complexity and length of certain Risk Assessment Tools represents a problem of implementation as well.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that a participant highlighted that for academics, scholars, and researchers working on Risk Assessment Tools it is highly difficult to have updated information regarding the feedbacks, successes, and challenges of the tools themselves. According to the participant, Italian authorities are still rather reluctant to share with the academia their findings and results, and this issue undermines the development of new tools – of the improvement of the existing ones – by researchers from various fields.

### **Main challenges for first-line practitioners in charge of assessing the risks**

During the social lab, participants highlighted some of the main challenges for first-line practitioners. Among these, they pointed at the security-oriented approach used in risk assessment within prisons, which might not only modify the final results of the observation, but also undermine the process of disengagement and rehabilitation of the individual.

Moreover, experts insisted on the fact that the lack of personal staff working in these contexts as well as the overcrowding in Italian prison prevent an effective risk assessment in two ways. On the one hand, the shortage of personnel overcomplicates the work of external professionals – e.g., educators, teachers, social workers – that might provide further insights and perspective to the dynamic observation of the detainees. On the other hand, the overcrowding makes it more difficult to observe, monitor and assess the risk properly of each detainee.

Besides this, one of the participants highlighted that a serious gap in the Italian penitentiary system is the fact that the Ministry of Justice hires almost exclusively legal experts and attorneys, unlike other ministries that have diversified their employees.

This preference is considered problematic, as it makes it more difficult to involve professional educators that might play a fundamental part both in the training of the prison staff and in the risk assessment. An additional issue, as was recalled, is the fact that «the recruitment of the so-called pedagogic legal officer is not intended for graduates in Education Sciences with a focus on “adult continuing education” but for graduates in Humanities, Philosophy, Law or Communication Sciences. On the contrary, educators only take on the role of administrative officers».

### Examples of best practices

A part of the social lab has been dedicated to the analysis of specific best practices, both in Italy and abroad, that may represent a benchmark to improve current Italian standards of Risk Assessment Tools. The aim of this section was to foster discussants to bring about valuable and significant methods and traditions and think together whether they should be integrated by Italian authorities.

A first interesting topic that has been discussed at the beginning of the social lab was the importance of investing in the so-called concept of “Dynamic Security”, which is frequently recalled as a strategy to deal with radicalised and terrorist offenders or other high-risk inmates to defuse violence and positively contribute to their disengagement. In this case, it is worth mentioning that a participant insisted on the fact that a dynamic security approach does not only benefit the treatment of inmates, but also can improve the risk assessment. Indeed, if implemented correctly, it can remove the cognitive and relational distance between the prison staff and the detainees, hence allowing to observe them closely, understand them, and assess better the risk of radicalisation or extremist violence.

A second best practice that was mentioned during the social lab was the Austrian case of the “Case Conferences” as an effective way to assess the risk of recidivism and radicalisation of former offenders. Case conferences – as it was explained by a participant – «are working tables that bring together the various actors dealing with detainees who are monitored for radicalisation or charged with terrorism-related sentences. The meetings intensify at the moment of release but also take place throughout the detention period, in some countries even after release». According to the specific moment, the actors around the table can change: as recalled by an expert, for example, in the Netherlands, the municipality, the local police, even educational services can participate in case conferences at the moment of the release. As such, case conferences can represent a significant tool, as they create a space where the results of the traditional risk assessment tool and the constant monitoring in the prison



environment can be discussed and the various perspectives are brought together to have a holistic and comprehensive perspective of how the rehabilitation process is going.

Finally, another interesting topic that participants focused on was the outsourcing of risk assessment in some countries. As mentioned by an expert, probation services in the Netherlands resort to risk assessment tools that are developed and implemented by an NGO, hence showing a high degree of trust and cooperation among these bodies. Indeed, by including NGOs in the implementation of risk assessment tools, authorities can deal with the challenges prison staff encounter when relating to the prison population.

### List of 5 main challenges or weaknesses of RATs participants agreed on

At the end of the first part of the social lab, participants were asked to discuss together and agree on a list of 5 main challenges or weaknesses of the Italian approach to Risk Assessment Tools. Hence, participants pointed at the following issues:

- Cognitive bias and stereotypes when implementing Risk Assessment Tools;
- The overcrowding of Italian prisons that renders more difficult a proper monitoring and risk assessment;
- The lack of adequate preparation of the prison staff, even because of a lack of resources;
- The lack of presence of professional educators working in training the prison staff and in the implementation of Risk Assessment Tools;
- The lack of normative tools that facilitate an adequate risk assessment and provide the proper resources to carry it out.

## New pathways for improving Risk Assessment Tools

### Design and Implementation phase

The Design and Implementation phase took the form of a moderated discussion. After identifying the 5 main challenges mentioned before, participants were asked to discuss together which might be some viable and effective solutions to fill the gaps of the current approach to Risk Assessment Tools. Despite it was previously thought to divide them into two smaller groups to facilitate the discussion, participants continued their

discussion all together, as they all work in or with risk assessment in prisons. This panel of the workshop was connected to the identification of the problems and challenges of Risk Assessment Tools.

### 5 actions to improve Risk Assessment in prisons

The roundtable discussion during the second session of the social lab has produced a lively debate among participants, who found some interesting solutions to overcome the existing problems of Risk Assessment Tools. In the following part, these suggestions are divided according to the specific feature and aspect they want to address:

- **Improvement of the training of prison staff:** throughout the discussion, participants pointed at various actions that might help the prison staff to adequately implement Risk Assessment Tools in prisons. Among these, they mentioned the hiring of professional educators and experts with specific resources to train the personnel on how these tools should be used and how to avoid the pitfalls of biased evaluation. Besides this, a specific focus on the dynamic security approach mentioned above should also be included in the trainings, in order to promote a different way not only for prison treatment but also for risk assessment;
- **Increase of the number of activities for detainees:** increasing the number of activities that detainees might access to within prison can also help to assess better how they would behave in simple situations outside the detention facility – e.g., cooperation with co-workers, acceptance of diversity, willing of personal improvement, etc;
- **Promotion of cooperation between the prison staff and social workers:** as maintained by several participants, one step further to improve the risk assessment tools would be to promote a close collaboration with external social workers. In this way, the risk assessment might be properly comprehensive and holistic, hence taking into consideration the multifaceted nature of the disengagement process;
- **Refinement of the Italian legal framework regarding risk assessment in prison settings:** as highlighted by some participants, despite having developed a valuable set of indicators for risk assessment, the Italian system still lacks the resources and structures to properly carry out this task. Under this perspective, it might be useful to provide new resources for this goal and create specific bodies in charge of both helping the process of reintegration of the convict and monitoring this path as well (e.g., the Social Aid Council that was previously used in Italy);

- **Testing foreign dynamic approach to risk assessment:** best practices such as the case conferences and the out-sourcing of risk assessment might be tested and implemented in Italy.

## Conclusions

The Italian social lab has produced some significant results that can be useful to analyse how Risk Assessment Tools are implemented in Italian detention facilities. Overall, the social lab has highlighted that the Italian authorities can resort to a strong set of indicators that are able to depict how the behaviours, systems of value, and emotions of extremist or terrorist offenders are evolving during their detention period. However, the discussion has brought about some existing gaps and challenges. Among these, it is worth mentioning that a recurring topic of the discussion was the unbalanced ratio between prison staff and professional educators and the prison population, a discrepancy that makes proper monitoring and observation of specific inmates more complex. An equal issue that participants had focused on was also the lack of proper preparation of the prison personnel in charge of carrying out the risk assessment and the challenges in integrating external professional educators, despite some initiatives having been taken over the last years. Nonetheless, the lively debate that the social lab has produced among different stakeholders and first-line practitioners has potentially laid the groundwork for a closer and more mature cooperation between various experts in the field.

# Polish Social lab on Risk Assessment Tools

## Introduction

The Polish social lab on Risk Assessment Tools was held online on the 1st of June 2023. It started at 9:30 and finished at 12:10. The online form was chosen in order to facilitate the participation of practitioners from different institutions from all around the country, who because of their work obligations would not be able to join otherwise. The agenda



Warsztat

### Narzędzia oceny ryzyka


- słabe i mocne strony oraz główne wyzwania związane z ich wykorzystaniem

1 czerwca 2023, 9:30 - 12:10

Online

### Agenda

9:30 - 9:35	Powitanie uczestników	Nina Czyżewska Polska Platforma Bezpieczeństwa Wewnętrznego
9:35 - 9:50	Prezentacja projektu PARTICIPATION oraz przedstawienie wyników badania ankietowego nt. narzędzi oceny ryzyka	Nina Czyżewska Polska Platforma Bezpieczeństwa Wewnętrznego
9:50 - 10:50	Narzędzia oceny ryzyka - słabe strony oraz główne wyzwania związane z ich wykorzystaniem Dyskusja moderowana	dr Magdalena El Ghmari Collegium Civitas, Ekspertka PBBW w obszarze ekstremizmu islamskiego i bezpieczeństwa kulturowego
10:50 - 11:50	Rekomendacje w zakresie rozwiązań mających na celu ulepszenie narzędzi oceny ryzyka oraz ich wykorzystania Dyskusja moderowana	dr Magdalena El Ghmari Collegium Civitas, Ekspertka PBBW w obszarze ekstremizmu islamskiego i bezpieczeństwa kulturowego
11:50 - 12:10	Podsumowanie i zakończenie	dr Magdalena El Ghmari Collegium Civitas, Ekspertka PBBW w obszarze ekstremizmu islamskiego i bezpieczeństwa kulturowego

 This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 962547.

of the meeting had three panels. In the opening part all the participants were welcomed, and the PARTICIPATION project was introduced together with the results of the online survey on Risk Assessment Tools. After introducing the results of the survey and pointing out the main challenges that were identified by the respondents, the methodological context in which RATs are created, implemented and used was presented. First, we focused on what is risk assessment in relation to different vulnerable groups which are under evaluation in different contexts. The participants were introduced to the risk assessment methodology, which has five main steps: risk identification, estimation, qualitative risk assessment, quantitative risk assessment and planning the response to risk. We also tried to define what risk assessment tools are. Then in a moderated discussion the participants talked about the challenges and weaknesses of Risk Assessment Tools and proposed ideas on how to address them.

Invitations were sent out to a wide range of experts working in different areas, mainly: academics and analysts working on the topic of radicalisation, LEAs and prison officers,

representatives of NGOs, as well as teachers and educators working with youth. The online workshop was attended by eleven participants: 1 representative of Academia, 1 representative of Teacher's Training Centre in Poznań, 1 project specialist working on the topic of radicalisation and 8 representatives of prison staff (prison educators, psychologists, lecturer from Central Training Centre of the Prison Service). Because of the specifics of the group the discussion mainly focused on Risk Assessment Tools in prison context.

The workshop was led by Magdalena El Ghamari - Expert on Islamic extremism and cultural security at PPHS and Nina Czyżewska, Project Officer at PPHS. Magdalena has a PhD in the field of defence sciences, specialising in operations and operational techniques. She is a research and didactic worker at the Institute of Political Sciences and International Relations (INPISM) and Head of the Cultural Security Laboratory at Collegium Civitas in Warsaw. Member of the Society for Libyan Studies (The British Academy), the Peacekeeping Veterans Association of the United Nations. A scholarship holder of the Minister of Science and Higher Education for outstanding Young Scientists and an expert of the Foundation for Polish Science. Her research interests focus on topics such as: terrorism (activity of terrorist organisations and recruitment processes), radicalisation processes, MENA region, religion and culture of the Arab-Muslim world.

## Main challenges of Risk Assessment Tools: insights from participants

The topic of radicalisation is widely talked about in Poland, but not in the prison context. Isolation and deprivation of needs accompany people deprived of their liberty and can lead to radicalisation. As far as the Prison Service is concerned, the topic of extremism has come up since this year. Instructions are given, especially during holiday periods to intensify preventive actions and to report inmates linked to terrorist crimes, making threats against public figures or displaying extremist attitudes. Thus, as can be seen, the Prison Service is beginning to recognise the problem. While terrorist offences are easy to establish on the basis of a conviction, other attitudes or behaviours among prisoners can be problematic, particularly as different behaviours can be interpreted differently by different people. Nevertheless, radicalisation is not the priority in many prisons, there are other issues, topics which are more urgent and pressing and to which most of the resources are dedicated.

In Poland we are at an initial stage of talking about Risk Assessment Tools. When it comes to different mechanisms of control and monitoring of radicalisation it was

indicated that currently there are none and we are just developing in this area. A tool is being developed in an IT system to assess the risk of recidivism, reoffending but the participant had no information on whether it relates to radicalisation in any way. Lack of a tool makes assessing the risk and conducting qualitative and quantitative analysis very difficult. One of the participants mentioned that she uses the R2PRIS (Radicalisation Risk Assessment in Prisons) Approach in her daily work to which she was introduced thanks to her participation in R4JUST project's training.

### The importance of considering the context in RATs

One of the main challenges of RATs is lack of adaptation of the tools to the context in which they are used. Without context it is impossible to know what the exact needs are. The workshop participants were asked to describe what they understand as the prison context. In their responses the prison context relates to the totality of a particular unit – the prison population, type of prisoners, type of prison, the prison staff, all the activities that influence the dynamics of a given prison, prison dynamic, the commitment of both the staff and the inmates, management, workload, and the equipment a given prison has, if it is a closed or open type of prison. In the answer of one of the experts «the prison context is one of isolation of inmates and very limited access by the prison service to the inmate's free environment (e.g., a violent extremist who has been imprisoned for a common crime) and issues of broadly understood security into which category everything is thrown, so perhaps some issues are not given due importance». It was stressed that the prison context is a different term than the prison dynamics but to conduct an analysis of prison context it is necessary to understand what the prison dynamics is. The prison environment is not only the inmates who are there but also everything that is happening around them. The analysis of prison context and prison dynamics allows one to understand who the inmates are, what rights they have, and from which activities they can benefit. Building the profiles, systematisation of different risks and factors which lead to radicalisation and creating categories have to be adequate to the context in which they are used.

### The issue of ideological biases and stereotyping in RATs

Another problem mentioned by the participants was the issue of ideological biases and stereotyping in RATs. Stigmatisation is very visible among the prison staff. It may manifest in turning a blind eye to certain types of behaviours if a prison officer sympathises with a certain group of people. This is why the parameters for assessing the risk of radicalisation need to be chosen and evaluated in regard to the environment in which they are used.

## Main gaps and challenges of Risk Assessment Tools

The biggest challenge identified by the practitioners is the fact that there is no possibility to create a record of all potential threats of radicalisation because such a list would have hundreds of points and would include aspects which are trivial, which are related to employment, emotional problems with psychology. Checking some of the points would not mean that a person is radicalised but in combination with other issues they might contribute to radicalisation.

Another shortcoming of the Risk Assessment Tools is the fact that very often they focus on one type of threats, very often on the threats related to Islamism and terrorist attacks. As shown in research, the problem of Islamist extremism is not the main threat now, especially in Poland. In the Global Terrorism Index 2023 we can find the information that currently the main risk is related to right-wing extremism and Poland is quite high in the rankings. The fact that RATs do not take into account the factors and profiles that allow to assess the risk of right-wing extremism results in the tools being ineffective and is a huge concern.

One of the problems brought up during the workshop is the issue of radicalisation of prison staff who work with inmates also get radicalised. There are no mechanisms or RATs in place to assess the risk of radicalisation of prison officers. This topic is very sensitive and often not raised in discussions about radicalisation. There is also the issue of people joining the services having certain preferences. The number of officers turning into the direction of neo-paganism and right-wing extremism movements is quite significant and very often those people are not aware that they are radicalised. However, this uncovers itself in certain moments when it comes to preferences, making deals with inmates, allowing for the use of violence. It is not checked at any point if the soon to be officers evince any signs of radicalisation or preferences. As for now in the recruitment form there is an obligation to declare membership in foreign organisations but not the national ones. Moreover, there is no procedure for passing such documents between different services. There is also the issue of GDPR and privacy connected to this. Another issue is the problem of training such officers. They can learn how the radicalisation processes look like, how to avoid it and they will be equipped with tools, techniques and possibilities which will make them impossible to detect.

## Main challenges for first-line practitioners in charge of assessing the risks

One of the main challenges is the fact that each person admitted to a prison should be evaluated in the context of Preliminary Threat Analysis (PHA). The lack of resources and prison staff makes it almost impossible to do so. Moreover, it is difficult to conduct

quantitative risk analysis as there are not enough people and resources to do it. Another option would be to delegate it to an external company but the cost of such an analysis is high and the penitentiary system in Poland is underfinanced.

Secondly, the ratio of prison educators and psychologists to inmates with which they work is another challenge identified by the participants. According to the official statistics there is one educator per 34 inmates and one psychologist per 200 inmates. However, the official statistics are far from the experiences of the workshop participants. One of them said that in her place of work currently there are 125 inmates per one educator in some cases per two educators. Another two participants said that there is one educator per overhounded inmate.

The work time is one of the main challenges when it comes to risk identification. As indicated above, the number of psychologists and prison educators is not sufficient. Very often the people who are responsible for assessing the risk of radicalisation of inmates have additional obligations. Moreover, they do not have enough time to analyse in depth each and every single person. In many prisons there are teams of practitioners working on the topic of radicalisation but the members of such teams are very often participating in them on top of their everyday obligations and responsibilities.

It was brought up that due to the lack of unified hierarchy and structure in the prison context much information is undocumented and lost in the process. The value of conversations between educators and psychologists is of a high importance but there is no one who is overseeing this process. Nothing is happening besides the conversation; no memorandum is being produced as a result. This way data which could be systemised and used in future is getting undocumented and in consequence lost.

One of the participants said that the issues that prisons and detention centers are dealing with are the problem of switching to action and openness to change. Usually, the action is limited to appointing a few people who already have a backlog of work anyway, collecting data and that's all. There are no outcomes of it and no change in working style on a daily basis. So much could be changed, taught, picked up at an early stage but unfortunately nothing happens.

Another factor that has to be taken into consideration is the financial factor. The involvement of a person to their job is very often correlated with their financial compensation. It is common to lose the motivation to work if obligations are piling up



there is no adequate compensation for it. The financial factor is also the cause of not sufficient personnel, lack of resources to be dedicated to training of the prison staff and all of the other challenges indicated before.

Among other challenges the workshop participants indicated: not sufficient training, lack of information exchange which is interconnected to the lack of time, lack of possibilities, overload of work and insufficient personnel as well as connecting radicalisation with other types of crime. Those issues were also listed out in the online survey.

#### List of 5 main challenges or weaknesses of RATs participants agreed on

- The people who work on RATs are overburdened with work and have to perform the risk analysis on top of their daily obligations;
- Not taking into account the context in which RATs are implemented;
- Lack of training for prison staff;
- There is no read-to-use tool which would allow to assess the risk of radicalisation;
- Lack of information exchange.

## New pathways for improving Risk Assessment Tools

### Explanation of the Design and Implementation phase

The Design and Implementation phase took the form of a moderated discussion. This panel of the workshop was connected to the identification of the problems and challenges of Risk Assessment Tools. After identifying a problem, the participants were proposing solutions on how to overcome it. This part of the meeting was very fruitful, and the participants came up with a lot of ideas on how to improve RATs in prisons.

### Actions to improve Risk Assessment in prisons

First of all, the participants focused on the issue of who should be responsible for performing risk assessment in prisons. They all agreed that it has to be a team. It cannot be a single person who is identifying the risks and analysing all the inmates from the radicalisation perspective. It is important to keep in mind that each person has their limits, and they should not be overburdened with responsibilities. The team has to consist of persons who are eager to work, are well compensated and want to learn. Moreover, working in a group allows us to compare experiences and broaden our perspectives. Also discussing cases in a group allows us to look at them from different perspectives. A person working on their own might miss some signs whereas the chances of that happening in a team is smaller.

As mentioned before, the context in which the RATs are used is crucial. The tools need to change in relation to the context in which the analysis is performed. For this reason, there should be no comparison between open and closed prisons and the structure and analysis should be developed in relation to specific contexts. This means that there is a need for analysts, people who know the specificity, context and dynamics of a given prison. Only then the risk assessment tools can be adjusted to the context. From the strategic perspective it would be good if it was a mixed team of someone from outside of the prison who does not know the place, together with a person who is a specialist of the given place. The team which is working on the topic of radicalisation should not have other work responsibilities. Furthermore, not only the prison context should be taken into account, but also the cultural environment perspective. When adjusting the RATs to a specific prison context it should be considered how the cultural environment can influence the inmates and the prison staff, what are the groups and what are their characteristics.

When it comes to the topic of training it would need to be organised on three levels: tactical, operational and strategic. On the strategic level there should be a Council/team of experts/trainers which would be dealing with a dedicated topic from the country's perspective. Those people would exchange information between themselves, they would work in a given topic (e.g., someone is dealing with left-wing, someone with right-wing, someone with Islamist extremism) and additionally train on the national level other practitioners and prison staff. It is also important to avoid the burn out of the trainers. The training team should not be burdened with doing the same things every day, these people need to be on the field. There need to be people who drive around the country, have contact with prison staff who would be delegated to contact with the experts and these persons would train other people. This is the area for the Central Training Centre of the Prison Service which should be the hub gathering the trainers and the prison staff coming from prisons to share their experiences and knowledge so that the people who are responsible for providing training are not stuck in place. The people from prison services dedicated to providing the training should be prevention officers, educators, psychologists but they should not be overburdened with other responsibilities. It was also mentioned that the retired officers should be engaged in the groups responsible for providing training. They have all the experience and knowledge and very often also the time that they would like to use doing something meaningful. When it comes to the format in which the training should be delivered it should be both online and offline. The physical training should be short and frequent so that the prison staff is updated on the newest trends. Those trainings should be

complemented by online training. The training in prisons should be sectorial, according to the role of each person, because the specificity is different with regards to the role a person has. This is why the training should be divided into different categories or different levels. While discussing the topic of increasing competences and gaining knowledge it was proposed to make time for the prison officers to improve their skills by reviewing documents, reading books, analysing monographs, familiarising yourself with outcomes of different projects, analysing what is happening in this area. Now it is not done in the prison context because of the time constraints.

Prison officers who work in prevention and in the area of radicalisation have to recognise the economic, political, technological, informational and ecological factors that may lead to radicalisation. This requires a lot of knowledge and is time-consuming. As already mentioned, one of the main problems of prisons in Poland is not sufficient personnel and overload of obligations. The prison officers do not have the resources to analyse in depth if each of the inmates is showing signs of radicalisation. This is why a risk assessment card and control list fill in a gap. It would allow us to check if certain symptoms happened or not and then after the preliminary assessment additional actions would be taken. Creation of general framework, categories, scenarios of the risk assessment model would be also helpful in this regard. Providing such tools would mean that the practitioners would not have to create them on their own. When it comes to qualitative analysis a survey could be directed to experts who have time, have an overview of an environment, visit prisons, talk to the prison staff. The analysis would allow for identifying the risk in different prisons.

Last but not least, the workshop participants stressed the need for the exchange of information between practitioners. The practitioners should have a dedicated platform where they could exchange information. It should be agreed at the managerial level of the prisons that there are periodic meetings ex. once per three months. The information should be also exchanged between different services (e.g., Border Guards and the prison staff). Receiving data and the background information about an inmate when he arrives at a detention centre would allow for an initial evaluation and risk assessment. There was an idea to engage representatives of different services in non-hierarchical NGOs. The exchange of information should take place not only between institutions, but also between different counties so that the officers can learn from each other's experiences. Study visits, meetings, platforms, offline and online exchange were proposed for this.

Besides the above-mentioned recommendations the practitioners mentioned that RATs should analyse the topic of right-wing extremism and right-wing organisations and they should take into account historical data. When it comes to the problem of stigmatisation the only solution is constant education, training, dialogue, naming the phenomena as it is. Talking about stigmatisation should be based on real cases which are more compelling to the listener. Another point that was brought up was that the prison service should take into account the gender perspective and prepare for inmates who are in the process of transition. This issue is still before the Polish prisons, but it has to be taken into consideration with planning. As for now the Polish prisons are not ready to respond to it.

## Conclusions

The main challenges that were appearing throughout the workshop were the problem of resources, lack of time, not sufficient personnel, overload with work, lack of training and the fact that in Poland there is no ready-to-use Risk Assessment Tool. The practitioners stressed the need to have a basis of potential events, incidents which can be the signs of radicalisation so that the psychologist or prison staff know how to identify if the person they are dealing with is in the pre-phase of radicalisation or if they are already radicalised. This is where a Risk Assessment Tool would definitely be helpful. However, the tool alone is insufficient. The next step should be the implementation of appropriate programmes for prisoners to address attitudes and beliefs. In the prison service top-down solutions are needed, including a change in implementing legislation. Until concrete measures are included, for example, in the orders of the Director-General of the Prison Service, none of the officers will dare to apply them. Training, education, long-term planning and long-term vision have to be incorporated into a strategy at a national level.

All the solutions proposed by the experts should include five main points: avoiding, transfer, mitigation, acceptance and contingency plan.

# Greek Social lab on Risk Assessment Tools

## Introduction

The Greek social lab took place in Athens, on May 15, 2023, between 12:00-15:30. The experts were selected on the basis of their distinct professional roles and responsibilities within the Greek penal and correctional system. Two of the ten experts participated virtually (online), while the rest were present (offline). Their insights about RATs thus represented both the views of the State (the Ministry of Citizen Protection) and practitioners of the correctional facilities across the country.



**Κοινωνικό Εργαστήριο**  
Πρόληψη και καταπολέμηση του βίαιου εξτρεμισμού  
στα καταστήματα κράτησης: Εργαλεία αξιολόγησης  
κινδύνου

15/05/2023, 14:00 – 17:00  
Σκουφά 75, 5<sup>ος</sup> Όροφος

### Πρόγραμμα

Ωρα	Θεματική
14:00 – 14:15	Welcome
14:15 – 14:40	Παρουσίαση – Συζήτηση ✓ Κενά και προκλήσεις στην πρόληψη και καταπολέμηση του βίαιου εξτρεμισμού ✓ Η σημασία των εργαλείων αξιολόγησης κινδύνου
14:40 – 15:45	Διαδραστική συζήτηση Existing and proposed practices towards: ✓ Multi-agency cooperation ✓ Use of Risk Assessment Tools
15:45 – 16:00	Coffee Break
16:00 – 16:45	Βήματα προς την ενσωμάτωση εργαλείων αξιολόγησης κινδύνου στα σωφρονιστικά καταστήματα
16:45 – 16:55	Ανατροφοδότηση
17:00	Λήξη

### Στοιχεία επικοινωνίας

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The participants in the social lab hence were:

**Expert 1:** The Director of a non-profit legal entity for the Social Reintegration of Ex-Prisoners.

**Expert 2:** Representative of the General Secretariat for Anti-Crime Policy of the Ministry of Citizen Protection.

**Expert3:** Chief administrative officer of the General Secretariat for Anti-Crime Policy (at the Ministry of Citizen Protection).

**Expert 4:** Head of Administration/Departments of a correctional facility.

**Expert 5:** Social worker in a women's correctional facility.

**Expert 6:** Warden at a Men's Correctional Facility.

**Expert 7:** Warden at a Men's Correctional Facility.

**Expert 8:** Social worker at a Women's Correctional Facility.

**Expert 9:** Social worker at a non-profit legal entity for the Social Reintegration of Ex-Prisoners.

**Expert 10:** Academic specialising in religious violent extremism.

The social lab took place in a hybrid format in order to facilitate the input of stakeholders that were out of the region of Attica. The project's research team facilitated the discussion along with the project manager, who has expertise in issues related to violent extremism and the criminal justice system. The facilitating team was responsible for the specifics of conducting the social lab meeting and assumed the responsibility of providing assistance, motivation, and actively collaborating with participants in the process of generating knowledge throughout the workshop. The methodology used consisted of the following steps: the social lab workshop began with an initial presentation of RATs and was followed by a discussion on the current situation around the existence and use of such tools within the Greek penal system. Subsequently, this led to a consideration of the main challenges and difficulties of the Greek context (as discussed below). Lastly, participants talked about the need to take specific measures to promote trust between governmental institutions, correctional facilities and civil society actors (including NGOs) in order to start utilising multi-level cooperation that would help with the more efficient awareness and prevention of radicalisation in the Greek penal system. The input of the two participants in a hybrid format was facilitated via the IdeaBoardz platform.

## Main challenges of Risk Assessment Tools: insights from participants

The insights from the participants of the social lab shed light on a main challenge of RATs that characterise a number of aspects of the Greek penal system – namely, whether or not RATs exist in the first place and, subsequently, when and how these are used. Indeed, when initially addressed with the question of offering their views on the RATs, participants were immediately skeptical about the very existence or the application of RATs for radicalisation within the Greek penal system.

It is important to note that by the end of the social lab, participants had reached the conclusion that certain RATs do in fact exist within the Greek penal system. These however were either not systematically used or were applied with no guidance and/or support. For instance, Expert 4 referred to a manual (or pocket-guide) on counter-

radicalisation and extremism published by the Center for Security Studies (KEMEA) that is addressed to prison staff and first-line practitioners. This manual, however, was published in 2016 and needs, therefore, to be updated based on the latest crucial developments.

Similarly, in some other cases, prison staff use their own experience and practices in noticing and reporting radicalisation incidents, without choosing a set of tools that have already been tested. Subsequently, and due to the lack of guidance, these tools turn out to be inefficient and fail. The consensus amongst participants was that the types of RATs at play in Greek prisons involve a number of primarily *informal* practices and processes. These are based on the prison staff's overall existing responsibilities, their personal relationships with the inmates, as well as their connections to and acquaintances with other members of staff of other prison facilities or with the relevant actors in the Ministry of Citizen Protection, the Ministry of Justice and or the Special Violent Crime Squad of the Police. As Expert 4 noticed, «No actual tools exist for us to use. But we still know what we are doing». More specifically: Though, in their words, no actual “scale from 1-10” exists for them to be able to “measure” the degree of radicalisation risk of inmates, each person working within the prison system has their own tools to be able to address the gravity of such issues. For instance, the scientific staff – such as experts 5 and 8 – (psychologists, social workers, etc) will apply their own respective tools to tackle such occurrences, while the prison guard – who comes directly in contact with the inmates on a daily basis – may choose to report any suspicious facts to their superior, and so on. All these professionals make up the Prison Council, which is the principal body in charge of collecting information on inmates, estimating the potential risks (radicalisation or other) and danger and, ultimately, choosing which type of information to disclose.

### The importance of considering the context in RATs (in prison)

The largest part of the roundtable discussion was devoted to the challenges and potential risks around RATs but also to the prevention of radicalisation more broadly. Most of the issues raised further correspond – to different degrees – to the subsequent topic of the particularities of the Greek penal context. Indeed, participants agreed that any attempt to establish uniform RATs should primarily take full account of the particularities of the penal system in Greece, and of the ways in which this has evolved, especially over the last five years. Such particularities are discussed throughout the following sections.

### The issue of ideological biases and stereotyping in RATs

Participants referred to the issue of addressing the nature and expressions of different types of radicalisation and of the ways in which ideological biases (either through the RATs but also based on the experts' own viewpoints) may preclude them from appropriately approaching (certain) cases of radicalisation. For instance, based on their own experience with the Greek penal system, some participants expressed their (personal) views on the existence or not of extreme-right terrorism in Greece, of the high risks of extreme-left radicalisation and recruitment, as well as of the rising threat of hooliganism, which, until recently, was a phenomenon scarcely seen in the country. Concerns were raised about the extent to which RATs would be able to properly address all these types of radicalisation.

Similarly, Expert 4 discussed how she does not consider herself an expert in noticing the signs of religiously-inspired radicalisation and expressed her doubt in her own ability to understand its nature and expressions. Subsequently, this, in her view, renders her unable to properly approach the respective inmate in order to help prevent (further) radicalisation. She, therefore, added that such cases should be handled, for instance, through the intervention of an imam, who must, however, be trustworthy and evaluated prior to contacting the radicalised inmate(s).

### Main gaps and challenges of Risk Assessment Tools

Two overall concerns were repeatedly raised, as a reaction to the availability or not of any such tools.

First, all participants seemed to agree that utmost attention should be paid to the content and the quality of training prison staff, especially concerning P/CVE. The preparation and training of prison personnel should hence be a prerequisite to the availability of RATs.

Second, the question of whether or not – and the extent to which – such RATs may violate the personal data and information of inmates, as mentioned in the section regarding the main challenges and weaknesses of RATs.

These two issues correspond directly to the subsequent question, which addressed the challenges and potential risks for first-line practitioners involved in the process.

### Main challenges for first-line practitioners in charge of assessing the risks

Concerning specifically the challenges first-line practitioners may face in assessing the risks, two issues were raised. First, the burden of responsibilities and lack of time of



prison staff. According to Experts 2 and 3, they believe that the high degree of formalism and professionalism of prison staff is reflected in the fact that they strictly follow the laws of three codes that make up the foundations of the Greek prison system: correctional law, the internal conduct rules and the relevant safety rules. Given that the staff spend 90% of their time and effort in trying to follow these rules in understaffed prisons, while at the same time handling the inmate population – with its high degree of diversity (in ethnic, religious and other terms) – they are often unable to devote any time to noticing and subsequently reporting of potential suspicious acts or behaviours pertaining to radicalisation. This also explains why they may be unable to find the time to undergo any further training.

Second, the subjective interpretation of such information to be reported was a further matter of discussion. Participants (particularly experts 5,6 and 8) agreed that prison staff, and members of the Prison Council more broadly, may often have different understandings of the degree of seriousness or urgency of any such information pertaining to radicalisation in particular. This may very often preclude them from passing on the information to their superior or to their colleagues.

### Examples of best practices

Regarding the Greek national context, no specific best practices were indicated. An interesting observation is that most participants – at different points in the discussion – wanted to be informed about the types of RATs used in other countries and specifically about some ‘best practices’ from which they could draw inspiration. Some participants, such as Expert 4, were aware of the existence of RATs abroad, as for example through their participation in the workshops and activities of the Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN) with colleagues from other countries.

### List of 5 main challenges or weaknesses of RATs participants agreed on

In addition to a proper and systematic use of codified RATs in Greek correctional facilities, which constitutes the main challenge in the radicalisation assessment process within the Greek penal system, an attempt to outline further challenges discussed in the social lab may lead to the following observations:

- **Lack of common understanding of “radicalisation”:** A recurrent theme evoked by the majority of participants concerns the need to clearly define and establish a common understanding of the meaning of the term ‘radicalisation’. According to experts 1,2,3 and 4, this should form a crucial aspect of the training of prison staff, who are often unaware of the concept’s meaning(s) (let alone of

the way to actually tackle it). Then, at a subsequent stage, the possible signs of radicalisation should be explained to them, i.e. a hypothetical question raised by Expert 2 was whether «a certain type of tattoo is a potential sign (of radicalisation)?».

- **Disclosure of personal information:** Expert 5 repeatedly noted how challenging the process of maintaining a balance between the kind of information disclosed to them by the inmates (which derives from a relationship based on trust and may often concern the latter's physical and/or mental health) and the respective worker's responsibility to report any such information that they deem suspicious of radicalisation («how do we know when and if we can cross this line?»). This also relates to the disclosure of such details, which inmates have privately discussed with the scientific staff of the Prison Council, either with other correctional facilities in the country or with any civil society actors or organisations that may seek to intervene and help, for instance, support prison staff in the detection of signs and the prevention of radicalisation («how can we ask for their consent to share such aspects?»).
- **Issues in information sharing between facilities:** The lack of sharing of information between prison facilities was a further challenge mentioned. In fact, all cooperation and exchange of information seem to be taking place informally, based on the personnel's networks and personal acquaintances. No official channel of communication exists, which could help prevent and counter radicalisation. Expert 4 mentioned a particular case of an inmate who was radicalised (extreme/far-left) and was recruiting other inmates. He had apparently been involved in such acts in the previous prison where he was held, but, due to lack of any disclosing information, the staff and security guards were unaware of this (see also Section on '5 actions to improve Risk Assessment in prisons').
- **Lack of resources:** An additional challenge concerned the lack of resources and the overall cost of using any established RATs. A participant shared her experience from her participation in a RAN workshop with colleagues from Germany and other countries. She had then already expressed an interest in applying such RATs in the facility where she works, but was held back by the potential cost of it: «this falls within the budget of the respective country or of the correctional facility that wants to use the tools».
- **Drastic changes in inmate population:** Lastly, a further challenge stems from a particular trait of Greek prisons noted by some participants, namely the drastic change in the makeup of the inmate population. Expert 6 went as far as to

observe that Greek inmates «currently constitute a minority in correctional facilities». This means that prison staff work with inmates with a diverse background, they are most often unaware of the latter's culture, their religion and even of their language. This linguistic barrier seems to form an important obstacle in the already challenging intercultural communication process, which also directly concerns the radicalisation assessment process. As reported by some participants, even in the cases where one inmate does speak English and volunteers to translate between the staff and the other prisoners, «how can we be sure that he's telling them what we told him?».

### New pathways for improving Risk Assessment Tools

As mentioned in the previous sections, RATs in the Greek penal context are either not utilised or are only utilised at a very *ad hoc* and per prison basis. Thus, no specific suggestions were put forward, rather some general recommendations for continuing discussions towards this direction.

Specifically:

- **Addition of radicalisation courses to Correctional Officer Curricula:** Participants emphasised that the adequate and constant training of prison staff around P/CVE and radicalisation is a necessary action in the process of all counter/de-radicalisation efforts (or tools) in the Greek penal system. According to participants, “radicalisation” has only recently been added to the curriculum as a separate topic of study in the School of Correctional Officers.
- **Improved information sharing system:** A suggestion put forward by Expert 2 was that the profile and potential radicalisation background of an inmate be shared with the prison staff from the very start of their imprisonment period. This, of course, requires prior establishment of formal channels of communication and the building of trust between agencies (including the LEAs) on such matters. In addition, participants observed that this could also be extended to help improve cooperation with civil society actors (NGOs and other experts) who must also be part of the radicalisation awareness and prevention effort.
- **Enhanced networking between various agencies involved:** Participants seemed to all agree that the sharing and spreading of information and knowledge, through the training of staff, and through roundtables as the one held for the purposes of this project, are crucial to raising awareness about and helping prevent radicalisation in the Greek correctional system.

## Conclusions

The results of the Greek social lab highlight several interesting facts with regards to the existing use, challenges and potential improvements in connection to RATs, in the Greek correctional facility context. In terms of ongoing practices, it is evident that most of the correctional facilities in Greece utilise at an ad hoc basis, risk assessment practices, and no common tool exists. This has also been referred to as a challenge. Several other challenges were mentioned associated with ideological biases/stereotypes, the quality of prison staff training with regard to violent extremism and radicalisation; the existing high workload of first-line practitioners; the lack of information sharing between the various agencies/institutions and the CSOs; the lack of resources and the cost of introducing RATs, and the current change in terms of prison population which has created various challenges pertaining to intercultural communication.

With reference to the above-mentioned challenges, three main suggestions were mentioned:

1. Adequate and constant training for prison staff on P/CVE-related matters;
2. Improvement of information-sharing mechanisms;
3. Building of trust and a cooperation culture between the various agencies/institutions and CSOs.

# International Social lab on Risk Assessment Tools

## Introduction

This final validation workshop was a continuation of the survey conducted in the beginning of 2023. It complemented the findings of this survey and also emphasized several new areas.



### 6.4 International Social Lab on Risk Assessment Tools

#### Moderators

Claudia Annovi, CeSI – Centro Studi Internazionali

Dana Dolghin, PATRIR

14:30–14:45 Roundtable

14:45–15:45: Discussion: the results of the questionnaire

15:45–15:55: Coffee Break

15:55–16:35: Future pilot actions

16:35–16:50: Plenary and discussion of recommendations

17:00: Closing remarks

29 June – 14:30-17 CET  
(online)

Teams Link:  
<https://bit.ly/3Nr7Twk>



For further  
information or to register  
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This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 962547.

Thirteen people confirmed their participation for the validation workshop, yet in the end the group consisted of eight experts. For the validation workshop, the team included insights of 8 experts in the field of radicalization as follows: 6 (Italy), 1 (UK), 1 (Romania). The participants hence were:

- Researcher on radicalisation in Italy and international expert on radicalisation in prisons;
- Manager in Italian detention facilities and international expert on radicalisation in prisons;
- Academic and expert in radicalisation in Italy;
- Academic and expert in Italy;
- Representative of the Italian Police;
- Expert in online radicalisation in

the UK;

- Researcher in P/CVE and prisons in Romania;
- Representatives of the Central Unit for Investigations of the Penitentiary Police (Nucleo Investigativo Centrale – NIC della Polizia Penitenziaria) working with prison facilities.

They were presented with clarification and validation questions based on the initial challenges and shortcomings reported in RATs that are used nationally or relevant used elsewhere in Europe, in the survey. The questions posed during the validation workshop took the initial conclusions formulated by experts during the survey and reflected on inconsistencies, further contextual explanations and recommendations.

The social lab took place on June 28th, online, and consisted of two main parts. After a brief presentation of PARTICIPATION Project and, specifically, of the goals and activities of task 6.4, the participants were presented with the results of the international survey that project partners have submitted to experts and stakeholders at European level from January 2023 to March 2023. The aim of this first part was to point at the main challenges of Risk Assessment Tools identified by the respondents and foster the debate among the participants regarding the strengths and weaknesses of Risk Assessment Tools in Europe.

The second part was initially thought as a further discussion among participants divided in two groups according to their professional background – hence, a group of participants working in the social sector and one with those working with prisons facilities. The aim of this second session was to identify new ideas and concepts from the previous debate and translate them into concrete pilot actions targeting different environments. However, since all the participants that managed to join the social lab shared many of the same points of view, the moderators decided not to divide the attendants into two groups, but to continue the discussion with one single audience.

The social lab was led by Claudia Annovi (CeSI) and Dana Dolghin (PATRIR). Claudia Annovi is Analyst in charge of the Radicalisation Desk at CeSI and a PhD Candidate at La Sapienza University working on conspiracy theories, populism and extremism. Dana Dolghin (PATRIR) is a researcher in the DEM (democracy, extremism and radicalisation) unit of PATRIR, is affiliated with the University of Amsterdam and works on extremism, polarisation and contestations of liberal democracy in several Horizon Europe projects.

## Complex definitions of RATs

The findings confirmed many of the issues pointed out by experts in the field elsewhere in literature and in the survey, namely that the definitions and the terms used are often fluid and interchangeable and that this affects the design and functioning of RATs. Furthermore, these are also influenced by the understanding of radicalisation that they work with. This observation was also noticeable during the conversations conducted during the social lab, where the moderators asked for a reflection on the main findings

in the survey. The definition of RATs, and their protean nature, were a focus of the discussion as well, as experts flagged the diversity of factors taken into consideration and in general, a lack of alignment between the complex factors and markers that speak to radicalisation and the actual parameters used in defining and designing RATs.

## Targets of existing RATs: environments, target groups etc.

In contrast with the survey, during the social lab, the online environment featured prominently in the priorities of researchers but also in the future trends flagged by experts. It has been especially highlighted as a gap (see last section). Italian experts argued that the online environment is difficult to measure for institutions such as police, because of the mandate, authority and reach that they are afforded. Furthermore, the lack of specialised personnel trained in monitoring online radicalisation was a concern voiced by several of those present.

During the workshop, the use of RATs in prisons was the main focus of the discussion. Several Italian participants referred to the prison environment as the main focus of the application of RATs, albeit imperfect in the process of application, as detailed further on. However, the social lab focused extensively on the imbalances in addressing these groups, particularly the preponderant focus on the Jihadi threat, and only the incipient expertise in adapting RATs to far-right and other complex ideological and non-ideological concerns (conspiracy theories, incels and other subcultures). Both in the survey and in the validation workshop, the concern with the biases towards certain groups (specifically Muslim) was expressed, compounded with the lack of flexibility of RATs to adjust to these conditions. Cumulatively, there was a consensus between those answering the survey that RATs are preponderantly focusing on Islamism and jihadism as phenomenon and individual cases. Conversely, there is a lack of systemic focus on the far-right threat or hybrid ideologies, such as conspiracy theories or anti-gender communities (e.g., Incels). At the same time, during the validation workshop, experts agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that prejudices and stereotypes about minorities represent a serious risk in the development of RATs, specifically when looking at the Muslim community.

## Types of institutional existing RATs in European countries

During the validation workshop, VERA was singled out as the most flexible available option of assessment because it can be applied in schools or hybrid ideologies, conspiracy theory and far-right and is adaptable. This mirrors much of the information emerging from the survey. During the validation workshop, one other tool mentioned

was the COMPAS algorithm, that could provide clear indicators not only in the incarceration but also how to handle deradicalisation in the prison system. It is used in various countries due to one of the most popular scores used nationwide and is increasingly being used in pretrial and sentencing, the so-called “front-end” of the criminal justice system.

## Experts/First-line practitioners involved in RATs in prison and in society

Much of the findings of the validation workshop complemented those of the survey when looking at the categories of professionals that are involved in RATs: from teachers, social workers and academics, to prison staff and administrative. During the validation workshop, the responders familiar with the Italian system specifically flagged religious leaders and social workers (but not necessarily experts in terrorism and violent extremism) working in prisons as those who provide support for populations at risk. The issues of culturally sensitive trainings for those working in prisons, including of religious leaders, was one of the gaps and the needs frequently mentioned. Being able to assess what can contravene or seem to be an aggression towards the cultural specificity of a group is an important feature of programs able to champion deradicalisation and long-term inclusion. In Italy, several initiatives run in collaboration by academic and prison staff experts develop manuals of cultural sensitivity, of awareness and information on cultural specifics. Most of these address Muslim cultures, few initiatives able to address conspiratorial thought or disinformation exist presently.

## RATs focusing on virtual environment: strengths and weaknesses

During the validation workshop, one question posed referred to privacy, namely that the majority of responders agreed that RATs pose threats in terms of security. One expert (UK based) argued the issues of privacy online false personas are a priority, not as a high privacy risk but as identity theft and impersonation. In terms of privacy rights, data retention should be maintained for the minimum amount of time so that it is not damaging to the person as was the main recommendation formulated. Using that data on individuals and having protocols is essential but without clear protocols in place this can become quickly abusive.



## Main gaps and challenges of RATs

- **Lack of training of professionals in prisons and other categories of FLPs**, which also leads to increased biases. Officers are unprepared to recognise a red flag, and they often lack cultural sensitive information to prevent biases and stigmatisation. The preparation of officers is adequate. Not all institutions have the possibility to properly train staff. In Italy, there are active steps taken to provide information awareness and cultural sensitivity, also by teaming up with organisations that also represent other cultural backgrounds. There is little advancement in this direction in Romania.
- **Lack of specialized tools and indicators able to construct a multidimensional step by- step monitoring tool of potential radicalisation.** Qualitative and interdisciplinary approaches are needed to arrive at better results in collaboration and prevention. Indicators and specialized indicators are needed, specifically those outlining identity. No connection between the initial stage, deradicalisation and recidivism (Exit Germany) really exists in the usage of indicators, which affects the quality of monitoring and evaluation. Measuring the popularisation of hate, specifically because it has complexified in the last decade, is necessary but imperfect without multidisciplinary indicators. With overlapping ideologies, new ways of managing radicalisation monitoring integrating the pre-existent online life of individuals are necessary, for instance identity factors and those measuring the misrepresentation of reality, such as deepfakes and synthetic identities.
- **Lack of design prevention and response programs that approach radicalisation together with strategic communication and conflict mitigation.** For instance, training programs for imams are under development in Italy, providing courses aiming to “create a climate of tolerance” and fight radicalisation by learning about constitutional rights. The program, funded by the Ministry of Interior, aims at non-Catholic religious leaders and those from other countries planning to work in Italy. Despite such initiatives, there are gaps of addressing these issues among Christian faith leaders and to create a context sensitive perspective. Since radicalisation is often based on a misrepresentation of religion, RATs should quantify these elements to prevent fake red flags from occurring.
- **Lack of narrative analysis.** There is a need for a system of describing the reality of those radicalised and understanding these parameters. Staff should be able deal with the subcultural roots and mindset, to improve prison intelligence or understand security threats. The need to deconstruct the phenomena and identify the main cultural and subcultural items that can help perfect tools and

RATs. There is a bias about what violent extremism means and is manifested that needs to incorporate understanding ticks of Jihadi radicalisation and far-right, so measuring interpersonal communication is essential.

- **Lack of identity indicators in Risk Assessment Tools.** There is missing information on identity and identity cues in RATs, as well as indicators that have to do with narrative and communication. This is perhaps especially relevant for the online environment. Identity markers are not detailed in the online environment, but continue to be basic (age-group, gender); although that helps with characterisation specifically to differentiate between fake and real accounts, it cannot help a systemic understanding of the phenomena.
- **Lack of awareness concerning the potential of radicalisation through communication,** even that produced by fake accounts. An expert from Italy argued platforms are just at the beginning of understanding cyber sociality, the dark side of the online and its influence on violent extremism. This awareness is not only achieved through legal frameworks; understanding foreign interference that wants to exploit networks to dismantle democracies and foster hate speech and hate is essential. Synthetic identities present adaptive narratives, low intensity threats which are nevertheless long-term and affect the capacity of understanding the complexity of radicalisation. One Italian expert flagged fields such as memes, that produce ambiguous content which is used by small communities as a new meta language (emojis in relation to incels, Islamophobia, etc.) that are specifically difficult to counteract without an interdisciplinary set of analysis tools.

# Conclusions

The aim of this entire task was to gather the perspectives and recommendations of those experts and first-line practitioners that work with and on Risk Assessment Tools to highlight what is working well and what should be improved or adapted. The different types of methodologies – survey and social labs – and the nature thereof – both international and national levels – that the consortium resorted to was meant exactly to have diversified results that might shed light on the different challenges faced by different types of actors in different parts of Europe. Moreover, the significant participatory approaches partners resorted to helped stimulating the dialogue and the discussion over these topics among different stakeholders, hence potentially producing some fruitful long-term results.

The activities carried out by the research team highlighted that the study, development and updating of Risk Assessment Tools is still an **underdeveloped area**. The reasons behind such inadequacy are manifold. First, when allocating resources on programmes related to radicalisation and terrorism, governments seem to dedicate few funds to the development and implementation of Risk Assessment Tools, especially in detention contexts, than to reactive and security-based measures. Such underfunding leads to an inevitable lack of updated RATs that might adequately address the issue of radicalisation and violent extremism in specific environments. Secondly, while some valuable and efficient tools and methodologies exist, some European countries simply do not use and apply them, for a lack of knowledge thereof and/or of training to apply them. The fact that some of the experts and first-line practitioners involved in these Social Labs – that were selected in light also of their job and work experience in this field – knew little about RATs speaks volume about the underdevelopment of such area in some countries. As a consequence, in various countries specific personnel tend to apply more informal methodologies, especially in prisons, to track down any kind of relapse into violent extremism. Besides this, the recurring issue of biased tools raised by participants suggests that RATs are not adequately updated according to the existing threats that violent extremism poses nowadays. As frequently repeated, violent extremism and radicalisation are ever-changing phenomena that change according to a set of variables mutating very often. As such, RATs need to be adequately updated, and those in charge of using them should be trained to carry out such task.

Besides this, 6.5 activities highlighted three overarching valuable **lessons learned**:

- **Need for adequate trainings:** during all the activities carried out, participants insisted on the need for an adequate training of the personnel of detention facilities in charge of applying and using RATs. They suggested that hiring educators and experts with specific resources to train the personnel would avoid the pitfalls of a biased evaluation as well as improve their capacity to detect any problem in a given context. Such trainings should include also lectures regarding the different cultural and religious backgrounds of the majority of people in detention facility (when different from the predominant one in that country) in order to understand better how to relate to them as well as radicalisation courses. The same suggestion can be applied also to those working with RATs in online environments – namely, knowing online subcultures of youth.
- **Need for multi-level cooperation:** various participants suggested that the lack of an adequate implementation of RATs is also the result of the absence of fruitful interagency cooperation. In many cases, one step further to improve the risk assessment tools would be to promote a close collaboration with external social workers. In this way, the risk assessment might be properly comprehensive and holistic, hence taking into consideration the multifaceted nature of the disengagement process. Besides this, an issue frequently raised is the lack of cooperation between academia and prison staff that slows down research on these topics – several researchers lamented that data from prisons to develop their research are kept classified.
- **Need for more interagency roundtables:** the different Social labs carried out during 6.5 activities that brought together various experts, first-line practitioners and institutional representatives highlighted that discussions as the ones we organised are very welcomed – yet very rare. A lot of participants expressed their enthusiasm for open discussion among different representatives bringing their own perspectives, and highlighted the added value of discussing together the weaknesses and challenges of RATs today. Such observation means that organising roundtables with different experts might lay the foundation for future improvement in such area.

Despite few **best practices** were mentioned during 6.5 activities, some participants mentioned some optimal approaches that might help further develop Risk Assessment Tools, especially within prison environments:

- **Dynamic Security Approach:** a strategy to deal with radicalised and terrorist offenders or other high-risk inmates to defuse violence and positively contribute

to their disengagement. In this case, it is worth mentioning that a participant insisted on the fact that a dynamic security approach does not only benefit the treatment of inmates, but also can improve the risk assessment. Indeed, if implemented correctly, it can remove the cognitive and relational distance between the prison staff and the detainees, hence allowing to observe them closely, understand them, and assess better the risk of radicalisation or extremist violence.

- **Case Conferences:** one of the participant mentioned case conferences as a valuable best practice to assess the risk of recidivism and radicalisation of former offenders. Case conferences – as it was explained by a participant – «are working tables that bring together the various actors dealing with detainees who are monitored for radicalisation or charged with terrorism-related sentences. The meetings intensify at the moment of release but also take place throughout the detention period, in some countries even after release». Such an approach might both bring together different experts and first-line practitioners to assess properly and (unanimously) when there is the risk of relapse into violence.
- **Outsourcing of risk assessment:** a participant mentioned the fact that in Netherland probation services frequently resort to risk assessment tools developed by an NGO as they proved to be effective and updated. Such approach shows a high degree of trust and cooperation among different agencies and actors, and the fact that other experts are included in the implementation can help overcome the problems encountered by the staff.

# Annex I



## INFORMED CONSENT FORM

**Title of the Project: Analyzing and Preventing Extremism Via Participation (PARTICIPATION)**

**Name of the Participant:** \_\_\_\_\_

1. I have read and understood the information sheet, the purpose of the study, and I have been given a copy to keep.
2. I am an adult according to my national law.
3. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project and understood why the research is being done.
4. I agree to take part in the study. I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences.
5. I understood that my personal information will be collected, stored and managed anonymously and/or confidentially according to my choice under the supervision of the Data Protection Manager of the project.
6. I know how to contact the research team if needed:
  - Yes   • No

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Name of Participant**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature**





This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research