

## ORPHEUS LIVE WEBINAR

JUNE 18<sup>TH</sup> 2020, 10-12 AM CET

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### THE PREVENTION PYRAMID AS A BASIS FOR DEVELOPING METHODS TACKLING THE RISKS OF VIOLENT EXTREMISM?

A critical reflection

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*ORPHEUS is a project tackling the risks of violent extremism. As one of the basic concepts it uses a prevention pyramid wherein different levels of prevention are combined and distinguished. As for all models, this pyramid model offers opportunities and limitations. These are discussed in this webinar.*

## Content

During a dissemination session and presentation of the Orpheus Project by Hilde Lauwers on a VVSG meeting - an Association of local Flemish municipalities - some questions were raised concerning the use and possible misuse of the pyramidal metaphor in prevention. We took up the challenge and wrote a reply to the VVSG (see below). It urged us to be clearer and indeed we took up some of the remarks of the VVSG. This discussion was further elaborated in an online discussion with prevention officer Mr. Peter Colle. Mr. Colle is trained as a criminologist from the University of Ghent and has been active in prevention and security issues for the city of Ghent since years. Mr. Colle was so kind, as a representant of one of our observer partners (the City of Ghent), to join us.

We had some discussions between partners of different countries on the interpretation, the range, borders and blurring of levels in preventive initiatives. We need to be very explicit on this issue. The safe spaces approach and training modules are developed cross-border and in the end will be implemented in a specific context.

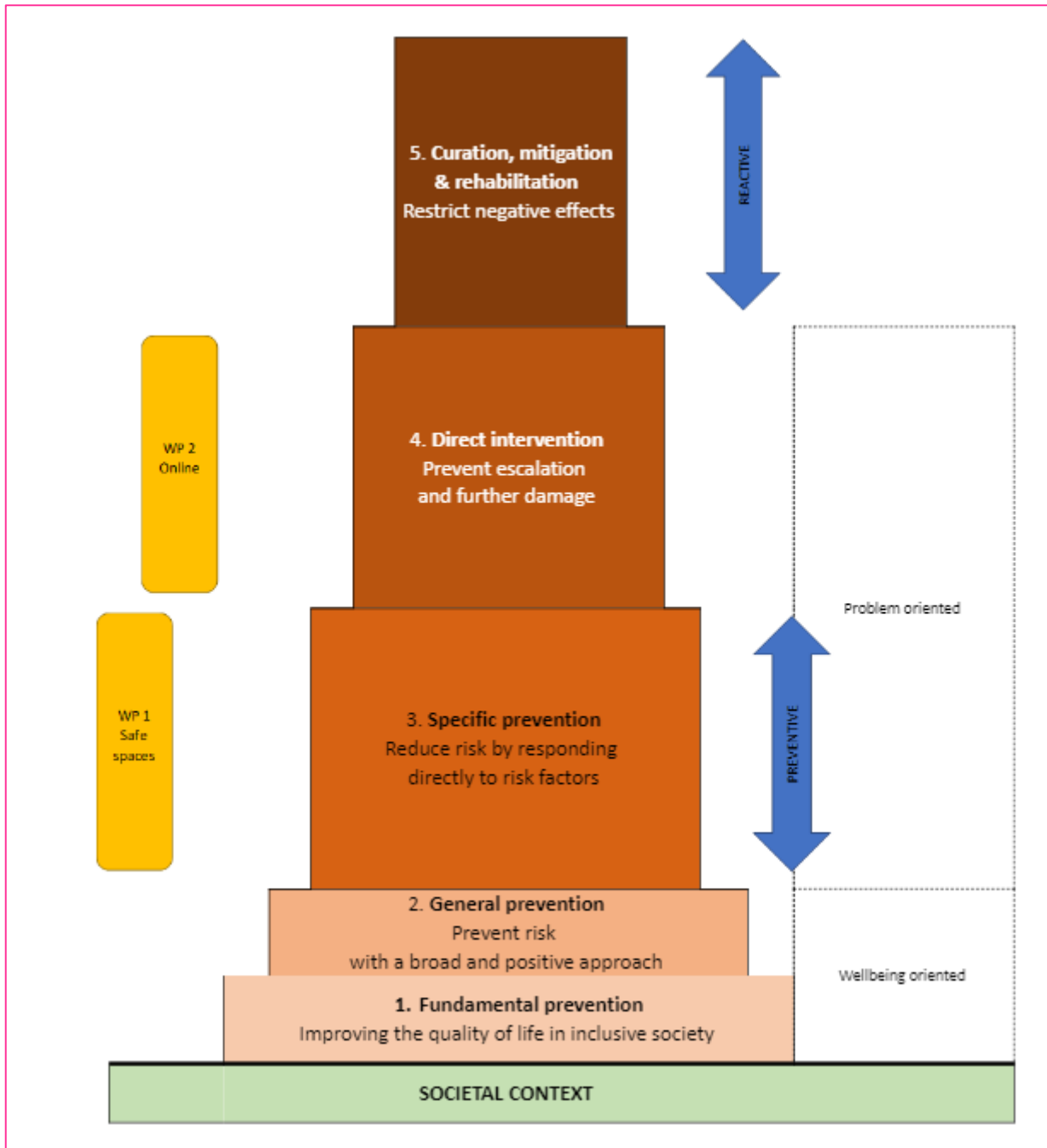
This context is not neutral and is characterized by certain interpretations on prevention. In short, a safe space pedagogy or a training for professionals could be very ethical, practice- or evidence based as such or tested in a certain context. This does not guarantee that this will be the same in different contexts and maybe the training must be adapted to the local circumstances. Theoretical concepts and metaphors are useful tools to discuss these issues in a safe climate.

## Annexes

- A. The prevention pyramid in the ORPHEUS PROJECT
- B. Reaction to the inquiry of the VVSG-Workgroup

**A. The prevention pyramid in the ORPHEUS PROJECT**

**THE ORPHEUS PREVENTION MODEL: THE PREVENTION PYRAMID**



*Framework for the integral prevention of radicalisation towards political violence - Görgöz, Vanhove & Van Bouchaute, elaborated on the model of Deklerck, J. (2006)*

### Typical characteristics of the prevention pyramid model

This model is an **integrated model** for all kinds of prevention work. The pyramid is reference framework for developing prevention policies and practices aiming at a **combination of general and specific measures** within an integrated approach.

The pyramid metaphor suggests that all prevention work starts from the ground level of the **broader societal context**: specific prevention practices are considered as part of improving the quality of social life of citizens in democratic inclusive societies. Or to put it the other way round: prevention policies and practices should not disrupt or deteriorate this quality of social life... Prevention work should have a special and critical attention to the general living conditions in society.

**Characteristics of this model** are:

- It is **not a phased of tiered approach** of prevention and it does not involve the idea of a cascading sequence of prevention efforts in time. On the contrary, the model starts from the analysis of a problem and leads to appropriate actions on different levels with special attention to avoid counterproductive effects of some (more problem oriented) measures on other prevention levels
- The model makes a clear distinction between a **problem** oriented (negative) versus **wellbeing** oriented (positive) prevention approach
- The model **differentiates five levels of prevention**, from general to specific prevention; making the difference with direct intervention and curation as the reactive part of integral prevention
- On the different prevention levels distinction is made between working on
  - Influencing the **attitudes** of the involved actors (on the different levels): sensibilisation, conscientisation, participation and consultation, information, increasing involvement of citizens and field workers...
  - developing **structural** measures that have impact on the context of the involved actors: we make a distinction between organisational measures (roadmaps, alarm procedures, protocols, ...) technical measures (safeguarding, control of risk zones... ) and policy measures (equality of opportunity in education, discrimination testing programs, neighbourhood renewal, implementing new social services...)

The model has been implemented in prevention of violence in schools or neighbourhoods and thus is useful as a framework for the ambitions in Orpheus. The model helps to map, analyse and evaluate the prevention measures. The project application aimed at using this model in the:

- **Work packet on Safe spaces: “In our integral prevention pyramid model this package focuses on general and specific prevention (level 2 and 3) with a positive effect on fundamental prevention.”**
- **Work packet on online prevention: “In our integral prevention pyramid model, this Work packet focuses on specific prevention (level 3) and direct intervention (level 4) with a positive effect on general prevention (level 2). Through cross-border cooperation between the pilot projects, a higher level will feed the lower level of the prevention pyramid and vice versa. The information of experts on alter-narratives can offer input for the grooming awareness and resilience workshops.”**

Fundamental prevention	General prevention	Specific prevention	Direct intervention	Curation, mitigation & rehabilitation
<i>Improving the general quality of life in an inclusive society</i>	<i>Prevent risks by approaching the problem broad and positive</i>	<i>Reduce risk by responding directly to risk factors</i>	<i>Prevent escalation and damage</i>	<i>Restrict negative effects</i>
<p>Although this dimension of prevention is often forgotten, it is essential for a good result of any other prevention measure on the other levels. Both the analysis and the approach are not problem but wellbeing oriented. In other words: this is a strategy of indirect prevention. We can think of measures in the field of social, education, economic, safety... policies.</p>	<p>The problem of increasing political violence in society is acknowledged but the prevention approach is wellbeing oriented. The aim of the positive approach is to avoid that groups are stigmatised, with more social frustration and self-stigmatisation as a counterproductive effect - a causal factor for political violence.</p>	<p>Prevention measures are directly targeted on a specific problem. Both analysis and approach are problem oriented. This is a direct prevention approach. The problem of political violence is acknowledged. To lower that risk the measures are specifically targeted to counteract specific risk factors causing political violence.</p>	<p>The risk for political violence to happen in society is clear and present. The aim of prevention in reaction to the immediate threat is to prevent a further escalation. Different intervention techniques are used.</p>	<p>The negative problem has already occurred. The effects of the problem have to be 'curated'. Both the analysis of the situation and the prevention approach is problem oriented. The goals of curation are to prevent the problem or situation of becoming worse and to have a quick and effective answer to the negative effects</p>
<p><i>Examples:</i>  <i>active non-discrimination policies, politicians promoting inclusive city with equal citizens, promotion of civil rights and human rights (association, free speech...), quality of services and education, high levels of work in dignity, community-based policing, ...</i></p>	<p><i>Examples:</i>  <i>training educators in their pedagogical role of having 'difficult conversations' in safe spaces based on a trust relationship, invest in support networks for vulnerable groups, improve the quality and quantity of public space and facilities...</i></p>	<p><i>Examples:</i>  <i>support legitimate channels for expressing grievances, resilience training programs with specific youth groups at risk, individual trajectories with vulnerable youngsters, juridical action against hate speech, strict and swift repression of hate crimes, promoting alter-narratives...</i></p>	<p><i>Examples:</i>  <i>time-outs, online intervention to disturb recruiting networks, individual trajectories with persons using hate speech, discussions with professionals to find a better way of reacting, ...</i></p>	<p><i>Examples:</i>  <i>exit programs for convicted terrorists, dismantling supporting networks after attacks...</i></p>

## **B. REACTION TO THE INQUIRY FROM THE VVSG-WORKGROUP ABOUT THE PREVENTION PYRAMID**

**Denoix Kerger & Bart Van Bouchaute,  
Researchers at Artevelde University of Applied Sciences**

Following the ORPHEUS presentation at the VVSG 'Radicalisation Working Group' (28.02.2020, by project manager Hilde Lauwers) an interesting but difficult question was raised about the prevention pyramid which is the basis of the prevention model we use.

### QUESTION

*"The question was raised whether it made sense to situate "wellbeing prevention" under prevention. Isn't this narrowing social policy down to prevention? And thus, making it functional for prevention, while it also has many other objectives. This places too much emphasis on the safety aspect of social policy. What is your answer to this? ... "*

### COMMENTS

The question about the prevention pyramid is particularly interesting but also complex. The answer must be nuanced.

**On the one hand, we can argue in favour of the model.**

The idea in this prevention model is indeed that good prevention means that one 'also' or 'especially' takes measures that are not primarily problem-oriented but can have effects on problems. Specific interventions aimed at young people who have or cause problems without taking care of the underlying levels are of little use.

An example from our study visits to Manchester (UK) in 2006-2016: there used to be some youth centres and youth workers in different districts. Due to budget cuts for local authorities, even these disappeared. The focus shifted to coping with (youth causing) nuisance/ (anti-social behaviour). In neighbourhoods where this was common, intensive youth work projects were installed by prevention workers in close collaboration with the police during several weeks. Afterwards this was abolished, and the project moved to other problem areas. Then the nuisance came back...

Simple conclusion: the foundation of good youth work as a basic provision for all children and young people is needed, when there are no problems, but certainly also when there are problems (such as nuisance). Youth work has a direct effect on young people's lives and indirectly on problems that young people have or cause. If such youth work exists and works well, it still possible that specific problem-oriented interventions will be needed and requested. But good youth work will have prevented many problems, and problem-oriented interventions will be embedded in a broader, positive approach to young people.

This is a classic, *old school* insight in the meaning of youth work, but we think it is particularly important to bring this line of thought to the attention again in times of strong, sometimes exclusively problem-oriented control and instrumentalization of youth work. After all, this ground layer of trust and relations was in danger of disappearing in various youth activities and only problem-oriented legitimations were possible, such as access to the labour market, prevention of drug abuse, reduction of nuisance and recently the risk of radicalisation and social alienation.

**On the other hand, this model indeed entails a considerable risk.**

If one is steering the pyramid in a manner of speaking 'top down' - in our case from a safety perspective aimed at early detection and managing risk - , then these broad welfare-oriented interventions will either be referred to the second plan or could eventually be eliminated due to urgency and scarcity. We agree on the suggestion in the question from the VVSG working group. Prevention might transform into an instrument of that safety and risk management policy. Youth workers and organisations may feel obligated to subscribe to this by political or public pressure, because. Due to covenants with local policymakers and shifts in funding, this sometimes is the only option organisations have to survive.

Even in *tempore non suspecto*, in the 1990s, with no reference to radicalisation, some academics warned and questioned this mechanism. Flemish welfare expert Dirk Geldof wrote a classic article in *Alert* (a Flemish journal for social policy and social work) on the problems and perverse effects of welfare work placed at the service of safety goals. The subject then was about nuisance and disturbing youth in the neighbourhoods, the reactions were VIP (very irritating policing), neighbourhood watches, problem-oriented policing... Geldof argued for a strict separation between welfare work, community work, etc. and policing. Good community work in the areas would have a positive effect on safety anyway. Despite the clear statement and analysis at the time, the instrumentalization, partly fuelled by the breakthrough of New Public Management in our local authorities, has continued, even in the management of local youth welfare work. In short, this means that, at best, youth welfare work risks becoming a sort of servant for local social policy agendas.

In times of fear and terror, many other assignments are now being bestowed that are actually at odds with the basic principles of such youth welfare work (the contested participation in LIVC+, for example<sup>1</sup>). With the diagnosis of and policy responses to the threat of 'home grown' terrorism, that risk has only increased in a climate of securitisation. One observes for example that, if youth welfare work would only make sense to the extent that "it would give signals about and helps provide guidance to radicalised young people".

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<sup>1</sup> Local boards for exchanging information between city council, education, police, welfare workers.

A recent article by Dutch expert Martijn de Koning<sup>2</sup> shows that the questions Geldof discussed are more topical than ever. During the 1990s the subject was nuisance and perceived insecurity in neighbourhoods, whereas now the focus on risk and safety in a 'radicalisation approach' is pointed at the national security. Muslims and by extension 'foreigners' are targeted. The image of safety itself has been radicalised. Prevention and attempts to manage risk have led to a great extension of the powers of the authorities. Within the classical roles of the government, safety becomes dominant, at the expense of other assignments of the government. This is described in literature as 'securitisation'. This is reflected in the increasing surveillance of certain easily identifiable groups (outsiders). This surveillance works in two directions: on the one hand surveillance, prevention and care are used for young people who are at risk of radicalisation; on the other hand surveillance, disruption and repression are used on the young people who are seen as responsible for that risk.

The classical role of youth workers is also changing in this context. Surveillance is the biggest common denominator of expectation for youth welfare work - and more broadly for social actors. This is manifest in the imperatives surrounding LIVC+, the obligation to report and the erosion of professional secrecy and confidentiality in recent Belgian legislation.

We also found inspiration for this discussion about the role of youth work in prevention in a document by Sieckelinck & Gielen for the RAN-network.<sup>3</sup> The potential of youth work is "tackling the risk factors that can *create a breeding ground for radicalisation*". There are multitudes of risk factors, which provide at best guidance, but by no means can they provide guidelines for protection policy or positive action. Moreover, scientific literature points to the perverse and even counterproductive effect of such actions - which we have already discussed at length in the initial phase of our ORPHEUS project. In describing the current situation, Sieckelinck also distinguishes two approaches: a deficit-based approach and a strength-based approach. He is a champion of the strengths-based approach. This was and still is the strength and foundation of good youth work. Assignments in the field of surveillance, reporting, etc. are very far from their DNA.

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<sup>2</sup> De Koning, M. [Wat leert het anti radicaliseringsbeleid ons over veiligheid ten tijde van #coronacrisis](#) dd. 28/3/2020 in which he also points to the same movement of corona. The classic general prevention, being prepared for a possible pandemic has, paradoxically, led to a phasing out of this part and relatively weak means of tackling the matter, due to the dominance of risk thinking in terms of health.

<sup>3</sup> "Although risk factors can indicate which risks need to be mitigated, countered or eliminated, they cannot offer guidelines for protective policies or for positive action. This is why the risk approach is sometimes criticised, particularly by social professionals seeking to draw up a social strategic agenda against extremism" Sieckelinck & Gielen in Protective and promotive factors building resilience against violent radicalization. [Ran Issue Paper April 2018](#)



## CONCLUSION

The prevention pyramid has been developed to think and work 'bottom up', but in practice there is an effective threat of a 'top down' approach, fuelled by politics of securitization in response to the social fear of 'home grown terror'. This movement is aimed at defusing or adjuring fear and can cause a perverting and a counterproductivity of the preventive ambitions - these are central challenges that the ORPHEUS project wants to answer.

And if steering does indeed starts from a securitisation approach, it is even appropriate, according to old (Geldof) and new (Sieckelinck) critics, to provide for a strict separation between welfare work on the one hand and the repressive apparatus, the left and right hands of the government, on the other.

In this sense, we must continue to take a particularly critical view at new terms such as “chain approach” and “integral or integrated prevention”. These all sound very logical and appealing but can become particularly repressive and counterproductive for young people but also for their supervisors. This can even lead to the lack of, obstructing of and dismantling of the still existing ‘safe space’ that youth work was and could be. This safe space idea does not only apply to the young people, but also and perhaps even more to the workers. We hear more and more signals that they, even more than the youngsters, are being trapped by the lack of safe space. This creates shyness and embarrassment to act and conflicts with the management in their own organization and with local and higher authorities.

The anxious and clumsy response<sup>4</sup> to a question from Uit de Marge and the Children's Rights Coalition to the Constitutional Court about the risks of participation in LIVC+ in the Flemish Parliament is thought-provoking in this regard.

Current events give involved practitioners, policy makers and observers every reason to remain critical of the counterproductive effects of sometimes well-intentioned prevention policies.

Bart Van Bouchaute & Denoix Kerger, April 2020

Ghent

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<sup>4</sup> One of the answers shows that participation in LIVCs by youth workers and relatives is “mostly about being able to detect threats that can undermine our society”. See [Commissieverslag](#).