



# Understanding Radicalisation and Extremism with respect to youth-work

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Saskia Tempelman

*Strategic Advisor on Countering Extremism  
National Co-ordinator for Security and Counter-Terrorism  
the Dutch Government*



## Why address extremism?

### **Well-being perspective:**

*Because extremist movements undermine individual autonomy, diminish future perspectives, tear families apart and disrupt communities*

### **Democratic perspective:**

*Because extremists oppose our open, pluralistic way of life and undermine the democratic order*

### **Security perspective:**

*Because extremists break the law and even threaten the lives of citizens.*



## ***“Married to monster”***

*Ex-wife of Paris bomber Ibrahim Abdeslam says he was a drug-taking boozier who never went to mosque.*



## ***Signals of radicalisation were laughed at.***

*“Somehow, I feel this is a personal failure. I could not change Bilal’s mind. We were too careful, out of fear”*



## ***Abdelhamid Abaaoud***

*Son of a grocer, his secondary education was spent at the prestigious Saint-Pierre College in Ukkel, a prosperous burrough in Brussels.*



## Radicalisation

*Comparable social-psychological processes behind various forms of radicalisation.*

***Identity and authority issues + lack of mentoring + vicinity of extremist peers → Radicalisation***

- Extremists hijack and further incite feelings of deprivation, exclusion and spiritual longing.
- Offer friendship and meaning.
- Provide incentive and legitimation for (violent) action.
- Often (very) hard to counter (provocation, mistrust)



# Democratic Resilience

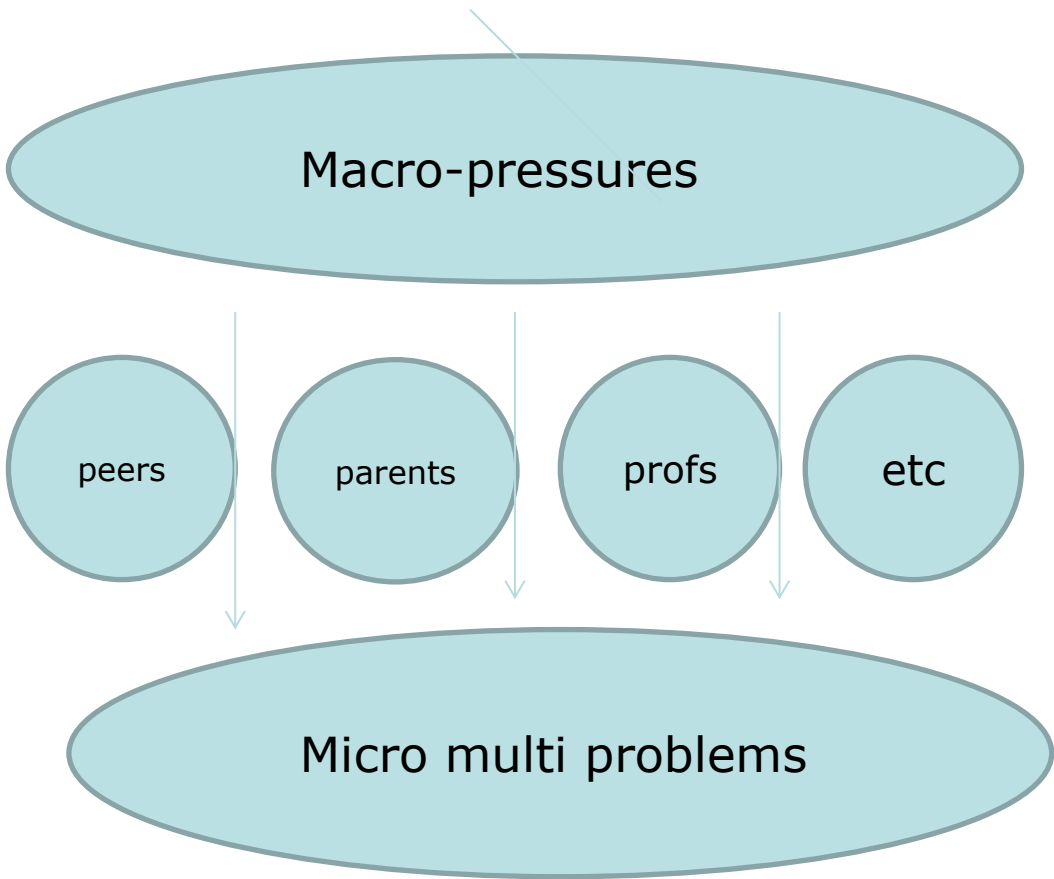
***Cognitive/emotional/social openness***

**+ *adequate mentoring***

**+ *vicinity of peer role-models***

**→ *democratic resilience.***







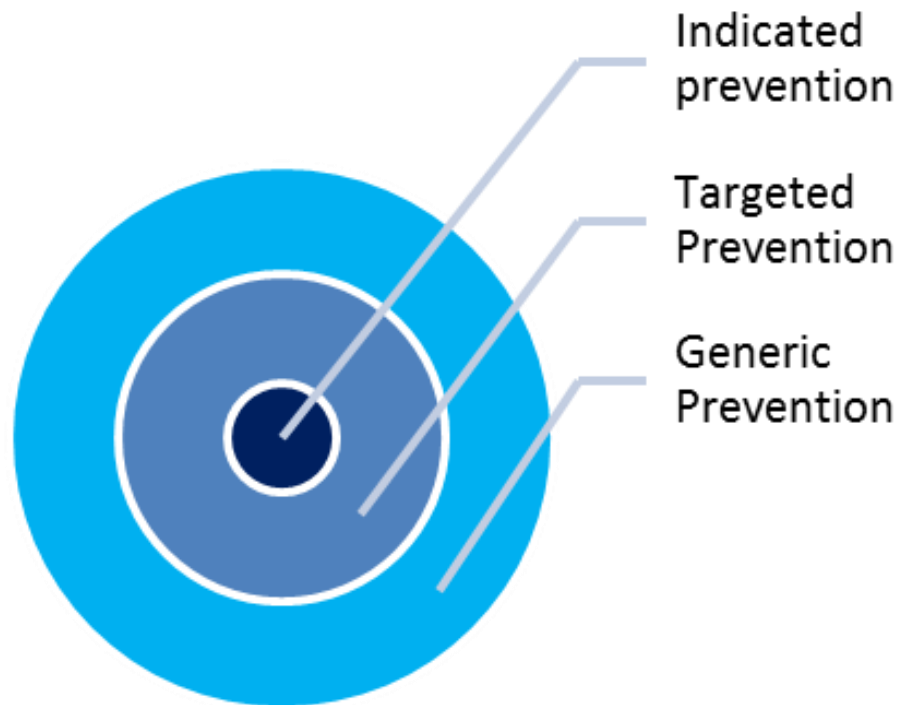
## *Integral authoritative coalitions to mentor youth*

- Understand emotional-spiritual needs
- Balance responsive connection and clear boundaries
- Allow for 'normal' adolescent radicalisation (black&white, defiance etc.) but draw the line when it goes too far.
- Realize the power of propaganda, sekt-like manipulation, conspiracy theories.
- Be aware of possible mental-health catalysts.
- Shake off shame, realize that no one can handle this alone.





# Integrated preventive approach on three levels







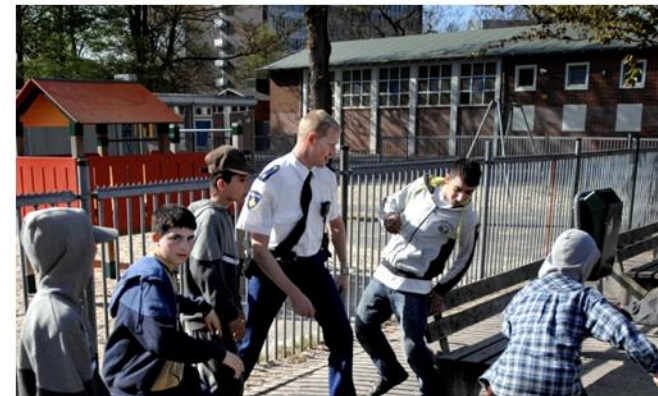
## Generic Prevention

- Radicalisation is here to stay.  
→ address in generic context.
- Resilient leadership: de-islamify the problem, stress importance of democratic resilience, and counter all extremist undermining of the open, democratic society.
- Support youth in identity development and finding place in society.  
→ Youth workers and teachers are already making a difference. Understand and cherish the ways in which generic institutions strengthen democratic resilience and prevent radicalisation.



# Targetted Prevention

- Network-analysis (compare criminal youth gangs)
- Local, multi-disciplinary approach: cooperation security domain and social domain.
- Training of relevant formal partners and informal key-figures (peer, community organisations)
- Insight into effective interaction and interventions





## Indicative prevention (and de-radicalisation)

- Local multi-disciplinary 'case-tables' to discuss signals and tailor-made interventions.
- Systems for sharing of signals and information
- Specific expertise in youth care and mental health services for mentoring radicalizing youth
- Support for families (safeguarding siblings etc.)





# Three lessons from the European Context

## **1. Analysis**

- of (generic) protective factors and specific risk factors.

## **2. National Coordination**

- stimulate and support local integral approach

## **3. National (or regional) facilitation**

- Networks: bring together (local) policy-makers, professionals and informal key-figures to exchange knowledge and practice
- Centre of Expertise: hotline + tailored practical advice.
- Toolbox for integral cooperation and practical intervention.