



Evaluation Needs in the Counter-Violent-Extremism Policy Field



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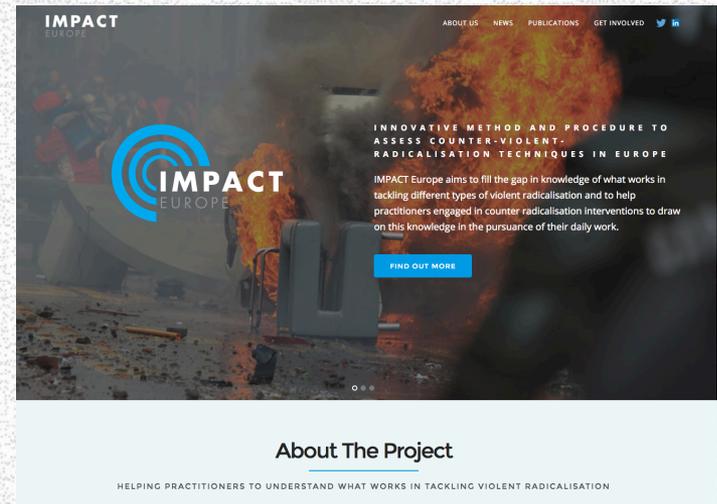
Evaluation of CVE interventions

Background

Experts and the European Commission lament the scarcity or the low quality of evaluations of CVE Counter-Violent-Extremism interventions (*Dawson et al. 2014, European Commission, 2014*).

- Criticisms about methodological limits and lack of empirical data (*Silke 2007; Horgan, Braddock 2010; Freese 2014; Mastroe 2016*).
- Absence of a common framework
- Few examples of theory-driven or realist approaches (*Veldhuis 2012*)

- *Period 1/2014 - 6/2017- The project has received funding from the European Union's 7th Framework Programme for research, technological development and demonstration under grant agreement no 312235*



The policy: strategy to counter extremist radicalisation

- Educational, social, political or economic programmes aimed at addressing the conditions propelling some individuals down the path to terrorism ...
- **Radicalisation:** *“A phenomenon of people embracing opinions, views and ideas which could lead acts of terrorism”*. (EC 2006)
- **De-radicalisation** *“A misleading term to encompass what are context specific and culturally determined efforts to reduce the risk of involvement or re-engagement in terrorism”* (Horgan, Taylor 2011)

Country	Strategy	Assumptions about radicalisation	Intervention	Evaluation
Denmark	a) Prevention as indirect strategy b) targeted	symptom of inadequate social integration	Improving socio-economic conditions of potentially vulnerable young people. Mentoring scheme for inmates associated with extremist groups	ISD <i>Butt, Tuck 2013; Schmid 2013</i>

CVE Interventions

Level	Type of intervention
Individual	Advice to relatives of 'foreign fighters'
Probation services and individuals	Mentoring scheme for inmates at risk of radicalisation
	Re-integrating radicals and disengagement programmes
Community	Dialogue with selected community Islamic leaders
	Education of young people on citizenship, ethnic tolerance, non-prejudiced thinking, cultural diversity
	Bridging gaps by interreligious, intercultural and other dialogues
	Engagement and empowerment of communities at risk
	Raising awareness of first line practitioners
Population	Delivering counter-communication challenging extremist propaganda
International institutions	Anti-Money Laundering

Method

Purposes

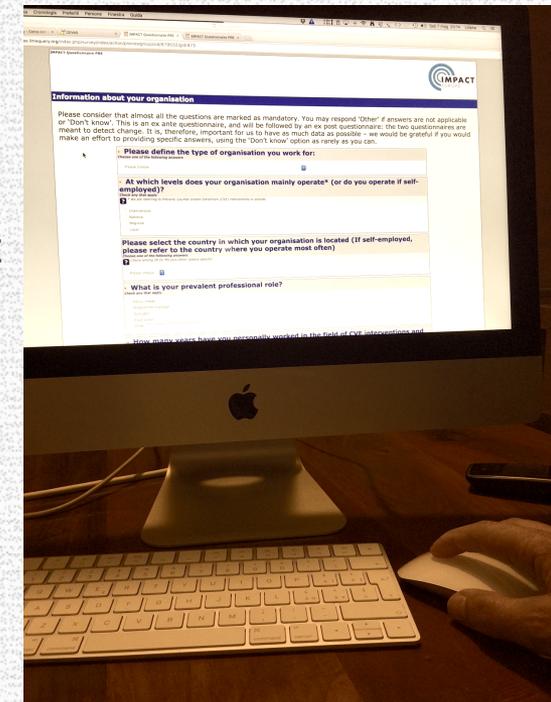
- Identifying evaluation needs in the sector of CVE interventions
- To assess the Evaluation Toolkit of the IMPACT Europe project and to ensure its usability and usefulness for external organisations

Method

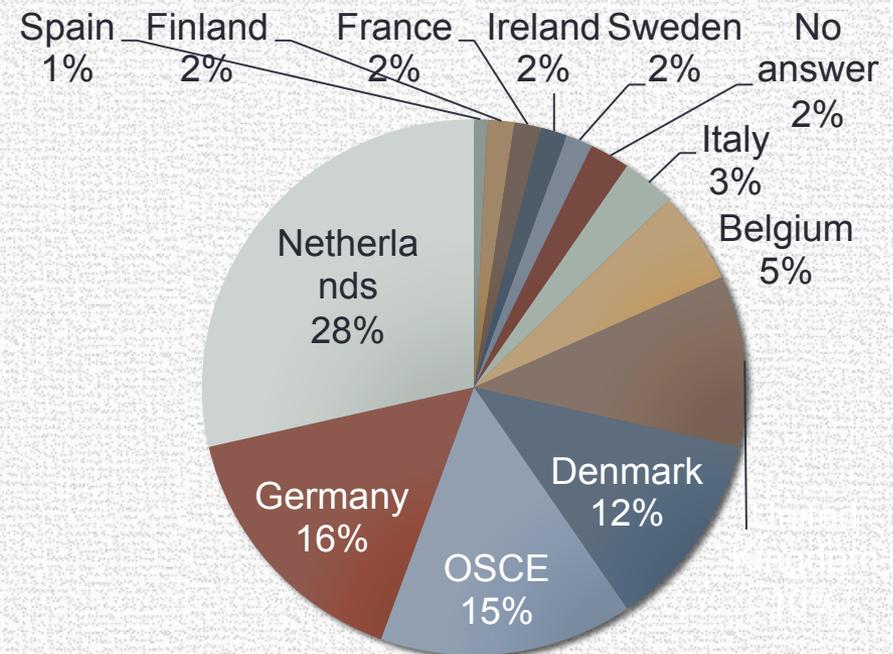
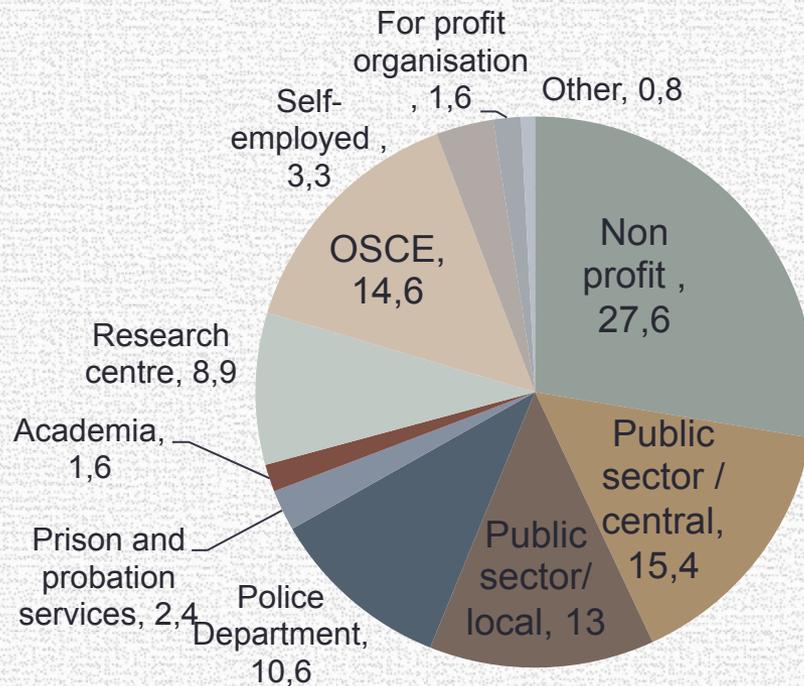
Survey with an online semi structured Questionnaire-Pre/Post (n. 80 items) N.123 respondents
 Ongoing consultation with the partners and Consortium end-users, n.8 semi-structured interviews and n.3 focus groups

Dimensions

Where respondents are located
Evaluation skills and access to professional development
Perceived evaluation competences and needs
Evaluations carried out by respondents' organisation
Characteristics of the evaluators of CVE interventions
Perceived challenges for evaluation



The sample



- n.126 respondents. Experts engaged in CVE policy which expressed their interest in the Evaluation Toolkit. **TOTAL 91** organisations
- 611 Member States plus OSCE (may be international)
- Levels of operation of the organisations: 43% international level; 56% at national; 37% at local.

Professional role and training course

Strong expertise in the field of CVE interventions (average 7.6 years -non profit organisations).

The most frequent professional roles are programme managers (44%), practitioners (28%), and evaluators (15%).



Low evaluation skills

- 40% attended at least 1 workshop about evaluation; rarely (13%) a specific course within a structured programme of study
- Only 2 evaluators out of 19 attended a training course (academic course) about evaluation, training among evaluators does not differ significantly from other roles (46.2% v/s 36.8%).
- No stat.Sig. significant differences between evaluators/non evaluators as concerns the N. of CVE evaluations read (Av 3.4 v/s 4. - ANOVA oneway respectively statistics F , 192).

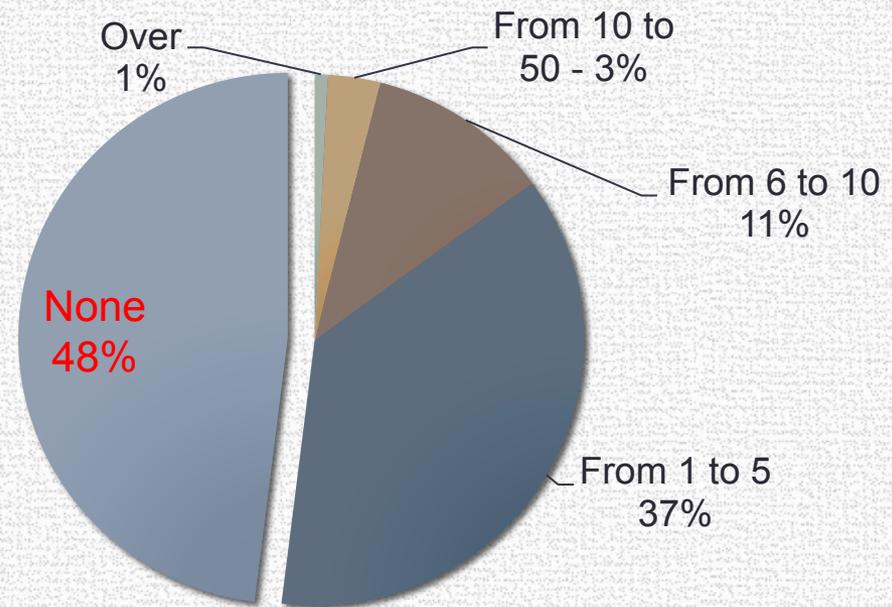
Weak practices of evaluation

Half of the end-users' organisations **have no experience of evaluation.** Only 15% managed many evaluations

Self-Reported evaluations N.472
(the question did not clarify what an evaluation is: anything the organisation thinks is an evaluation)



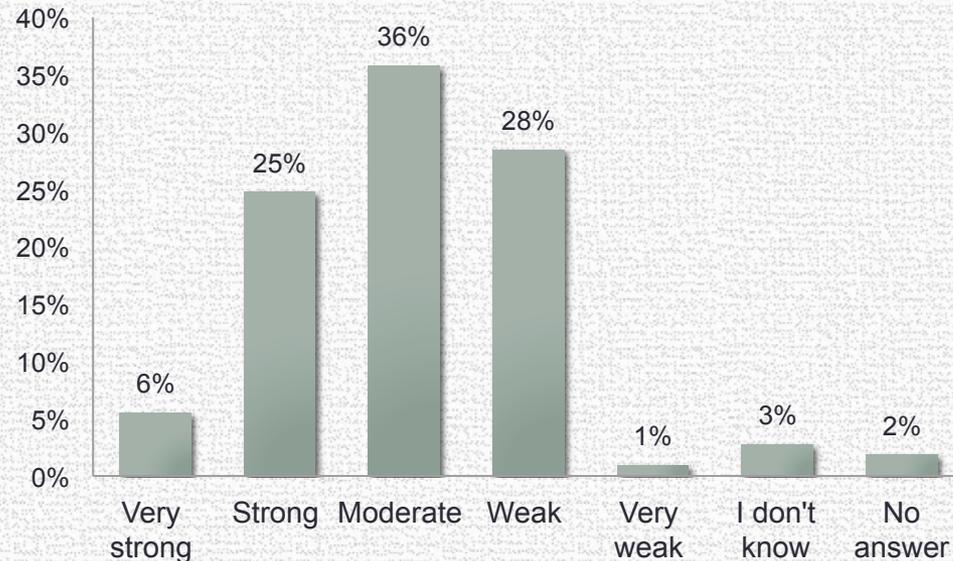
How many evaluations of Counter/ Prevent Violent Extremism interventions has your organisation carried out in the last 5 years?



Self- perception of evaluation competences

Designing an evaluation of CVE interventions...

Only 1/3 reports weak competence to develop an evaluation design.



Although respondents often reported they have no evaluation experience....

The self perceived competences to conduct or design evaluations are usually considered from moderate to high

???

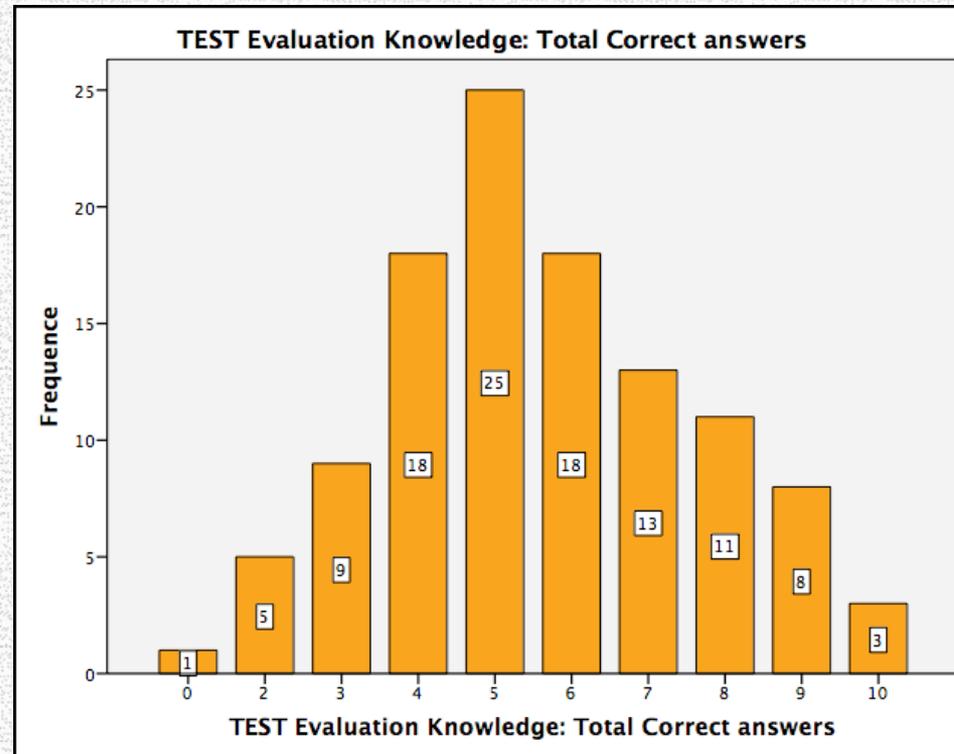
Evaluation skills and perceived competences

ITEMS EKA TEST: How should be a proper evaluation design of a CVE intervention?	% Correct	% Uncertain	% Error
1. Based on good monitoring data. If you don't have any, it is impossible to make an evaluation	17	24	59
2. It must always compare beneficiaries of the interventions with non-beneficiaries to provide valuable information	23	42.5	34.5
3. Aimed at understanding the processes as it is almost impossible to measure outcomes	25	38	37
4. Sometimes it can avoid to identify evaluation questions	34	49	17
5. Aimed at identifying the best solution and at generalising these practices in all the contexts	39	32	29
6. Exclusively based on the measure of discrepancies between observed and expected	49.6	38.8	10.6
7. Based on methods of research (qualitative and /or quantitative) chosen ad hoc for the specific intervention	62	25	13
8. Based on a choice of priorities because it is not useful for an evaluation to try to answer all questions	65.5	26.5	8
9. Focused on new or pilot interventions: the very fact that a programme is implemented in many coun	66	17	17
10. Based on a good reconstruction and understanding of the programme theory	84	12	4
11. We could search for lessons and methodological suggestions also from other sectors of intervention	86	14	0

Assessing common knowledge about a proper evaluation of CVE interventions

We used International standards of evaluation to build the EKA (Evaluation Knowledge Assessment) TEST to assess evaluation knowledge

It identifies the most common mistakes or convincement – misconceptions that may be detrimental for a proper evaluation.



Average 5.6 Median 5, St Dev 2

Slightly higher values (Aver. 6,8) in the sub-group of evaluators

(*t*-Test Leven's for equality of variance $F 1.537$ Sig .218, Sig 2 tailed .010).

Assessing common knowledge, preconceptions and convictions about a proper evaluation

Evaluation
competences:

Pre and Post Test

4.5/ 10



Contrasting beliefs emerge! ...about a proper evaluation of CVE interventions:

- *Aimed at understanding the processes as it is almost impossible to measure outcomes (NO - Correct 25%)*
- *Based on a good reconstruction and understanding of the programme theory (Yes- Correct 84%).*
- *Evaluations must always compare beneficiaries of the interventions with non-beneficiaries to provide valuable information (Uncertain 42%)*
- *Exclusively based on the measure of discrepancies between observed and expected outcomes (NO - Correct 49.6%)*

Although perceived skills are quite high, the average rate of the EKA test is moderate. **A large part of respondents resulted to have uncertain opinions** (I don't know) or erroneous conviction.

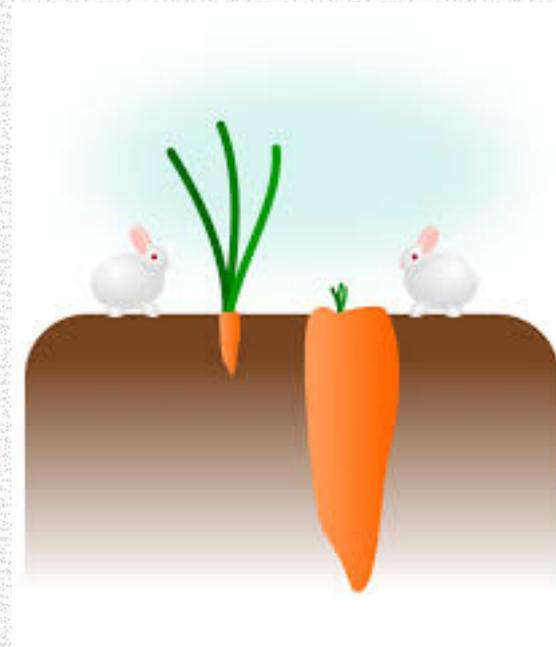
Perceived evaluation competences of end users and their role

Professional evaluators are conscious of their limits and difficulties to make good evaluations.

v/s

1 out of 4 (24%) of non evaluator judged their personal competences as 'strong or very strong'

Doing evaluation...**an easy and underestimated task for people with less evaluation competences**

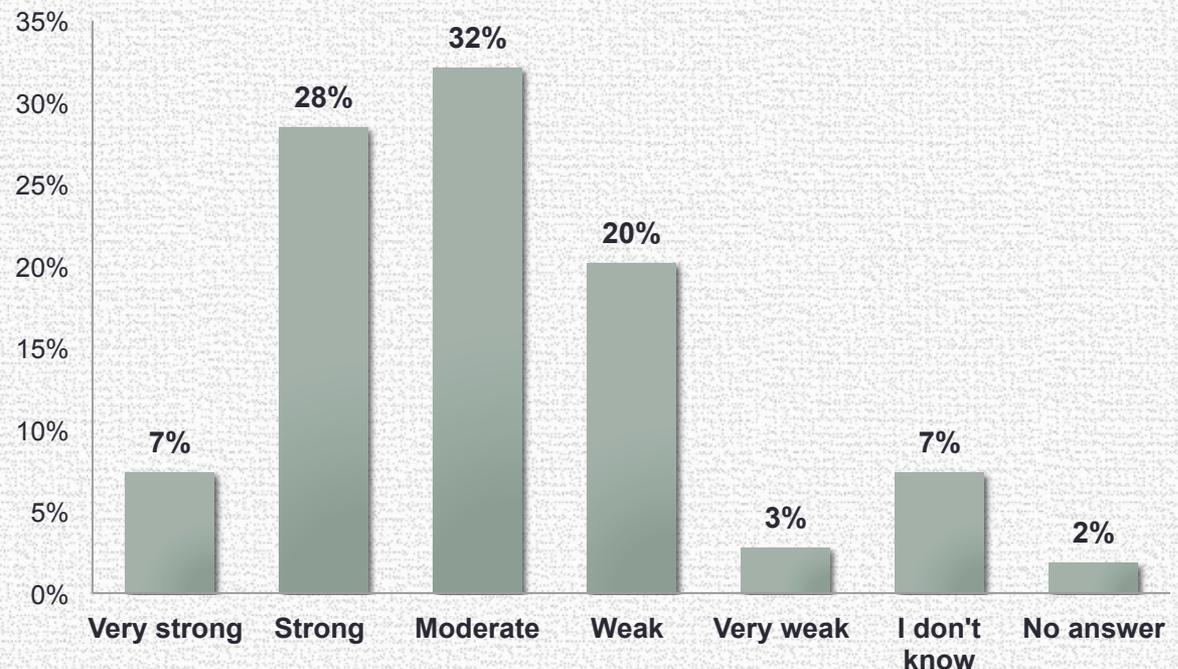


Evaluation self perceived competences: improving the reconstruction of the programme theory

However.....

1/3 of respondents state that they are not able to reconstruct the programme theory of CVE interventions, that is the explicitation of theoretical approach, logic models and assumptions.

Personal competences about using logic models to represent the CVE programme theory



Evaluations: use and dissemination

Moderate Utility

judgment about evaluation reports: 27% 'Extremely or very useful'.

The pessimistic judgment is more common among organisations that in the last 5 years conducted 3 or more evaluations (69.6% Vs. 38%).

Low Availability

45% of the sample state that **to find and to obtain evaluation reports is 'very or extremely difficult'**

Low Dissemination

- mainly inside the organisation without public access (4 internal seminars, 3 confidential reports, 3 external meetings, 2 published reports on the website, 2 published articles)



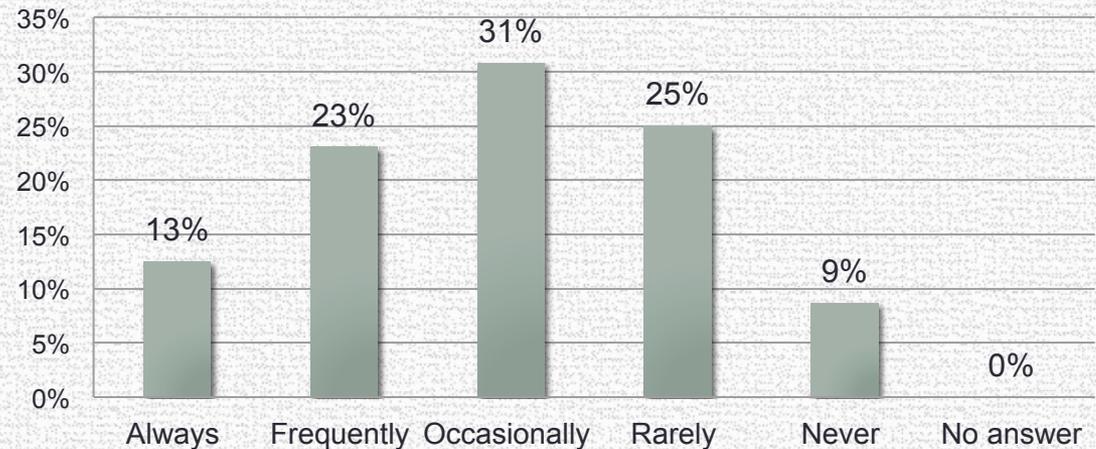
Dissemination of evaluation results

There is a trade-off between keeping results private and dissemination.

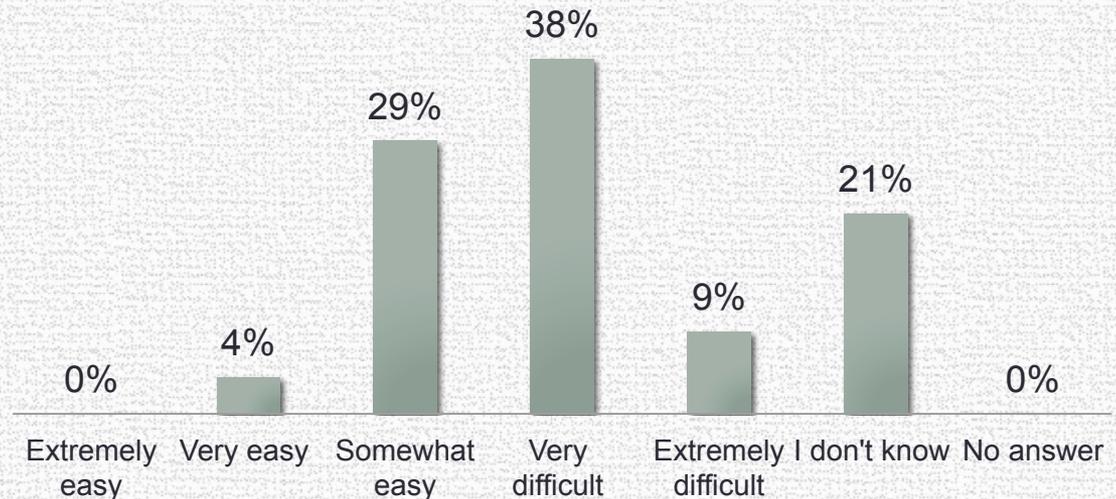
Only 13% of respondents report that their organisation always disseminates evaluation results. More than 1/3 never or rarely does

At the same time, only 1/3 of respondents find obtaining evaluation reports easy or somewhat easy

Dissemination of evaluation findings

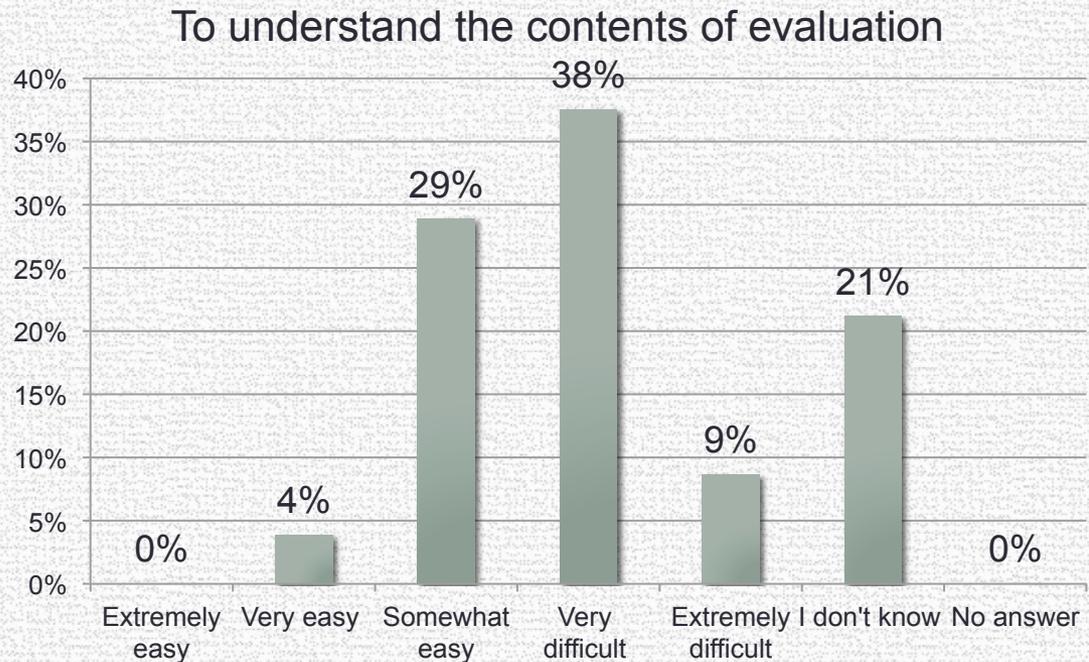


To obtain full copies of evaluations



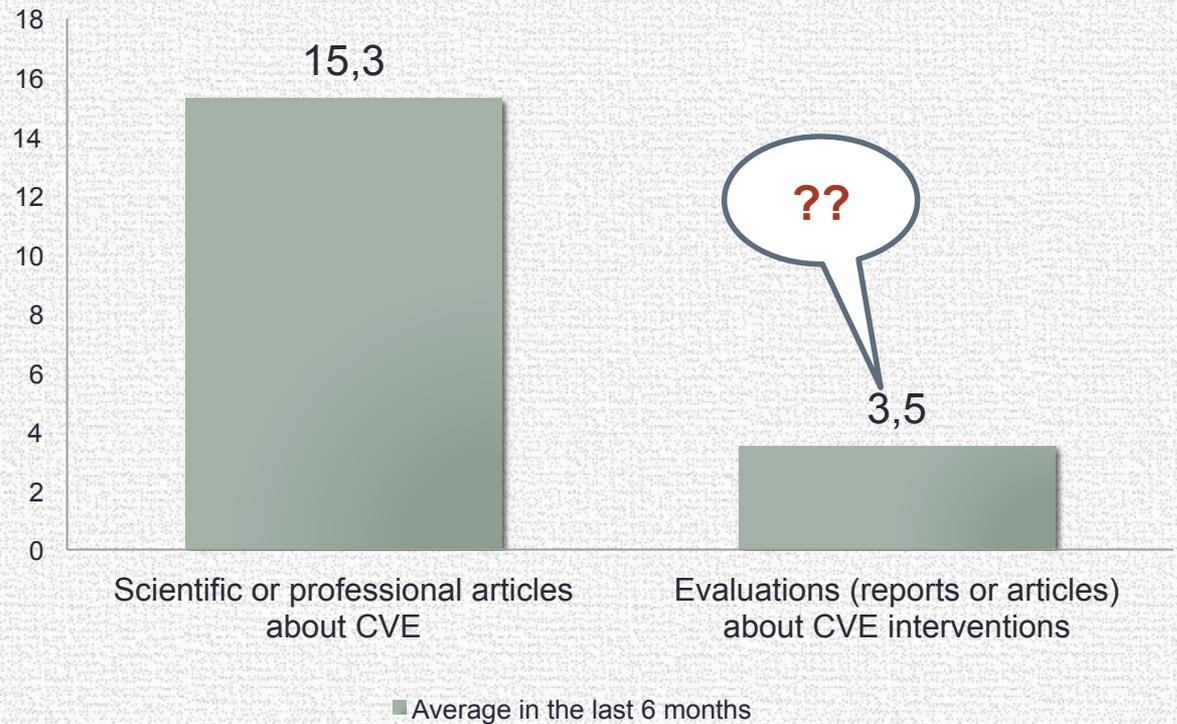
Disseminating the results and improving the accessibility to evaluation reports

Only 4% of respondents state that is 'very easy' to understand the evaluation reports



Disseminating the results and improving the accessibility to evaluation reports

However...there is a good level of on going access to qualified sources of information about CVE



How to interrogate the underpinned programme theories

- “Another challenge common to most European countries is **their choice of partners**, as authorities have frequently struggled to find cooperative, legitimate and reliable partners within local Muslim communities” (Vidino, Brandon 2015:2)
- Do organisations of non-violent extremists act as ‘conveyor belts’ or ‘firewall’ for terrorism (preventing from embracing Jihad)?
- Which partners do you choose for cooperation?
- Which groups should we focus on: people already on the path of becoming violent extremists or non-violent extremists?



We need a ‘Theory driven evaluation’ to test the ‘Gateway’ Hypothesis



Main perceived obstacles and challenges for the evaluation

- **Methodological issues:** ” *...it is not possible to adopt RCT design because it is impossible to build a control group, contexts are heterogeneous, and the target groups are small*”
- Difficult to measure failures
- Communication issues between local and national governance levels and among different sectors (security/ intelligence)
- Short term projects without outcome evaluation
- **Bias** due to over reporting of socially desirable response, lack of compliance, labelling avoidance. Measures are usually biased towards showing success because success delivers more money.
- **Reliability:** The CVE community components do not share the same terms and concepts (outcome measures)
- **Judicial problems** in using third party's information. Combined police/intell services have more/different levels of Intelligence.
- Sensible data

Possible opportunities and threats for improvements of evaluation capabilities

Opportunities

- Need: strong call of public commissioners and practitioners toward more useful evaluations
- Skills: low level of evaluation expertise, difficulties in understanding the contents of evaluations
- Sound theory of change in the CVE – de radicalisation field

Threats

- Self perceived need: over representation of personal capabilities
- Scarce availability: It is not easy to find and obtain evaluation reports...lose of opportunity for knowledge building and translation
- Confusion about evaluation approaches (programme theory reconstruction) accompanied by strong beliefs about what a sound evaluation should be.
- Risk of uncritical transfer from other policy sectors (eg RCTs clinic health)
- Lack of cooperation: Competitive dynamics influence the quality of evaluation and its dissemination
- Pressure: desire for immediate results - a 'magic bullet' - which can distort interpretation

Conclusion

- **Appropriate dimension** to analyse the outcomes and comparing different mechanisms in different contexts (local/ global strategy) promoting large programme evaluations: smaller civil society groups, NGOs, or municipalities may not possess the administrative resources and technical -methodological expertise to conduct a full-fledged evaluation
- **Better dissemination**: A key issue that impedes the use of evaluation results is the limited released of evaluation reports. **Theoretical advancements** in the sector of CVE strategies seem to be more sophisticated than the level of debate about the evaluation that risks to rolling back on 'old' positions. Theory driven approaches confused with process evaluation or a qualitative evaluation
- Comparison among different CVE programme evaluations in terms of **Context –Mechanism-Outcome configurations** (Pawson 2006) rather than standardisation of evaluation designs and metrics to assess the outcomes.
- **Learning from related field** in terms of programme theory refinement: causal mechanisms and theory adjudication (e.g Criminal Justice- restorative justice, mentoring)

Contacts

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