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Preventing Violent Extremism in Lebanon: Experience from a Danish-Lebanese Partnership

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**Developing Local Initiatives to Prevent Violent
Extremism in Lebanon: The Role of Municipalities**

The UN Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism from 2015 highlights the role of local actors, including municipal governance bodies and civil society, in the implementation of effective prevention programmes (United Nations, 2015a). Similarly, the European Union's regional strategy for Syria and Iraq, which was published in 2016, also highlights the need to strengthen local resilience capacities in Syria, Iraq and the affected neighbouring countries (Council of the European Union, 2016). According to this strategy, efforts should aim to support the resilience of individuals, local communities and institutions in coping with the effects of the crisis. Although The Islamic State in Syria and the Levant (ISIL) has now lost the bulk of its territory in Syria and Iraq, its ability to inspire supporters on a global scale has paradoxically underlined the importance of locally tailored efforts towards preventing and countering violent extremism (PVE/CVE). Considering the global trend towards increased urbanisation, cities around the world are dealing with many of the same challenges, including the prevention of crime and terrorism (United Nations, 2015b).

One platform for promoting a localised approach to PVE is the Strong Cities Network (SCN). Launched by the Institute for Strategic Dialogue at the UN General Assembly in 2015, the SCN was established to place cities at the forefront of prevention efforts and to support them to coordinate, sustain and integrate prevention activities. Whilst it is increasingly recognised that drivers of radicalisation are not only personal and transnational, linked to global Jihadist networks and foreign policy grievances, but also rooted in the local context, there remain large global inconsistencies in the inclusion of cities in prevention efforts, including in the Middle East (Roy, 2002; Burgat, 2016; Vidino et al., 2017). With a growing membership of over 125 cities spanning six continents (March, 2018), the SCN provides a forum for global convening among local and national policy-makers through the annual Global Summit, which attracts practitioners and mayors from all over the world. The SCN also provides a vehicle for more in-depth regional and local capacity-building on identifying early warning signs amongst vulnerable youth, mentoring vulnerable youth, local risk assessments and support to local action planning processes; and on-the-ground programming, such as establishing local prevention networks to foster multi-stakeholder coordination on PVE relevant community-based activities. Led by a Steering Committee of 26 global cities, the SCN is the only recognised global platform for mayors to engage with the shared purpose of developing effective PVE policies and programmes suited to their local context. By providing a platform for direct municipality-to-municipality exchange between both practitioners and policy-makers, the SCN can help facilitate policy and on-the-ground programme impact. This political engagement is critical to pave the way for on-the-ground practitioner work.

While there is a clear and vital role for national governments in coordinating and supporting early prevention activities, local community stakeholders including municipalities are critical to the *implementation* of national strategies and action plans. By coordinating local prevention work, the municipality can prevent and reduce so-called “concerning behaviour” by youth considered to be “at risk” of becoming radicalised at an early stage and react according to needs identified. Considering the vital role that local actors such as municipalities can play in the design and implementation of national PVE strategies, this paper discusses the challenges and opportunities that were identified in the set up of a municipality-led prevention network in Lebanon. The local prevention in Lebanon is inspired by the Danish prevention model, which around 2014 became internationally known as the “Aarhus model”. The establishment of a local PVE programme in Lebanon is the initial result of an ongoing bilateral Lebanese-Danish partnership funded by the Danish Government’s Peace and Stabilisation Fund and piloted since 2016 in three Lebanese municipalities: Saida, Tripoli and Majdal Anjar. The bilateral partnership, implemented under the patronage of the Lebanese Minister of the Interior and Municipalities, seeks to build local capacity among municipalities, civil society and other local actors to coordinate and support prevention activities through the establishment of multi-stakeholder prevention networks anchored in the municipality.

Yet how does a PVE model travel from one context to another – in this case from Denmark to Lebanon? What are the challenges met and the pitfalls to avoid when seeking to establish a PVE programme, while being inspired by a programme conceived in an entirely different context? Initially, this paper provides an overview of the Danish municipality approach to PVE, which has inspired the establishment of local prevention networks in Lebanon and, subsequently, it discusses some of the challenges and lessons learned when trying to transfer a Danish PVE approach to a Lebanese setting.

**The Danish Approach to Preventing and Countering
Violent Extremism (PVE/CVE)**

As mentioned, the prevention networks established in Lebanon with Danish support are largely inspired by the Danish multi-agency approach to P/CVE, which is underpinned by a distinction between PVE and CVE. PVE intervenes at a very early stage and therefore targets broader audiences. Measures to *counter* violent extremism (CVE) are closer to counter-terrorism (CT); they target specific identified individuals who are assessed to be in danger of becoming “radicalised” or on the verge of joining extremist milieus.

Back in 2008, the EU Counter-Terrorism Coordinator Gilles de Kerchove appointed Denmark as lead country for the prevention of radicalisation and de-radicalisation initiatives (Lindekilde, 2015). The Danish PVE approach, however, gained worldwide attention in 2014 when the Danish municipality of Aarhus was successful in preventing people from travelling to Syria and Iraq. In two years, from 2012 to 2013, 30 people travelled from Aarhus to Syria or Iraq; in 2014, this number had dropped significantly to one single person (Socialforvaltningen, 2015). Although it is not possible to establish that the decrease was a direct consequence of the local PVE efforts – since other factors might have played a role – the significant decrease spurred international interest in what now came to be labelled the “Aarhus model”. Yet the local police and municipality in Aarhus not only prevented people from travelling but also developed a programme to tackle returnees who came back to Denmark from a conflict zone. In a context where the issue of foreign fighters joining Daesh was topping the international agenda, governments from all over the world looked to Aarhus for inspiration for how to supplement regular law enforcement with preventive measures. CNN, for instance, aired a programme stating that “Denmark offers rehabilitation to returning foreign fighters,” suggesting that in Denmark returnees were granted generous welfare state services – job, education and psychiatric treatment – as a means to ensure their reintegration into post-conflict life (Naik, Shubert, & Thompson, 2015). Although there is some truth to this, the Danish PVE-approach cannot be reduced to a programme that merely caters for the well-being of former combatants. It is much broader in scope and mixes softer approaches seeking to enhance the well-being of Danish citizens with harder approaches that strive to prevent or disrupt a terrorist attack through intelligence and policing.

The “Aarhus model”, which is but one corner of a broader Danish approach, has grown out of pre-existing structures of crime prevention that were established back in the 1970s before terrorism and radicalisation became major security concerns. The preoccupation with radicalisation and violent extremism was initiated around 2007, when Denmark as a response to the London and Madrid bombings (2004 and 2005) started developing a

preventive approach as a supplement to regular law enforcement. The Danish PVE approach was inspired by pioneering efforts in the UK and the Netherlands, such as the British PREVENT, PURSUE, PROTECT & PREPARE Programme and the Dutch Wij Amsterdammers, and developed in three national action plans from 2009, 2014 and 2016, respectively. Each Action Plan was a response to specific events: the first plan was published after the London bombings and the new framing of “home-grown terrorism”; the second one specifically targeted foreign fighters travelling to Syria and Iraq, while the last one was adopted after a terrorist attack perpetrated in Copenhagen in February 2015.

Defining the Problem: Social Issues, Radicalisation or Violent Extremism?

The particularity of the Danish approach to PVE is as already mentioned a specific mix of a security logic – aiming at protecting state and society from a terrorist attack – and a welfare state logic catering for the well-being of the citizens (Hemmingsen, 2015, p. 15). This twofold logic implies that PVE practitioners must consider their target group as both a potential security threat and a potential welfare state client who needs help to improve his or her general “well-being”. A key document for the Danish PVE approach is the Service law (*Serviceoven*) – adopted in 1998 –, which outlines the legal framework for the prevention of social problems in general. The aim of the Service law is to ensure the “well-being” of Danish citizens by providing them with social services according to needs. Hence, if local authorities (police or municipality) assess that a person is in danger of becoming radicalised, their toolbox does not only contain repressive police measures but also social measures – education, job, housing, etc. – in order to prevent the person from eventually pursuing a path towards violent extremism.

As mentioned, the Danish PVE approach has to a large extent grown out of pre-existing structures of regular crime prevention that were established before terrorism, radicalisation and violent extremism became serious matters of concern. This can explain why the Danish approach has been developed in a rather pragmatic way, where professional experience with crime prevention would play a larger role than lofty theories about radicalisation, which often lacked empirical underpinning. Although the three Danish Action Plans include definitions of “radicalisation” and “extremism”, “the approach has been developed in practice, through learning-by-doing and trial-and-error, rather than sitting behind a desk” (Hemmingsen, 2015, p. 7).

Over the years, however, the perception of the threat – “radicalisation” and “extremism” – has evolved. The first Action Plan from 2009 was primarily preoccupied with “radicalisation and extremist *views*” and aimed at protecting liberal *values* such as democracy and freedom of speech (The Danish Government, 2009, our emphasis). After the publication of the first Action Plan, research suggested that “radicalisation” was in reality a complex phenomenon that could not be explained by mere ideology and that “radicalisation” was in itself a contested if not confusing concept that could have counter-productive effects on target audiences (Neumann, 2015; Crone, 2016; Sedgwick, 2010; Baker-Beall, Heath-Kelly & Jarvis, 2015). Similarly, authorities became increasingly aware that in a liberal society the problem was not the adoption of extremist *ideas* per se but more precisely the perpetration of violent *acts*. Hence, in the subsequent Action Plans the vocabulary to describe the forerunner of the terrorist threat evolved in such a way that the role of ideas was toned down, while behaviour and violence were emphasised. This evolution shines through in the current denominations of PVE and CVE – the prevention and countering of *violent* extremism –, which sideline the notion of “radicalisation”.

The Danish Action Plan from 2016 still refers to the role of ideas and defines “radicalisation” as “a short- or long-term process where persons subscribe to extremist views or legitimise their actions on the basis of extremist *ideologies*” (The Danish Government, 2016, p. 7, our emphasis). Yet the definition of “extremism” does not mention ideas but refers to “persons or groups that commit or seek to legitimise violence or other illegal acts, with reference to *societal conditions* that they disagree with” (The Danish Government, 2016, our emphasis). In all circumstances, it is difficult to gauge how those definitions matter for actual PVE practices on the ground.

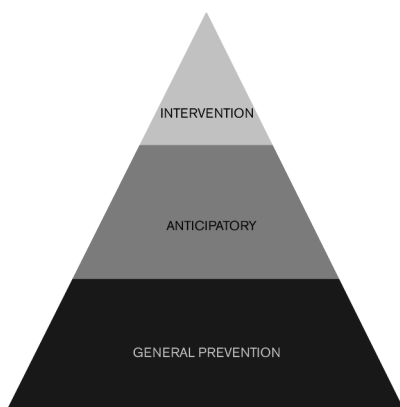
The Role of Municipalities and the Local Level

Apart from the Danish Security and Intelligence Service (PET) and the Ministry for Foreigners and Integration, which are national entities, the actors involved in the Danish PVE approach are primarily local. In Denmark, municipalities benefit from a large degree of local self-government and “the Danish model” denomination in reality glosses over a host of different approaches and practices that have grown out of local contexts. The way a local municipality deals with violent extremism and radicalisation can differ from one locality to another. Irrespective of differences, municipalities and local police are close to the citizens and are therefore in a privileged position when it comes to discovering problems at an early stage. The important role that municipalities play in

Danish PVE – as well as their degree of autonomy – might explain why the Danish approach is often denominated the “Aarhus model” after the second largest city in Denmark. The local police and municipality in Aarhus were pioneers in Denmark when it comes to developing an extensive PVE programme that other municipalities could subsequently be inspired by.

Although the PET established a division for prevention in 2008, and the first National Action Plan was adopted the year after, it is as mentioned a particular feature of the Danish PVE approach that it has grown out of pre-existing local prevention networks that were established in the 1970s to prevent regular forms of crime. Even today, some municipalities or local police districts will consider terrorism and violent extremism as a form of crime on a par with other types of crime: not essentially different and caused by the same factors. Hence, a police district or municipality can consider that they are not dealing with cases of ideological “radicalisation” but merely with the social problems that they consider as enabling factors of crime, including the crime of terrorism. This specific perception of terrorism implies that the religious dimension of violent extremism is often downplayed in the Danish approach. As public authorities do not consider religion as a root cause, the Danish approach has for instance abstained from producing religious counter-narratives or systematically involved religious actors, although local authorities have on some occasions engaged in dialogue with religious personalities and mosques.

Regular Crime Prevention and the Prevention Triangle



While the specific role and responsibility of municipalities will vary, the activities of local actors can be broken down according to the “prevention triangle” (see diagram on the right), which is a core element to understand the Danish approach to PVE. The prevention triangle is a tool to assess the severity of a case and subsequently refer the case to the relevant authorities. As the Danish PVE approach consists of a widely ramified network of actors, a clear division of labour is required in each case. The prevention triangle, which is inspired by criminology and health prevention, entails three discrete parts that makes it possible to assign specific tasks to specific actors. The intelligence service and law enforcement agencies are preoccupied with cases at the very top of the

triangle; municipalities and local police districts intervene at the middle level; while municipalities, civil society organisations and the preventive department of the intelligence service can intervene at the general level at the very bottom of the triangle. The following sections will briefly sketch out the logic of the prevention triangle. It is not the aim of this paper to provide a critical discussion of the (contested) terms of “radicalisation” or “youth at risk”, which are used in the official presentations of the triangle, although such a discussion is both relevant and appropriate. This paper will merely focus on presenting some key facets of the Danish model in its own terms.

General prevention: The general preventive level at the bottom of the triangle has a constructive and wide-ranging preventive aim of building or enhancing societal resilience. As such, it does not target specific individuals or groups but broader environments and audiences. The main purpose is to develop young people’s social skills, their capacity for critical thinking and sense of responsibility. In practice, the preventive department of the intelligence service can for instance participate in public outreach meetings or in closed seminars with civil society organisations or Muslim opinion-makers.

Anticipatory intervention or “youth at risk”: The anticipatory level is the responsibility of municipalities and local police, and it is precisely this level that most significantly distinguishes the Danish model from other approaches. In contrast to the direct intervention at the top of the triangle, which is common to many countries, anticipatory interventions can target one or several individuals who authorities assess to be “at risk” of radicalisation but who are not yet part of a criminal or extremist milieu. While interventions at the top of the triangle follow a *security logic*, the anticipatory level is defined by the so-called “service law” (*Servicebogen*), which is preoccupied with the “well-being” of the citizens rather than with security. Hence, it is not the aim of anticipation to disrupt a criminal act but merely to ensure that individuals at the fringes of society are reintegrated back into society in order to thrive. This approach is underpinned by a welfare state logic considering crime (including violent extremism) as a consequence of social problems, exclusion and so on.

In order to prevent citizens from further engaging with extremist milieus, a municipality can provide a person with access to social services such as education, housing and work to ensure his or her social well-being. All interventions at this level are voluntary. The municipality or the local police can *offer* these services but do not dispose of any means to *force* a person to get a job, a mentor or leave a violent milieu, if he or she does not want to. By improving the well-being of an individual or allowing him or her to get in contact with new milieus, it is an underlying logic of these initiatives that extremist

environments can lose their attraction. Other than regular social services, which are part of the “normal” welfare state system, police and municipalities also dispose of specific measures that are tailor-made for cases of violent extremism: they can offer mentors to young people or coaches to parents who worry that their children are getting involved in extremist environments and activities. The role of a mentor is to support a young person in various ways according to his or her specific needs, for instance by giving advice or helping with practical issues that the young person finds hard to deal with. PVE measures can also include professional upgrading of frontline staff to be better equipped to deal with violent extremism.

It is at this anticipatory level of risk assessment that the establishment of municipality prevention networks is particularly useful. They can be effective in providing training to “frontline workers” on early warning signs, receive referrals of early concerns, and design and provide appropriate programmes of support. Obviously, there is no guarantee that this “soft” approach will work. If a person pursues an evolution towards violent extremism (the intervention level of the triangle) and refuses to cooperate with local authorities, the PET can decide to step in and take over the case.

Direct intervention: Direct interventions are concerned with individuals who are already active in violent extremist groups or who are assumed to be able to commit violence or other criminal acts. As mentioned, the intervention level at the very top of the triangle is the responsibility of the intelligence service in collaboration with law enforcement agencies. If a case is considered to be situated at the very top of the triangle, it is so serious that instant intervention is required. At this level, the responsible agencies work at the individual level and target a specific, identified individual who is at risk of acting violently or of travelling to a conflict zone abroad. At this level, the police or the intelligence service can confiscate passports or engage in “preventive talks” with an individual to disrupt a course of action that could lead to a criminal act. Alternatively, they can start monitoring a person or initiate an investigation with a view to indicting the suspect. The intelligence service can also call upon the social service providers of the municipalities to support their preventive intervention.

Local Multi-Agency Networks: Organisational Features of Danish PVE

After a short summing up of the logic behind the Danish PVE approach, this section will briefly sketch out the organisational set up. In 2008, the PET for the first time established a preventive department, which in collaboration with the former Ministry of Integration

was one of the drivers behind the establishment of what has now become an extensive Danish PVE network. Today, the large web of PVE and CVE efforts span a variety of actors, including the PET, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry for Foreigners and Integration (formerly Ministry of Integration), 12 police districts, almost 100 municipalities, the Prison and Probation Service, teachers, social service providers, psychiatrists, asylum centres and civil society organisations. A main feature of the Danish model is this ramified web of multi-stakeholder prevention networks and the high level of cooperation and information sharing between them. Yet, although the Danish approach involves a large number of actors, this paper focuses on the role of *local* actors, such as municipalities and police in the current PVE efforts.

A cornerstone of the Danish approach are the so-called “info-houses” that have been established in each of the 12 police districts in Denmark. An info-house is a cooperation structure between various authorities or more precisely a network of information sharing. The info-houses allow police and local authorities to meet on a regular basis to discuss reported cases of radicalisation and refer them to the relevant authorities. As mentioned, this multi-agency approach builds on already established networks of crime prevention and in particular collaboration between Schools, Social Service providers and Police (the so-called “SSP network”). Each municipality in Denmark has established SSP networks, where schools, social services and police cooperate closely to prevent minors from getting involved in crime or drug abuse. Within the last decade, radicalisation has been added as yet another risk parameter on a par with other forms of crime. As the SSP-networks include various professions with different expertise – teachers, police and social service providers –, it enables a more holistic approach to reported cases of radicalisation. If a teacher is for instance worried about the possible “radicalisation” of a pupil, the involvement of the local police or social services will provide a more comprehensive picture of the individual in question, and this might lead to the conclusion that the reported case of radicalisation was unfounded. Similarly, the SSP cooperation also enables better coordination of possible forms of intervention (i.e., mentoring, exit programmes, social welfare and so on.).

Inspired by the SSP cooperation, other collaboration forums have been developed more recently to handle cases with a psychiatric dimension and cases involving people who are released from prison. Although radicalisation research has often claimed that “terrorists” were entirely rational, in Denmark it has turned out that some cases of radicalisation involved people with psychiatric diagnoses or issues. Similarly, the Prison and Probation Service (the KSP network) has the obligation to assess and report on whether a person to be released from prison is potentially “radicalised”. The cooperation

structure that allows psychiatric institutions to collaborate with social services and police (the PSP network) was established in 2009, while cooperation between the social services, police and the KSP network was set up two years later. These collaboration networks were not established to prevent radicalisation and violent extremism per se but crime or recurrence in general, including violent extremism. If a young person of school age is considered “at risk” of getting involved in extremist milieus, SSP would probably be the most relevant cooperation network to activate. If a person to be released from prison is assessed to be “radical”, the KSP structure can be activated; and, finally, if a reported case has a psychiatric dimension, the PSP network can be called upon. In all circumstances, the info-house is the entry point of each reported case, which ideally allows local authorities to get a centralised overview of all the cases in a specific police district.

Cases can come to the knowledge of authorities in two ways: either through the “open” system or through the “classified” one. A wide range of actors can report cases of radicalisation through the open system: not only frontline staff, teachers, relatives, employees in prisons or asylum centres (who now have an obligation to report potential cases of radicalisation) but also – in principle – every citizen who has a specific concern. These actors can communicate their worries through incident reports, via a national hotline or directly to the info-house. Apart from this open information system, the intelligence service can also obtain classified information through surveillance, informants and so on. If the intelligence services get information about a person who is “at risk” of becoming involved in violent extremism, they can decide to hand over the case to the info-house, thus referring it to social services or psychiatry, for example.

Dilemmas of Information Sharing

The many stakeholders involved in the Danish PVE approach imply a vast amount of information sharing between authorities and therefore also challenges and dilemmas. The Danish approach to regular crime prevention has grown out of a context of a relatively high degree of trust between the Danish population and law enforcement agencies. The possibility for public authorities to exchange information is of course highly regulated, and this implies that under normal circumstances the citizen must consent to authorities exchanging information. Yet cases of violent extremism are different. In 2009, the law regarding the public administration of justice (*Retsplejeloven*) was amended to allow authorities involved in the SSP/KSP/PSP cooperation to exchange sensitive information about a citizen in cases of violent extremism without the consent of the person in

question. This wide-ranging possibility of information sharing, which potentially compromises normal data protection, is one of the features of the Danish multi-stakeholder approach that poses specific challenges when trying to transfer the Danish PVE approach to another context, which will be further discussed in the Challenges and Lessons Learned section.

**The Establishment of Local Multi-Stakeholder
Prevention Networks in Lebanon:
Considering the Lebanese Context**

The attempt to establish three prevention networks in Lebanon, partially inspired by the Danish PVE approach, initially requires a fine assessment of the local context in Lebanon. The political instability in the country and its proximity to the Syrian conflict with spill-overs related to Lebanese involvement has provided fertile recruitment ground for violent extremist groups. The influx of 1.5 million Syrian refugees has further exacerbated the socioeconomic pressure on Lebanese society already strained by years of civil war and consequences of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The long-standing tension between Sunnis and Shias across the region and the subsequent involvement of Hezbollah in the Syrian conflict has created grounds for exploitation by Sunni extremist groups to legitimise recruitment with 900 individuals from Lebanon estimated to have joined Daesh or other Sunni violent extremist groups in Syria and Iraq (The Soufan Group, 2015; Alami, 2015).

The political situation in Lebanon remains complex due to the country's confessionalist form of government, which complicates consensus-based policy formulations and definitions due to existing inter-sectarian rivalries as the result of the 15-year-long civil war, particularly in relation to very sensitive issues such as violent extremism, where significant disagreement exists in relation to the labelling of terrorist groups within the country. However, in 2017 Prime Minister Saad al-Hariri established an Office for a National PVE Coordinator under the Presidency of the Council of Ministers. The National Coordinator, who has led a process to develop a National PVE Strategy and is currently working on developing a National Action Plan for its implementation, has so far given priority to securing inter-ministerial and thereby inter-sectarian buy-in for the development of a prevention-focused strategy. At the time of writing, there is Cabinet-level buy-in for a key position paper, forming the backbone of the strategy. The strategy is built on the following nine pillars of work, including the role of municipalities and local communities:

1. Dialogue and conflict prevention
2. Enhancing good governance
3. Justice, human rights and the rule of law
4. Urban development and engaging local communities
5. Equality and empowering women
6. Education and skills development
7. Economic development and job creation
8. Strategic communication, information technology and social media
9. Empowering youth

The Danish-Lebanese SCN engagement with Lebanese municipalities is well aligned with Pillar 4 and Pillar 6 of the National Strategy to establish a role for municipalities in local prevention work. Pillar 4 emphasises the importance of building “local networks with

stakeholders, schools and other local NGOs to interact with target groups and respond to individual needs of youth and individuals at risk of violent extremism, in collaboration with municipalities” (The Lebanese Government, 2017, p. 21). Pillar 6 acknowledges the need to “build the capacities of municipalities and raise awareness of violent extremism and its risks and early warning mechanisms” (The Lebanese Government, 2017, p. 29).

The Lebanese National Strategy led by the National PVE Coordinator was officially launched by Prime Minister Saad al-Hariri in December 2017. The process of the National Strategy led to inter-ministerial consensus that is to be followed by formal approval from the Council of Ministers together with possible institutionalisation of the PVE Unit within the Office of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers. These events are to be followed by a public consultation process on the National PVE Strategy and, finally, a National Action Plan. As part of the formulation of the Strategy and the consensus-building process, the Cabinet endorsed a national definition of violent extremism as:

“The spread of individual and social hatred that may lead to community-based violence, the rejection of diversity and non-acceptance of the other, and the use of violence as a means of expression and influence is the behaviour that threatens social values ensuring social stability” (The Lebanese Government, 2017, p. 1).

In contrast to the Danish PVE approach, early general PVE efforts in Lebanon have so far predominantly been undertaken by civil society actors due to weak state structures caused by sectarian divides whilst disruptive interventions have centred on security measures carried out by law enforcement and security services. However, the field of anticipatory PVE efforts is historically limited in Lebanon. Nonetheless, there is an emerging consensus in Lebanon that municipalities can play an important role in coordinating and supporting the work of frontline practitioners and community-based organisations. The appointment of a National PVE Coordinator and the decision to develop a national strategy point towards an increasing recognition that national and sub-national government has a role to play in early prevention responses. As the national strategy has a focus on local communities as agents of change, the Danish-Lebanese Strong Cities Network Partnership (SCNP) is in a good position to influence and underpin implementation of national policy at the local level.

Building Stronger Cities: Establishing Local Prevention Networks

In Lebanon, crime prevention is not currently, nor has it historically been, within the remit of municipalities. However, there is a pool of local professionals operating in local

communities who can be brought into a whole-of-community approach to prevention. The theory of change for the Lebanese-Danish SCNP builds on the belief that, in order to support communities at risk of radicalisation to violent extremism, a coordinated effort among key local actors – equipped with the relevant skills and capacities – is needed. As already mentioned, “multi-agency” networks are at the core of municipal-led prevention efforts in Denmark and across Europe. Like the Danish SSP model (cf. infra), European multi-agency approaches bring together police, schools, social services and other local stakeholders to provide a mechanism for assessing potential drivers of violent extremism and designing effective support programmes. These approaches draw heavily on insights from the fields of public health and crime prevention, particularly programmes targeting gang recruitment.

With financial support from the Government of Denmark’s Peace & Stabilisation Fund and in partnership with the Lebanese Ministry of the Interior and Municipalities, the SCN has established multi-stakeholder prevention networks in the Lebanese municipalities of Saida, Tripoli and Majdal Anjar, which as part of the project has joined the global SCN. The project aims to support municipalities in strengthening their abilities to coordinate and deliver local prevention activities aligned with national strategies and action plans. This is done by facilitating the creation of municipality-led community prevention networks and providing them with the knowledge and tools needed to identify and react to early signs of radicalisation, thereby reducing the risk from violent extremism within their communities.

The project approach seeks to promote bottom-up, community-led PVE programming. The prevention networks include various practitioners such as teachers, youth workers, religious leaders, representatives from local and national government institutions and also psycho-social intervention providers who are committed to developing the knowledge and skills that are required to undertake PVE work.

The Lebanese prevention networks represent the first attempt in the Middle East to create a locally-owned model for coordinating non-law enforcement and non-security driven PVE efforts. Since their establishment in mid-2016, the prevention networks have met on a monthly basis to coordinate PVE efforts and responses to local issues, in addition to implementation of local outreach activities such as awareness sessions for youth and families or roundtables for religious leaders on PVE and interfaith dialogue. The networks are led by the municipality and some municipalities have expressed the ambition to institutionalise the networks by transitioning them into “Prevention Committees” in addition to establishing a department for prevention of

violent extremism within the municipality, signalling the prospect of a formal status within the municipal infrastructure.

The project remains a pilot and, in addition to promoting concrete prevention of violent extremism initiatives where these are feasible, it will capture learnings that can feed into a development of a Lebanese Prevention model. Although the work has shown significant progress to date, a number of challenges remain for achieving long-term sustainability and impact.

**Promoting the Whole-of-Community Approach:
Challenges and Lessons Learned**

The scope of a municipality's involvement in PVE can vary extensively. There is no one-size-fits-all approach. The role of the municipality and local actors will vary depending on the local context from a role as a mere implementer of national action plans to more decentralised arrangements where municipalities and local actors are responsible for devising and implementing independent local strategies within a national policy framework.

Initially, the Danish-Lebanese cooperation project in Lebanon was intended to be largely inspired by the Danish prevention model. Yet the Danish PVE model functions within the framework of one of the most developed welfare states and with a high degree of decentralisation and trust between law enforcement agencies and local communities, which enables the sharing of sensitive information concerning individuals in a safe environment at an early stage of radicalisation. The Lebanese and Danish contexts are very different: in Lebanon, the approach to PVE has historically been largely security-driven and with a limited role for municipalities to provide social welfare benefits to individuals in contrast to their Danish counterparts. For those reasons, it has so far been counterproductive to work at an individual level and only to a limited extent include law enforcement agencies. However, the risk of stigmatisation, as well as unwarranted engagement by law enforcement or intelligence services due to the traditionally "securitised" approach, remains when working at the individual level. Despite potential challenges, the SCN engagement seeks to develop possible ways of involving local law enforcement at the community level.

Whereas the engagement of Danish national and municipal level practitioners has provided useful inspiration to their Lebanese counterparts – particularly in promoting local, cross-sector coordination involving both civil society and sub-national governance structures – a key learning from the pilot phase is the need to *contextualise* Danish approaches to the local setting in Lebanon. Municipal governance structures in Lebanon are for instance less resourced than in Denmark, and their mandates are often limited to infrastructure and basic service provision. However, since this gap is often filled by the strong and vibrant Lebanese civil society, there is a pool of practitioners operating in local communities who can potentially be brought into a whole-of-community approach to prevention, something which Danish practitioners have learned from. Working at the local municipality level in all circumstances includes a careful application of a "do no harm" principle in a country where there is a historic reliance on security and intelligence services to deal with the challenge of violent extremism. The close cooperation between the intelligence service and local prevention networks is one of the features of the Danish PVE approach that must be adapted if not completely left out of the picture when transferred to a different context.

Reinventing the Danish Approach to PVE and CVE: Challenges and Pitfalls

Since 2014, the Danish approach to PVE and CVE – often known as the “Aarhus model” – has been a source of inspiration for similar programmes in a host of countries worldwide. This paper has shown that the Danish programme: 1) combines a security logic with a welfare state logic; 2) gives a pivotal role to *local* multi-stakeholder networks; and 3) largely considers terrorism and violent extremism as a form of crime on a par with other forms of crime. Yet, although the Danish P/CVE model has so far been successful in tackling violent extremism in Denmark, it is conceived in a specific setting and must therefore be adapted, if not reinvented, to fit a different context. The Danish context is characterised by a developed welfare state, a large degree of trust between civil society and public authorities (including police) and the local multi-agency networks of crime prevention – SSP cooperation –, which are most likely to be lacking in other contexts. When seeking to establish some version of the Danish model in another context, such networks, which are the core of the Danish model, would have to be established – not necessarily with the same actors but with the local actors that are appropriate in the specific context. A major challenge of the Danish model is the large degree of information sharing among local actors as well as the role played by the intelligence service, which is informed about and involved in many P/CVE cases. In most cases, these features would have to be skipped in other contexts.

The discussion of a Danish-Lebanese PVE partnership in Lebanon has given a glimpse of how such challenges can play out in reality. In Lebanon, the current absence of formal non-security referral mechanisms at the local level represents a particular set of risks and challenges in relation to applying the Danish individual case-by-case approach to prevention. As mentioned above, risks are associated with concerns about the potential for individuals at a very early stage of radicalisation to be passed on to law enforcement and security services due to the “securitised” approach leading to unwarranted arrest and detention. As a mitigating measure, Lebanese police and security services have not formally been involved in the inception phase of the project, although in some instances this now appears to organically grow out of the local dialogue within the prevention networks.

As expected when dealing with issues related to both security concerns and decentralisation discussions, obtaining national sign-off and local level buy-in – in a context where reservations about the role of municipalities in PVE have been abundant – requires extensive footwork at all levels. Nevertheless, mobilising and sustaining national and local political support in addition to community buy-in is a key factor for consolidation and sustainability of the prevention networks as key stakeholders in local prevention efforts. While fruitful and productive relationships have been established

among key national level policy-makers in Lebanon, continued engagement and advocacy is essential to feed into national policy formulation and to ensure that local-level efforts are aligned with national priorities.

The pilot has demonstrated a need to be realistic and not attempt to apply Danish methodologies requiring a well-developed, decentralised welfare state along with its tradition for multi-agency coordination on crime prevention as their backbone. Rather, the focus should be on supporting partners in developing their own contextualised approaches and utilising existing assets, such as the well-established civil society inspired by relevant and transferable elements of the Danish PVE-model, while at the same time bearing in mind that the Danish PVE-model was developed over 10 years.

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EuroMeSCo

Founded in 1996 and comprising 106 institutes from 32 European and South Mediterranean countries, EuroMeSCo (the Euro-Mediterranean Study Commission) is the main network of research centres on politics and security in the Mediterranean, striving at building a community of research institutes and think tanks committed to strengthening Euro-Mediterranean relations.

The objectives of the network are to foster influential quality analysis and reflection on Euro-Mediterranean politics and policies; to serve as a platform for dialogue between the members of the network and key stakeholders to discuss the key trends and challenges on the region's agenda; to increase the impact of think tanks and research institutes and to actively contribute to policy-making through dissemination of research outputs of the network to experts and national, European and international institutions linked to Euro-Mediterranean relations.

The EuroMeSCo work plan includes a research programme with five publication lines (Joint Policy Studies, Papers, Briefs, Spot-Ons and reports), as well as numerous activities, including annual conferences, seminars, workshops, presentations, formal and informal meetings with policy makers on the key political and security dynamics. It also includes communication and dissemination related activities (website, newsletter and targeted institutional dissemination) to raise awareness and promote the work of the network and to stimulate debate on Euro-Mediterranean affairs.

