

Glaudé, M., Meijer, J., Breetvelt, I., Felix, C. (2014). *Evaluatie training potentieel gewelddadige eenlingen (PGE)*. Onderzoek in opdracht van het Ministerie van Veiligheid en Justitie, NCTV. Amsterdam: Kohnstamm Instituut (rapport 917).

Executive summary

Following a number of seriously violent incidents in the Netherlands, the National Coordinator Terrorism and Security (NCTS) commissioned Radar Consultancy bureau to develop a training course on identifying potentially violent loners (PVL). The training course is meant for everyone who may encounter PVL in their professional work, such as police officers, counsellors, service personnel and social workers. The course lasts one day. NCTS needed to evaluate the training and to this aim contacted the Scientific Research and Documentation Centre (SRDC) of the Netherlands Ministry of Justice and Security. SRDC commissioned the Kohnstamm Institute of the University of Amsterdam to do the evaluation research. A supervisory committee was also installed.

The evaluation research addressed the following research questions:

1. To what extent are participants of the PVL training course satisfied with it?
2. To what extent are the learning goals of the PVL training course achieved?
3. 3a. To what extent do former participants apply learned knowledge and skills in their daily practice?
3b. To what extent are there differences between participants and non-participants in signalling, qualifying and dealing with PVL?
4. To what extent is the PVL training transferred to other members of former participants' teams, organizations and institutes?
5. 5a. Are there PVL training topics which can be improved?
5b. To what extent is the PVL training course internally consistent, i.e., are there weak spots in the HRD cycle and where is there room for improvement?
5c. To what extent is the PVL training course externally consistent (homogeneous), i.e., where are weak spots located and where is there room for improvement when considering ideas about the goals and their achievement?
6. What is the reach of the PVL training course?

The evaluation research project consisted of a number of activities. First, the evaluation forms completed by some participants immediately after the training course were analysed. Radar Consultancy designed these forms. They were completed anonymously. Second, interviews were held with the course developers. Two random samples of 278 persons in each sample were drawn from the list of former participants and the waiting list of future participants. Some persons had to be removed from the samples because they were closely involved in either the training course or the evaluation research itself. An invitation to participate in an internet survey was therefore sent to 238 former participants as well as 272 persons on the waiting list. The latter group functioned as the control group in the research. Response rates were 81 (34%) and 68 (25%), respectively.

The evaluation forms, which were designed by Radar Consultancy, included a number of questions related to whether participants enjoyed the training course and to the perceived learning effects. The internet survey included some questions which assessed participants' satisfaction with the training course in the sense of whether it was useful. All the respondents, i.e., participants as well as persons on the waiting list, were also given a description of four cases which could be considered to be PVL to a greater or lesser degree. Respondents were asked to what extent they found each case alarming. They were also asked what they would do if confronted with the case. For example, would they gather more information about the person in question or share their concerns about the individual with other professionals.

The supposition was that participants would be better able to identify PVL and suggest more and varied actions to be taken compared to persons on the waiting list. Below the results of the evaluation research are explained in relation to the research questions.

Ad 1

Enjoyment of the training course is satisfactory with an average score of 8 on a scale from 1 to 10 on the Radar Consultancy evaluation forms. The results of the internet survey also indicate that participants are generally satisfied with the course in the sense of whether it is useful: more than 80% of respondents are satisfied or very satisfied.

Ad 2

The goals of the training course appear to have been achieved. Participants think that they are able to recognize PVL signals quicker after the course and understand better why and how individuals become derailed and possibly work towards a violent act. Respondents also claimed that the training course provided them with useful guidelines on what to do and with whom they can share their concerns about a particular person. Apart from this, they find that they can use the insights they have acquired to make the cooperation with their partner organizations more effective regarding the early signalling of PVL.

Ad 3a

Participants indicated that they apply what they have learned about signalling PVL in their daily practice. The training does not influence, however, their actions after the signalling (gathering information, sharing concerns and so on). Participants stated that they would not have acted differently had they not followed the training course.

Ad 3b

The two groups judged the four case descriptions differently. Contrary to expectation, it appears that former participants found the four cases presented to the respondents less alarming than the persons on the waiting list. A possible explanation for this is that participants have learned to fine tune their judgment and therefore are less prone to decide that a particular case is indeed a PVL. However, the number of action alternatives indicated, as well as the types of action alternatives, do not differ between participants and persons on the waiting list. Participants as well as persons on the waiting list mentioned the action alternatives *using risk taxation instruments* and *reporting someone to the police* significantly less than *gathering information and sharing concerns*. The case depicting a violent personality disorder (no PVL) is judged as less alarming by former participants as well as persons on the waiting list.

Ad 4

Although more than three quarters of the respondents who were participants indicated that they talked about the training course with others working in the same organization, far fewer participants mentioned changing their method of working. For example, only a quarter of participants indicate that the training course has led to an improvement in the cooperation regarding PVL with their partner organizations. All in all, the transfer of knowledge and skills acquired during the course to the working situation is not spectacular.

Ad 5a and 5b

First of all, a follow-up appears to be required as there is still a need for professionalization regarding PVL after the training course. Such a follow-up could establish whether the acquired knowledge and skills are sustained and to what extent they are transferred to the work situation. Attention could be paid to formulating training course goals and evaluation criteria and constructing an evaluation

instrument. In this way, learning goals would become transparent to participants, and the extent to which these goals are attained could be investigated. Moreover, goals would also provide indications for the selection of target groups for the training course and its content. The learning situation could also be improved by working more interactively. More attention could be paid to the composition of course materials, for instance by including risk taxation instruments. Finally, the selection of future participants should be guided by the diversity principle: a mixed group composition appears to be a success factor.

Ad 5c

There are no improvements needed concerning the external consistency of the training course. The client, the researchers and other stakeholders agree about the goals of the training course and the trajectory leading to these goals.

Ad 6

From March to December 2012, a total of 907 persons participated in 68 training courses. The police and education were the best represented professions. Counsellors, service personnel, as in mental health care and youth care, as well as social workers and community workers were less well represented. It would be helpful to identify other professionals who would benefit from the training. The results of this research offer suggestions in this respect.