COUNTRY REPORT / ITALY

DISENGAGEMENT, REHABILITATION AND REINTEGRATION OF FOREIGN TERRORIST FIGHTERS

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Abstract

According to the official data, foreign fighters linked to Italy in various forms – not only citizens and residents – number 144. That means less than 1/13 of France’s contingent (approximately 1,900 individuals) and 1/4 of Belgium’s (approximately 600). In addition, most foreign fighters linked to Italy were born abroad and only 11 individuals were actually born in Italy. Finally, among these 144 Foreigners fighters linked to Italy, 29 had already returned to Europe – not necessarily to Italy. Only 10 returnees were present at the time on Italian territory (3 were detained and 7 were closely monitored by national authorities).

If the data show how the scope of such phenomenon is residual, however, we should not make the mistake of considering the foreign fighters as a static and entirely alien issue when considering the Italian territorial context. From this point of view, the Italian Government Commission on Jihadism and the States General on the Execution of Criminal Sentences concerning the prison environment in 2016 highlights the there are two privileged (and “classic”) places able to nurture radicalization dynamics: the online context, that is, the Internet, and the offline one, that is composed by prisons, an environment in which the tight relation between prison population and material deprivation can enhance proselytism and the development of radical ideology as form of construction of collective identity and fight against social exclusion.
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1. Introduction

Reintegrating ex-combatants is an essential part of peace building and it is now a common challenge for policy makers. Doing so can help prevent conflict recurrence and undermine active armed groups by reducing their numbers, ensuring that those that defect remain outside the group, and encouraging other fighters to defect in the future. Reintegration is often controversial and can generate significant backlash from communities expected to take in former fighters. If former fighters are not accepted and reintegrated into the social, political and economic life, there is a greater likelihood of recidivism and a return to violence.

The latest report of Europol on terrorism in Europe referring to the year 2020 proves that the phenomenon continues to be a threat. In fact, in 2020, 10 jihadist attacks took place in European countries with 12 dead and 47 injured. In the same year, were made 254 arrests for suspected crimes related to jihadist terrorism and 87% of those arrested are male with an average age of 31-32, (64% are under 35).

Beside the terrorism that strikes directly European countries, there is a new and dangerous challenge for Europe: the return of the so-called foreigners fighters. This is a phenomenon that has undergone a sharp acceleration due to the defeats of the Islamic State in Syria and the resulting diaspora from Daesh. In fact, according to various estimates, in the more than 52,000 foreigners enrolled in the Islam (of which almost 7,000 women and more than 6,000 minors) there are 8200 fighters were recorded by national authorities as returnees.

However, in this context we can observe that Italian data represent only a small share of the overall phenomenon. Indeed, according to the official data, foreign fighters linked to Italy in various forms – not only citizens and residents – number 144 (Viminale 2021). That means less than 1/13 of France’s contingent (approximately 1,900 individuals) and 1/4 of Belgium’s (approximately 600). In addition, according to Morone and Vidino, only about 10% of the foreigners fighters linked to Italy are female. It is interesting to note that half of these women are converted, almost all of them possess Italian nationality. Furthermore, compared to a significant percentage of men, none of them have a criminal record or experience of detention before leaving for the conflict area. In addition, Morone and Vidino analyzed that:

- at the time of their departure, fighters average age was 30 years old (range from 16-years old to 52);
- in contrast to trends observed in other Western European countries, most foreign fighters linked to Italy were born abroad with only 11 individuals (8.8%) were actually born in Italy.
- Italy’s foreign fighters do not predominantly hail from metropolises or large urban centres.
- in terms of employment, 44.8% of them were blue-collar workers, while 8% were white-collar workers, 2.4% were students and 34.4% were unemployed.

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1 Grip L. Kotajoki J. (2019) Deradicalisation, disengagement, rehabilitation and reintegration of violent extremists in conflict-affected contexts: a systematic literature review
3 Report on the development and situation of terrorism in the European Union, European Union, Luxembourg
• Almost the half of them (44%) had a criminal record (not necessarily in relation to extremist activities) prior to traveling to the warzone, and the 22.4% of them had been detained before departure.

• the most common destination among Italy’s foreign fighters was Syria: 88.8% of the overall contingent headed there. Some 5.6% reached Libya, and 2.4% traveled directly to Iraq.

• With respect to the affiliation to armed groups on the battlefield, some of them have more than one affiliation. 76 individuals joined—at least for a certain period of time—the so-called Islamic State. 18 sided with Jabhat al-Nusra (a group which was originally affiliated with al-Qaeda) or its successor groups; 5 with the Free Syrian Army; 31 fought with other smaller organizations (Jaysh al-Islam, Suleiman Fighting Company, etc.).

Finally, according to official sources, (Viminale 2021), among these 144 Foreigners fighters linked to Italy, 29 had already returned to Europe – not necessarily to Italy. In October 2019, Italy’s Anti-Mafia and Anti-Terrorism National Prosecutor, Federico Cafiero de Raho, specified that only 10 returnees were present at the time on Italian territory (3 were detained and 7 were closely monitored by national authorities). Finally, in Italy were carried out 71 expulsions of terrorist from other countries (Dossier Viminale, 2021 - referring to the period 1 August 2020 - 31 July 2021),

If the data so far analyzed show how the scope of such phenomenon is residual, however, we should not make the mistake of considering the foreign fighters as a static and entirely alien issue when considering the Italian territorial context. In fact, if we try to contextualize the experience of the Italian fighters in the overall aspect of Islamic radicalization, firstly we notice that the situation has not always been like that. At the beginning of 2000, especially in northern Italy, in the cities of Brescia and Milan, a series of Islamic attacks made by the so-called “lone wolves”: they are people who are not part of actual organizations, though ready to answer individually to the jihadist call, anticipated on Italian territory what fully occurred in other European countries and ended with the massacres perpetuated in France, Belgium and Spain in later years.

The reasons why from an initial tension it did not develop a violent situation comparable to the experiences of other countries, can be analysed under several points of views. In fact, according to an important survey carried out by a number of Italian researchers which is called “understanding the Islamic radicalization. The case Italy” (2019), different reason must be analysed: demographic, urbanistic and historical ones.

First of all, Italy is a nation in which immigration started more recently if compared to other countries, with a lower presence of second and third generation immigrants who, in many countries, contributed to increase the number of foreigner fighters.

Secondly, from an urbanistic point of view, Italy does not have great centers of aggregation such as the huge suburbs with strong presence of foreign communities and clear social exclusion context, that are common in France or more specifically in the area of Molembeek a Bruxelles.

Finally, some historical reasons must be taken into consideration. In the past Italy had to face internal terrorism during the seventies and the State was forced to use effective repression measures that contributed to embank the phenomenon since the origins of Islamic radicalization.
Moreover, it should be also considered that in the 2016 report of National Antimafia Bureau it is stated «the evolution of international terrorism and the investigation on criminal activities of Islam State and its affiliates (or aspiring martyrs) in our Country confirm the interweaving between organized mafia-related crime and international terrorism. Rather than an interweaving, it is a total interpenetration». In this perspective, it is clear that such a cooperation for the affiliates to radical Islamic organization on one hand enhances the access to material resources (such as armaments and protection), while on the other hand they are forced to a certain parsimony when operating within the national borders, because to easily handle its businesses criminal organizations need a context which lacks non-needed violence.

As already analysed, if some peculiar factors permitted Italy to stem the initial pressure towards radicalization, it must not lead us in the error of believing that the phenomenon cannot change along time both with the returning in Europe of the thousands of fighters who still are in middle East and in relation of forms of proselytism that can develop internally. From this point of view, the Italian Government Commission on Jihadism and the States General on the Execution of Criminal Sentences concerning the prison environment in 2016 highlights the there are two privileged (and “classic”) places able to nurture radicalization dynamics: the online context, that is, the Internet, and the offline one, that is composed by prisons, an environment in which the tight relation between prison population and material deprivation can enhance proselytism and the development of radical ideology as form of construction of collective identity and fight against social exclusion. In Italy all these aspects take a strong worrying dimension because of the composition of the prison population. Furthermore, in 2019, out of 60.000 prisoners, 20.000 are foreigners; of these, 13,000 come from Muslim countries and 8.000 declare that they profess the Islamic religion. According to recent data from the Department of Penitentiary Administration of the Ministry of Justice (October 2021), it is noted that in the work of preventing radicalization in prison, 313 inmates are monitored, divided into three levels of attention based on the danger, 142 of them are classified as high level, 89 at medium level and 82 as low level. Among these prisoners, the most represented nationalities are the Algerian (27%) and the Moroccan (25%).

Therefore, as highlighted by the very same Commission on Jihadism, an action based solely on repression appeared inadequate and must be preceded by policies aimed at preventing radicalization itself. Despite this consideration, also by virtue of the completely residual numbers of FF present in our country, there is no specific law that makes the Disengagement, rehabilitation and reintegration practices as a proper model of intervention, but only some not conclusive anti-terrorism and deradicalization laws based mainly on repression. These set of regulations, do not in any way affect the causes of radicalization and terrorism: they only allow intervention on outbreaks that have already emerged. Therefore, the result that this modality of intervention can produce is micro-preventive.

For this reason, the Copasir “Comitato per la sicurezza della Repubblica”, underline the importance of "Some possible measures and lines of action aimed at improving the effectiveness of preventive action, alongside those of a repressive nature already envisaged" as well as soliciting the examination of the legislative proposals on the subject presented in Parliament. Prevention, repression and cooperation are the areas where it is necessary to act with effective, far-sighted and integrated interventions in order to "integrate micro (individual) mechanisms with macro (social / cultural) ones: only in this way can they be start

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6 Comprendere la radicalizzazione jihadista. Il caso Italia, predisposto dalla European Foundation for Democracy e dal Centro studi parlamentari Nomos.
effective prevention techniques in the fight against terrorism”\(^7\). The Committee therefore underlines “the urgent need for legislative intervention" to equip Italy as well "with a discipline to counter the growing phenomenon of jihadist radicalization, as a new frontier of the terrorist threat. Deradicalization is one of the anti-terrorism policies, it represents a real tool for controlling and reducing the subversive threat and the recruitment of European citizens by terrorist organizations”.

Furthermore the CASA (Comitato di analisi strategica antiterrorismo) has launched a reflection on radicalization which it has deepened in several hearings. A possible increase in the risk of violent phenomena was noted. The Committee points out the urgent and no longer postponable need for a legislative intervention which, in analogy to what has happened in other European legal systems, equips our country with a discipline suitable for countering more incisively the growing phenomenon of jihadist radicalization, as a new frontier of the terrorist threat, as attested by the results of the Committee's work. (Atti Parlamentari 8 – DOC. XXXIV n.6).

In responses of these pression and the need to implement a more conclusive regulation system, currently (December 2021), in Italy is under examination an unified text of the proposed laws C. 243 Fiano and C. 3357 Perego (related to other terrorism, those of the extreme right and extreme left), containing "Measures for the prevention of subversive phenomena of violent radicalization, including the phenomena of radicalization and the spread of violent extremism jihadist". The purpose is to regulate the adoption of measures, interventions and programs aimed at preventing phenomena of radicalization and spread of violent extremism of jihadist matrix (as defined by the European Commission Communication COM (2005) 313) and to promote the deradicalization and the recovery of the subjects involved (Italian citizens or foreigners residing in Italy), in terms of social, cultural and work/job integration.

The law proposal starts from the resolution of the European Parliament of 25 November 2015 on the prevention of radicalization and the recruitment of European citizens by terrorist organizations (2015/2063) and, according to the Member of Parliament Fiano, that we interviewed, “There are good chances to reach the approval of the Law as it was drawn a text that is widely agreed and, if it will pass at the Chamber, there are great expectations on the quick approval from the Senate”.

As can be seen from this introduction, therefore, the phenomenon of FF appears entirely residual, even if the European experience tells us that in the future the situation could evolve. It is equally clear that there is a strong delay in the legislative context with respect to the adoption of laws that can guide an action not only of repression but also of effective contrast to radicalization through rehabilitation and reintegration paths. From this point of view, the law currently under discussion in Parliament can certainly become an important element to lay the foundations for a better inter-institutional cooperation and to develop a culture of training that involves all different levels. However, for the purposes of this work, lacking a concrete legislative framework with respect to the issue of the DRR and with such limited numbers of returnees, we are forced to broaden the analysis to policies to combat radicalization of an Islamist matrix as it is a more extensive field in which we can assess how Italian system is concretely working on these topics.

\(^7\) Report Copasir “Una più efficace azione di contrasto alla radicalizzazione di matrice jihadista”.
2. Inter-governmental/ inter-institutional cooperation

As we stated in the introduction in Italy the experience of DDR is very limited both for quantitative reasons and for the absence of a conclusive legislation framework. This limited experience forced us to enlarge our dissertation to the more general topic of the policies of deradicalization. In DRR practices as well as in deradicalization policies, inter institutional cooperation plays a fundamental role. The diverse Italian PCVE structure including its large share of civil society involvement allows for more flexible solutions. The mistakes and failed approaches, as well as the cases of observed successes achieved by other nations – which have been confronted with Islamist extremism much longer and to a greater degree (Crowell 2017) – can serve as lessons for Italy, which is newer to the phenomenon of Islamist extremism. Just think of the important Danish model of Aarhus, which demonstrates how effective cooperation between numerous state and non-state actors can work with mutually beneficial results (Agerschou 2014).

In Italy there are collaborative actions between institutions, authorities and bodies responsible for the fight against terrorism and other institutions and operators of civil society. However, there is a need to systematize these initiatives which must be framed within a coherent plan of interventions. Only an integrated strategy will be able to effectively counter extremism and terrorist violence. But in Italy, the limited presence of Islamic communities of third generations and the small number of foreign fighters estimated up to now have led to a slow approach to deradicalization. (Parliamentary Acts - 8 - Senate of the Republic DOC. XXXIV, N. 6)

The RAN (Radicalization Awareness Network), in December 2021 published a paper that compared the European national measures for preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE), in which they require at national level the elaboration of a strategic plan that is based on an interconnection between the various actors - public and private. According to the RAN, it is necessary to develop and promote measures, actions / programs to prevent violent radicalization / self-radicalization and the spread of violent extremism. In Italy, however, there is no national plan addressing radicalization or extremisms in a broader sense. The management of these issues is implemented to the actors involved in counterterrorism activities, such as governmental departments and security forces without a general policy able to coordinate the single initiatives. Additionally, a substantive role is played by the third sector and NGOs, often working in support of the public institutions.

It must be said, however, that in Italy the network of subjects that work in this field is very wide. Here we try to highlight the main actors present in the country.

- Dipartimento delle informazioni per la sicurezza della Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri (DIS): It coordinates the entire safety information activity, elaborates strategic analysis or analyzes relating to particular situations, promotes and guarantees the exchange of information between the information services and the police forces.
- The DCPP – Central Police Department for Prevention is given an essential task in countering terrorism, acting at a national and international level against political and cyber terrorism. Of its four inner branches, the Service Agency for the Fight Against Extremism and National Terrorism and the service addressing the same phenomena. In this connection, the DCPP is in charge of coordinating DIGOS (General Investigations and Special Operations Division) and NOCS (Central Operational Security Unit) actions. The work of the
public security forces is supported by massive intelligence operations, one of the major actors in the Italian counteraction strategy against terrorism and extremism.

- **Dipartimento dell’Amministrazione Penitenziaria**: the DAP strategy consisting of the intensification of courses to learn about proselytism and its potential radical twists, addressed to prison staff, department heads, and prison administration officers. These have implied, for instance, encouraging prisoners to engage in counseling activities with educators and social workers, as well as with the professional as psychologists, psychiatrists, experts in clinical criminology, and transcultural therapists. An aspect worth noticing is the agreement between the UCOII – Union of Islamic Communities in Italy and DAP to allow the promotion of suitably trained imams.

- **L’Unione delle Comunità ed Organizzazioni Islamiche in Italia (U.CO.I.I.) e Confederazione islamica italiana**: they are involved in projects, programmes, and meetings, creating a prototype for institutional collaboration in drafting protocols and action plans. Worth noting is the National Pact for an Italian Islam, sealed in 2017 between the Ministry of the Interior’s, the Council for Relations with Italian Islam and the representatives from many Islamic associations. Similar agreements have been formulated at the regional and subnational level as well.

- **Osservatorio nazionale per l’integrazione degli alunni stranieri e per l’intercultura**: it is a consultation body; its main task is to find solutions for adapting integration policies to the real needs of an increasingly multicultural and constantly changing school.

- **Garante nazionale dei diritti delle persone detenute o private della libertà personale**: it is a pivotal independent body in charge of detecting vulnerable situations and dealing with all the issues related to prisoners’ rights and dignity. It constantly provides state-of-the-art reports, aiming at strengthening and improving the detainees’ mental and physical well-being. Its regional and local divisions can be found throughout Italy.

- **Comitato di Sicurezza Finanziaria (Financial Security Committee)**: a major role in detecting illegal funding for terrorism purposes is played by the Guardia di Finanza (financial police), who are authorized to make investigations in support of other public security forces. In particular, the financial police help the prevention strategies against terrorism, by freezing financial and economic resources and keeping check on suspected financial activities. They also take part in the national coordination envisaged through the CASA committee.

- **Polizia postale e delle comunicazioni.**

- **Comitato parlamentare per la sicurezza della Repubblica (COPASIR)** is an organ of the Parliament of the Italian Republic which exercises parliamentary control over the work of the Italian secret services.

- **Comitato di analisi strategica antiterrorismo (CASA)** is a very valid tool, which can be considered a model to be replicated in the European context. CASA represents the meeting place, the information exchange, the cooperation and coordination between the police forces and the intelligence agencies with the participation and collaboration of the prison administration.

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8 This can be marked as a very good practice deserving in-depth discussion between local authorities and public administrations, also “from the point of view of easier access to alternative measures to detention”.

9 They are not legal agreements in a strict sense as envisaged by article 8 of the Constitution.
- L’Ufficio di Servizio Sociale per i Minorenni (U.S.M.M.): it is a historical service of the Juvenile Justice that specifically deals with children subjected to criminal proceedings, operating mainly outside the prison facility.
- Prefectures
- Local authority
- No profit organizations, associations and NGOs (third sector): a huge amount of (informal) work is carried out by the third sector, associations, NGOs, and advocacy groups, which, play an essential role. Indeed, they are perceived as fundamental actors in framing an effective preventive strategy in Italy and they cooperate with the institutions, through the organization of commissions and committees, in which they take part as privileged interlocutors.  

The following units, not yet active, but provided for by the law currently under examination (Measures for the prevention of subversive phenomena of violent radicalization, including the phenomena of radicalization and the spread of violent extremism jihadist), should also be mentioned:

- Parliamentary committee for the monitoring of subversive phenomena of violent radicalization including those of a jihadist matrix: it is composed of five deputies and five senators, it carries out information activities on subversive phenomena of violent radicalization, dedicating particular attention to verifying respect for rights and freedom, (constitutionally guaranteed) of women and minors. The Committee also carries out its activity through the hearing of institutional subjects, members of the judiciary and police forces, department directors and university rectors, school directors, health directors, prison directors, ministers of worship, religious guides, social workers and experts. The Committee also examines a report on the functioning of the internet that the Postal and Communications Police sends to the Committee at the end of each semester.
- The National Center on Radicalization (CRAD): it prepares the national strategy for the prevention of radicalization processes and adhesion to violent extremism of a jihadist matrix and for the recovery of the subjects involved in the phenomena of radicalization; this plan defines the projects, actions and initiatives to be implemented. The CRAD, in agreement with the competent administrations, identifies the resources available at European level, as well as the share of funds destined for the Radicalization Awareness Network (RAN), to be used in the activities envisaged by the national strategic plan.

10 Among the various associations and NGOs, remarkable local experiences involving foundations and organizations can be reported in addition to the major role played by Amnesty Italia and Action Aid. Furthermore, the main research of two important institutes focuses on the topic of radicalization and de-radicalization: ISPI – Institute for International Political Studies and CeSI – Centre of International Studies. As far as the dissemination of in-depth information is concerned, the activity ReACT – Observatory on Radicalism and the Fight Against Terrorism, should be mentioned.

11 It is established in the Department of Civil Liberties and Immigration of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, with the presence of representatives of the Department of Information for Security of the Presidency of the Council of Ministries and Ministry of foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of justice, Ministry of defense, Ministry of labour and social policies, Ministry education and Ministry of health, as well as representatives of institutions and associations operating in the religious, cultural, educational and social fields and of the Council for relations with Islam.
3. Risk assessment tools

As we mentioned, only 3 Foreigner fighters are currently imprisoned in Italian prisons and other 7 are currently monitored by authorities. It means that in Italy the returned phenomenon is quite residual and for this reason it does not have a consolidated and standardized custom with no specific tools and no specific classifications. Therefore, risk assessment in relation to returnees is usually unstructured and based by an evaluation case by case both by police and judiciary forces. On the basis of our interviews and the consolidated international experience, in general terms we can say that the risk assessment for returnees has to deal with 2 main elements. First of all, estimating the risk, it is important to consider how the duration of their stay in the war area may affect. From this point of view, the longer the period they lived in the conflict area, the higher the fighting experience and the ideological belief gained. While a short stay in those areas may be seen as a disillusionment element for the fighter once he had the direct experience of life in the so-called caliphate, which could be exploited also as weapon of counternarrative opposed to the jihadist ideology. Secondly, it should be considered the reason that led to the return, comparing the declarations made by the person affected with a deep investigative activity to confirm the truthiness of the declarations. The pressure of the family, nostalgia for habits of the past daily routine, illnesses and winds, in fact, do not assume the basic renouncement to the jihad principles.

On the basis of the combination of the answers given by the returnee in front of their prosecutors and the investigation activity made by the law enforcement it is theoretically possible to split the jihad veterans into four macro-categories with different risk levels. The first category is represented by those who voluntarily left the territory of Da’ish and that therefore can be considered disillusioned or even traumatized by such experience. Then there are the “opportunists”; people who are not ideologically disillusioned but that returned to their home country for family reasons or because of illnesses or wounds suffered on the battlefield. Therefore, they have unchanged ideological motives, potentially still dangerous as they could leave for other conflict theaters or become recruiters at home. The third category Returnee is made by people taken prisoners or nonetheless returned against their will. The prison environment in this situation can be ground for extremist ideals, allowing the subjects already radicalized and violent to create a network of people potentially receptive to antisocial messages. It should be remembered that many terrorist cells formed during the simultaneous stay in prison of their members. The last group of returnees, surely the most dangerous, is the one made by operational agents, Returnees who handle sleeping cells and structures in Europa or other nations in order to conduct attacks and move further the media focus from middle east theaters to western world.

As we said, however, this is only a general framework that can guide the prosecutors decision and not a specific model of risk assessment as far as each case is assessed by judges and probation services on the bases of each single case. If the situation for FF is quite unstructured, as far as their small number allowed to a more specific case-oriented analysis, a little bit different is the situation if we enlarge our point of view to radicalization in general.

From this point of view, the Italian state pays great attention to the practices of monitoring radicalization in prison. As already pointed out, the Anti-Jhiadism parliamentary commission had highlighted how prison, together with the world of the web, represent the two main axes

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of proselytism in Italy on which to focus the control and prevention action. In this perspective, therefore, the DAP for activities related to the phenomenon of the risk of violent radicalization in prison, makes regular use of the Central Investigative Unit of the Penitentiary Police (NIC). In particular, following the reports from the prisons, the NIC carries out a careful analysis of the information in its possession (collected by police and by penitentiary officers) and attributes to each prisoner a level of monitoring on a scale of three.

The first level - classified HIGH - groups all prisoners for crimes related to international terrorism and those of particular interest for attitudes that reveal forms of proselytism, radicalization and/or recruitment. The second level - classified MEDIUM - groups the inmates who have put in place several attitudes within the penitentiary that suggest their proximity to jihadist ideologies and therefore, to proselytizing and recruiting activities, while the third level - classified LOW - groups those inmates who, due to the generality of the information provided by the Institute, deserve further study for the subsequent evaluation of insertion in the first or second level or the maintenance or expulsion from the third level.

The identification of an ongoing radicalization process and the exact recognition of the type of classification is a prerequisite for a more suitable de-radicalization activity. Monthly, with regard to inmates classified as first level and bimonthly for second level ones, the Central Investigation Unit analyzes the data relating to prison life and external contacts of each inmate. On the other hand, as regards subjects who fall into the third level, the managements of prisons are encouraged to send updates only when useful and tangible news emerges related to the risk of radicalization and proselytism and which can provide significant elements for subsequent insertion in the second or first level. This monitoring process consists of an empirical observation through which it is possible to ascertain any adherence to extremist ideas, implement de-radicalization procedures, or in the event of an imminent release of reporting to the Police in the area to implement preventive measures. Specifications.

Furthermore, the results of these activities are shared, with a view to cooperation, as well as with the heads of the Penitentiary Administration, with the National Anti-Mafia and Anti-Terrorism Directorate and if there are facts of investigative and/or judicial interest with the Authority. Judicial, as well as with the Antiterrorism Strategic Analysis Committee (CASA).

4. Prison and probation-based rehabilitation programs

Tackling violent radicalization in prison is part of the broader debate on the possibility that rehabilitation processes can take place within this total institution. Many scholars, in fact, question the re-educational function of the prison as envisaged by the Italian Constitution. As an example, Luigi Ferrajoli argues: "the prison is a criminogenic place of miseducation and solicitation of crime" as the concepts of repression and education would be incompatible.13

If the aforementioned appears to be an absolute point of view on the phenomenon, it remains doubtful that the particular conditions that develop in prison - marginalization and material deprivation, social degradation, harshness of the environment and close contact with numerous inmates, all exacerbated in the case Italian from a strong generalized overcrowding - make the prison a real training ground for crime and specifically a perfect place for the development of a process of religious radicalization. It is no coincidence that in 2008, in an

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interview reported by Il Sole 24 ore (17/01/2015) Amedy Coulibaly, one of the three Paris attackers, told France 2 that "prison was her best school to start at terrorism".

In fact, in a context in which social connections are lost and the identification of the group is called into question, a new desire for belonging, for group identity, for protection is generated which sees religious leverage as an important landing point. Furthermore, the repressive nature of the prison, if not accompanied by an adequate rehabilitation process, would end up exacerbating the aversion to the system, in a place, the prison, where one lives an extreme experience of confrontation with the state authorities. As mentioned during our interviews “from all this, it emerges plastically that in prison people are more fragile and hopeless; if you bring radical minds to them, these already weak individuals may begin to believe that religion is the solution to all their problems. And these, in turn, will radicalize others, multiplying the virus of terror exponentially. Having entered the prison as common criminals, these subjects emerge radicalized, ready to explode in the name of Allah”. From this point of view, the Italian case is no exception, with a prison system mainly focused on the repressive part and not very developed with respect to the issue of reintegrating prisoners into social life.

Looking at the numbers, as already mentioned, we can say that in the 198 Italian prisons only 3 Foreigners fighters of Italian nationality are detained, while another 7 are currently subject to probation. If we stopped here, therefore, we could say that the risks set out above are entirely residual in the Italian context. However, if we broaden the horizon not only to the issue of fighters but to the more general phenomenon of Islamic radicalization, we notice a rather worried and growing situation in Italian prisons. The DAP (Department of Penitentiary Administration) in fact, following the risk assessment procedure described above (see par. 3) has reported an increase from 2015 to today in the number of people at risk with the latest data showing a number of inmates monitored of 508 for a total of people considered at various levels of risk it is around 2000 units. Among them, the Department of Penitentiary Administration of the Ministry of Justice (2021), has classified 142 prisoners in the high level of risk.

About this particular category of people, Italian law introduced in 1975 (Prison Administration Act, Law no. 354 of 26 July 1975) the Article 41-bis, also known as carcere duro ("hard prison regime"), is a provision that allows the Minister of Justice or the Minister of the Interior to suspend certain prison regulations. It is a high level of surveillance used against people imprisoned for particular crimes: in particular Mafia-type association under 416-bis (Associazione di tipo mafioso), and in some cases also for terrorism that try to attempting to subvert the constitutional system. It is suspended only when a prisoner co-operates with the authorities, when a court annuls it, or when a prisoner dies.

The system was essentially intended to cut inmates off completely from their original milieu and to separate them from their former criminal associates. Measures normally include the complete isolation of the prisoner and the ban on the use of the telephone and having personal correspondence with their relatives and with other prisoners, as well as restrictions on visits from members of the family (once per month and visitors are only allowed to communicate by intercom through thick glass). Each social, cultural and sport activities are suspended, and prisoners under 41-bis lose their political rights.

Over the years, the 41-bis system has gradually been relaxed, in response to domestic court decisions or the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CBT) recommendations to ensure appropriate contacts and activities for prisoners subject to that regime, and in
relation to the 2007 sentence of the European Court of Human Rights that held that the application of the 41-bis regime breached two articles of the European Convention on Human Rights: the right to a fair hearing and the right to respect for private and family life. Also for these reasons, 41-bis is a measure that judges use mainly against Mafia crimes and only in a few cases for other types of offenses, when the charges against the prisoner are very serious and the judge considers his position as irrecoverable and extremely dangerous. According to the DAP in 2021 only 14 people considering at high risk in relation to islamic terrorism are actually in prison under the 41-bis regime.

In addition to the special regime of isolation, freedom of worship is another important issue in relation to the contrast of the risk of radicalization. As can be seen from a report by the DAP, “the violent radicalization of a confessional nature is based, in particular, on an erroneous representation of the cultural and religious tradition. There is therefore a clear difference between legitimate religious practice and radicalization that leads to extremism and violence. And in fact, freedom of worship, a constitutionally guaranteed right, is specifically recognized within penitentiary institutions and is governed by the penitentiary law (Article 26 of the Penitentiary Law, Law 26 July 1975 No. 354 and Article 58 of the Execution of the Penitentiary Law, Presidential Decree of 30 June 2000 n. 230) ”(DAP 2019).

This is an issue that takes on ever greater importance if we look at the change that has taken place in the European prison population, of which Italy is no exception, which has seen the number of foreigners in prison increase in recent years. As well highlighted in Antigone's 13th report, “for historical and cultural reasons that can be easily understood, Catholic prisoners are the most numerous (54.7% of the total of Italian prisoners); followed by Muslims (11.4%) and Orthodox (4.2%) ”. It should also be noted that the report shows that 26.3% of the total inmates preferred not to declare their faith to the prison administration. A fact certainly influenced by a part of the atheist prison population, but which conceals as "Muslims in prison, sometimes, are wary even of declaring their religious faith as they are worried about a possible penalizing treatment".

These figures of strong growth in the last decade of detainees of non-Catholic faith, should have led to the organization of internal services to support the faith needs of prisoners no longer attributable exclusively to the Catholic Church. However, the delays in this regard are evident. As stated Carlo Alberto Romani, member of the Board of Directors of the Italian Society of Criminology, interviewed by us "from our research (Extreme radicalism in prison: an empirical research. Italian Review of Criminology, Year XI n.4 2017) emerges as the need to profess one's faith is one, although often not the main one, of the needs expressed by the sample of foreign Islamic prisoners from which it can be understood how the risk of adhering to the appeal of a charismatic guide is almost always facilitated by the absence of other valid references, internal and external to the prison. This risk must be weakened ".

Only in 2015, in fact, was a protocol of understanding signed (renewed in 2020) between the Department of Penitentiary Administration and the Union of Islamic Communities and Organizations in Italy (U.CO.II.) to facilitate the access of Cultural mediators and ministers of worship in prisons. These are mediators and imams who, before entering prisons, must pass a certification process under the scrutiny of the Ministry of the Interior, which makes their ability to access penitentiary facilities more limited and more subject to bureaucratic delays.
From this point of view Hadman al-Zeqri, UCOII National Councilor, told us in an interview that there are only 40 (including two women) Islamic mediators and ministers of worship who have been authorized to enter prisons to date. "What is decisive is the slowness in approving the applications presented by ministers of worship to which is added the inadequacy of the spaces available".

These critical issues were also echoed in our interviews by Alessio Scandurra, Coordinator of the Antigone Observatory on conditions of detention and Coordinator of the European Prison Observatory, who told us that "in prisons in Italy, too little is still being invested to counter radicalization" and there are often enormous cultural linguistic barriers, with prisons where there are no operators able to speak Arabic. The interviewee observed how in fact a few hundred educators for over 60,000 prisoners work in prisons, of which a third are foreigners, "with language problems and little knowledge of the context that the prisoner finds outside the prison". The prison system is late in responding and has "nothing to offer" and, instead, "we should build ad personam projects".

5. Preparedness of Frontline Practitioners

Deradicalization, as described in chapter 2, must be understood as an organic process in which different actors are involved, including practitioners, professionals and experts, local communities, family, prison facilities, social support and religious ministers, who are called to intervene by accompanying the subject towards the fulfillment of his path of rehabilitation and reintegration.

It is evident that specific training for the personnel involved in the front line is essential in order to develop and/or strengthen the ability to read the radicalization processes and act positively within the deradicalization process.

The importance of training also emerges in the bill in approval\(^{14}\), on which the Hon. Emanuele Fiano, who signed the measure, says: "The imprint of this bill is also that of a strong investment in training". Starting from this desire of the legislature comes Article 7, which provides for personnel of the police, the armed forces, the prison administration, the National Guarantor of the rights of persons detained or deprived of their liberty and territorial guarantors, teachers and managers of schools of all levels, universities, operators of social and socio-health services and personnel of the local police corps, according to methods identified by the competent administrations, also in coherence with the National Strategic Plan referred to in Article 2, programs and specialized courses, aimed at providing elements of knowledge also on intercultural and inter-religious dialogue in order to prevent subversive phenomena of violent radicalization, including the phenomena of radicalization and spread of violent extremism of the jihadist matrix. This commitment also finds space in Article 8, paragraph 5, where it is stated that Starting from the school year 2022/2023, the National Teacher Training Plan referred to in Article 1, paragraph 124, of Law No. 107 of July 13, 2015, also provides for training and refreshing activities for teachers and principals of state and equal school institutions aimed at increasing knowledge and global citizenship skills for school integration and intercultural teaching. Finally, it is also worth noting the content of Article 9, entitled "University and post-graduate training projects for the training of specialized professional

\(^{14}\) Measures for the prevention of subversive phenomena of violent radicalization, including the phenomena of radicalization and spread of violent extremism of jihadist matrix (Unified text C. 243 Fiano and C. 3357 Perego di Cremnago).
figures", which provides for the allocation of resources to finance projects for university and post-graduate training of professional figures specialized in the prevention and contrast of radicalization and violent extremism of jihadist origin, in inter-religious dialogue, in intercultural and economic relations.

The widespread awareness of the importance of investing in the management of skills in order to tackle the phenomenon more effectively - which emerged unequivocally both in the interviews and in the focus group - is amply demonstrated by a planning process that anticipated the law itself. There are many paths taken, alongside the more traditional practice of training projects aimed at selected groups of beneficiaries, digital spaces have also been activated through which multilingual information material can be distributed (documents, scientific research, manuals, information on specific initiatives, as well as public events and debates). In this context, the START InSight system is very interesting, as well as their National Observatory on Radicalism and Counter-Terrorism -ReaCT.

The Memorandum of Understanding between the Department of Penitentiary Administration and The Union of Islamic Communities and Organizations in Italy (U.CO.I.I.), first signed in 2015 and renewed in 2020, is undoubtedly among the most valuable initiatives. Through this protocol, in addition to an activity of religious and moral support to inmates by providing access to the Penitentiary Institutes of adequately prepared people, a training course for the Penitentiary Police carried out by teachers identified by the Ucoii has been activated. At the basis of this choice, there is the conviction that knowledge of other people's culture and religion helps to understand, to deconstruct prejudice, to distinguish the religious from the radicalized, the radicalized from the violent radicalized. Still, in the penitentiary field, it is important to mention the project R.A.S.MO.RAD - Raising Awareness and Staff MObility on violent RADicalisation in Prison and Probation Services.

The engagement of universities in higher education programs on the topic of radicalization and deradicalization interventions is also highly important. In this regard, some examples of higher education courses implemented since 2018 to date are:

● University of Siena: Deradicalisation Practices and Techniques
● University of Bari Aldo Moro: Awareness of radicalization: gender, minors and processes of deradicalization
● Pegaso University: Countering international terrorism: cyber jihad, intelligence and strategic communication
● University of Siena: Educational Models of Deradicalization and Conflict Management in Multicultural Health Care Contexts
● LUM Jean Monnet University and 21 universities in Italy and in countries bordering the Mediterranean, PrIMed project, Learning by sharing activities and training activities: integration processes and countering radicalization
● AlmaLaurea: Terrorism, Prevention of Radicalisation and Interreligious and Intercultural Integration.
● Cesie: prevention of radicalization and the role of Muslim communities.
● University of Rome Tor Vergata: Radicalisation and Terrorism: Prevention and Counteraction.
University of Bergamo: Prevention and Countering Radicalisation, Terrorism and the Politics of Integration and International Security

It therefore evidently appears that, albeit with some delays, in Italy as well, greater emphasis is being placed on the theme of specialized training for those operators who, at all levels, find themselves dealing with certain aspects connected to deradicalization.

6. Reintegration measures

Today, terrorism and jihadist radicalization processes represent one of the greatest threats to our security and one of the most serious dangers is the action of the returnee, the foreign terrorist fighter. A picture that today more than ever is confirmed because according to the Swedish radicalization expert Magnus Ranstorp: "COVID19 and extremism are the perfect storm". Isolation and greater exposure to the virtual ecosystem have in fact opened up new opportunities for proselytism and recruitment to extremist groups.

This widespread awareness has not been sufficient to remove Italy from a situation of great backlog in the construction of a policy system consistent with the many recommendations that international bodies indicated as a way to counter the phenomenon. As repeatedly mentioned in this report, since 2014 the European Council has called for the implementation of measures to counter this threat also through interventions to prevent radicalization and reintegration and deradicalization of people considered at risk.

In the wake of the most recent EU and international strategies for the prevention of jihadist drifts, deradicalization enters, in its own right, among the policies of counter-terrorism; it represents a real security tool to control and reduce the subversive threat and recruitment of European citizens by terrorist organizations.

Compared to this scenario, if from the side of repressive actions there has been a timely intervention, with The reform that took place with the "anti-terrorism decree" of February 18, 2015, n. 7 converted, with amendments, by Law April 17, 2015, n. 43 and the subsequent Law July 28, 2016, n. 153, from the side of the prevention of radicalization processes, as well as, the rehabilitation and reintegration of foreign fighters are from 2017 under discussion a measure that should complete the package of policy tools.

It should be noted, in order to better frame the position of Italy, the government programs for the recovery of former terrorists, although in a phase of growth, have been activated for a few years in Western countries. The most important public policies, aimed at deradicalization, are currently underway in various countries of the Islamic world, while, as far as Western countries are concerned, the most advanced programs (and from which the first indications are beginning to emerge) are taking place in Great Britain, Denmark, Holland, Sweden, Norway, Germany and Canada. In Italy, the limited presence of Islamic communities and third generations, and the small number of foreign fighters estimated so far, have


16 With the aim of finding a common strategy for reintegration and deradicalization, the Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN) distributed the "Declaration of Good Practices with Foreign Fighters for Prevention, Outreach, Rehabilitation and Reintegration", a manual in which some key points are listed in order to achieve an effective management program for jihad veterans based on the best experiences collected.
determined a slow approach to deradicalization. However, as Sergio Bianchi\textsuperscript{17} reminds us, in order to have a comprehensive statistical picture, in addition to the 82 foreign fighters surveyed by AISE, we must add the more than 60 people convicted or awaiting trial for crimes related to terrorism of jihadist matrix and the approximately 400 people now subject to monitoring.

The proposed law Measures for the prevention of subversive phenomena of violent radicalization, including the phenomena of radicalization and spread of violent extremism of the jihadist matrix (Unified text C. 243 Fiano and C. 3357 Perego di Cremnago) aims to counter and prevent the phenomena of radicalization and spread of violent extremism of jihadist matrix, as well as to rehabilitate those involved, whether Italian citizens or foreign residents in Italy, through inter-religious and intercultural dialogue and through the knowledge, respect and sharing of constitutional principles.

In outlining the tools to achieve this objective, the text takes into account the consolidated guidelines in international and supranational and, in particular, the resolution 2063 of the European Parliament of November 25, 2015, and the Communication of the European Commission COM (2005) 313, on the prevention of radicalization and recruitment of European citizens by terrorist organizations, as well the many suggestions of scholars, experts, public operators, associations and religious communities.

The measure was inspired by the awareness that together with the indispensable strategy based on repression and intelligence, it was essential to build a genuine counter-narrative, also through inter-religious dialogue, knowledge and training, by sharing constitutional principles.

Building on this assumption, the text revolves around 8 cornerstones:

- The establishment of a national center on radicalization (CRAD). The task of this center will be to annually prepare the National Strategic Plan for the prevention of radicalization processes and the recovery of those involved in the phenomenon of radicalization.

- The institution of Regional Coordination Centers on radicalization (RAC). The task of the RACs will be to implement the National Plan by submitting an annual report to the CRAD. This body will be chaired by the Prefect and composed of representatives from local institutions, bodies and associations operating in the religious, cultural, educational and social field in the region, associations and organizations operating in the field of social and health assistance and integration, as well as unions of employers and workers.

- Establishment of a new parliamentary body: "the Committee for the fact-finding activity on the phenomena of radicalization and violent extremism of the jihadist matrix. The task of this Committee will also be to present an annual report to Parliament on the activities carried out and the results obtained.

- Specialized training programs and courses. The participants in this training activity are the personnel of the Police Force and city police; the Military; the Prison Administration, the National Guarantor and local guarantors of the rights of persons detained or deprived of their personal freedom; teachers and principals of schools of all levels and universities; operators of social and socio-health services, the personnel of the local police force.

\textsuperscript{17} President of Agenfor International, Arabist, de-radicalization expert
● Preventive interventions in schools. The National Observatory for the integration of foreign students must develop guidelines on intercultural and inter-religious dialogue, in accordance with the strategic plan drawn up by CRAD. The guidelines are adopted by the decree of the Minister of Education and are communicated to regional scholastic offices and scholastic institutions. The National Observatory carries out annual monitoring of the initiatives undertaken by scholastic institutions. As of the school year 2022/2023, it is projected that the National Training Plan for teachers will also include training activities aimed at increasing knowledge and skills in global citizenship for school integration and intercultural teaching.

● Funding of university and post-graduate training courses for the training of professional figures specialized in the prevention and contrast of radicalization and violent extremism of the jihadist matrix, in inter-religious dialogue, in intercultural and economic relations.

● Communication and information activities. The National Strategic Plan prepared by CRAD can foresee projects for the development of information campaigns, through multimedia platforms that also use foreign languages, as well as the possible participation to similar campaigns promoted by international institutions of which Italy is part of, in order to promote integration and intercultural and inter-religious dialogue, as well as to contrast radicalization and the spread of violent extremism of jihadist matrix.

● Deradicalization and rehabilitation of Italian or foreign prisoners. The Minister of Justice annually adopts a National Plan to guarantee Italian or foreign prisoners a penitentiary treatment that promotes their deradicalization and rehabilitation, in coherence with the National Strategic Plan drawn up by CRAD. By September 30 of each year, a report on the status of implementation of the Plan shall be submitted to the Commissions.

The regulatory framework described above, having not yet been implemented, confirms a policy gap with respect to other countries which instead have a national-level model that makes the procedures and good practices of deradicalization consistent. In spite of this background, there is no lack of local experimentation of collaboration between institutions and civil society operators, aimed at addressing the issue of Islamic extremism from the standpoint of prevention and deradicalization. The words of Carlo Alberto Romano18 are emblematic of this point "In the communities, the most valuable work is done......Our history, based on the municipalities, has always entrusted local communities with the management of even their own security..... In our country, the management of local communities has produced the main embankment, because it has created situations of dialogue, despite the delay of the national legislature."

Some of the measures undertaken are of a preventive and general nature, for example, activities addressed to the entire Islamic community, including intercultural meetings, integration courses and other initiatives aimed at reducing social tensions. Other interventions are more focused on specific individuals who have already been radicalized, whether they are individuals who present "signs of radicalization" or individuals who have been convicted of terrorism. Some of these programs, in fact, take place in prisons.

On this second front, despite the fact that they are initiatives that arise from the willingness of local actors or, in any case, are not framed within a coherent and ordered plan of intervention, there are some common features such as, for example, the composition of a

18 Member of the Board of Directors of the Italian Society of Criminology and university professor.
specialized team, which generally includes radicalization experts, psychologists, social workers and, in some cases, former militants.

In fact, some of these programs take place in prisons. In this regard, interventions channeled through the Alternative measures to detention have been positively evaluated, and this is particularly the case when dealing with radicalized youth in a context of community that supports the social reintegration and empowerment of the individual, drawing on the power of human relations through community networks, families, friends, mentors (trainers), as well as the joint collaboration of External Penal Area officials and professionals working on the front line. Among the main figures involved in these programs are the case manager, who is responsible for the treatment and reintegration plan; the mentor, who serves as a liaison between the youth, their community, law enforcement, and the judicial community (especially in cases where youth belong to minorities who struggle to recognize the authority of the justice system in charge of their case); the families, who are considered active participants in the program; and the communities of reference.

About minors we have a concrete case of application of a deradicalization program - that will be clearly explained in the chapter on vulnerable categories. This is a good practice of deradicalization and social reintegration that can represent an important precedent in a context where the familiarity of adolescents in the use of computer tools, represents a risk of involvement of minors in terrorist propaganda.

Remaining on the fundamental role of the ecosystem of social networks as a real socio-cultural environment of potential radicalization and violent self-radicalization, favored in particular by uncontrolled access, disintermediation and incessant propaganda through multimedia narratives increasingly enticing, especially for young people, has also become the place of communication projects that rely on a strategy of counter-narrative directed to deconstruct, discredit and demythicize the extremist-violent message. An important contribution in this direction has been given by Europe, funding several projects, including the OLTRE project and the OPEN project, which alongside a research objective to systematically update the understanding of the phenomena of radicalization and training to all public and private actors who have a role in the policies to combat radicalization, have also provided for offline/online communication activities.

7. Vulnerable categories

The DRR is a residual phenomenon in Italy – as it was repeated in other parts of this report - and it certainly is more so for the most vulnerable categories, such as women and minors. Indeed, as reported in the introduction the percentage of women Italian related FF is less than the 10% of the total population of Italian related FF and none of these women are actually detained in Italian prisons. The deradicalization processes and specifically the DRR process to be implemented in Europe cannot exclusively concern adult males, since there is also an involvement in extreme radicalization, although marginal, also of women and children. They are involved not only as family members of extremists but in some cases as an active part in the radicalization also as Foreign Fighters.

The concern with females is very important because the public debate has been increasingly focusing on the strong capacity of ISIS to recruit women: the stories of young women leaving
their countries to become “jihadi brides” have been increasingly reported in the media (Wahid, 2015).

Women played a variety of roles beyond those of simplistic ‘jihadi brides’ – a particularly limited term, which overlooks the complexity of motivations and roles of these women.

In the panorama of Islamist terrorism, the figure of women is taking on an increasingly active role against infidels: a role of strategic value for terrorist organizations, of anonymous online radicalization and planning of an attack. The strategic role of educator and recruiter that women plays in the modern global dimension of Islamic terrorism is the step that precedes the role of active fighter in jihad.

An unprecedented number of Western women have recently joined the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). The group has envisaged strictly non-combat roles for them, but violence is an essential part of their embraced ideology and several signs suggest that they could claim a more militant role.

Peresin and Cervone’s study of Western women joining ISIS concluded that the number of those women, more than 200, “is much higher than in any previous jihadist mobilization of Western foreign fighters” (Peresin & Cervone, 2015). We believe that this is especially important because it shows that ISIS needs to attract not only fighters but also women to create a society that is not only composed of warriors but also by families, where people can live an “ordinary” life. This is a cornerstone of ISIS’ “utopian” narrative, which is a very important radicalization factor (C. Winter, 2015a, 2015b).

The 2013-2018 data provided by the International Center for the Study of Radicalization, women are 4,761 of 41,490 fighters from over 80 countries: about 13%. Other sources provide percentages ranging from 15 to 20%. The countries with the highest rate of "vocations" are France and Germany, followed by Great Britain, Austria and Belgium, with Italy having a much smaller presence even if it has increased over time.

The numbers available also showed that there is no single profile of women who have enlisted in Syria and Iraq. Significant differences appeared in terms of age, marital status and level of education (showing that there is no direct link between terrorism and low education).

There are 138 foreign fighters from Italy, of which 12 are women. Of the 24 Italian citizens, 7 are women, 6 of whom are converts.

In Italy, among the women who have leave the country with their children to follow their husbands foreign fighters, some are first and second generation, are between 17 and 40, are single or married and with children; almost all of them have a higher level of education, they all left from northern Italy and some converted to Islam after the proclamation of the Islamic state. The precarious economic conditions explain only minimally the departure of these girls; there are in fact examples of women from wealthy families, with excellent education and therefore with good prospects for professional development in the country of origin.

Compared to the traditional places where recruitment takes place - especially mosques and prisons (but in the case of Italian women none have a criminal record) - the Internet and social networks have acquired a primary role (Telegram, Viber, VKontakt, Tumblr and WhatsApp).

In addition to ideological motivations, among the most common push factors we find the sense of not belonging to own society and the need for independence (Morazzoni, Zavettieri, 2018).
Europol underlined that only 11% of European returnees are women. Which would suggest that women, having reached the Caliphate, are not free to leave the territory. It can be added that these are mainly young women: the Caliphate needs young women because they can have children and therefore contribute to its demographic growth. However, many muhajirats have understood that the promises of IS were false and have returned to Europe, or have tried to do so (Bombardieri, 2018). It is precisely these repatriated women who today propose to plan strategies to combat violent ideologies. In fact, the female returner has the opportunity to undertake two paths, strongly in contrast with each other: on the one hand, the path of radical Islam that leads her to seek new solutions to design a new hijra; on the other, the path of "redemption", through which returnees can become figures capable of assuming an important role in the processes of de-radicalization. But, in Italy there is still no law that regulates the phenomenon of repatriation and not even a provision for the reintegration of the ffs into their context of daily life. In this situation, having assessed the danger of the returner, we proceed with the detention, as happened for example for Laura Bombonati, arrested and locked up in the Turin prison.

Some cases of muhajirat have been reported by the media:

Maria Giulia Sergio, who converted to Islam, left for Syria with her Albanian husband Aldo Kobuzi in 2014. She left Italy just four days after your arranged marriage. She wanted to marry a man, before her departure from Italy, so as not to be forced to marry a stranger in Syria. The woman's family members also converted to Islam and in 2015 attempted to reach the Near East area; but they were intercepted and arrested before departure. In 2016 Maria Giulia Sergio was sentenced to 9 years in prison, but she is still a fugitive. Her mother and father died, while her other daughter is still in prison, where she serves a sentence of 5 years.

Lara Bombonati is converted to Islam with her husband Francesco Cascio (who died in fight at the end of 2016). It is suspected that the woman, who went to Syria in early 2015, provided logistical support to the jihadist group Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham, operating as a link between Syria and Turkey. Returning to Italy in 2017, she was arrested just before leaving for Belgium, where she allegedly met her future husband, and then went back to Syria. Lara Bombonati wanted to have a child, but Francesco Cascio was not interested in paternity; he only invoked jihad and martyrdom: “I wanted to have a family but he always and only asked to die, to become a martyr. He now lives in all of us”.

Alice Brignoli with her husband Mohamed Koraichi (Italian citizen of Moroccan origin) and their three minor children, had left Italy in 2015 to reach the territories occupied by the IS. There Koraichi took part in the military operations of the Caliphate, while his wife played an active role in educating the children in the cause of jihad.

Even more complex is the situation concerning minors, who arrived in the territories controlled by the Islamic State, brought by their parents or other adults, or who were even born there. Many of them spent several years in areas under the control of extremist groups, exposed to acts of systematic violence and traumatizing events, in daily contact with jihadist ideology, undergoing constant indoctrination. Resolution no. 2016/2036 of the European Parliament emphasized the importance of repatriating, rehabilitating and reintegrating children, referring in particular to child soldiers. The education of children is to be considered
a strategic element for effective reintegration because it reinserts them in a context they have lost and allows them to interact by developing an awareness and a new orientation with respect to what they have experienced.

Minors are categorized into infants (between 0 and 4 years old), children (between 4 and 14 years old) and teenagers (between 15 and 17 years old) on the basis of their degree of independence in traveling to the Islamic State (Cook, Vale, 2018). A distinction was also made between minors considered victims of the Caliphate, as they were born there or still brought babies by their parents, and those who voluntarily submitted themselves to the indoctrination practices and violent activities of the IS.

In fact the European FF are mainly young immigrant or second generation Muslims (Morazzoni, Zavettieri, 2018). Their radicalization process usually follow a path that can be summarized in the DRIA model (due to personal trauma, the young person does not recognize himself in the values of the society he belongs to and reconstructs his identity by joining the jihadist community, initially by finding on the web the "facilitators" who initiate him towards hijra).

The actions of the children recruited are therefore strongly dependent on their age but also on sex. The boys recruited in the IS are variously involved in roles of armed conflict (training, executions and direct combat). The girls recruited in the IS are instead educated on the roles of the "good wife" and on the fact that one can already get married at the age of 9. Girls are generally referred to as "sisters of the Islamic State" and, as a result, may be involved in recruiting and disseminating propaganda (Scherrer, 2018, p. 37). Regardless of their actions, however, under international law, all minors recruited into armed or terrorist groups are, in the first instance, victims of crimes committed by adults.

Among the minors involved in Italy we have:

Alvin Berisha, an 11-year-old of Albanian origin, brought from Italy to Syria in 2014 by his mother who had joined the Islamic State. He was returned to our country. At least 7 other Italian minors remain in the Syrian camps. Three of them, in particular, are focused on the attention of the Ros and the Milan prosecutor’s office: they are the children of Alice Brignoli and Mohammed Koraichi, she is Italian and he is Moroccan with Italian citizenship who joined ISIS in 2015.

Tarik Aboulala, a Moroccan who arrived in Italy at the age of 15, in 2010, and entrusted to a community for problematic minors because he was an orphan. He disappeared in 2015 and died in combat in Syria in 2016.

The son of the imam of Sellia Marina (Catanzaro), was arrested in 2011, left for Syria at the end of 2013 and died in 2014 during a bombing.

A concrete and effective case of application of a deradicalization program within the juvenile penal process was found in Trieste. It was a personalized individual program addressed to a minor investigated for proselytism and supporting ISIS. The offender is a 15-year-old Italian, son of Muslim immigrants, with only a superficial and distorted knowledge of the Islamic religion. According to the technical consultant of the Public Prosecutor's Office, the boy was in a position where joining the jihadist movement could have made up for an identity crisis.
The minor, after admitting the reported misconduct, thanks also to the collaboration of his parents, consented to immediately start the project. Under the coordination of the Juvenile Social Service Office (Ussm), he was "disconnected" from the internet in order to divert him from the intense ISIS propaganda to which he was subjected and underwent a "probation" process. The probation project has seen the involvement of a psychotherapist and a Muslim mentor expert in recruitment processes, who after an analysis of the personality and the psychological and cultural conditions of the suspect, as well as, the causes and the level of adherence to extremist ideology; has realized a program of deradicalization and social reintegration.

This is undoubtedly a good practice and an important precedent in a context where the familiarity of adolescents in the use of computer tools and the period of social isolation caused by the Covid-19 emergency, represents a condition that multiplies the risk of involvement of minors in terrorist propaganda.

It's most important providing, through a whole of government approach, timely and appropriate reintegration and rehabilitation assistance to children associated with foreign terrorist fighters returning or relocating from conflict zones, including through access to health care, psychosocial support and education programs that contribute to the well-being of children and to sustainable peace and security.

As Mr Fiano points out: "State structures are not only for suppression - or for the development of subsequent judicial activities - but they can also serve as a means of prevention. These are issues that can be solved by using the conceptual tools of prevention, having confidence - and it is not easy - that the subjects involved can be de-radicalized. The imprint of this Bill is also a strong investment in the training of penitentiary operators and in some cases of the police, who are able to recognize the phenomenon and deal with it. (...) "It is important that all territories have eyes and ears on the phenomenon of radicalization, which is a phenomenon in the making. We want to prevent young Muslims in certain workplaces, prisons, or on the internet from becoming radicalized. It is necessary to become aware of this phenomenon early in order to stop this process". Two key points. "We do not want the theme of de-radicalization and the battle against any form of violent extremism of jihadist matrix to harm the constitutional right of the profession of faith. We think that the prevention of these violent acts cannot disregard the idea that people can be rehabilitated and our interventions can not have as background anything other than the social, cultural, and professional integration of those who have held criminal conduct."

In Italy, as we have seen in previous chapters, the legislative procedure aimed at introducing "Measures for the prevention of radicalization and jihadist extremism" is currently at a standstill. The experimentation of prevention and de-radicalization strategies takes place directly in the field, there are no real actions of deradicalization about vulnerable categories. An example of this lack is the declaration of Sergio Bianchi: "The three micro-meso and macro levels need to be balanced because if they are not, it leads to conflict. At the micro level, the work of the social system is important; it is already there, not to be invented. People have their own vulnerabilities. For example, in a northern prison there is a young girl with a mental disability, who converted to Islam a couple of years ago, she says she is Muslim. She doesn't understand anything about Islam, but having ended up under the radar of CASA (Comitato di Analisi Strategica Antiterrorismo - Committee for Strategic Antiterrorism

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19 President of Agenfor International
Analysis), of NIC (Nucleo Investigativo Centrale - Central Investigative Unit), and NIR (Nuclei Investigativi Regionali - Regional Investigative Units) at this point the security system prevails over the mental-psychological assistance system. In these cases, one must be very careful because welfare organizations, both public and private, can play a role. This is very important for minors, because juvenile procedures, which are very different from ordinary procedures, allow for the intervention of these subjects even within criminal procedures. I have cases in Bologna of two juvenile boys, arrested by ROS for very serious crimes, for whom an honorary judge, a friend, took charge and through a targeted intervention we rehabilitated them and made an example of them. If they had ended up in prison it would have been the end of the world.”

Another important point of view is that of Luisa Ravagnani. In Italy I don't think that there are any de-radicalization projects directed at women and children, while on the RAN web site (the network of sensitization to the problem of radicalization in order to help front line operators and to facilitate the exchange of experiences and good practices among them) we can find projects in Belgium, Holland and Denmark. If a significant project were to be implemented in Italy, it would be introduced through European channels because only European funding is available for activities on this matter. Perhaps there are local projects that address a specific problem related to a single case. Italy is mentioned for some prison related projects.”

In short, in Italy the process of deradicalization and reintegration is still very long, and the phenomenon is still residual. But it is absolutely necessary to start today to implement all the tools necessary to prevent radicalization phenomena and to reintegrate the vulnerable people who have returned home.

8. A focus on Brescia: "The Islamic Capital of Italy".

In order to offer further insights into the discourse developed so far by providing some concrete examples at the local level, we have decided to carry out a territorial study on the metropolitan area of Brescia by conducting a focus group with some active players in that context. The choice of Brescia, defined by Limes, an Italian geopolitical magazine as the "Islamic capital of Italy" is determined by the higher percentage of Muslims in relation to the population in comparison with other Italian provinces. A widespread presence on the provincial territory, with almost 70 thousand people from 30 countries and with two cases of foreigners who have made headlines: Anas El Abboudi and Samir Buogana. Zakaria Youbi, a friend of Anas, also lived in Vobarno and was deported to Morocco on suspicion of having become radicalized. To these two subjects Muhammad Waquas (Pakistani) and Lassaad Briki (Tunisian), both legal residents and workers in the town of Manerbio, were arrested with the charge of international terrorism.

For the realization of the focus group representatives of local institutions, from universities, of some associations, as well as journalists, teachers and members of the Islamic community were involved. Due to the particular conditions imposed by the Pandemic, it was not possible to gather all the interlocutors in one place. The venue of the meeting, also for its symbolic value, was the Islamic Cultural Center of Brescia (mosque) in Via Corsica 261.

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20 Researcher University of Brescia.
The comparison was built around three stages: a snapshot of the territory and the phenomenon of radicalization; the actions that the territory has introduced to address the problem of radicalization; results and critical issues that have emerged from which a renewal of the tools to act in the direction of prevention and social reintegration of subjects radicalized or at risk of radicalization can be derived.

Starting from the photograph of the territory, it is everyone's conviction that, despite the possible tensions and the cases of radicalized subjects, the local context is substantially sheltered from a worsening of the phenomenon. This, however, rests primarily on the knowledge of the faithful who attend the mosque. The Imam himself - Amen Al Hazmi - underlines that not all those who come from Islamic countries attend places of worship. And in a particular way, there are many young people who in an unprotected situation of the mosque and at the mercy of the disinformation of the network, can become a target of jihadist propaganda. On this front, Prof. Viceconte, who has always taught in professional institutes with a majority of non-Italian students, reports of his students who, pressured by problems of social insertion, manifest a certain detachment from the faith that they express with forms of protest (a famous Moroccan rapper) which combine migratory tensions with themes of radicalization, while ignoring even the basics of Islamic culture and the Muslim religion.

This reflection is framed in the conviction of the entire focus table that behind radicalization there is an absolute lack of knowledge of the Koran and religious teachings that provides space for jihadist propaganda on the Internet. "The role of the Islamic community is important but it is not an absolute guarantee since the young person who does not know the Quran and does not attend the mosque is beyond control and often at the mercy of the internet and fake news."

Moving on to the topic of the work done in recent years with respect to deradicalization actions. Everyone encourages us to look at prevention policies. In this perspective it is unanimous that important work has been to create the conditions for a relationship of great collaboration between the Islamic community and local institutions. "Having an Assessor open to dialogue makes this approach possible, when you find instead, an institution that begins to place obstacles, for example on the request for places of worship, the situation changes, which is not conducive to dialogue."
There was a fact that convinced even the most skeptical to act in the direction of action of dialogue and inclusion of the Islamic community and attention to radical drifts when in the aftermath of the attack at the Bataclan venue (2015) we learned of a few people in the prison of Brescia who applauded the terrorist act.

In this direction on the line of the National Pact with Islam, signed at the Viminale in February 2017, the "Inter-religious Table for Dialogue with Islam" - a space of comparison wanted by the Territorial Council for Immigration - has developed a plan to promote the integration of people of Islamic faith and prevent forms of radicalization or fanaticism.

"Brescia, as explained by Antonio Viceconte and confirmed by Imam Amen Al Hazmi, is a context where inter-religious dialogue has been initiated for years, which includes as an active part of the Islamic community and which has given rise to a variety of initiatives, which can be inscribed in the framework of actions to counter radicalization, starting from the middle of the decade. The comparison and exchange with the Diocese has been particularly advanced, with reciprocal moments of sharing, with the Bishop in the mosque and the Imam in the cathedral, to highlight the need and the will of cooperation and comparison".

The inter-religious "Pact of Fraternity" in Brescia is part of this scenario. A pact that provides for continuous moments of confrontation that have naturally seen the phenomenon of radicalization and policies to deal with it addressed several times.

Over time, projects have also been developed in schools. A primary example is that of the Istituto Comprensivo of Nuvolera, the leading school of the "Educare alle differenze" Project, which derives from an initiative of the Regional Educational Office for Lombardy.

The decision by the Mosque in Via Corsica to open its doors for a series of open days, three days a year is also worth mentioning. Then there is the project “In cammino ... alla scoperta dei luoghi di culto della città” (Christian, Islamic, Orthodox, Sikh) promoted by I.I.S.S " A. Mantegna", now in its sixth edition "Respect for the other starting from the knowledge of religious culture is essential because ignorance is the basis of all forms of intolerance". In this reconstruction of interventions that go in the direction of constituting a condition of exchange and integration between communities, the participants at the table also recall the "Festival della Pace", now in its fourth edition where the theme was "Religions: threat or defense of peace. Inter-religious dialogue is able to build peace".

The Brescia mosque was also the final stop, in 2008, in the Training Course: "Islamic communities and Italy" organized by Agenfor. Training represents a real pillar of commitment in the area. The University of Brescia, with the Prefecture of Brescia and the Islamic Community of Brescia, in 2018, designed and built a training course for Imams, one of the first in Italy. The Islamic community has identified 25 people from the province, reporting to the provincial coordination of Islamic communities that in the course of 5 meetings have deepened and analyzed the regulations that govern the presence of Islamic communities in the territory.

Finally, in this exercise of reconstructing the initiatives of the territory, it is pointed out that the prison of Brescia is among the eight (out of 198) that since 2015 have participated in the first experimental phase of the DAP-UCOII agreement for the access of Imams in penitentiary institutions.

The last topic that the focus table was invited to address is that of the future and how to equip itself to improve the action of prevention and countering radicalization. The unanimous
response was to persevere with the work done so far on the territory in the perspective that the approval of the national law can give a boost to local planning.

"The main effort should be to continue to involve young Muslims in the definition of shared activities. In the mosque, we have activated a study room where university and high school students come together and help each other in their studies. But we need to broaden our knowledge of the fundamental values of our religion. "We need to look at our models of education ... update our content."

"But our work is not enough." The antidote to the bad teachers of propaganda, all the interviewees agree, lies in the role of the family, the Islamic community and the local community, with particular reference to the school. In this perspective, the experience of inter-religious dialogue that exists in Brescia represents a resource that should be pursued without hesitation because it can offer spaces and opportunities for dialogue, meeting and sharing. Schools must find space to reflect on the issues of Islamic radicalization and, more generally, on all those behaviors that deny respect for others.

On this theme of the future, it is undoubtedly important to report what Ahmed El Balazi (Imam of the Islamic Cultural Center of Garda and Valle Sabbia - Vobarno) says about what should no longer be done if one decides to fight the phenomenon of radicalization in an effective way.

"From Vobarno left Anas (a young foreign fighter who died in Syria) and his friend Zacaria Youbi was deported from Italy for links with Isis. Anas from the prison of Brescia has been transferred to the one in Calabria, that is, one of the three structures where radicalized subjects are known to be transferred. Once you hang out with these extreme groups, "you get burned and go all the way". "Anas was a normal guy, he would greet me, then he grew a beard, he raised his pants like the Prophet and started to badmouth me. So I asked him why such behavior, and he explains that he understood that I am not a true Muslim.

The Imam goes on to tell stories that respond with his experience to what should be done in the future and what we should avoid. I have been here since 2010 and we have had several cases of radicalization. There are people in life who lose hope at some point. A boy born and raised here (whose name he prefers not to mention) had personal problems and this weakness became the point from which his radicalization process began. He really just wanted to run away from his problems. Fortunately, I got a message from one of his friends and we were able to stop him. If we examine what’s behind a radical choice, there is almost always a condition of fragility and personal suffering that has little to do with religious belief. These boys find false answers on the internet. If we don’t keep these kids inside the light, outside there is darkness. And in the darkness, there are people cherry pick passages of the Quran attacking disbelievers who attack Muhammad. Knowledge is the first antidote to radicalization and this is why in Vobarno we have carried out many initiatives of inter-religious dialogue involving the community and young people in schools.

Continuing on the theme of knowledge and the importance of school, Cristina Fantoni wanted to close this discussion by presenting an experience that she considers a fundamental tool to be repeated in the future to counteract radicalization.

A good practice, says the school director of the Istituto Comprensivo di Nuvolento, was the project "Educare alle differenze" an initiative that was created with the Regional Law November 6, 2017, n.24 "Regional interventions of aid and assistance to victims of terrorism.
and information, training and research to know and prevent the processes of violent radicalization”.

The project, which involves 17 primary and secondary schools, began in 2018 with a training course for teachers and school leaders and a provincial conference titled “Contro ogni forma di estremismo violento cosa può fare la scuola” which literally means “Against all forms of violent extremism, what can the school do?”.  

On that occasion there was a report done by Dr. Omar Bellicini titled “La radicalizzazione di stampo islamista nelle giovani generazioni” meaning “The radicalization of Islamist type in the younger generations”.

Teachers who participated in the course created “learning units” to counter violent extremism. A theme to which particular attention has been dedicated is that of the manipulation of communication, with work on fake news and the connection between it and political extremism. In 2021, we resumed activities with a questionnaire that involved 1,805 students from the 17 institutes in our network and a conference in which we defined training initiatives arising from the analysis of the issues raised in the questionnaire.
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