

Evaluating P/CVE: Institutional Structures in International Comparison

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Executive Summary

Preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE) is an emerging field with a wealth of valuable experience but without proven recipes for success. Evaluation – the systematic and objective assessment of ongoing or completed activities – can help P/CVE actors to learn from this experience in ways that are immediately useful for current and future projects and complement the equally pressing need for applied research. The relative youth of the P/CVE field and its intervention approaches makes evaluation particularly important to help funders invest effectively and avoid adverse effects.

A key part of making evaluations as useful as possible is to develop effective institutional structures that shape who influences how evaluations are targeted, commissioned, funded, and conducted, and to what extent their results are used to inform future action. As part of the PrEval¹ project, this study surveys international examples of evaluation structures to inform German P/CVE policy.

Focus and Approach

At the center of our inquiry is the vast field of primary, secondary and tertiary P/CVE activities, including civic education, implemented by non-governmental and usually non-profit organizations (NGOs) that largely depend on government funding. Many of these NGOs work closely with a variety of public authorities in the education, health, social, and security sectors. It is within this challenging, multi-stakeholder context that systematic evaluation has developed in a way that is at least partly accessible to open-source research. The study focuses on three elements of institutional structures that are particularly relevant for evaluation: (1) the formal rules with which P/CVE policy and funding bodies guide their implementing partners; (2) evaluation capabilities among funders, implementers and evaluators; as well as (3) the social norms that influence whether and how evaluations are conducted and utilized (i.e., evaluation culture). From an initial mapping of OECD countries, we used a set of selection criteria, including track records and the scope of actors and approaches in both P/CVE and its evaluation, to identify four case country studies: Canada, Finland, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom (UK).

We conducted the case studies between November 2020 and May 2021 using both public and confidential primary sources, secondary literature and 46 semi-structured interviews with experts and stakeholder representatives from the respective countries. In addition, we conducted background interviews with stakeholders in Germany to

¹ The project's full title is: "Evaluation Designs for Prevention Measures – multi-method approaches for impact assessment and quality assurance in extremism prevention and the intersections with violence prevention and civic education." The Peace Research Institute Frankfurt (PRIF) coordinates the project; the German Federal Ministry of the Interior, Construction and Community funds it. See <https://www.gppi.net/project/preval>.

validate the study's conclusions and recommendations for German decision-makers within policy, funding and implementing institutions.

Key Findings

As in Germany, we found that P/CVE actors across Canada, Finland, the Netherlands, and the UK struggle in similar ways with designing and implementing systematic, useful evaluations that maximize opportunities for learning – and thus progress toward greater impact. Across these cases, the demand for evaluations as learning tools is strong among funders and implementers alike, which is appropriate for an emerging field. However, the extent to which this demand is – or is not – being met differs significantly between the four country cases. An analysis of how these differences relate to each country's systemic choices about evaluation structures – i.e., formal rules, investments in evaluation capabilities, and the existence of an evaluation culture, as introduced above – provides useful insights for P/CVE evaluation policy anywhere.

Based on these findings, the study identifies six areas in which decision-makers at the policy level, in funding bodies and in implementing organizations can use structural levers to advance evaluation. The first three of these areas mirror the three sets of systemic choices just mentioned; they are about shaping an overall system of constructive P/CVE evaluation practice. The other three areas focus on designing individual evaluations in effective ways. To incentivize and enable a strong evaluation practice, decision-makers need to address all six areas.

● System level

1. Build a constructive evaluation culture by prioritizing trust.

The case studies demonstrate that to maximize the utility of the significant investments that evaluation requires, P/CVE actors need an environment of trust in which owning up to one's mistakes does not result in undue punishment. This works only if all stakeholders share a willingness to learn, and if those who cannot be incentivized to do so by funders – the funders themselves – show that willingness as well. While a constructive evaluation culture depends on all stakeholders, our findings suggest that funders hold a special responsibility for building and nurturing it.

To create such a culture of trust– which is well established in the Netherlands, but less so in the United Kingdom (UK) – German P/CVE funders should tackle four systemic issues:

- 1. Ensure a minimum level of financial security for implementers.** This requires both more long-term funding opportunities and for all funding to align with the government's strategic priorities.
- 2. Provide implementers with both formal and ad-hoc access to key decisions about funding,** including (but not limited to) decisions about government-mandated external evaluations. Advisory bodies set up for this purpose need to be inclusive across all sectors and stakeholder groups involved in the P/CVE field.

- 3. Protect implementers from undue consequences of failure.** If implementers of pilot programs receive critical evaluation results, they may need incentives to adjust – but those can only work if coupled with protection from defunding or bankruptcy.
- 4. Walk the walk.** Funders need to not only demand transparency and learning from implementers but also set a good example by openly discussing their own lessons in portfolio management and evaluation.

Tackling these four issues in a way that communicates transparency and openness is key to building the foundation for well-functioning evaluation structures.

2. Design formal rules to enable differentiated evaluation strategies.

Funding-related legal or administrative obligations are a strong structural instrument to make sure that evaluations are undertaken in the first place. These obligations are used in both the UK and the Netherlands, the latter of which has successfully instituted specific requirements for different programs, grantees or intermediaries. German P/CVE funders can use existing administrative obligations on reporting to attach demands for scientific evaluations. However, an unspecific obligation alone, even if binding, cannot ensure quality, scientific evaluation standards, or the uptake of evaluation findings.

Funders should therefore use the distinct administrative instruments at the level of individual funding schemes or even individual grants to define targeted evaluation requirements as binding for their grantees. Using these tools, funders can hold or empower implementers to particular ways of using or supporting evaluations according to the funder's evaluation strategy. This can help both funders and implementers to consider evaluations early on in the portfolio design, program and project cycles. Of course, any demands on implementers need to be matched by the necessary financial resources.

3. Invest in capabilities for managing and conducting evaluations, and using their results.

For evaluations to achieve both their learning and accountability goals, it is crucial that the cultural norm-building and formal rules that drive a demand for evaluation are met by the necessary supply of people and organizations to manage, conduct and use the results of these evaluations. These three supply functions need to be well-organized – i.e., effectively placed within institutions – and supported in a way that allows various actors to uphold professional standards and put the overall investment in evaluation to good use.

In terms of organization, the case study evidence indicates that decentralized responsibilities for commissioning evaluations and organizing uptake allow different actors, be they policy actors, funding bodies or implementers, to pursue distinct evaluation strategies to meet their specific needs. At the same time, the supply market

of evaluators also requires attention on the part of P/CVE funders: the necessary mix of capable, independent evaluators or evaluation consultancies must be built and maintained. Funders alone hold the financial power to do so. A mapping of capacity needs in this regard is forthcoming from the PrEval project. However, P/CVE actors come in many sizes, and building the same level of capability in both small and large organizations would be duplicative and inefficient. To realize the potential of evaluations as learning tools, we found that capability centers often have a strong positive effect. In Canada and the Netherlands, knowledge hubs that can also serve as help desks contribute to a healthy and well-functioning evaluation culture. Centrally provided toolkits, training, counseling, exchange, and peer learning opportunities were key elements of making evaluation more focused on learning. This centralized support approach applies to funders and implementing organizations in managing evaluations and their associated uptake as well as to the evaluators conducting evaluations, be they professional consultants, academics or P/CVE practitioners who engage in peer evaluation.

● Strategy level

4. Define evaluation plans and build evaluable portfolios.

Across the four case studies, we found that evaluations were often launched as an afterthought for projects, programs or policies which lacked concrete goals or theories of change. Conversely, evaluations produce much more relevant and useful results when applied to P/CVE activities that were designed to encompass clearly defined goals, theories of change and a plan for when and how evaluation should help with learning. Evaluability does not exclude any type of activity, nor does it privilege some P/CVE approaches over others; rather, evaluability only requires clarity about goals and observable metrics (which could be qualitative or perception-based).

German P/CVE funders in particular, but also implementers, should develop evaluation strategies that set specific learning goals for evaluation and, most importantly, ensure that projects and programs are designed to match the chosen evaluation strategy. They should consider a variety of factors in formulating an evaluation strategy, such as the balance between individual project evaluations and larger program or portfolio evaluations. If only certain projects are to be evaluated, they should set specific selection criteria. They need to choose in advance what approach (e.g., process or outcome evaluation) and timing make sense for a specific evaluation, and how transparently they will distribute the results. Funders in particular should consider how they want to assess long-term effects and combine the evaluation process with other, more long-term research.

5. Ensure independence, impartiality and quality in evaluations.

Funders of P/CVE evaluation need to guarantee the independence of evaluators from those who manage evaluations (and their results) as well as from those under evaluation. At the level of evaluators, efforts are currently being made in all four case study countries to increase the independence and impartiality of evaluations by creating more external or mixed (internal-external) evaluation teams.

Experts consulted across the four case study countries suggested that evaluation teams should consist of a mix of evaluation specialists, subject-matter experts in P/CVE, and former P/CVE practitioners. Those managing evaluations at the government level or in implementing organizations should be sufficiently independent from those implementing P/CVE activities to avoid that evaluation results are (ab)used for political purposes.

Within governmental structures, evaluation independence can be achieved by creating different reporting lines. For implementing organizations, such impartiality can only be cultivated if funders communicate it as a priority and allow for sufficient financial and staff capacity. Additionally, those funding evaluations need to design sophisticated quality assurance mechanisms for the evaluation process – something that was absent in all of our cases studies. Making quality assurance a criterion when choosing evaluators can set the right incentives for those implementing evaluations.

6. Establish state-of-the-art uptake procedures.

Implementing the lessons learned from evaluations remains a challenge across country cases. In Canada and Finland, institutional follow-up mechanisms for evaluation results at the program and project levels are missing completely. In the UK and the Netherlands, the existing mechanisms are widely criticized as ineffective.

To support the uptake of evaluation results, P/CVE actors could easily implement two standard instruments: dedicated steering groups and formal requirements for a management response process. Steering groups establish constant communication between evaluators and other stakeholders, including the future recipients of the recommendations produced by the evaluation. This creates a learning process that functions already during the course of an evaluation and not only once there is a draft report. A management response is a formal reaction to an evaluation report in which the recipient institutions commit themselves to voluntary follow-up actions and publicly hold themselves accountable to their commitments.

German P/CVE actors – policy actors, funding agencies and implementing NGOs alike – should adopt such state-of-the-art instruments of professional evaluation to ensure that their investments into data and knowledge also yield learning and progress in terms of preventing and countering violent extremism.

Introduction

A key part of making evaluations worthwhile is developing effective institutional structures.

Preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE) is an emerging field. While it offers a wealth of valuable experience, “comparatively little is known about what works and why,” as a recent survey of approaches put it.² This makes the evaluation of P/CVE activities simultaneously important and challenging. Important because P/CVE needs active, critical and constructive evaluation to fill in knowledge gaps and make progress; challenging because the key structures of evaluation – i.e., rules, resources and culture – are very much under development in parallel to the field itself.

A key part of making evaluations worthwhile is developing effective institutional structures that shape who influences how evaluations are commissioned, funded and implemented, and to what extent their results are used for learning. This study aims to provide an overview of the trade-offs and implications of designing these evaluation structures for the P/CVE field. Our research rests on the premise that evaluation should primarily enable learning: for a field as young as P/CVE, it is more important to determine what works and learn from mistakes than to use evaluation as a tool to punish implementers and funders for measures that did not have the desired effect. The relative priority in designing, managing and implementing evaluation must be learning. Therefore, the guiding questions underlying this study are: How do evaluation structures in different countries support or obstruct useful evaluation in prioritizing learning and improvement while maintaining accountability? And what can German P/CVE decision-makers at the level of government, funding bodies, NGOs, as well as (to a lesser extent) evaluators and academics learn from these findings?

Even after two decades of practice, the field of P/CVE remains fundamentally contested. Critics have called P/CVE the “soft arm” of counterterrorism and a misleading label for “ineffective, discriminatory and divisive” measures that “fail because they focus on suppressing ideas rather than reducing violence.”³ On a broader level, P/CVE is highly politicized in some countries, and the field struggles to escape its reputation for anti-Muslim bias. In addition, P/CVE can be a dangerous field of work: some people engaged in preventing violent extremism receive death threats. These controversies only make the need for evaluation more pressing: finding out ‘what works’ and how to improve is crucial for sharpening P/CVE’s central concepts and practices so that governments can invest effectively and avoid adverse effects.

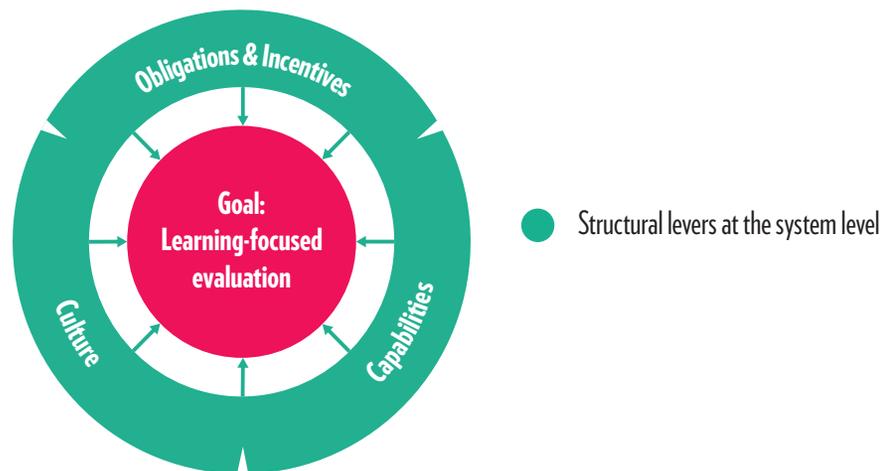
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- 2 This consensus about the state of the field is reflected, for example, in survey publications by Sarah Marsden, James Lewis and Kim Knott, “Countering Violent Extremism: An Introduction,” Centre for Research and Evidence on Security Threats (CREST), 2017, <https://tinyurl.com/2xukvr6z>, from which we have drawn this quote. See also, along the same lines, Eric Rosand, Emily Winterbotham, Michael Jones and Franziska Praxl-Tabuchi, “A Roadmap to Progress: The State of the Global P/CVE Agenda,” The Prevention Project and Royal United Services Institute, 2018, p. 35, <https://tinyurl.com/etfrascf>, as well as James Lewis, Sarah Marsden and Simon Copeland, “Evaluating Programmes to Prevent and Counter Extremism,” CREST, 2020, <https://tinyurl.com/2djbsk3h>.
 - 3 Brennan Center, “Why Countering Violent Extremism Programs Are Bad Policy,” 2019, <https://tinyurl.com/w97wja6x>.

Strengthening Germany’s P/CVE evaluation practice is one of the main goals of the PrEval⁴ project, of which the research for this study was a part. The project investigates Germany’s evaluation needs and capabilities in preventing violent extremism. While other parts of the project deal with the methods of evaluating P/CVE and Germany’s capabilities in the field, this study focuses on evaluation structures – and, in particular, the key institutional choices behind the practice of P/CVE evaluation. Drawing on other countries’ experiences in making these choices, this study collects international best practices for establishing evaluation structures in a way that is conducive for learning, while also contributing to accountability. The recommendations are geared primarily toward German decision-makers but could also be applied to other contexts.

What the study refers to as ‘evaluation structures’ primarily encapsulates three interrelated components:

1. **Formal rules:** the legal and administrative requirements and informal incentives through which, consciously or not, funding bodies shape whether and how evaluations are conducted;
2. **Evaluation capabilities:** the organizations and types of individuals that are able to conduct the key tasks of an evaluation process (e.g., evaluation management, evaluation implementation and uptake – see more on key concepts below), as well as the scale at which they are able to do so;
3. **Evaluation culture:** the norms that influence the ways in which evaluations are conducted and how their results are (or are not) used, as well as the extent to which there is a shared sense of trust that allows for admitting mistakes and learning not only from success but also from failure.

Figure 1: Systemic Levers for Learning-Focused Evaluation



4 The project’s full title is: “Evaluation Designs for Prevention Measures – Multi-Method Approaches for Impact Assessment and Quality Assurance in Extremism Prevention and the Intersections with Violence Prevention and Civic Education”. More information is available at <https://www.gppi.net/project/preval>.

Well-designed evaluation structures work in ways that make learning easier and, therefore, more likely to happen.

These three structural aspects of the evaluation system – all the policy institutions, funders, implementers, and evaluators in a country taken together – directly influence if evaluations occur and to what extent different actors have an incentive to design and use evaluations as a learning tool. Since evaluations can have significant effects on funding, they also directly shape what the P/CVE field can accomplish. Evaluation structures mediate between the needs and interests of a diverse set of P/CVE actors – i.e., funders, implementers and evaluators – in various related fields such as policing, crime prevention, public health, social work, and civic education. Well-designed evaluation structures work in ways that make learning easier and, therefore, more likely to happen.

For this reason, government actors should make decisions about P/CVE evaluation structures strategically and avoid unconsciously adhering to institutional path dependencies. Any effects on funding patterns, and thus on P/CVE practice, should be the result of evidence on what works or how to improve – not the result of unintentional side effects of how ministries or funding lines in public budgets are organized.

While institutional setups and actors differ around the world, many countries face similar challenges in establishing and advancing organizational structures for P/CVE evaluations that are geared toward learning. After an initial survey of relevant international contexts, we focused on four case study countries to identify best practices and obstacles in setting up evaluation structures: Canada, Finland, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom (UK).

At the center of our inquiry is the vast field of primary (including civic education), secondary and tertiary P/CVE activities implemented by non-governmental and usually non-profit organizations (NGOs) that largely depend on government funding. Many of these NGOs work closely with various public authorities in the education, health, social, and security sectors. The focus of this study is on this challenging, multi-stakeholder space, which is at least partly accessible via open-source research.

Based on our findings, we identify important lessons and recommendations for key structural choices facing the German P/CVE system.

Key Concepts

PVE/CVE activities are usually broken down into primary, secondary and tertiary prevention. While sometimes criticized, this typology, which goes back to Gerald Caplan's work in 1964, is still used frequently by practitioners, researchers and policymakers. **Primary prevention** describes measures aimed at avoiding the onset of radicalization. **Secondary prevention** is about individuals who are already deemed “at risk” of radicalization and has the goal of preventing this initial degree of radicalization from escalating further and leading to violence. **Tertiary prevention** aims to de-radicalize already radicalized individuals, who are often extremist offenders.⁵

5 Frank Greuel, “Das zu weite Feld der Prävention, oder: Wo Prävention beginnen und aufhören sollte,” [The Too Wide Field of Prevention, or: Where Prevention Should Start and Stop], PRIF Blog, 2018, <https://tinyurl.com/vw7jnut6>.

P/CVE activities are implemented either directly by public agencies or indirectly through programs led by external implementing organizations, usually NGOs, which are commonly funded by public actors. Evaluators can be employees of these organizations or external experts, such as teams of academics or professional evaluation consultants. We describe these three groups of actors as **funders**, **implementers** and **evaluators**. Some organizations or individuals simultaneously play more than one of these roles.

Following a standard definition by the OECD, an **evaluation** is a systematic and objective assessment of an ongoing or completed set of activities (“project” or “program”), including their design, implementation and results, which also encompasses unintended consequences and changes made during the implementation. The aim is to determine the relevance and fulfillment of set objectives in terms of a project’s or program’s effectiveness, efficiency and impact, along with additional criteria depending on the nature of the activities. Being objective requires independence and impartiality, key principles that distinguish an evaluation from internal reviews or self-assessments that fulfil complementary functions in organizational learning.⁶

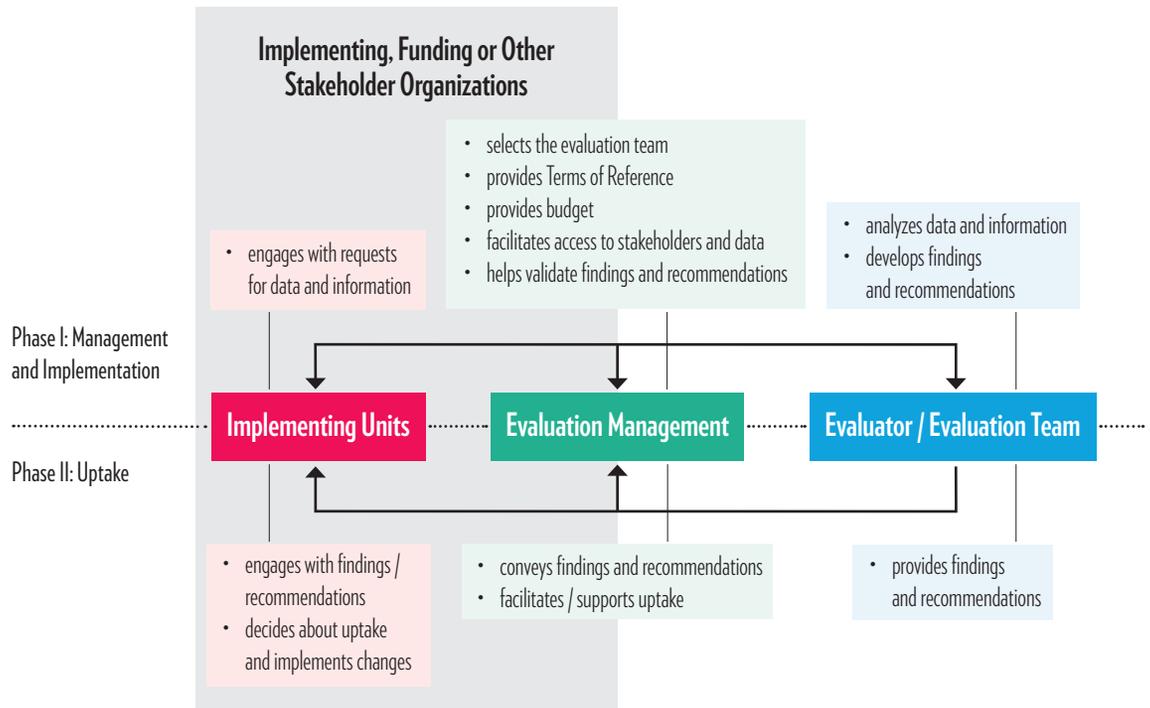
Evaluations typically focus on one of several levels. The **project level** is the lowest one, while the **program level** includes many projects and may be synonymous to or part of a funding organizations’ entire **portfolio** of supported activities (be it through grants or commercial contracts). At the highest level, a **policy evaluation** usually covers an entire policy field and assesses not only implementing organizations’ activities but also whether their key policy choices, processes and structures are relevant, appropriate, effective, efficient, and sustainable, among other criteria.

Evaluation management is the organizational function that determines which activities are evaluated and in what way. In addition, evaluation managers commission individual evaluations, select evaluators, and manage the latter group’s access to data and stakeholders during the **evaluation implementation** phase. The evaluation management function also provides quality assurance and manages the **uptake** process during which the evaluation’s findings and recommendations are brought to the attention of key stakeholders in order to spark necessary changes. Any organization that commissions evaluations engages in some form of evaluation management.⁷ **Evaluation culture** describes the norms and expectations that exist around evaluations and between P/CVE actors. This culture shapes the role and extent of evaluations in the P/CVE field. We understand a constructive evaluation culture as one marked by shared cultural norms of learning across sectors (e.g., police, justice, social work, or health) and between funders, implementers and evaluators. Such a culture creates the necessary space for individuals and organizations to admit mistakes, to pilot new, experimental approaches, to see some of them fail, and to openly share knowledge and lessons.

6 United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG), “Norms and Standards for Evaluation,” 2017, <https://tinyurl.com/e4cv97tc>.

7 Given its central role in the success of evaluation (and even individual evaluations), there is strikingly little research on evaluation management. Fragmentary treatments we build on include Philipp Rotmann and Andrea Binder, “Evaluierung außenpolitischer Maßnahmen in fragilen Kontexten: Erfahrungen und Empfehlungen,” [Evaluation of Foreign Policy Measures in Fragile Contexts: Experiences and Recommendations], GPPi, 2014, <https://tinyurl.com/yzb6bduh>; Margie Buchanan-Smith, John Cosgrave and Alexandra Warner, “Evaluation of Humanitarian Action Guide,” Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action (ALNAP), 2016, <https://tinyurl.com/uzw8x4zy>; Andrea Queiroz de Souza and Leila Broich, “Evaluation Management Manual,” Welthungerhilfe, 2020, <https://tinyurl.com/jk8cmzsd>; and United Nations Evaluation Group, “Norms and Standards for Evaluation,” pp. 18–19.

Figure 2: Evaluation Management, Implementation and Uptake



Methodology

In this study, we identify lessons from a sample of OECD countries. We analyze how P/CVE evaluations can be organized to enable a constructive and rigorous evaluation practice that helps improve P/CVE efforts.

To this end, we selected our potential case studies from among the group of OECD countries only, so as to ensure a baseline comparability to Germany. Given that the practice of evaluation is so closely linked to funding, it was important to consider cases where governments funded P/CVE activities implemented in their own countries (and subsequently evaluated them). For this reason, we chose to exclude the policy field of funding P/CVE interventions in third countries as part of a country's foreign and security policy. As a result, the selection of case studies for this analysis excludes countries that receive such external P/CVE funding.

We conducted this study in three consecutive steps. As a first step, we scanned the group of OECD countries to identify cases for which there is evidence of substantial P/CVE activities. This left us with a total of 11 potential case studies, plus the European Commission as a potentially comparable case with its own P/CVE instruments. By reviewing publicly available information and conducting a series of semi-structured, open-ended interviews with international P/CVE and evaluation experts, we then completed a **mapping** of these potential cases. To choose our case-study countries, we used a number of indicators that we consider key if the aim is to draw general lessons for improving Germany's P/CVE evaluation structures:

- **P/CVE evaluation track record:** We only considered countries that have at least a basic track record in conducting evaluations and that were recurrently mentioned either in the existing literature or by experts interviewed during the mapping phase. The alleged quality of countries' established P/CVE evaluation practice, in contrast, was a variable we used to select for variance. We purposely built a sample that included not just the cases with the most positive reputations, but also countries in which the practice of evaluation is rooted deeply enough to allow for the identification of distinct 'structures' as well as for systematic observations regarding both positive and negative lessons.
- **Size and structure of the country (and P/CVE actor landscape):** We mapped the potential case study countries according to their size and federal structure as well as the respective fragmentation of relevant P/CVE actors. On the one hand, this allowed us to select countries with a certain similarity to the German case (which privileged federally organized and/or otherwise decentralized systems); on the other hand, it permitted selecting for variance and investigating more centralized systems as well to understand the different lessons to learn.
- **Scope of the P/CVE 'toolkit':** We also mapped whether countries' established P/CVE practices were narrowly focused on a single, traditional sector of policymaking and governance (usually the internal security sector) or distributed across several sectors, such as security, justice, health, and social services. For selecting our final sample of case studies, this indicator mattered only insofar as it ensured that we chose several cases that show sufficient similarities to Germany's multi-sector P/CVE approach, without absolutely excluding more narrowly organized cases that promised important insights for other reasons.
- **Relations between government and civil society:** As civil society stakeholders are usually key P/CVE partners and often key implementers of government-funded programs, we broadly assessed potential case-study countries for the quality of the relationship between their governments and civil societies at large. We then selected for variance between both positive and negative examples to identify best practices as well as challenges.
- **Diversity of P/CVE evaluation methodologies:** While this study does not focus on P/CVE evaluation methodologies (an aspect and topic covered by another PrEval study⁸), we made sure to include countries that demonstrated a basic commitment to using a range of different methodological approaches when evaluating P/CVE projects or programs.

8 Mona Klöckner, Melanie Verhovnik-Heinze, Raphaela Schlicht-Schmälzle, and Reiko Nakamura, "Multi-methodik in der Evaluationspraxis: Eine Erhebung sozialwissenschaftlicher Begleitungen." [Multi-Method Approaches in Evaluation Practice: An Assessment of Social Scientific Guidelines], Peace Research Institut Frankfurt, forthcoming in 2021.

Table 1: Case Mapping

Indicators	Canada	Finland	Netherlands	UK	Australia	Denmark	Sweden	EU
P/CVE Evaluation Track Record	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
<i>+ yes/- no</i>								
Country Size	+	-	-	+	+	-	-	+
<i>+/- reflects comparability to Germany</i>								
Structural Setup of Country	+	-	-	-	+	-	-	+ / -
<i>+/- reflects yes/no federal system</i>								
Scope of P/CVE Evaluation Methodologies	+	+	+	-	-	+	+	+
<i>+ broad, diverse methods; - narrow, no qualitative indicators</i> <i>UK: excessive reliance on quantitative indicators, systematic bias against qualitative assesment</i>								
Government-Civil Society Relations in P/CVE	+	+	+	-	(+)	-	+	+
<i>+ constructive, extensive; - less constructive, less extensive</i>								
Scope of P/CVE Toolkit	+	+	+	-	-	-	+	+
<i>+ broad, whole of society; - narrow, security-centered</i>								
Qualitative Summary	Extensive P/CVE and evaluation activities, multi-level federal structure	Reputation for innovative and structured evaluation approach	Very sophisticated P/CVE and evaluation activities, innovative approaches and very positive reputation	Very sophisticated P/CVE and evaluation activities, important conflicts and tensions	Only limited P/CVE and evaluation activities	Relatively substantive P/CVE and evaluation activities but narrow law enforcement focus, minor civil society role, accessibility concerns	Relatively substantive P/CVE and evaluation activities, but reputed to be less structured or innovative than other Nordic countries	Major structural differences to country cases as a top-up funder complementing or substituting for national activities, currently reviewing approach and structure

 Selected for case studies

 Not selected for case studies

Based on this mapping, we finally selected four country case studies for further investigation during the second phase of our research: Canada, Finland, the Netherlands, and the UK. Two countries – the Netherlands and the UK – have a proven track record in P/CVE in general, and in P/CVE evaluation in particular. Canada and Finland, on the other hand, are emerging actors in this field. In terms of country size and structure, Canada’s federal setup and the UK’s highly centralized system offered useful points of contrast. Finland and the Netherlands both have a very broad P/CVE ‘toolkit’, while Canada and the UK represent the full spectrum of standardization regarding evaluation methodologies.

In all of the countries we mapped during research phase one, P/CVE practice – which often originated in a narrow focus on Islamist extremism – has evolved to address all kinds of extremism associated with risks of violence, including extremism based on religious, political or ethnic ideologies.

As a second step, we conducted a **case study analysis** of the four chosen countries. Building on our conceptual scaffolding, which understands “evaluation structures” as defined by the three previously introduced elements – (1) formal rules, (2) capabilities for evaluation management, evaluation and uptake, and (3) evaluation culture – we used the following set of guiding questions to ensure a structured and consistent approach:

- Who are the respective key actors involved in P/CVE evaluations, e.g., policymakers, program funders and implementing organizations, evaluation managers and evaluators?
- How do the relations between these key actors – ranging from institutional hierarchies or legal obligations tied to public funding to more informal relationships – shape the ways in which these actors conduct evaluations and use the results to improve P/CVE activities?
- What is the focus of P/CVE evaluations in terms of levels (policy/program/project), sampling (every grant or some kind of selection) and types of P/CVE activities or actors as well as the frequency, timing and depth of evaluations?
- How well do evaluations work, and what are their key lessons, best practices and current challenges, both in terms of assuring learning and accountability as well as in terms of advancing P/CVE practice in general?
- What are specific lessons that are relevant for the German context?

We conducted the case study research and analysis between November 2020 and May 2021, based on public and non-public primary sources, secondary literature and a total of 46 semi-structured interviews with experts and stakeholder representatives from the respective countries. All interviews were conducted online or via phone. Where they are not explicitly referenced as stemming from a specific document or source, all empirical claims in this study are based on these interviews. Additional information from interview partners and other interlocutors in the case-study countries was solicited through email.

In a third step, we **compared and synthesized key findings** from the case study research. We also conducted several background interviews with stakeholders in the German P/CVE evaluation landscape to help translate our conclusions for the German context and validate our recommendations for German decision-makers working in policy, funding and implementing institutions. These findings and recommendations are presented in the concluding chapter.

Limitations

The research for this study was disrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic. Due to travel and other related restrictions, all interviews had to be conducted online. Given the sensitivity of some of the issues at stake, this meant that some of our interview partners were constrained in their ability to share particular details when interacting with us through online video conferencing tools. Further, all research was conducted in either English or French, which limited our access to primary documents as well as, for the Netherlands and Finland, our interactions at a sub-national level. Finally, the research team consisted entirely of experts in monitoring and evaluation rather than topical experts in P/CVE. While we did have constant access to the extensive P/CVE expertise of our PrEval consortium partners, this may have limited us in our empirical research with regard to our understanding of certain – implicit or ill-documented – P/CVE-specific issues or aspects of P/CVE. As discussed in the methodology section on case selection, we excluded non-Western countries from our mapping of potential case-study countries, a choice we made to ensure comparability with the German case, but one that places limits on the “international” dimension of this study.

Canada

In Canada, P/CVE is still a nascent field. When compared to some of the Western European countries, deadly violent and extremist attacks remain infrequent events in Canada.⁹ However, the country is not completely unharmed by violent extremism. In 1985, the bombing of Air India Flight 182 resulted in the largest terrorist attack in Canadian history, with over 300 fatalities. After the 9/11 attacks, initial changes in Canada's approach to counterterrorism and P/CVE¹⁰ were further pushed by the release of the official report on the Air India Flight 182 bombing¹¹: in 2010, the Commission of Inquiry tasked with investigating the attack proposed the establishment of an academic program to study terrorism and counterterrorism. One year later, the Kanishka Project, named after the attacked plane, was created at the Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness (Public Safety Canada¹²). The federal government supported the five-year research initiative with CA\$10 million (about €6.8 million), a sum that funded almost 70 projects, most of them researching P/CVE and (counter)terrorism.¹³

In 2012, Canada launched its first counterterrorism strategy, which includes a prevention component.¹⁴ Since 2015, the federal government expanded it to add funding for community-based P/CVE intervention programs in which local NGOs, researchers and/or local and federal police worked together. Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau made prevention and countering “radicalization to violence” a national priority and directed the minister of Public Safety Canada to establish what would become the Canada Centre for Community Engagement and Prevention of Violence (Canada Centre,¹⁵ for short), which formally opened its doors in 2017.¹⁶

9 According to the Global Terrorism Index 2020 from the Institute for Economics and Peace, the number of deaths related to terrorist attacks decreased in recent years. Since 2002, Canada was exposed to 57 attacks, leading to 24 deaths. In 2019, of the five recorded attacks, none led to a loss of lives. See: Institute for Economics and Peace, “Global Terrorism Index 2020: Measuring the Impact of Terrorism,” 2020, <https://tinyurl.com/dzw3a83d>.

10 Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN), “Conclusion Paper RAN event, Digital study visit to Canada,” 2020, <https://tinyurl.com/8ytkeknu>.

11 Canada, “Commission of Inquiry into the Investigation of the Bombing of Air India Flight 182 Research Studies – Volume 1,” 2010, <https://tinyurl.com/5767y5k3>.

12 Public Safety Canada, the ministry responsible for national security, remains the only federal funder for P/CVE, including for civic education programs, as there is no ministry or department of education at the federal level. (Interviews with implementer/researcher and Public Safety Canada/Canada Centre between January and February 2021.)

13 One example is the foundation of the Canadian Network for Research on Terrorism, Security and Society (TSAS), which is still active today. The Kanishka Project also contributed to hosting events to share knowledge on counterterrorism. See project website for more information: <https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/ntnl-scrnt-cnt-trrrsm/r-nd-flght-182/knshk/index-en.aspx>.

14 Canada, “Building Resilience Against Terrorism. Canada’s Counter-Terrorism Strategy,” 2012, <https://tinyurl.com/h3jffkwa>.

15 For more details see: Public Safety Canada, “Canada Centre for Community Engagement and Prevention of Violence,” 2020, accessed June 11, 2021, <https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/bt/cc/index-en.aspx>.

16 A more detailed overview of different precursors to the Canada Centre can be found here: Michael King and Brett Kubicek, “Canada Centre for Community Engagement and the Prevention of Violence (CCCEPV),” in *Top Secret Canada: Understanding the Canadian Intelligence and National Security Community*, eds. Stephanie Carvin, Thomas Juneau, and Craig Forcece, IPAC Series in Public Management and Governance, University of Toronto Press, 2021.

Through the Canada Centre, the federal government is by far the largest funder of P/CVE-related activities and research nationwide.

Through the Canada Centre, the federal government is by far the largest funder of P/CVE-related activities and research nationwide. Most projects for primary, secondary and tertiary prevention depend on government funding, as do many NGOs implementing these projects.¹⁷ The Canada Centre currently counts 10 to 15 employees.¹⁸ Starting in 2016, its initial budget was CA\$35 million (about €23.8 million) distributed over five years, and CA\$10 million (about €6.8 million) for each following year. About 70 percent of these grants are distributed through the Community Resilience Fund (CRF).¹⁹ NGOs, community and for-profit organizations, provincial and local police, research institutions, as well as individuals are among the P/CVE actors who can apply for funding on an annual basis. The CRF provides time-limited funding only. Funding periods can extend to up to five years and there is no follow-up funding. To a lesser extent, the Canada Centre can also commission projects via direct tenders.²⁰

In 2018, Canada released the National Strategy on Countering Radicalization to Violence. With regard to evaluating P/CVE activities, it includes demands for relevant actors to “[b]uild knowledge on methods to measure and evaluate the effectiveness of programs” and “embed evaluations into design and delivery of programs to build the evidence base of what works.”²¹ In early 2019, Canada established a National Expert Committee on Countering Radicalization to Violence consisting of non-governmental actors. This committee has further pushed for advancing evaluation without having an official role in program delivery and evaluation.²²

Canadian provinces and cities often have different regulations and policies. As a result, there are no uniform structures between the federal, provincial and municipal levels and the respective policies at different levels.²³ In the provinces, and especially in those with a low population density, there is less engagement regarding P/CVE. Québec is an exception: there, in addition to federal funding, the main implementing organizations involved in and conducting research projects on P/CVE receive considerable funding from the Québec Ministries of Public Security, Health and Social Services as well as, to a lesser extent, from the Ministry of Education and Higher Education. Moreover, the province launched a strategy to combat radicalization for the period 2015 through 2018 (so even before the launch of the National Strategy), which

17 Interviews with implementers and researchers as well as Public Safety Canada/Canada Centre between January and March 2021.

18 Interview with Public Safety Canada/Canada Centre, April 2021.

19 Interview with Public Safety Canada/Canada Centre, January 2021. More precisely, the CRF contributed: CA\$1.2 million (more than €800,000) in the first and CA\$2.4 million (about €1.6 million) in the second fiscal year; CA\$4.4 million (about €3 million) for projects in 2018–2019; and CA\$7 million (€4.7 million) per year for 2019–2020 and beyond (see: King and Kubicek, “Canada Centre for Community Engagement and the Prevention of Violence”). More information on priorities of its most recent call for applications can be found here: <https://tinyurl.com/98yjb3ks>.

20 Interview with Public Safety Canada/Canada Centre, January 2021.

21 Its three overarching priorities are: “Building, Sharing and Using Knowledge”; “Addressing Radicalization to Violence in the Online Space”; and “Supporting Interventions” (Canada, “National Strategy on Countering Radicalization to Violence,” 2018, <https://tinyurl.com/e3bsrk7z>).

22 Interview with implementer and member of the National Expert Committee, March 2021.

23 Interviews with evaluator and with implementers, January 2021. For more on the integration across different governmental levels, see e.g.: Patrick J. O’Halloran, “Assessing the integration of cross-sectoral policy issues: a case study of Canada’s approach to Countering Radicalization to Violence,” *Policy Sci* 54 (2021): pp. 183–208, accessed April 27, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11077-020-09397-w>.

included action points on prevention.²⁴ While no follow-up plan was announced since then, funding opportunities linked to the strategy still remain.

Some funding comes from other provincial governments and municipalities or independent communities (such as religious organizations), though not necessarily labelled as P/CVE-related funding. Most projects are implemented at the municipal level and many are multi-sectoral, meaning they include the education, health, social services, and police sectors.²⁵ Altogether, there are rather few institutions and individual actors focused on P/CVE. Many of them simultaneously wear several hats as implementers, researchers, evaluators, or advisors to the federal government (e.g., in the National Expert Committee).²⁶

The Canadian approach aims to be “agnostic” when it comes to the type of ideology driving potential radicalization to violence.²⁷ Some implementers and researchers, however, perceive a bias toward focusing on preventing Jihadist terrorism (as national priority) instead of, for example, right-wing extremism²⁸ – and especially so with regard to Canada’s Security Intelligence Service²⁹. Some also noticed (and partly criticized) a one-sided emphasis on the security dimension of radicalization, to the detriment of social or public health-focused perspectives. This is also reflected in the fact that Public Safety Canada, the ministry responsible for national security, is the main – and only – federal P/CVE funder.³⁰

Legal and Funding Obligations

While systematic evaluations of the effectiveness of P/CVE projects are a recent endeavor in Canada, they are both a goal of the National Strategy and a priority of individual stakeholders.³¹ Currently, external evaluations are only required for projects funded by the federal government through the Canada Centre, which is the biggest funder of P/CVE activities.³² Applicants for project funding are required to include an evaluation component in their proposals. In the past few years, the Centre also set aside a “significant portion of funding” (up to 15 percent) for third-party evaluations as well as research on P/CVE evaluation practice.³³ This is a rather new development.³⁴ Because

24 Gouvernement du Québec, “Plan d’action gouvernemental 2015-2018 ‘La radicalisation au Québec : agir, prévenir, détecter et vivre ensemble’,” [Government Action Plan 2015–2018 ‘Radicalisation in Québec: act, prevent, detect and live together’], 2015, <https://tinyurl.com/5frecyt7>.

25 O’Halloran, “Assessing the integration of cross-sectoral policy issues: a case study of Canada’s approach to Countering Radicalization to Violence.”

26 Interview with implementer/researcher, March 2021.

27 Interviews with implementers, researchers and Public Safety Canada/Canada Centre between December 2020 and March 2021.

28 Barbara Perry and Ryan Scrivens, *Right-Wing Extremism in Canada*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2019.

29 Interviews with researcher, implementer and member of the National Expert Committee, March 2021.

30 Interviews with NGO representative and implementer/researcher between January and February 2021.

31 Interviews with implementers, researchers and Public Safety Canada/Canada Centre between December 2020 and April 2021.

32 Interviews with NGO representatives, evaluators and Public Safety Canada/Canada Centre between December 2020 and April 2021.

33 Interview with Public Safety Canada/Canada Centre, January 2021.

34 Interview with implementers, January 2021.

of the Canada Centre’s relatively short existence, long-term impact evaluations are still rare. To our knowledge, and aside from general reporting requirements, organizations or individuals receiving P/CVE funding from provincial or municipal governments are not legally obliged to evaluate their activities.

Implementers emphasize the importance of learning through evaluation. They generally prefer to conduct evaluations on project outcomes with mixed methods³⁵, thus going “into more depth than mere box ticking.”³⁶ However, if not required by the respective funders, there is sometimes a resistance to evaluations from within project teams, either because evaluation is suspected to be a means to political ends rather than a tool for learning, or because implementers do not want to unnecessarily expose themselves (and their clients) to criticism.³⁷ If conducted voluntarily, evaluations are often used to justify an organization’s existence and thus focused on continuing funding.³⁸

Priorities and Coverage

When speaking about P/CVE evaluations, our interviewees usually had the project level in mind.³⁹ To our knowledge, there are no publicly available external project evaluations yet, but publications are currently in progress. In general, evaluations concentrate on processes, operations and the overall implementation of P/CVE projects.⁴⁰ Both the Canada Centre and individual implementers see the limitations of this approach and aim to move toward outcome and impact evaluations.⁴¹ After it ended in 2016, the Kanishka Project was subject to a rapid impact evaluation for the entire program, which was subsequently published. The evaluation report included a short management response and action plan, which fed into the Canada Centre’s knowledge mobilization strategy.⁴²

Additionally, the Canada Centre commissioned an evaluation during its 2016/2017 funding cycle. The research team evaluated federally funded, but independently chosen, projects and assessed them using a process and a formative evaluation approach. While the evaluation report is not publicly available, the evaluators plan to publish several

35 Interviews with NGO representatives and implementers between January and March 2021.

36 Interview with NGO representative, January 2021.

37 Interview with implementer/researcher, February 2021.

38 Interview with implementer/researcher, February 2021.

39 While there is no agreed-upon terminology, the representatives of the Canada Centre think that some of the “projects” they are funding include several components and can thus count as a “program” – in that case, an evaluation is required for the entire program.

40 King and Kubicek, “Canada Centre for Community Engagement and the Prevention of Violence.”

41 In a recent publication, a practitioner and a representative of the Canada Centre itself demanded: “Now that CVE research and programs have been established, the Canada Centre is poised to accelerate the use of measurement and evaluation, and support the development of the field as it progresses from early emphasis on process evaluation, toward assessing the impact on risk and protective factors.” (King and Kubicek, “Canada Centre for Community Engagement and the Prevention of Violence.”)

42 The Canada Centre was supposed to be called the “Office for Community Outreach and Countering Radicalization to Violence.” See the evaluation of the Kanishka Project for more information: Public Safety Canada, “2015–2016 Evaluation of the Kanishka Project Research Initiative,” 2016, <https://tinyurl.com/dzpfzsmf>.

articles with the results.⁴³ On the policy level, as part of a set cycle, Public Safety Canada's Office of Audit and Evaluation completed a "delivery evaluation"⁴⁴ of the Canada Centre, which was published in 2020.⁴⁵ It assessed the Centre's role in developing the National Strategy, but not the strategy itself. The evaluation team concluded that the Centre has assumed a national leadership role for P/CVE. The report also indicates that there is only limited data to support a thorough analysis of the Centre's efficiency or impact because of its short existence as well as a lack of documentation regarding its outputs and outcomes. The report also includes recommendations for the Canada Centre's management, which has committed to implementing the suggested actions by the end of August 2021.⁴⁶

At the country's provincial level, evaluating P/CVE programs or projects is not a priority⁴⁷, nor is there a dedicated evaluation budget for projects funded by the province of Québec. However, in projects that are co-led by implementers and researchers or in instances when actors play a double role, elements of self-evaluation are usually included.⁴⁸ Due to privacy concerns regarding client data, the results of these self-evaluations are generally not published. Also on a policy level, Québec commissioned a (rather output-oriented) interim report of its extremism prevention strategy.⁴⁹ When it comes to evaluations of local police programs, there is no publicly available information on respective evaluation structures.

Actors, Management and Uptake

Canada's P/CVE community is generally small and evaluations of it are even more limited in number. There are only few people who regularly take on the role of external evaluators, so most evaluators were mentioned by several interviewees.⁵⁰ Most of them are contracted experts from the private sector or academic researchers, while some additionally work as implementers. In small fields like the realm of P/CVE in Canada such overlaps in roles can lead to conflicts of interest, especially if external evaluators also run projects and apply for the same funding as the programs or organizations they evaluate.⁵¹ However, interviewees who had prior experience acting in such a double role underlined that their dual function increased mutual understanding.⁵²

43 Interview with evaluator, February 2021.

44 Public Safety Canada, "Multi-year Risk-based Audit and Evaluation Plan," 2020, <https://tinyurl.com/3cx9tazu>.

45 Public Safety Canada, "Delivery Evaluation of the Canada Centre for Community Engagement and the Prevention of Violence," 2020, <https://tinyurl.com/2taauktc>.

46 Public Safety Canada, "Delivery Evaluation of the Canada Centre for Community Engagement and the Prevention of Violence."

47 Interviews with NGO representatives and researcher/implementer between January and February 2021.

48 Interviews with implementers and researchers, February and April 2021.

49 Gouvernement du Québec, "Bilan en date du 31 mars 2017 du Plan d'action gouvernemental 2015-2018 'La radicalisation au Québec : agir, prévenir, détecter et vivre ensemble'," [Assessment as of 31 March 2017 of the Government Action Plan 2015-2018 'Radicalization in Québec: Act, Prevent, Detect and Live Together], 2017, <https://tinyurl.com/w4ssa25m>.

50 Interview with NGO representative, January 2021.

51 Interview with NGO representative, January 2021.

52 Interview with implementers, January 2021.

There is a lack of established ways to ensure that evaluation results are taken up into policy processes and decision making.

When it comes to project evaluations, implementers would usually prefer collaborations between internal and external evaluators.⁵³ This allows for capturing specific insights from project implementers themselves, through case workers or colleagues working in the same organization, which in turn ensures trust from clients and colleagues; at the same time, external evaluators bring an independent perspective that helps target blind spots.

Third-party evaluations are still an exception for projects where funders do not require any evaluation component and depend on implementers' initiatives.⁵⁴ Implementing organizations sometimes finance evaluations on a voluntary basis, or they try to include a third-party component by tasking researchers who are willing to work pro bono.⁵⁵ Larger organizations sometimes have internal evaluation specialists or try to separate teams to ensure independence. Most practitioners agree, however, that the evaluation practices of such in-house evaluators resemble reporting or mere output evaluations, as opposed to outcome-focused evaluations.

This opinion is reinforced by the fact that there is no standardized way of conducting evaluations, and they do not happen at a specific point in time during the project cycle. Each project funded through the Canada Centre can decide on the evaluation method as well as the depth and timing of an evaluation. Those managing evaluations choose their evaluators, for example through a competitive bidding process, established work relations, or by creating an internal evaluation position.⁵⁶ The Canada Centre is not prescriptive and does not interfere in the evaluation process. However, when explicitly approached, the Centre will support and advise on how to establish evaluation goals or choose the right methods.⁵⁷ Since projects funded through the Centre usually receive grants for three to five years, most projects are still ongoing, which makes it difficult to draw final conclusions on whether or not evaluations were conducted. If an organization evaluates a P/CVE project on a voluntary basis, it is usually the CEO or board that manages the (self-)evaluation.⁵⁸

As evaluations are the evaluator's intellectual property, publication is not mandatory. Reasons mentioned for not publishing them are the lack of funding to actually publish,⁵⁹ a preference for shorter scientific publications based on the evaluation⁶⁰, or wanting to protect client data.⁶¹ Government representatives are encouraging evaluators and implementers to publish their reports and retain the right to do so themselves to inform further learning and increase transparency.⁶²

The quality control of project evaluations is "rather informal"⁶³ and there is a lack of established ways to ensure that results are taken up into policy processes and

53 Interviews with several NGO representatives and implementers between January and March 2021.

54 Interviews with two implementers/researchers between February and March 2021.

55 Interview with NGO representative, January 2021.

56 Interview with Public Safety Canada/Canada Centre, April 2021.

57 Interview with Public Safety Canada/Canada Centre, January 2021.

58 Interview with NGO representative, January 2021.

59 Interview with evaluator, January 2021.

60 Interview with evaluator, February 2021.

61 Interview with implementer/researcher, February 2021.

62 Interviews with Public Safety Canada/Canada Centre, January and April 2021.

63 Interview with Public Safety Canada/Canada Centre, January 2021.

decision-making.⁶⁴ Still, following its approach of only providing time-limited funding, the Canada Centre wants evaluations to serve as a basis to inform further programming. As per the Canada Centre, implementers should use evaluation results for future applications: if they received a positive evaluation, this should help them get additional or follow-on funds from other government actors (such as provincial governments). Until now, this concept could not be tested, but practitioners and P/CVE experts doubt that this can work due to a lack of priority and budgets on the provincial level.⁶⁵

As already mentioned, P/CVE evaluation practice is still nascent in Canada. One of the Canada Centre's main functions, therefore, is capacity-building for both P/CVE interventions and their evaluation. To this end, it focuses on research, strengthening coordination, and knowledge production and exchange on the implementation, evaluation, research and policy levels. The Canada Centre's approach is characterized by a hands-off attitude, leaving ample leeway for implementers, researchers and evaluators to connect, learn and build trust within the wider P/CVE community.⁶⁶

To achieve this, the Centre also funds research and initiatives such as the Canadian Practitioners Network for the Prevention of Radicalization and Extremist Violence (CPN-PREV⁶⁷), a network of researchers as well as health and social services professionals. The network builds capacity through knowledge creation and exchange activities, such as conducting and publishing systematic reviews of the existing research⁶⁸, or by mapping Canadian initiatives, including on P/CVE evaluation⁶⁹. The network is associated with the UNESCO Chair in Prevention of Radicalisation and Violent Extremism (UNESCO-PREV Chair⁷⁰), also co-financed by the Canada Centre, which hosts several prevention as well as research projects on evaluation, including on methods and international comparison on evaluation practices.⁷¹ Members of the network and the research chair work closely with the Canada Centre and are one of the main non-governmental hubs for the Canadian P/CVE field.

The Canada Centre's openness to funding different formats for capacity-building and exchange allows practitioners to set their own priorities in a bottom-up process. Implementers welcome the process that led to the creation of the Canada Centre and lauded it. Moreover, Public Safety Canada is generally perceived as being "very good at listening to researchers."⁷² In this same vein, the Canada Centre funds and co-organizes workshops on current research as well as larger conferences for knowledge dissemination and networking among different stakeholders, such as the annual "Mega

64 Interview with evaluator, January 2021.

65 Interview with evaluator, January 2021.

66 Interviews with implementer and Public Safety Canada/Canada Centre, April 2021.

67 See the CPN-PREV website for more information: <https://cpnprev.ca/>.

68 Ghayda Hassan, Sébastien Brouillette-Alarie, Sarah Ousman, et al., "A systematic review on the outcomes of primary and secondary prevention programs in the field of violent radicalization," Canadian Practitioners Network for the Prevention of Radicalization and Extremist Violence, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/w5r9m3ru>.

69 See the CPN-PREV website for more information: <https://cpnprev.ca/the-mapping/>.

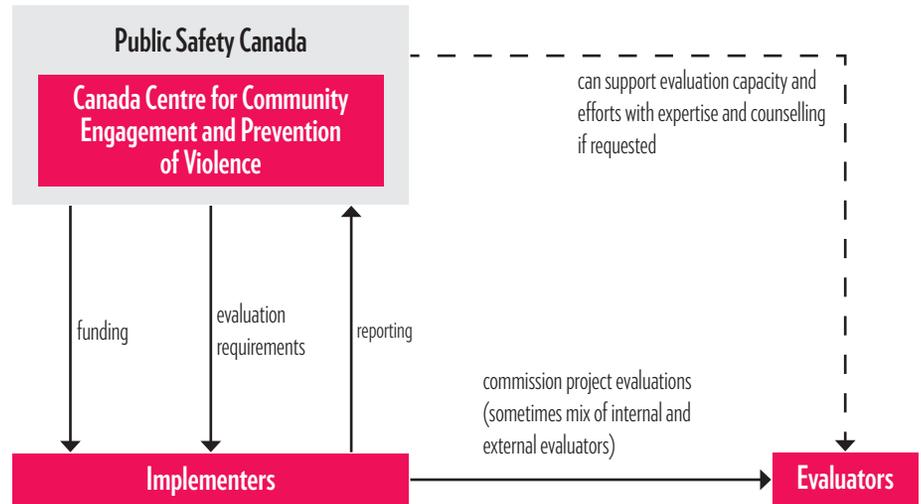
70 See the Chair's website for more information: <https://chaireunesco-prev.ca/en/home/>.

71 See the project page of PREV-IMPACT Canada for more information: <https://chaireunesco-prev.ca/en/projets-chaire/prev-impact/>.

72 Interview with implementers, January 2021.

Week.”⁷³ Many planned activities, such as the development of guidelines for P/CVE practices, have yet to be put into practice. However, the Canada Centre has generally underlined that “if practitioners find that a community of practice for evaluation is needed, we would be interested to support it.”⁷⁴

Figure 3: Key Actor Relations for Federal Grants in Canada



Evaluation Culture

The Canadian P/CVE evaluation culture has been steadily emerging, especially since new evaluation requirements by the Canada Centre (the biggest donor) added an obligatory element – along with an incentive to dedicate funding – to the existing bottom-up interest in learning and improvement. Similarly to Canada’s approach to developing P/CVE interventions, this evaluation culture will likely be influenced by research accompanying project evaluations, and the research projects on evaluation that are already underway will further inform established practices.

The Canada Centre’s formal evaluation requirement is supported by stakeholders on all levels, who are pushing for more learning, including through project evaluations. Implementers do not perceive questions of accountability for funds well spent as the primary focus of evaluations because the Canada Centre recognizes existing capacity and knowledge gaps regarding P/CVE. On a policy level, accountability will become increasingly important as the Canada Centre’s budget will likely grow over the

73 Until now, this conference only took place once in 2019. See the conference report for more information: Sébastien Brouillette-Alarie, Ghayda Hassan, Sarah Ousman, et al., “The Prevention of Violent Radicalization: Evidence-Based Guidelines to Promote Efficient Interventions,” Conference Report, 2019, <https://tinyurl.com/94afajbv>.

74 Interview with Public Safety Canada/Canada Centre, April 2021.

Organizations can be reluctant to highlight mistakes even if the aim is to learn from them if evaluation results should be referenced when applying for follow-up funding.

coming years. Many interviewees expressed their worry that the current upswing of P/CVE interventions and respective evaluations might dwindle again in case of a new (conservative) government coming into power.⁷⁵

When it comes to moving toward nationwide evaluation standards for P/CVE practice, challenges remain. NGOs' general openness to third-party evaluation is muted by the reality that some evaluators also implement P/CVE projects and are thus potential competitors.⁷⁶ The Canada Centre is aware of the difficulties such arrangements produce, and has been taking steps to strengthen trust among actors, for instance by funding shared workshops, conferences and networks.⁷⁷ Moreover, implementers are hesitant to proactively suggest impact evaluations for their projects, as these could threaten projects if results are not positive and funding discontinued as a consequence. Organizations can be reluctant to highlight mistakes even if the aim is to learn from them if, as the Canada Centre suggests, evaluation results should be referenced when applying for follow-up funding from other sources. Citing other actors (rather than themselves), multiple P/CVE project implementers interviewed for this study mentioned fear as an important factor hampering efforts to expand evaluation practices. For example, other organizations supposedly worry that evaluations may reveal client numbers that are too low to justify the organization's existence⁷⁸, or that funders on the provincial level may try to protect certain institutions (such as hospitals, health institutions, etc.) by avoiding potential bad publicity.⁷⁹

Lessons

In general, there is much to learn from a country that is just starting to establish P/CVE evaluation structures. Implementers in Canada cherish the high value that is placed on evaluations and only refrain from outsourcing it to external evaluators because of a lack of funding or because of fears of unnecessary exposure to criticism given that it is not required of them.

This case study shows that P/CVE funders are in a good position to create incentives to lower the barriers for conducting evaluations. They can provide additional funding for publishing evaluation reports to allow for a sharing of best practices and to inform future decision-making, project implementation, evaluation methods, and their own evaluation expertise.⁸⁰ This can help enlarge the P/CVE evaluation field and avoid being overly dependent on a few people who can act as evaluators.⁸¹ An evidence-based and practitioners-centered network (such as CPN-PREV) can inform the development of evaluation approaches and build an important bridge between funding, implementing and research entities.

Canada's experiences with establishing a centralized coordination body at the

⁷⁵ Interviews with NGO representatives, an evaluator and the Canada Centre between January and April 2021.

⁷⁶ Interview with NGO representative, January 2021.

⁷⁷ Interview with Public Safety Canada/Canada Centre, April 2021.

⁷⁸ Interview with implementers, January 2021.

⁷⁹ Interview with implementer/researcher, February 2021.

⁸⁰ King and Kubicek, "Canada Centre for Community Engagement and the Prevention of Violence."

⁸¹ Interview with NGO representative, January 2021.

federal level – the Canada Centre – are also inspiring. A similar organization overseeing evaluation structures could, however, be more independent and encompass multiple types of stakeholders, including community leaders, NGOs, evaluators, police, social workers, and researchers.⁸² Canada’s experiences with multi-stakeholder approaches for P/CVE projects could also feed into the development of a potential coordinating body for evaluations.⁸³

Finally, long-term planning is crucial. Funders should refrain from hastily setting up new structures to fund interventions without specifying conditions for their evaluation. The Canadian example also shows that the Canada Centre was created in a “rushed” way and rapidly allocated project funding, while the development of an adequate evaluation framework and a robust culture of P/CVE evaluation still lag behind.⁸⁴ Individual project funding should also go beyond pilot phases. Evaluating projects on a regular basis could have the same intended effect, namely to continuously enhance existing approaches. Lastly, there needs to be a clear and unwavering commitment to facilitating uptake: once an evaluation is done, it should feed into policy decisions.

Table 2: Summary of P/CVE Evaluation Structures in Canada

Who coordinates evaluations?	Federally funded activities: to a limited and growing extent, the Canada Centre for Community Engagement and Prevention of Violence (part of Public Safety Canada, the domestic security ministry); otherwise implementers Provincially funded activities: implementers
Who funds evaluations?	Federally funded activities: Canada Centre; occasionally self-funded by implementers
Who evaluates?	Internal evaluations: implementer staff (self-evaluation) External evaluations: for-profit consultancies or academic researchers
What is evaluated?	Mainly project level (not mandatory); no overarching program evaluation so far Policy evaluations: Canada Centre for Community Engagement and Prevention of Violence (2020); interim report of Quebec’s Governmental Action Plan (2017)
What is the primary goal of evaluation?	Balance between accountability (justify spending, ensure follow-up funding) and learning (improve P/CVE interventions)
How is uptake organized?	No generalized or mandatory uptake procedures

82 Interview with NGO representative, January 2021.

83 See for example: Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), “Understanding the Role of Gender in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization That Lead to Terrorism. Good Practices for Law Enforcement,” Vienna: OSCE, 2019, pp. 82–85, <https://tinyurl.com/579asbww>.

84 Interview with implementers, January 2021.

Finland

The notion of “[p]reventing violent acts arising from extremist ideologies,” as the Finnish government put it, first appeared formally in Finland’s Internal Security Programme of 2012, a document that the Finnish Interior Ministry compiles for every legislative term.⁸⁵ Referencing a growing European trend toward P/CVE as well as a specifically Finnish concern with “school shootings [sic],”⁸⁶ the Interior Ministry presented Finland’s first “action plan for preventing violent extremism.”⁸⁷ In the following years, radical Islamism came into focus as a comparatively high share of the Finnish Muslim population (0.07 percent or about 80 people) joined Islamist terrorist groups in Syria and Iraq, as reported by Finnish security agencies. By 2016, more than 20 of these individuals had returned to Finland, according to the Finnish domestic security and intelligence service Suojelupoliisi (SUPO).⁸⁸ In August 2017, Finland experienced what media outlets called its first terrorist attack when an 18-year-old rejected asylum seeker with ties to ISIS killed two and wounded eight people.⁸⁹ More recently, Finland has experienced a rise of far-right extremism, which SUPO also emphasized in its 2020 National Security Overview.⁹⁰

It was against this background that the Finnish government launched the country’s subsequent P/CVE action plans for the 2016–2019⁹¹ and the 2019–2023 periods.⁹² In these documents, the Finnish authorities make a point of distinguishing violent extremism from non-violent “radicalism [which] can be a positive, developmental and socially progressive force.” They also frame violent extremism

85 Government of Finland, Ministry of the Interior, “A Safer Tomorrow – Internal Security Programme,” 2012, <https://tinyurl.com/37aebusx>.

86 In the same year (2012), a group of surviving families of victims of a 2008 suicide mass murder in a vocational training school won their case before the European Court of Human Rights, which sentenced the Finnish government to pay damages for negligence. The court found that the police had “failed to confiscate the shooter’s firearm” despite having been aware of it and having questioned the perpetrator before the attack. Pekka Vääntinen, “Finland failed to protect citizens of school shooting,” EURACTIV, September 18, 2020, <https://tinyurl.com/um82m4b9>.

87 Government of Finland, Ministry of the Interior, “Towards a Cohesive Society – Action Plan to Prevent Violent Extremism,” 2012, <https://tinyurl.com/xy5s5vzh>.

88 Richard Allen Greene and Inez Torre, “Syria’s foreign jihadis: Where do they come from?,” CNN, September 1, 2014, <https://tinyurl.com/9xysvr27>; SUPO, “Radical Islamist terrorism remains a major threat in Europe,” 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/djrpw4nc>.

89 Jussi Rosendahl and Tuomas Forsell, “Finnish killings treated as first terror attack, suspect ‘targeted women’: police,” Reuters, August 19, 2017, <https://tinyurl.com/v39258>.

90 Vision of Humanity, “Global Terrorism Index 2020: Deaths from terrorism reach five-year low, but new risks emerge,” 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/krvxjr7>; SUPO, “National Security Overview 2020,” 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/3d4yvtyz>.

91 Government of Finland, Ministry of the Interior and National Cooperation Network for the Prevention of Violent Extremism, “National Action Plan for the Prevention of Violent Radicalisation and Extremism,” May 13, 2016, <https://tinyurl.com/tbxwe9aa>.

92 Government of Finland, Ministry of the Interior, “National Action Plan for The Prevention Of Violent Radicalisation And Extremism 2019–2023,” December 19, 2019, <https://tinyurl.com/723ecef>.

Effective prevention is understood as requiring a whole-of-society effort to recognize and manage individual violent extremists and enhance social inclusion.

as primarily a consequence of failed social inclusion.⁹³ Effective prevention, thus, is understood as requiring a whole-of-society effort to, on the one hand, recognize and manage individual violent extremists and, on the other hand, enhance social inclusion. According to the action plans, the way to achieve such inclusion is by building channels for community engagement and fostering trust in the Finnish democratic system, and by focusing primarily on young people.⁹⁴ Consequently, the education, social and health care sectors play a central role in Finnish P/CVE, albeit in close connection with the security services.⁹⁵ This cooperation between different sectors – on the basis of independent and mostly health, social and education-focused programming without a primary P/CVE focus – is what makes Finland an interesting case study, despite the fact that these defining elements are not uncontested in Finland either.⁹⁶

With its very first action plan in 2012, the Finnish government established the National Cooperation Network for the Prevention of Violent Extremism (NCN), chaired by the head of development of the Police Department in the Interior Ministry. The NCN brings together representatives from ministries and government agencies, the police and local authorities as well as research institutes and several NGOs.⁹⁷ Every NCN member we interviewed described its culture as cooperative, non-hierarchical and open to the perspectives of all independent P/CVE-relevant actors, who generally see their perspectives well reflected in the governmental P/CVE framework.⁹⁸

In contrast to other case-study countries, the Finnish Interior Ministry's most important role is as an agenda-setter and coordinator rather than a funder. Most Finnish work explicitly labelled as P/CVE, and especially smaller projects implemented by NGOs, receive funding from the EU's Internal Security Fund for Police Cooperation (ISF)⁹⁹ or the Finnish National Lottery Fund¹⁰⁰ instead of the Interior Ministry.¹⁰¹ Generally, the Finnish P/CVE effort draws heavily on input from the education sector as well as social programs funded by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. These programs are neither primarily focused on P/CVE nor are they labelled as P/CVE

93 See <https://tinyurl.com/2ns82vww>.

94 Government of Finland, Ministry of the Interior, "Towards a Cohesive Society"; interview with implementer, March 2021.

95 Interview with researcher, April 2021; interview with NGO representative, March 2021.

96 Interview with NGO representative, March 2021; interview with researcher, April 2021; interview with implementer, March 2021; interview with public official, April 2021; interview with NGO representative, April 2021.

97 The full list of members includes: the Ministries of Justice, Foreign Affairs, Social Affairs and Health, Education and Culture; the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (short THL, which is an institute under the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health); the Criminal Sanctions Agency; the Finnish National Agency for Education; the SUPO; the National Police Board; the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities; the cities Helsinki, Oulu, Turku and Tampere; Finn Church Aid; the Finnish Federation of Settlement (NGO); the Muslim Youth Forum of Finland (NGO); the Young Muslims (NGO); and Youth Against Violent Extremism (NGO).

98 Interview with NGO representative, March 2021; interview with public official, April 2021; interview with implementer, March 2021; interview with researcher, April 2021; interview with public official, April 2021.

99 Interview with public official, April 2021; interview with NGO representative, March 2021.

100 The Finnish Lotteries are obliged to raise funds through gaming for sports, arts, culture, and media as well as volunteering: Ministry of Education and Culture, "Funding of arts and culture based on government transfers," 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/26kj8af3>; and European Commission, "Study on Volunteering in the European Union: Country Report Finland," 2010, <https://tinyurl.com/s6k3dnfj>.

101 Interview with public official, April 2021; interview with implementer, March 2021; interview with researcher, April 2021.

activities. However, their funders and implementers do expect P/CVE-relevant effects in line with the whole-of-society, socially driven understanding of and approach to addressing violent extremism to which most Finnish stakeholders subscribe.¹⁰² The Ministry of Justice is also involved in P/CVE activities, for instance by providing training for policymakers and practitioners as well as toolkits and manuals on P/CVE.¹⁰³

On the municipal level, so-called anchor teams are the flagship project of Finnish youth crime prevention and they have a strong P/CVE component. These local and multi-disciplinary teams include social workers, police, and health care workers from a mix of public agencies and NGOs. They work with at-risk youths to anticipate or break spirals of radicalization or criminal entanglement, to (re)integrate affected young people into society, and to identify needs for additional follow-up services.¹⁰⁴

Legal and Funding Obligations

Coupled with a comparatively low political priority of P/CVE in Finland in general as well as a lack of centralized government funding for P/CVE-specific work, the Finnish whole-of-society approach has meant that there is very little systematic, professional evaluation of P/CVE efforts.

For now, neither EU-funded nor Finnish Lottery-funded P/CVE programs are under any obligation to submit themselves to independent, systematic evaluations that go beyond the EU's standard rules for evaluating ISF-supported projects – nor is there dedicated funding for voluntary evaluations. It is, however, possible for implementing agencies or NGOs to build evaluation funding into their project budgets. Such dedicated evaluation budgets were the primary source of funding for the voluntary evaluations that have been conducted. At the policy level, too, there is no legal nor political obligation to evaluate P/CVE-related policy like the action plans.¹⁰⁵

Priorities and Coverage

Apart from these individual evaluations conducted on a voluntary basis, the general interest in and initial efforts toward systematic data gathering for thorough project- and program-level evaluations of Finnish P/CVE activities have only started to grow very recently.

With that as a caveat, there are four promising starting points for gaining systematic insight into the priorities and scope that guide Finland's nascent P/CVE evaluation practice. First, at the project and program levels, Finland has a long-standing

102 Interview with researcher, April 2021; interview with NGO representative, March 2021; interview with implementer, March 2021; interview with implementer, April 2021.

103 Interview with researcher, April 2021.

104 Crimeprevention.fi, "The Anchor Model," 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/3e73ksaa>; Ankkuri, "Anchor-work in Finland," 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/rjad58s>; Government of Finland, Ministry of the Interior, "Manual on multi-professional anchor work," 2019, <https://tinyurl.com/87sm9zuj>; interview with public official, April 2021.

105 Interview with researcher, April 2021; interview with public official, April 2021; interview with public official, April 2021; interview with implementer, March 2021; interview with researcher, April 2021.

track record in evaluating activities relating to social and health policy, which is also a major component of Finnish P/CVE work. The Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (THL) is an independent research institute that operates under and works closely with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. The latter also provides almost half of the institute's funding.¹⁰⁶ The THL mandate includes managing evaluations for projects and programs funded by the ministry. For this purpose, the THL employs dedicated evaluation experts who both directly conduct evaluations and manage tenders for outsourcing evaluations to external researchers, other experts, or consulting and evaluation firms.¹⁰⁷ So far, none of these THL evaluations have specifically focused on the P/CVE effects of the ministry's social programs. It was only in 2020 that the THL hired its first P/CVE specialists to build analytical capacity focused on P/CVE. The institute is now developing a risk assessment tool for violent extremism, which will eventually be used by social and health care workers.¹⁰⁸

Also at the project and program levels, work done by the NGO Nordic Safe Cities offers a second useful starting point for understanding and learning from Finland's nascent P/CVE evaluation practice. The organization plans to introduce an evaluation framework for its partner municipalities, two of which are located in Finland (Helsinki and Vantaa).¹⁰⁹

At the policy level, the third promising starting point for building a more systematic Finnish evaluation culture is a voluntary external evaluation that was conducted to assess the government's 2016–19 P/CVE action plan. It was a personal initiative by the NCN chair that led to this effort and the evaluation was funded by an ad-hoc reallocation of Interior Ministry budget to formally commission the external evaluators. The initiative and evaluation are seen as a success and, as a result, the NCN received a small budget that will enable an evaluation of the current action plan in its final year, which will be in 2023 (see box on p. 34 for more details).¹¹⁰

Beyond these organized evaluation frameworks that either already exist (in the sphere of social policy and public health) or are emerging (at the P/CVE policy level), a fourth starting point on which to build is a Finnish body of practice when it comes to irregular, one-off evaluations, many of which are conducted by universities.¹¹¹ For instance, the University of Helsinki designed and implemented a training program for school teachers and, in parallel, conducted systematic research on the results, including by measuring the extent to which participating teachers had made progress in identifying violent extremism over the course of the program.¹¹² While this particular project was funded by the National Board of Education, similar projects have also been funded through the EU's Horizon 2020 research framework program.¹¹³

106 Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare, "Funding," January 20, 2021, accessed June 11, 2021 <https://thl.fi/en/web/thlfi-en/about-us/funding>; Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare, "What is THL?," September 20, 2019, <https://tinyurl.com/ysuc6apx>.

107 Interview with implementer, April 2021; interview with evaluator, April 2021.

108 Interview with researcher, April 2021.

109 Interview with researcher, April 2021; see also Nordic Safe Cities' website for more information, <https://nordicsafecities.org/>.

110 Interview with public official, April 2021.

111 Interview with researcher, April 2021; interview with researcher, April 2021.

112 Interview with researcher, April 2021.

113 Interview with researcher, April 2021.

P/CVE Policy Evaluation in Finland

Since policy evaluations are particularly rare in the P/CVE field, the Finnish experience in this regard is particularly instructive for Germany. The NCN chairperson, an official in the Ministry of Interior, took the initiative to commission Finland's first evaluation of its 2016–19 National Action Plan (NAP). Conducted in 2019, the primary objective of the evaluation was to improve the design and implementation of the next action plan by documenting known problems and supporting policy decisions to address them. For those in the Interior Ministry advocating for more political and policy attention to as well as funds for P/CVE activities, the evaluation results thus became a bargaining chip in internal negotiations as well as a basis on which to justify more investments into building a systematic evaluation practice going forward.¹¹⁴

The evaluation of the 2016–19 NAP was commissioned through an open tender.¹¹⁵ To ensure independence, the NCN wanted an inter-disciplinary evaluation team consisting of external evaluation experts rather than P/CVE experts.¹¹⁶ The international accounting and audit firm KPMG won the tender with a team that involved one strategic consultant and one evaluator with expertise in the public sector. Implementing NGOs, for their part, stated that they would have preferred a mixed evaluation team, including P/CVE experts, to ensure a “more holistic learning process.”¹¹⁷ The KPMG evaluators were tasked with assessing the extent to which the NAP implementers' outputs and capacities had met previously formulated goals.¹¹⁸

Apart from the overall timeline, the evaluation subject (the 2016 NAP) and the required expertise, every other decision, such as the type, design and methods of the evaluation, were not specified in the terms of references but agreed upon later, together with the KPMG team.¹¹⁹ The evaluation started in November 2018 and the final report was published in April 2019, just in time to feed into the drafting of the next NAP, which was endorsed later that year.¹²⁰ The evaluators positively noted the NCN's “hands-off-approach,” openness and support. NCN members from outside the Interior Ministry who we interviewed for this study supported the initiative. They also expressed their conviction that governmental programs and strategies should, as a matter of principle, be scrutinized, including through independent evaluations, which our interviewees see as an instrument to explain to citizens how public bodies spend their taxes.¹²¹ However, such feelings of responsibility and commitments to transparency are mostly intrinsic as P/CVE is not a priority issue for most citizens and even many policymakers and politicians. Moreover, given that public funding for these programs is comparatively small, external demand for accountability is also limited.¹²²

The current NAP has taken up several findings and recommendations that were formulated in the KPMG evaluation report. For instance, the report identified a need for more capacity-building and training for actors working in P/CVE-relevant fields, such as in the education sector. The THL's decision to develop a risk assessment framework, which will include a training program for social and health-care workers, was also partly based on this finding.¹²³

114 Interview with public official, April 2021.

115 Interview with NGO representative, March 2021; interview with public official, April 2021.

116 Interview with public official, April 2021; interview with evaluator, April 2021; interview with NGO representative, March 2021.

117 Interview with public official, April 2021; interview with researcher, April 2021.

118 Interview with implementer, March 2021; interview with evaluator, April 2021.

119 Interview with evaluator, April 2021.

120 Interview with evaluator, April 2021; interview with public official, April 2021; Samuli Kinnunen and Elli Partanen, “Assessment of the National Action Plan for the Prevention of Violent Radicalisation and Extremism by the Ministry of the Interior,” Ministry of the Interior and KPMG, 2019, <https://tinyurl.com/py5x84bx>.

121 Interview with implementer, March 2021.

122 Interview with implementer, March 2021.

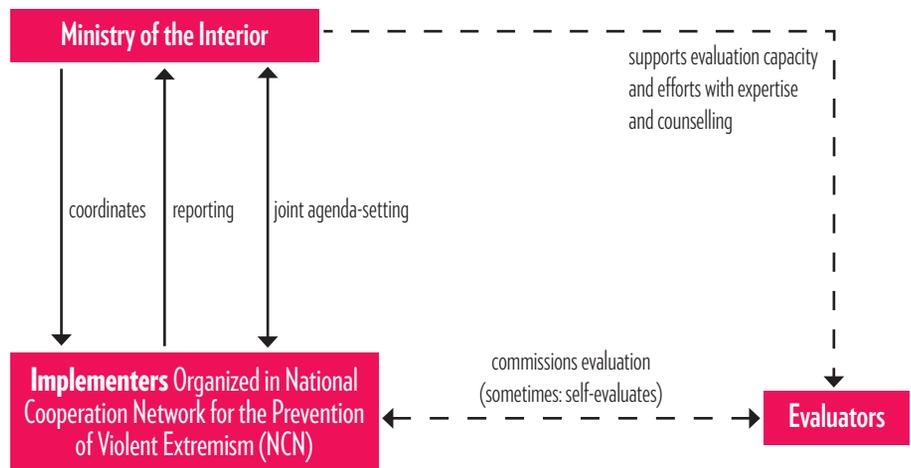
123 Interview with implementer, March 2021; interview with public official, April 2021.

Actors, Management and Uptake

Among all the fields that contribute to the Finnish P/CVE landscape and different P/CVE activities, the one with the most established evaluation practice and framework is the social and health sector, where the government-funded research institute THL is the key node and actor. For each evaluation, the institute's evaluation experts develop a tailored evaluation design to ensure that it fits the activities that are being evaluated as well as the analytical rationale guiding the evaluation (i.e., the key learning motivation driving the evaluation). The THL has increasingly sought to build evaluative elements into its approach and activities from the start. The main aims behind this are twofold: (1) to ensure ongoing data collection and observations, and (2) to provide flexible opportunities for adjustments and course corrections during a program or project. This way, so the rationale, learning can feed directly into practice rather than being limited to informing future activities, usually with several years of delay.¹²⁴

Smaller THL projects tend to be evaluated in-house, while bigger projects and programs are usually outsourced to external experts. It is worth noting that this happens outside of any formal obligations or systematic framework. It is common for THL to work with universities as well as international for-profit consultancies, such as KPMG, PwC or Accenture.¹²⁵

Figure 4: Key Actor Relations for Centrally Administered Grants in Finland



¹²⁴ Interview with evaluator, April 2021.

¹²⁵ Interview with NGO representative, March 2021.

Evaluation Culture

As of July 2021, and looking back over the past decade since Finland's first P/CVE action plan was adopted in 2012, there is no noteworthy evaluation culture in the Finnish P/CVE field. Apart from the described overlap with the field of social policy, which has a more established evaluation practice, systematic evaluations that are based on established scientific methods and international professional standards are not a common requirement for P/CVE work.

In our interviews, some Finnish interlocutors described a reluctance among policymakers to facilitate more evaluations due to the additional scrutiny this might attract.¹²⁶ Moreover, some implementers question the “evaluability” of their work's contributions to P/CVE.¹²⁷ Despite these doubts, a sense of urgency to learn more about which approaches work and how P/CVE efforts could be improved appears to have developed among Finnish P/CVE practitioners in recent years. This growing demand is one of the key drivers of recent evaluation efforts, along with a widespread confidence that there will be successful uptake by policymakers due to open, consensus-based and non-hierarchical relations between the public sector, including the police, and civil society.¹²⁸

At the program and project levels, most current P/CVE evaluations concentrate on output metrics, and mainly with a view to detecting overlaps and using limited funding more efficiently. This narrow focus reveals a privileging of accountability over learning, a mindset and approach that differs quite strongly from the learning focus exhibited by the example set by the Finnish government's own policy evaluation (see box on p. 34).¹²⁹

Lessons

Finland's P/CVE efforts are an example of a very balanced approach between crime prevention and social inclusion that has broad support among all stakeholders.

P/CVE evaluation practice in Finland is still in an infant stage and is thus characterized by ad-hoc initiatives as well as a lack of structures and formal requirements. Many P/CVE project funders and implementers are presently making their first experiences with commissioning – and being on the receiving end of – systematic evaluations.

Finland's P/CVE efforts are an example of a very balanced approach between crime prevention and social inclusion that has broad support among all stakeholders. In line with this social inclusion mindset, both the government-led NCN and civil society implementers frame violent extremism as a result of social exclusion. Effective prevention, then, is understood as helping young people find their place in local communities, while staying alert for the first warning signs of failed inclusion. Following this view, inclusion goes beyond mere integration into social structures and networks. It also includes a strong civic education component that aims at nurturing individuals' consciousness and ownership of the duties, rights and merits that come with being a

126 Interview with public official, April 2021.

127 Interview with researcher, April 2021; interview with implementer, March 2021.

128 Interview with NGO representative, March 2021; interview with public official, April 2021; interview with public official, April 2021.

129 Interview with researcher, April 2021.

citizen in a democracy, including the possibilities to shape programs and policies that directly affect them. In contrast to other countries that emphasize a punitive logic focused on risks, this inclusive mindset permeates the Finnish P/CVE space.¹³⁰

When attempting to learn from Finland’s limited experience with evaluating P/CVE activities, three key takeaways stand out.

First, professional and transparent policy evaluation, if managed inclusively, is feasible and can be politically useful to advance an entire policy field, not least in terms of securing funds.

Second, professional evaluation management and evaluation implementation both require expertise and permanent capacity that is independent from funding choices about the programs that are being evaluated. The Finnish social ministry’s research institute THL is one institutional blueprint for how such capacity could be organized.

Third, the nature of P/CVE activities and the strategic intention behind their evaluation should drive tailored evaluation approaches, as shown by the THL in Finland. A specific evaluation design should follow from a stated purpose, not the other way around. It is best practice to design projects and programs in a way that allows for systematic evaluation, learning and flexible adaptation, and to do so from the inception phase by building data collection and course correction opportunities into project activities and budgets.

Table 3: Summary of P/CVE Evaluation Structures in Finland

Who coordinates evaluations?	No coordination save for policy evaluation (national action plans) by the chair of the National Cooperation Network (NCN) for the Prevention of Violent Radicalisation and Extremism (Ministry of Interior)
Who funds evaluations?	Projects/programs: general research funds from the EU or ministries in the NCN Policy: Ministry of Interior
Who evaluates?	Internal evaluations: implementer staff External evaluations: consultants (for-profit consultancies) and academic researchers
What is evaluated?	Individual projects (not mandatory) P/CVE-related activities of National Coordination Group members (not mandatory) National Action Plans (2016–2019, 2020–2023 forthcoming, not mandatory)
What is the primary goal of evaluation?	Learning to improve national action plans and identify capacity gaps; accountability in terms of informing citizens on funds spent
How is uptake organized?	No generalized or mandatory uptake procedures

130 Government of Finland, Ministry of the Interior, “National Action Plan For the Prevention Of Violent Radicalisation and Extremism 2019–2023,” p. 36. The National Action Plan, for instance, also includes a chapter on integrating young people into P/CVE efforts by making information accessible and including them into policymaking and project planning processes (p. 44 ff).

The Netherlands

In the Netherlands, domestic counterterrorism measures received growing attention after the 9/11 attacks and again following the 2004 murder of prominent Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gogh by a jihadist extremist. The field of P/CVE also gained in importance in the following years, with a focus on preventing or countering jihadist radicalization and violence among the country's Muslim community, which accounts for about five percent of the overall population.¹³¹

Municipalities and regions are the main focal points and actors in the Dutch approach to preventing radicalization.¹³² As early as 2005, local authorities developed action plans to counter radicalization, seeking to address the issue by fostering the integration of the country's Muslim communities. These early efforts assumed violent radicalization to be a consequence of a lack of integration and thus focused on integration into the Dutch democratic system.¹³³ In the same year, the Dutch government established the role of a National Coordinator for Security and Counterterrorism (NCTV), which has been under the auspices of the Ministry for Justice and Security (JenV) since 2017.¹³⁴ Today, the NCTV is an organization of about 300 staff that combines police, intelligence coordination, cybersecurity and counter-radicalization roles.

The Dutch government's 2007–2011 Polarisation and Radicalisation Action Plan built on early experiences made by local authorities and aimed at developing additional capacities as well as expanding them to other regions. In addition to funding the action plan, including research and implementation components, with a budget of €28 million, the central government's role was to disseminate knowledge to the local level.¹³⁵ After 2011, the impact of the financial crisis on budgets, combined with new research evidence questioning the link between polarization and radicalization, led to a shift in priorities: security services no longer assessed jihadist radicalization in the Netherlands as a central but rather as a fringe phenomenon. The action plan was not renewed, P/CVE-

131 Lorenzo Vidino and James Brandon, "Countering Radicalization in Europe," *The International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence*, 2012, <https://tinyurl.com/rjkc9tx>, pp. 27–28; Riazat Butt and Henry Tuck, "European Counter-radicalisation and De-radicalisation: A Comparative Evaluation of Approaches in the Netherlands, Sweden, Denmark and Germany," *Institute for Strategic Dialogue*, 2014, <https://tinyurl.com/kw9rhnd4>, p. 3; Statista, "Islam in the Netherlands - Statistics & Facts," 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/34yk5rex>.

132 Interview with government official, April 2021; Dutch House of Representatives, "Brief van de ministers van sociale zaken en werkgelegenheid, van justitie en veiligheid, van volksgezondheid, welzijn en sport en voor basis- en voortgezet onderwijs en media," [Letter from the Ministers for Social Affairs and Employment, Justice and Security, Health, Welfare and Sport and For Primary and Secondary Education and the Media], June 11, 2018, <https://tinyurl.com/exb42p4s>.

133 Vidino and Brandon, "Countering Radicalization in Europe," pp. 29–32.

134 Originally under the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations as the National Coordinator for Counterterrorism (NCTb).

135 Vidino and Brandon, "Countering Radicalization in Europe," pp. 29–34. Involved ministries include the Ministry of Interior and Kingdom Relations (BZK), the Ministry of Employment and Social Affairs (SZW), the Ministry of Justice and Security (JenV), the Ministry of Public Health, Welfare and Sport (VWS), and the Ministry of Youth and Family, Education, Culture and Science (OCW).

related spending dwindled and most projects ground to a halt. Local administrations were asked to follow a narrower counter-radicalization approach focused on at-risk individuals instead of prioritizing more long-term community integration activities.¹³⁶

P/CVE as an approach to radicalization and extremism resurfaced again with the return of foreign fighters from Syria and Iraq.¹³⁷ In 2013, the NCTV raised the threat level related to the “rise of jihadist extremism” in the Netherlands to “substantial.”¹³⁸ One year later, the NCTV and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment (SZW) issued The Netherlands Comprehensive Action Programme to Combat Jihadism. The Dutch cabinet pledged to spend €129 million from 2015 until 2020, including on intelligence and law enforcement, international engagement, and prevention.¹³⁹ As part of this effort, a Social Stability Expertise Unit (ESS) was established at the SZW. Together with the NCTV, it has become a key P/CVE knowledge and support hub, particularly for actors working in the field at the local level. The comprehensive approach aims at preventing radicalization and violence by improving community and individual resilience, while simultaneously fighting extremist structures. Accordingly, the JenV and the SZW allocated €7 million of the Action Programme’s budget to municipalities and regions in 2018.¹⁴⁰

Legal and Funding Obligations

The Netherlands have been at the forefront of P/CVE evaluation practice for years and are several years ahead of most other countries in their efforts. The country generally has a strong tradition of evaluating programs and projects, going all the way back to the 1970s. Today, evaluations are a fixed component of programming in every major policy field. While these evaluations are not always clearly distinct from audits, since 2010 there has been a strong focus on learning as a complementary objective to accountability mandates.¹⁴¹ At the same time, questions about the efficiency and effectiveness of

The Netherlands have been at the forefront of P/CVE evaluation practice for years.

136 Ibid.; Government of the Netherlands, “National 2011–2015 Counterterrorism Strategy has been presented,” April 20, 2011, <https://tinyurl.com/484w4rmt>; interview with P/CVE advisor, February 2021.

137 Stef Wittendorp, “Do We Really Understand What the Comprehensive Approach is All About in Counter-Terrorism and Counter-Radicalisation?,” International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague, April 25, 2018, <https://tinyurl.com/y3de6wxv>; Government of the Netherlands, “Counterterrorism gives the fight against terrorism cohesion and direction,” July 11, 2016, <https://tinyurl.com/yhwnfs53>.

138 Dutch House of Representatives, “Brief van de ministers van veiligheid en justitie en van sociale zaken en werkgelegenheid,” [Letter from the Ministers for Security and Justice and Social Affairs and Employment], September 3, 2014, <https://tinyurl.com/tjjspcb2>.

139 Dutch House of Representatives, “Brief van de ministers van veiligheid en justitie, van binnenlandse zaken en koninkrijksrelaties en van defensie,” [Letter from the Ministers for Security and Justice, the Interior and Kingdom Relations, and the Ministry of Defence], February 9, 2015, <https://tinyurl.com/cv9ufvs5>; Dutch House of Representatives, “Brief van de minister president, minister van algemene zaken en de vice-minister-president, minister van sociale zaken en werkgelegenheid,” [Letter from the Prime Minister, Minister for General Affairs and Deputy Prime Minister, and the Minister for Social Affairs and Employment], March 3, 2015, <https://tinyurl.com/2mr2vc8b>.

140 Interview with government official, April 2021; “Dutch gov’t invests €7 mil. into fighting radicalization,” NL Times, December 21, 2018, <https://tinyurl.com/dwczs2ce>; Dutch House of Representatives, “Brief van de ministers van sociale zaken en werkgelegenheid, van justitie en veiligheid, van volksgezondheid, welzijn en sport en voor basis- en voortgezet onderwijs en media.”

141 Carolien Klein Haarhuis, “The Netherlands,” in *The Institutionalisation of Evaluation in Europe*, eds. Reinhard Stockmann, Wolfgang Meyer and Lena Taube, Palgrave Macmillan, 2020, pp. 89–114.

The greatest incentive to evaluate is the decentralized responsibility for P/CVE.

P/CVE-related spending from parliament, city councils and other professionals have become more numerous over time and funders have defined mandatory accountability requirements for their grantees. On the other hand, all interview partners we spoke to emphasized learning as the main motivation behind evaluations. In all our conversations, interviewees stressed that the Netherlands prioritizes a learning culture, a finding that also emerges from previous studies on evaluation practices in other Dutch policy fields.¹⁴²

At the national level, the NCTV and ESS are required to report on the efficiency of their spending, including the effects of the measures they fund, to internal inspectorates. This reporting is based on the results of (self-)evaluations shared by implementers as well as on the findings of additional, commissioned evaluations. Programs that are directly funded by national ministries, such as the National Extremism Support Center (LSE), are required to evaluate their work.¹⁴³ Ministries are accountable to and required to report to the Dutch parliament, including on evaluation results. In addition, parliament has also commissioned P/CVE policy evaluations in the past.¹⁴⁴

Municipalities and regions have to report on how they spend funds they receive from the NCTV and ESS. Until the 2019–20 budget period, they were only required to report financial flows and output indicators, such as the number of beneficiaries by project. Recently, the reporting requirements were expanded to encompass conducting mandatory “light effect measurements,” which effectively translates to (self-) evaluation. Ministries want to keep the reporting burden light and in line with existing reporting standards for local councils.¹⁴⁵ Beyond this, the government encourages external evaluations where they are financially viable and methodologically feasible. Where these criteria are not met, self-evaluation is an accepted practice, for example in the case of the Care and Safety Houses. These multi-agency support units facilitate casework and other preventive measures at the regional level.¹⁴⁶ In our interviews, officials explained two main ways in which the Dutch P/CVE structures incentivize high-quality evaluations: First, funding from the national to the regional and local levels creates not only a link for evaluation capacity support but also incentivizes beneficiaries to demonstrate a willingness to learn and improve. Second, officials emphasized that the greatest incentive is the decentralized responsibility for P/CVE, meaning that the local level is equally responsible for the prevention of extremist violence and will thus be held accountable by the public if attacks or other violent events do occur.¹⁴⁷

142 Rotmann and Binder, „Evaluierung außenpolitischer Maßnahmen in fragilen Kontexten: Erfahrungen und Empfehlungen.“

143 Interview with implementer, April 2021; interview with government official, April 2021.

144 Ibid. For the Comprehensive Action Plan, see for example: First Line Practitioners, “The Netherlands Comprehensive Action Programme to Combat Jihadism,” January 2014, <https://tinyurl.com/nk94dfaa>; for an evaluation of passport measures see: Government of the Netherlands, “Evaluatie Tijdelijke wet bestuurlijke maatregelen terrorismebestrijding,” [Evaluation of the Temporary Law on Administrative Measures Against Terrorism], April 9, 2020, <https://tinyurl.com/pu7yv6js>.

145 Interview with government official, April 2021.

146 Wim Hardyns, Janne Thys, Lien Dorme, Noel Klima, and Lieven Pauwels, “Multi-Agency Working to Prevent Violent Radicalisation,” RADICES 1, no. 1 (2021): pp. 22–40, <https://tinyurl.com/3cckhhwt>; interview with researcher, April 2021.

147 Interview with government official, April 2021.

Priorities and Coverage

In the Netherlands, there are examples for P/CVE evaluations at all levels, from strategies and political action plans (policy evaluation) to program and project evaluations, both at the national and at the local level. Even the country's first systematic primary, secondary and tertiary prevention efforts in 2008 and 2009 were evaluated, following public debates about their appropriateness and effectiveness.

At the project level, too, there are early examples for external evaluations of municipal (pilot) projects, including of front-line worker and resilience trainings commissioned by the relevant ministries or municipalities, as well as an evaluation of a special detention facility for individuals with a terrorist background.¹⁴⁸ In 2012, a meta-evaluation of around 40 local projects was completed as part of the 2007–2011 Polarisation and Radicalisation Action Plan. Other evaluations and studies of projects and programs have since followed.¹⁴⁹ Recent examples for P/CVE-related evaluations at the program level include a formative evaluation of the LSE and an ongoing evaluation of its two main programs on exit work and support for families of at-risk individuals, as well as an evaluation of the implementation and effects of a temporary law on so-called passport measures and related travel restrictions.¹⁵⁰ At the policy level, some municipal action plans get evaluated and in some instances those evaluations are

148 “Evaluatie van projecten waaraan in het kader van het Actieplan Polarisatie en Radicalisering 2007–2011 een decentralisatie-uitkering of tijdelijke subsidie is toegekend,” [Evaluation of Projects that Were Awarded a Decentralisation Grant or Temporary Subsidy Within the Framework of the Polarisation and Radicalisation Action Plan 2007–2011], KplusV, 2010; Tinka M. Veldhuis, Ernestine H. Gordijn, Siegwart M. Lindenberg and René Veenstra, “Terroristen in detentie: evaluatie van de Terroristenafdeling,” [Terrorists in Detention: Evaluation of the Terrorist Unit], Ministry of Justice, 2010, <https://tinyurl.com/avxfatme>, p. 2.; Trees Pels, Marjan de Gruijter and Corine van Middelkoop, “Evaluatie trainingen Amsterdamse professionals in het herkennen en omgaan met radicalisering,” Forum and Verwey-Jonker Instituut, 2008, <https://tinyurl.com/2nfjdt4w>; Trees Pels, “Evaluatie training religie pedagogische professionals Slotervaart,” [Evaluation of Training for Religion Pedagogic Professionals in Slotervaart], Verwey-Jonker Instituut, 2009; Amy-Jane Gielen, “Een kwestie van identiteit: Evaluatie training identiteit & weerbaarheid voor moslima’s,” [A Matter of Identity: Evaluation Training Identity and Resilience for Female Muslims], A.G. Advies, January 2009, <https://tinyurl.com/ecs38cz7>, p. 4.; M. Lousberg, D. Van Hemert and S. Langelaan, “Ingrijpen bij radicalisering - De mogelijkheden van de eerstelijnswerker,” [Intervention in Case of Radicalisation: Possibilities of the First-Line Worker], TNO Security and Defense, October 2009, <https://tinyurl.com/56tu6med>.

149 V.R. Viola van Guldener and H.P. Henry Potman “Vijf jaar lokale projecten Polarisatie en Radicalisering Resultaatinventarisatie 2007–2011,” [Five years of Local Projects Polarisation and Radicalisation Result Inventory 2007–2011], KplusV, 2012, <https://tinyurl.com/jwcrb8w>; Allard R. Feddes, Liesbeth Mann and Bertjan Doosje, “Increasing self-esteem and empathy to prevent violent radicalization: a longitudinal quantitative evaluation of a resilience training focused on adolescents with a dual identity,” *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* 45, no. 7 (2015): pp. 400–411; Bart Schuurman and Edwin Bakker, “Reintegrating jihadist extremists: evaluating a Dutch initiative, 2013–2014,” *Behavioral Sciences of Terrorism and Political Aggression* 8, no. 1 (2016): pp. 66–85; G. Hassan, S. Brouillette-Alarie, S. Ousman, D. Kilinc, É. L. Savard, W. Varela, L. Lavoie, A. Fetiou, S. Harris-Hogan, E. Borokhovski, D. Pickup, P. Madriaza, C. Rousseau, S. K. Thompson, J. McCoy, V. Venkatesh, M. Boivin, M. Srimathi Narayana, D. Morin, ... the CPN-PREV team, “A systematic review on the outcomes of primary and secondary prevention programs in the field of violent radicalization. Canadian Practitioners Network for the Prevention of Radicalization and Extremist Violence”, PREV, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/2bsj3rx3>.

150 Government of the Netherlands, “Evaluatie Tijdelijke wet bestuurlijke maatregelen terrorismebestrijding”; Andersson Elffers Felix, “Evaluation of Forsa and the Family Support Centre,” 2018, <https://tinyurl.com/dk4yeayu>; interview with implementer, March 2021; interview with government official, April 2021; interview with P/CVE advisor, February 2021.

even commissioned and paid for by national ministries.¹⁵¹ The 2014 Netherlands Comprehensive Action Programme and both national counterterrorism strategies that have been passed to date were also evaluated.¹⁵² For most of these evaluations, the final reports are publicly available.

The NCTV is particularly interested in ex-post impact evaluations and has recently commissioned a comparative meta-review of P/CVE evaluations.¹⁵³ The SZW also funds research projects, such as trainings in which consultants help trainers in local projects create a theory of change and find out which elements work best under which conditions.¹⁵⁴ While there are more P/CVE evaluations in the Netherlands than in most other countries, they also remain rare in certain sub-areas of P/CVE that are difficult to evaluate, such as P/CVE work involving multiple agencies.¹⁵⁵ The NCTV and the SSE have been aiming to increase the Dutch P/CVE evaluation capacities by harmonizing standards and improving the targeting of evaluations, including for effect measurement, among other steps.¹⁵⁶

Actors, Management and Uptake

In the Netherlands, P/CVE evaluators are mostly researchers and consultants who specialize in P/CVE and social cohesion, and/or the evaluation of such work. Many of them work as part of small P/CVE or public sector consultancy firms or research institutes. In ministries, inspectorates usually fulfil internal oversight and sometimes evaluation roles.¹⁵⁷ For quality assurance reasons, evaluations of a bigger scope typically involve dedicated supervisory boards that consist of academics, experts, local civil servants, and intervention developers.¹⁵⁸ Dutch evaluation culture is known for being “liberal,” meaning that experts normally have a lot of independence and leeway to do their work.¹⁵⁹

151 Petra Bulk, Esther van der Leeuw and Saskia Doek, “Evaluatie actieplan ‘Weert weert polarisatie en radicalisering’,” Gemeente Weert, September 3, 2009, <https://tinyurl.com/22rfnvrw>; KplusV, “Evaluatie van projecten waaraan in het kader van het Actieplan Polarisatie en Radicalisering 2007–2011 een decentralisatie-uitkering of tijdelijke subsidie is toegekend.”

152 Inspectorate of Justice and Security, “Evaluation of the Netherlands comprehensive action programme to combat jihadism,” Ministry of Security and Justice, 2017, <https://tinyurl.com/whnfhpc>, p. 4; M. Noordegraaf, S.C. Douglas, A. Bos and W.M. Klem, “Gericht, gedragen en geborgd interventievermogen?: Evaluatie van de nationale contraterorisme-strategie 2011-2015,” [Focused, Supported and Secured Intervention capability? Evaluation of the National Counterterrorism Strategy 2011–2015], Utrecht University Repository, 2016, <https://tinyurl.com/22jf2tj2>, p. 5; N. Woestenburg, H. Winter, M. Diekema, S. Roest and N. Struiksmā, “Evaluatie Nationale Contraterorisme-strategie 2016-2020 fase 1: analyse en meetbaarheid beleidsmaatregelen,” Pro Facto, January 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/cs4kd4ta>, p. 1. A second evaluation of the current strategy is forthcoming.

153 Ibid.

154 Interview with evaluator/researcher, April 2021.

155 Interview with government official, April 2021.

156 Ibid.; interview with government official, April 2021; on the challenges of evaluating see: Amy-Jane Gielen, “Evaluating countering violent extremism,” in ‘De-radicalisation’ – Scientific insights for policy, eds. Lore Colaert, Flemish Peace Institute, 2017, pp. 101–117, p. 103 ff.

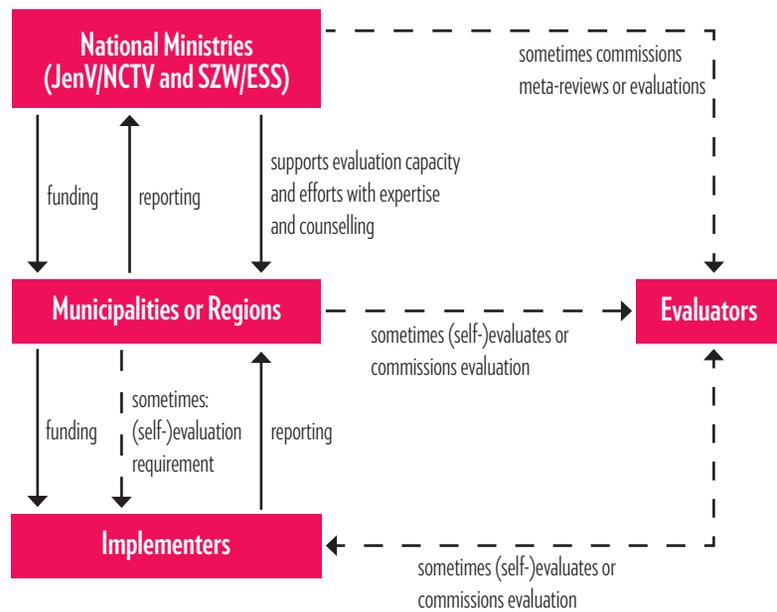
157 Inspectorate of Justice and Security, “Evaluation of the Netherlands comprehensive action programme to combat jihadism.”

158 Interview with evaluator/researcher, April 2021.

159 Haarhuis, “The Netherlands,” pp. 73–74; Frans L. Leeuw, “Evaluation policy in the Netherlands,” in *Evaluation policy and evaluation practice. New Directions for Evaluation*, eds. W.M.K. Trochim, M. M. Mark, and L. J. Cooks, Wiley Periodicals, Inc., 2009, pp. 87–102.

The NCTV and the ESS have recently increased their investments into capacity-building for self-evaluation and evidence-based project work that allows for reporting and evaluation, both throughout the Dutch administrative structures and for implementers (local administration and other providers). This move builds on positive experiences with general P/CVE capacity support offered to municipalities in the form of trainings and counselling.¹⁶⁰ The overarching goals are to harmonize reporting, ensure that a greater share of activities is covered by evaluations, and to establish an evaluation culture and deepen the skills base for evaluation. In 2019, the SZW launched a self-evaluation toolkit for local administrations and implementers working with a people-centered approach to P/CVE, which was developed based on practitioners' stated needs.¹⁶¹ Very recent efforts to develop an evaluation culture in the P/CVE field also include trainings on how to apply the toolkit and work in an evidence-based way.¹⁶²

Figure 5: Key Actor Relations for Decentralized Grants in the Netherlands



160 Vidino and Brandon, “Countering Radicalization in Europe,” p. 47; interview with P/CVE advisor, February 2021.

161 Dutch Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, “Toolkit Evidence-Based Werken bij de preventie van radicalisering,” [Toolkit Evidence-Based Work in the Prevention of Radicalisation], 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/39ydzeu>; interview with evaluator/researcher, March 2021; interview with government official, April 2021; interview with evaluator/researcher, April 2021.

162 Interview with evaluator/researcher, March 2021; interview with government official, April 2021; interview with evaluator/researcher, April 2021.

In line with the Dutch approach to P/CVE as a whole, evaluation management is mostly decentralized.

In line with the Dutch approach to P/CVE as a whole, evaluation management is mostly decentralized. Typically, decisions about what, when and how to evaluate, as well as steps like developing the terms of reference and recruiting an evaluator, lie with the local administration or organization responsible for implementing a particular intervention.¹⁶³ The funding ministries' role (and this mainly pertains to NCTV and ESS) is to facilitate, coordinate and support evaluations. In some instances, ministries may also set evaluation requirements (if applicable), or they directly commission additional (meta-)evaluations of particular services across locations to learn about effects, as well as evaluations of national-level policies and measures.¹⁶⁴ The latter tend to be more sophisticated than evaluations at the local level – a function of generally larger budgets – and cover a somewhat constant number of interventions per year in order to inform policy development in ministries.¹⁶⁵

To support the country's P/CVE evaluation practice at the local level, policy officers at the NCTV and ESS collaborate across ministries and serve as direct contacts and counsellors for local administrators or other implementers, usually on top of their regular duties.¹⁶⁶ Implementers use this offer for early discussions about evaluation planning or the joint development of terms of references.¹⁶⁷ Coordinators attempt to synchronize the timing of evaluation cycles at different levels, but they also admitted that decentralized responsibilities make such coordination difficult.¹⁶⁸ The responsibility for ensuring uptake also lies primarily with the local level as well as with the implementer being evaluated. This is very common in Dutch evaluation practice in general.¹⁶⁹ Participation in reporting or (self-)evaluation is mandatory for organizations or projects that receive funding from the national level, depending on the requirements. Negative evaluation results usually do not trigger funding cuts, although funders expect improvements such as updated implementation plans based on evaluation findings.¹⁷⁰ Evaluation coordinators, for their part, use the evaluation results they receive from beneficiaries as well as additional evaluations to fulfil accountability requirements and inform future policy development.¹⁷¹ The JenV's internal Research and Documentation Centre (WODC) also has a strong track record in policy research and evaluation for policy development, and research-based evidence has significantly shaped the evolution of Dutch P/CVE policy in general.¹⁷²

163 Interview with government official, April 2021, interview with implementer, March 2021.

164 Interview with government official, April 2021; interview with evaluator/researcher, April 2021.

165 Interview with evaluator/researcher, April 2021.

166 Ibid.; interview with implementer, March 2021; interview with evaluator/researcher, April 2021.

167 Interview with implementer, March 2021.

168 Interview with government official, April 2021.

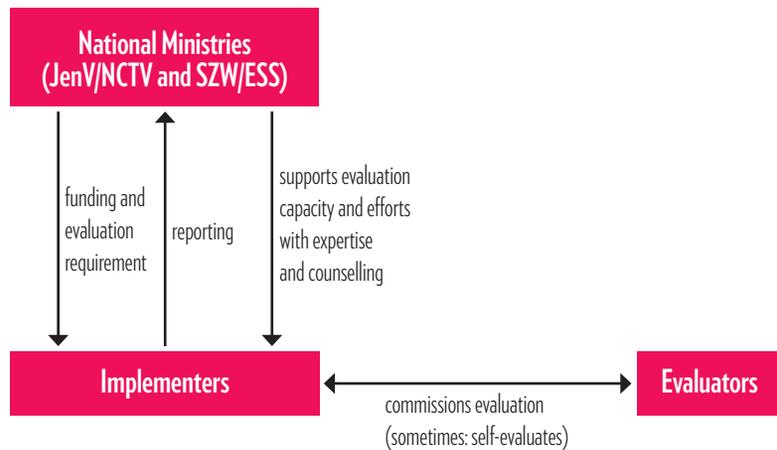
169 Ibid.; Haarhuis, "The Netherlands," p. 78 ff.

170 Interview with government official, April 2021; interview with evaluator/researcher, April 2021; interview with P/CVE advisor, February 2021.

171 Ibid. The Netherlands Comprehensive Action Programme required four annual progress reports, which informed the budget decisions and program adjustments based on results. See also: First Line Practitioners, "The Netherlands Comprehensive Action Programme to Combat Jihadism."

172 Vidino and Brandon, "Countering Radicalization in Europe," pp. 31–32; Haarhuis, "The Netherlands," p. 82 f; interview with P/CVE advisor, February 2021.

Figure 6: Key Actor Relations for Centrally Administrated Grants in the Netherlands



Evaluation Culture

All interview partners emphasized that there is a focus on as well as an established culture of learning in the Netherlands. Investments into capacity-building for P/CVE evaluation and corresponding support measures, including the self-evaluation toolkit as well as training and counselling offers, that were brought underway since 2018/19 reflect this emphasis. However, these investments are also driven by increasingly extensive reporting requirements and growing public pressure to justify public spending. These demands are in line with the strong accountability mechanisms that are in place in the Dutch political system. The capacity investments also reflect a pattern of decentralization and support from the national level that has existed in Dutch P/CVE from the start, independently of evaluations. P/CVE evaluations, however, have been more widespread in the Netherlands than in most other countries for over ten years, and began to emerge long before the more recent investments into capacity support for evaluation. This matches evidence about the Dutch evaluation culture in other policy fields.¹⁷³

While experts see room for improvement in terms of the methods, quality, standardization, and coverage of P/CVE evaluations, they are generally seen as useful tools for learning and improving P/CVE efforts. Evaluations have been instrumental in shaping a field of P/CVE practice that is renowned for its quality and that has come a long way since the days when some implementers are remembered to have tried to take advantage of the widespread fear of extremism to peddle scientifically very questionable interventions.¹⁷⁴ Multiple experts mentioned that there is an intrinsic interest in the

¹⁷³ Rotmann and Binder, „Evaluierung außenpolitischer Maßnahmen in fragilen Kontexten: Erfahrungen und Empfehlungen.“

¹⁷⁴ Interview with P/CVE advisor, February 2021.

An important part of Dutch evaluation culture seems to be the fact that there are no strict, top-down consequences that follow from negative evaluation results.

effectiveness of P/CVE measures and cited it as the main rationale behind evaluations.¹⁷⁵ Some interviewees also pointed out that those developing specific P/CVE interventions may have reservations about evaluations because they worry about negative results. Bridging this skepticism gap requires extra investments into building trust.¹⁷⁶

An important part of Dutch evaluation culture seems to be the fact that there are no strict, top-down consequences that follow from negative evaluation results, even though evaluations are often required and learning-based improvements generally expected.¹⁷⁷ As already mentioned, the main incentives to evaluate a project or intervention are connected with funding from the national to the regional level, which usually comes with an expectation to learn and improve, as well as the decentralized nature of P/CVE responsibility in general. This context gives rise to an intrinsic interest to evaluate and improve at the local level, because local actors carry political responsibility and thus face public blame if extremist violence is not effectively prevented.¹⁷⁸

Another feature of Dutch P/CVE evaluation practice is a shared sense of certain objectives in a relatively small community of experts.¹⁷⁹ This open and constructive learning culture and sense of community are facilitated by a revolving-door effect: many P/CVE professionals transition between policy roles at the local and national level, or between research, evaluation, implementation and policy roles. Apart from a general sense of trust, this model facilitates a culture of unbureaucratic support by evaluation coordinators at the national level, who help others plan and execute an evaluation, while the autonomy to make decisions remains with the beneficiary or implementing organization. Even during a period of reduced budgets and thus funding for P/CVE projects between 2010 and 2013, the NCTV developed a toolbox to ensure knowledge transfer and informal practitioner networks continued to exist.¹⁸⁰ At the same time, early research on P/CVE in the Netherlands also suggests that evaluations were managed by a small club of people who knew each other well and had no real interest in honest criticism.¹⁸¹ Based on our own research for this study, we cannot completely rule out this possibility, although the widespread use of evaluations and respective policy adjustments generally support interviewees' accounts of a functioning P/CVE evaluation ecosystem.

Lessons

The Netherlands stand out among our case-study countries because of their early and widespread adoption of P/CVE evaluations as well as a genuine emphasis on learning and partnership across levels and roles, in combination with clear accountability mechanisms and strong investments into evaluation capacity-building in recent years.

175 Interview with evaluator/researcher, April 2021; interview with evaluator/researcher, March 2021; interview with P/CVE advisor, February 2021; interview with government official, April 2021.

176 Interview with evaluator/researcher, April 2021.

177 Interview with government official, April 2021; interview with evaluator/researcher, April 2021.

178 Interview with government official, April 2021.

179 Ibid.

180 Interview with P/CVE advisor, February 2021.

181 Vidino and Brandon, "Countering Radicalization in Europe," p. 46.

While accountability is an important motivation for evaluations, implementers primarily need to be willing to evaluate what they do and learn from the results.

Findings from previous research about P/CVE in the Netherlands also apply to how Dutch P/CVE interventions are evaluated. More specifically, collaboration is facilitated by the country's relatively small size, well-functioning bureaucratic apparatus and well-connected expert community, in addition to a "long-established base of community policing, municipal contacts with minority organizations, deeply entrenched social work, and well-developed migration and social science research community."¹⁸² The widespread use of evaluation in Dutch policymaking in general is another important driver for the country's extensive P/CVE evaluation practice.

The Dutch case shows how a decentralized system can still incentivize evaluation and learning in a structural way. While accountability is an important motivation for evaluations, implementers primarily need to be willing to evaluate what they do and learn from the results.

As elsewhere, evaluation capacity at the local level is limited in the Netherlands, and standardization has proven difficult. Ministry officials with a background in P/CVE practice or evaluation understand this particularly well. Larger, federally organized states with a less pronounced evaluation culture at the national level may have difficulties establishing unbureaucratic contact to evaluation facilitators at ministries, but the Dutch revolving-door effect can help maintain relationships of trust that facilitate an open evaluation culture. The Dutch government's use of meta-reviews and systematic studies that evaluate certain interventions has helped compensate for the strong focus on local responsibility for evaluation as well as for the limited information sharing between different levels.

Finally, the Dutch solution to the problem of insufficient capacity has been twofold: first, by cooperating with independent P/CVE experts and building a pool of researchers who have established themselves as reliable evaluators; second, by investing in capacity-building to address the lack of "time, skills, and money" for evaluations, as one expert put it.¹⁸³

In sum, the most important lesson to be drawn from the Dutch example for the purpose of this study is that the country emphasizes three supporting conditions for a constructive evaluation culture and systematic, learning-focused evaluation to emerge: The first is a shared understanding, backed up by practical decisions, that evaluations are first and foremost opportunities for learning and improvement. The second is that responsibility for success as well as evaluation is decentralized, which enables Dutch actors to tailor evaluations to their organizations' learning needs. The third is centrally provided capacity-building support to enable an array of small, decentralized organizations to make the most of their willingness and mandate to evaluate. The 'Dutch mix' of willing participants, knowledgeable experts and officials who facilitate, coordinate and promote evaluations and knowledge seems to be a good environment to continuously develop an evaluation practice, and to strive toward better measurements of effects and impacts as well as standardization and smart use of evaluations.

182 Vidino and Brandon, "Countering Radicalization in Europe," pp. 45–46.

183 Interview with evaluator/researcher, April 2021; Interview with evaluator/researcher, March 2021.

Table 4: Summary of P/CVE Evaluation Structures in the Netherlands

Who coordinates evaluations?	Evaluation coordinators/facilitators at the Social Stability Unit (ESS) of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment (SZW) and at the National Coordinator for Security and Counterterrorism (NCTV) under the Ministry of Justice (JenV)
Who funds evaluations?	National government (NCTV and ESS)
Who evaluates?	Internal evaluations: local administrators and implementer staff; staff in ministries' internal inspectorates External evaluations: consultants (for-profit consultancies) and academic researchers
What is evaluated?	Individual projects, interventions and trainings (mandatory, with limitations) Municipal, regional and national programs (mandatory) All national-level action plans and strategies since 2007 (mandatory)
What is the primary goal of evaluation?	Focus on learning and improvement as well as accountability for funds spent
How is uptake organized?	Responsibility for uptake lies with the evaluated entity Some evaluations are required and learning-based improvements according to evaluation results are expected Sharing of lessons is encouraged and supported

The United Kingdom

In Europe, the UK has been among the countries hit hardest by terrorist attacks over the last two decades. This has heavily influenced the intent and urgency with which the country has approached P/CVE as well as the implementation and evaluation of P/CVE interventions. In the UK, to ensure accountability for P/CVE work is not only to prove that taxpayers' money is well spent but also to meet public expectations that prevention efforts reach their intended goals. This has led to considerable political pressure on the British government as well as evaluators and implementers, which has negatively influenced cooperation on P/CVE measures as well as their evaluation.

Because of its exposure to several terrorist attacks, the UK has one of the most long-standing and, by now, most elaborate P/CVE practices in Europe and beyond. The UK government passed its first counterterrorism strategy called Contest in 2003¹⁸⁴, which consists of four strands: Prevent, Pursue, Protect, and Prepare. The Prevent strand originally targeted communities at risk, until a 2011 review¹⁸⁵ and subsequent new strategy¹⁸⁶ triggered a shift in its focus, from communities to individuals. In 2015, the UK government installed the so-called Prevent Duty, which obliges all teachers, health care professionals and social workers to report any individual deemed “at risk” of radicalization. These individuals are then potentially referred to Channel, the secondary prevention component of Prevent.¹⁸⁷ Today, Prevent is a complex funding stream for primary, secondary and tertiary extremism prevention work. Its overall budget increased from almost £27 million (or €31 million) in 2014 to over £47 million (or €54 million) in 2018.¹⁸⁸

Outside of Prevent, the British government also adopted a counter-extremism strategy in 2015.¹⁸⁹ Like the primary-stage Prevent interventions, it targets the pre-criminal space.¹⁹⁰ The accompanying funding stream Building a Stronger Britain Together (BSBT)¹⁹¹ has recently been scaled down to primarily provide in-kind support (e.g. trainings instead of funding), which is mostly delivered by the private public relations and communications agency M&C Saatchi. A progress report for BSBT was published in 2019. It is unclear whether BSBT's downscaling had to do with a general need to cut funds or if it was a result of this report.¹⁹²

184 The 2003 strategy was not public. The first published version of Contest is its 2006 iteration: HM Government, “Countering International Terrorism: The United Kingdom’s Strategy,” 2006, <https://tinyurl.com/44h22vyf>. The latest iteration of Contest is available at: HM Government, “The United Kingdom’s Counter-Terrorism Strategy,” 2018, <https://tinyurl.com/3zbbkhh6>.

185 Lord Carlisle Report, “Report to the Home Secretary of Independent Oversight of Prevent Review and Strategy,” 2011, <https://tinyurl.com/wvsv69de>.

186 HM Government, “Prevent Strategy,” 2011, <https://tinyurl.com/2nwxsxut>.

187 UK Home Office, “Factsheet: Prevent and Channel,” 2019, <https://tinyurl.com/2wpmxnjk>.

188 Parliament, “Written Questions,” 2019, <https://tinyurl.com/fxc9p9c>.

189 HM Government, “Counter-Extremism Strategy,” 2015, <https://tinyurl.com/zkc65dds>.

190 Interview with government consultant, February 2021.

191 Home Office, “Guidance: Building a Stronger Britain Together,” 2016, <https://tinyurl.com/rwam7u48>.

192 Interview with implementer, April 2021.

The former Office for Security and Counter-Terrorism (OSCT), now part of the Homeland Security Group (HSG) inside the British Home Office, is responsible for managing Prevent. This also includes the Research, Information and Communications Unit (RICU) that is in charge of the strategic communications strand for Prevent. Other ministries – such as the Department for Education, the Department for Health and Social Care, and the Department for Sports and Media – also play a role in P/CVE, but the Home Office tightly upholds and controls this policy field.

Every year, the Home Office assesses which local communities are “at risk” of radicalization.¹⁹³ The respective “priority” areas (approximately 50) then receive Prevent funding as well as a so-called Prevent coordinator, who is often (but not always) part of the local municipal authority. Ten to twelve of these at-risk areas are selected as having “top priority” and receive more funding and a Prevent team, which includes a Prevent lead, an education officer and a community officer.¹⁹⁴ While the Home Office centrally funds all corresponding activities, projects aimed at primary prevention are often locally commissioned (by Prevent coordinators) as well as implemented (either by Prevent teams or, more often, by civil society organizations). Prevent coordinators thus serve as intermediaries between projects – and often implementers – and the Home Office. Non-priority areas still need to implement the statutory Prevent Duty.

Interventions in the secondary and tertiary space are centrally funded but not always locally delivered. Individuals who are deemed at-risk and subsequently referred to the official government program Channel then receive an offer to participate on a voluntary basis. The intervention providers that mentor or consult them (who are often former law enforcement officers or formerly radicalized individuals) are registered in a central Home Office database. In a complementary effort, civil society organizations offer counseling or mentoring projects for “at-risk” individuals who did not meet the Channel criteria. P/CVE efforts in the tertiary space mainly consist of interventions that are part of the UK government’s Desistance and Deradicalization Programme,¹⁹⁵ about which very little information is available in the public domain.

Prevent has been the subject of much controversy in the UK. Theoretically, it targets all forms of extremism; however, in practice, the focus has been heavily on Islamist extremism. Only in recent years has some of the attention shifted to other forms of radicalization.¹⁹⁶ Accordingly, and since its inception, Prevent has been widely criticized as targeting and stigmatizing Muslim communities. While the cases that are referred to Channel are, for instance, rather evenly split between Islamist and other forms of extremism, the initial cases reported to the authorities under Prevent Duty are heavily tilted toward the country’s Muslim population.¹⁹⁷ Prevent’s effectiveness has

**Prevent has been
the subject of much
controversy in the UK.**

193 The metrics to assess this include history of terrorist offenders, live investigations, Channel cases, past incidents, and community tensions. Interview with local authority Prevent lead, March 2021.

194 Interview with local authority Prevent lead, March 2021.

195 UK Home Office, “Factsheet: The Desistance and Disengagement Programme,” 2019, <https://tinyurl.com/3m3xd5z7>.

196 Paul Thomas, “Britain’s Prevent Strategy: Always Changing, Always the Same?” in *The Prevent Duty in Education: Impact, Enactment and Implications*, eds. Joel Busher and Lee Jerome, Palgrave Macmillan, 2020, pp. 11–31.

197 Helen Warrell, “Inside Prevent, the UK’s controversial anti-terrorism programme,” *Financial Times*, January 24, 2019, <https://tinyurl.com/jp679f7d>. In 2020, for the first time, there were more referrals to Channel related to far-right extremism than to Islamist radicalization. See: James Grierson and Dan Sabbagh, “Largest number of Prevent referrals related to far-right extremism,” *The Guardian*, November 26, 2020, <https://tinyurl.com/skakjuwa>.

also been questioned repeatedly.¹⁹⁸ Some have called it “counterproductive” because false referrals can contribute to marginalization and, potentially, even radicalization.¹⁹⁹ These critiques gained new traction after an attack at Fishmonger’s Hall in London in 2019 killed two and wounded three. The attacker had been a participant in a tertiary Prevent program and had even been attending a Prevent seminar at the time of the attack.²⁰⁰ Because of these controversies, many implementing organizations that receive Prevent funding prefer not to disclose this so as not to endanger their work, credibility or safety. This shows the degree of controversy surrounding Prevent that exists in the UK and negatively influences relations between the government and civil society.

Not least because of these criticisms, the UK government commissioned a new independent review of Prevent in 2019, which will be submitted this year. The role of evaluations is a key part of ongoing efforts to restructure the UK’s P/CVE work.²⁰¹

Legal and Funding Obligations

“New public management” has been engrained in the UK administration since the Thatcher years. It refers to a practice of efficient and evidence-based policymaking.²⁰² All policy fields – including P/CVE – must show that they have spent taxpayer’s money well. In this vein, evaluation must be fulfilled for Her Majesty’s Treasury according to standards of the so-called Green and Magenta Books.²⁰³

Evaluations are also crucial for securing continuous funding for Prevent within the UK government. The UK Treasury conducts cyclical comprehensive spending reviews,²⁰⁴ which are an additional and strong incentive for all government units to prove the value of their work and secure future budgets. In an environment where budgets are limited and contested, as is the case in the P/CVE field, the imperative to demonstrate “value for money” means that evaluations are primarily conceived as tools for accountability. The political pressure regarding P/CVE described above adds to this understanding of evaluation practice.

In the UK, the obligation within government to evaluate all programs and interventions trickles down to the project level: all implementers applying for government funding must include a reporting and evaluation component into their proposals, which the Home Office (for centrally administered activities) or a local authority (for locally delivered projects) then take into account in their funding decisions. Funding for evaluation activities typically comes out of the Home Office budget; however, local authorities may also proactively commission ad-hoc evaluations

The imperative to demonstrate “value for money” means that evaluations are primarily conceived as tools for accountability.

198 Helen Warrell, “Inside Prevent, the UK’s controversial anti-terrorism programme.”

199 Amrit Singh, “Eroding Trust: The UK’s Prevent Counter-Extremism Strategy in Health and Education,” Open Society Justice Initiative, 2016, <https://tinyurl.com/yxf34rm8>.

200 “London Bridge: What we know about the attack,” BBC, December 3, 2019, <https://tinyurl.com/2uk4h4r5>.

201 Interview with former government official, March 2021.

202 Rotmann and Binder, “Evaluierung außenpolitischer Maßnahmen in fragilen Kontexten: Erfahrungen und Empfehlungen.”

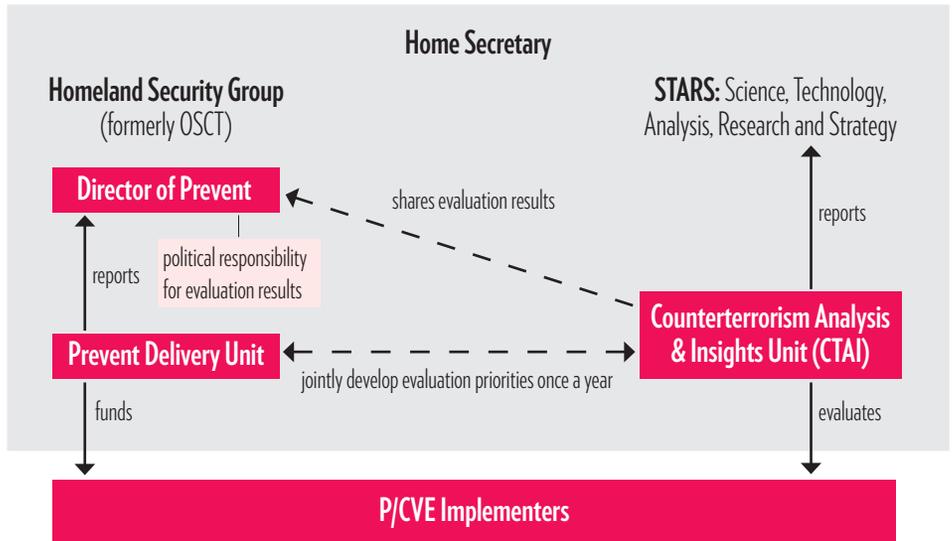
203 The Green and Magenta Books are guidance documents issued by HM Treasury on how to evaluate policies, projects and programs, and on how to respectively design evaluations. Available at HM Treasury, “The Green Book,” 2020, <https://tinyurl.com/3czxr4uf> and HM Treasury, “The Magenta Book,” 2020, <https://tinyurl.com/bfm49ccv>.

204 HM Treasury, “Spending Reviews,” archived, 2007, <https://tinyurl.com/4auxsp7u>.

(paid for through central government funds)²⁰⁵ and the police at times fund smaller-scale evaluations, for instance in the form of research cooperation.²⁰⁶

The Counter Terrorism Analysis and Insights Unit (CTAI), Prevent’s research strand that sits alongside the Prevent delivery unit in the HSG, manages program-related evaluations. Unlike their colleagues in Prevent delivery, CTAI employees answer to a separate reporting line – the head of STARS, the Home Office’s Science, Technology, Analysis, Research and Strategy department. The political responsibility for evaluations and their results lies with the director of Prevent.

Figure 7: Home Office: Key Relations for P/CVE Delivery and Evaluation



Priorities and Coverage

In the UK, evaluations of P/CVE measures occur on the policy, program and project levels. Despite this rather comprehensive scope of P/CVE evaluation practice, many of the non-state actors interviewed for this study reflected that hardly anything was actually evaluated. This sentiment is probably a function of the fact that “virtually none of [the evaluations] are published.”²⁰⁷ Many also felt that the government’s focus was only on quantitative, output-oriented reporting, which interviewees did not consider genuine evaluations.

On the project level, aside from the abovementioned reporting component, implementers may request an external evaluation, especially if they want to prove the

205 Interview with evaluator/researcher, April 2021.

206 Interview with researcher, April 2021.

207 Interview with former police/researcher, February 2021.

To outsiders, the timing and priorities of program evaluations appear arbitrary.

effectiveness of a new project. In practice, this usually means using up leftover funds.

Bigger, externally conducted and program-wide evaluations look at a certain selection of projects or a certain area of Prevent. As these are usually not published, the coverage of such program-wide evaluations is difficult to judge. A publicly available “progress report”²⁰⁸ of the BSBT funding scheme to counter extremism is the exception. To outsiders, the timing and priorities of program evaluations, which are set according to internal Home Office schedules, appear arbitrary.

On the policy level, the Prevent strategy is occasionally reviewed (first in 2011 and, as of July 2021, at the present time). The publicly available 2011 review was not an evaluation per se but rather took the form of a mix of surveys, consultations and focus groups that highlighted how Prevent was perceived by intervention providers, community and faith groups as well as the public.²⁰⁹

While all the above information will be fed into the CTAI’s work, it is not clear to what extent different types of evaluations inform one another. High staff turnover in the Home Office further hampers institutional learning. For these reasons, more than one interviewee described the UK’s evaluation practice as not systematic.

Actors, Management and Uptake

In the UK, P/CVE evaluations are either conducted in-house by the CTAI or externally. Given that the unit itself only consists of a handful of people and has limited capacity, it commissions longer-term outcome evaluations to external evaluators via tendering processes. However, calls for tenders are usually not public and often go straight to a list of registered service providers who can then apply. Occasionally, organizations that regularly provide research services for the UK government may also be commissioned.²¹⁰

External evaluators are usually academics, research groups or commercial evaluators.²¹¹ The short timelines of many of these assignments and the fact that evaluation results often cannot be published mean that academics have fewer incentives to apply.²¹² Instead, academics or researchers may choose to acquire external funding to conduct a non-commissioned public evaluation.²¹³ This means greater independence, but also less access to potentially sensitive data – and no obligation for uptake by relevant ministries or agencies. Some police forces have partnerships with universities or researchers working on P/CVE-related topics. In exchange for granting researchers access, the police may use their research as a de facto way of evaluating its activities. Implementers also engage in self-evaluation, although this usually means reporting, rather than systematic outcome-oriented assessments of P/CVE interventions.

208 Home Office, “Building a Stronger Britain Together: Progress Report,” 2019, <https://tinyurl.com/4decj526>.

209 Prevent Review: Summary of Responses to the Consultation, 2011, <https://tinyurl.com/3dmacbyy>.

210 The most well-known example of this is the Behavioral Insights Team (BIT), which was commissioned by the Home Office at the call of the Cabinet Office.

211 Interview with evaluator, April 2021; interview with government official, April 2021.

212 Interview with evaluator/researcher, February 2021.

213 An example is Joel Busher and Lee Jerome, *The Prevent Duty in Education: Impact, Enactment and Implications*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2020.

Evaluators usually rely on their own mechanisms for quality assurance, for example through peer review.²¹⁴ In addition, any evaluation goes back and forth between evaluators and the Home Office. This process can be more or less extensive, depending on the degree of political sensitivity. One evaluator pointed out that the Home Office practically wrote the report on their evaluation results itself, perhaps because the evaluation found that only about 10 percent of the approximately 80 projects surveyed were effective.²¹⁵

Over the course of a project, implementers collect data and submit it to the Prevent coordinators who pass all reporting on to the Home Office on a quarterly basis. This type of reporting often takes the form of quantitative output assessments (i.e., how many people were reached, how many people were referred to Channel, etc.) and is not an evaluation.

Actual P/CVE evaluations happen on the program level. Once a year, the CTAI and the delivery units in the HSG jointly define annual evaluation priorities (e.g., around a thematic focus) that often target a certain subset of projects. Since the guiding criteria are not public and set as part of the annual budgetary cycle, implementers do not necessarily know about them in advance and thus do not always collect the baseline data needed for evaluation at the beginning of a project.

Program evaluations happen in the primary, secondary and tertiary spaces. Evaluators have pointed out that evaluations are often timed in a way that ensures that results are delivered right when a decision on follow-up funding needs to be made.²¹⁶ This underscores the focus on accountability as the primary objective of evaluation, as there is no time to improve or learn from evaluation results if funding is terminated as a consequence of negative assessments. According to our interviewees, small organizations in particular often lack the capacities to frame learnings (and mistakes) vis-à-vis evaluators in a way that would secure funding.²¹⁷ They also pointed out that there are few incentives for implementers to answer all evaluation questions honestly.

Institutionalized uptake of evaluations also remains a challenge in UK. Inside the Home Office, there is an internal process for sharing and discussing evaluation results and creating learning opportunities within teams. One interviewee claimed that this works very well for those ‘inside the room’, but that the discussions usually remain inaccessible to anyone outside the immediate teams.²¹⁸ There is usually no follow-up to these conversations, and given that all of this stays within the Home Office anyway, there is no external pressure for uptake. In addition, high staff turnover rates in the Home Office create an organizational environment in which lessons are rarely institutionalized.²¹⁹

The Home Office shares evaluation results with individual project teams if there are very concrete improvements to make, but Prevent coordinators do not necessarily see them.²²⁰ In our research, we did not come across any systematic evaluation training

Small organizations often lack the capacities to frame learnings (and mistakes) vis-à-vis evaluators in a way that would secure funding.

214 Interview with evaluator/researcher, April 2021.

215 Interview with evaluator, February 2021.

216 Interview with evaluator/researcher, April 2021.

217 Interview with implementer, March 2021.

218 Interview with government consultant, February 2021.

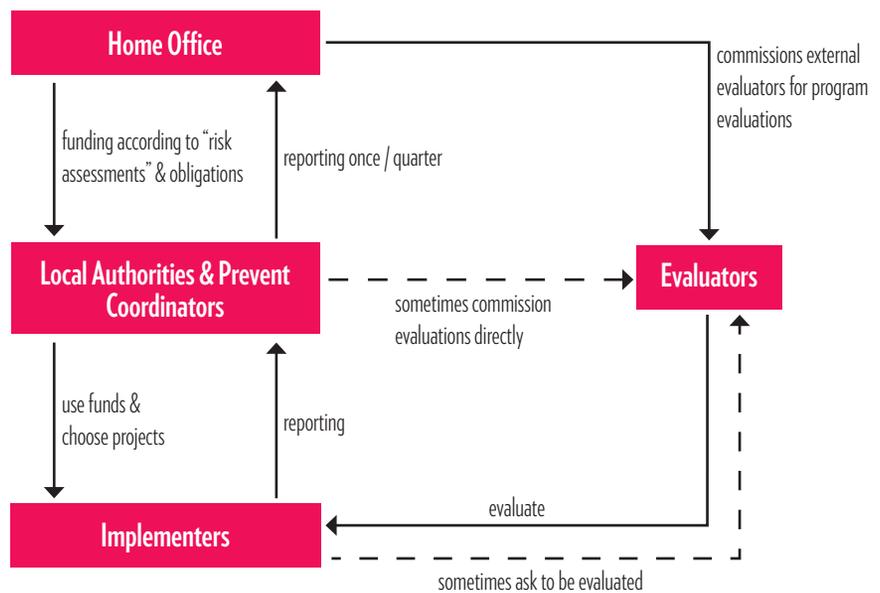
219 Interview with implementer, April 2021.

220 Interview with local authority Prevent lead, March 2021.

or capacity-building efforts for implementers. However, the UK has made substantial investments into generating a knowledge base for P/CVE policy, such as in the form of the Centre for Research and Evidence on Security Threats (CREST). Some have criticized that the Centre’s research is heavily focused on matters of security.²²¹

The Home Office is currently rethinking its evaluation practice and aims to conduct more long-term evaluations that exceed the length of the government’s annual budget cycle. In addition, there are plans to create an “Evaluation Board” whose task it would be to determine evaluation priorities, accompany implementation and ensure uptake.²²²

Figure 8: Key Actor Relations in the United Kingdom



Evaluation Culture

Budgetary constraints and political pressure to show that the UK’s approach to countering and preventing violent extremism is working have heavily influenced British P/CVE efforts and the practice of evaluating them. Moreover, the dominant role of the security bureaucracy in P/CVE has meant that there is a lack of transparency around extremism prevention activities, which also extends to respective evaluations and their findings. Taken together, this makes for an evaluation culture that is heavily tilted toward ensuring accountability for money well spent and lives saved, which hinders learning. The public’s scrutiny of Prevent has further increased the pressure

²²¹ Interview with evaluator/researcher, April 2021.

²²² Interview with government official, April 2021.

to improve accountability. In combination with the general sensitivity of the issues at stake, this has create an environment that strongly disincentivizes decisions to make evaluations public. As a result, funders, implementers and, at times, even evaluators do not trust each other, which undermines a collaborative approach to learning. Non-governmental stakeholders in particular miss a shared understanding that if a project was approved by the Home Office but did not yield the intended results, this is seen as a joint responsibility of the Home Office and implementers.²²³ At the same time, some evaluators pointed out that implementing organizations with long-standing histories of cooperation with the Home Office were sometimes able to dictate the terms of their evaluations.²²⁴

The overall lack of transparency further contributes to this mistrust. In a line of work that is generally very secretive, access to relevant information, ranging from personal to sensitive intelligence data, is indeed a difficult issue. However, we also observed a pattern in that those interviewees with some (formal or informal) access to the Home Office tended to note a certain level of sophistication in how the organization conducts evaluations and lauded it as a “genuine learning organization.” By contrast, and strikingly, those with more limited or no direct access beyond the scope of their own projects said that they were unsure if the Home Office conducted any outcome-oriented evaluations at all. Interview partners working inside the government also pointed out that they themselves were not sure whether implementers could make sense of the Home Office’s evaluation practice.

The fact that the ministry does, however, have a well-staffed internal Analysis and Insights unit underscores the UK’s evidence-based approach to policymaking and suggests a general commitment to evaluations that is supported by budgets and staff. The desire to deliver policy that is rooted in research means that there is a genuine appetite for improvement through evaluation within the ministry, which is the basis of a robust learning culture.

Lessons

Other countries can learn from the UK’s level of sophistication, professionalization and investment into evaluation practice in general. Emphasizing research as a basis for policymaking is a good foundation for building well-functioning evaluation systems, including for P/CVE. However, the case of the UK also illustrates that for this to work well, it is imperative to build trust between the different actors that are involved in the field, and to consider learning a shared endeavor between funders, implementers and evaluators.

If done well, the UK’s program-level evaluations in particular can be a real inspiration: rather than focusing on individual project evaluations, these allow evaluators and implementers to ask “what works” for a specific geographic region or thematic field. They also offer the necessary space to explore questions that go beyond pure efficiency and concentrate on learning. Similarly, the UK’s model of primarily

223 Interview with evaluator/researcher, April 2021.

224 Interview with evaluator, February 2021.

using in-house evaluation teams that consist of staff with security clearance but a separate reporting line to ensure independence can be an interesting setup to explore.

The case of the UK further shows that the constraints of public scrutiny, safety or funding can lead to real trade-offs where learning is concerned – and to a heavy focus on accountability as the primary objective of evaluation in consequence. Such constraints cannot be ignored when designing learning-oriented evaluation structures.

Finally, transparency on the part of government funders is key. This does not mean that all evaluation results belong in the public domain. However, especially if evaluations are not made public, those on the outside of government need to be given straightforward pathways of access to provide “organic feedback”²²⁵ to their funders.

Table 5: Summary of P/CVE Evaluation Structures in the United Kingdom

Who coordinates evaluations?	Counter Terrorism Analysis & Insights (CTAI) Unit in the Home Office (responsible for domestic security)
Who funds evaluations?	Home Office
Who evaluates?	Internal evaluations: implementer staff (self-evaluation); CTAI/Home Office staff External evaluations: consultants (for-profit consultancies); academic researchers
What is evaluated?	Individual projects (mandatory reporting) Sets of projects or interventions on the program-level according to priorities defined by the Home Office (mandatory) Reviews of National Strategies (2011, ongoing)
What is the primary goal of evaluation?	Strong focus on accountability for funds spent, but also learning for evidence-based policymaking and good public management
How is uptake organized?	Implementers are sometimes informed of evaluation results for learning purposes Projects are sometimes terminated after negative evaluation results Informal and non-transparent information sharing mechanisms within Home Office

²²⁵ Interview with implementer, April 2021.

Findings and Recommendations

This study has analyzed the national P/CVE evaluation structures in Canada, Finland, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom as well as their effects on the countries' respective evaluation practices. In doing so, we asked what structural choices increase or reduce the likelihood that evaluations will serve as instruments for learning and improving policy. While the Netherlands show how the twin goals of learning and accountability can be pursued simultaneously and in ways that reinforce each other, other cases revealed that there are important trade-offs and unintended negative effects when structures are geared toward maximizing accountability at the expense of learning. For a field as young as P/CVE, and in situations where the two objectives conflict, the relative priority must be on learning.²²⁶ Across all four countries, both funders and implementers indicated a strong demand for evaluations as a learning tool. The individual cases offer many different and useful insights regarding the extent to which and in what ways this demand is – or is not – being met.

The scope and nature of P/CVE activities and their evaluation differ significantly between the four countries. At the same time, there are important commonalities: the P/CVE field as such is relatively young and lacks tried-and-tested standards for achieving sustainable impact. In every case-study country, many stakeholders – from security agencies to social workers – are involved in delivering P/CVE efforts, and they often collaborate across sectors and despite substantial differences in professional and institutional cultures. For more than a decade now, non-governmental organizations have been implementing a lion's share of P/CVE efforts in these countries, often using government funding that continues to be tied to individual projects and short-term outcomes and is unpredictable beyond the current three- to four-year funding period. Funding for P/CVE interventions is thus generally distributed in ways that hamper learning and institutional development, rather than supporting it.

As a field, P/CVE is also always at risk of being suddenly and massively politicized, not only after individual, high-profile terrorist attacks, but also because of the ways in which domestic political actors use and abuse the looming threat of extremism. These are key reasons for the unique challenges faced by the UK when compared to the other three cases as well as Germany, which have so far largely been spared by such developments.

Amid these challenging conditions, P/CVE actors in all case-study countries struggle – often in ways similar to the German context – with designing and implementing systematic, useful evaluations that lead to real uptake and learning.

In the concluding section that follows, we have organized the study's main findings and our resulting recommendations along six structural 'levers' for stronger, more useful evaluation practices. More specifically, we outline three systemic levers and three levers for concrete evaluation strategies (see also Figure 9).

²²⁶ See, among others, Rosand, Winterbotham, Jones and Praxl-Tabuchi, "A Roadmap to Progress: The State of the Global P/CVE Agenda"; Lewis, Marsden and Copeland, "Evaluating Programmes to Prevent and Counter Extremism."

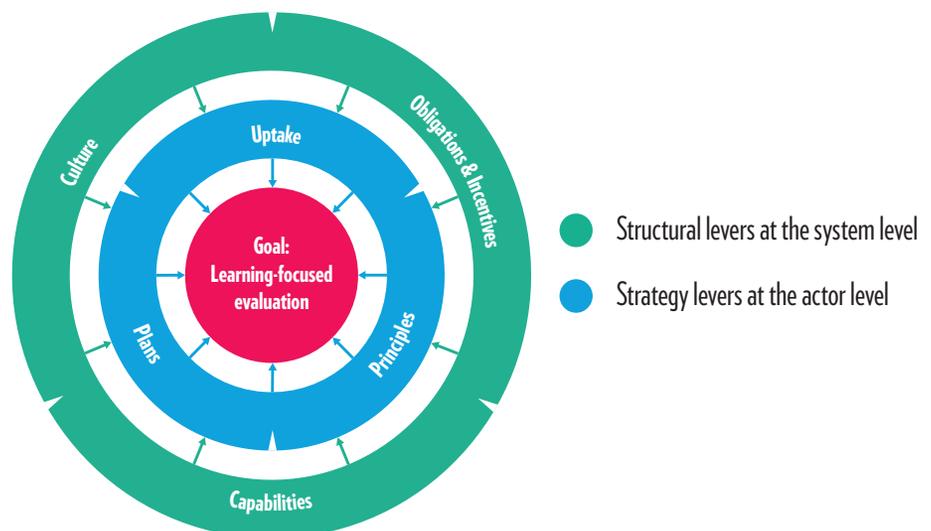
The first subsection covers the key structural levers that P/CVE policymakers and political decision-makers have at their disposal to build or strengthen an overall system that enables and incentivizes constructive evaluation. To that end, we highlight three elements of structure, which we introduced at the beginning of this study: legal and formal obligations; capacity; and culture.

The second subsection covers design choices for specific evaluation strategies that each funder and most implementers need to address to deal with common practical questions:

- How to translate an abstract priority for learning with accountability into practical choices in terms of legal and funding obligations, capacity investments, and shaping a constructive evaluation culture in the everyday practice of portfolio management and evaluation?
- How to ensure a high quality of evaluations as well as sufficient capacity and professionalization? How to incentivize or enable a greater variety of evaluation approaches (e.g., process and outcome or impact evaluations, program and project evaluations)? How to tailor strategic choices so that scarce funds support those evaluation approaches that best advance the field?
- How to ensure and support uptake by implementers, funders and policymakers?

Both sets of levers – for national governments to build better P/CVE evaluation systems and for individual government institutions or NGOs to develop better strategies – need to be exercised to build an overall stronger evaluation culture and practice that advances the quality of all P/CVE efforts through constant, collaborative learning.

Figure 9: Six Structural Levers to Enable and Support Constructive Evaluations at the System and Strategy Levels



Structural Levers for Constructive Evaluation at the System Level

A constructive and effective evaluation practice squarely rests on a system in which culture, formal rules and capabilities align to enable and facilitate a focus on learning. By emphasizing the systemic nature of these investments, we seek to direct attention to the factors that lie beyond any individual evaluation process: the network effects and public goods that are required to create a constructive evaluation system in which individual actors have the right incentives and support to design and implement more effective evaluations.

● System level

Build a constructive evaluation culture by prioritizing trust.

In terms of both accountability and learning, evaluations only work well if all involved stakeholders see them as being managed in a legitimate, constructive and efficient way. Moreover, investments in identifying insights and lessons must be matched by a real willingness on the part of relevant actors to actually learn those lessons. Learning, in turn, depends on individuals' and organizations' ability to own their mistakes without fear of negative repercussions that might jeopardize the survival of their organizations.

P/CVE funders, implementers and evaluators can all contribute to building and maintaining an evaluation culture rooted in these principles. However, since they hold enormous sway over implementing organizations, P/CVE funders are in a special position vis-à-vis implementers and evaluators. Only funders can cultivate the necessary trust in their integrity, meaning that they will not abuse the instrument of evaluation (for instance, by punishing an organization for failing to achieve the desired results in a pilot project, which is by definition meant to be experimental). Similarly, only funders can provide the money to build capacity for quality evaluations, evaluation management and uptake. Finally, funders are in a special position to shape positive incentives that motivate implementing organizations to be transparent about challenges and failures, rather than obfuscating or whitewashing them out of fear for their organizational survival.

Our case studies show that shared cultural norms of learning across sectors (such as the police, justice, social work or health) as well as between funders, implementers and evaluators can make a huge difference, as is the case in the Netherlands. Such a culture creates space for individuals and organizations to admit mistakes, to pilot new, experimental approaches, to see some of them fail, and to share knowledge and lessons openly. This is key to professionalizing a young policy field such as P/CVE. The overall effects of this common culture also deliver the necessary level of democratic accountability, despite the fact that most of the structural conditions strongly favor learning.

The United Kingdom is a cautionary tale that demonstrates the negative consequences when such shared norms are absent: substantial investments into program-level evaluations and applied academic research for P/CVE clearly fell short of building a constructive evaluation culture. The main reason for this is a pervasive culture of mistrust and secrecy that has become associated with the government's security-focused approach to P/CVE interventions and their evaluation, which is in turn the result of a destructive politicization of the entire P/CVE field in the UK.

Our case studies show that shared cultural norms of learning across sectors, as well as between funders, implementers and evaluators can make a huge difference.

Canada, on the other hand, is almost the mirror image to the UK in terms of P/CVE evaluation culture. While there is a widespread commitment to evaluation and learning among both implementers and policymakers, the desired effects are still pending – likely because of missing rules that would have enforced quality standards and uptake requirements, and because of capacity and resource gaps for scientific evaluation. In Finland, interest in P/CVE evaluation practice is still a very recent phenomenon and has yet to grow into a full-fledged evaluation culture before a systematic analysis in this regard is possible.

With regard to Germany, preliminary findings of other PrEval research streams²²⁷ suggest that key elements of a constructive P/CVE evaluation culture are already in place: the biggest funders as well as the large majority of implementing organizations are generally very open²²⁸ to using evaluations as an instrument to promote learning. Existing communities of practice in subsections of the field²²⁹ are ideal starting points for this. Similar to the Canadian case, obstacles mainly have to do with the allocation of funding as well as grant management, along with insufficient personnel resources in various parts of the German P/CVE system. Germany's many government institutions involved in funding P/CVE on the federal and state levels have yet to build the necessary trust in their sincere commitment to a learning culture – a parallel to the UK, albeit to a much lesser extent.²³⁰ To strengthen trust, German P/CVE funders need to address four key areas:

- 1. Long-term funding:** A constructively self-critical evaluation culture can deepen its roots only if implementers' organizational survival is not constantly at stake. Trust thus requires a baseline level of financial security for implementing organizations. While some P/CVE activities are purposefully experimental and funders need a certain flexibility to address changing political priorities, the great majority of social work, civic education and counter-radicalization efforts in Germany and the four case study countries alike has been consistently government-funded for decades and builds on a political majority that stretches across party lines. If P/CVE funding schemes do not by design anticipate and reflect this need for balance between stable and shifting political priorities, they

227 See Mona Klöckner, Melanie Verhovnik-Heinze, Raphael Schlicht-Schmälzle, and Reiko Nakamura, "Multimethodik in der Evaluationspraxis: Eine Erhebung sozialwissenschaftlicher Begleitungen," PrEval Report, forthcoming in 2021; Alina Mönig, Svetla Koynova, Matthias Quent, and Vivienne Ohlenforst: "Monitoring, Evaluation und Lernen: Erfahrungen und Bedarfe der Fachpraxis Extremismusprävention im Bereich Qualitätssicherung," PrEval Report, forthcoming in 2021; Andreas Uhl, Benjamin Zeibig, Manuela Freiheit, und Andreas Zick, "Evaluationskapazitäten im Bereich der Extremismusprävention und der politischen Bildung in Deutschland," PrEval Report, forthcoming in 2021.

228 Matthias Quent, "Prävention von Rechtsextremismus: Erfahrungen und Herausforderungen für Evaluation und wissenschaftliche Begleitung", 2021, PrEval Spotlight, <https://tinyurl.com/cssbu4uv>; Svetla Koynova, "Evaluationsbedarfe der Praxis: Ergebnisse einer Bedarfsabfrage im Präventionsfeld Islamistischer Extremismus", 2021, PrEval Spotlight, <https://tinyurl.com/y63xuyjz>.

229 See, for example, "Nordverbund Ausstieg Rechts", <https://www.nordverbund-ausstieg.de/>, on exiting radical right-wing organizations, or the "Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft religiös begründeter Extremismus", <https://www.bag-relex.de/>, on religiously motivated extremism.

230 Interviews with representatives of the German Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community as well as the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth; and preliminary survey results from a forthcoming large-scale PrEval study on German stakeholder perspectives on evaluation (Andreas Uhl, Benjamin Zeibig, Manuela Freiheit, and Andreas Zick, "Evaluationskapazitäten im Bereich der Extremismusprävention und politischen Bildung in Deutschland", PrEval Report, forthcoming in 2021).

should be adjusted to better allow funders to maintain and grow a healthy and vibrant landscape of multi-sectoral P/CVE activities.

- 2. Access:** Trust also requires inclusive information flows between funders and implementers. These should not only be formal but also encompass ad-hoc exchanges on crucial and often sensitive issues, such as evaluation priorities, the effects of evaluation results on forthcoming funding decisions, or changes to funding schemes. Moreover, funders should provide implementers with real opportunities for giving timely and substantive input into forthcoming policy decisions, unrelated to evaluations. Advisory bodies on strategies, policies and evaluation priorities need to be set up in an inclusive way, meaning they should cut across sectors and other stakeholder groups (i.e., by including practitioners and academics from diverse sectors ranging from security to social work). Such institutions should also be transparent enough to ensure that all those involved in evaluations have a basic understanding of how major evaluations are initiated, planned and conducted.
- 3. Tolerance for failure:** Trust requires protection from undue negative consequences if the results of an evaluation are critical. In contexts where it is difficult to admit failure publicly (as is the case in German culture), and particularly in policy areas that are easily politicized (such as P/CVE), limiting transparency can be a temporary solution: not every evaluation must be published. Evaluation regulations can be designed in ways that incentivize transparency in general but also allow for justified exceptions in cases where a choice must be made between a candid and thus useful assessment and the publication of results. For funders, the threshold for such partial transparency should be significantly higher than for implementers (see next bullet point).
- 4. Walking the walk:** If they want implementers to be open to and subject themselves to (self-)critical evaluation, funders must reciprocate. They should not only expect greater transparency about mistakes and failed experiments from implementers, but also make sure to set positive examples by regularly and openly discussing their own mistakes and lessons, for instance in portfolio design and management, as well as their evaluation decisions, criteria and uptake of recommendations.

By striking a balance between long-term, predictable and flexible funding, ensuring inclusive access for implementers, tolerating and protecting failure, and setting an example, funders can help build the constructive evaluation culture they seek. While these four pieces are necessary preconditions, they alone are not sufficient to achieve this goal. Two other areas need to be addressed as well: legal and funding obligations, and capacity and support.

Design formal rules to enable differentiated evaluation strategies.

In every country, there are legal obligations aimed at ensuring that taxpayers' money is spent efficiently and effectively, based on long-standing accountability principles. These legal rules are typically focused on ensuring responsible procurement of inputs and establishing an efficient relation between these inputs and the reported results at the output level. Learning is usually not an objective of these reports. Rather, the guiding principles are full coverage (i.e., every euro, dollar or pound must be accounted for) and administrative efficiency (meaning reporting and auditing must be possible at a small fraction of the resources spent on the actual activity). This usually happens at the expense of depth and comprehensiveness. Evaluations are a complementary way of assessing activities more comprehensively, both in terms of what they achieved (outcome or impact evaluations) and how well they were designed or managed (process evaluations).²³¹

All case studies show that a blanket legal or administrative obligation to conduct evaluations that is tied to program or project funding is the strongest structural instrument to ensure that evaluations are undertaken in the first place.

All case studies show that a blanket legal or administrative obligation to conduct evaluations that is tied to program or project funding is the strongest structural instrument to ensure that evaluations are undertaken in the first place. At the same time, such a rule can only ever be unspecific if it is applied in a generalized way to a very diverse set of activities, as is the case for the large funding schemes that are typical for the P/CVE field. An unspecific obligation alone, even if binding, cannot ensure quality, scientific evaluation standards, or the uptake of evaluation findings.

At the level of individual funding schemes or even individual grants, however, funders typically have legal tools to define administrative obligations that are binding for their grantees. Those act in a similar way to obligations defined in contracts that result from public tenders. Using these tools, funders can bind or empower implementers to particular ways of using or supporting evaluations according to the funder's evaluation strategy. For example, as is the case in the UK, small projects that follow a well-tested theory of change might only be bound to the commitment to regularly report a small, clearly defined set of data to a program evaluator, or to participate in interviews or site visits if they are sampled for a larger program evaluation.²³² Larger or experimental projects or programs, on the other hand, may be obliged to conduct a process or developmental evaluation in parallel to their project work. This could be commissioned by the funder or the implementer. Alternatively, they may be bound to undertake a parallel research project that serves a dual purpose of developmental evaluation and basic research. Combined with the relevant resource allocation and capacity investment considerations (or the lack thereof), the nature of such formal obligations strongly affects how funders' goals and priorities in evaluation practice are understood, trusted and implemented by their grantees.

In Finland, there are no legal obligations to evaluate other than those that follow from the EU's regulations for recipients of EU funding for P/CVE work. In Canada,

231 Even in the UK with its strong, accountability-driven system across all levels of government, the Green Book is written in a way that presents "appraisal and evaluation" as a decision-making tool for administrators and policymakers that requires and leaves room for judgment rather than mandating a legally consistent, one-size-fits-all procedure. HM Treasury, "The Green Book."

232 The applicant guide for the UK's Building a Stronger Britain Together program, for example, outlines evaluation obligations to all applicants. See: <https://tinyurl.com/3dt7wjbs>.

the federal government recently began demanding that the implementers of federal programs commission external evaluations. For recipients of provincial or municipal funds, however, the decision to evaluate as well as considerations regarding the type of evaluation still remain voluntary. In the UK, evaluation obligations tied to government funding are used to establish a basic level of compliance and ensure the necessary data collection efforts. This obligation to comply with evaluations also secures data collection and access for program-level evaluations, which are centrally handled by the Home Office (either in-house or tendered to external professional evaluators).²³³

What the Netherlands, Canada and the UK have in common is that there are different requirements for different programs, grantees or intermediaries. Requirements also differ in relation to different levels of evaluation (i.e., project, program or policy level). They range from reporting basic data or the results of self-evaluations to obligations according to which implementers have to commission external evaluations proactively. In the Netherlands, these different requirements appear to work together in a remarkable way to avoid unnecessary reporting or distrust on the part of implementers while also promoting learning at the implementer level and feeding relevant data into large-scale meta evaluations for learning at the policy level.

The strategic use of administrative obligations tied to funding is therefore an important lever for funders and policymakers who want to promote learning-focused evaluations. As demonstrated by the Netherlands, it is generally helpful to focus limited resources on evaluating those projects or parts of funding portfolios where an evaluation is most promising in terms of the value it adds to achieving important learning objectives and ensuring accountability.

German P/CVE funders should use the administrative obligations they attach to their grants to formulate distinct and targeted demands for scientific evaluation of programs and interventions. These should serve the purpose of advancing German P/CVE practice according to an established evaluation strategy that defines priority areas and objectives for evaluation in each funding portfolio. The specifics should be designed in a way that prioritizes learning and complements already existing legal requirements that ensure accountability. Moreover, all demands must be matched by adequate financial resources so implementers can actually fulfill them. In doing so, funders should keep following international (as well as current German) practice and keep legal accountability requirements for budgeting separate from complementary evaluation obligations. For more on designing evaluation strategies, see subsection Define evaluation plans and build evaluable portfolios below.

Invest in capacities for managing and conducting evaluations, and using their results.

The Netherlands, Canada and the UK – the country cases where we found the most widespread and rigorous as well as generally better utilized and accepted evaluation practices – all show significant strategic investments into building evaluation capacity

²³³ It is, however, unclear to what extent the reporting data and the results of larger-scale program evaluations are fed into each other inside the Home Office (see UK chapter for details).

among funders, evaluators and implementers of P/CVE activities. This includes the capacity to manage, conduct and (to a much lesser extent) utilize evaluation results. These countries also demonstrate different solutions for how such capacities can be structured and embedded in institutions – be it in a centralized manner (for the entire country) and/or in a more decentralized way (e.g., among different P/CVE actors). Investments in these three basic kinds of evaluation capacity – for evaluation management, evaluation implementation and evaluation uptake – are necessary even if they alone are not sufficient for P/CVE actors to realize the potential of evaluations for learning, as the examples of Canada and the UK suggest.

Evaluation Management and Uptake

It is only in the UK that evaluation management is fully centralized. There, the Home Office's Counter Terrorism Analysis and Insights (CTAI) unit runs all evaluations of P/CVE measures at the program level, which makes for the bulk of evaluation activity in the UK. Some – usually process – evaluations are conducted in-house (by the CTAI staff), while outcome or impact evaluations are usually outsourced to external consultants via tenders. In Finland, project- or program-level evaluations in the health and social services sectors are managed by the national ministry's own research institute, which maintains specialized teams of research and evaluation experts for major policy fields. This also includes P/CVE as the most recent one. A typical corollary of centralized evaluation management is that the organization in charge of defining the scopes of and controlling evaluations is separate from the organizations that decide about uptake – which are usually either implementers or funders. In the UK, this separation is not as strict when it comes to funders, as evaluation managers and funders do sit in parallel units that interact. It is, however, particularly detrimental that evaluation managers and implementers are strictly separated as most evaluations are kept confidential within the Home Office and are not always or not fully shared with implementers. This severely limits uptake opportunities for implementers.

In Canada and the Netherlands, there is no centralized evaluation management and evaluations are handled and commissioned in a decentralized way. However, there is centralized support in the form of dedicated knowledge hubs that assist implementing organizations or lower-level government agencies in the cities and regions in their efforts to commission evaluations that are useful (see subsection Develop evaluation plans below). In the Netherlands, this support capacity plays an important role in facilitating uptake of evaluation results. Combined with a strong evaluation culture, clear formal obligations to evaluate, and a system of conducting overarching meta-studies to synthesize key data, the complete decentralization of program or project evaluations allows different actors to pursue different evaluation strategies. Each institutional actor can decide their evaluation strategy according to individually defined learning objectives: implementers can commission evaluations tailored to their needs for improving projects, while funders can run larger program-level evaluations to help improve longer-term portfolio design and investment decisions.

German P/CVE funders and major implementers should define the scope of their respective roles in managing evaluations, based on a strategic division of labor that serves their respective purposes and objectives for evaluations.

Evaluation Implementation

In both Canada and the Netherlands, individuals serving as external evaluators are typically specialized P/CVE evaluation consultants as well as, in some instances, current (in the case of Canada) or former (in the Netherlands) staff in P/CVE implementing organizations who engage in peer-to-peer evaluations. In the UK, external evaluations are usually contracted to either academics, non-profit research institutes, or commercial evaluators. In Finland, only health or social policy interventions are systematically evaluated at the project or program levels. In these instances, a mix of academics and evaluation consultants are contracted for the purpose. The only P/CVE evaluation at the policy level conducted so far was tendered to an international audit firm (KPMG).

When it comes to the question what kind of ‘evaluator market’ is most likely to provide the best evaluation capacity for a multitude of different evaluation needs and strategies, the experiences collected in our case studies, along with those from other sectors such as foreign policy and humanitarian action,²³⁴ suggest that a diversity of skills, professional backgrounds and perspectives are important objectives. In the Netherlands, the institutional practice of revolving doors between government authorities, P/CVE implementing NGOs, and evaluation consultancies appears to serve this goal particularly well. In Canada, a less differentiated cast of actors led to concerns about conflicts of interest if competitors for funding engage in peer evaluation. In contrast, the Dutch evaluation landscape with its established, if often boutique, evaluation consultancies and fluid movement of experts between different stakeholder groups has created a positively diverse evaluation market. The size and diversity of this supply of expertise on the market makes it comparatively easy for organizations that seek evaluators to adhere to the principles of independence and impartiality.

German funders of P/CVE interventions should review the results of the PrEval project’s forthcoming mapping and analysis of Germany’s existing evaluation landscape.²³⁵ If they find a capacity and/or a utilization gap, they should leverage the resources and respective rules of their funding schemes to promote additional independent and impartial evaluation capacity. In addition, they should make use of existing capacity in the evaluations they commission and incentivize its use by implementers.

Centralized Knowledge and Capacity Support

In all our cases, the management, implementation and uptake phases of evaluations involve many different actors, even in the most centralized context (the UK). Some of these actors are small; for others, P/CVE is only a minor part of their institutional mission and project portfolio. There are also actors who are new, either to the P/CVE field in general or to the practice of systematic evaluation. In short, not every organization is well-equipped for conducting state-of-the-art evaluations, and many need support to realize the potential of evaluations as an instrument for learning and improvement.

234 Rotmann and Binder, “Evaluierung außenpolitischer Maßnahmen in fragilen Kontexten: Erfahrungen und Empfehlungen.”

235 Uhl, Zeibig, Freiheit, and Zick, “Evaluationskapazitäten im Bereich der Extremismusprävention und politischen Bildung in Deutschland.”

In the Netherlands, Canada and the UK, the government provides dedicated support to this end. This usually means strengthening the execution of evaluations by bringing in professional evaluators, whether through consultancies or by working with experts from academia or civil society. It also means building the capacity for managing evaluations and their uptake, both within implementing organizations and funding institutions. These governments do this primarily in two ways: by investing in applied P/CVE and evaluation research, and by establishing and funding so-called knowledge hubs or help desks to support all actors in the P/CVE space with practical challenges they face when conducting evaluations.

In the UK as well as in Canada, a wide range of standing advisory committees (consisting of both scholars and practitioners) as well as research centers are funded specifically for the task of institutionalizing capacity for research and advice on P/CVE. The Canadian government, for example, funds CPN-PREV, the Canadian Practitioners Network for the Prevention of Radicalization and Extremist Violence, which is based at the Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM). CPN-PREV has a dedicated team of applied researchers who provide “evidence-based best practice guidelines” and other knowledge resources based on “systematic reviews” on key subjects at the core of P/CVE-related theories of change. Additional advisory bodies exist to feed practitioner knowledge back into policy, including funding policy, usually by way of meetings in quarterly or semi-annual intervals. The Netherlands maintain a mix of decentralized research projects based at different universities and a central research center that is part of the Ministry for Justice and Security (JenV).

When it comes to centralized knowledge hubs, the Dutch government maintains a standing inter-ministerial working group between policy officers of the two P/CVE funding ministries. It operates as an integrated help desk for municipal authorities and implementers who seek to design and commission evaluations. Its members support the field by developing toolkits, delivering trainings and generally being ‘on call’ for case-by-case inquiries. In Canada, an even more well-resourced support function has only recently been established as part of Public Safety Canada, the federal ministry responsible for internal security. Its Canada Centre for Community Engagement and Prevention of Violence includes a “research team” whose mandate encompasses knowledge management as well as demand-driven support on matters of evaluation management and design. In the UK, the CTAI unit at the Home Office could also play such a role if it did not operate in such a highly opaque and confidential manner as is currently the case. At the moment, the UK’s comparatively large applied research community de facto fulfills the role of a collective knowledge hub on P/CVE – albeit more on P/CVE practice than evaluation.

In sum, these examples show that there are multiple ways of organizing the two core elements of capacity support for evaluation – in terms of implementation and in terms of management and uptake – that appear beneficial (and perhaps even necessary) for building a strong P/CVE evaluation landscape. What none of the countries we studied has so far addressed, however, is the issue of effective capacity support for knowledge uptake. Effective uptake is not only a matter of binding obligations, financial incentives for learning, and evaluation managers that follow up with decision-makers about their management response plans and the commitments formulated therein. None of these elements carry weight if the people in the line organizations that deliver P/CVE activities do not have the time to absorb and react to evaluation results. Typically,

None of the countries we studied has so far addressed the issue of effective capacity support for knowledge uptake.

most evaluation recommendations are addressed to implementers, while some are also directed at funders. As many of our interlocutors in all four country cases reported, and as preliminary results of another PrEval study on the German context appear to confirm,²³⁶ both sides struggle with insufficient capacities to systematically engage with evaluation findings and operationalize them for their own current and future work. This capacity shortage is often a function of the fact that many implementers in the P/CVE landscape are purely project-funded. In these cases, the incentive to maximize operational reach (i.e., serving the largest possible number of at-risk individuals or delivering the highest possible number of interventions) is often not balanced by an incentive for quality and learning. Addressing this challenge is another key for building an effective evaluation ecosystem.

German PVE/CVE funders should invest in capacity support for evaluators and evaluation managers. Such investments should be based on a systematic needs assessment for the German context that covers both the level of implementing organizations (where, in our case-study countries, funding for evaluation and uptake management roles is often lacking) and the field as a whole.²³⁷ In our case-study countries, centrally provided toolkits as well as training, counseling, exchange and peer learning opportunities were among the most important instruments for building an effective evaluation practice.

Structural Levers for Constructive Evaluation at the Strategy Level

The preceding section outlined three ways to strengthen P/CVE evaluation practice at the system level. To leverage the benefits of these systemic investments for improvements at the level of individual organizations, policymakers, leaders and portfolio managers can use the instrument of evaluation strategies. Evaluation strategies focus limited evaluation resources in ways that best meet stakeholders' needs. At the level of institutional evaluation strategies, our research suggests three particularly powerful and important levers for better evaluations: building evaluable portfolios; ensuring the impartiality and quality of evaluations; and establishing state-of-the-art uptake procedures.

● Strategy level

Define evaluation plans and build evaluable portfolios.

Across our case studies, we found that current evaluation practices suffer from the fact that a large share of evaluations are launched as an afterthought for projects, programs or policies and thus lack concrete goals or theories of change. On the flipside, evaluations tended to produce much more relevant and useful results when they assessed P/CVE activities that were designed with an eventual evaluation in mind. Beyond defining clear goals and theories of change, this also includes building in opportunities for

²³⁶ Uhl, Zeibig, Freiheit, and Zick, "Evaluationskapazitäten im Bereich der Extremismusprävention und der politischen Bildung in Deutschland."

²³⁷ Ibid.

flexible adaptation in response to the findings of an evaluation at each level (project, program and policy).

At the project or program levels, positive examples from the Netherlands include so-called pilot grants that actually took the label “pilot” seriously: the activities funded through these grants were deliberately designed as experiments. Their goals specified learning by experimentation as equally important as general P/CVE impact, and the activities themselves were complemented by developmental evaluations to assess progress along the way. Flexible grant provisions or contracts allowed course corrections or even major changes to the project designs in response to interim evaluation findings during a particular funding period. Implementers were able to rely on an explicit and formal assurance by funders that negative evaluation results would not jeopardize follow-on funding but rather enable another iteration, tied to an obligation to learn and adjust based on the evaluation results.

British and Finnish evaluation practice also encompass individual elements that can serve as best practices, primarily when it comes to the strategic use of evaluation resources by some of the UK Home Office’s and the Finnish social ministry’s program evaluations. Rather than spending scarce evaluation resources on burdening every small project with evaluation requirements (which often leads to low-quality data and evaluations of very little value, as demonstrated by many efforts to use project evaluation results for meta-evaluations), evaluation managers prioritized what they wanted to learn and invested in evaluations accordingly. While this means that only a part of funders’ overall funding portfolios are ‘covered’ by evaluations, custom-tailored evaluation designs ensure that central learning goals are actually met.

Such a strategic approach to evaluation resource planning may, as one potential alternative, lead to many small, simple project evaluations that can either be aggregated by meta-evaluations or complemented by applied research for program-level insights. Another way of implementing such an approach could be a mix of broad program evaluations and in-depth formative or developmental evaluations for particularly important pilot projects. Many other combinations of the extensive methodological toolkit of modern evaluation are also conceivable.

In interviews conducted as part of the PrEval project, German P/CVE actors noted diverging evaluation objectives between different major public funders as a key challenge. In Germany, there are several funders at the federal level, and many additional funders at the regional – or state – level. We did not find similar challenges for Canada, simply because the Canadian provinces do not demand evaluations from their grantees. In the Netherlands, the responsibility for evaluating P/CVE interventions lies primarily with local authorities, but there is also strong national guidance and support on how to do evaluations right. This may help explain why we did not find implementers that experienced similar conflicts over evaluation goals between different funders.

German P/CVE funders should develop evaluation strategies that set specific learning goals for evaluations and define how the instrument of evaluation should be applied to different types of P/CVE work as well as to the different types of activities they fund.²³⁸

- What balance should be struck between the breadth (i.e., between focusing scarce evaluation resources on some projects only vs. asking exactly the same extent of evaluation from every project) and depth (i.e., between collecting basic output data vs. engaging, for instance, in developmental evaluations)? Which criteria should inform which projects or programs are selected for evaluation and how the appropriate resources are allocated?
- What activities should be supported with process evaluations that may help the implementer adjust and improve their project or program while it is still ongoing? And what types of activities should only be evaluated ex post for outcomes or impact?
- When should evaluations start and end, and how should longer-term changes be reflected in evaluation designs? What should be the relation between applied, often more short-term evaluations and more fundamental, often longer-term academic assessments?
- How to ensure that relevant evaluation results are available in time for important decisions? This is relevant at every level: projects and programs can be adjusted mid-way, and funding policies are being reviewed on a regular basis, at least whenever a new government comes in. What level of transparency is necessary for evaluation results to be meaningful?

German PVE/CVE funders should require that projects and programs are designed with an eventual evaluation in mind, including by specifying clear goals and theories of change. Evaluability does not exclude any type of activity or privilege some P/CVE approaches over others; evaluability only requires clarity about goals and observable metrics (which could be qualitative or perception-based). Building evaluations into program and project designs, however, requires capacity support for implementers on how to design P/CVE activities for better evaluability (see Invest in capacities for managing and conducting evaluations, and using their results, p. XX above) as well as on how to overcome methodological challenges for measuring P/CVE. It also requires that implementers can trust that they will be evaluated in ways that are fair and suit their work (reflected, for instance, by being given the chance to appoint their own external evaluator instead of one being appointed by the funder), and not by a one-size-fits-all evaluation methodology.

²³⁸ Guiding questions inspired in part by the good overview provided by the UK government's "Magenta Book," pp. 12-17.

Ensure independence, impartiality and quality.

Designing evaluations that are independent and impartial can be an uphill struggle, as many of our interview partners in all four case study countries recognized. Many, and in some countries most, evaluation activities are described by stakeholders as “internal self-evaluations” that have yet to meet the basic evaluation principles of independence and impartiality. The growing political pressure toward “some kind of evaluation” is rarely matched with sufficient capacity within the organizations expected to commission, manage or conduct them, or with sufficient support on the part of government P/CVE funders.

This gap contributes to a rampant conceptual confusion around the terms ‘evaluation’, ‘review’ and ‘assessment’. Since evaluations are but one part of this larger learning toolbox, the P/CVE field would do well to follow the established, more precise definitions of the term. This would allow actors to make more conscious decisions regarding trade-offs between the conflicting principles of evaluation, for example between independence (which requires a distance between evaluator and implementer) and utility (which requires access and trust between the two roles).

As a matter of principle, independence requires that evaluators can do their work free of any control or influence by any party affected by the evaluation or its results, and in particular by those who are responsible for the activity that is being evaluated. This implies that evaluation managers must be particularly conscious of and alert regarding certain trade-offs: unlike evaluators, evaluation managers cannot be completely independent if they are to be useful. However, their role does require a significant degree of insulation from the political or budgetary interests of those in charge of funding or executing P/CVE activities, respectively.²³⁹

Relatedly, impartiality requires “objectivity, professional integrity and absence of bias (...) at all stages of the evaluation process.” This includes “planning an evaluation, formulating the mandate and scope, selecting the evaluation team, providing access to stakeholders, conducting the evaluation and formulating findings and recommendations,” as well as handling the feedback process with the intended addressees of those recommendations. To avoid conflicts of interest, “evaluation team members must not have been (or expect to be in the near future) directly responsible for the policy setting, design or management of the evaluation subject.”²⁴⁰

Despite formal standards that demand independence and impartiality, deviations from either principle are common and widely justified – and not only by those who are responsible for them. Some interviewees argued that implementers will only trust their own colleagues when discussing potential shortcomings of their work – an indicator for a trust gap more than a reason against independent evaluation. Other reasons given for such deviations from the standard referred to the protection of sensitive data collected from participants in P/CVE activities (and at-risk individuals in particular), as well as to a lack of available independent and impartial evaluation capacity (i.e., competent external evaluators for contracting). Finally, a lack of demand for independent and impartial evaluation on the part of funders and standard-setters was also frequently noted by interviewees from all case-study countries.

Independence requires that evaluators can do their work free of any control or influence by any party affected by the evaluation or its results.

239 United Nations Evaluation Group, “Norms and Standards for Evaluation,” p. 11.

240 For all quotes in this paragraph: Ibid.

At the level of evaluators, efforts are currently being made in all four case-study countries to increase the independence and impartiality of evaluations by using more external or mixed (internal and external) evaluation teams. When it comes to best practices, experts consulted across the four countries suggested a mix between evaluation specialists (who focus on methodology), more practically focused academic subject-matter experts in P/CVE, and former P/CVE practitioners.

At the level of the evaluation management function, its very role as a bridge between stakeholders and evaluators means that independence cannot be absolute but must be balanced with access to and influence over other stakeholders. Evaluation managers are only useful if they can effectively facilitate access to data and interview partners or manage the uptake process, to name just two examples. However, they also need to protect the evaluators' independence against pressure from other stakeholders. Therefore, it is international best practice for evaluation managers to work separately from those holding operational responsibility for activities that may be subject to evaluation.

For these reasons, evaluation units typically report to the highest level of an organization, such as the board or, in government departments, to one of the top levels outside the divisions that handle the actual programs. Small implementing organizations, and particularly NGOs, often cannot maintain an evaluation management function that is effectively independent and not affected by pressures relating to organizational survival, including with regard to obtaining follow-on funding. Even large organizations that rely largely or entirely on project-based financing may not be able to sustain an evaluation management function that is truly independent for every project. At the same time, ownership and control build trust, and evaluation uptake often works better if evaluations are commissioned by the organization that is the main addressee of an evaluation's findings.

Both funders and implementers must ensure that their own evaluation management function is independent from portfolio management (funders) and implementation (implementers), while also ensuring access to top-level decision-makers to facilitate uptake. This balance is typically struck by locating evaluation management functions outside of the part of the organization that manages other operations and having it report directly to the top level. In the UK Home Office, for example, the CTAI unit reports to the ministry's chief scientific advisor at the top management level, a reporting line that does not intersect with that of the portfolio management unit.

Funders should also ensure that trusted, long-term implementing partners are able to give their internal evaluation management function some independence from the workings of individual projects or programs. While we did not find a fully convincing solution to this problem in any of the case-study countries, a small share of institutional funding, where legally possible, could be dedicated to supporting central evaluation management, uptake and learning functions at reliable implementing organizations where staff would be shielded from fluctuations in individual project budgets and timelines.

Quality assurance for evaluations is another challenge that all case study countries share. In none of our case studies did we find any structural requirements or incentives to build mandatory quality assurance mechanisms into evaluations. The Netherlands are the only country case in which we found a common practice of using

independent expert review boards in larger evaluations on a voluntary basis, to ensure a critical peer review of evaluation methodologies and findings that is separate from stakeholder consultations.

P/CVE actors that commission evaluations should demand up-to-date quality assurance mechanisms from evaluators and use their ‘market power’ to make quality assurance a matter of competition between evaluators. Apart from demanding quality assurance when commissioning evaluations directly, funders should also incentivize and support this, in part by funding evaluation capacity support as described above.

Establish state-of-the-art uptake procedures.

The uptake of evaluation results is the biggest common challenge among all our case-study countries. In Canada and Finland, institutional follow-up mechanisms for evaluation results are completely missing for both project and program evaluations. In the UK and the Netherlands, the existing mechanisms are widely seen as ineffective. In Germany, judging from interim results of other PrEval research streams, actors could benefit from establishing state-of-the-art follow-up procedures in the first place, ideally by building on strengthened capacity support, as suggested above.

Typically, evaluation processes involve the creation of steering or reference groups to establish communication with all relevant stakeholders, including future addressees of recommendations. Throughout the evaluation process, the role of these groups is to validate interim findings and discuss the viability of potential recommendations. Thus, they initiate a learning process through repeated interactions, often in a series of workshops between the evaluation team and stakeholder representatives. Formal evaluation reports are then followed by a mandatory management response in which the leadership of the organization in question (typically the one that commissioned the evaluation in the first place) responds to each finding and recommendation with a written statement. These statements usually outline whether or not management accepts the findings and recommendations, which ones in particular, and what it intends to do by what date. It is part of the evaluation management function to follow up and ensure that the stated actions are taken. Publishing evaluations and management responses can help create public accountability for this process.

German P/CVE actors – policy actors, funding agencies and implementing NGOs alike – should establish state-of-the-art uptake procedures for evaluation findings and recommendations, and hold themselves accountable for compliance with their own commitments.

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