

Preventing violent extremism in North Africa and the Sahel

D6.4

Workshop: European Café Debate and presentation of initial findings from Sahel cases



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Authors:	Luca Raineri
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SSSA and ARGA organised a public webinar to disseminate and discuss the findings of PREVEX WP6 first deliverable, the Policy Brief on “EU and other stakeholders’ prevention strategy towards violent extremism in the Maghreb and the Sahel”. The webinar was hosted by SSSA and took place on 14 January 2021, from 4 to 6.30 pm (CET), i.e. just a couple of weeks after the publication of the Policy Brief, so as to exploit the momentum and maximise the impact of the publication. It was held in French, with a view to encouraging the participation of local stakeholders from Maghreb countries, under the title: “Contrecarrer l’Extrémisme Violent au Sahel: le Rôle de l’UE en Discussion”.

89 participants from several European, Sahelian and North American countries joined the event, including officers of EU institutions, agencies and missions; officers of international and regional organisations (UN, WFP, IOM, UNICRI, INTERPOL); public servants of European Member States and Sahel countries; think tank experts (International Crisis Group, Institute for Security Studies, DCAF), European and Sahelian academics and students, journalists, as well as members of NGOs and CSOs from Sahel countries.

The webinar was opened by the introductory remarks of Professor **Francesco Strazzari** and Dr **Luca Raineri** (SSSA), who introduced the overall PREVEX research project and contributed to situating this discussion in the broader framework of the project’s time span and cross-case comparability. The session was chaired by **Edoardo Baldaro**, researcher at the Université Libre de Bruxelles and the UN Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute, and well-known international expert on violent extremism in Sahel.

The first speaker was **Abdoul Wahab Cissé**, Senior Researcher at the Alliance pour Refonder la Gouvernance en Afrique (ARGA), and member of the WP6 PREVEX research consortium. Cissé introduced the content and main findings of the Policy Brief on “EU and other stakeholders’ prevention strategy towards violent extremism in the Maghreb and the Sahel”, of which he is a co-author. Cissé provided an extensive description of the Brief’s methodology and elaborated on the categorisation of the different narratives underpinning EU-sponsored strategies, policies and actions dealing with P/CVE in the Sahel. He then moved on to the detailed analysis of Mali’s and Niger’s approaches to P/CVE, and the role of the EU in it. In both countries, the Brief highlights a significant intention-implementation gap, leading to a decoupling of EU rhetoric and action in the field of P/CVE. EU-sponsored P/CVE actions are articulated in the framework of the 2011 EU Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel, with comparatively more emphasis on security in Mali, and on development in Niger. Yet the EU lacks an adequate theory of change explaining how improvements in development and/or security may affect violent extremism in the Sahel, and its interventions have demonstrated a lack of focus. As a result, other international and regional interveners in the Sahel have proved more determined and impactful in shaping Mali’s and Niger’s domestic approaches to violent extremism, including most notably France, the USA, and the G5 Sahel. Echoing the conclusions of the Policy Brief, Cissé recommended that the EU develops an evidence-based toolbox on P/CVE, with concepts, guidelines and best practices that help translate broad strategic orientations into actionable initiatives on the ground in order to tackle the intention–implementation gap; and that the ongoing review of the EU Sahel Strategy maintains a strong focus on governance so as to temper the over-reliance on securitized approaches and short-term stability.



The second speaker was dr. **Moulaye Hassane**, Director of the Programme on Combating Radicalisation and Violent Extremism at the National Centre of Strategic and Security Studies of Niger (CNESS).

Dr Hassane exposed the Nigerian strategy of P/CVE and its main tools, including the recently adopted National Strategy on Cult and the Strategy against Violent Extremism. While Niger has been able to benefit from the cooperation of the EU and its Member States (especially Germany, Denmark, Luxembourg) in this domain, dr Hassane noted that effectiveness is put in jeopardy by a lack of coordination, a limited attention to local ownership, and a tendency to disregard domestic expertise. However, dr Hassane insisted, the main challenge to an effective implementation of Niger's approach to P/CVE is in the domain of communication. Adequate communication tools and procedures would improve mutual understanding and peacebuilding initiatives among communities at horizontal level, and they would enable a better flow of information from the periphery to the centre, and from the bottom-up at institutional, vertical level.

The third programmed intervention was delivered by **Ornella Moderan**, Chief of the Sahel Programme at the Bamako-based Institute for Security Studies (ISS).

Dr Moderan stressed the idea that a more coordinated, comprehensive and integrated approach would increase the effectiveness of the EU approach to P/CVE in the Sahel. She noted the need to strengthen strategic and operational synergies across disparate fields in which EU action can make a difference and which could have a considerable impact on violent extremism: not only support to security and development, but also to education and humanitarian interventions. According to the studies carried out by ISS in this domain, hunger, greed or unemployment are only secondary drivers of radicalization towards violent extremism in the Sahel. The problem appears to be less the lack of food or job today, than the lack of perspective in the future, which fuels perception of a corrupt and unjust system of governance held responsible for widespread marginalization and inequality. Violent extremism is therefore the expression of common feelings of frustration, unmet demands of redemption, and hope for revenge.

These thought-provoking interventions triggered a lively debate among the audience. The audience engaged the panellists with questions and remarks, and the discussions focused in particular on the following issues: the importance of involving local communities and grassroots organisations in the design, implementation and assessment of P/CVE strategies and actions; the need to avoid underestimating the importance of religious sensibilities and perceptions as key drivers of violent extremism, and the risk that context-insensitive calls to secularism may end up backfiring, by fuelling stigmatisation and polarisation among a largely Muslim population; the key role of migration, which – in a classical voice or exit dilemma – provides an alternative to discontent and disenfranchisement, and therefore represents a resilience strategy against violent extremism in the Sahel; the ambiguities of the concept of violent extremism, which may lead to misrepresent and misunderstand local insurgencies, and to disregard other important sources of insecurity and conflict unfolding in the region (such as in Casamance); the risk that stabilisation strategies premised on the unconditional return of the state may be counterproductive, by restoring a climate of impunity and abuses which has the potential to fuel violent extremism; the key impact of long-term, locally-owned development projects to distract local youth from violent extremism and provide an alternative perspective, as the case of Taoudenni demonstrates; the poor implementation of gender-sensitive approaches



to P/CVE which, while often evoked on paper, are seldom streamlined, and typically rely on gender stereotypes that end up reiterating discriminatory gender norms.

As a result of the passionate and lively debates among the participants, the webinar ended about 30 minutes later than originally planned (6.30).



Annex: List of Attendees

Name	Affiliation
Abdoul Moumouni Abbas	ONG Dialogue pour la Paix (D4P)
Abdoul Wahab Cisse	ARGA
Adji NDIAYE	FES PSCC
Ahamadou Sambel	Helen Keller INTL
Ahmadou MAHAMANE	Chenonics International
Alice Farina	University of Trento
Alicia Charles	Expertise France
Amadou Diallo	Prodis consult
Ana Franco	
Anna Schmauder	Clingendael Institute
Annachiara La Greca	
Arama Laya Kountché	ARGA Mali
Ardiouma Brice SANOU	ARGA/BURKINA
Arthur Boutellis	International Peace Institute
Assane Mbaye	ARGA
Badreddine EL harti	UN Principal SSR-RoL Adviser
Benoît de Ligniville	EEAS
Bintou Dembele	ARGA/Mali
Boas Morten	NUPI
Bouma Alfred NEBIE	Radio Tampani
Camilla Silvi Marchini	SSSA
Claire Dubois-Lidon	INTERPOL
DJERMA Ko	Etrama SARL
Daff Sidiki	ARGA
Delina Goxho	Open Society Foundation
Dramane SISSOKO	ARGA-MALI
Edoardo Baldaro	Université Libre de Bruxelles
Elena Dal Santo	UNICRI
Fatima Lanhait	
Fernandez Sandra	ONG CISP
Flore Berger	DCAF
Francesco Saraceno	EUCAP Sahel Mali
Giovanni Yassiya Sawadogo	Justice
Giulia Gonzales	University of Turin
Guillaume Soto-Mayor	Institut Montaigne
Harouna ABARCHI	Association Nodde Nooto (A2N)
Hawili Renna	International Crisis Group
Ibrahima kanta Abdel hafiz	
Igor Milic	
Ilaria Briglia	University of Trento
Jeanne Béatrice Manga	Ministère de l'Education Nationale Sénégal
Jeandidier Vermetot	École de la paix de Grenoble
Jerome Mellon	UN Department of Peace Operations
Jules Honinckx	IRIS
Kari Osland	NUPI



Khadidjatou Diakhate	Osidea
Laura Berlingozzi	SSSA
Leila Marzo	INTERPOL
Luca Raineri	SSSA
Ludovic Payet	INTERPOL
Mounkaila D Abdoulkarim	IOM
Mahamane Laouali	BETA Consult-sarl (Bureau d'Etudes et d'Analyses)
Marie Sandnes	PRIO
Mario Ragazzi	
Marta Elisabetta Abbado	CISP
Marta Furlan	University of St Andrews
Matteo Da Rulando	University of Trento
Matthias Biesemans	CUTA
Mattia Caniglia	European Strategic Intelligence and Security Center
Michelangelo Dondi	SSSA
Modibo Yacouba DIARRA	ARGA
Moulaye El Oumrany	ONG PAIX ET PROGRES
Moulaye Hassane	CNESS
Nadjitoide Arnaud	association des blogueurs du burkina
Ornella Moderan	Institute for Ssecurity Studies (ISS)
Ousmane Aly Diallo	Amnesty International
Patrizia Russo	
Paul Absalon	
Phénicia Baatout	General Secretariat of the Council of the EU
Ruth Hanau Santini	World Food Programme
SABIT Idrissa	
Samantha VALERY	International Alert
Sandro De Luca	CISP
Sidy DIALLO	ARGA Mali
Sofia Fiammenghi	Crisis Action
Sokhna Ndiaye	Gorée Institute
Souwaiba Ibrahim	Reppad
Stefano Di Giulio	SSSA
Victoria Baux	
Frédéric Yameogo	LE REPORTER
Emmanuel Yanogo	Zatu conseil
Yéhya MAIGA	ARGA-MALI
Yida Diall	Université de Bamako
Zacharia Tiemtoré	ISSH
Zahra Bel Arache	SSSA
alessia busi	SSSA
guillaume lacaille	DCAF
inma vazquez	Medecins sans Frontieres
yssouf traore	



Annex 2: Invitation



Sant'Anna
Scuola Universitaria Superiore Pisa



**Gouvernance
en Afrique**
Alliance pour Refonder la
Gouvernance en Afrique - ARGA



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PREVENTING
VIOLENT
EXTREMISM



CAFÉ DÉBAT

Contrecarrer l'Extrémisme Violent au Sahel : le Rôle de l'UE en Discussion

14 Janvier 2021
16h00 - 18h00 (UTC +1 Rome, Bruxelles, Niamey)
15h00-17h00 (UTC Bamako, Dakar)

Lien d'inscription: <https://bit.ly/3bbV9YY>

Intervenants:

FRANCESCO STRAZZARI ET LUCA RAINERI (Ecole des Hautes Etudes Sant'Anna) *Mot de bienvenue et présentation du projet PREVEX*

ABDOUL WAHAB Cissé (Alliance pour Refonder la Gouvernance en Afrique) *Présentation du Policy Brief 'The EU and other stakeholders' prevention strategy towards violent extremism in the Sahel'*

MOULAYE HASSANE (Centre d'Etudes Stratégiques et de Sécurité du Niger, Chef de Programme Lutte contre la Radicalisation et l'Extrémisme Violent) *L'approche nigérienne à la prévention contre l'extrémisme violent*

ORNELLA MODERAN (Institute for Security Studies, Cheffe du Programme Sahel) *Les facteurs de radicalisation au Sahel*

Débat avec les participants modéré par **EDOARDO BALDARO (Université Libre de Bruxelles)**

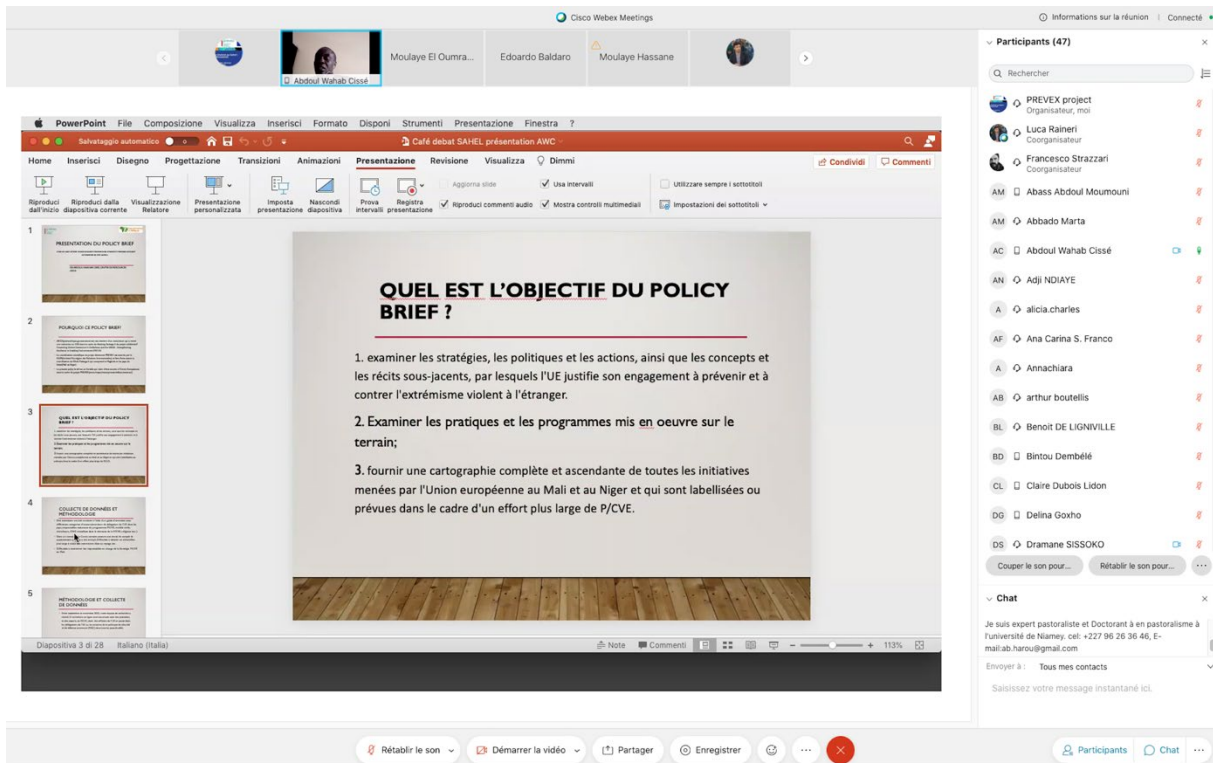
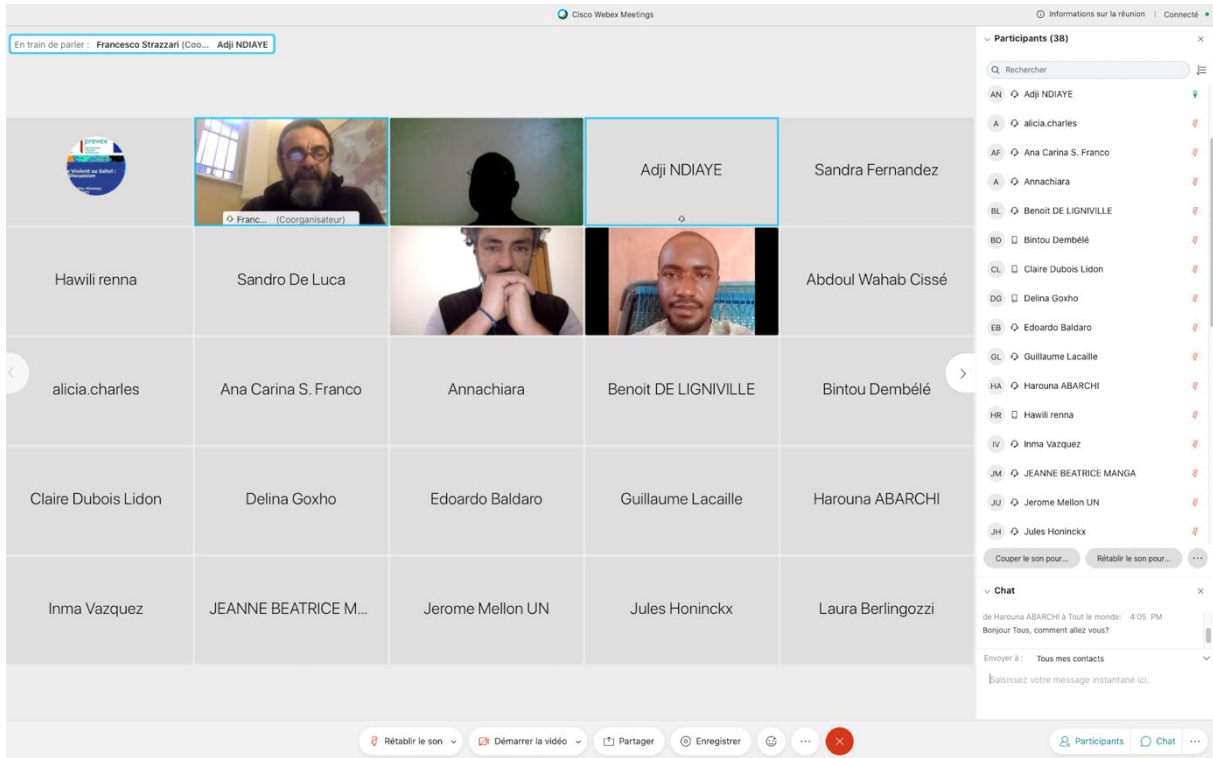
LUCA RAINERI *Synthèse et conclusions*

Suite à l'adoption de la stratégie antiterroriste de l'Union Européenne, la lutte contre l'extrémisme violent est devenue l'un des objectifs clé de l'action externe de l'UE, en particulier dans la zone de son voisinage (élargi). Mais **que fait réellement l'Union Européenne pour contribuer à la prévention et à la lutte contre l'extrémisme violent au Sahel ?** Cette question est au cœur du projet de recherche Horizon2020 **PREVEX (Preventing Violent Extremism in the Balkans and the Mena : Strengthening Resilience in Enabling Environment)**. Grâce à la collaboration de chercheurs d'Europe et du Sahel, un nouveau **Policy Brief** fait l'état des stratégies, projets, actions et récits sous-jacents par lesquels l'UE met en œuvre son engagement à prévenir et à lutter contre l'extrémisme violent dans la pratique. S'appuyant sur une vaste collecte de données et des entretiens avec des acteurs clés, le Policy Brief comprend des études approfondies des cas du Mali et du Niger, ainsi que l'analyse des stratégies nationales et des tendances régionales et interrégionales.

Organisé conjointement par l'**Alliance pour Refonder la Gouvernance en Afrique** (basée au Sénégal) et l'**Ecole des Hautes Etudes Sant'Anna de Pise** (Italie), ce Café Débat offre une occasion de présenter les résultats du Policy Brief et de stimuler un échange avec des experts de l'extrémisme violent au Sahel. Le format en ligne, permet de recueillir les voix du terrain et de les porter à l'attention des décideurs politiques, en vue d'aider la communauté internationale, et l'UE en particulier, à développer une approche plus sensible et efficace à la prévention et à la lutte contre l'extrémisme violent. La participation de la société civile, des chercheurs et des étudiants intéressés aux enjeux de l'extrémisme violent au Sahel est vivement encouragée.



Annex 3: Screenshot



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