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Is the reintegration of Daesh's children and adolescents in Europe feasible?

Would it put Europe at risk for those returning to the European countries?

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Abstract

The Islamic State, more commonly known as ISIS or Daesh counts numerous children and adolescents in its ranks. A considerable number of these children are foreigners and come from some countries of the European Union. At the European level, these children are part of different categories: those who went to Daesh conflict zone's territory by choice; those who were taken there by their radicalized parents; and those who are born in ISIS territory from an EU relative.

However, now that ISIS is now losing ground, what will happen to these children? Will they come back to the EU countries? Are they allowed to? What will be the EU governments' approaches for these child returnees? Are they victims or participants of ISIS machinery? Are they going to face prosecution, or will they be rather reintegrated into society? Is this reintegration possible on a psychological, social, educational, societal point of view? And what about the security of the EU countries they will come back to? Is this security at risk? Are the EU citizens going to accept these children back? These are some of the most important questions that are raised and answered as best as possible throughout this paper.

In order to understand the functioning and deep core of ISIS and understand if these children could be reintegrated back into the European societies, it is first of utmost importance to elaborate on ISIS's history, their motives to use children, how do they recruit them, how they manage to turn these children into what they call "the lioncubs of the caliphate", and whether the participation of these children is mostly voluntary or not.

Once these components analyzed, we can go on and consider the impact conflicts can have on these children, if they are seen as victims or participants, and what are the reactive and repressive measures that can be applied. Since the EU member states' experiences with child returnees is a new phenomenon and is still very limited, it is necessary to consider initiatives and efforts that have been used for former child soldiers and analyze if these could fit or be adapted to Daesh child's returnees.

It is beyond any doubt that the question of Europe's security is on the mind of many people when considering the reintegration of these children. Therefore, considering the global European response to these returnees, evaluate the racist and discriminatory climate in the European countries, and interpret the citizens' reactions to these child's returnees is primordial. Finally, amongst the EU member states, a point of analysis will be made on Belgium to understand its approach and "readiness" as regards to these children.

In lights of the elements analyzed throughout this paper, we can estimate that the reintegration of these children and adolescents will be a difficult journey but not an impossible one, and as far as the security of Europe is concerned, it is not necessary to consider these child's returnees as real threats but rather as potential ones. Indeed, if they receive the necessary and adequate support and assistance they need, their reintegration might be feasible, and Europe's security will be at low risk. It is however, impossible to guarantee and insure the positive future and fate of these children as their treatment will be a long-term job, but optimism and inclusivity are the keywords for the future.

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Introduction

The aim of this research is to analyze the rising number of children and adolescents enlisted with Daesh and understand if any potential rehabilitation within the western societies is feasible and if it already exists political and judicial procedures, mechanisms, infrastructures, services, etc. or if all those measures have still to be created. In other words: is Europe ready for these potential returnees?

By choice of writing, the rehabilitation and reintegration's process of these children and adolescents will be the main pillar of this research; however, the general perception of these returnees is that they might put the European societal order at risk, therefore, the question of Europe's security will naturally stem from it.

The use of children by armed or terrorist groups is playing now an increasing strategically important role in the Middle East. Indeed, since 2014, one of the greatest concerns for the European Union specifically and for the entire world in general is the expansion of the terrorist organization ISIS/Daesh and the numerous attacks and killings that they perpetrate on European soil as in the territories they occupy. The growing number of fighters joining ISIS is alarming and amongst them we count numerous children according to the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) (as cited in European Parliament, 2015a, p.3). Amongst these children and adolescents, there are different categories: both the European and non-European ones who went to Daesh conflict zone's territory by choice; those European who were taken there by their radicalized parents; those who are born in ISIS territory from an EU relative; and the Syrian and Iraqis local children. This growing number of children and adolescents in the ranks of ISIS is one great concern not only for their life and violated rights but also for the security of the EU. Indeed, according to a seminar organized by the European Parliament's Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE) group (2018): "ISIS is losing ground in Syria and Iraq and the number of individuals travelling back to Europe after having spent time in a jihadist conflict zone is expected to rise" and some of those who might come back will be children. Indoctrinated by "the Islamic State and Jabhat al-Nusra's ideology that is hostile towards the western democracies" (European Parliament, 2015b, p.2) and trained to be combatants and killers, their return as well as their reintegration into the European societies might be a challenge that the European community would have to face.

However, child soldiering has not been on the top priority of states' security agenda (especially the European states) as is terrorism for instance, however it should. First, because the recruitment of child soldiers involves "the suffering and death of hundreds of children" (Achvarina, V. & Reich, S.F., 2006,

p.130). It should also not be forgotten that child soldiering is closely linked to terrorism and therefore, focusing on one without considering the other is counter-productive. Second, child soldiering, as we have discussed, might pose “a long-term threat to the health and security of societies far beyond the borders of the war-torn, fragile states in which these civil and ethnic conflicts take place” (Achvarina, V. & Reich, S.F., 2006, p.130). Therefore, child soldiering should be taken into great consideration as would their difficult but necessary rehabilitation.

The reasons for choosing to focus on the children and adolescents¹ rather than the “adult” members of the terrorist group is because ISIS is recruiting more and more children in its ranks, known as the “lioncubs of the caliphate” (Horgan, J. G., Taylor, M., Bloom, M., & Winter, C., 2017, p.2) and because these children are entitled to a special status, under the International Convention on the Rights of the Child; therefore they need special attention, protection and rehabilitation programmes. Nevertheless, there will not be any specific focus on the girls used by Daesh: it is first, a writing choice in order not to expand on every single notion and category of persons related to Daesh due to the restrictive length of this paper; and second, because they are, generally, less numerous than boys and men; indeed, women and girls constitute only 20% of foreign fighters (Gaub, F. & Lisieckaand, J., 2016, p.1). Therefore, the aim, here, will be to focus on Daesh’s children as a whole. However, not all of them will be part of the analysis, only those from European origin or born in ISIS territory from an EU relative will be.

Child soldiering, as we know, is not a new phenomenon. During the modern times, it began before the Second World War when Hitler started recruiting children, known as the “Hitler Youth”, officially formed in 1926. This youth followed Hitler throughout the 12 years of the Third Reich until the end of the war. Hitler wanted to create a “new mankind” thanks to these young people but at the end he did not succeed in doing so (Bartoletti, S.C., 2016, p.8).

The use of these children in war then followed from 1975 in almost every conflict in Africa; then, in other countries such as Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Peru, Algeria, Azerbaijan, Egypt, Iran, Lebanon, Sudan, Tajikistan, Yemen, to now be expanded in the countries of the Middle East, particularly in Syria and Iraq (Horgan, J. G. et al., 2017, p.3). The African conflicts have seen most of the use of child combatants; for instance, “the Ugandan Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) comprised almost exclusively child combatants as did the Revolutionary United Front

¹ Throughout the paper the appellation “Daesh’s children” will be used to refer to both children and adolescents

(RUF) of Sierra Leone” (Horgan, J. G. et al., 2017, p.3). Nowadays, this phenomenon has become a geographically widespread one with Daesh’s children being on the headlines of today’s History.

The return and reintegration of Daesh’s children is still a very limited and recent phenomenon in the EU and it is interesting to analyze the EU response to it. This paper will be divided into three main chapters alongside a conceptual framework and a conclusion. Chapter one will focus on the contextualization of the issue: namely a brief history of Daesh; the number of foreign fighters and children; the European countries most affected by it; the recruitment methods of Daesh; and will end with an overview of these children’s rights and the international and European mechanisms that can protect them. Chapter two will focus on the future these children could have if returning to the European countries, namely prosecution, non-judicial forms of responsibility, and/or rehabilitation and reintegration. The impacts war can have upon children will also be explained. Furthermore, we will look at the reintegration process in a global picture; we will then look at past reintegration’s approaches used for former child soldiers² and the Hitler Youth and understand if those mechanisms could fit for Daesh child’s returnees; and finally, we will analyze what could be the potential obstacles for their reintegration. Chapter three, at the end, will deal with the global EU response to these returnees and give an overview of the mechanisms some EU Member States have already put in place. However, looking at the approaches of each Member State would be enormous and not pertinent in the framework of this paper, therefore, we will look more closely at the Belgian approach as an illustration case since it is one of the European countries most affected by the departure of its citizens to Syria and Iraq (Boutin, B., Chauzal, G., Dorsey, J., Jegerings, M., Paulussen, C., Pohl, J., Reed, A., & Zavagli, S., 2016, p.25). We will look into its mechanisms to assess Belgium’s readiness of Daesh’s children return and we will then analyze if these children could pose a potential threat to the Member States they are coming back to. Finally, a section on racism and xenophobia will be provided, linked to the question of the population’s reaction upon these children’s return and how could the EU manage these positive or negative reactions.

The method used for this paper is multi-dimensional comprised primarily of desk research, interviews and an online survey created and distributed on the social media to gain more knowledge and understanding on what the reactions of the European’s population would be if the children happen to come back.

² Throughout the paper, the term “child soldiers” will be used to refer to child soldiers in a general way (African, Colombian, Pakistani, ...). The Hitler’s Youth are obviously also child soldiers but for the sake of differentiation we will only use the term Hitler’s Youth when mentioning them

Conceptual framework

Before being child combatants, they are first and foremost children entitled to rights specifically designed for them.

Hereafter are introduced concepts, definitions and clarifications that will be useful throughout the paper:

- **Daesh** is a jihadist Islamic terrorist group with many names. “UN and US officials generally use the acronym ISIL that stands for “Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant”” (Irshaid, F., 2015). Daesh calls itself “Islamic State” (IS); the term "Islamic State in Iraq and Syria" (ISIS) or "Islamic State in Iraq and al-Sham" (ISIS) is also used; but the most common name used across the world is Daesh or Da'ish, it is “an Arabic acronym formed from the initial letters of the group's previous name in Arabic "al-Dawla al-Islamiya fil Iraq wa al-Sham”” (Irshaid, F., 2015).
- **Child**: according to the internationally agreement of article 1 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989 (CRC), a child is “any person under 18 years of age unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier” (as cited in Vandenhoe, W., & Weyns, Y., 2014, p.2). The underlined part can pose a problem when referring to the Convention since this specific part gives member states a margin of appreciation when applying their domestic laws on children associated with armed groups.
- **Child “soldier”**: in the Paris Principles there is no use of the term “child soldier” or “child soldiering” but rather “**child associated with an armed force or armed group**”. Therefore, we might retain the following definition when talking about a child “soldier”: “any person below 18 years of age who is or who has been recruited or used by an armed force or armed group in any capacity, including but not limited to children, boys, and girls used as fighters, cooks, porters, messengers, spies or for sexual purposes. It does not only refer to a child who is taking or has taken a direct part in hostilities” (UNICEF, 2007, p.7). As we might understand from the definition, in armed groups, children are not only used as combatants but for many other reasons. What the definition does not mention is that they can also be used for being: bomb carriers; sentries; suicide bombers; and lay and clear landmines (Lorey, M., 2001, p.2).
- **The age limit**: there is a widespread controversial and debated issue about the age limit for children to be recruited in armed forces or groups. Under the 1977 Additional Protocol to the 1949 Geneva Conventions, **the minimum age is set at 15 years old**. For the first time, in an international binding instrument, this recruitment’s issue has been taken to the table. This 15 years old minimum set-up

has also been reaffirmed in the 1998 Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (Harvey, R., 2003, p.27). Interestingly is to notice that even though the CRC defines a child as being under 18 years old, the international law and the international community decided otherwise when it concerns the recruitment in hostilities and army. However, the CRC itself is also controversial as §2-3 of article 38 stipulates that “States Parties shall take all feasible measures to ensure that persons who have not attained the **age of fifteen years do not take a direct part in hostilities**. States Parties shall refrain from recruiting any person who has not attained the **age of fifteen years into their armed forces**. In recruiting among those persons who have attained the **age of fifteen years** but who have not attained the age of eighteen years, States Parties shall endeavor to give priority to those who are oldest” (UNICEF, 1989, p.11). So, what sense does it make to define a child as being 18, if then he/she can be recruited at the age 15? According to Harvey, R. (2003, p.27), this can be explained by the reluctance of States to change their recruitment and deployment’s habits or legislation. However, in 1999 and 2000, we have witnessed a major progress raising the age limit at 18 years and prohibiting states’ army and armed groups to recruit and deploy children under 18. This was implemented by the ILO Convention 182 of 1999; the ILO Convention Recommendation 190; and the Optional Protocol to the CRC on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflicts of 2000 (Harvey, R., 2003, pp.27-28). However, even though the Protocol prohibits recruitment under the age of 18, it permits **voluntary recruitment of 15 to 18 into national armies**.

- **Foreign Terrorist Fighters (FTFs):** it exists many definitions of a foreign fighter, but I believe that the one from the UN Security Council resolution 2178 is the more appropriate one. In 2014, UNSC adopted a definition of its own regarding foreign fighters while adding the term “terrorist” in it and without taking into account the “religious” aspect as it is described in other definitions such as the one from EUROPOL. Therefore, FTFs are:

“... nationals who travel or attempt to travel to a State other than their States of residence or nationality, and other individuals who travel or attempt to travel from their territories to a State other than their States of residence or nationality, for the purpose of the perpetration, planning, or preparation of, or participation in, terrorist acts, or the providing or receiving of terrorist training, including in connection with armed conflict” (United Nations Security Council, 2014, as cited in Schmid, A.P., 2015, p.4).

In the framework of this paper, it is more appropriate to take the definition of the UN Security Council even if I personally would not put the term “terrorist”. I however agree to follow this definition because it does not include the element of religion. In fact, there is nothing religious about

killing and torturing people; and recruiting and abusing children. “ISIS is nothing like a State and is definitely nothing taken from Islam” (Dandois, T., & Trégan, F-X., 2016). Indeed, in every Islamic law books, there is a chapter about “jihad” stating that “those who have fulfilled certain requirements are obliged to participate in military jihad, namely: Muslim, adult, sane, free (not a slave), male, healthy, and capable”; but nowhere it is indicated that children have to participate (Lubis, N. A. F., 2008, p.175).

- **Rehabilitation:** it refers to “the assistance given to persons for their physical and psychological recovery” (OHCHR, s.d.).
- **Reintegration:** is “the process through which children transition into civil society and enter meaningful roles and identities as civilians who are accepted by their families and communities in a context of local and national reconciliation. Sustainable reintegration is achieved when the political, legal, economic and social conditions needed for children to maintain life, livelihood and dignity have been secured. This process aims to ensure that children can access their rights, including formal and non-formal education, family unity, dignified livelihoods and safety from harm” (UNICEF, 2007, p.8). I partially agree with this definition because the “psychological” condition for a sustainable reintegration is not included and I strongly support the idea that psychological support is a crucial element for a child’s reintegration.

Therefore, rehabilitation and reintegration processes should always be brought together.

- **Deradicalization:** “the word "radicalization" can be used to describe a process whereby individuals develop, over time, a mindset that can increase the risk that they will engage in violent extremism or terrorism. Therefore, the term "deradicalization" should only be used to refer to the methods and techniques used to undermine and reverse the completed radicalization process, thereby reducing the potential risk to society from terrorism” (Clutterbuck, L., 2015, p.1).

Indoctrination is one of the most important strategy of child’s recruitment amongst Daesh. Consequently, it is important to explain the concept:

- **Indoctrination:** There are a variety of explanations about what is indoctrination, but the following is, in my opinion, the more appropriate for the case of Daesh children.

According to some philosophers, indoctrination is “the paralysis of one’s intellectual imagination (Laura, 1981; 1983; Laura and Leahy, 1989; Leahy and Laura, 1997; Neiman, 1987, as cited in Tan, C., 2004, p.1). The imagination of an indoctrinated person is paralyzed in three ways. Firstly, the person holds to beliefs or values without any good reasons or rational justification. Secondly, an

indoctrinated person not only lacks good reasons for holding to beliefs, he or she is unable to justify these beliefs. In other words, such a person has an uncritical spirit. In such a case, the child's moral autonomy is limited. The third aspect is closed-mindedness, as evidenced by the inability to consider alternatives. In other words, the person holds to a dogmatic style of belief where the domain of intellectual freedom is constricted rather than enlarged" (Tan, C., 2004, p.2).

Chapter one: Contextualization and the protection mechanisms

Before starting to address the specific topics of foreign fighters, children and the recruitment methods, it is important to look at Daesh's organization history.

I. ISIS' history

The ISIS that we know today, was in 2004, only a branch of Al-Qaeda in Iraq. After the death of Osama Bin Laden, ISIS and Al-Qaeda started to pull apart because of political and theoretical divergences. When the rebellion started in Syria, ISIS immediately entered the territory and fought against Al-Qaeda's branch in Syria to take the control over Syria's territory (European Parliament, 2015a, p.2).

Establishing a caliphate, through the possession of territory, is one of the main goals of Daesh. Since 29 June 2014, ISIS renamed itself the Islamic State and established its Caliphate. A caliphate is a "theocratic rule of a territory where all inhabitants should abide by 'Sharia' – the Islamic law" (European Parliament, 2015a, p.2) and where the caliph, Abou Bakr Al-Baghdad, influences the entire Muslim community, might they live in ISIS-controlled territories or abroad.

Following this declaration, a massive propaganda started, calling all Muslims' men, women and children, to join ISIS under its new and unique Islamic "pan-state", which appeared to be highly successful. Indeed, according to figures from the European Parliament (2015a, p.3), 6 million people are believed to live under ISIS's rules. Why has this ISIS narrative been so successful? ISIS made the promise that every individual would be given a home, good food, good medical care etc. (General Intelligence and Security Service, 2016, p.3) and that this new state would gather all Muslims from all over the world. An European's deserter explained in the documentary "Daech - Paroles de déserteurs" (Dandois, T. & Trégan, F-X., 2016) that him and others were convinced that ISIS was on the right path because there was no more corruption as it was the case during Bashar al Assad's time, and because they wanted a "real" Islamic State with military and civilian institutions like Daesh promised; but they realized that Daesh had nothing to do with the values it pretends to defend, namely Islam or jihad. Islam literally means "peace, safe, and submission [...] to the will of God" (Lubis, N. A. F., 2008, p.164) but where is the peace and safety in Daesh?

The concept of jihadism, which is an extreme form of fundamentalism, is a key concept for radical groups like Daesh (Lubis, N. A. F., 2008, p.163).

Since 2014 when the international community started attacking Daesh's territories, mainly its "capitals" Raqqa in Syria and Mosul in Iraq, more combatants were needed in the field to defend the Caliphate. This is how foreign fighters and the recruitment of children started to be on the rise.

II. Foreign fighters and the European Union countries most affected

Daesh, is, nowadays, quite unique for many reasons. First, contrary to other terrorist or radical groups, Daesh via its Caliphate is a pseudo-state. Second, unlike other armed groups, Daesh is quite transparent about its strategy recruitment of children. Being so transparent about it, via the social media and their videos, is not insignificant at all, it is part of their strategy to gain worldwide attention (Anderson, K., 2016, p.37).

According to the most recent figures (2011-2016), we know that more than 42.000 foreign fighters (among them children) from more than 120 countries have travelled to Syria and Iraq and approximately 5000 come from the EU countries: most are Belgian, French, German and British; then some come from Austria, Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, and Sweden. Belgium has the highest number on a per-capita basis (Network, R. A., 2017, p.6; Europol, T. E. S. A. T., 2017, p.12; Anderson, K., 2016, p.16); this percentage of Europeans is unprecedented, representing a 20% of ISIS total foreign fighters. However, as regard to children, despite all the information gathered, estimating the numbers who travelled from Europe to ISIS' territory is very difficult as is the number of children born in Syria or Iraq (Council of the European Union, 2017, p.4). Why? Because some might have died in conflict's theatre; managed to escape; returned without notice; taken refuge in refugee camps or have not been detected. So how do we know that ISIS is using so many children? First, as we have said, ISIS is not fearful in showing the world what they do. Proofs have been collected through social media by ISIS's supporters and participants who share daily images and videos' propaganda and testimonies of these children; through interviews with Daesh children by Western reporters or non-governmental organizations like Human Rights Watch; or through analyzes of ISIS administrative documents "available in Aymenn al-Tamimi's online archive of translations" (Horgan, J. G., et al., 2017, p.7).

The age of these children varies: it can range from new-born children to 18 years old. "Reports confirm children as young as 12 engaging in military training and of 14-years-old suicide bombers [...] or very young children (8 years old) engaged in executions in some form" (Horgan, J. G., et al., 2017, pp.7-8).

III. Why does Daesh use children and adolescents?

We know that the use of children by armed groups is not new; however, Daesh changed the nature of children's participation. Usually terrorist groups use children on the short-term because they are in desperate need of combatants but Daesh uses its children in a consistent and organized manner. Daesh's goal of expanding the caliphate could not work without a generation of future fighters and this is where children come into play: they will be the post-ISIS generation when Daesh will cease to exist. Children are part of both the short and long-term of Daesh's strategy as they will be an asset to maintain the survival of the caliphate (Anderson, K., 2016, p.23). This is the main reason of using children but there are many others:

1. They use them as a vital instrument for their worldwide recruitment and for their aggressive propaganda to generate fear. In their propaganda videos, ISIS portrays children as being aspirational figures and they want to show to the Muslim community that Daesh is the Islamist place to be (The Carter Centre, 2017, p.2). Children are also seen as effective recruiters to engage other children because they are in general "less suspicious of their peers and more inclined to trust people of their own age" (Horgan, J. G., et al., 2017, p.11). Additionally, they also want to show to the "infidels" that, with its youth army, ISIS organization is well-prepared for the future (The Carter Centre, 2017, p.3).

Children are usually seen as easy targets:

2. Because they are more vulnerable to indoctrination and recruitment. Children can be more easily manipulated than adult members to obey and accept Daesh violent actions, ideology and messages without doubting nor questioning its essence because they have fewer notions of right and wrong and preconceived beliefs. For this reason, children are seen to be more obedient, motivated, dedicated and loyal. Therefore, they use their innocence for ISIS's long-term survival in turning them into brutal merciless fighters. While on the short-term, they can manipulate them and sent them on suicide missions (Harvey, R., 2003, p.25).
3. Because of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons into the international arms market as these weapons are easier for children to carry (European Parliament, 2014, p.2).
4. Because they are more affordable in economic terms. Indeed, they consume less food and they do not have to be paid as much as an adult fighter (Daesh salaries are approximately 200\$ per month for an adult and 100\$ for a child) (Benotman, N., & Malik, N., 2016, p.27; Anderson, K., 2016, p.39). "Daesh's largest expenditure is salaries, as they prioritize investment in people, therefore,

using children fits their strategy of investing in people while maintaining costs” (Anderson, K., 2016, p.39). If for instance, they would have recruited more adults than children, they would not be able to recruit so many people otherwise they would be “bankrupt” more quickly.

5. There is one last important point which Anderson, K. (2016, p.40) calls “counter-terrorist measures” which is quite an intelligent move. As a matter of fact, the international community is always more reluctant to conduct air strikes and military operations when they know that children are in the front line of the battlefield³. Plus, international laws will usually lean towards considering children associated with armed groups as “victims of offences against international law; not as perpetrators” and tend not to prosecute them (Paris Principles, 2007, as cited in Anderson, K., 2016, p.40). This is something Daesh knows and takes advantage out of it.

IV. The recruitment’s methods

It is first important to highlight the process in which children go from “innocent children” to “reckless and fearless lioncubs of the Caliphate”. This is called the socialization’s process which is summarized into six stages by the researchers Horgan, J. G., et al. (2017, pp.11-12):

1. *“Seduction:* Initial exposure to ISIS ideas, norms and practices through propaganda, peripheral participation in public events, and indirect access to personnel (Daesh’s members);
2. *Schooling:* Routine, direct exposure to personnel, accompanied by intensive indoctrination;
3. *Selection:* Focused attention from recruiters, screening for aptitude and grooming for military training or other roles;
4. *Subjugation:* Physical and psychological brutalization through intensive training, isolation from family, wearing a uniform, and deepening of commitment through acts of loyalty, sacrifice, and discipline; emergence of solidarity via shared hardship;
5. *Specialization:* Fostering expertise and exposure to specialized training;
6. *Stationing:* Role assignment and deployment; including participation in public events to recruit additional members”.

We will, now, focus on ISIS’s strategy of recruitment which is twofold: local and international.

³ On this regard, last year, Canada has been the first country issuing a “doctrine”, a “guide” for its troops on how to deal with child soldiers on the battlefield (The Guardian, 2017, May 19). In the framework of this thesis, the subject will not be addressed but it is worth analyzing it in a near future.

a. At the local level:

According to Benotman, N., & Malik, N. (2016, p.33), there are two kinds of recruitment: the coercion method and the “co-option” one.

- Coercion: it often occurs through abductions. How? By forcing children to join ISIS without leaving them the right to decline; by kidnapping them off the streets (Horgan, J.G. et al., 2017, p.9); by flogging, torturing or raping them if they refuse; by obliging parents to send their children; or by instituting an atmosphere of fear, pressuring children to join them.
- Co-option: this method is used through many ways:
 - Schools are one of the best methods for the recruitment of children. First, they made education compulsory and then they changed the education’s programme. That way they can control children’s education and teach them ISIS values and ideology. It is some sort of co-option method because after children have learned and incorporated those new “disciplines” they will be unconsciously more eager to join ISIS’s ranks. “Subjects such as drawing, music, nationalism, history, French, philosophy and social studies have been removed and replaced by Salafi-jihadist ideology, Qur’an memorization and extremist interpretations of the Qur’an” (Horgan, J.G. et al., 2017, p.9);
 - They pay families a financial compensation if they enroll their children into ISIS’s schools and training camps. Families usually accept due to their restrictive economic situation. Furthermore, the high salaries that children receive if joining Daesh is also a triggering factor (Benotman, N., & Malik, N. 2016, p.34; The Carter Centre, 2017, p.5);
 - Fighting for an ideology is usually a strong motivation for children to join ISIS because it gives them a meaning in life. Being given a role in ISIS is sort of a personal fulfillment to feel accepted and needed (Benotman, N., & Malik, N. 2016, p.34);
 - ISIS often goes in public spaces and give out free candies and toys to lure children or by allowing older children to carry ISIS flags and weapons. Children are usually attracted to these kinds of materials. This is a successful method because children are directly exposed to ISIS ideology and they can see from themselves the success of ISIS and “its utopian society, and the alleged benefits for those who have already joined” (Benotman, N., & Malik, N. 2016, p.35);
 - According to the documentary of Amara, S. (2017), ISIS often organizes “media points” in public spaces, placing giant screens and displaying executions and fighting videos with the purpose of expanding their propaganda strategy. Exposing children to violence and

desensitizing them to it is a very important tool because that way children will be more eager to join Daesh as they will not comprehend the bad sides of the organization.

Daesh even opened child recruitment offices. We can find two of them in al-Mayadin and al-Bokamal, two Syrian cities (Anderson, K., 2016, p.7).

The co-option method is the most frequently used because ISIS children are, in general, more inclined to join ISIS under a “voluntary” form, contrary to past armed groups and terrorist organizations, where children are usually taken by force⁴ (Anderson, K., 2016, p.9).

b. At the international level:

At the local level, ISIS can use their physical presence to entice and recruit children, however, they cannot do the same for people abroad. Therefore, ISIS in their international recruitment strategy have a very strong communication plan, mainly using the internet and the social media but also, their paper magazine “Dabiq” and chat rooms and forums to directly communicate with potential recruits (European Parliament, 2015, p.3).

At the international level, ISIS’s strategy of recruitment involves, more than anything else, the psychological appeal. “ISIS’s success in recruiting people globally through psychological methods is historically unprecedented” (Anderson, K., 2016, p.11). They offer these young people a sense of belonging to a true community; a new identity; new values and beliefs (Horgan., J.G., et al., 2017, p.6). This is an extremely important strategy because during the teenage years, young people are in search of a new life’s meaning, and groups like ISIS provide these young people with answers whether it involves their faith, belonging, or purpose. “ISIS makes these children feel loved, wanted, and understood, and then subsequently uses these emotions to distance the child from his/her parents” (Anderson, K., 2016, p.14). The majority of messages and narratives used by Daesh depicts the West as the enemy, the “hypocrisy of the West” and states that the “ulterior motive” of the West is to destroy the Islamic community. “The ultimate purpose is to entrench an “us” vs. “them” division in the mind of the target audience and, in turn, provoke them to migrate to fulfill their moral duty of defending the Caliphate” (The Carter Centre, 2017, p.5). This “us vs. them” is called the “polarization of society” (Somers, B., 2018).

⁴ Obviously not only in the Daesh’s case, children have volunteered. In other conflicts such as in Sierra Leone, Burundi, Palestine, ... children volunteered; but the motives and the number of volunteers, however, were different than from Daesh and Hitler’s as we will explain later (Jordans, M. J., Komproe, I. H., Tol, W. A., Ndayisaba, A., Nisabwe, T., & Kohrt, B. A., 2012, p.6; Jordan, M.K., 2012, p.45)

Finally, and not the least, Daesh wants to promote the notion of “brotherhood” where all Muslims from all over the world with different backgrounds and nationalities can happily live together in this pseudo Islamic state. “This idea of a post-racial, post-citizenship society resonates rather strongly with young individuals who are marginalized and discriminated against in their native countries because of the color of their skin and/or their heritage” (The Carter Centre, 2017, p.6).

Daesh also has a strategy recruitment for both the foreign (since young children cannot travel alone) and local families. For their long-term strategy of establishing a Caliphate, they also need the families to build the new society. In this perspective, parents play an important role because not only Daesh can indoctrinate children with their ideology but parents as well and it is easier for a child to trust what their loved ones tell them.

As we have seen, education, social mobilization and psychological appeal are the main factors in Daesh’s recruitment strategy. However, indoctrination (which begins from the recruitment to the training) is one of the crucial means for ISIS. Therefore, it is important to deepen our understanding of the indoctrination practice because we might presuppose that it could be the cause for children’s potential difficult reintegration.

c. How do they turn them into the lioncubs of the Caliphate?

The strategy used by Daesh is well designed, nothing is left to chance and the trainings are attended by both the local and international recruits.

- **Education:** the primary and most important tool to train them is education (Benotman, N., & Malik, N. 2016, p.30). As it is explained in the documentary “Ashbal-les lionceaux du califat” (Dandois, T. & Trégan, F.X., 2017), in mathematics for instance, they learn how to calculate through images of guns, knives or bombs and they learn English through the use of words such as "army, bullet" etc. As we saw already, the educational curriculum is completely changed, and education is turned into a system of indoctrination rather than a system of intellectual empowerment. Even physical education has been changed and renamed “Jihadi Training”: “it includes shooting, swimming, and wrestling and the physical education textbook includes workout routines, as well as a section on weaponry that teaches various parts of history, assembly, firing, and instructions on cleaning and storage of light weapons” (Benotman, N., & Malik, N. 2016, p.31).
- **Mental training:** the mental training is one of the most important and intense one. Mental training is primarily used for Daesh’s long-term goals: create the future with indoctrinated followers who

will fight and stand for the caliphate undoubtedly. “Conformity, compliance and blind obedience are the hallmarks of the child’s progression from regular schooling to fully fledged training” (Horgan, J.G., et al., 2017, p.10).

This mental training involves three dimensions:

- **Indoctrination:** those who are recruited attend Shari’a camps, where they learn everything they can about Sharia and Islamic religion. The training is intensive, and children are obliged to pray 5 times a day. Some are even too young to understand what is happening but still undergo the indoctrination (Anderson, K., 2016, p.28). In fact, the indoctrination process must start as young as possible where the ideas received can be controlled because the youngest the child is, the most susceptible to such ideas he or she will be (Anderson, K., 2016, p.29). This mental training lasts for 45 days where indoctrination and brainwashing are part of their daily life.

Additionally from the training camps, Daesh created a guidebook called “A Sister’s Role in Jihad” which is aimed to teach mothers how to indoctrinate their children (Anderson, K., 2016, p.29).

- **Exposure:** “Exposure to violence reinforces violence as a way of life” (Anderson, K., 2016, p.31). This is why Daesh exposes these children to violence in a daily way, whether it be in the public spaces, at schools or in the training camps. Moreover, exposure to violence put children in a mindset where violence, killings, executions, etc. becomes normal. The effects of exposure are exacerbated when children participate in this violence. For instance, “children learn to behead through practicing on dolls” (Anderson, K., 2016, p.33).
- **“Total organization”:** according to the Sociologist Erving Goffman (as cited in Anderson, K., 2016, p.35), it is defined as being a method which “has monopoly control of its members’ everyday life”. It is done by isolating children from anything else that is not related to Islam and Daesh fundamentalist’ values, including isolation from their families, both during the mental and physical training; that way “they create strong bonds with their peers, who slowly become their new family” (Anderson, K., 2016, p.39). Isolation is a useful tool to control one’s thoughts and behaviors. Consequently, “ISIS ideology becomes a normal part of their daily lives and children view this ideology as normal and right, not as fundamentalist or extreme (Anderson, K., 2016, p.36).

Once they are indoctrinated and separated from their families, the only thing left to do is turning them into fighters.

- **Physical training:** after the mental training where children are put in a certain state of mind, the military training can begin. This training lasts for approximately three months and is intensive both mentally and physically: they are being hit with sticks to become more tenacious; their living conditions appeared to be extreme as they are forced to sleep on flea-infested mattresses for instance. They are being taught different specific skills such as how to fight in battles using hand-to-hand combat; how to use weapons; how to create bombs and explosives; how to deal with prisoners; how to drive; training of self-defense and martial arts; etc. (Dandois, T. & Trégan, F.X., 2017; Benotman, N., & Malik, N. 2016, pp.37-39).

Once they complete their two trainings, a graduation ceremony takes place and they are assigned to special units. They are called the "generation of lions, protectors of religion, dignity and land" (Anderson, K., 2016, p.27).

d. Similarities with other groups?

The way in which ISIS is using its children can be compared to the Nazi Germany and the Hitler's Youth Army during the Third Reich. Indeed, the large-scale indoctrination was both used by Hitler and Daesh. Their desire? Create a "new mankind" for the former and create the next generation of the caliphate for the later. Both of their youth's strategy recruitment is therefore a long-term one.

As regard to the recruitment, Hitler's strategy is quite similar to the Daesh one: first, entice children through activities, toys and parade in uniform to make children envy them. Second, the summer camps were an easy way to recruit children as they were away from their parents and thus more vulnerable to the ideological education that the Hitler Youth's organization was trying to implement (Korn-Brzoza, D. 2017).

Afterwards, once they were enrolled in the Hitler's Youth, Hitler also changed the nature of education and used the premises of schools to make German youth the "catalyst for change away from the 'decadent' politics of inter-war Germany, towards the new 'national community' of the future" (Benotman, N., & Malik, N. 2016, p.32). For instance, the educational books were picturing the other nationalities, especially the Jews, as a subhuman category, and they were being taught racial laws, ... After the educational indoctrination, they were brought to military camps to defend Hitler and Germany in times of war (Korn-Brzoza, D. 2017).

Finally, the same way Daesh indoctrinates its children to hate the Western countries, Hitler has indoctrinated his youth to hate those who were not part of the "master race" (Jordan, M.K., 2012, p.44).

As we can see, a lot of similarities appear between the Hitler's Youth and the children of Daesh.

e. Voluntary participation or not?

This whole section about the indoctrination process leads us to the following question: is the voluntarism perspective of Daesh recruitment real or blurred?

Harvey, R. (2003, p.26) uses the term voluntary but put in quotation mark. Why? She explains that those "volunteer" children join an armed group either to avenge a family member; because they believe in the cause these armed groups say to defend; because they believe they will be offered protection, food, a new family, a new identity and a purpose in life. Additionally, Ms Salem, M.A. (personal communication, April 2, 2018), psychotherapist, explains that when there is no more reference in the society where you live, there is more chaos, this chaos can lead to the loss of identity and therefore to the transgression of rules. This rules' transgression is especially strong for oppressed minorities. A child or teenager from Arabic origin who lives in Europe might be perceived as an oppressed or judged minority who has not really found his/her place and therefore there is a need to get back to one's roots, if these roots are valued ideologically or religiously it can push teenagers to volunteer by a sense of belonging. Therefore, we must always understand why they volunteered in the first place.

Moreover, the enlistment of Daesh's children after the massive indoctrination they undergo can, in any case, be compared to voluntary participation and this is a very important point. As explained in the conceptual framework, when you believe so much in a cause or that you have experienced such an indoctrination process you become blind, you accept everything that you have been told or shown without questioning, you lack a rationale justification for your beliefs and acts, you do not measure not even see the downsides and you therefore become an uncritical soul.

Furthermore, as the European Parliament explains: "Voluntary recruitment is complex and cannot be explained by a single cause: poverty and other socio-economic conditions; displacement and family separation; mobilization along ethnic or religious lines [...] are all explanatory factors [...]. Many will also argue that there is no real voluntary enlistment, as children who voluntarily join armed forces or groups are in fact forced by structural factors and circumstances" (2014, p.2). Some of these factors such as the economic or sociocultural conditions; religious beliefs; structural factors; or even because some of these young people "struggle to reconcile their religious and national identities" in the Western

societies (Anderson, K. 2016, p.6), all can be related to the ISIS's case⁵. Therefore, those explanations as to why people join an armed group might sound “voluntary” in surface but are blurred in practice.

Obviously, it exists some cases where children are aware and conscious about their involvement's choice. It is important here to highlight that not all adolescents from EU countries joined Daesh for ideological or religious reasons and not all of them have bad socioeconomic situations, but a majority does. Some in fact are from wealthy families and have received appropriate education as Webber, J. (personal communication, April 17, 2018); Somers, B. (2018); and Coolsaet, R. (2015, pp.12-18), amongst others, explain. As pointed out by Horgan, J.G. et al. (2017, p.4) and Coolsaet, R. (2015, p.18), some teenagers joined armed groups because their friends join; because they were living a boring life; or because of anger against the society they were living in because they felt excluded. For these cases, we can talk about voluntarism. However, when deciding to leave to join Daesh, they might not be fully conscious about what Daesh's life is really about, which is a life of daily violence.

When asking Webber, J. (personal communication, April 17, 2018), international disaster and trauma counsellor, if she believes that this youth's voluntarism is conscious or blinded, here is her answer, and I personally follow her opinion: “Daesh slowly and intentionally builds relationships with youth, feeding on their idealism, naivete, immature thinking and decision making, and hope for a better life. Rather than unconscious, this youth is gradually and deftly converted to thinking in a different ideology and within a closed, secret group structure. Whether they are poor or have higher socioeconomic status, youth is easily influenced and converted to “groupthink” where blind compliance with irrational decisions and heinous actions in the name of the organization is valued. Daesh provides a sense of structure and belonging to both disaffected and naive youth who gain purpose and meaning within the group and do not understand that they are being manipulated as pawns for Daesh. Unquestionable loyalty is central and discussing or questioning a decision is disloyal; thus, irrational and dehumanizing decisions are followed blindly”.

Could we then conclude that these “voluntary” children are in a certain way more “unconsciously” volunteer than really volunteers per se?

⁵ As explained by Coolsaet, R. (2016, p.14), Daesh attracts individuals with very different personal patterns and profiles, it is therefore impossible to gather all the profiles under an exhaustive list

V. The human rights of these children and the protection mechanisms

Recruiting children in armed conflict is one of the greatest human rights violations, not only because is the recruitment prohibited under international law, but also because of the suffering (both mental and physical) children are subjected to which amounts to violations of their rights.

a. Rights

As we know, the most important convention on the rights of children is the international Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989. All the rights listed in the convention (economic, social, cultural, civil and political) are applicable to any child, even those who are or have been part of an armed group. These rights include amongst others⁶: the right to life, survival and development; right to non-discrimination; right to protection (this protection mechanism is very important as children have always been a vulnerable “category”); right to a fair hearing (if any); right to a proper education (and not the kind of “education” given in the Daesh’s schools); ... As stated in article 3 of CRC “the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration” (as cited in UNICEF, 1989), the best interests of the children are also established by Islam through the Shari’a and it includes, amongst others: “provisions for the family environment; health education; cultural activities; special protection; civil rights; freedoms; and the protection of children against abuse, violence and exploitation” (Lubis, N. A. F., 2008, pp.172-173). Daesh is said to be an Islamist state obeying by Shari’a rules, however, they are constantly violating and abusing the rights of the children they recruit.

On top of all the economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights contained in the Convention which applies to all children below the age 18 without any form of discrimination, articles 39 and 40 of the Convention are of particular relevance for the case of Daesh’s children who return to the Western societies, namely the rehabilitation and reintegration’s issue dealt by article 39, and the prosecution’s issue (if any) as well as other non-judicial measures and forms of responsibility dealt by article 40.

Additionally, the Optional Protocol to the CRC on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflicts of 2000 is of great importance because it has enlarged the rights of children associated with an armed group. Daesh’s children can find relevance in this Protocol and especially §3 of article 6 which calls on states parties to give all the “appropriate assistance for their physical and psychological recovery and their social reintegration” (as cited in OHCHR, s.d.).

⁶ It would be counter-productive as part of this thesis to enumerate all the rights these children are entitled to as they are numerous

Finally, on the side of the EU, there is one important mechanism which is of relevance for this paper which is the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU of 2000 that emphasizes in §2 of article 24 the need to put the child's best interests as primary consideration. This charter is of utmost importance as it is a binding document contrary to the CRC. Therefore, the EU MS are obliged to obey by this Charter which is important for the reintegration of Daesh child's returnees.

One sad observation regarding CRC, as raised by Harvey, R. (2003, p.12) is that it is undoubtedly the most ratified Convention (as of April 5th, 2018, there are 196 parties and 140 signatories), however it is also the most violated one since in reality the application of these laws is limited. In fact, she further explains: "CRC is not suited to the realities of conflict" because "the Committee on the Rights of the Child is not able to respond in situations of emergency, cannot make *ad hoc* recommendations, cannot hear individual complaints or impose sanctions on offenders" and additionally "CRC covers a wide range of rights, which governments struggle to implement even in peacetime".

b. Protection mechanisms

This notion of protection is of utmost importance because it englobes different actions at different periods of time. "Protection means all activities aimed at securing full respect for the rights of an individual as set out in the relevant human rights instruments and international humanitarian law (McConnan, I., & Uppard, S., 2001, p.18).

Mr Garms, U. (2018) from the United Nations' Office on Drugs and Crime's Terrorism Prevention Branch explained during the ALDE conference that the protection must be applied at every stage. "Since they have experienced a lot of violence, the justice system has first a role of protecting them as victims but also protecting them against secondary victimization namely re-traumatization and stigmatization". In this respect, paragraph 8.11 of the Paris Principles and Guidelines clearly emphasizes the importance of protection against forms of stigmatization and discrimination: "Children associated with armed forces or armed groups who return to communities without undergoing any judicial or other proceedings should be closely monitored to ensure that they are not treated as scapegoats or subjected to any processes or mechanisms that contravene their rights" (UNICEF, 2007, p.42).

The protection of children's rights is part both of International Human Rights Law and Humanitarian Law, forming International Law.

Since 1977 to nowadays, the international community has gathered its power to form a strong and large-scale legal framework around the issue of children involved in armed conflicts. Amongst the most important ones and in addition to the ones mentioned earlier, we count (Harvey, R. 2003, pp.26-28):

- Cape Town Principles and Best Practices – 1997;
- The Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children in Armed Conflict – 1997. The current position is filled by Virginia Gamba;
- The numerous Security Council Resolutions such as the 1261 (in 1999); 1314 (in 2000); 1379 (in 2001); 1460 (in 2003) and many others. The latest one dates to 2014 with SC Resolution 2143;
- The EU Guidelines on Children and Armed Conflict – 2003;
- The Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict – 2005;
- The Paris Commitments to Protect Children Unlawfully Recruited or Used by Armed Forces or Armed Groups - 2007;
- United Nations Global Counter Terrorism Strategy resolution 70/291 – 2016.

All these legal instruments are important, however, words on paper do not fully secure the rights of these children and even with all these conventions, declarations, agreements and initiatives, the phenomenon of children associated with armed groups is still very present. In fact, the problems with these conventions is that they are, for the majority, non-binding on states, they are simply recommendations. Therefore, concrete actions are more than ever necessary if we want to stop seeing children being used and abused.

VI. Conclusion

As we have seen, Daesh's recruitment is vast, diverse, large-scale and meticulously designed. Their recruitment of children is unique compared to other terrorist or armed groups; and so is their use of children which is both part of a short and long-term strategy to expand the Caliphate and ensure its survival. Indoctrination, education and social mobilization are the main elements used both at the local and international level. However, as we have analyzed and from the researches I made, the closest ones who can be compared to the children of Daesh are the Hitler's Youth. The strategical method of children's recruitment is quite the same so as are the motives to invest in children rather than in adults, in other words: create a future loyal generation of followers and believers.

Finally, it is important to highlight, once again, the "voluntary" notion of these children which is quite important. Comparing to the recruitment by former armed groups, the "voluntary" conscription also

known as the co-option method appear to dominate in the ISIS's case, even though it is difficult to assess the clear voluntarism aspect of these young people while joining Daesh.

We must acknowledge, even reluctantly, that the outcomes of Daesh's strategy appear to be quite successful viewing the growing number of children being enrolled since the beginning of the establishment of the Caliphate in 2014. This is why, more than ever, we have to remind ourselves that these children have their rights being daily violated and therefore, the international and the European protection mechanisms have now to be moved from theory into practice in order to save these potential child returnees from a dark future.

Chapter two: What future for these children and adolescents in the countries of the European Union?

In a first phase, it is important to analyze the impact the daily violence has on the mental, psychosocial or physical aspects of the children associated with armed groups; and how are these children perceived to understand if a reintegration could be arguable.

In a second phase, we will look into the reintegration in its globality; analyze mechanisms used for former child soldiers or Hitler's Youth; look into the potential reintegration processes that could fit for Daesh's children; and the potential obstacles they might face.

I. The impact of war

Having been exposed to daily violence and being accustomed and desensitized from this violence; having been participants of the practices of Daesh; having undertaken military training; having undergone intense indoctrination; ... can lead Daesh's children to serious and long-term traumas and destruction in identity.

Molyneux, T. (2018), Programme Manager of the non-governmental organization Child Soldiers International explains during the ALDE group seminar that "All these traumatic events have a serious impact on the formation of a child's identity; on the personality and moral development; on their physical and mental health; and on their social relations". This can lead to issues such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD); difficulties in managing and controlling behavior and emotions; violent and aggressive behavior; feelings of shame; feelings of not belonging; stigmatization; discrimination; loss of speech; intense fear; "altered lines of loyalty; lack of familiarity with EU values and society" (Network, R. A., 2017, p.24); detachment from parents and society; disobedience; ... (European Parliament, 2014, p.4; Guyot, J., 2007, pp.3-5; Benotman, N., & Malik, N., 2016, pp.46-50).

PTSD is the most common problem when returning from war. Indeed, as an example, between 93 and 97 percent of former child soldiers in the Lord Resistance Army appeared to suffer from PTSD (Benotman, N., & Malik, N., 2016, p.47). PTSD can cause depression, stress, nightmares, isolation; it can lead to recurrent memories of hurtful experiences; to feel like the traumatic events were happening all over again; to have sudden emotional or physical reactions when reminded of the traumatic events; to be unable to remind parts of the traumatic events; ... As was the case for a sample of ex child soldiers in Mozambique (Boothby, N. 2006, pp.249-250).

Sometimes, after these traumas, children are in a “survival mode”. Webber, J. (personal communication, April 17, 2018) explains that “The youths’ sympathetic nervous systems are mostly likely high and physically responding in fight or flight or freeze mode”. As further analyzed by Network, R. A. (2017, p.79) “[...] When perceived to be under threat, humans will either fight the threat, flee away from it or freeze in their response. This is the point at which the ‘thinking brain’ of these traumatized children is hijacked by the lower brain functions, which in turn go into ‘survival mode’. Children in survival mode will find it difficult to engage because their initial response is to survive or ‘react’ rather than think ‘rationally’”.

Traumas can manifest differently in children’s behaviors according to different categories of age:

- Infants and toddlers: it would be wrong to believe that they are not impacted by violence as one might think that they are too young to remember what happened. In fact, in ISIS’s territory, mothers play also a great role in indoctrinating their children even at the youngest age. According to Osofsky, J.D., (1999, p.36) studies have shown that this category of children can suffer, amongst others, from “excessive irritability, immature behavior, sleep disturbances, emotional distress, fears of being alone, and regression in toileting and language”. Violence at a young age has a serious impact on the child’s normal development.
- Pre-teens: symptoms of anxiety, depression, sleep disturbance, aggressive behaviors, and difficulties to concentrate at school appear to be “common” for this category of children (Osofsky, J.D., 1999, p.37). They can also find themselves in social isolation or repetitively reproduce traumatic events in their play with other children for instance. Daesh allows soccer but only according to the law of retaliation (Dandois, T. & Trégan, F.X., 2017). Therefore, when these children would come back in Europe they might reproduce these same rules while playing soccer with other children.
- Teenagers: as we know, the adolescence’s period is critical for the development of the personality since it is the period where one incorporates the values and the norms they have being taught. “High levels of aggression, anxiety, behavioral problems, school problems, truancy” are numerous symptoms witnessed amongst this category of children. Furthermore, according to some studies, they often appeared to be “deadened to feelings and pain and show restricted emotional development over time” and “they may attach themselves to peer groups and gangs as substitute family and incorporate violence as a method of dealing with disputes or frustration (Osofsky, J.D., 1999, p.38).

- ⇒ For both the pre-teens and adolescents, their educational skills might have been impaired because of the limited and distorted knowledge they have received in ISIS's schools and they might have difficulties in finding a job in the future (Benotman, N., & Malik, N., 2016, p.47)
- ⇒ According to some studies on children that have been exposed to war or conflicts, PTSD appeared amongst these three categories of age (Osofsky, J.D., 1999, p.38).

Finally, it is important, to clarify that the impact of armed conflict will not be the same upon all children. It will vary, depending on the following: (Guyot, J., 2007, p.3; Osofsky, J.D., 1999, p.36)

- the duration of their “stay” in the conflict zone: according to a study on former child soldiers in Mozambique, those who stayed one year or more with the armed group showed more aggressive and disobedient behaviors; in another study in Northern Uganda, the researchers found that the longer the period spent with the armed group, the more difficulties they had to reintegrate (Boothby, N. 2006, p.249);
- the level of involvement in violence: according to Kort, B. (2007, as cited in Betancourt, T.S., Borisova, I., Rubin-Smith, J., Gingerich, T., Williams, T., & Agnew-Blais, J. 2008, p.22) “children who served as combatants experienced more psychosocial distress at the time of reintegration than children who served as messengers, spies, or guards”;
- the characteristics of the child: for instance, whether the child had already aggressive behaviors tendencies even before the conflict;
- the environment's support (family and community support): studies in Uganda, Sierra Leone and El Salvador have demonstrated that “former child soldiers who were easily accepted back into their communities had significantly lower levels of psychosocial problems as compared to those who experienced rejection and difficulty with reintegration” (as cited in Betancourt, T.S., et al., 2008, p.26);
- the voluntary notion: there is a very interesting insight from a study in Nepal indicating that children who enlisted voluntarily are “less prone to long-term PTSD” and psychological problems than those who were coerced (Betancourt, T. S., et al., 2008, pp.22-23; Drumbl, M.A, 2012, p.155). According to O'Neil, S. & Van Broeckhoven, K. (2018 p.74) in a recent United Nations University's report, children who volunteered in armed groups are better treated than those who are coerced. Could that be a reason why they have lesser psychological problems?

To sum up, the more trauma they experienced, the more likely they will have psychological, social and physical problems.

II. Victims or participants?

In international law and amongst the international community, in general, children associated with armed groups are seen primarily as victims, again because of this “involuntary” notion of their actions and conduct (Grover, L., 2013, p.449). Accordingly, the international and national courts tend generally to discourage children’s prosecutions.

According to some, a balance should be found between this victim-perpetrator duality. In fact, “some have argued that they can be held responsible, though not criminally (Arts, 2006; Happold, 2006, as cited in Vandenhole, W., & Weyns, Y., 2014, p.9), others have pointed out their ‘tactical agency’, meaning that they are “passively undergoing events” (Honwana 2005, as cited in Vandenhole, W., & Weyns, Y., 2014, p.9).

In my opinion, I think it is more appropriate to use the terms “victims” and “active/passive participants” rather than “perpetrator or criminal” because this term is connotatively too strong and negative, and we should be careful with the terms we use when talking about children.

I believe that being a victim does not exclude being a participant as well:

- First, we might affirm that all these children are victims of the indoctrination they have undergone; victims of poverty; victims of the socioeconomic, sociocultural circumstances and all factors that we have mentioned above that lead them directly or indirectly to join ISIS.
- Second, we have the “passive participants”. I would put all children born in Syria or Iraq as well as the European ones who were taken by their radicalized parents into ISIS territory under this category because they did not actively choose this life even though they have actively taken part in ISIS’s expansion of the Caliphate once they got acquainted with this life.
- Third, the “active participants”. Under this category, I would put the children who come from Europe and elsewhere in the world and who “volunteered”. Why? Because even though they have been indoctrinated, they have actively planned and prepared their journey. “Thanks to internet propaganda and their contacts with ISIS members already in Syria, most knew in advance what is going to be expected of them” (General Intelligence and Security Service, 2016, p.5); however, even though they witness the daily violence that ISIS perpetrates around the world, they might think that life with ISIS is not as harsh as it is depicted. As Webber, J., (personal communication, April 17, 2018) develops: “according to cognitive developmental theories such as Piaget many youths who volunteered did not reach an abstract level of thinking developmentally or a mature moral level to be

equipped to make such a cognitive shift on their own. They did not have the benefits of academic, moral, or religious education to begin to be able to make cognitively informed mature decisions”. In other words, they might be blinded by the indoctrination and they might be morally and cognitively immature to make rational decisions. Drumbl, M.A (2012, p.100) advocates for the term “engaged victim” or “circumscribed actor” which I agree with because the “voluntary” notion cannot be completely left aside. “A circumscribed actor has the ability to act, the ability not to act, and the ability to do other than what he or she actually has done. The effective range of those abilities, however, is delimited, bounded, and confined. ... Affected by conflict, they also affect others. Threatened and harmed, they may, in turn, threaten and harm others.” (Drumbl, M.A., 2012, pp.98-99).

Therefore, I personally believe that some sort of responsibility, but not under criminal procedures, should be acknowledged for those active participants because they still made the decision to leave even though they were blinded by the indoctrination.

Consequently, the prosecutions or not they will face will highly depend on this victim/passive/active participant imagery, but more importantly it should be decided on a case-by-case basis because they do not all have the same roles in ISIS and they do not incorporate the experiences the same way (see the determining factors above) (Benotman, N., & Malik, N., 2016, pp.41-44; Anderson, K., 2016, p.3).

III. Reactive and repressive measures

In this section, we will use a gradual path, that is going from step one: the risk and needs assessment; to step two: prosecution; and three: reintegration.

a. Risk and needs assessment (RNA)

The RNA is the primary step to be undertaken whether it be for adult FTFs or children. Therefore, once they arrive in the EU countries, they will be subject to this assessment.

The RNA already exists for adults but is not suitable for children. As we already said, children are different from adults and need therefore measures specifically tailored to their stages of development. Using an RNA conceived for adults will not be appropriate and will prove ineffective. It is not to say that we cannot use the already existing tools, but they must be revised and adapted to the specific needs and characteristics of children (UNODC, 2017, p.139; Network, R. A., 2017, p.5).

What can the assessment measure? The main needs of the child; the risk factors (the risk of re-recruitment; risk to be a threat to him/herself and/or for the society; risk of secondary victimization

within the justice system); and strengths and weakness factors. In the case of these returnees, measuring the likelihood of violent extremist tendencies is necessary. Therefore, these tools could: “properly assess the personal circumstances that led the child to become involved with a terrorist or violent extremist group, whether that happened out of conviction, through coercion or for material gain; recognize the different levels of involvement in such a group; avoid considering such children as a homogeneous group and determine the need for measures to promote disengagement from violence” (UNODC, 2017, p.139).

What is the purpose of such tools? The fundamental purpose is to assess whether the child should be handed over to the juvenile justice system or back to the society while following rehabilitation and reintegration programmes. It is then useful for establishing a good and appropriate intervention and reintegration plan, whether in the juvenile institutions or not.

How can these tools function? The RNA will usually be performed by local authorities whose main source of information will be based on the children’s stories. However, their narratives might be distorted because of the traumas they experienced and the impact it can have on their memory or it can just be a “well-rehearsed rationale that he/she has developed to justify their own behavior” (Coolsaet, R., 2015, p.11). Sometimes, it is also possible to gather information through intelligence services or social media.

As a complement to the RNA, social enquiry reports could be of great help. Their objective is “supporting the adjudicatory process by providing the court with information on the situation of the individual child and by presenting suggestions on the most appropriate sentence to be applied. They are an extremely valuable tool to the application of sentences that are responsive not only to the seriousness of the offence, but also to the personal situation of the child” (UNODC, 2017, p.95).⁷

In Mozambique, for instance, a similar assessment has been created and used. It is called the “Child Behavior Inventory Form” to assess “aggression, traumatic symptoms, and high-risk to pro-social behavior” to establish which assistance was best suited to the child (Boothby, N., 2006, p.247).

On a more hypothetical note, could it be conceivable to also assess the regrets and remorse of those children? Could this have an impact on whether they should be criminalized or not? But then, how could one evaluate such sentiment? As I see it, this might leave room for further consideration.

⁷ More information on the social enquiry reports can be found in Annex 1

b. Criminal prosecution, non-judicial forms of responsibility or reintegration into society?

Criminalizing or not children who have taken part in hostilities has always been a tough debate. There is a global consensus under international law that children under the age 18 should not be held criminally accountable for their involvement with armed groups might they have committed crimes and human rights violations. First, because they are primarily victims of recruitment and victims of human rights violations themselves; and second, because the mere recruitment of children is a violation of international law (UNODC, 2017, p.75). It is therefore vital to recognize that “children should not have been in the ranks in the first place, and that children having been recruited is the prior crime. This line of thinking does not exclude children taking responsibility for their acts, but in the context of armed conflict, it considers that they have been victimized” (Nylund, B. V., 2016, p.209). Additionally, it is also stated in international law that “the arrest, detention, or imprisonment of a child... shall be used only as a measure of last resort” (as cited in Jordan, M.K., 2012, p.30). However, if imprisonment occurs, “it should be for the shortest period of time and efforts to find other solutions should continue” (as cited in Jordan, M.K., 2012, p.30).

Prosecutions for children and juvenile institutions can sometimes be more harmful than repairing: according to a UN report, young people who are incarcerated are “regularly subjects of violence, intimidation, exploitation and inhumane conditions” (van der Heide, L. & Geenen, J., 2017, p.12). Additionally, incarceration can have a serious impact on their reintegration: they can face stigmatization when returning to their community because they will be labelled as criminal and they will have to drag a criminal record (UNODC, 2017, p.98). Furthermore, if the rehabilitation programmes are not processed appropriately, it can delay their educational, vocational, and psychological reintegration. Being isolated and confined in an environment of violence might not help them as they need to be as soon as possible reconnected with their families and communities. In fact, “institutionalization has been shown to be detrimental to the social and psychological development of children as it isolates them from their communities and increases their marginalization” (Machel, 2000, as cited in Jordan, M.K., 2012, p.35). It is argued that “punishing children for acts they committed under duress or when their moral capacities are not fully developed seems destined to permanently alienate the child from society” (Rowe, C. R., Wiebelhaus-Brahm, E., & Morgan, A. T. 2010, p.149). Therefore, juvenile institutions might not be appropriate for the specific needs and development of children.

UNODC, however, (2017, p.40) clearly states that the “recognition of their victim status does not exclude criminal liability and other forms of accountability of children alleged to have committed terrorist offences”. Additionally, if the child’s agency is not recognized, the society he/she is going back to might have a feeling of unfairness which can lead to rejection, discrimination and a complication in the reintegration’s process (Drumbl, M.A., 2012, p.196). Therefore, transitional justice efforts should be applied for the most serious cases and those who “volunteered”. But of what kind?

- Traditional accountability mechanisms such as community-based programmes. “These mechanisms have proven effective in rehabilitating juvenile offenders; in fostering respect for the rights of others; and have the advantage of being perceived as legitimate in the eyes of the community” (UNICEF & No Peace Without Justice, 2002, p.133)
- Mediation; diversion programmes; customary and traditional ceremonies (Drumbl, M.A., 2012, p.188)
- Drumbl, M.A (2012, p.209) and Nylund, B.V. (2016, pp.208-211) amongst others, advocate for restorative justice (UNODC, 2018, p.88). It refers to “a concept for holding children responsible, while at the same time considering their specific needs and rights in the process of recovery and reintegration. It includes alternatives to criminal trials, incarceration and other actions that would impede a child’s return to society. The restorative justice approach considers children as participants rather than faultless and passive victims. It finally allows children to “be made aware of the consequences of their actions and the gravity of such actions, so they know that such behavior will not be tolerated” (Jordan, M.K., 2012, p.49).
- Truth commissions: the aim is “to address accountability and establish an accurate historical record of past atrocities by gathering testimony that clarifies what took place and publicly acknowledges previously undisclosed crimes” (UNICEF & No Peace Without Justice, 2002, p.127). Truth commissions have an educational effect and can help shape children’s perception of right and wrong (UNICEF & No Peace Without Justice, 2002, pp.130-131). This might be effective for Daesh’s children as what they endure during their time in ISIS will completely disrupt their understanding of the “right” and “wrong” notions.

The international community is of belief that “such measures have the inherent merit of preventing the risks of victimization and stigmatization that are associated with long periods in police custody or detention and are thus more responsive to the developmental needs of children” (UNODC, 2017, p.88).

Besides many believe that these forms of accountability can benefit both the society and the best interests of these victims-participants (Grover, L., 2013, pp.450-451; Veale, A. 2006, p.6).

Problems of age classification:

Children from Daesh are categorized by RAN (2018) into three groups:

1. Teenagers from 10 to 17 years. Many of them have received combat training and have experience in extreme violence. In this category there is a subgroup category of children aged 15-16-17 who travelled alone and joined Daesh
2. Pre-teens from 4 to 9 years old: they suffered indoctrination but most probably did not engage in violent terrorism themselves
3. Infants and toddlers: they might have been indoctrinated and have witnessed daily violence but did not engage in violence

This classification implies that according to their group of age, children, at their return will be dealt with differently and I personally disagree with that. Why? Because that would mean that we assume that the threat would mainly emanate from the teenagers' category for the simple fact that they received military training. But regardless of them receiving military training or not, they all have undergone the same intense indoctrination, and all have been exposed to daily violence. I personally believe that they are all affected and therefore, treating those from 10 to 17 years old differently on the mere argument that they have received military training and have committed acts of brutality is counter-productive because even those who did not take part in violence could later become alarming if they do not receive proper assistance. In psychological terms, I completely agree that they must be treated differently as we have already seen that the traumas will manifest differently in children's behaviors according to their age. However, as regard to prosecution, the non-judicial mechanisms or reintegration, I believe that the age should not be given so much consideration. What is most important in my opinion are all the factors being mentioned already above (the traumas they experienced, their duration in the conflict, the indoctrination, the voluntary notion, ...)⁸. On this regard, Drumbl, M.A. (2012, p.209) also advocates to "invest less in categorical age demarcations", as age is certainly an important factor but it "does not have to be singularly determinative". Plus, on which legal basis is this classification based upon?

⁸ On the prosecution's matter, we do not consider infants and toddlers since they will obviously not be criminalized regarding their young age

Of course, the adolescent's brain is not "child-like" (Drumbl, M.A, 2012, p.57), but with the violence, abuse, indoctrination they have experienced, their cognitive development has been brutalized and affected. That is another reason I believe that the age should not be valued so importantly.

At their return they will be treated on a case-by-case basis according to their specific needs, because it is proper to each how they incorporated the experiences and how it affected them, and each will need different assistance. In this case, why building this classification if they are anyway going to be treated individually according to their own story? Consequently, I truly believe that it is not necessary to have this kind of age classification.

Another problem of this age classification is that, as we know, there is no international consensus on the minimum age of criminal liability, it is the task of the States to establish it in their domestic laws⁹. CRC requires States parties to establish "a minimum age below which children shall be presumed not to have the capacity to infringe the penal law" (Veale, A. 2006, p.1). This leaves a wide margin of appreciation to States which can be problematic. In fact, how can one define at what age did the child attain the moral, social, cognitive, emotional or physical capacity to commit a crime? For instance, can a child of 8 years old be dealt with in a criminal way since he/she can retain ideas of violence and imitate them? Does he/she have the maturity to understand what he/she is doing? (Veale, A. 2006, p.7). It is very difficult to assess at which specific age a person has the maturity to consciously commit crimes. Besides, there is the problem of determining the real age of a person if he/she is not in possession of his/her birth certificate or if the birth certificate is not recognized as valid, as can be the case for many children born from an EU relative in ISIS's territory (UNODC, 2017, p.43; Veale, A. 2006, p.7; O'Neil, S. & Van Broeckhoven, K., 2018 p.136). Consequently, how would this child be treated in Europe in the juvenile system if we do not know his/her age? In which category of the classification above can we put him/her?

Therefore, instead of classifying children according to their age, we should rather treat them on a case-by-case basis, according to their needs and taking into account their full story. This is the most important.

Leaving aside the age factor, what should be recommended to do with those who "volunteered"? Even if it is very difficult to assess the voluntary aspect of a child who went to join Daesh and even if we

⁹ In Belgium, the age of criminal responsibility is 18 years old (Veale, A. 2006, p.1)

leave aside this notion and presume that “they were not freely choosing to volunteer because it is beyond their comprehension or stage of development” (Webber, J. 2018), they still actively planned their journey and this factor cannot be underestimated. Therefore, the UN Security Council adopted resolution 2178 in 2014. Accordingly, MS who agreed on the resolution must criminalize their citizens if the following occurs: “travel or attempt to travel for the purpose of the perpetration, planning, or preparation of, or participation in, terrorist acts, or the providing or receiving of terrorist training; financing of such travel; organization or other facilitation of such travel” (European Parliament, 2015b, p.3). However, regarding children, in light of the elements described above, I remain from the firm conviction that they should not be held criminally responsible. A great majority of FTFs come back because of disillusionment and remorse (Network, R.A, 2017, p.23). This shows how misinformed and enchanted they were by the life ISIS promised. Of course, the voluntary notion should be taken into consideration as the other factors mentioned but has anyone ever made a naïve and foolish lifestyle choice? Could not they get a second chance? After all, they are still children. Of course, some form of accountability should be applied but they should rather be subject to non-judicial forms of accountability as we have clearly stated that depriving children of their liberty is detrimental.

Finally, we should acknowledge that there is in fact, as Molyneux, T. (2018) explains, a conflict of interest between the states’ obligation to sanction acts of terrorism and secure their population on one hand; and their obligation to protect children’s rights on the other hand. I would therefore recommend children’s returnees to be first and foremost considered for rehabilitation programmes; and for the most serious cases and those who volunteered, to have access to alternatives of judicial measures which can then facilitate their entry into reintegration’s processes. It is also important to highlight that since gathering evidence on crimes Daesh’s children might have committed can be difficult, prosecution will be even more complicated as just the mere belonging to the group cannot be an argument for their prosecution.

c. Lessons learned from the past

Since the return of Daesh children is still a limited phenomenon in the EU, we should look at past examples to draw lessons.

On the matter of prosecution: the practice of prosecuting children is very rare. The Special Court for Sierra Leone is the only international court where child soldiers from 15 to 18 years old can be trialed. However, it appeared in my researches that no cases have been brought to the Court, in fact: “juveniles between the ages of fifteen and eighteen determined to be guilty of committing heinous war crimes are

not subject to imprisonment. Instead, juvenile criminals will be “sentenced” to a truth and reconciliation mechanism [...]” (Romero, J. A. 2004, p.2; Harvey, R., 2003, p.79). Some cases of prosecution and detention appeared in the Gacacas courts in Rwanda for example, however, the trials have been suspended in late 2003 because of questions of fairness concerning the courts (Refworld, 2004). In Northern Uganda, for instance, a general amnesty has been offered to all children (Veale, A. 2006, p.6). As for the Hitler’s Youth, most of them have been amnestied under the Youth Amnesty, issued by the Allies for all citizens born after January 1, 1919. They concluded that anyone who was 14 or younger at the time of Hitler could not be held responsible for his/her actions (Beckert, H. 2016, p.31).

On the reintegration’s matter: we will first look at approaches that were used and were successful for ex child soldiers in general, then investigate the Hitler’s Youth case.

i. **Former child soldiers**

It exists nowadays numerous rehabilitation and reintegration efforts for former child soldiers, part of Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) programmes. Some have been successful and others not or less. In this chapter we will give examples of the most used initiatives.

The do’s:

- **Psychosocial support and mental health services** must come together (Betancourt, T.S. et al., 2008a, pp.3-4), this is the very first step of a reintegration program. According to those same researchers, there exists a variety of clinical models but one particularly successful is the Classroom Based Intervention model: “it integrates components of supportive group psychotherapy and cognitive behavioral therapy which are indicated in the clinical literature as effective for addressing disorders such as depression, anxiety and some aspects of complex trauma” (Betancourt, T.S. et al., 2008a, p.46). It is done through playing, learning and creative problem-solving and it appeared successful in Sudan, Burundi, Sri Lanka, Turkey amongst others (Ager, A., Akesson, B., Stark, L., Flouri, E., Okot, B., McCollister, F., & Boothby, N. 2011, p.2). Psychosocial efforts are meant to reconnect families, communities and the child; rebuild social networks; and provide children with “tools” to deal with challenges and traumas. Mental health interventions on the other hand are fashioned to reduce the mental health issues of children (Betancourt, T.S. et al., 2008a, p.36).
- **Community acceptance and family support** is of utmost importance for the social reintegration and psychological recovery as was demonstrated in studies in Sierra Leone, Uganda and El Salvador, amongst others (Betancourt, T.S. et al., 2008a, p.26; Verhey, B., 2002, p.3). In fact, when

reintegration programmes fail, two explanations come up: either it is because of the child's difficulties to cope with his/her traumas which leads to constant violent behavior, or because his/her community does not accept him/her back (Benotman, N., et al., 2016, p.56; Akello, G., Richters, A., & Reis, R. 2006, p.229). In the African countries, generally children go through **traditional cleansing ceremonies** to be “cleansed” and “healed” from their actions. This is a way through which the communities can forgive the child and accept him/her back (Akello, G., et al., 2006, p.230; Boothby, N. 2006, p.252; Betancourt, T.S. et al., 2008a, p.12; Awodola, B., 2012, p.38). Furthermore, **community sensitization campaigns** are also a useful tool to reintegrate them and to prepare the communities for their return (Verhey, B., 2002, p.3); indeed, “sensitization campaigns were designed to enable community members to understand that former child soldiers were victims too, even though they may have perpetrated violence” (Boothby, N. 2006, p.253). These sensitization programmes can take the form of group discussions or workshops (Betancourt, T.S. et al., 2008a, p.35). **As for the families**, studies have shown that “former child soldiers with high family connectedness and social support were more likely to have lower levels of emotional distress and better social functioning” (Betancourt, T.S. et al., 2008a, p.25). Interviews with former child soldiers emphasized the need of friends and family's support as they help them deal with painful memories (Betancourt, T.S., et al., 2008a, p.15)

- **Community-based projects** (such as reparation of hospitals, ...): it permits the child to be given an **active role** in society and this is a very important aspect for him/her to feel useful (Boothby, N., 2006, pp.253-254). In Mozambique for instance, former child soldiers collected all the weapons they used during their time in the armed group and turned them into public art objects such as benches or fountains to symbolize the transformation of aggression into peace (Salem, M.A., personal communication, April 2, 2018). These kinds of initiatives are important because the more they have an active role of transformation, the more they will succeed in regaining a role in society. In Sierra Leone, for instance, children have been given a voice through radio and other media for entertainment broadcasts (Rowe, C. R. et al., 2010, p.147). Findings have shown that “to play an active role [...] may be critical to survival and mental health alike (Jensen & Shaw, 1993, p. 702, as cited in Harris, D.A., 2009, p.2). These initiatives are important to reconnect the children and their communities.
- **Education:** attending school allows children to regain a sense of normality and security; enable psychosocial aspect; encourage goal setting; give them confidence and a purpose in life (Sommers, 2003; Elbedour et al. 1993; Loughry et al. 2006, as cited in Betancourt, T. S. et al., 2008b, pp.5-6;

Awodola, B., 2012, p.38). According to caregivers, education should be a focal point in reintegration programmes (Betancourt, T.S. et al., 2008b, p.8). Both traditional and alternative education is an element of successful reintegration (Betancourt, T. S., et al., 2008b, p.5). Accelerated education program within the schools help children to catch up on their backwardness (Betancourt, T.S. et al., 2008a, p.43).

- The use of **creative and recreational activities** such as dance, music, drama, games, sports, ... are very useful. Those activities emphasize “cooperation, imagination, and the development of other social, emotional and cognitive skills” (Betancourt, T.S. et al., 2008a, p.35), it also helps them to relax, feel normal again, and contribute to their psychosocial development (Education, M., 2012, pp.46-47). Indeed, sport and play programs focus particularly on “fostering healthier, educated children; empowered individuals and communities; improved health and healthier lifestyle behaviors; and they teach important conflict resolution skills including teamwork, fair-play and communication” (Betancourt, T.S. et al., 2008a, p.44).
- **Individual/group counselling and collective conflict resolution** has proven to be effective (Verhey, B., 2002, p.3; Rowe, C. R. et al., 2010, p.141). Those sessions help the child to “process his/her memory, and cope with the violence they have survived, witnessed or committed. Memories are accessed through story telling or drawing” (Akello, G. et al., 2006, p.232).
- **The nonverbal approaches to recovery:** it helps them express what they cannot express verbally as it is very recurrent for victims of trauma, especially children, to be paralyzed when they have to express “speechless terror” “given the nature of human neurological responses to trauma” (Harris, D.A., 2009, pp.1-4). In fact, it appeared in some studies (2001) that “the children who had experienced the highest degree of exposure seemed to worsen as a result of talking about the events” (Harris, D.A., 2009, p.4). Recalling the experiences endured and repeating them orally is the cause of flashbacks and feelings of reliving the trauma; thus this technique called direct therapy exposure should be avoided (Harris, D.A., 2009, p.2). This can be replaced by creative arts therapy. “Art, song, drama, and dance in primitive times were motivated by a need for catharsis and for gaining control over threats to the community or to the individual” (Harris, D.A., 2009, p.8). Those arts therapy have been used and proved effective in many locations, with a clear example in Mozambique as it was documented in Boothby, N. (2006).
- To reduce the symptoms of PTSD, one of the main successful methods is the “**avoidance**” **coping mechanism**. In Mozambique, it has been shown that child soldiers who used this mechanism had fewer PTSD symptoms over time. Avoidance is “actively identifying social situations, physical

locations, or activities that had triggered the emergence of PTSD symptoms in the past and making efforts to avoid them in the future” (Boothby, N., 2006, p.250). Therefore, when they are confronted with painful memories, they avoid them and think about something else.

- **Strong role models** are also necessary (Boothby, N. et al., 2006, p.102)
- **Return to a normal life, undertake daily activities** is helpful, for them to feel like “everyone else”, to find back their “true” identity and to accelerate their psychosocial recovery (Boothby, N., 2006, p.254; Guyot, J., 2007, p.9)

It appears in many studies illustrated above in Sierra Leone, Burundi, El Salvador, Uganda, Mozambique, ... that after having participated in reintegration programmes, a large part of former child soldiers has been reintegrated into their communities with high employment rates and no alarming observations of mental health problems (Jordans, M. J., Komproe, I. H., Tol, W. A., Ndayisaba, A., Nisabwe, T., & Kohrt, B. A. 2012, p.11).

The do not's:

- The “handover ceremony” where the child is being brought back to his/her community can reduce the problems of stigmatization, however, it can put all the attention on the child as being one with a “problematic past” (Akello, G. et al., 2006, p.235). Therefore, focusing all the community’s attention on the child might not help. The reintegration must be handled in a discreet and smooth way.

ii. Hitler’s Youth

While for child soldiers in general DDR programmes are used, the initiatives designed for the Hitler’s Youth could be found under the triple-D process: demilitarization, denazification and democratization (DDD)¹⁰; these are the stages for the **re-education process** of the former youth Nazi (Fox, E., 2016, p.43). It is important to understand that the only reintegration efforts made at that time were educational. There were not any psychological, mental, counselling, ... support for this youth like it is the case for child soldiers who have been beneficiaries of DDR programmes. Why? I tend to believe that the reasons behind this lack of reintegration efforts are that States had more pressing duties after the war such as rebuilding their countries and putting Nazis on trial, and I also tend to believe that reintegration programmes began to be truly considered through DDR.

¹⁰ Demilitarization for Hitler’s Youth can be compared to Disarmament for former child soldiers; Denazification compared to Demobilization; and Democratization compared to Reintegration. In fact, democratization was the most important tool in Germany for citizens to be reintegrated

The DDD process did not have anything to do with the end of the Nazi indoctrination, in fact the indoctrination knocked down in 1945 with the death of Hitler and the collapse of the Nazi Germany. The purpose of the denazification process was to reeducate people with democratic values.

The democratization process started with the **reorganization of the schools' structures, both material, building and pedagogical**. In fact, schools' infrastructures had to be rebuilt since they were destroyed by the war; the teaching materials, both books and the curriculum programme had to be reimagined to concur with democratic values and dismantle the Nazi culture that youth had so deeply incorporated (Fox, E., 2016, p.45; Beckert, H., 2016, pp.21-23); and new pedagogical methods (less strict and authoritarian) needed to be found such as stronger relationships between students and teachers, more discussions and open debates for students to give their opinion (these kind of interactive methods promote the critical thinking of students), sport and physical education were also renewed to focus on "democratic ways of living and thinking" (Beckert, H., 2016, p.49).

Furthermore, **democratic youth organizations** were built helping Hitler's Youth to find their way towards democracy and to spread democratic values around them (Fox, E., 2016, pp.52-53). These extracurricular programmes and organizations were greatly welcomed and had a positive impact on youth and it gave them a sense of purpose. "Liberal values, decreasing competitiveness, and encouraging cooperation among members" were part of these programmes (Beckert, H. 2016, p.56).

Other initiatives took place such as: **exchange programmes** with the United States to gain a broader perspective of democracy and other cultures; or **the use of radio and student newspapers at schools to give them an active role** (Beckert, H. 2016, pp.45-57).

Success or not?

Because of the deep and brutal indoctrination they experienced during the Hitler time, Hitler's Youth became dehumanized and both denazification and democratization phases at first failed because the youth still believed in Hitler and his ideals (Fox, E., 2016, p.47). However, they slowly distrusted the regime they so much believed in as they felt that they were being let down. They then started to reexamine their previous values and focused on their survival without talking about the past (Fox, E., 2016, p.51).

"It is certain that some Hitler Youth struggled to return to normalcy, initially rejecting Allied efforts of democratization in the process. Nevertheless, decades of demilitarization, denazification,

reconstruction, and democratization, through other youth organizations helped fully convince Germany's youth of the positive values of democracy [...]” (Fox, E., 2016, p.56).

d. Reintegration of Daesh's child returnees

Each child had had his/her own experience and history within ISIS, therefore each has to be dealt with in an individual and tailored way within an overall and multi-agency approach where different actors such as law enforcement agencies, local authorities, child services, social care services, schools, health services, sports organizations, religious organizations, ... will have to come together in a coordinated manner to respond to their needs (Vautmans, H., personal communication, March 23, 2018). To that end, coordination between the national and the regional/local level must be top prioritized (Network, R.A., 2017, pp.7-32).

Benotman, N., & Malik, N., (2016, p.85) give us a detailed intervention approach on how to deal with child returnees (the diagram can be found in annex 2). To sum up, they suggest the following for children from 3 to 18 years old, whether they are being prosecuted or not: deradicalization, rehabilitation, re-education, re-integration, counselling and training, debunking ideology. As for the children from 0 to 2 years old, they advocate the same, but without deradicalization and rehabilitation efforts. I would rather promote this line of intervention rather than the age's classification of RAN because this approach does not put so much emphasis on the child's age when treating their case but takes into account the whole package of their experience.

We will first look into the deradicalization process which is the first step when the child returns which is an important one.

i. Deradicalization

Child soldiers in general are being “offered” DDR programmes, Hitler's Youth DDD programme, but what about Daesh child returnees? It is debated that DDR might be inadequate for child returnees since DDR process does not address the significant religious and political indoctrination imposed on them (Benotman, N., & Malik, N., 2016, p.61), therefore, we might in this case suggest: Deradicalization (Disengagement), Rehabilitation and Reintegration process (DRR).

Before going into the process of deradicalization, it is first important to understand how radicalization occurs. Coolsaet, R. (2015, p.6), explains that in the eyes of the wide population, radicalization reflects a phenomenon that is almost exclusively perceived as being Muslim-related. He further describes it as being a “socialization process in which group dynamics are more important than ideology”. “Feelings

of frustration and inequity first have to be interiorized and then lead to a mental separation from society (which is considered responsible for those feelings). Individuals then reach out to others who share the same feelings and create an ‘in-group’ [...]”. From this description, we can understand **that ideology is usually not the main driver of radicalization** but feelings of exclusion and a desire to get involved with a group that shares the same feelings is. This is important to understand how to “deradicalize” a person.

However, deradicalization does not come alone. Not only deradicalization is meant to shift a mindset but it is also meant to change one’s extremist behavior, and to do that, we also need to consider the disengagement process. Disengagement is the procedure in which radicalized persons change their behaviors and stop using violence as a way of life (Veldhuis, T., 2012, p.2).

There is a serious issue when using the term deradicalization. In fact, in Europe (and in Belgium mainly), there is a widely held view that Islam is the problem to radicalization and that the solution is to “instill radical Muslims with more appropriate thoughts” (Coolsaet, R., 2015, p.23). If we think like that, if we continue to associate this group of people to the radicalization problem, the only thing that we will achieve is polarizing the society even more, excluding and stigmatizing these people even more, feeding racism, which will lead to the failure of the deradicalization programmes and to the reintegration.

Deradicalization and/or disengagement?

Both deradicalization and disengagement processes must be combined in rehabilitation plans (Network, R.A., 2017, p.43). However, sometimes one might happen and the other not. In fact, as RAN Exit (2017, p.2) reported, deradicalization is in general much harder to accomplish than disengagement because it is both a change in behavior and a change in belief which is deeper rooted inside an individual, and as UNODC (2018, p.116) affirms “programmes focusing on disengagement from violence tend to be more effective and are less likely to give rise to discriminatory practices”.

It is of general belief that disengagement might be best suited when dealing with child returnees. Why? First, because a lot of them do not have a real notion of Islam. Daesh is a terrorist organization with fundamentalist views, however, these fighters and especially the young cannot be called fundamentalists per se since their knowledge of Islam is superficial, the younger they are, the more their knowledge is frivolous (Coolsaet, R., 2015, pp.8-11), in fact, they just learn a self-constructed discourse and pretend defending it. As expressed by El Said, H. (2015, p. 256, as cited in Pettinger, T.

2017, p.40) “evidence shows that most violent extremists have weak or no rigorous religious knowledge”. The radical ideas Daesh’s children have are not truly theirs, they have been imposed on them, therefore, as Coolsaet, R. (2016, p.17) explains there is nothing to “deradicalize”, and since these children do not have a real constructed ideology mindset, deradicalization might appear less useful since it concentrates on ideology. Furthermore, as Human Rights Watch (2005; as cited in Pettinger, T. 2017, p.21) notes “while [former fighters] may be disengaged, they are not necessarily ‘deradicalized’”. In fact, one can abandon his/her violent behavior but can still retain his/her extremist ideas (Veldhuis, T., 2012, p.8). Therefore, it might be better to focus more on disengagement, so they can abandon the violent behavior they have been taught in ISIS and so that they do not pose a risk to society.

It is further important to emphasize that deradicalization does not mean imposing another religion or beliefs on someone because everyone is entitled to his/her freedom of religion, deradicalization I believe is trying to make one understand the true roots and values of one’s religion, make him/her understand that there are other ways in which understand the religion and not the twisted version that Daesh gave them, in other words help them interpret Islam in a non-violent way. To show the right path of Islam, call on an Imam might be a good solution as Mascagna, S. (personal communication, April 10, 2018) and RAN Exit (2017, p.7) pointed out. I personally believe that discrediting their ideology or religion will not be useful, but engaging in an open and constructive discussion to try to understand their point-of-view will be better received. In fact, as pointed out by Coolsaet, R. (2016, p.19), theological and ideological discussions are generally useless, it is often the emotional dimension that plays a determining role.

How can you deradicalize/disengage someone from extremist violence?

There is first a question that we must ask ourselves: how do governments determine if a child is a threat or not?

There is no one-size-fit-all approach, what might work for one country or individual might not work for another one. The question to be asked before each intervention is “what works for whom in what circumstances?” (Veldhuis, T., 2012, p.4).

According to Köhler, D., (2014, p.4) there are **three dimensions** to be taken into consideration when building a deradicalization/disengagement programme: **affective, pragmatic and ideological**. The affective dimension addresses “the need for individuals to be emotionally supported and to find an alternative reference group. Family counseling is considered vital to addressing these needs” (Köehler,

D., 2014, p.5) as are mentors; the pragmatic dimension entails to introduce new perspectives of life: indeed, leaving an extremist group can create a sense of emptiness, therefore, they need to be given alternatives to what they have known (RAN Exit, 2016, p.5); and the ideological dimension is to “dismantle the previously learned radical ideology” (Köchler, D., 2014, p.4). I personally do not agree with the word “dismantle”, I would rather refer to: “reaching a critical self-assessment of his/her past” (Köchler, D., 2014, p.4), in other words, we must help them think critically.

- There are primarily two kinds of methods and interventions that can be used: **therapeutic or socio-dynamic counselling**. The therapeutic one is usually an individual session where the personal matters of each child are addressed. The aim here is to “open up the returnee’s worldview to different perspectives and interpretations through conversations” (Network, R.A., 2017, p.43). The socio-dynamic process is a group session that can provide “peer group assistance and recognition that an individual’s feelings are not unique” (RAN Exit, 2016, p.4). According to Webber, J. (personal communication, April 17, 2018), group counselling are valuable modalities amongst ex child-combatants. She explains that group intervention replaces the toxic authoritarian ISIS group. The group intervention provides several curative benefits such as peer support; better communication and relationships; trust; and it is a recapitulation of the family dynamic and a microcosm of the community. These group experiences promote a new worldview and respect for human life. The goals are to respect one another; listen to the others; learn to disagree in a respectful way; cope with emotion dysregulation; and help each other towards common goals. Older adolescents who have the capacity for abstract thinking and moral decisions will experience a new way of relating to and speaking with other people that they can contrast to their extremist soldier experience. However, a first psychological evaluation of each child must be undertaken to be sure that none of them will have a negative impact on the others of the group.

It is generally recommended to combine individual and group counselling practices (Network, R.A., 2017, p.43).

- Apart from counselling services, **psychological support** which addresses grievance and trauma, focuses on rebuilding self-esteem and promotes a sense of self-control must be sought (UNODC, 2018, p.116).
- **Providing proper religious care** through the help of an Imam as we have mentioned already.
- As we have seen in the case of the Hitler’s Youth, they have been re-educated through democratic values. In the case of deradicalization and disengagement of a Daesh’s child, **using the premises of**

schools to promote the democratic values such as tolerance, humanity, openness might work, as it was suggested by Würtz, K., (2018) during the ALDE group seminar.

- Since a majority of them have a great lack of knowledge about the religion they pretend to defend, it is important to re-educate them. In fact, **education might be one of the top priority point**. A study by Tahiri, H., Grossman, M. (2013; as cited in Pettinger, T., 2017, p.40) found that “education was identified by all participants as the most critical element in reducing the appeal of violent extremism”. Therefore, viewing them as uninformed rather than radicalized might improve the deradicalization programmes.
- “Initiatives that strengthen **critical thinking, dialogue and acceptance of diversity** and that challenge the legitimacy of violence as a means of pursuing ideological or political objectives” are necessary as well (UNODC, 2018, p.116).

After the deradicalization/disengagement process, a final question must be given consideration: how can governments assess and determine if the child is no longer a threat?

Which are the problems with the deradicalization programmes? Successes appeared to be weak because of a lack of clear definitions and objectives; problems of evaluation’s measures; the aspect of necessary voluntary participation (for the deradicalization and/or disengagement to occur, the child has to be willing to enter the process, no one can force him/her to do so); and there is the discrimination’s aspect of these programmes as we have mentioned (UNODC, 2018, p.107; Pettinger, T., 2017, p.41).

ii. Rehabilitation and reintegration process

Before each intervention, it is crucial that all people involved in the rehabilitation process are trained and prepared in trauma treatment and Daesh radicalization methods, this is called “trauma informed practice” (Webber, J., personal communication, April 17, 2018).

Both Daesh’s children who are prosecuted and those who are not, are entitled to rehabilitation and reintegration programmes, it would be a violation of their rights not to be given assistance and support. As we have already established that the best suited solution would be not to prosecute them, we will not concentrate on the specific rehabilitation programmes in prisons.

First, it is important to affirm that most of the initiatives stated above for former child soldiers and the re-education of Hitler’s Youth can apply in the case of Daesh children. We will now give a general overview of what can be done for these children:

- **Traditional or cleansing ceremonies** for the religious ones and as substitute of those cleansing ceremonies for those who do not have religious traditions, Webber, J. (personal communication, April 17, 2018) suggests the experience of **the life story line** which can make them understand that the Daesh's period was only a part of their life and that even after ISIS, life continues. As Sandlarz, E. clinician psychologist and psychanalyst explains (as cited in Le Parisien, 2016), we need to build a bridge between before and today, so the child can reconnect to him/herself and his/her family and community. The child is like a tree that has been uprooted. But the roots have not disappeared, we just need to help him/her find them back.
- They absolutely need **psychological care**, and this is not debatable. We have already analyzed the impact living with ISIS could have on them, thus they need to be subjected to a psychological and mental health examination to determine the degree of their trauma and apply the right interventions. This is the primary element of any rehabilitation programme. As explained by Salem, M. and Webber, J. (personal communication, 2018), when there is trauma, a verbal blockage is created, and methods of metaphors or multisensory treatment through art therapy, play therapy can allow this blockage to be unblocked. Using family systemic therapies or social therapies can greatly help Daesh's child returnees' reintegration. These therapies consider all the variables namely psychosocial, cultural, religious but also how to reconnect with a community, a society and family. Furthermore, as we saw, PTSD symptoms are very recurrent in child soldiers and people who have experienced deep trauma. A variety of techniques exist that can alleviate the suffering depending on the specific symptoms as highlighted in previous sections (a table resume can be found in Annex 3). Finally, when asking Webber, J. (personal communication, April 17, 2018) what is the best way of helping a child who had experienced trauma, she referred to the Triphasic model which constitutes three phases: safety and stabilization; remembrance and mourning; and reconnection. "Safety is the actual task of recovery with the clinician primarily helping the client to regain both internal and external control. The goal is to enable the client to make a gradual shift from unpredictable danger to reliable safety. The mourning and remembrance phase allows the client to reconstruct the story of his or her trauma. Reconnection is the final phase and involves redefining oneself in the context of meaningful relationships. Survivors bring closure to their experiences and learn that these events do not determine who they are" (Webber, J. M., Mascari, J. B., Dubi, M., & Gentry, J. E., 2006, p.18)
- As we have established with child soldiers the **nonverbal approaches of recovery** (dance, music, arts, drama, sports, ...) are highly recommended. Sport for instance has the potential to reconstruct the child's identity as to develop important citizenship values and social skills. While using sport

games with Daesh children, the goal must not be emphasized on competitiveness but rather on achieving a goal collectively (Berlin, M., 2017, pp.3-4). What they learn within sport games can then be applied in real life within their communities (Berlin, M., 2017, pp.14-20).

- As soon as possible upon their arrival, we need to **normalize their day-to-day lives** as it has also been done for former child soldiers and socialize them “into an appropriate social network”. “Children will benefit from a structured ‘normal’ and safe environment in which they can interact at day care or school with peers” (Network, R.A., 2017, p.70).
- They need to be given **an active role**, whether it be in the planning of the scope of the intervention, in prevention initiatives or in projects initiatives as it has been the case with Hitler Youth and their use of radio and newspapers in schools or the weapons’ exhibition in Mozambique. Youth should act as agents of change, so they can feel empowered. As for the prevention initiatives who else would be better placed to talk than a former extremist? They are “credible messengers, they are well placed to discredit extremist propaganda, prevent radicalization, contribute to disengagement and deradicalization” (RAN C&N & RAN Exit, 2017, p.7).
- **Both formal and religious education** is unquestionably one of the core elements. They need to be re-educated to undo the harm indoctrination had had on them. They need to learn again the values of democracy as Hitler Youth’s did. “Re-education procedures focus on debunking the credibility of ISIS ideology and replacing these narratives with positive alternatives. Children will require learning new concepts on Islam, as opposed to their already existing framework. [...] The efforts would delegitimize ISIS ideology, and invalidate the extreme notions of nationhood and religious indoctrination that children would have experienced in their previous education system in ISIS. It would therefore be important to deconstruct the educational and intellectual components of Islamic State curriculum, and create a new curriculum to displace this, by teaching components of the Qur’an that advocate that one can be fully Muslim and British, for example” (Benotman, N., & Malik, N., 2016, p.66).
- **Mentoring and counselling:** a mentor is a person towards whom the child can turn to. Many persons can be mentors however I believe that the best suited person for the job is either a former extremist or someone who has cultural, religious, ethnical background such as an Imam or Islamologist (RAN Exit, 2017, p.3). Former extremists have the power to be more credible in the eyes of the child since he/she has gone through the same experience; they can be seen as an exemplary role model who managed to find back a normal life (Benotman, N., & Malik, N., 2016, p.72); they can be very helpful in “connecting on a personal level with isolated people”; and they

can “add value thanks to their education, talents and life skills learned outside the extremist environment” (RAN Exit, 2017, p.4).

- Last but not least: **family and community support**. Family plays a crucial role in reintegrating the children safely in the community. To do so, Koehler, D. (2014, p.5) suggests resorting to family counselling programmes. These programmes help families to learn how to counter the radical narratives of the child but not by debating on the good and wrong of the religion because then the child might not be open to the discussion, rather the family can become an alternative example “portraying a lifestyle or mindset different from the one portrayed within the radical ideology”.

In general, “the closer and stronger the positive affective environment around the radicalized person is, the more difficult it will be for him/her to radicalize further, or to engage in undetected behavior that poses a security risk” (Koehler, D., 2014, p.9). Therefore, reintegration programmes should also provide support to the family.

Furthermore, acceptance by the community is also very important to avoid stigma and exclusion which would complicate the reintegration. That is why, the community should be prepared to the child’s return, but it should not be mediatized as we have seen that it can have a negative impact.

e. Potential obstacles for the reintegration

Apart from the psychological and mental health dimension that can impair children’s successful reintegration, there are other significant challenges they might face upon their return: one of the main obstacles is **stigmatization and isolation** from society which can exacerbate the psychological traumas and have an impact on their recovery (Akello, G. et al., 2006, p.238). Former child soldiers experienced it and it will probably happen with Daesh’s children since they will be seen as “willing participants” who made the choice to leave (Benotman, N., & Malik, N., 2016, p.51); I believe that even if we manage to reintegrate them on the “short-term”, if the **socio-economic and cultural structures** do not adapt, they will continue to feel excluded from the Western societies because they will be labelled “Muslims/terrorist”, therefore if the root causes are not changed, their reintegration might not work in the long-term; finally, the **States’ conflict of interest**, as we mentioned, between the State’s security and the best interest of the child could be an obstacle. Finally, the cooperation and information sharing between the different structures and actors involved in the reintegration’s process (teachers, social workers, mental health practitioners, etc.) might be difficult (O’Neil, S. & Van Broeckhoven, K., 2018 p.96)

IV. Conclusion

These children have suffered intense indoctrination and great psychological, mental and social traumas. Some will be more affected than others, but it is important to stress that all children have had some level of engagement with and exposure to Daesh's extremist ideology and this is important to remember when thinking about what to do with them. It does not mean that "all children are or will become potential violent extremists or terrorists. However, a failure to recognize the impact of such an ideology on the potential for (re)integration into European society may be significant" (Network, R.A., 2017, p.70).

First the question of whether the child is a victim, or a criminal must be answered. We have established that a balance should be found between the "victim-perpetrator" appellation because they are first victims: victims of indoctrination, poverty, socio-economic and cultural circumstances, ...; however, they are also either "passive participants" because they did not choose this life, or "active participants" because they voluntarily decided to join Daesh. Second, the question "what should we do with them?" should be answered. Since a balance for the appellation has to be found, a balance between incarceration and reintegration programmes should also be found. In fact, the international legal instruments have established that prosecution should be a matter of last resort and that reintegration efforts should be prioritized as well as alternatives to judicial mechanisms. I would therefore recommend children's returnees to be first considered for rehabilitation programmes, and for the most serious cases and those who volunteered to have access to restorative justice and diversion programmes, which can then facilitate their entry into reintegration's processes.

On the matter of classifying children according to their age, I personally oppose to this. To sum up, we will refer to Sandlarz, E. who explains in a documentary (Dubois, C. & Ferreira, V., 2017), that it will be more complex if the child has been acting out, but it does not mean that there will be a greater dangerousness with that specific child compared to another one who did not take up arms. In fact, even those who did not engage in violence but who have still undergone indoctrination, whether this child is 8 years old or 14, if we do not take care of this child immediately upon his/her return, it is just a matter of time before he/she "explodes" and commits violence. Therefore, it is not the age but rather their personal experience in Daesh that should be given full consideration.

In fact, each child is different and requires tailored-made deradicalization, rehabilitation and reintegration programmes depending on the duration of the "stay" in the conflict zone; the type of exposure to violence; the level of involvement in violence; the characteristics of the child; the

environment's support; ... Thus, those efforts and interventions have to be based on the specific needs of each child and not on labels, categories of children, such as the "returnees". There is no one-size-fits-all approach, and programmes that have worked in one country on specific individuals might not work in another country on other individuals.

Children of Daesh coming back to the EU countries are still in a very limited number, thus, it is important to look at past initiatives such as those for former child soldiers or for the Hitler's Youth. From what we have analyzed most of the initiatives could work for Daesh returnees. However, there is one aspect that is added for the Daesh's case which is the deradicalization and disengagement approaches. We could compare this deradicalization with the denazification of the Hitler's Youth. With the little literature found on the successful reintegration of the Hitler's Youth, we could conclude that the denazification has been fruitful. Hitler's Youth idolized Hitler and once he died, their idolization died with him and this is probably how they "undone" their indoctrination; as for Daesh's children, they idolized ISIS and now that ISIS is being defeated, could we assume that their indoctrination and disengagement will be easier?

The journey of rehabilitation and reintegration will be certainly a harsh and long one and if we want results we absolutely need time, but it is vital that all efforts are gathered into an integrated and multidisciplinary approach with the participation of many actors: teachers, NGOs, social workers, psychologists, doctors, politicians, local authorities, and so on. The psychological care which is the most important one must be accompanied by school, professional, medical, social reintegration and must absolutely be supported by the family. Additionally, if we want a successful reintegration, the willingness of the community to adopt the ex-offender and accept him as a full member is crucial. The true answer for the successful reintegration is therefore an inclusive society which requires "anti-discrimination; the fight against daily and structural racism; and a faculty of empathy" (Coolsaet, R., 2016, p.18).

Finally, we must be conscious that even if rehabilitation and reintegration programmes could work and even if children would manage to cope with their traumas and live a normal social, economic, cultural life, their experiences under ISIS will never leave them completely. As humanists we must however remain optimistic.

Chapter three: the European Union at risk?

Experience with child returnees in Europe is still very limited. So far, only a few member states have had child returnees: Denmark, Finland, France, the Netherlands, Sweden, Germany and the United Kingdom (Council of the European Union, 2017, p.5). Nevertheless, as ISIS is losing ground and control over the territories it occupies, the member states might expect a third wave of returnees but this time comprising more women and children (Belga, as cited in 7sur7, 2018). Is Europe ready for that? Do the governments want them back? Are these children considered as a potential threat? These questions have to be raised.

I. What is the global EU response to these returnees?

“The return of these children is a matter of the member states themselves but is of course of great importance to the EU given the security implications. Therefore, the EU supports and coordinates the member states in their efforts” (Vautmans, H., personal communication, March 23, 2018)

a. The four current trends

In all EU member states, if the child comes back and if his/her parents are not fit to take care of his/her because they are radicalized or have died in conflict for instance, foster care or grandparents are the best alternative option (Ramadan, O., 2018).

Practices in the member states concerning this new situation currently differ, there is not one common approach, each member state handles the situation in its own way. According to RAN (as cited by Vautmans, H., personal communication, March 23, 2018), it currently exists four different approaches amongst member states:

1. The concerned member state does not provide any active aid to arrange the return of the child and it does not provide documents to the family member (ex: a grandparent or parent) who goes to the embassy to try to make the child come back.
2. The concerned member state grants children of a certain age the right to return, it is often below the age of 9-10 years old.
3. The concerned member state informs the grandparents about the whereabouts of their grandchildren, enabling them to arrange a return.
4. The concerned member state simply provides help in the camps whether it be humanitarian help or socialization help, with or without the cooperation of authorities. In fact, most of women and

children who manage to escape ISIS are found in refugee or detainees camps for instance in Turkey or in the North of Syria (De Pauw, H., personal communication, May 29, 2018).

These approaches can be debated and criticized:¹¹

- The first one can certainly be the most criticized as it can be perceived as if the member states do not want these children to come back. In fact, in the documentary “Paroles de déserteurs” (Dandois, T., & Trégan, F-X., 2016), the military chief of Thuwar al-Raqqa¹² narrates that he contacted several EU embassies, explaining that one of their nationals was trying to get out of Syria. The EU embassies did not want to help and replied that they did not want them back, they prefer to leave them there and whether they die in Syria or not it does not matter, the most important thing is that they do not come back here to make trouble. In fact, a representative from the European Commission confirms (personal communication, June 1st, 2018) that most EU governments do not want them to come back; notwithstanding of course, these are off-record statements as the governments cannot officially express such strong feelings.

As Somers, B. explained during the ALDE group seminar (2018) “the way we are going to deal with this issue will tell us how we look at our society: do we look at people as citizens or as outsiders? The signals we are giving in how we treat people determines the views of thousands of people and it is fundamental”. Indeed, if even our own governments express such distinct views, how can we expect the citizens to be more open-minded and accept these returnees back?

- The second approach is also of great concern. Why allowing children only below the age of 9-10 to come back? What about the older ones? Should we leave them there to their own fate? Is that because once again we make such a differentiation in treatment between those who received military training and those who did not? Why do we have international conventions stating that all children should be treated equally and on a non-discrimination basis if we do not respect them? All of them should be granted the right to return, it is both a moral, legal and human rights obligation to help them come back.
- The third approach is certainly the most advanced and positive one as it helps the relatives to move forward in their quests as it is usually difficult to have precise and accurate information about the children’s whereabouts.

¹¹ I do not have in my possession which member state falls into which approach, and “naming and shaming” is certainly not the purpose of this paper

¹² It is a faction of the Free Syrian Army who fights ISIS in Syria. The faction is specialized in exfiltrating deserters’ fighters

- As for the fourth approach, providing assistance in the camps is a first good step as the living and hygienic conditions in the camps are of poor quality (De Pauw, H., personal communication, May 29, 2018), however, a second step is needed which is to make these children go out of there and bring them back to their European countries.

The sad reality is that “some states are discouraging people from returning from conflict zones and have gone so far as to refuse to let children back in their countries after suspected involvement with an armed group” (O’Neil, S. & Van Broeckhoven, K., 2018, p.220), and we should not let that become a norm. These approaches are in fact new and they are the only current ones, thus we should stay optimistic that they will evolve over time.

b. Some EU member states’ practices

So far, there is no specific programme to deal with these child’s returnees. Instead of creating new ones, member states will have to use existing mechanisms upon the child’s return and adapt them according to the child’s needs and development (Council of the European Union, 2017, p.5). Some member states have already developed measures to combat radicalization and extremism (some of these programmes are developed only for adults and will therefore need to be adjusted), calling these measures deradicalization/disengagement programmes. This section is meant to give a general overview of some of the best practices and initiatives¹³¹⁴.

- **Denmark** has developed many innovative programmes to tackle radicalization. The **Aarhus Model** is worth mentioning whose programme is called Deradicalization Targeted Intervention. It is a method that “encompasses a wide range of activities, including targeted mentorship programmes for at-risk youth and “deradicalization” for those who have been involved with non-state armed groups” (O’Neil, S. & Van Broeckhoven, K., 2018, p.95). The aim of the programme is to “develop tools that can be adapted to the individual needs of young people and provide the long-term support and advice that is needed in order to break with and stay out of extremist circles” (Lozano, M. 2014, p.24). The Aarhus model is not only aimed at deradicalizing young extremists but also at rehabilitating them. It is a one-of-a-kind program in Europe. “The programme, closely watched by authorities around Europe, involves counselling, help with readmission to school, meetings with parents and other outreach efforts. It was first developed in 2007 to deal with far-right extremists”

¹³ Detailing a list of all existing programmes would be enormous and irrelevant

¹⁴ Most of the deradicalization programmes in France and the Netherlands begun “in the wake of attacks perpetrated by Muslims” (Pettinger, T. 2017, p.30)

(Higgins, A., 2014) and has been now redeployed to address the return of young Muslims who went to Syria and Iraq.

- **Germany** has already a well-known past of child soldiers and neo-Nazis' extremists, therefore we might presuppose that amongst the member states, Germany is the most advanced one. In fact, Germany is currently the only EU member state that has set up a **unique welcoming and psychotherapeutic center program** in Europe for the Yazidis ex Daesh children (Amara, S., documentary, May 12, 2017). Furthermore, "new federally funded programs were planned in 2018 to educate and deradicalize returning foreign fighters" (Arab News, 2018). They have other projects such as **EXIT Deutschland**¹⁵ for extremists' youth who wants to disengage; **Violent Prevention Network** that helps young extremists to move away from extremism by learning empathy, self-reflection, responsibility, relationship skills and self-esteem, this program has started also to work with religiously radicalized individuals (Lozano, M. 2014, p.31); the **German al-Hayat** programme first undertakes an assessment of the returned foreign fighter, and second goes into a process of counselling and reintegration. "The programme focuses on ideological and pragmatic elements as well as addressing the reestablishment of family relations and potentially finding an alternative social network" (van der Heide, L. & Geenen, J., 2017, p.10). Germany has in fact already developed a lot of disengagement and deradicalization programmes (Coolsaet, R., & Renard, T., 2018a, p.53).

According to Korn, J. (as cited by Glader, P., 2012), the initiatives developed in Germany for young extremists can also be used with Muslims fundamentalists.

- In **the Netherlands** amongst the most well-known programmes we count for instance an **Exit Facility** programme put in place in 2015. The programme is on a voluntary basis and the aim is to reintegrate the individual into the society by offering him/her "coaching through intensive conversations" (Coolsaet, R., & Renard, T., 2018a, p.66); there is then a **personal intervention programme for young people in right-wing extremist circles** who wish to exit these circles (Lozano, M. 2014, p.37); **Actieplan-Slotervaart Het tegengaan van radicalisering** is a programme meant to "increase awareness of the dangers of radicalization amongst young people in the Dutch town of Slotervaart and engage those already radicalized" (Butt, R., & Tuck, H. 2014, p.7).

In terms of disengagement, the Netherlands appears to be one of the most advanced one (Coolsaet, R., & Renard, T., 2018a, p.73)

¹⁵ The majority of the EXIT programmes in the EU countries concentrate on the individuals' ideologies even though some focus more on the behavior and social reintegration (Pettinger, T., 2017, p.32)

- In **France** for instance, a new pilot project on disengagement has been launched in 2017 called **RIVE** (Coolsaet, R., & Renard, T., 2018a, p.73). There is one programme specific for children called “**Madame Deradicalisation**” that “uses a variety of developed techniques to work with at-risk youth and addicts and employs these techniques to deradicalize French children who support, or have attempted to join, the Islamic State” (Benotman, N., & Malik, N., 2016, p.62).
- Additional member states have built comprehensive programmes which are similar to the ones described above such as in **Sweden** and its **Exit Fryshusetand** programme; and **the UK** and its **Prevent Programme**
- A study made on Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands advanced that the authorities of the three countries favor disengagement rather than deradicalization programmes (Coolsaet, R., & Renard, T., 2018a, p.73).

For those countries who encourage more disengagement than deradicalization programmes we could suggest that they are on the right path as we have established in the previous chapter that disengagement is best suited for returnees.

c. The Belgian approach

“Belgium has the highest reported number of recruits to Islamist armed groups per capita in Western Europe” (Human Rights Watch, 2016b), this is the reason I decided to focus my attention on the Belgian’s approach as an illustration case.

According to van Tigchelt, P. (2018), Director of the Coordination Unit for Threat Analysis (CUTA) in Belgium, approximately 150 children are believed to be in the Caliphate: 105 were born there by a Belgian relative; 45 travelled to Syria with their parents and 12 were unaccompanied teenagers. About 75% of them are younger than 6 years old. So far, four teenagers and 14 children below 12 years old came back and approximately 22 children announced their wish to return but how many will succeed in doing so is unpredictable (Coolsaet, R., & Renard, T., 2018a, pp.21-22).

i. The return

As far as returnees are concerned, Belgium does not yet have a practice that has really been stopped. So far, Belgium has only dealt with this issue under the sole security angle, with the National Security Council (CNS) having defined, at the end of February 2018, measures to strengthen controls in the event of a possible return to the country but the General Delegate for children's rights in Belgium,

Bernard De Vos, expressed that safeguarding our security cannot, under any circumstances, be at the expense of the children's rights (Belga, 2018).

Out of the 4 current approaches described above, Belgium places itself in the second one: granting children below 9-10 years old the right to come back and for those above that age, a case-by-case approach is applied, meaning that each child will be treated differently. Apart from the issues described above regarding this approach, there are other concerns that need to be raised:

- It is first important to stress that Belgium is not actively looking for these children but with regard to the CRC which Belgium has ratified, the national authorities are obliged to protect these children and thus help them to come back. De Vos, B. (as cited in Belga, 2018) has recently urged the Belgian authorities to do their utmost to ensure the repatriation of all Belgian children wishing to return to Belgium regardless of their age or level of engagement and ensure their reintegration into society. Vautmans, H., (personal communication, March 23, 2018) further explains that if the Belgian authorities know that a certain child is in a certain camp (for instance because the grandparent of the child in Belgium has looked for him/her), it will gather information to see whether and how this child could return. It is therefore the task of the grandparents or any relative of the children in Belgium to look for them.
- There is a second problem to raise: how to come back to Europe? In the camps where the mothers and children are, in most cases, they are not allowed to leave because they are considered as foreign supporters of an occupying force, therefore, they are often only allowed to leave when their origin home country provides a return proof of citizenship (Ramadan, O., 2018). Two further problems stem from it: first, children, mothers or grandparents must prove that children are descendants from a Belgian's relative otherwise they cannot come back to Belgium. But how to prove it? Mainly through DNA testing but these procedures are complex, expensive and take time (van Tigchelt, P. 2018). "According to Belgian law, blood determines nationality" thus if the parents of the child deceased, it will become problematic for the child to prove his/her Belgian nationality (Coolsaet, R. & Renard, T., 2018a, p.38). Therefore, De Vos B. (as cited in Délégué général aux droits de l'enfant, s.d.) advocates for other means of identification such as photos, videos, exchange of letters, special physical signs and other administrative documents. Second, Belgium does not provide any active help, thus how are they supposed to go out of the camps? By themselves? The child with or without the mother has first to reach the Belgian embassy. The problem is that Belgium does not have any diplomatic post in Syria; in Iraq the Dutch embassy mainly represents Belgium; and Turkey has a

Belgium embassy but the road to reach is very dangerous (De Pauw, H., personal communication, May 29, 2018).

It is fair to say that Belgium should change its policy of “let them come back but let them handle it themselves”. Should we remind the Belgian authorities that these children are still their citizens? The passive attitude of Belgium could make us believe that they do not want them to come back. Could we further assume that this Belgian’s position might be partly due to the fact that the biggest political party at the federal government is a right-wing, nay extreme-right party? If this powerful party sees foreigners as illegals, how does it see these children?

ii. The judicial system

Most of the Belgian children in the caliphate are below 6 years old, therefore regarding the judicial care of minors related to violent radicalism and terrorism, the youth prosecutor's office will barely be solicited. However, for the few older ones who might come back and who might be brought before the judicial system, it is the juvenile judge at the regional and not federal level who will be responsible for taking measures regarding their cases as explained by van Tigchelt, P., (2018) during the ALDE group seminar and by Michel, I., & Demoulin, I (personal communication, April 23, 2018). As regards to those who voluntarily decided to travel abroad to join ISIS, they are more likely to face prosecution (Vautmans, H., March 23, 2018). However, according to the Belgian law, there is no longer a right to punish children, therefore, it is the juvenile protection law also called child’s protection law which will be applied for these cases (De Pauw, H., personal communication, May 29, 2018). The legislation based on this model considers the child as not responsible for his/her actions, but rather the victim of circumstances and accordingly help him/her through education and support (Défense des Enfants, 2009, p.3). We have already advocated in a previous chapter not to place children’s returnees in prison and this is even more recommended not to in Belgium. Indeed, according to academic literature, prisons in Belgium suffer from poor conditions where radicalization is alarming (Coolsaet, R., & Renard, T., 2018a, p.33). Therefore, depriving child’s returnees of their liberty and putting them in Belgian’s facilities would appear detrimental and counter-productive.

iii. The deradicalization and disengagement system

Due to the complexity of the Belgian system which has different levels of power (federal, regional, local), the only possible and feasible approach to these returnees is a multi-agency one where a tailor-made approach will be needed for the local task forces to know which actor and which body is best positioned to take the necessary actions for the child (van Tigchelt, P., 2018).

Upon the children's return, the psycho-socio-educational care will be carried out by the youth aid agencies. First, an initial observation and assessment will take place to establish an individualized monitoring plan. The intervention will consider the cultural diversity and the Islamic religion, the post-traumatic dimension, the experiences in victimology as well as the knowledge on child soldiers (Demoulin, I., personal communication, April 23, 2018).

It is important to note that Belgium was the first country to warn the issue at the European level of European citizens going abroad to Syria and Iraq. Since then, some municipalities reinforced the prevention units and appointed deradicalization officials (Coolsaet, R. & Renard, T., 2018b). On the prevention side, Belgium has developed a lot of measures both at the federal, regional and local level such as the National Action Plan to Prevent Violent Extremism in 2015; the Flemish Action Plan in 2015; the prevention plan against radicalization in the Brussels Capital region; and many others (Boutin, B. et al., 2016, p.6).

But what about the disengagement/deradicalization and rehabilitation programmes? Three years ago, the UN Working Group on the Use of Mercenaries paid a visit to Belgium and it appeared that no rehabilitation programmes have been settled for returnees (Boutin, B. et al., 2016, p.9)

- An outstanding example is the Mechelen model. Mechelen has adopted an integral approach with a strong focus on prevention and where community dialogue is robust; in fact, it has a large community of young Muslims, but none left for Syria, contrary to other cities of Belgium (Molenbeek, Vilvoorde, Liège, Antwerpen) where Muslims communities are large and where a lot of these youths that went to join Daesh come from (Schyns, C. & Müllerleile, A., s.d.).
- The city of Vilvoorde for instance has already started to work a lot on prevention, as for the deradicalization part, they have established what they call a curative approach which is person-oriented and “is aimed at youth who has already come in contact with radicalized ideology or who has returned from Syria”, the objective is to “limit the spread of the ideology and to restore the person's ties to the community” (Strong Cities Network, 2017, p.4).
- A more advanced programme is the Centre d'Aide et de Prise en charge des personnes concernées par tout Radicalisme et Extrémisme menant à la Violence (CAPREV) initiated in 2017. The aim of this programme is to support people who are already engaged in a process of radicalization. The main interventions are a psycho-social support and a disengagement process (Riguel, S., s.d., p.1).
- Finally, a new pilot project will be launched in the city of Antwerpen called Deradiant. This will be the first deradicalization programme in Belgium. They will first initiate the project with detainees in

prison for six months and after the trial period, an evaluation will be undertaken to consider if the project could spread or not (Deradiant, s.d.). We will thus need to wait to see if children's returnees could benefit from this programme.

The problem that may arise in Belgium due to its complexity system is the information sharing which is vital between the different actors and bodies in charge of the child. On this matter, van Tigchelt, P. (2018) explains that CUTA has established a dynamic database which gathers all information about FTFs. It is a database in which all services in Belgium, such as law enforcement intelligence services, services responsible for childcare, justice houses, etc. gather all information about FTFs. For instance, when law enforcement services have the confirmation that a child wants to return, they inform the youth aid agencies, so they can prepare actions prior to the child's return. However, if the sharing of information is meant to monitor the child at the reintegration level, where should we impose limits? In fact, if social workers exchange information about a child with the police authorities, is it not a violation of ethics and mandate since the social worker is supposed to establish a relationship of trust with the child? This is something worth considering.

Could we say that Belgium is ready for the potential return of these children? Yes and no.

Yes, because as De Pauw, H., (personal communication, May 29, 2018) declared, Belgium has already a great experience and expertise in supervising child soldiers, therefore, we might presuppose that it should not be a problem for Belgium to handle these children' returnees; additionally, Belgium has great youth aid services and great professionals in psychology and traumas. No, however, because Belgium is still at its very beginning in terms of deradicalization/disengagement programmes; it does not have a comprehensive national strategy; and so far, coordination amongst the different levels has not been solid. Accordingly, a lot of work still needs to be done.

iv. Potential problems for reintegration

In Belgium, there are additional problems that can be raised, apart from the psychological, mental, educational or discriminatory issues that can prejudice the child's reintegration:

According to youth representatives in Belgium "many young people are depressed and feel hopeless. The enduring economic and labor market stagnation is certainly part of the explanation for why youngsters today have the impression that they are just fiddling around without decent job prospects" (Coolsaet, R., 2015, p.13). This is even more true for the Muslim communities in Belgium. "The gap between natives and immigrants in terms of employment and education is higher than anywhere else in

Europe”. In most socio-economic categories (housing, education, employment, health), young Muslims face many obstacles and discrimination (Coolsaet, R., 2015, pp.15-16).

Besides the economic and unemployment’s dimension, there are other issues such as the youth suicide rate which is much higher in Belgium than in most other EU Member States; and the dropping out of school which appears to be more frequent in Belgium (Coolsaet, R., 2015, p.13). Finally, pessimism in Belgium appears to be very high comparing to the European average (Coolsaet, R., 2015, p.14).

How are child’s returnees going to be reintegrated back into this society that faces many societal problems while they will have to carry an additional burden of being a former affiliated member of Daesh?

II. Is Europe at threat?

As we know, the European Union project is already at threat because of the terrorist attacks, Brexit, the rise of populist movements, and the immigration crisis to name a few. Should we add the return of Daesh’s children to the list?

After the numerous attacks perpetrated on European soil and after seeing their own citizens flying to conflict zones, some member states have adopted measures which are called “foreign terrorist fighters” laws. Since then, the national security landscape in Europe has become more severe. However, these measures undermine international human rights such as freedom of expression, association, peaceful assembly, movement; freedom from religious or ethnic discrimination; right to liberty; fair trial; privacy, ... (Human Rights Watch, 2016a, p.9; Amnesty International, 2017, p.6). These measures include, amongst others: travel bans and ID confiscation; citizenship revocation; security and intelligence powers; emergency laws; ... (Human Rights Watch, 2016a, pp.13-26).

Indeed, a climate of fear prevails in the EU, prejudicing its cornerstones: fairness, equality and non-discrimination. So how will these child returnees be viewed and treated upon their return?

It is undeniable that managing the return of these children will pose a significant challenge “both in terms of the child's welfare and security concerns” (Council of the European Union, 2017, p.1).

Daesh’s children have been indoctrinated in hating the West, considering it as the enemy of the Muslim community which magnifies even more this “us versus them” that they have known in their European countries (The Carter Centre, 2017, p.5). Therefore, once they will come back to the EU countries they might keep these feelings of hatred which is deep rooted inside their mind and might therefore pose a

potential threat to the society. This “potential” threat might turn “real” both on the short and long-term. “In the short-term, there is a concern for the child's own welfare, but they could also have violent tendencies which present a risk to the welfare of others, particularly other children. In the longer-term (and one could argue, in the short-term, too), there is a risk of terrorism” (Council of the European Union, 2017, p.2). But how could we prevent this potential threat from waking up? It is important to emphasize the term « potential »:

- first, because not all these children might become a threat depending on their level of indoctrination and radicalization; engagement; the reason they return¹⁶, etc. therefore this threat can only be assessed on a case-by-case basis;
- second, because if these children receive early, urgent and specific treatment and attention, they might not turn into a “threat” (Council of the European Union, 2017, p.4; European Parliament, 2015b, p.3). Thus, early and tailor-made intervention is critical if we want to preserve society from being at risk. Managing, facilitating these children’s return and taking care of them is indeed the best way to prevent future violent acts of terrorism on European soil (Délégué général aux droits de l'enfant, s.d., p.5).

We cannot however be naïve: this reinsertion will be a long-term endeavor and to guarantee that none of these children will commit attacks or violence in a few years is impossible. At least, as De Pauw, H. (personal communication, May 29, 2018) emphasizes, if they are on Belgian territory for instance we know where they are and we can monitor and help them.

It is very important to give them alternatives to the life they have known over there once they come back, otherwise they might reject what Koehler, D. (2017, as cited in Pettinger, T., 2015, p.92) calls “re-pluralization” which is “the developing perception that there exists only one solution, extreme violence”. This is of utmost importance.

Moreover, it is important that the political will of the states and the national security concerns do not hamper the rights of these children. “Some states are using a child’s suspected or demonstrated association with armed groups as grounds for barring their re-entry into the country and/or stripping their citizenship” (O’Neil, S. & Van Broeckhoven, K., 2018, p.220) and this is sending the wrong message to both the European citizens and Daesh’s children themselves who wish to return. Why?

¹⁶ “Some may come back disillusioned and unwilling to engage further in extremist activities” (European Parliament, 2015b, p.3)

First, because if the children manage to come back they might be negatively perceived by the citizens as their own government in the first place was not really keen on having them back. Second, as De Pauw, H. (personal communication, May 29, 2018) explains: if the governments leave these children there to their own devices, they will feel neglected and abandoned and this situation is even more risky because an "us versus them" feeling might install itself in their mind even more and if they manage to come back to the EU countries, the risk becomes much higher as they might want revenge.

An additional problem that may arise if states do not do anything to help these children to come back is that these children arrive in the EU countries illegally as it is pointed out in the documentary "Paroles de déserteurs" (Dandois, T., & Trégan, F-X., 2016). This situation might pose a security problem because they will not be registered, they will therefore not receive the help they need, and thus they might remain radicalized, attached to ISIS and commit atrocities on European soil and this is when the countries will be more at risk. "It would therefore be better to monitor the return from camps to borders instead of waiting for them to return but without being announced" (Ramadan, O., 2018).

In fact, because of the indoctrination they received, the combat skills some acquired, the traumas they experienced both at the psychological and physical level, we cannot ignore the risk they can pose to the security of the European countries (van der Heide, L. & Geenen, J., 2017, p.4), however, we should not exaggerate it. First, because according to Webber, J. & Salem, M.A. (personal communication, 2018) "children and adolescents should have a higher chance of reintegration than adults primarily because of the brain's plasticity to change and continue to develop. Children and adolescents are more likely to successfully move through deradicalization and reeducation process because their brains are still developing intensively, and they are more adaptable". Second, as we have already established most of the states are reluctant for these children to come back and since they are not actively helping them, these children might feel unwanted, they therefore may not come back at all or at least very little. Consequently, we could assume that the threat and the security's topic is limited and that there is a low risk of threat at the European level.

III. A negative/racist climate in the European Union?

a. Racism, discrimination and anti-Muslim hatred

A climate of fear has gained the EU countries. Unfortunately, because of the terrorist attacks and Daesh claiming them, the Muslim community across Europe is in the spotlight and a climate of racism has gained over. "There are some indications that the growing concerns with national security and the proliferation of counter-terrorism laws and measures are being fed by a rise in xenophobia and

Islamophobia in Western countries” (O’Neil, S. & Van Broeckhoven, K., 2018, p.223). This is even more true in Belgium. According to a study carried out by the European Commission in 2015, Belgium appears to be one of the most racist countries in the EU (Paris Match, 2017). In 2016, 988 cases of racism and xenophobia were registered in Belgium (Statista, 2018).

A Muslim resident in Belgium expresses: “These days it is not easy to be Arab, Muslim and living in Molenbeek¹⁷ [...] We are attacked by the Islamic State, which considers us disbelievers when we have nothing to do with them. And we are attacked by the State, which says, ‘You are involved with the Islamic State’” (Human Rights Watch, 2016b). Even though Belgium is one of the wealthiest countries in the EU, half of its Muslim citizens live below the poverty line. The country has created “ghettos” where most Muslims live in impoverished communes “where they comprise nearly one-fourth of the population” and putting them into those “ghettos” marginalize them even more (Human Rights Watch, 2016b). Rising intolerance of ethnic and religious minorities in Belgium has been of great concern in recent years according to some national and local human rights associations (Human Rights Watch, 2016b). According to a study in Belgium, feelings of sympathy and the level of tolerance are decreasing towards people coming from the Maghreb (IPSOS, 2009, p.106). The results of this survey appear worrying while 60% of the respondents indicated that having racist reactions can sometimes be justified (IPSOS, 2009, p.111). Additionally, a Eurobarometer survey (Eurobarometer, S., 2015, p.1) revealed that 74% of the Belgian population believe that discrimination based on ethnic origin is very widespread in Belgium.

In Vilvoorde, for instance, 42.8% of the population is of foreign origin and 49.8% of this population is unemployed (Strong Cities Network, 2017, p.1). In Belgium, young Muslims no longer believe in equal opportunities, “some do not have the impression that they are confronted with a multitude of choices in all dimensions of life. Quite to the contrary. They feel as if they have ‘no future’ as their horizon. ‘Un sentiment d’abandon’ (‘a feeling of abandonment’)” (Coolsaet, R., 2015, p.16). Feelings of exclusion are “significantly more prevalent in Belgium” for the Belgo-Moroccan families. Should it therefore come as a surprise that young people with Moroccan roots are overrepresented in the ranks of ISIS? (Coolsaet, R., 2015, p.18). Aboutaleb, A. (as cited in Coolsaet, R. 2016, p.17) warned many years ago about the polarization of society between on one hand “the white part of the population in which the “fear of the other” is sometimes translated by Islamophobia and racism, and Muslims, on the other hand, “feeling demonized”.

¹⁷ In Molenbeek, 41% is of Muslim origin (Pettinger, T., 2017, p.31)

Thus, how could a Daesh child returns to Belgium when such a climate of racism prevails over the country?

To put an end to this racism and anti-Muslim hatred culture, we should take out the debate on the Islam's position in the West; we should rethink our society to make inclusiveness a social and real project where discrimination and structural and daily racism are dismissed; an inclusive approach is the only way to fight segregation, stigmatization, racism and radicalization (Somers, B., 2018); and instead of putting Muslims in marginalized districts we should rather support them (Coolsaet, R., 2016, p.18).

b. The citizens reactions to these returnees

If governments are already reluctant to accept these children back, how is the population supposed to feel and react?

When Daesh started recruiting children internationally, it has shown to the world how brutal and influent it can be. Displaying propaganda's videos of children killing and beheading has caused "a heightened sense of panic in the Western world" (Anderson, K., 2016, p.16). And indeed, how could it not? It is understandable and normal to be afraid, it is human. Especially since the numerous terrorist attacks on European soil, people feel afraid because they start understanding that tragedies, danger and conflicts can also happen in their own countries, near their homes and not only in the far-away regions of Africa, Syria or Iraq, ...

To grasp more perceptions about the population's reactions to these returnees, I created an online survey gathering 268 responses. This sampling can in no circumstances be representative of the entire population in the EU but at least it can give us some insights.

Out of the 268 replies, 46.8% believe that these children are a minor threat for the EU and 40.8% believe they are a major threat. Some also indicate that the children can become a major threat in the future if they remain in the circle of terrorism.

To the question "Would you be afraid if these children come back to Europe? And therefore, would you be reluctant for them to come back?", 57.4% answered that they would be afraid but not particularly reluctant because these children should have the right to come back, be treated properly and reintegrated into society. Moreover, most of the respondents see them first as victims who then become criminals, some against their will, some not, it all depends on a case-by-case basis. Finally, 42% of the respondents believe that the children could regain a normal life and be reintegrated into the

European societies, while 37.9% said they do not know but certainly hope so (the survey can be found in Annex 4).

We have already mentioned the powerful extreme-right political party in Belgium with strong (and negative) positions as regards to foreigners. Citizens are the ones who elect their representatives, therefore could we assume that these strong positions are shared by the Belgian population?

De Pauw, H. (personal communication, May 29, 2018) believes that in Belgium, this subject is very sensitive because Belgians in general are afraid, they are not very receptive to Muslims, seeing them as a potential danger. Undeniably, according to a 2016 poll (as cited in Coolsaet, R., 2016, p.14) among all Europeans, the Belgian is the one who fears the most to be the victim of a terrorist attack. According to the official statistics of the European Union, it would be twice as anxious than the average European. For the Belgian, terrorism is the main threat facing the country. However, according to results described above, we could deduce that even though the population might be afraid of these children coming back, they would not be reluctant and do not think like their governments in terms of “leave them there” which is a positive and encouraging observation (we could therefore be hopeful that the Belgian population does not indeed follow the strong positions of this extreme-right political party); additionally, the majority remains optimistic in these chaotic times that the children could be reintegrated. However, the 37.9% responding “I do not know” reflects the reality: in fact, in that moment and in the years to come, it is impossible to guarantee their successful reintegration.

Are people going to have mixed feelings about these child’s returnees? Probably. First, because of the societal and structural racist and discriminatory environment around Muslim communities in general, and second, because of the indoctrination and military training some children received. Will the population accept them back? It is very difficult to assess because it is a human challenge between “I want to feel safe and not threaten in my own country” and “these children have a right to come back and receive assistance”. The population indeed might feel threatened because who knows if these children are not going to keep some ISIS’s ideology inside them and commit violence in a near or remote future.

c. How could the Member States manage the return of these children from a societal point of view?

Returnees might generate a lot of media attention and it should be contained. First, to not provoke a moment of panic amongst the population and second, for the children not to be in the spotlight as it

could lead to stigmatization. This is why member states need a communication strategy to deal with the return of these children.

What is of utmost importance as pointed out by De Pauw, H. (personal communication, May 29, 2018) is the way we speak about this topic on the media. If the media depicts these children negatively, we should expect hostility amongst the citizens' reactions. In fact, as Network, R.A. (2017, p.5) declares, we should "expect (social) media reports to impact upon societies' openness to the reintegration of returnees". We should therefore prepare a communication strategy within the local community. As part of this local communication strategy, it is important to avoid exposing the child to the press in order to protect him/her. Local services should indeed answer the community's concerns, but they should also protect the child. Why preferably local and not national? As we have already said, too much media attention could impair the child's reintegration as he/she can be stigmatized, therefore it is not necessary to "alarm" the entire country when the child comes back, only the community where he/she will be reintegrated back could be notified. I use here the term "could be notified" rather than "should be notified" because I do not believe that automatically warning the local community is necessary. Indeed, I follow De Pauw, H. (personal communication, May 29, 2018) opinion that the return of these children should be done in a smooth and discreet manner. I believe that at the local level, these communication strategies could include workshops, discussions, ... only for the communities who feel worried about the child's return. If the community is indeed concerned by the child's return, local sensitization campaigns and/or discussions could be helpful to ease the tensions of fear and learn how to accept the child back. As a matter of fact, "efforts to sensitize families and communities appear to bolster reintegration programmes. In Mozambique, community members said that their acceptance of returning child soldiers was impacted by campaigns and activities to encourage their support" (O'Neil, S. & Van Broeckhoven, K., 2018, p.89). Community initiatives and the premises of schools appear to be strong drivers to reduce stigmatization and social isolation. In fact, schools can have the ability to foster tolerance and facilitate "positive peer interaction" (Betancourt, T.S. et al., 2008b pp.12-17). Additionally, to avoid further stigmatization in schools, only the professors and the staff of the school should be informed about the presence of the child's returnee. It is not necessary to inform the other children of the school as they might therefore not interact with the child and isolate him/her.

A communication strategy might be essential for many reasons (Network, R.A., 2017, p.83):

- First, because it is a controversial and "taboo" topic and we should be able to talk about delicate topics to find solutions;

- Second, “authorities and local communities need to work together to re-socialize or integrate returnees into society” as we have already concluded that the support and the acceptance of the community is crucial for the child to be successfully reintegrated;
- Third, because not all returnees have the same profile and it is important to communicate about the child’s individual experience and not categorize them all under same label;
- Fourth, because “immediate public response to the issue is likely to be emotional or based on mistaken assumptions. In the short-term, fear and anger will characterize some people’s immediate responses to the issue and will need to be addressed”.

Communication will in fact be needed to “steer the discourse towards a space that is as calm and as rational as possible” (Network, R.A., 2017, p.84) and address the population’s emotions, concerns and fears.

Example of practice: in Finland, seminars are organized at the local level. The seminars bring together different local actors such as law enforcement, social services, NGOs, religious communities and community-based organizations. “The seminars function as a trust-building and co-creation platform for local preventive practices and initiatives [...] The objective of this co-creation is to facilitate a transparent, inclusive and participatory process for all parties that also prevents stigmatization and ‘targeting’, for example of Muslim communities” (Network, R.A., 2017, p.85).

How could the EU support the member states? At the EU level, “the EU’s European Strategic Communications Network can assist Member States in their strategic communications efforts, both by advising on and developing campaigns upon request and by exchanging good practices” (Council of the European Union, 2016, p.14).

We can conclude that, communication is essential and will serve both to manage the negative feelings of the population and help to accept the child back into the community. However, this process should be done only if absolutely necessary, and under certain conditions and precautions, that is first and foremost in a discreet way. Their trip back and their readjustment into the society after the traumas and experiences they have encountered over there will already be delicate and arduous enough to cope with, thus it would be good if we could avoid adding the problem of stigmatization to the list.

IV. Conclusion

As far as child’s returnees are concerned, the EU member states do not yet have a clear experience nor practice. Some member states have already put deradicalization and disengagement programmes in

place but mainly for adults since the return of Daesh's children is still very limited. The current four approaches that exist in the EU can be debated and criticized but we should remain optimistic that these will gain experience and evolve over time.

So far, I believe that the member states most advanced to deal with child's returnees are Denmark, Germany, France, The Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom as they have already received child's returnees and have already implemented structures. As for Belgium, which was the illustration case of this paper, it still does not have a clear approach as regards to child's returnees. Belgium has indeed already numerous prevention initiatives put in place but concerning rehabilitation and deradicalization/disengagement programmes, they do not have clear responses. So far, the first deradicalization programme in Belgium will be a pilot project called Deradiant, it is however too soon to know if this initiative could be used for child's returnees. We can estimate that Belgium is not ready enough to welcome back these children and a lot of work still needs to be done.

When talking about the return of these children, the question of "will the EU countries be threatened by them?" stem naturally from it. In fact, because of the indoctrination they undergone, the military training they received and the traumas they experienced, these children could pose a potential security threat to the member states. To avoid any short-term or long-term violence, these children need to receive direct and urgent assistance whether it be psychological, social, educational or judicial if that is the case. However, assuring that they will not commit atrocities in a near or remote future is out of anybody's hands for now because even a child of 6 years old could turn violent if he/she does not receive the appropriate care. We should not however distort the reality and overemphasize the issue because the reality is that most of these children might not come back at all in the EU countries. Why? Because of the reluctance of many states to help them to come back. And if some indeed manage to come back, first they will come back in a very limited number thus the states will be able to manage the flow and second, the psychologists Webber, J. & Salem, M.A. (personal communication, 2018) are of belief that children and adolescents "have a higher chance of reintegration than adults". I am therefore of conviction that the countries of the EU are dimly at risk.

Since the numerous terrorist attacks perpetrated on EU territory, a climate of fear has propagated. Additionally from that fear, racism and discrimination are still very present in the member states, in some more than others obviously as it is the case for Belgium which appeared to be one of the most racist EU countries. Muslims in all fields of life whether it be social, educational, medical, economical are discriminated and it is vital to put an end to this culture of racism otherwise child's returnees might

face even more difficulties upon their return. But how could we end this societal problem? By adopting an inclusive society where the “us versus them” would be dismissed.

It is therefore not abnormal to witness mixed feelings amongst the populations regarding these children. It is indeed human to feel threatened. However, according to the online survey’s results (which is however not representative of the entire EU population), we could presuppose that even though the population might be afraid of these children coming back, they would not be reluctant as the majority of the respondents believe that these children have a right to come back and be supported and they remain optimistic that they can be reintegrated into society.

But how exactly are the governments going to handle the return of these children from a public point of view? Should they inform the population of the children’s return? Communication strategies are indeed essential because these children are going to generate a lot of media attention, but we should be careful how the media depicts these children in the news because it can be detrimental for their reintegration. Local communication strategies are needed for the local communities who feel worried about the child’s return. Workshops, discussions, seminars could be organized at the local level to answer the concerns and fears of the local community, so the community could learn how to accept the child back. Undertaking communication campaigns at the national level to alarm the population about the child’s return is unnecessary and counter-productive in my belief as it could lead to stigmatization for the child. It is therefore important for the child to come back to the EU countries in a discreet and smooth manner to not panic the entire country and for him/her not to impair his/her reintegration.

Conclusion

Will the reintegration of Daesh's children be difficult? Yes. Will it be impossible? No. Will they put the European Union countries at risk? Perhaps.

As we have seen, Daesh's recruitment is vast, diverse, large-scale and meticulously designed. Their recruitment of children is unique compared to other terrorist or armed groups; and so is their use of children which is both part of a short and long-term strategy to expand the Caliphate and ensure its survival. From the researches I made, the closest ones who can be compared to the children of Daesh are the Hitler's Youth in terms of recruitment's strategy and in terms of motives: both Hitler and ISIS wanted to create a future loyal generation of followers. Their main recruitment and obedience methods are intense indoctrination, distorted education and social mobilization both at the local and international level.

The "voluntary" notion of these children is important to highlight. Comparing to the recruitment by traditional armed groups, the "voluntary" conscription also known as the co-option method appears to dominate with ISIS, even though it is difficult to assess the clear voluntarism aspect of these young people while joining Daesh.

We must acknowledge, even reluctantly, that the outcomes of Daesh's strategy appear to be quite successful viewing the growing number of children being enrolled. As we have seen, there are numerous international conventions for the protection, safety and well-being of children. Unfortunately, because of ISIS, the rights of these children have been violated, and it is time for these international and European protection mechanisms to be enforced.

These children and adolescents have suffered intense indoctrination and great psychological, mental and social traumas. Some will be more affected than others, all these children have had some level of engagement with and exposure to Daesh's extremist ideology. It does not necessary mean that all of them are or will become potential violent extremists or terrorists, but it is important to recognize the impact of such a strong indoctrination.

When the child returns, the first question to be answered is whether the child is a victim, or a criminal. We have established that a balance should be found between the "victim-perpetrator" denomination (we could use the term "engaged victim" or "circumscribed actor" that Drumbl, M.A (2012, p.100) recommends) because all of them are first and foremost victims: victims of indoctrination, poverty, socio-economic and cultural circumstances, parents.... However, they are also participants: either

“passive” ones because they did not choose this life or were taken there by their parents, but they still followed ISIS’s path or engaged in ISIS’s activities; or “active” ones because they voluntarily decided to join Daesh. Afterwards, we should determinate what to do with them. The international legal instruments have established that prosecution should be a matter of last resort and that alternatives to judicial mechanisms should be prioritized if the child’s profile is not deemed appropriate for a reintegration programme. I would therefore recommend children’s returnees to be first considered for rehabilitation programmes; and for the most serious cases and those who volunteered to have access to restorative justice and diversion programmes, which can then facilitate their entry into reintegration’s processes.

On the matter of classifying children according to their age, I personally believe that it is not the way how it should be done. In fact, because of the intense indoctrination they all undergone and because of the daily violence they have been exposed to, all children are susceptible of becoming violent since it is the only way of living they have known there. Even those who did not engage in violence, whether this child is 8 years old or 14, if we do not take care of this child immediately upon his/her return, he/she can end up committing atrocities. Therefore, I do not personally believe that stressing so much on the age is necessary. It is rather their personal experience in Daesh and needs upon return that should be given full consideration.

In fact, each child is different and requires tailored-made deradicalization, rehabilitation and reintegration programmes depending on the duration of the “stay” in the conflict zone; the type of exposure to violence; the level of involvement in violence; the characteristics of the child; the environment’s support; ... Thus, the cares must be based on the specific needs of each child as there is no one-size-fits-all approach, and programmes that have worked in one country on specific individuals might not work in another country on other individuals.

Daesh’s children coming back to the EU countries are still in a very limited number, this is why we have analyzed past initiatives such as those for former child soldiers or for the Hitler’s Youth. From what we have analyzed most of the initiatives could work for Daesh’s returnees. However, there is one aspect that is added for the Daesh’s case which is the deradicalization and disengagement approaches. We could compare this deradicalization with the denazification of the Hitler’s Youth for instance. With the little literature found on the successful reintegration of the Hitler’s Youth, we could conclude that the denazification has been fruitful. But is the deradicalization and disengagement process going to

work for Daesh's children? Only time will tell but disengagement approaches should be favored against deradicalization ones as we have established.

The journey of rehabilitation and reintegration will be certainly a harsh and long one and if we want results we absolutely need time and the participation of the entire society whether it be teachers, NGOs, social workers, psychologists, doctors, politicians, local authorities, communities, families and so on. These children will need psychological care which is the most important one, education, medical and social support and efforts. Families are of utmost importance throughout the entire process so as is the willingness of the community to accept the child's returnees back into the society and these aspects are crucial. For them to be successfully reintegrated, governments should start working on an inclusive society where anti-discrimination, anti-racism and empathy prevail.

On the reintegration aspect we should be conscious that even if rehabilitation and reintegration programmes could work and even if they manage to regain a normal life, their ISIS's experiences will never leave them completely and this is where the question of Europe's security comes in.

We know that the EU member states do not yet have a clear experience with child's returnees. There is still no clear and defined practice, but some have already deradicalization and disengagement programmes mainly for adults. So far, there currently exists four approaches amongst the member states and these could be debated and criticized but we should remain optimistic that they will positively evolve over time.

Denmark, Germany, France, the Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom are the most advanced ones in terms of "readiness" to take these children under their wings. As for Belgium, which was the illustration case of this paper, it still does not have a clear approach concerning child's returnees. On the prevention side, Belgium has already numerous prevention initiatives but on the rehabilitation and deradicalization/disengagement side, it is still blurred. We can estimate that Belgium is for now not ready enough to welcome back these children.

Because of their experiences under ISIS, these children could indeed pose a potential threat to the member states. To avoid any violent "explosion", these children need to receive direct and tailor-made assistance whether it be psychological, social, educational or judicial if that is the case. However, assuring that they will not commit atrocities in a near or remote future is impossible for now as it will be a long-term job over several years. We should not however amplify the problem because the reality is that most of these children might not come back at all in the EU countries. Why? Because of the

reluctance of many states to help them to come back. And if some manage to come back, first they will come back in a very limited number thus it should not be too overwhelming for the states and second, the psychologists Webber, J. & Salem, M.A. (personal communication, 2018) are of belief that children and adolescents “have a higher chance of reintegration than adults”. I am therefore of conviction that the countries of the EU are dimly at risk.

Since the numerous terrorist attacks perpetrated on EU territory, a climate of fear has propagated. Racism and discrimination are still very present in the EU, in some countries more than others as it is the case for Belgium which appears to be one of the most racist EU countries. As said before, Muslims in all fields of life whether it be social, educational, medical, economical are discriminated and it is vital to put an end to this culture of racism otherwise child’s returnees might face even more difficulties upon their return.

Witnessing mixed feelings amongst the populations is normal. However, according to the online survey’s results (which is however not representative of the entire EU population), we could presuppose that even though the population might be afraid of these children coming back, they would not be reluctant as the majority of the respondents believe that these children have a right to come back and to be supported and they remain optimistic that they can be reintegrated into society.

Communication strategies are essential because these children are going to generate a lot of media attention. We should be careful however to how the media depicts these children because it can be detrimental for their reintegration. Local communication strategies are needed for the local communities who feel worried about the child’s return. Workshops, discussions, seminars could be organized at the local level to answer the concerns and fears of the community. Undertaking communication campaigns at the national level to alarm the population about the child’s return is unnecessary and counter-productive in my opinion as it could lead to stigmatization for the child. It is therefore important for the child to come back to the EU countries in a discreet and smooth manner to not panic the entire country and for him/her not to impair his/her reintegration.

In lights of all the elements analyzed throughout this paper, I believe that the member states which will experience the return of Daesh’s children should not give in to panic. The small number of children who will manage to come back, will be able to reintegrate society if they receive the necessary support. It is indeed a human drama and there is no single answer, but member states have to be reminded that these children are their own citizens and they need to be helped, otherwise they might actually later

turn into a real threat. Combining an inclusive approach which deals with the security issue and the human dimension is what we need even if it will be a long and arduous process.

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Annex 1

This text is taken from the report of UNODC (2018, p.95) named “Handbook on Children Recruited and Exploited by Terrorist and Violent Extremist Groups: The Role of the Justice System”:

“Social enquiry reports should contain relevant information related to the family background of the child, the child’s current circumstances, including where he or she is living and with whom, the child’s educational background and health status, and previous offences, as well as the circumstances surrounding the commission of the offence and the likely impact of any sentence on the child.

The adjudication of cases involving children accused of terrorism-related crimes may pose particular difficulties. In order to strengthen the impact of social enquiry reports, it is recommended that clear guidelines be developed on the content, style and objective of the reports and that professionals are adequately trained on their significance. Social workers carrying out investigations of such cases should be appropriately trained on potential security risks. Judges should not discount lightly the recommendations made in the reports or discount them merely on the basis of the gravity of the offence. Experience has shown that an effective measure to boost adherence to such recommendations during sentencing is a formal requirement that the court justifies in writing the reasoning behind the selection of a different sentence.

In particular, guidelines could be developed to ensure that especially relevant aspects of the child’s rehabilitation are taken into account, such as:

- (a) The specificities of the recruitment process, and especially an analysis of “push factors” and “pull factors” that were decisive in the case of the individual child, in order to ensure that the selected sentence addresses the fundamental needs of the child;
- (b) Family relationship with particular emphasis on the role of the family in the recruitment process, as well as on the identification of positive relationships that will be conducive to reintegration. Situations where the families are also facing stigma or fear and require adequate support should also be highlighted;
- (c) The experiences within in the group in terms of violence, exploitation and relationships of submission or control with other members of the group;
- (d) Risks for the child safety, with particular emphasis on the risks of secondary recruitment, or retaliation from members of the groups. Risks related to ostracism by the community should also be analyzed”

Annex 3

Table 1. Preferred Psychotherapy Techniques for Different (PTSD) Target Symptoms

Most Prominent Symptom	Recommended Techniques	Also Consider
Intrusive thoughts	Exposure therapy	Cognitive therapy Anxiety management Psychoeducation Play therapy for children
Flashbacks	Exposure therapy	Anxiety management Cognitive therapy Psychoeducation
Trauma-related fears, panic, and avoidance	Exposure therapy Cognitive therapy Anxiety management	Psychoeducation Play therapy for children
Numbing/detachment from others/loss of interest	Cognitive therapy	Psychoeducation Exposure therapy
Irritability/angry outbursts	Cognitive therapy Anxiety management	Psychoeducation Exposure therapy
Guilt/shame	Cognitive therapy	Psychoeducation Play therapy for children
General anxiety (hyperarousal, hypervigilance, startle)	Anxiety management Exposure therapy	Cognitive therapy Psychoeducation Play therapy for children
Sleep disturbances	Anxiety management	Exposure therapy Cognitive therapy Psychoeducation
Difficulty concentrating	Anxiety management	Cognitive therapy Psychoeducation

Webber, J. M., Mascari, J. B., Dubi, M., & Gentry, J. E. (2006, p.18)

Annex 4

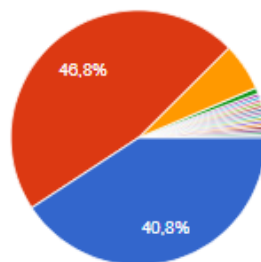
QUESTIONS

RÉPONSES

268

Do you think these children are, for the European Union countries,

265 réponses

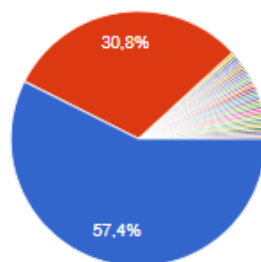


- A major threat
- A minor threat
- Not a threat at all
- I don't know
- They are the most influencable/ the...
- A threat
- These children, per se, are not a thr...
- The treat is Daech. Not the children

▲ 1/3 ▼

Would you be afraid if these children and adolescents come back to Europe ? And therefore, would you be reluctant for them to come back?

263 réponses

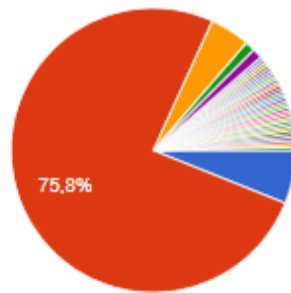


- Yes
- No
- Je ne serais probablement pas rass...
- If they are juste flown back to Europ...
- I don't know
- I will ve afraid because they are a t...
- Depend on how they are welcomed...
- It's a dillema.on the one hand I woul...

▲ 1/5 ▼

Do you think these children and adolescents, are:

264 réponses

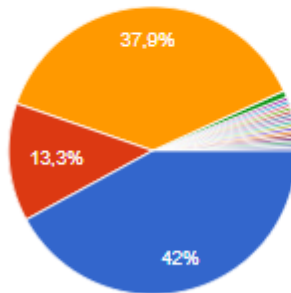


- Criminals
- Victims
- Both
- Both
- both
- Criminals and victims (of parents w...
- Les deux, ils ont été victimes du lav...
- Depends on the age. Kids <16 are...

▲ 1/5 ▼

In the long-term, do you think they can regain a normal life and be reintegrated into the European societies?

264 réponses



- Depending on the more or less traumatic experience they have got and the support received afterwards
- It depends on different parameters. I think a psycho social assessment and a probation is necessary
- It will depend from individual to individual.
- Yes, I hope a lot of them

▲ 3/3 ▼