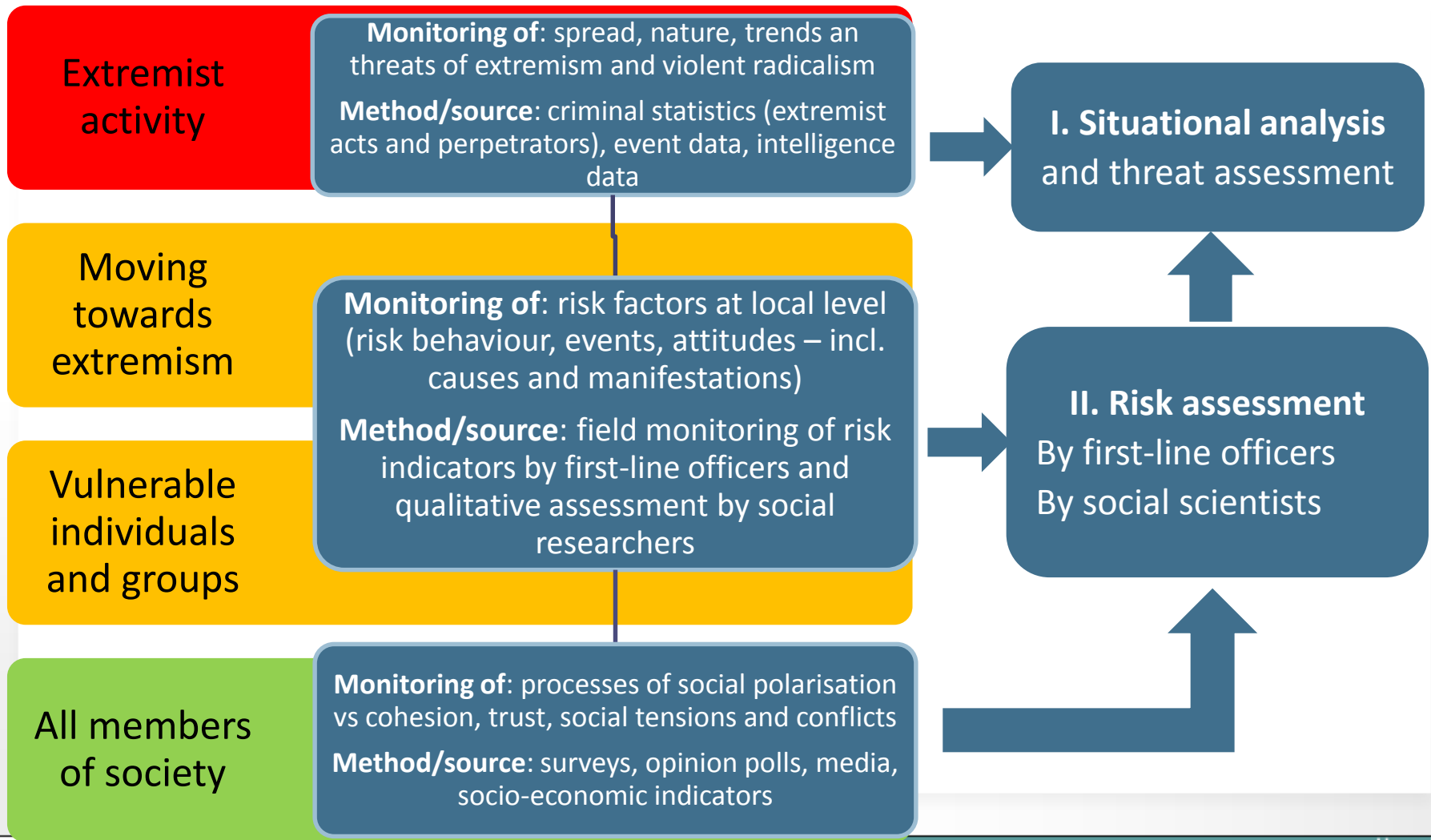# Validation of Radicalisation Monitoring Tool

Risk assessment by first-line officers

Rositsa Dzhekova

28 June 2016
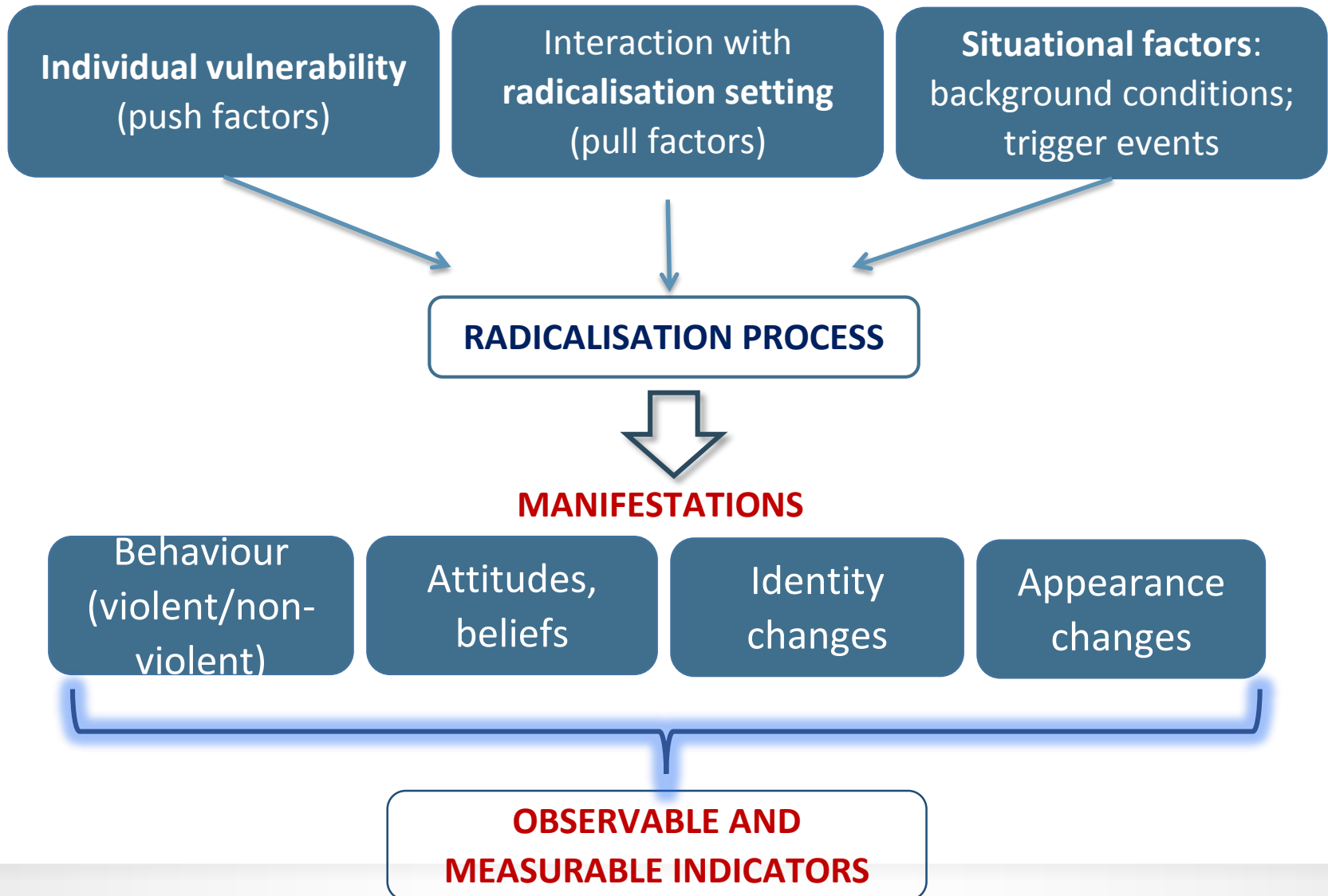
The monitoring toolkit model: overview

Extremist activity

Monitoring of: spread, nature, trends an threats of extremism and violent radicalism

Method/source: criminal statistics (extremist acts and perpetrators), event data, intelligence data

I. Situational analysis and threat assessment

Moving towards extremism

Monitoring of: risk factors at local level (risk behaviour, events, attitudes – incl. causes and manifestations)

Method/source: field monitoring of risk indicators by first-line officers and qualitative assessment by social researchers

II. Risk assessment By first-line officers By social scientists

Vulnerable individuals and groups

All members of society

Monitoring of: processes of social polarisation vs cohesion, trust, social tensions and conflicts

Method/source: surveys, opinion polls, media, socio-economic indicators

**Component II
Risk assessment by first-line officers
Islamist radicalisation**

Analytical Framework

ROOT CAUSES, DRIVERS AND FACTORS OF RADICALISATION

Individual vulnerability (push factors)	Interaction with **radicalisation setting** (pull factors)	**Situational factors**: background conditions; trigger events

RADICALISATION PROCESS

MANIFESTATIONS

Behaviour (violent/non-violent)	Attitudes, beliefs	Identity changes	Appearance changes

OBSERVABLE AND MEASURABLE INDICATORS

Risk indicators Islamist radicalisation: community/group level

TRIGGERS:

- Social, religious, ethnic conflicts and tensions
- Extremist rhetoric by (right-wing) politicians
- Repressive measures by authorities (demolishing illegal housing /mosques, arrests, refusal of social benefits, legal bans on religious freedoms)
- Media
- Terrorist acts in the vicinity or abroad
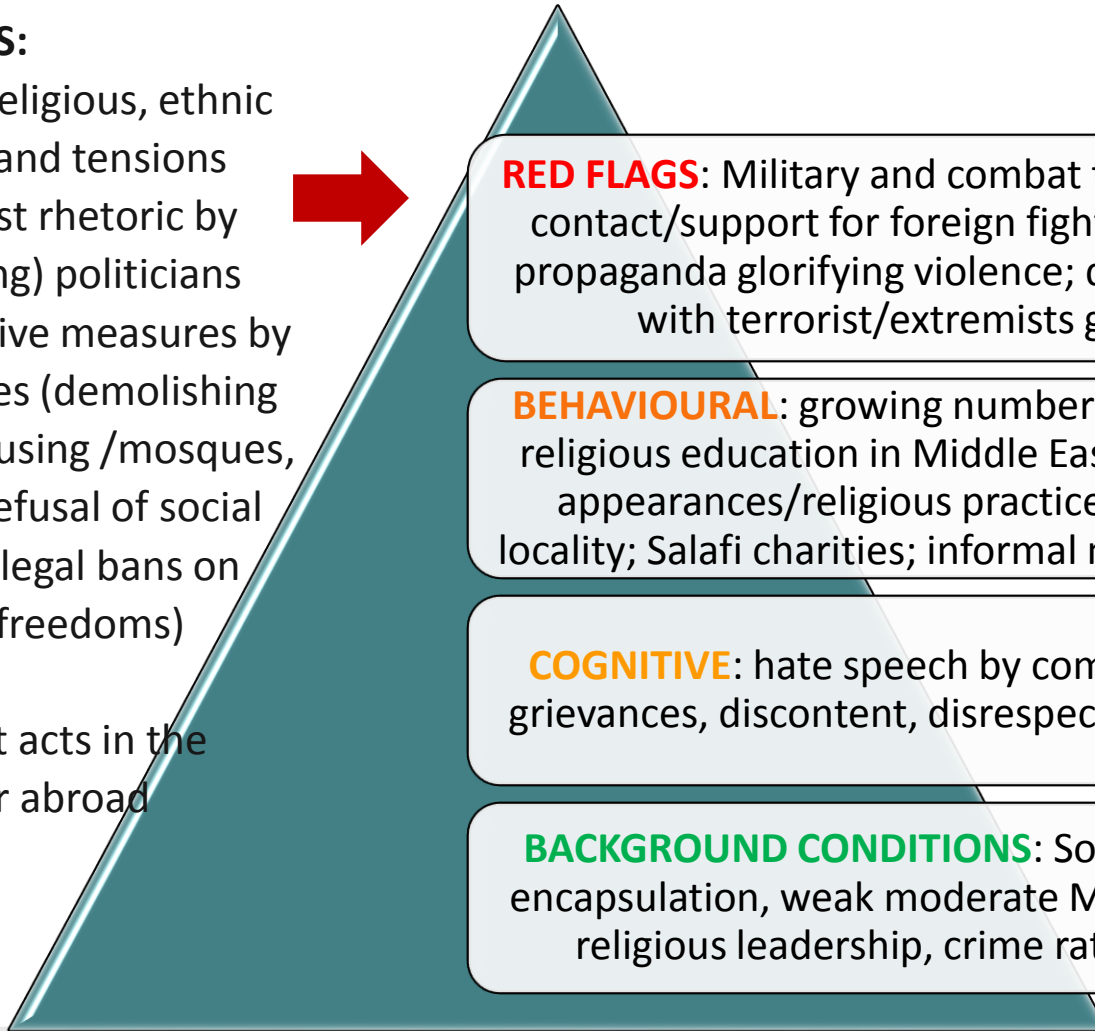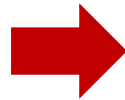
RED FLAGS: Military and combat training provision in area; contact/support for foreign fighters in transit; spread of propaganda glorifying violence; demonstrating allegiance with terrorist/extremists groups and causes

BEHAVIOURAL: growing number of converts, people with religious education in Middle East; noticeable changes in appearances/religious practice; foreign emissaries in locality; Salafi charities; informal mosques; strikes, protests

COGNITIVE: hate speech by community leaders, voicing grievances, discontent, disrespect for (secular) authorities

BACKGROUND CONDITIONS: Socio-economic problems, encapsulation, weak moderate Muslim leaders, contested religious leadership, crime rates, in-group conflicts

Behavior/actions	Cognitive indicators (attitudes, beliefs, convictions)	Situational factors / background conditions Triggering factors
MICRO LEVEL (INDIVIDUAL)		
Suggestive - Individual received religious education in Middle East - Individual changed appearance (beard, traditional Islamic dress, callous on forehead) – especially relevant with regard to converts - Noticeable change in religious practices (??) - Seeking or having contacts with a charismatic person or spiritual advisor - Cutting ties with family and friends, socially withdrawn **Red-flags** - Attends rallies for extremist causes - Travel to risk countries/conflict zones - Contacts with radical groups locally or	- Openly voicing grievances - Expressing dichotomous worldview (us versus them) - Expressing disrespect for (secular) authorities - Statements dehumanizing groups like unbelievers, gays, other ethnicities or religions etc. - Expressing dissatisfaction with religious leaders **Red flags** - Openly voicing support for terrorist organisations and causes	- Psychological problems - History of violence - Criminally versatile - Gang membership - Prison experience - Relevant occupational and technical skills (IT, chemicals, weapons) - Addictions - Family problems - Financial problems - Education and employment situation Triggers - Personal trauma or crisis event - Victimization or conflict situation

Rationale of the risk assessment for 1ˢᵗ line officers

- **Community police** can spot and record facts, detect behaviour, observe different processes, events and other related to potential radicalisation risks.

- Need to develop clear, objective, detectable, measurable **risk indicators** of radicalisation that can be monitored on a regular basis.

- Observable indicators for first-line officers used across the EU/US fall in the following categories: **behaviour, appearance, cognitive factors** (identity, ideology, attitudes) – individual and group level

- Not all of these can be recognised/observed by police – we need also **other methods and sources** (other frontline practitioners or sociological researchers).

Testing risk indicators of Islamist radicalisation among local police (1)

AIMS:

- Test which of the **risk indicators (individual and group level)** can be observed and registered by fist-line police officers.

- Further develop **concrete, clear and measurable indicators** from broader categories of factors.

- Develop, test and finalise **questionnaire protocols**.

- Provide analysis and recommendations on the use of indicators, questionnaires and the **institutional mechanism** for conducting the risk monitoring and subsequent risk assessment.

Testing risk indicators of Islamist radicalisation among local police (2)

METHODS:

- Analysis of court trial files to specify risk factors and target communities

- In-depth interviews with police chiefs (4)

- In-depth interviews with intelligence officers (3)

- Interviews and test (paper) questionnaires: community police officers (5)

- 1 field visit to a Roma quarter with the local police officer

- Interview with prison guards (1) and prison social workers (1)

TARGET GROUP:

- 4 Roma (Muslim) communities identified based on **court trial proceedings** (Pazardzhik, Plovdiv, Asenovgrad, Nova Zagora)

Analysis of court trial proceedings

- Psychological, biographical, socio-economic profile of 14 defendants on trial for propagating violence/hate and war (from a small Salafi Roma community)

- Identified concrete behaviours, attitudes, events, people, relationships, locations.

- Places and nature of meetings, preaching, other religious activities, propaganda materials relevant to the trial (IS symbols, literature, etc.), recruitment to Salafi Islam, online behaviour (FB)

→ **Enabled us to ask police specific questions of people, places, behaviours and other manifestations of potential risk indicators**

Interview themes (1): Local setting and conflict potential in community

- Intra- and inter-community tensions (nature, magnitude, frequency)

- Protests, strikes, demonstrations (with religious/ideological element)

- Incidents of disrespect towards formal institutions/rules, hate speech (examples)

- Incidence of capsulation/estrangement of a group from the community

- Formal-informal mosques in locality / attendance / competing imams

- Foreign citizens staying / being active in community (religious emissaries, foreign fighters)

- Irregular/secretive meetings, preaching and gatherings with religious character taking place outside official places (mosques)

Interview themes (2): behavioral/appearance indicators (individual + group)

- Number of people with changed appearance (dress, grooming style) within community

- Members of community receiving religious education in the Middle East

- Number of converts to Islam / adopting Salafi interpretation (hard to distinguish by police, except by external signs) – number, profile, observable changes in behavior/rethoric

- Travel patterns (Western Europe/Midde East) and potential changes in behavior/appearance upon return

Other themes for in-depth interviews with police chiefs / 1st-line officers

- Nature of activities of religious leaders in locality

- Relationship between community members and authorities

- General socio-economic / crime problems plaguing the community

- Other relevant behavior of individuals and groups within community (combat training, arms procession, criminal behavior, secretivity).

- Discussion of possible institutional mechanisms for reporting on risk indicators by community police

General observations from interviews

- Local police patrolling the area on a daily basis know very well the community and its members, but have **limited sensitivity and/or understanding of radicalisation-related risk factors**.

- **Reluctance to speak** about religious or political factors, or any other potentially relevant issues unrelated to crime (such as social and psychological factors, religious practices, behaviours, etc.)

- **Good knowledge** of local conflicts, sources of income of community members, general travel patterns (but no knowledge of people receiving religious education abroad).

- The localities studied are **not considered "ghettos"**, police has a regular presence/coverage and good (self-reported) level of crime / conflict management.

Findings from testing the risk indicators

- **Indicators at group and community level observable by police**: number of Islam converts/Salafi followers, change in appearance, demonstrative behavior of religious belonging, local conflicts, number of people visiting local mosque, general travel patterns, illicit activities/ trade taking place in community.

- **Indicators not directly observable by police**: rhetoric, propaganda materials, nature of religious preaching and propaganda activity, what happens inside mosques and other places of prayer/religious education, motivations and convictions.

- **Police in all three localities have failed to register/report**: the sale/distribution of t-shirts and other products with ISIS symbols, secret meetings, marches, foreigners sheltered in community, online behaviour.

Unexplored topics

- Illicit financing for religious activities – could be potentially monitored by investigative/criminal police

- The adequacy of risk indicators for other Muslim communities (migrants, Turks, Pomaks) would need to be tested and tailored (different community dynamics)

- Potential red flags for high-risk activities and behaviours not observed/present yet but should be also monitored

Conclusions

- Police officers have limited understanding of radicalisation phenomena, risks and processes, and general reluctance to deal with the issue

- Police does not see monitoring radicalisation as being part of their mandate (not a crime) – understood as strictly intelligence issue

- Community policing approach underutilized, no tradition

- Fear to admit there is a problem or risk

- Need for an institutionalized procedure and instructions to apply monitoring of risk indicators

- Urgent need for training and education prior to monitoring

- Cooperation with social services and other stakeholders is ad-hoc and mostly relying on good personal contacts – no institutionalized mechanism, could be potentially effective

Conclusions (2)

- A clear distinction must be drawn and made clear to stakeholders between intelligence objectives and monitoring of early warning signs by police for the purposes of prevention work.

- Police are potentially able to monitor objective indicators that do not require personal judgement or additional investigative work (e.g. number of people with changed appearance)

- Monitoring individual and community behaviors needs to be mandated officially and clear guidance needs to be offered on what is to be recorded and reported, how often and in what format.

Next steps

- Additional interviews / field visits in further localities
- Further interviews with analysts at the MoI on the feasibility of the risk assessment
- Writing up analysis of monitoring capacity gaps + recommendations
- Compiling practical monitoring manual / guide
- Finalising questionnaires for community police
- Writing up an analytical guide to conduct the risk assessment / subsequent analysis of reported data on indicators
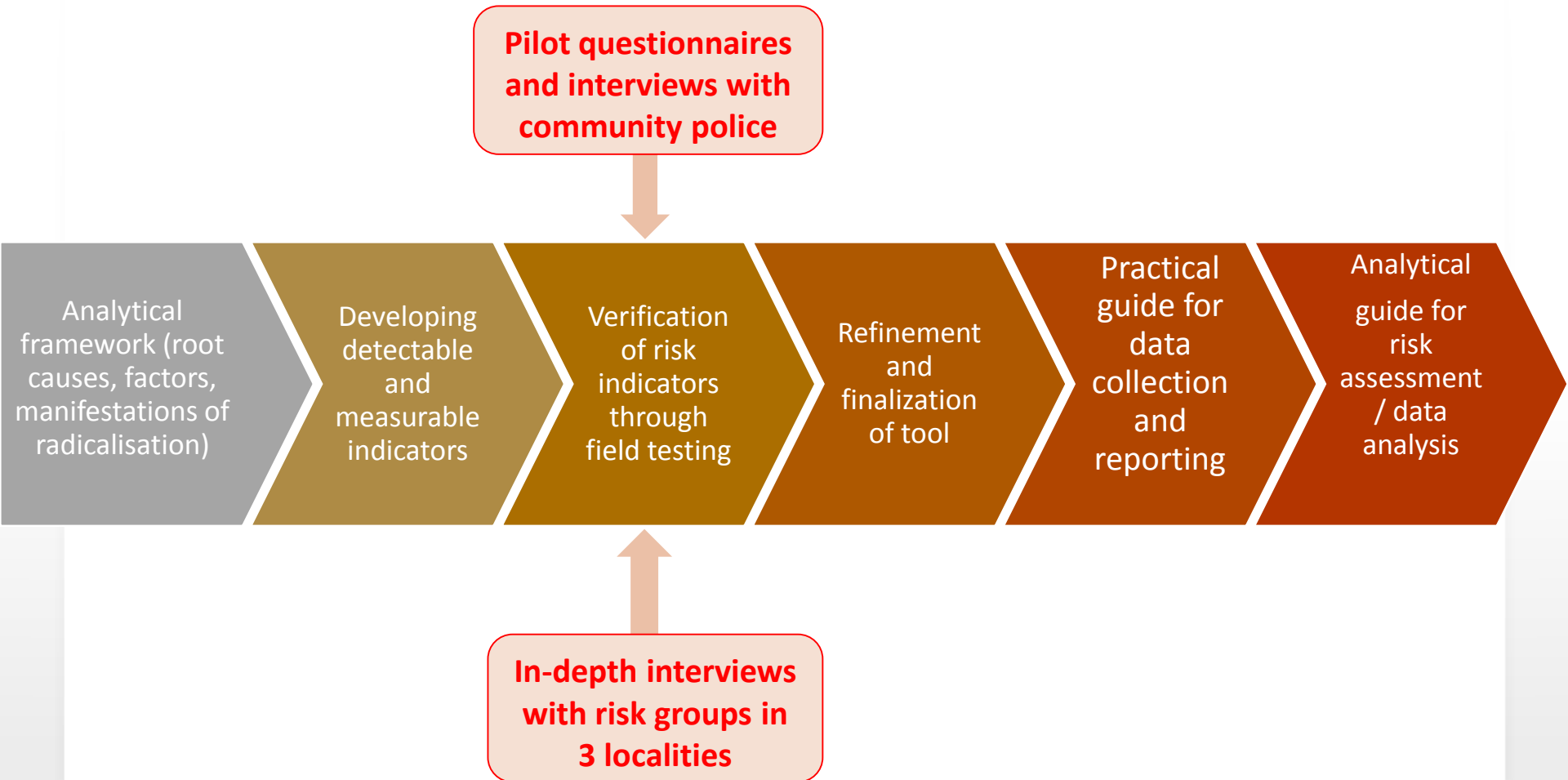
Finalising the Risk Assessment component

- **1st line police officers: Questionnaires and monitoring guide**
  - Training on understanding and monitoring risk indicators
  - Instructions on registering risk indicators (finalized questionnaire and guide)
  - Institutional mechanism for reporting on risk indicators
- **MoI analysts: analytical guide for conducting the risk assessment based on**:
  - First-line officers reporting of risk indicators
  - Qualitative assessment of root causes and factors
  - Analysis of other situational factors / secondary data
  - Guide on the use of the analytical framework (push factors + pull factors + breeding ground / situational factors incl. triggers)

Possible products / outputs

- Questionnaire protocol for local police officers
- Manual / guide for 1st line police on understanding, detecting and reporting early risk signs

- Description / recommendations on institutional mechanism for conducting the risk monitoring
- Analytical guide for conducting risk assessment based on collected data

The RMT validation and finalization process

Pilot questionnaires and interviews with community police

Analytical framework (root causes, factors, manifestations of radicalisation)	Developing detectable and measurable indicators	Verification of risk indicators through field testing	Refinement and finalization of tool	Practical guide for data collection and reporting	Analytical guide for risk assessment / data analysis

In-depth interviews with risk groups in 3 localities

Discussion

- How should the RMT look like as a final product?

- What type of outputs would have the biggest impact / value in your context for which groups of stakehoders?
  - Police officers / 1-st line practitioners
  - Policy-makers
  - Analysts / researchers

- Policy briefs and policy recommendations – going beyond the methodological aspects of RMT and think of how to translate for different stakeholders + impact (e. g. flag issues of hate crime registration)

THANK YOU

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