PREPARE PROJECT

Preventing radicalisation through probation and release

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Germany: a hybrid model with an overall security-focused approach

Because of Germany's complex federal system, neither a purely state-led nor a civil society-focused approach has prevailed so far. The country remains a hybrid model in which emphases and successes depend on the Länder.

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Probation allows for individualised follow-up for prisoners leaving prison and mobilises many services (prison administration, justice services, etc.). As a result, it is a key moment to act against the violent radicalisation of these individuals, whether it took place in prison or on release. Local authorities have a key role to play in coordinating these different institutions. They can also use their knowledge and know-how in the field of prevention of reoffending and disengagement.

PREPARE contributes to the prevention of radicalisation through disengagement and rehabilitation programmes during release and probation, notably through multi-agency partnerships that include local authorities.

Efus coordinates this project from 2017 to 2019 with a broad partnership of local authorities and civil society organisation: City of Malaga and Generalitat of Catalonia (Spain), Rotterdam and The Hague (Netherlands), Bagnolet (France) and Vilvoorde (Belgium), Violence Prevention Network and Denkzeit (Germany), Fryshuset (Sweden), European Forum for Restorative Justice (Belgium) and Fondation Agir Contre l'Exclusion (France).

1. The federal government's strategy to prevent extremism and promote democracy

Besides measures applied by security agencies, Germany's national strategy to prevent extremism and promote democracy comprises approaches that "range from promoting participation in civil society and strengthening democratic counterforces through preventive educational work with children, young people and young adults, their parents and other reference persons, through political education work, the conveying of knowledge and strengthening of the capacity to act amongst specialists and multipliers, to the provision of counselling services" (Bundesregierung 2016:10).

In order to allow for the above listed measures the federal government provides different funding streams[1]: The most important is the federal programme "Live Democracy! Active against Right-wing Extremism, Violence and Hate"[2], which is embedded in the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth. From 2016 to 2018, its funding has more than doubled, up to a total of €120.5 million in 2018. Accordingly, the programme has been significantly expanded and new subject matters included. It now supports the establishment of sustainable structures at the national, state and local level and provides longer-term funding for the structural development of significant (non-governmental) organisations with longstanding expertise, which operate nationwide. Furthermore, it supports towns and cities, local authorities and rural districts to draw up and implement locally strategies to promote democracy and diversity.

Additionally the "Cohesion through participation" federal programme, which is affiliated with the Federal Ministry of the Interior and implemented in cooperation with the Federal Government Commissioner for the New Federal States (resourced with €12 million per year), focuses on empowering regional and local actors, especially in structurally weak parts of Germany. The projects aim at building the capacities of and training key local stakeholders and multipliers (both from civil society organisations and local municipalities) to become so-called "democracy advisors".

A third relevant institution is the German Federal Agency for Civic Education, which is tasked with promoting civil society by providing information and by enabling and encouraging citizens to actively participate in the democratic process. This institution was established in 1952 "to educate the German people about democratic principles and prevent any moves to re-establish a totalitarian regime." Besides general civic education (which is also given to young people and hard-to-reach target groups), the German Federal Agency for Civic Education, together with their network of branches in the Länder, offer activities, services and materials to professionals working with young persons or in any educational context and provides funding for (pilot) projects (Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung 2012: 1).

2. Roles of and relationship between the State and civil society

In (international) debates around actors and fields of action in preventing and countering (violent) extremism Germany is very often portrayed as having exceptionally high civil society involvement. Yet, larger scale assessments of the work field show that while NGOs and civil society initiatives do play a significant role they are far from being predominant.

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[1] This description of institutions and funding streams does not claim to be exhaustive, for more information on other involved stakeholders, see the federal government's strategy to prevent extremism and promote democracy (Bundesregierung 2016).
[2] German title: *Demokratie leben! Aktiv gegen Rechtsextremismus, Gewalt und Menschenfeindlichkeit*

In 2017 for example, a study identified a total of 721 projects aiming at "the prevention of extremism or politically motivated crime" (Gruber/Lützinger 2017:7). Prevention is understood here as including measures of civic political education as well as de-radicalisation. Out of all 721 projects, 336 were state-run. This means that 47% of the total number of registered projects were implemented by state actors in direct contact with the target group. In other words, efforts are almost evenly shared between civil society and governmental institutions (Gruber/Lützinger 2017:7). Nonetheless, the nature of governmental efforts varies across different levels and entities: Approximately one third of the total 721 projects were implemented on a state level, while projects implemented on federal, regional and municipal levels accounted for about 20% respectively. Due to the diversity of statewide, regional or municipal measures combined with the federal structure of the German Federal Republic, the exact arrangements of the relationships between state(s) and civil society largely depend on the respective states, which makes a detailed statement on the matter of said relationship(s) difficult. However, even though civil society actors are far from being alone in this field, a quick comparison with France or the UK highlights the significance of the "softer" German approach including a large share of civil responsibility (Foley 2013:316; République française. Premier ministre. 2016). This current state of affairs, which is still actively supported by the official federal government strategy (Bundesregierung 2016:7-8), as well as the diverging paths of Britain and France, stem from a particular historical understanding of state and society and developed organically within the context of German society (Foley 2013:316).

3. Roles of and relationship between the State and civil society

Based on research interviews combined with the existing literature and elicitations on the matter, the fields of work regarding the prevention of extremism and deradicalisation in Germany have been divided into categories, which we will briefly describe hereafter prior to covering the topic of de-radicalisation within the penitentiary system.

>>>>> *Family counselling and counselling to the social environment*

Counselling to the social environment classifies as systemic counselling and differs from "outreach work" in its purely indirect interaction with (potentially) at risk or radicalised persons via their social environment (El-Mafaalani et al. 2016:17). It usually aims at full (cognitive) deradicalisation and seeks to eliminate the risk for an individual to become radicalised (El-Mafaalani et al. 2016:17). Nonetheless, the actual counselling process is often much more diverse and therefore cannot be divided into the two categories of "systemic" or "outreach" approaches as easily. Rather, it consists of case specific actions based on the individual needs and circumstances of those seeking advice or help. This includes mere support of the social environment but can well lead to direct counselling of a potentially radicalised person.

The central and nationwide contact point for counselling of the social environment in the context of Islamist extremism is the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees' (*Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge* - BAMF) "Advice Centre on Radicalisation". Regarding the counselling of the social environment in the context of right-wing extremism "Mobile Counselling Teams" (*Mobile Beratungsteams*) have proven their worthiness in practice for many years. In contrast to many counselling services working on Islamist extremism, the Mobile Counselling Teams do not work directly with

(potentially) radicalised individuals (see 3.3. "Support to Exiting Extremist Groups and Subsequent Stabilisation"). For this purpose, however, a diverse set of options of parent counselling services as well as distancing and exit work is available nationwide.

A second purpose of counselling the social environment is educational and sensitisation work with the private and professional social environment of persons at risk of becoming radicalised.
Feedback from counsellors working in the context of Islamist extremism show frequent overreaction on the part of officials and professionals who are working in close contact with young people (teachers, sports coaches, *i.a.*). Without directly contacting the target group, counselling services can help to explain, assess as well as integrate certain statements made or actions taken by young people in order to subsequently signal an "all clear" or initiate a counselling or deradicalisation process. In particular, there are no accounts of such societal overreactions regarding left- or right-wing extremism. This could be explained by oversensitivity among youth care professionals and educators on the issue of Islamist extremism or underestimation of right-wing challenges among German youth or, possibly, a combination of both.

>>>>> *Counselling of persons at risk of becoming radicalised and (partly) radicalised individuals*

Working with the social surrounding/environment of the individuals in question can be a first step towards working directly with (partly) radicalised individuals. The opportunity can present itself as a potential result of the counselling and sensitising of parents or teachers described in the section above. Naturally, this contact has to be established voluntarily and with the full knowledge of the individual and a transparent work ethic is vital in pedagogical work with the target groups. Multipliers in the sense of the social surrounding/environment are not only teachers, but also people working in institutions such as child and family help centres, police officers and others who may be in direct professional contact with (young) individuals at risk of becoming radicalised (Hohnstein et al. 2015:25). Training multipliers in single or group settings is a fundamental part of prevention and deradicalisation.

Another option to initiate first contact with the target group is the "classic" street work of social workers (Hohnstein et al. 2015:22). This outreach approach has been in use since the late 1980s and stems from the early fight against right-wing extremism and other forms of youth gangs. The principle is based on acceptance without supporting the ideas and tries to stop radicalisation processes by using social-pedagogical methods. Yet, this form of establishing contact is becoming less relevant and few organisations are still active in this field. Another challenge is identifying the potential target group since "classic" and highly visible skinheads are losing relevance, while right-wing and Islamist extremists try to blend into mainstream society in order to avoid drawing attention to them.

>>>>> *Support for leaving extremist groups and subsequent stabilisation*

The support structures to help individuals exit an extremist group are part of the tertiary prevention string and their main aim is either a cognitive or a habitual distancing process, depending on the project (Gruber/Lützinger 2017: 21). In Germany as well as in other countries, so-called "Exit" programmes

are the most prominent and are based on the work of Norway's Tore Bjørgo[3], who started a pilot project in 1997 called "Project Exit – Leaving Violent Groups". In the following decades, this project gained a lot of traction and was implemented, sometimes by name only, in or adapted to different international contexts (Institute for Strategic Dialogue 2014:1; Köhler 2015:425).

Similarly, HAYAT is offering a support programme for individuals wanting to leave Islamist groups, which is strongly based on the experience gathered in right-wing extremism exit work and aims to achieve an organisational as well as an ideological distancing process (Hayat Deutschland).

Violence Prevention Network also offers support to individuals showing an interest in exiting extremist groups through various projects in several federal states (Violence Prevention Network e.V. 2017:7-8). At the federal level, most of the non-governmental organisations supporting individuals exiting right-wing extremist groups participate jointly in a working group called *Ausstieg zum Einstieg* (roughly translated by "Exit to entry") (BAG Ausstieg zum Einstieg). In recent years, state security actors have also set up Exit programmes for interested Islamists. Various State Offices for the Protection of the Constitution (state-level domestic intelligence agencies, *Landesämter für Verfassungsschutz* (LfV)) have adopted this practice, for example North Rhine-Westphalia (*Aussteigerprogramm Islamismus*) and Lower Saxony (*Aktion Neustart*).

>>>>> *Deradicalisation within the penitentiary system*

Deradicalisation in prison is certainly challenging: on the one hand prisons are seen as hotbeds of radicalisation because detainees are particularly vulnerable due to the exceptional stress they experience from being separated physically and psychologically from their familiar social surrounding. Other inmates and recruiters can exploit this situation to foster the individual's process of radicalisation. At the same time, some radicalised detainees may be open to enrol in deradicalisation programmes precisely because of the cognitive and emotional openings induced by being in custody (Neumann 2017:42).

One of the new funding priorities in the "Innovative pilot projects" section of the "Live Democracy!" programme is dedicated to "Prevention and deradicalisation in prison and probation". The projects funded in this context seek to provide preventive-pedagogical offers for detained juvenile offenders and support during and after the prison sentence. Additionally, they provide exit interventions and distancing work for detainees who are already radicalised are facilitated. This part of the programme also primes projects that aim at qualifying and training prison staff to deal with both inmates who are vulnerable to radicalisation and those already radicalised.

A full account of all measures taken in the deradicalisation work in prisons in Germany cannot be given in this short text due to the complex nature of the landscape in a federal system. Up to now, the academic and grey literature have focussed on systematically surveying the landscape instead of naming concrete measures. Here, the main challenge of the field is becoming apparent: The deficiency of empirical evidence.

The most complete study on extremism in German prisons was published in June 2017 by "Kriminologische Zentralstelle e.V.". According to the study, intervention offers can include but are not limited to educational options, faith based interventions, psychological or cognitive interventions, creative or cultural activities, sport, or inclusion of family, mentors and so called "Listeners" (Illgner et al. 2017:99). These interventions are designed to support deradicalisation and internal distancing

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[3] Dr Tore Bjørgo is Professor and researcher at the University of Oslo. He is the Director of the university's Centre for Extremism Research: Right-Wing Extremism, Hate Crime and Political Violence

processes. It is worth mentioning that, especially regarding faith-based interventions, the measures entail a certain degree of conflict between the constitutional right of religious freedom and some aspects of security.

However, work in the context of the penitentiary system does, or rather should not stop after the release of a prisoner. Subsequent stabilisation coaching is of the utmost importance to minimise the chances of the "client" being pulled back into the scene he was trying to leave. Depending on the federal state, the organisation or agency working with an individual while still in prison can sometimes continue the work outside, at least for an interim period. Such an approach can be necessary to ensure a safe and trusting transition to a different counselling service, whether NGO- or state-run, tasked with working with (former) extremists outside of the justice system. In order for this transition to work smoothly, close multi-agency and -actor cooperation would be vital, but the fact is that this still needs considerable improvement. Hence in some instances, counsellors have to end contact with their client upon their release, which poses a critical threat to the person's deradicalisation or stabilisation process.

4. On evaluation

As in most other countries, evaluation and impact measurement of prevention and deradicalisation programmes is a highly debated topic in Germany now. Due to the complex nature of the issue and the fact that measuring the impact of pedagogical work within currently proposed short-term frameworks is not only near impossible but also dubious from a scientific point of view, a different approach is being pursued at the moment. While evaluation is now part of almost every such programme in Germany, that rarely means impact evaluation but rather a process-based, formative evaluation aimed at better understanding certain prevention and deradicalisation processes and hereby continuously improving the work of the respective projects. While no scientifically valid and useful method for impact measurement in this field of work has been found, this strategy is likely to be pursued in the foreseeable future.

5. Conclusion

As was demonstrated above, due to its complex federal (funding-)structure neither a purely state-led nor a civil society-focused approach has prevailed in Germany so far. The country remains a hybrid model in which emphases and successes depend on the Länder, even though there is an overall trend towards a more security-focused approach. Nonetheless, efforts in favour of a diversity of approaches are still being made, especially for youth care. This leads to a comparatively high amount of pilot projects that aim at innovation but also at improving or complementing existing programmes and projects.
This diversity of approaches certainly sets Germany apart from other European countries. In light of the need for professional diversity when facing a threat such as extremist ideologies and the various factors supporting it, this diverse strategy is already proving its worth and has the potential to continue to do so. In this context, different experiences and approaches should be understood as an opportunity rather than a lack of fixed standards. Some major challenges remain: Most notably, the still insecure and short-term funding structures and consequently the uncertain ability of NGOs to secure qualified staff for this field in the long run.

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