

# Disengagement in prisons organised by the Flemish Government

Gert Vanherk  
policy coordinator prison Hasselt

HULP- EN DIENSTVERLENING  
AAN GEDETINEERDEN



# Situation

- ▶ Very few signs of radicalisation before the attacks in Paris.
- ▶ 88 prisoners in Flanders which are accused or convicted for terroristic acts (most Islamic radicalisation). Several will leave prison in 2019.
- ▶ 1/01/2017: two consultants started trajects towards disengagement.
- ▶ In June '18 was decided to recruit two more, but these profiles are hard to find.



# Approach

Starting points:

- not deradicalisation, but disengagement and reintegration
- Proactive
- Voluntarily (?)
- Intensive
- Continuity

We don't believe in standard programs or investing only in theological counter narratives. We do believe in a differentiated approach. Every person is unique.



# Approach

- ▶ Trust / authentic connection => open attitude
- ▶ detecting needs, searching where support is required and taking steps to realize this support
  - Prison regime, family, education, work, identity, religion or ideology, resilience, mental health...
- ▶ Detecting push and pull factors
- ▶ Searching for old passions or positive strenghts
  - Perspective: what do you want to do, who do you wish to be



# Approach

- ▶ First relation and connection (unexpected kindness), than confrontation
  - Not convincing, but stimulating critical reflection
- ▶ Multi-agency approach
  - The consultants stimulate the prisoner to work with other services to work with him on his needs.
  - The goal is to realize a plan of reintegration which everyone can support.
- ▶ Close collaboration in preparing and realizing reintegration



# Context (working points)

- ▶ Basic training for every kind of professional in prison. Prevention by creating a positive climate.
- ▶ Group activities have to be available and accessible.
- ▶ Information sharing with the Justice Department requests a clear framework (collective policy).



# Results & Research

- ▶ Approach is only two years operational
- ▶ Only one prisoner refused the support
- ▶ The two consultants have each 10-12 cases.

Together with the other services we reach about 2/3<sup>e</sup> of these prisoners.

- ▶ A first research project is finished (okt '17 – aug '18)
  - Need of a better splitting between policy, supporting professionals and the trajects.
  - Need of multi-level-governance (clear framework and shared approach)





# Questions?

[Gert.vanherk@wvg.vlaanderen.be](mailto:Gert.vanherk@wvg.vlaanderen.be)