

Between religion and extremism | Strategies for working with radicalised individuals

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Violence
Prevention Network

Who is Violence Prevention Network

- Non-profit NGO based in Germany
- Operating nationwide and supporting partners internationally
- Around 150 staff | over 20 years of experience
- Working in prevention of extremism, intervention and deradicalisation/exit
- An interface between practice and research

In our work we aim for ...

... people who are susceptible to radicalisation and perpetrators of violent crimes with extremist motivations...

to be enabled to lead an independent life and to become and feel like a part of democratic society...

in order to pre-empt and prevent extremism of any kind.

Our work in the justice sector

- Implementation of training on 'anti-violence and education of responsibility'[®] in group settings and individual counselling
- Regular exchange roundtables with probation services
- Courts, juvenile court assistance and probation services contact us with support requests for radicalised individuals
- Methods & topical priorities of supervision depend on degree of radicalisation



A holistic approach



The care, consultation, disengagement support, and distancing from extremism we facilitate, takes place inside and outside of prison

The work is:

- resource-oriented
- systemic (includes the social environment)
- focused on individual needs (autonomy, spirituality, connection etc.)

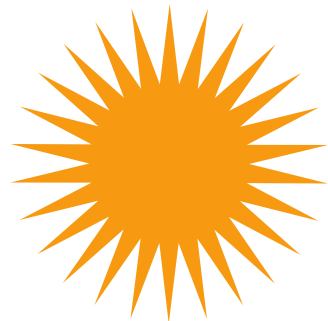
Access, approach & relationship



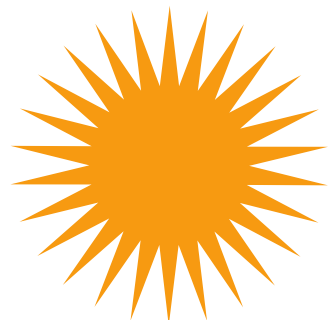
When meeting with a client, it is crucial to provide a space of comfort. The principle of 'voluntariness' cannot always be met in probation settings.



A 'room of silence' can provide that space in our counselling centre. Room can create a sense of well-being and safety and help clients to overcome inner resistance regarding certain topics.



Identification elements and knowledge of 'codes' tend to be very crucial for the target group we work with | **Case example: A male returnee, Kevin**



Only trust, authenticity and a sensitive approach to religious identity enables cognitive opening. For us, it is important to possess (geo-)political, psychological as well as theological knowledge & expertise as well as social work skills.

Demand-driven counselling

Case example: A returnee, Kevin (male):

„I have broken the oath of loyalty. I turned my back on Daesh. Thereby I committed a sin, right? And now I am a traitor whom God will never forgive, right?“

- From our experience, it is important to jointly reflect on answers to these questions.
- Taking religious questions seriously leads to a feeling of acceptance & may be an entry point to other topics such as biography, experiences of discrimination, life crises etc.
- Oftentimes such questions are the triggers for a person's life crisis and shape the entire course of life.
- Moreover, not meeting these needs may hold significant risks for radicalisation or recidivism.

Hindrances to the work

- Undifferentiated approaches and generalised diagnoses and interventions harbour the risk of trivialising or stigmatising clients.
 - Sometimes 'typical' adolescent behaviour is assessed in a security-oriented manner.
 - Missing support systems, in terms of religious communities, social environment etc.
- **Social disintegration is a factor that can lead to re-radicalisation**



Prospect | The importance of multi-agency settings



Inclusion of security - oriented risk assessment & our social diagnostics approaches



Cross-institutional exchange & roundtables
→ multi-perspective approaches



More holistic case understanding & decision-making

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