



The challenge of extremism

Examples of deradicalisation and
disengagement programmes in the EU

October 2010





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Kind regards,

Hanne Stig Andersen

The Division for Cohesion and Prevention of Radicalization

Introduction

In January 2010 a survey on deradicalisation and disengagement was initiated. In this survey five respondent countries have described specific deradicalisation and/or disengagement programmes targeted towards individuals. These five countries are Germany, Great Britain, the Netherlands, Denmark and Sweden. This report focuses on these intervention programmes, because the main objective of the survey is to map such programmes. The main objectives of the survey were:

- To map the practical experiences in EU member states with policies and programmes on deradicalisation and disengagement, focusing on how to intervene when individuals have been attracted to extremism.
- To support the exchange of experience and good practice among the EU member states in the further efforts to address the challenges of extremism and radicalisation.

The questionnaire was sent to all 27 EU member states. 18 EU member states replied extensively by giving descriptions of their overall strategies on prevention of extremism. All but one of the 18 countries have developed, or are developing, strategies to prevent radicalisation and extremism. Accordingly most of the strategies are broad initiatives on early prevention of radicalisation and extremism. The implementing partners in the strategies are often a mix of different authorities and organisations on a national, regional and local level.

Out of 18 countries, 13 countries have experienced problems with right-wing extremism, 12 countries have experienced problems with left-wing extremism, 10 countries have experienced problems with militant Islamism, and seven countries have experienced problems with separatist movements, animal right groups and/or other groups. In most countries right-wing extremism and militant Islamism are assessed as the biggest threats.

As “lead country” on deradicalisation and disengagement in the context of the EU Counter Radicalisation strategy, Denmark is happy to disseminate the results of this survey on deradicalisation and disengagement in the European Union.

More detailed information on the programmes described in the report can be found via the hyperlinks after the description of each programme in the report.

Table 1: Presence of extremism and policies to prevent extremism

	Strategy/ policy to prevent extremism	Have experienced problems with extremism	Right-wing groups are active	Left-wing groups are active	Militant Islamist groups are active	Separatist movements/ Animal rights groups etc. are active
Austria*	•	•	•	•	•	•
Belgium	•	•	•	•	•	•
Cyprus	•					
Czech Rep.	•	•	•	•		•
Denmark	•	•	•	•	•	
Finland	•					
Germany	•	•	•	•	•	
Great Britain	•	•	•		•	
Hungary	•	•	•	•		
Ireland	•					
Latvia		•	•	•		
Malta	•					
Netherlands	•	•	•	•	•	•
Portugal	•	•	•	•	•	•
Romania**	•	•	•	•	•	
Slovak Rep.	•	•	•	•		
Spain	•	•			•	•
Sweden	•	•	•	•	•	•

* In Austria the term “militant” Islamism does not apply. Instead Islamist extremists who are politically and/or religiously (ideologically) motivated are active.

** In Romania there have been problems with extremism, but an extremism phenomenon as such does not exist in the country. Only very few isolated events have occurred.

This report is the first step in mapping the various initiatives in the field of deradicalisation and disengagement. As the report is based only on results from the survey, the report does not provide an exhaustive list of all intervention programmes in the EU member states. It is important to note that there are additional intervention programmes and pilot projects in the EU that are not covered in the report.

Terminology referred to in the questionnaire used in this survey

Radicalisation: A process whereby an individual adopts the ideas of extremism and follow behaviour patterns that could eventually lead to the use of undemocratic or perhaps even violent means.

Extremism: Typically, this expression refers to political ideologies or movements that are opposed to a society's core (constitutional) values and principles. In the European context this could be said to apply to ideologies or movements that disregard basic principles of democracy and human dignity. The term has also been used to describe the methods through which political actors attempt to realise their aims, that is, by adopting means which show disregard for the life, liberty and human rights of others.

Exit: The term has been used for projects helping young people to break out of extremist groups, possibly including practical and economic assistance to start a new life in another environment.

Disengagement: Refers to behavioural change, such as leaving a group or changing one's role within it. It requires relinquishing the objective of achieving change through violence.

Deradicalisation: Refers to change in values or ideals, i.e. it implies a cognitive shift and a fundamental change in understanding.

The two terms disengagement and deradicalisation are not mutually exclusive i.e. they sometimes overlap.

Germany

In Germany a holistic strategy to the prevention of extremism has been adopted. It incorporates preventive as well as intervening measures at national, federal and local levels.

At the national level, the Federal Government in 2002 designed a comprehensive, strategy for the fight against racism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism, based on four pillars.

- 1) Human rights policy and education in human rights and formation of human rights
- 2) Support to civil society and strengthening civil courage
- 3) Promoting the integration of migrants
- 4) Measures aimed at the perpetrators and their environment
 - Criminal prosecution
 - Bans on associating
 - Definitory system of “politically motivated crime”
 - Monitoring by the Offices responsible for the prosecution of the Constitution
 - Programs for drop-outs

In Germany extremism has been observed among groups from the left- and right-wing and among militant Islamist groups.

Two specific programmes on deradicalisation and disengagement will be described here: “Verantwortung übernehmen - Abschied von Hass und Gewalt” (Taking responsibility - breaking away from hate and Violence) and “Aussteigerhilfe Rechts” (Help for right-wing extremist drop-outs). Both programmes are targeting persons who want to get out of the extremist environment and/or put an end to their extremist ideologically motivated violent behaviour.

Taking responsibility - breaking away from hate and violence

The programme “*Taking responsibility - breaking away from hate and violence*” has been running for seven years and the concept is therefore well-defined.

Aims & objectives

The aim of this programme is to facilitate a new and non-violent life for juvenile convicts, who have committed serious violent crimes and have xenophobic and right-wing extremist tendencies. Participation in the programme is voluntary. The programme takes measures to address issues on how to stay out of violence after release, and develop resources regarding communication, relationships and conflict-resolution in order to plan for an independent, non-violent and positive future.

Target group

The programme applies to imprisoned extremists, relatives, friends/social network, but the main target group is male juvenile convicts. During a training programme and especially during the time after release, measures are taken to include the social network of the participant e.g. family, friends, and partners.

The participants for the programme are recommended by the prison staff and selected by the trainers. There are more applicants than places available in the programme.

The training programme is as a rule covered in 20 sessions on a weekly basis during approximately five months. The training starts at an individual level and proceeds in groups with six to nine adolescents. Two trainers work with each group.

In order to participate in the program, the participant must have an upcoming release from custody, and be willing to speak about their previous life and the offences they have committed. They also have to follow the rules agreed upon within the group.

Method

The training begins with an individual interview of each participant in order to prepare the individual for the following group sessions. This interview focuses on expectations to the programme.

The individual interview is followed by a series of group sessions. These sessions progress slowly, starting with the introductory group session. In the first group session the participants get to know each other a little and agree upon the rules in the group, first in small groups, second by the group as a whole. At the first group session it is important to establish a feeling of trust within the group. The principle of non-humiliation is stressed in all the sessions in order not to receive condemning responses from others in the group or the trainers.

During the next stages the participants are encouraged to talk about their life and family relations prior to prison. More specifically group sessions begin to deal with the personal situation of the individual such as lack of attention, being left alone, being helpless and the experiences with violence. All group sessions begin and end with a “flash” round, where the participants can express what is on their minds freely. This part aims at practising the abilities of each participant to express thoughts and feelings, and to clear their minds before discussing the issue of the day. Individual discussions can be necessary parallel to group sessions and are sometimes held afterwards. Sports events may also be included if they are considered to improve the work with the individuals.

The programme is based on a principle of self-education. Instead of a classical teaching in history and politics the participant has to learn about, and reflect on, the connection between emotions and violence, consequences and responsibility. When these connections are established, the individual is able to implement methods in order to connect their actions with their way of thinking. In this way, the programme is based on active participation, self-education and learning to be critical of oneself. Ideological narratives are also discussed. In this respect, coming to terms with right-wing extremist ideology in training arises from each individual situation. The experience to date has shown that the specialised trainers and the discussions facilitate the participants coming to terms with

the right-wing extremist ideology. The discussions in the group sessions usually revolve around social problems such as unemployment, welfare, economic crime, and corruption.

Experiences show that all the participating extremist juvenile convicts in the programme had similar backgrounds of deprived families, disturbed relationships, break-ups, desertions and abuse. Therefore the involvement of the families and close friends is important in order for the participant to change and to stay on the right track. But even though the programme aims at initiating the process of changing the attitudes of the participant, a complete change in attitude towards violence cannot be expected. It is usually not possible to change the attitude completely of a person inside prison, and this is also made clear to the families when involved in so-called 'family days'. The training is just one step to a better life.

Parallel to the group sessions, the programme offers a series of discussions in the detention centres which are open to all young inmates. The aim of these sessions is amongst others to disclose double standards within the right-wing extremist way of thinking and to expose factual historical inaccuracies. In these sessions, right-wing agitators and spokespersons are openly challenged.

When the participants of the programme are released, they are offered a year of post-release counselling, and most participants accept this offer. During the counselling period the participant can reach the counsellors by telephone around the clock (in case of an emergency) and are offered frequent meetings. During this period, the participant receives support in terms of using what they learned during the training programme. This support is critical in order for the participant to be able to resist the temptation of sliding back into the extremist environment. The counsellor also offers practical support in terms of establishing a new life such as finding a new place to live, furnishing, getting an education or a job.

Partners

The trainers in the programme are not part of the usual prison staff. The trainers often have a background as juvenile court assistants, social workers, or probation officers. The trainers are required to have great methodological competence, comprehensive knowledge of the history referred to by the extremists, knowledge of right-wing extremist symbolism, a quick wit and a familiarity with young people in prisons. It is difficult to find enough professionals who are capable and willing to get involved in this demanding job. It is therefore an integrated part of the programme to search for and recruit new employees. Individual training for the staff is developed and taught by experienced trainers.

Although prison staff is not part of the programme, they are informed about the programme and taught about right-wing extremism and they offer support to the trainers. The aim is that the programme will be an integrated part of the daily routines, and that the prison staff also will be integrated into the programme.

Evaluation

Evaluation shows that nearly 80 % take advantage of the post-release counselling and individuals are in general not arrested again in the period with mentorship, nor later. The recidivism-rate seems to be under 5 %.

The programme has been evaluated during its entire seven years through interviews with participants, prison staff, trainers and inmates, who are not participating in the programme. The programme management has used the results of the evaluation in order to improve the various elements of the programme and update the training curriculum.

Further information on this programme can be obtained reading the report "Taking responsibility - breaking away from hate and Violence" published by the German Violence Prevention network, and the report can be found at:

<http://www.violence-prevention-network.de/allgemein/category/1-publikationen?download=15%3Abrochure-taking-responsibility-breaking-away-from-hate-and-violence>

Help for right-wing extremist drop-outs

Aims & objectives

The aim of this programme “Help for right wing extremist drop-outs” is to support individuals in leaving the right-wing extremist environment behind. The programme applies to people who have committed right-wing or xenophobic crime. It is often young inmates, or former delinquents of both sexes who are supported in improving their general situation in life and supporting them in leaving their extremist milieu.

Target group

The radicalised individuals who participate in this program have proactively and voluntarily made contact to the program. It is a precondition in the programme that the individual joins the programme voluntarily, takes responsibility for his/her own life, and is ready to search for a new life free from persecution and harassment. The person must also be willing to share personal information and experiences.

Method

The programme offers individuals being part of an extremist environment the space for talking with unbiased people about problems, concerns, fears. The programme also offers ideological alternatives to support the participant to leave the environment behind. The programme also offers personal support in how to make a plan for the future and how to support the participant in reaching goals. The programme also offers practical support in finding a place to live, getting an education and/or a job. The programme facilitates the use of existing consulting facilities, and offers support in removing visible extremist symbols such as establishing contact to places that can remove tattoos. The programme also offers emergency accommodation if the participant is threatened, and

the programme offers furthermore help in talking to parents as well as assistance in conflict solving. In some cases it is possible to get financial support for the above-mentioned activities.

Partners

Social workers, individuals with personal experience from extremist groups have been involved in implementing the program. A number of different partners have been involved in developing this programme; sub-national and local authorities, judicial sub-national agencies, police officers and non-governmental organisations.

More information on the programme can be found at:

www.aussteigerhilferechts.niedersachsen.de

Great Britain

In Great Britain, a comprehensive strategy called CONTEST has been developed to counter terrorism.

CONTEST is organised around four work streams:

- *Pursue*: to stop terrorist attacks
- *Prevent*: to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting violent extremism
- *Protect*: to strengthen our protection against terrorist attack
- *Prepare*: where an attack cannot be stopped, to mitigate its impact

Great Britain has experienced problems with right wing extremism and violent Islamism, of which the most serious threat is perceived to come from Islamist terrorism.

In all descriptions of *Prevent* it is very clear that cooperation between many levels is essential. A number of ministries are responsible for delivering *Prevent*, which falls under the aegis of the Home Office, as the overall coordinator of CONTEST. A national *Prevent* board has been established engaging all ministries and agencies, regional and local representatives in the work stream. A great part of the work with CONTEST and *Prevent* is focused on how to ensure good cooperation and coordination in this comprehensive strategy involving a range of partners at different levels.

Prevent

Aims & objectives

The aim of the Prevent programme is to prevent violent extremism through five main objectives:

1. Challenge the ideology behind violent extremism and support mainstream voices
2. Disrupt those who promote violent extremism and support the places where they operate
3. Support individuals who are vulnerable to recruitment, or have already been recruited by violent extremists
4. Increase the resilience of communities to violent extremism
5. Address the grievances which ideologues are exploiting

A range of local interventions to counter radicalisation are funded under objective 3 of Prevent. These interventions are provided by individuals and organisations with the necessary understanding of the issues and the expertise to effect change. The programme adapts to local needs so the right type of interventions, by the right people, with the right knowledge and skills are made.

Target group

In the *Prevent* strategy, both militant Islamists and right-wing extremists are potentially considered target groups however the strategy is chiefly focussed on Al-Qaeda inspired Islamism. The Channel project is the mechanism by which individuals at risk of being drawn into extremism are identified and assessed for referral to interventions.

Most interventions take place in communities but some are provided in institutions including prisons.

Method

Intervention methods fall into three broad types: diversion, support and challenge. These are often overlapping.

Diversion usually helps vulnerable individuals to find alternatives to extremism and to develop more constructive ways to use their time. This can include encouraging them to take part in sports or social activities, to develop their sense of citizenship and responsibilities towards social, family, community or religious environments. This can be done by helping them to find democratic and non-violent channels to express their convictions about discrimination, injustice and grievances.

Support can be personal or practical. Personal support is offered through counselling to help individuals who suffer from a lack of confidence, social isolation, family difficulties or other personal problems that cause them to seek consolation in the simple verities of extremist ideology. Practical support is offered in order to help individuals acquire a stake in society through finding employment, obtaining educational or vocational qualifications to set them on the right path.

Challenge involves challenging the ideological or religious contradictions and inconsistencies of extremism, or it may concern more common sense realities like the harmful effects of violent extremism on both perpetrators and victims. The participants are challenged through discussions with intervention staff and through films and written materials as well as contact with those who have suffered extremist violence. It is particularly important that challenging interventions are accompanied by individual support in order to provide alternatives to extremism.

The direct forms of the above-mentioned interventions may be supplemented by indirect measures such as family support, protection from peer pressure and linking vulnerable individuals into supportive networks.

In the programme, the risks attached to the intervention programmes are also considered. The risks can be hostile media exposure, attacks or threats to the provider, or employment of unsuitable staff.

Partners

There are mainly three types of organisations that provide interventions: Community groups, professionals and multidisciplinary panels.

It is important that the providers have credibility amongst those they wish to influence. Partners, whether they are well-established organisations or individuals may have to be supported to be providers.

Evaluation

Measuring the effect of interventions presents significant challenges. It may take a long time for a change to occur, and it is sometimes difficult to attribute a positive outcome to a specific activity. Evaluation methods are still under development.

Links

Further information on Prevent can be found at:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/preventstrategy>

The broad strategy to counter terrorism is called CONTEST, and can be found at:

<http://tna.europarchive.org/20100419081706/http://security.homeoffice.gov.uk/news-publications/publication-search/contest/contest-strategy/contest-strategy-2009?view=Binary>

Read more about Channel here:

<http://tna.europarchive.org/20100419081706/http://security.homeoffice.gov.uk/news-publications/publication-search/prevent/channel-guidance?view=Binary>

The Netherlands

Pilot deradicalisation Winschoten

In the Netherlands, a broad strategy to counter polarisation and radicalisation has been adopted. It is called the *Polarisation and Radicalisation Action Plan (2007-2011)*. The municipalities are stimulated to research the level of polarisation and radicalisation within their own municipality and develop a local action programme if necessary. The national level facilitates this by supplying finance and research, and by organising conferences and sharing of best practices. The intervention programmes are implemented by partners on the local-, national- and federal levels.

The programme “Pilot deradicalisation Winschoten” focuses on disengagement. The pilot programme in the municipality of Winschoten has been running for approximately one year.

Aims & objectives

The aim of this programme is to prevent further radicalisation and social isolation of individual young persons involved in extremists environments. The objectives of the programme are to prevent and combat participation in, and support of socially undesirable behaviour such as vandalism, acts of violence and threats.

Target group

The target group is right-wing extremists. Participants in the programme were identified by youth workers, police officers and two municipal officials. Potential individuals were profiled through the already existing material on the individual. This was done to get

The Netherlands has experienced extremism from five types of groups from:

- 1) The Left-wing,
- 2) The Right-Wing,
- 3) Militant Islamism,
- 4) Animal rights,
- and 5) An asylum-related left-wing.

more insight in to the circumstances and behaviour of the participant. This type of profiling also gives insight into the possibilities of intervention and establishing contact with the individual in the first place.

Method

After the assessment of possible individuals for the programme, contact to the candidates is made and the type of intervention is decided upon in order to make it effective.

The intervention is based on talks with the young person. An important element is to discuss the negative consequences for the individual of belonging to an extremist group. The police carry out these discussions with the individual and the police also make contact with school authorities. The social services are also involved in talking with the participant. The municipality is involved in terms of agreements with the participant when for example housing assistance is provided.

Partners

In the programme practical support is provided such as help in finding housing, a new job or in establishing new social networks outside extremist groups. Involvement of family members is important and this is also facilitated by the programme. Financial assistance may also be provided e.g. alleviating debt.

To implement the programme police officers, social workers and other professionals are recruited. They have all have been trained in communication with the target group and other involved partners.

Evaluation

The programme was evaluated qualitatively by the Anne Frank Foundation. The Foundation observed the process, reviewed the actions taken and the progress made. On the basis of these assessments the Foundation wrote lessons learned and recommendations for further steps with the programme. The programme has been successful in contribut-

ing to a number of fringe members leaving the right-wing extremist groups and halting right-wing extremist behaviour.

Links

The *Polarisation and Radicalisation Action Plan (2007-2011)* can be found at:

<http://english.minbzk.nl//subjects/public-safety/publications/@108447/polarisation-and>

Denmark

In Denmark, a national strategy to prevent radicalisation and extremism was presented in 2009. The strategy is called “*A Common and Safe Future - an action plan to prevent extremist views and radicalisation among young people*”. The plan includes broad preventive measures as well as targeted deradicalisation and disengagement measures. The strategy covers seven areas:

1. Direct contact with the young people
2. Inclusion based on rights and obligations
3. Dialogue and information
4. Democratic cohesion
5. Efforts in vulnerable residential areas
6. Special initiatives in prisons
7. Knowledge, co-operation and partnerships

In Denmark both right and left -wing extremists as well as militant Islamists have been involved in events threatening the public order.

Several ministries are involved in the implementation of the action plan, and the Division for Cohesion and Prevention of Radicalisation, which is part of the Ministry of Integration, is responsible for the overall coordination. Furthermore, the Danish Security and Intelligence Service (PET) has established a Centre for Prevention, which plays another key role in the prevention efforts.

At the local level, there is a significant cooperation among schools, social services and the police (the so called SSP cooperation) the main focus of which is prevention of crime among young persons. As part of these local crime prevention efforts some municipalities have experience in dealing with young people, who show signs of extremist views or behaviour. However, it remains to gather more information in order to document this local experience. The overall message from local professionals is that they need more knowledge and tools to understand and interact with young people who show signs of radicalisation or extremism.

Intervention programmes are placed under the first focus area “Direct contact with young people”, as mentioned above. In the present report, focus is on the current project “Deradicalisation - Targeted Intervention” which is supported by the EU Commission and implemented over a period of 3 years from 2009 to 2012.

Another relevant programme, “Deradicalisation - Back on track” is under development and scheduled to start in 2011 if financing will be in place. This programme is directed towards prisons. In this programme a cognitive approach to intervention is expected to be central.

Deradicalisation - Targeted Intervention

Aims, objectives & target group

“Deradicalisation - Targeted Intervention” aims at supporting young persons in leaving extremism and discriminatory violent behaviour behind. The objective is to provide long-term support and advice that is necessary for young people to break out and stay out of extremist circles. The programme has two parts.

One part is to develop a concept of “exit talks” targeted at young people who are part of extremist circles. This part of the project is being developed and implemented by the Danish Security and Intelligence Service (PET).

The other part of the programme is to develop a concept for mentoring schemes aimed at young people who are members of extremist groups, express extremist views and/or exhibit discriminatory behaviour towards other groups in their immediate environment. The mentoring schemes are interventions based on day-to-day contact with a mentor, and the trustful relationship between a mentee and the mentor, who helps the mentee in many aspects of life.

This part of the project is being developed and implemented by the Danish Ministry of Refugee, Immigration and Integration Affairs in close cooperation with the two largest municipalities in Denmark (Copenhagen and Aarhus) and East Jutland Police.

In most cases it will be youth workers, teachers and other groups who are already in close contact with the target group who identify young people eligible for the programme.

Method

Leaving an extremist group can be extremely difficult without continuous personal support. Thus through an on-going contact and dialogue with the participant, support is offered in the process of leaving the extremist circles. Ideological alternatives are not offered but the ideology of the individual will be challenged by the mentors in order to provide space for reconsidering stereotypes and double standards.

Participation in the programme is voluntary. Therefore, it is central to the programme to develop methods whereby the young people can be reached, and to motivate them to participate in the mentoring scheme or the preventive talks.

The intervention will be targeted the participant and tailored to the individual's situation and needs. It may be comprised of one or more components such as specialised social or pedagogical support, involvement of family members, finding a new job or new possibilities for education. Counselling is offered in situations where it is needed, but no financial support is given. The challenges of each individual are mapped initially to secure the proper platform for intervention and dialogue. It is expected that the average number of sessions with the participant is between 10 and 20 on a weekly or monthly basis.

Since dialogue is the main method used in both parts of the programme the first step will be to develop a methodology on techniques for dialogue based on interaction, and to test it in practice.

Partners

In the mentoring project carefully selected mentor candidates from the two municipalities will receive training during 2010 before being deployed as mentors. In the mentoring

schemes relevant mentors are selected based on their skills, not their former profession. The most important selection criterion for mentors is that the mentor has key knowledge about the local area of the mentee, and that the mentor is predisposed to get in touch with the mentee. The mentors will often be former police officers, social workers, school teachers or psychologists. In addition, a group of municipal employees will also receive training in order to be able to supervise and support the mentors. The training courses are developed and offered by external partners.

It is part of the project to develop a manual, and this will be part of the training material for the mentors.

Partners in the programme, “Deradicalisation - Targeted Intervention”, are from the Ministry of Refugee, Immigration and Integration Affairs in co-operation with municipalities of Copenhagen and Aarhus as well as East Jutland Police District and PET. On a longer term the project can be implemented in relevant municipalities.

Evaluation

The project is concerned with gathering the experiences on a continuous basis, so as to attain a greater level of know-how that can strengthen the future preventive and deradicalisation efforts. Ongoing evaluation of the programme is integrated to secure improvements along the way.

Links

Further information can be found at:

http://www.nyidanmark.dk/en-us/citizenship/prevention_of_radicalisation/prevention_of_radicalisation.htm

Sweden

Exit Fryshuset

The Swedish methods to counter extremism have been elaborated in co-operation between the national and the local levels. The Swedish Government has commissioned the Association of Local Authorities and Regions to gather information about best practices used for deradicalisation and disengagement. As this report shows, there are many different programmes in the cities and their nature varies. In some cities social services are in charge of the work, in others the police is in charge. The Swedish exit programme focusing on deradicalisation and disengagement is called “Fryshuset Exit” and was established in 1998. It is a well-defined programme with structures that eventually have been institutionalized.

The self-helping programme “Fryshuset Exit” was initiated by the non-governmental organization, the YMCA group (Young Men’s Christian Association), in 1998 as a reaction to violent riots between groups of immigrants and ethnic Swedish teenagers. The programme is funded both by the national and the local governments.

In Sweden, Islamic extremists and separatist movements as well as left- and right wing extremists are active.

Aims, objectives & target group

“Fryshuset Exit” aims to facilitate disengagement of young persons from groups consisting of destructive young people such as Neo-Nazi groups or other right-wing extremist groups. The programme primarily aims to support the participant, but the general idea of the self-helping programme is that the individual participant has to be the main driving force in the disengagement process and in making his or her own change. For example, the individuals participating in the programme have made contact to “Fryshuset Exit” themselves. Parallel to the disengagement process, the programme also includes an educational and informative part. This part focuses on general prevention and on en-

hancing the awareness for teachers, club workers and other persons in order to react to indicators for right wing extremism. The programme addresses both right wing extremists showing interest in leaving the movements, parents to right wing extremists who need support and knowledge about the movement engaging their children, and also authorities in need of knowledge of right wing extremism e.g. the social services, the police or the local government.

Method

The programme consists of three major methods: 1) Consultations of therapeutic nature to the individuals, or by referral of them to other social institutions. 2) Social support to make the participant feel that he or she is part of society. 3) Guidance and counselling for various actors involving school staff.

The programme often engages parents or other family members in the disengagement process of the participant. The participant may also receive practical support from the programme, however, no economic aid or rewards are given. The participant may be supported in finding a temporary place to live, and a 24/7 help-line is available to the participants. The personnel make notes about the social character, appearance and social relations of the participant, but the programme does not have trained personnel to make a psychological assessment of the participants.

Partners

Once a person has agreed to participate he/she is guided and supported through individual meetings and/or telephone contact with the coaches/instructors. The programme is divided into stages, but since the programme is a self-helping programme, the amount time and the number of stages differ.

The implementing partners are local authorities and non-governmental organisations. The coaches in the programme are often former Neo-Nazis and/or former members of other right wing extremist groups and have received training in behavioural science themselves. No specific manual has been developed.

Evaluation

“Fryshuset Exit” is being evaluated continuously by officials appointed by the government. An interim report from 2009 shows, that only few participants drop out of the programme. The report also shows that participants as well as relatives and authorities in connection with the cases are pleased with the support they have received. Young people who are drawn into groups that use violence are costly for the society. “Fryshuset Exit” aims to minimize the costs for society by helping young people to reject the use of violence. In the long run the work of “Fryshuset Exit” has also contributed to a decrease in the number of incarcerations and the persons in need of psychiatric care and drug rehabilitation. Preventing young people from ending up in destructive gangs striving for one-sided solutions and extremist ideologies requires strong support in order for them to change their lifestyle and for them to acquire a more positive identity.

Links

Further information can be found at:

http://www.fryshuset.se/Fryshuset/in_english.aspx

Conclusions and Perspectives

Based on the responses of this survey the following conclusions can be made from the existing deradicalisation and disengagement programmes in the EU.

As only 18 out of 27 member states have provided extensive answers there may be programmes in the EU that have not been described in this survey. Such programmes might indicate other conclusions than those outlined below.

Approaches to intervention

All but one of the 18 countries have developed or are developing strategies to prevent extremism and radicalisation, but only five countries Germany, Great Britain, the Netherlands, Sweden and Denmark have described specific intervention programmes in detail.

Interventions can be made both in groups and individually. The German experience provides an example of working with groups combined with an individual intervention. Whatever the approach, the individual process of reflection and change will always be in focus. In all the described programmes initiatives to change both the participants' behaviour and their ideological thinking are found. Regarding the terminology of the questionnaire it therefore does not always make sense to make clear distinctions between the behavioural (disengagement) and ideological change (deradicalisation). A prerequisite for the intervention programmes is that the participant volunteers to this process of reflection and change.

Based on the programmes in these countries two very broad elements of intervention can be identified:

- Supporting and motivating
- Challenging the narrative

Supporting and motivating

Individual support and motivation is used as the primary method for assisting individuals in leaving extremist groups behind. In the initial phase the motivational challenge consists simply of building a trustful relation on which to continue the contact with the person. Further on in the intervention, motivating the individual may imply appealing to those basic needs, feelings and interests that might trigger disengagement from the violent group or behaviour. For instance, assisting the person in finding answers to identity issues or overcoming a personal frustration, helping the person out of a psychological dependence of the violent group, highlighting the personal costs for the person and his family, and highlighting the potential for venting grievances by democratic means are all examples of what could be called a motivational approach.

Practical, individual support can be an important component in trying to motivate the individual. Such practical support could be assistance in finding positive alternatives to the extremist groups and their activities i.e. by establishing new social networks or providing practical support such as helping with housing, employment, education or a legitimate forum in which to be politically active.

Involvement of parents and other social networks has also been a successful element in order to offer a broader social support to the individual and to create alternatives to extremist circles. Involvement of parents has in general two purposes. One purpose is to support vulnerable families in dealing with other underlying problems that may have played a role in why the person has ended up in an extremist and violent environment. Another purpose is to create broad support for the individual to help the participant in staying on the right path when the overall intervention period ends.

Challenging the narrative

Supportive and motivating measures remain crucial in any disengagement or deradicalisation effort, and in some cases they alone might foster disengagement from violent groups and means. In some of the described programmes, however, a further step is taken: challenging and deconstructing the extremist narrative.

This involves, for example, challenging inconsistencies or double standards in the extremist ideology and propaganda as well as efforts to convey a realistic understanding of how society, international politics etc actually work. Also, confronting the person with the victims of extremist violence may contribute to reflection and new awareness. Highlighting concrete examples is very important in this connection.

Organization of intervention programmes

Cooperation among authorities and a combination of partners at a national and local level appear to be essential, not only in preventive efforts but also when working more specifically with deradicalisation and disengagement.

The national level, which in some cases is federal, often plays a strategic role, collects and disseminates knowledge obtained from the various programmes and often funds the programmes.

The local level is, in most cases, the implementing level. Local actors play an essential role, since they have knowledge about the youth environments and ability to engage. In some of the observed programmes the local implementing partners are the local authorities such as the municipality and/or the local police who work directly with the participants. In other cases the intervention programmes are run by NGO's with economic support from authorities.

Staffing of intervention programmes

The staffs of the described programmes, private or public, are all required to have a basic knowledge of and experience with the target group of the programme before starting up a deradicalisation process. In most programmes knowledge of the target group and abilities to work with young people is also an explicit requirement.

Staffs often have backgrounds as police officers, social workers or youth workers. In some cases former extremists are playing a key role in deradicalisation and disengagement. Involvement of former extremist plays the largest role in programmes run by

NGO's. In some cases former extremists can possess legitimacy among the target group and add street credibility to the programme.

A training programme for the staffs is often part of a programme in order to continuously be able to support and challenge the target group the best possible way. The staffs are trained in coaching skills and on how to meet the participant in an open and unbiased dialogue. This unbiased dialogue seems important for the participant in order to deal with and talk about his/her current and past problems and experiences without feeling prejudged.

Evaluation of intervention programmes

Evaluation is a not a fully developed or implemented part in all programmes. In Germany the direct effect of the programme "Taking responsibility - breaking away from hate and Violence" has been measured, and in that case recidivism is around 5 %. The pilot project in Winshoten in the Netherlands and "Fryshuset Exit" in Sweden have been evaluated qualitatively and the results show that the programmes have been successful in contributing to a great number of young people leaving extremism behind.

The Challenge of extremism

Examples of deradicalisation and disengagement programmes in the EU

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