

Good Practice in Preventing Violent Extremism/ Hate Crime, within the Radicalization Awareness Network – and media and gender approaches¹

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No form of antisocial conduct threatens to corrode the fabric of liberal democratic regimes more than violent extremism and ideologies of group-focused hatred. Verbal and physical attacks on targeted groups, motivated by political or religious worldviews that disdain universal human rights, undermine the civic philosophy on which integrated, non-violent societies are founded. Unfortunately, in contrast to crimes like sexual offences and domestic violence, which have been studied extensively by scholars and which we have devised methods of rehabilitation, research on preventing and intervening against violent extremism and hate crime is still in its infancy. We do not yet know very much about how to steer at-risk youth away from developing group-focused enmity and the exclusionary proclivities that they foster, ranging from discrimination and bullying to violence and terror. What may be worse, we do not know how to oppose and effectively defuse violent, extremist messages in the internet and in the culture at large: i.e., to create deradicalizing narratives – also, how to deal with existing fiction narratives around these and similar issues in preventive media education (cf. footnote 7 and 7). Thus, we find it difficult to avert and defuse the debilitating effects of illiberal ideologies on the body politic. Finally we are only just beginning to understand what gender means for processes of radicalisation and why and how we should integrate specific gender aspects into our prevention and rehabilitation approaches.

The Radicalization Awareness Network (RAN), which was established by the European Commission in September of 2011, ten years after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, recognizes that while it is necessary to bolster intelligence and security networks in order to counter hate crimes, violent extremism, and terrorism that strategy in and of itself is insufficient. Public safety requires that we embed intelligence and security functions into civil society at large, by raising awareness of the problem and by developing sophisticated, effective techniques for preventive measures with at-risk groups and for intervening with would-be offenders. Accordingly, the RAN – as an umbrella organization composed of local actors, professional intervention practitioners, research experts, policy makers, and civil society groups – incorporates diverse perspectives and operates across a variety of social arenas. The intention here is to increase community strength and resilience in the face of the challenge posed by violent extremism. By design, the RAN is divided into a number of working groups, which currently include Community Policing, Deradicalization and Exit Interventions, Inner- and Outer European Dimension (Diasporas), Internet and Social Media,

¹ This paper is the second substantially expanded edition of “The Narrative Principle: Good Practice in Anti-Hate Crime Interventions, within the Radicalisation Awareness Network”. In: “Right-Wing Extremism in Europe Country analyses, counter-strategies and labor-market oriented exit-strategies.” Ed. by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation 2013, p. 379-408. http://cultures-interactive.de/tl_files/publikationen/The_Narrative_Principle_Good_practice_in_Anti-Hate_Crime.pdf. The addendums and changes regard solely the issues of media/ internet/ testimonials and women/ gender in (de-)radicalising (first edition section 2.8).

(Mental) Health Services, Prevention (Early Interventions), Prison and Probation Services, and Victims of Terrorism. The collective aims of these working groups are to exchange experiences, knowledge, and good practices, and to draft policy recommendations for the EU and its member states.

Early on, during the RAN's preparation phase, it was understood that specialized social entrepreneurs and independent practitioners from grass-roots organizations have vital roles to play in delivering anti-hate crime messages to the public, conducting anti-extremist interventions, and training staff members. These non-governmental field actors frequently share the same cultural background as their clients. Moreover, they are often able to access even the most at-risk and hard-to-reach environments, and to penetrate the language, habits, and cultural narratives of radicalized individuals. As such, they are in a better position than government officials to build relationships of mutual trust and confidentiality with clients. Trust and confidentiality, in turn, are indispensable in facilitating deradicalization. Thus, it is not surprising that NGO practitioners often have achieved better rates of success at lower cost than governmental bodies, which tend to lack access to and respect among disenfranchised, radicalised communities, and may even sometimes unwittingly "exacerbate division" (EC Combating Radicalization 14781; January, 2005). Hence, as early as 2009, the EC's Stockholm Program stated that the "[k]ey to our success [in deradicalization] will be the degree to which non-governmental groups ... across Europe play an active part" (17024/09).

To that end, the RAN decided to establish "Derad," a working group on deradicalization, exit interventions and hate-crimes prevention that comprises experienced first-line practitioners from various EU Member States.² These individuals have many stories to tell, concerning the different contexts of their work, the methods and strategies they have employed, their successes and failures, and the levels/ lacunas of public awareness in the national media and partisan discourse, in light of the ever-present risks of populism and sensationalism. Some of these individuals are engaged in training and quality management, and/or are willing to contribute to a "good practices" approach that is designed to be transferable and adaptable to different working areas and EU member states. The Derad group is concerned with violent extremism of all kinds, whether motivated by religious/ cultic or political visions or other forms of ideology, by ethnic issues or gang related codes of conduct. Its working definition of violent extremism and/or terrorist radicalisation are fulfilled by any individual and/or organization that support attitudes contrary to accepted principles of human rights, civil liberties, and suggest violent means for combating the constitutional order and the rule of law. They convey resentful worldviews and an unyielding in-group out-group distinction to their followers and encourage conduct grounded on basic ideologies of superiority/ entitlement, separation/ discrimination/ exclusion, and sometimes encompass the legitimacy of group-focused

² Adding to the RAN work are the "Women/Girls in Extremism" project (WomEx/EU), conducted by Cultures Interactive (CI, Berlin) and two projects conducted by the Berlin-based Violence Prevention Network (VPN): "European Network of Deradicalization" (ENoD/ EU), which establishes profiles of good-practice approaches and the "European Platform of Deradicalizing Narratives" (EDNA/ EU), which collects deradicalizing narratives for the Internet.

hostility, hate crime, and violence. Typically, such organizations aggressively recruit young susceptible people and draw them into a condition of enthusiasm and obedience as well as dependency and fear.³ Thus far, the Derad working group has gathered many deradicalization practitioners, mostly from NGOs. However, the group also includes statutory first-line prevent practitioners working in prison, probation, sometimes even intelligence services and community policing.

As a first step, the Derad group conducted international practitioner workshops with some thirty participants each, as well as smaller focus groups and individual interviews with colleagues from numerous European countries. Derad also drew substantially on recent intervention research.⁴ In the wake of all this preparatory work, a first edition of “Good Practice Guidelines/Principles” and “Policy Recommendations” has been drafted which will be summarized below. Roughly two thirds of the European member- and candidate-states have thus far been involved in articulating these principles. Moreover, the RAN Collection of promising practices (and some other more specific products) were directly and indirectly emanating from this work. The overarching principles of good practice in deradicalization/ rehabilitation and hate-crime prevention, as stated here, are assumed to apply across societal milieus, EU member states, and group-focused varieties of hatred and violent extremism. Furthermore, good-practice interventions should be applicable in any institutional setting in which deradicalization efforts are needed: prisons, probation offices, schools, youth clubs, community institutions, etc.

In the spirit of the Innovation Union initiative⁵ and of “Europe 2020 – A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth,”⁶ “EU policymakers have recognized the importance of societal challenges” and have committed themselves to ensuring “that research being undertaken is translated into products and services which serve to address societal challenges.”⁷ In this sense,

³ See also: Alex. P. Schmid. “Radicalisation, De-Radicalisation, Counter-Radicalisation: A Conceptual Discussion and Literature Review.” ICCT Paper, 2013. <http://www.icct.nl/download/file/ICCT-Schmid-Radicalisation-De-Radicalisation-Counter-Radicalisation-March-2013.pdf>

⁴ That research includes the TPVR project (EU/“Towards Preventing Violent Radicalization”), conducted by the London Probation Trust in conjunction with its German partner, the Violence Prevention Network (2009-11); the LIPAV project (EU/“Literary and Media Interaction as Means of Understanding and Preventing Adolescent Violence and Extremism”), conducted by Cultures Interactive (Berlin); governmental “Federal Model Projects” (including VPN and CI, among others); and the Belfast-based CHC project (EU/“Challenge Hate Crime”), conducted by NIACRO (Northern Ireland Association for Care and Resettlement of Offenders) in affiliation with German partner VPN. The results were effectively reconfirmed by the following: the Copenhagen conference, “Tackling Extremism: Deradicalization and Disengagement” (2012), which was organized by the Danish Ministry of Social Affairs and Integration (http://www.strategicdialogue.org/Tackling_Extremism_-_Conference_Report.pdf); “Preventing Extremism: A Danish Handbook Series,” the OSCE recommendations reports on anti-Semitism and discrimination against Muslims (2008/10); and Saskia Lützing, “The Other Side of the Story: A qualitative study of biographies of extremists and terrorists” (2012) and many others.

⁵ http://ec.europa.eu/research/innovation-union/index_en.cfm?pg=why

⁶ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2010:2020:FIN:EN:PDF>

⁷ <http://i3s.ec.europa.eu/commitment/13.html>

Derad will strive to transform expert and practitioner knowledge into products, guidelines, and training materials that support those who do first-line work in preventing hate crimes and violent extremism.

The description provided below will be organized into two sections, one pertaining to the interventions themselves along with their methodological components and the other to the desirable structural or contextual factors surrounding them.

1. Components of good-practice interventions

1.1. Building trust and relationships

Good-practice interventions succeed in conveying respect and building personal trust in order to be able to challenge the individual's beliefs and thereby facilitate personal change. These interventions provide a safe and confidential space for establishing sustainable working relationships between clients and practitioners, and among the clients as a group in their own right. The latter is a highly demanding task, since it involves winning over a type of person who is profoundly alienated from authorities and from society at large, and who therefore tends to be suspicious and volatile, perhaps even possessing a paranoid mind set. Yet, building personal trust, which includes establishing confidence and guaranteeing confidentiality, is by far the most important – indeed, utterly indispensable – prerequisite for any good-practice approach to prevent and to rehabilitate from having committed acts of hate crime, extremism, as well as small and big scale terrorism. Without this all-or-nothing prerequisite, an intervention will only have a limited capacity to challenge and confront clients, and to facilitate changes in personal attitudes and behaviors.

It is worthwhile noting that a trust-based working relationship is substantially different from the fraternizing comradeship among buddies, fellows, homeboys, etc. that typically exists in adolescent groups, but sometimes (counter-productively) develops between social workers and their clients. The existence of a trustful work relationship always rests on the twin elements of support/respect and confrontation/critique – generally in the sense that the person of the client is unconditionally respected and s/he is supported in her/his sustainable development while the acts and attitudes of the clients will be confronted in a way that facilitates enduring personal change. Moreover, in such a relationship, there is always an agreed-upon set of objectives that give the joint work-effort its focus (e.g., the client's development of certain desired skills).

Furthermore it should be mentioned here that in good practice, building trust between clients and practitioners may be predicated to a certain extent upon personal facilitator talent, which, however, can be developed by training in specific skills. Moreover, good practice rests upon one pivotal contextual factor that will be elaborated further below: namely, the requirement that independent

practitioners who may be non-governmental are involved. They come from outside the clients' institution and are thus able to provide a confidential and safe space; their work needs to be accompanied by visible trust between statutory and non-statutory actors and by professional quality assurance.

1.2. The narrative mode and the life-world as foci

In their methodology, good-practice practitioners generally focus on facilitating narrative exchange, as opposed to argumentative or ideological discussion. Narrative exchange means that conversations between clients and practitioners revolve around sharing personally lived-through experiences, events, and encounters that – subjectively perceived – comprise autobiographical memories and carry an emotional charge. It thus involves a dialogue between persons from different life-worlds that results in the establishment of a personal relationship. For these reasons, narrative exchange and trust-building are both closely linked and interdependent. Conversely, exchanges carried out in the “argumentative/ rational mode” tend to focus upon theories, opinions, and ideologies rather than exploring and sharing personal life experiences. They fuel debate, but do not by themselves create trust and understanding.

Hence, successful practitioners of prevention and deradicalisation interventions are able to nurture in clients the capacity to engage in narrative exchanges with others, and to recount emotionally significant memories and observations even if they may harbour interpersonal and/or social conflict – and become attentive listeners to others. In more concrete terms these practitioners are often able to:

- encourage the client to cultivate the capacity for telling stories, i.e., narrating subjectively significant personal experiences. Furthermore (and always proceeding with caution), practitioners can often induce the client to bring into the open whatever positive or negative emotional charge these experiences may carry.
- help the client to actively listen to and respect comparable narratives told by other people – in fact, to empathically “co-narrate them.” In other words, the anti-hate-crime practitioner may encourage and teach the client to assist the story-telling processes of others in a group setting and in informal social situations.
- instil an appreciation for personal or familial experiences and the value of recalling and recounting them.

This focus on narrative and on trust-based storytelling may sometimes unearth feelings of embarrassment, shame, insecurity, fear, or helplessness, on the one hand, and aggression or hostility, on the other. Of course, these affects have frequently been instrumental in generating acts of hatred and violence, so they must be handled with great caution. The emphasis on narrative exchange will

bring to light experiences of personal ambivalence, contradiction, and internal conflict as well as experiences of the multiplicity of personal thoughts and associations – which can facilitate compromise, all of which will have to be acknowledged.

By contrast, so-called “extremist narratives” usually lack genuine narrative quality; that is, they rarely convey much first-hand personal experience. In fact, extremists instinctively avoid narratives proper, preferring to engage in argument and support historical/ religious contentions. That way, they can sidestep or suppress the narrative level of exchange. It is for this very reason that good-practice approaches strive to narrativize opinions and contestations by exploring the areas of personal experience that, consciously or not, fuel them. Enhancing and deepening the narrative quality of interaction within an intervention should facilitate personal change, development, and deradicalization in the client.

1.3. Emotional intelligence

Good-practice deradicalization interventions highlight emotional, as opposed to cognitive, learning and intelligence. More specifically they seek to foster the acquisition of what might be termed “conflict intelligence”: the ability to handle conflict in productive ways. Accordingly, such interventions do not emphasize educational topics or intellectual issues as such. Instead they focus on the subjective – and most often conflict-laden – dimension of a topic and on “identity issues.” Emotional learning needs to be the main focus here, because the prejudice and hostility that fuel conflicts and hate crimes are primarily guided by affect, even though they sometimes may wear cognitive or ideological masks.

1.4. Voluntary participation and the incremental buy-in

In good-practice anti-hate crime and deradicalization interventions, participants enroll on a voluntary basis only. Such programs work best with those who are genuinely motivated to take part. Hence, participation must be freely chosen, rather than assigned, coerced, or mandated, and dropping out must neither be held against clients or go on their records in any way. Under those ground rules, the drop out rate tends to be minimal, usually around three to five per cent. By the same token, only modest forms of incentives – if any at all – should be offered to potential participants. Still, the principle of voluntary participation by no means rules out motivational one-on-one conversations and mentoring. Those forms of encouragement can help support clients once they have expressed possible interest in taking part in deradicalization programs and undergoing personal transformations.

1.5. Group-based interventions

In some good-practice approaches, the most significant phases of the work take place in and with the group. Here, attention is paid to the group dynamics and the relationships that the participants develop with one another. Some practitioners' experiences suggest that group-work approaches are, for principle reasons, more profound in their deradicalizing impact than one-on-one settings. These approaches attribute the high impact of group-interventions to the fact (a) that a well-moderated group-dynamic process can be a powerful therapeutic experience for the group members which is unmatched by any one-on-one interaction, (b) that acts of hate crime and violent extremism always emanate from and are fuelled by escalating malicious group-dynamics (so that resilience against this requires work with group experiences), and (c) that extremist and violent offenders tend to be quite adroit in manipulating and evading one-on-one interventions (possibly because most of these young people have been raised in single parent families and are quite apt in handling single parent interventions).

However, good-practice group-work approaches always have to make sure not to exceed an appropriate level of intensity. If and when the need arises, practitioners should offset and balance open-process group work with pedagogical exercises and supplementary one-on-one sessions. This tactic is especially crucial whenever the client makes the transition from one institution or stage of life to another (prison, probation, community, school, employment, etc.).

1.6. Open-process, participatory approaches and methodological flexibility

Good-practice methodology is based on "open-process interaction." This approach builds upon and explores participants' concerns and reactions as they emerge during the group interaction process, while the facilitators confine themselves to making suggestions. There is no strict syllabus, fixed session plan, or established toolbox to govern interventions; rather, they are characterized by methodological flexibility and eclecticism. Open-process, participatory, and exploratory interaction is indispensable for building trust, respect, and personal commitment with client groups that are difficult to engage.

Clients who come from sub-cultures in which group-focused hatred and violent extremism are the norm will hardly change their attitudes and behavior simply because they are told or taught to do so by way of a fixed lesson plan, or because they have passed through a cognitive-behavioral training program having a particular modular structure. Instead, the participants should explore the personal issues that have arisen on account of their behaviours and offences, even though and precisely because they may not be used to doing that. Typically, these will involve issues of prejudice, extremism or harassment, often arising from the clients' personal histories. The point is to encourage clients to take these steps in their own way – and in open interaction with other clients and the facilitators – rather than being taught or persuaded to do so by means of instruction or teaching.

1.7. Likely topics and issues of open-process rehabilitative intervention

If the aforementioned methodological principles of narrative (group) work have been put into place, and the clients have gradually committed to this process, the following topics and issues are likely to come up in the intervention, and/or may be suggested easily by facilitators:

- commonly shared and/or individual issues of biography and social circumstance.
- experiences of unstable family conditions, dysfunctional parenting, and chronic relational stress at home (of which clients are often hardly aware). These phenomena quite frequently encompass deprivation, denigration, and violent victimization, although clients tend to belittle or deny the impact of such experiences. Moreover, some clients may report abuse of alcohol and drugs as dysfunctional coping strategies in their families.
- one's own patterns of behavior within the group work intervention itself. For example, some clients may try to establish power relationships by claiming superiority over, denigrating, or trying to subdue other group members.
- events or experiences which have been made in part within a clique of peers who served as a surrogate family upon which the individual may have become highly dependent.
- experiences of being personally recruited by radical organizations.
- friendship and loyalty versus dependency and subjugation.
- gender issues such as manliness/ womanliness, sexual attractiveness, homosexuality, etc. Gender issues have generally been overlooked by all levels of security and prevent practitioners but are, in fact quite important and impactful. As will be elaborated further down, violent extremist clients' sense of manliness (not weak or homosexual, but domineering, etc.) or sense of womanliness (not equal to men, but possibly proactive and self-asserted or supportive and family/ community oriented) has often been found to be intricately connected to the motivation to engage and act out in extremist and hateful ways.
- matters of politics or religion, in which participants discuss and reflect on their commitments and beliefs. They may have to confront the simplified thought-patterns and pseudo-logical explanations that underlie their conduct. Here too, geopolitical conflicts as portrayed in the media may come to light during group discussions.
- fictional media narratives, and how they affect the thoughts and actions of certain individuals.⁸

⁸ The particular option to work with fictional narratives has certain methodological ramifications. See www.weilnboeck.net: the FP7 projects (in DG research), "Media/Trauma Therapy" (MTT), 2005 to 2007 EU DG Research/Marie-Curie-Actions, FP 6, EIF No. 23953, and "Media/Cultural and Violence/Extremism Prevention" (LIPAV), 2008 to 2011 EU DG Research/Marie-Curie-Actions, FP 7, ERG No. 203487. See also the following articles, all by the present author and available on his website: "Provincializing Trauma: A Case Study on Family Violence, Media Reception, and Transcultural Memory," originally in *Journal of Literary Theory* (6:1, 2012), pp. 149-175; "Towards a New Interdisciplinarity: Integrating Psychological and Humanities Approaches to Narrative," in Sandra Heinen and Roy Sommer (eds.), *Narratology in the Age of Cross-Disciplinary Narrative Research* (Berlin:

- most importantly, the violent act narrative, in which the client tells of having played the role of perpetrator or victimizer, committing acts of hatred, denigration, and violence against others.

Some approaches have used group sessions devoted to exchanging on specific violent acts that participants have committed; these will be especially intense, both narratively and emotionally. Moreover, they will sometimes be linked to their putative opposite: experiences of victimization and denigration. Research and practitioner experiences both clearly indicate that what is needed here is a frank, highly-detailed, emotionally honest exchange about such incidents. These violent act accounts delve into a step-by-step narration of the all pertinent details, affects, and thoughts which occurred in the moments when the individual committed a hateful and violent act.

Conversely, cognitive-behavioral training programs with modular structures are not well-suited to supporting open-process, exploratory, narrative exchange and to developing personal capacities for (co-)narrative interaction – at least as such programs are currently implemented in many sectors of intervention work. To the contrary, cognitive-behavioral approaches often enable facilitators and clients to avoid direct (co-)narrative interactions altogether. They tend to evoke obedience rather than helping to induce a personal transformation on the part of the client.

1.8. Civic education: political debate over perceived and real injustices

Narrative-, emotional-, and life-world-oriented exchanges prevail in good-practice approaches, and rightly so. However, matters of civic education and political debate should not be neglected, even though we should recall that talking about ideology or morality to clients with fundamentalist leanings does not work well. The reason is that ideology and morality were not what originally motivated their antisocial conduct. Instead, those elements were, more often than not, layered on top of pre-existing violent and extremist dispositions to justify actual conduct.

Still, ideological beliefs and the simplified attitudes and opinions that often accompany them are in fact internalized as someone becomes an extremist. Facilitators need to probe into how such beliefs got embedded in the individual's personal history and how he or she became invested in them emotionally. Instead of aiming to win arguments, on the level cognition and attitudes one may aspire at best to sow "seeds of doubt." For this group of clients, doubts, questions, and ambivalence are not yet generally accepted as viable options of thought.

Aside from ideological beliefs, particular attention needs to be paid to grievances and injustices, whether real or imagined, that clients may bring up in the course of conversations. Such grievances

De Gruyter, 2009), pp. 286-309; "Mila – eine Fallrekonstruktion der qualitativ-psychologischen Literatur- und Medien-Interaktionsforschung (LIR)," originally in *Psychotherapie und Sozialwissenschaft* 10:2 (2008), pp. 113-146; and "Die Anwendung der Gruppenanalyse in der Kulturvermittlung. Trauer-Abwehrarbeit in einer Sitzung des Gruppenanalytischen Literaturseminars über Judith Hermans 'Hunter-Tompson Musik,'" originally in *Arbeitshefte Gruppenanalyse* 28. Themenheft: Kultur und Gruppenanalyse (2/2002).

need to be acknowledged and fleshed out by a more in-depth narrative exchange. At the same time, it is crucial to remember that mainstream society and its official representatives may have frequently – even systematically – acted in high-handed ways that did abridge people’s rights.

1.9. Pedagogical exercises emphasizing personal responsibility

Aside of the open-process (group) work on personal and biographical issues there are a variety of traditional methods used in educational group settings that help to illuminate what democracy and human rights might mean in actual practice as member of society in different situations. “Diversity training,” “anti-bias work,” and similar approaches – if not imposed and/or overdone – can enable the members of a group to work through their racist, exclusionary, or discriminatory tendencies. These approaches may help to foster a value system in clients consistent with the requirements of a liberal society, while simultaneously enhancing clients’ prospects for responsible citizenship.

1.10. History, (youth) culture(s), and fictional narratives

By the same token, interventions derived from good-practice narratives and directed against hate crimes always have an intrinsically temporal dimension, albeit perhaps a fairly straightforward one that does not entail the systematic teaching of “history lessons.” History (in the limited sense intended by the interventions) suggests that things develop over time and that their outcomes depend on certain formative, real-world circumstances. But above all, history in our context teaches that lives and outcomes can be changed, at least in principle. Hence, it is vital that the starting point of interventions be the biographies, i.e. personal histories and stories, of individual clients, as nested within their family histories. Once those matters have been elucidated, practitioners may turn their attention to history in the broader, socio-political sense.

Furthermore, good-practice approaches must take cultural factors into account, since these too provide a context that shapes people’s behavior. Accordingly, groups may introduce and work with media narratives, whether drawn from fiction, film, music, or websites, in an effort to encourage the participants’ own creativity and reflection. As is well-known, young people are generally attracted to youth-cultural activities. They are also avid consumers of media productions, especially fictional narratives that provide entertainment and/or involve issues of identity.⁹

⁹ As already alluded to in footnote 7, the humanities’ fields of literature, culture, and media studies may have a bigger role to play in practical approaches to extremism and violence prevention interventions as is generally realized – or deemed opportune – in these fields. For instance, Fiction Narrative Interaction Research (MIR) is a novel methodological design of humanities research. While investigating processes of cultural/ aesthetic interaction, MIR also aims at developing new schemes and tools which are applicable in both media/culture teaching and preventive social interventions – thus crossing over and synergizing putatively far-apart academic and administrative areas (as EU-DG Research, DG Justice, and DG Home Affairs). The MIR design enables the humanities to approach, in an empirically rigorous manner, the twofold-question of: (a) What do people actually do in mental, biographical, developmental and social respect when they read/view books, films, songs etc., i.e. when they interact with fictional narratives of their personal choice? (b) What do fiction narratives actually ‘do’, more accurately: which interaction potentials and reader-impulses do they carry, due to their specific content and form? These questions – and the MIR

2. Good-practice intervention programs in context

2.1. Independent outside practitioners

As suggested above, with regard to the formal setting of interventions, the ideal facilitator of the deradicalization process has non-governmental status and also comes from outside the institution of the client (whether it be a prison, a probation office, a school, etc.). It is essential that facilitators be able to act with a certain degree of independence and thereby provide a safe and confidential space for participants. It is likewise essential that facilitators are perceived by their clients to enjoy such independence, so that trust- and relationship-building can succeed.

Independence and confidentiality are the dual requirements of good-practice anti-hate-crime work. Without them, an intervention has little chance of long-run success, and may even have adverse effects. This is true for two reasons. First, radicalized individuals – especially those who are institutionalized – are unlikely to trust an employee whose reports and decisions can affect their fate. Second, people who agree to participate in state-of-the-art interventions stand to experience profound personal changes, ones that evoke deep-seated emotions and sensitive, even painful, memories. The experience can be compared to undergoing psychotherapy. For good reasons, it is not permissible for patients to be counselled by practitioners who have existential power over them: job superiors, care takers, family members, and the like. Anti-hate-crimes practitioners must have the independence and the authority to provide a secure and confidential atmosphere in which clients can speak and interact freely.

2.2. Institutional support for outside practitioners

However, good practice, as provided by independent practitioners, relies heavily on the institution itself. For an intervention to succeed, the institution needs to be on board. It must understand the good practice approach and actively signal both its high esteem for the incoming facilitators and its readiness to support, secure, and continue their work. For this purpose, institutional staff members need to be educated about the complexity of anti-hate-crime and deradicalization work. Statutory employees and institutional leadership should be encouraged to request appropriate consultancy and staff training from the independent practitioners and/or their organizations.

2.3. The relationship between NGOs and the state

design – may well be brought to bear on topics of violence and extremism prevention and thus assist in developing impactful methods of intervention.

The EC's 2009 *Stockholm Programme* states that the "key to our success [in de-radicalization] will be the degree to which non-governmental groups ... across Europe play an active part." Practitioner organizations, mainly NGOs and civil-society groups, clearly need stable sources of funding if they are to carry out the Programme's goals. It is essential, both for reasons of principle and reasons of financing, to set up legal and budgetary structures that make it easier for independent practitioners to engage in the interventions mandated by governmental institutions.

One obvious desideratum is to provide a degree of professional and vocational security for non-governmental practitioners' organizations. For that to happen, society must become more resilient, and develop more effective ways to prevent young people from getting involved in extremist milieus and violent activities. That step, in turn, presupposes a degree of trust between governmental and non-governmental organizations. Individuals who are involved in extremist or terrorist activities typically view the state as an enemy. To them, the state is an entity that abuses and distrusts its own citizens. In order for deradicalization efforts to succeed, there must be an appearance of trust between statutory and civil community actors as well as support for and confidence in outside practitioners.

2.4. Practitioners' intervention styles

Whenever narrative and open-process exploratory interactions are the preferred approach (whether in one-on-one or in group exchanges), practitioners should develop intervention styles designed to foster strong working relationships. In particular, practitioners should signal trustworthiness, authenticity, curiosity, institutional independence, and respect for the client. They ought to evince a critical attentiveness that is simultaneously accepting yet confrontational. The point is to maintain a basic distinction between the client's personhood, which will be accorded respect, and the client's offensive behavior and extremist opinions, which will be probed and questioned.

2.5. Practitioner training, professional assistance, and quality management

To be successful, deradicalization approaches must rely on professional facilitators who possess relevant skills and knowledge on the level of both personal attitudes and methodological practices. Hardly anyone has ever been able to implement state-of-the-art methodology simply from reading case studies. We need to institute a "train the trainer" program, assisted by a pool of experts having both a deep understanding of what strategies work and significant experience in implementing those practices and in adapting them to different circumstances.

2.6. Party-political and media discourses

Public discourse on hate crimes, violent extremism, and human rights exerts a strong influence on deradicalization work done with at-risk individuals. It is therefore indispensable to pay heed to the

ways in which representatives from governments, political parties, media outlets, and other public institutions portray victims, perpetrators, interventions, prejudices, and possibly-mainstream extremist views. Currently, within the overwhelming majority of EU member states, incidents of group-focused hatred, extremism, and terrorism are often neglected, covered up, or manipulated by populist and partisan interests for their own ends. Moreover, the media tend to treat these problems as sensationalist fodder instead of adopting intelligent strategies for preventing and resolving them.

In this respect, the least that a deradicalization intervention can and should do is to acknowledge and discuss these public discourses, and to highlight the duplicities of mainstream, allegedly non-extremist media narratives that are in fact populist and/or sensationalist. In addition, it would be helpful if political parties could agree on a code of conduct cutting across partisan lines, providing guidelines or rules on how best to depict extremist actions and attitudes in public discourse. Such code would apply – in however slightly different ways – to representatives of governments, political organizations, and the media.

2.7. Involvement by third parties

In addition to engaging independent specialists from outside a given institution, good practice also frequently relies on another third-party element. Carefully chosen members of different groups within civil society should be invited to enter the institution as interlocutors, commentators, and witnesses with special experiences. So, for example, good-practice guidelines would call upon so-called “formers” (those who have abandoned violent lifestyles), as well the victims and survivors of extremist acts (although certain methodological cautions are appropriate for this group). It can also be useful to ask respected or charismatic representatives from the community or mainstream society to play a role within the institution. Family members, especially, may contribute to deradicalization processes in certain cases.

To be sure, the practitioners themselves will have to think through, prepare for, and mediate the participation of third parties in deradicalization work. Also, the presence of the third parties must be carefully embedded in established intervention protocols.

In general, however, it is desirable that the risk-averse perspective that has characterized many statutory counter-extremism and prevention strategies should be supplemented by a perspective that is both more inclusive and less driven by security concerns. Bridges need to be built across the chasm separating binaries such as “civil vs. public,” “statutory vs. non-governmental,” “professional vs. volunteer,” “national vs. local (or international),” and “East vs. West” (cf. the Copenhagen Convention of 2012, footnote 3).

2.8. Cross-institutional, long-term support relationships and change-management

Successful disengagement from extremism is facilitated by the existence of stable practitioner- and mentoring-relationships that persist when the client leaves an institution and enters a new sphere of life. Non-statutory, practitioners who can move easily among different social sectors are obviously in a good position to provide such mentoring.

The necessity for cross-institutional coaching may be most evident in the case of imprisoned clients. Here an inmate's rehabilitation practitioner should already be in place during his or her time in prison; the relationship developed there should be retained in the early stages of the ex-offender's reintegration into the community, assisting the client with change management. However, the existence of a stable, on-going support system is also important for clients making other types of institutional transitions, such as the transition from school to workplace.

By the same token, interventions have to be long-term and be accompanied by visibly strong institutional and societal commitments. Project-style interventions of a short- to middle-term duration may even be counter-productive, since they can enhance frustration and distrust on the part of clients, most of whom tend to be volatile and to have scant experience in commitment and responsibility. Here, only long-term and resilient mentoring relationships will suffice to create the interpersonal trust and respect that set the stage for successful deradicalization.

2.9. What doesn't work: pure anger management and cognitive-behavioral training

Having explored the issue of what methods and strategies are most likely to work in facilitating deradicalization, we next turn to the question of which approaches have little effect, or possibly even adverse effects. Academic research and practitioner exchange workshops agree on the shortcomings of two commonly-touted alternatives: fully modularized cognitive-behavioral training programs (CBT), and pure anti-aggression or anger management programs (AM). CBT approaches generally do not support open-process, exploratory, and participatory exchange. On the contrary, they may unintentionally serve the function of deterring direct (co-)narrative interaction between facilitators and clients and among clients in the group. Often they end up producing compliance without conviction, a "let's-get-it-over-with" attitude that does not truly engage the individual or issue in personal change. Anger management (AM) courses, for their part, often tend to be superficial in the sense that they do not probe into biographical issues such as the genesis, function, and targets of an individual's aggression. Unless CBT and AM techniques are carefully embedded into a solid methodological framework of open-process, relationship-based, and narrative intervention work, their effectiveness will suffer, and they may actually turn out to be counter-productive.

3. Topical issues of (de-)radicalisation and prevention – women/ gender and internet/ media

The two particular questions of (3.1) what can and cannot be done in the Internet and social media to prevent violent extremism and (3.2) what role women and gender play in de-/ radicalisation and in preventive work are currently being intensely discussed – and some good practice projects are underway to acquire insight and develop suitable methods and tools of intervention.

3.1. What can and cannot be done in the internet and social media

Many policy makers and colleagues from the field of media production strongly emphasise so-called “counter narratives” as means of prevention and deradicalisation through the internet and social media. In fact, a few approaches have developed that produce audio-visual testimonials or – yet to be properly defined – ‘deradicalising narratives’, the more or less unspoken assumption of which is that they are able to trigger and facilitate processes of deradicalisation that can thus be employed via the internet. The sources of such narratives/ testimonials generally include former violent extremists and their families, moderate community voices, and the victims and/or survivors of terrorist acts and hate crimes.

Yet, first-line practitioners from various member states and areas of work steadfastly claim that “one cannot deradicalise on-line, period!”. “Even secondary prevention is not an option” (which works with highly susceptible yet not fully radicalized persons). “The only thing you can do with the internet and social media is awareness raising and campaigning” (within civil society). What makes matters even trickier is that more often than not these practitioners tend to think that “these media people – and policy makers – don’t know the first thing about derad and prevent”. Hence, this situation indicates not only a key controversy with regard to methodology. It also signals a degree of alienation between important stakeholders of prevention and deradicalisation activities that actually should work together closely in cross-disciplinary and interagency constellations.

Indeed, we need to acknowledge that the methodology for developing deradicalising media narratives is still in its early stages. Considerable thought must be given to the techniques that will be used: interviews, post-production of the AV material, and ways to embed it in off-line intervention programs. Clearly not every well-intended testimonial or narrative about violent extremism will actually have a deradicalising effect upon every kind of at-risk individual at every moment in the process of personal development. Also, when a process of deradicalisation is set in motion, it may still fail and even backfire. There seems to be no neutrality in activities concerning the prevention of extremism and violence. Hence, if a measure does not create the often evocated ‘added value’ it is likely to cause damage.

Moreover, in terms of the above mentioned practitioners’ reactions, one must concede that the mainstream of counter terrorism theory is fraught with various misconceptions about what can and

cannot be done in the internet¹⁰. (i) Some assume counter-narratives are self-evident: It just takes some suitable educational material and interviews – and here, basically, any authentic input would do. (ii) Others even want to learn from extremists’ web-activities and “counter-radicalize” through pro-democracy values – forgetting that counter-manipulation, i.e. radicalisation for the good cause, cannot be the solution. (iii) Few attempt employing humour, even ridicule, thus ignoring that extremists lack any sense of humour and that ridicule/mockery is potentially offensive and may therefore be a most explosive strategy especially with radicalized young people. (iv) More modest approaches seek to communicate the government’s good-will and democratic values and engage in counter-messaging that concentrates on systematically refuting misinformation and propaganda. Usually it is quite apparent that such approaches will not impress extremists. (v) Yet another kind of approach produces victims’ testimonials to deter terrorism – but is not sufficiently clear that radicals and hate crime perpetrators react quite aversely to any victim issues because they generally have been victimized themselves and are in strong psychological denial of these hurtful experiences.

Across the board (vi) it is commonly held by policy makers and educators that the first and most important thing which needs to be done in terms of communications is to “counter”, “contest”, “combat”, “dismantle” the extremists’ thought patterns and ideology – and in order to do so apply “ideology, logic, fact”¹¹. This however disregards the general experience of first-line practitioners: that countering will not deradicalise anyone, on the contrary, since extremists feed on being countered and argued with (as noted above in 1.2 and 1.8). Therefore, the respective cognitive-behavioural programmes and media strategies that focus on “countering” and on levelling cognitive arguments certainly have much value in raising awareness within civil society and in providing primary prevention. But they are largely ineffective and potentially even counter-productive in secondary prevention and deradicalisation.

Moreover, so-called “extremist narratives” are not narratives in the exact sense of the term at all. In fact, recruiters and extremist ideologues avoid genuine narrativity. Moreover, most often they are largely incapable of creating and sharing personal narratives to begin with. In turn, genuine narrativity is exactly what is needed in rehabilitation, deradicalisation, and prevention. Since such

¹⁰ See “Deradicalising Narratives within the RAN approach – what can and what cannot be done in media based interventions.” http://cultures-interactive.de/tl_files/publikationen/Engl_DeradNarr_HWeilnboeck.pdf. And: “Do we really need ‘counter narratives’? And what is a ‘narrative’ anyway? – Current misunderstandings about and solutions for building an approach of ‘deradicalising narratives’ interventions”, http://cultures-interactive.de/tl_files/publikationen/Do-we-need-counter-narratives%20_TeilA.pdf.

¹¹ “The first (pillars of an effective counter-narrative) is an effective comprehensive message that dismantles and counter-argues against every dimension of the extremist narrative, namely the theological, political, historical, instrumental and sociopsychological dimensions.” Stated by the United Nation's Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force (UN-CTITF), Omar Ashour: Online De-Radicalization? Countering Violent Extremist Narratives: Message, Messenger and Media Strategy. (Perspectives On Terrorism, Vol. 8., No. 6, 2010); <http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/128/html>; accessed April 19, 2013. Cf. also: proposed policy recommendations – from the RAN@ working (December 2012). http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/ran-high-level-conference/docs/proposed_policy_recommendations_ran_at_en.pdf.

processes of profound personal change basically require that the clients build up and develop their ability to create narratives, i.e. to articulate personally lived-through experiences and convey their subjective perspective. One particularly valuable aspect of such narrative then is that it cannot be countered and devalued anymore, because one cannot counter a narrative, understood as personal and subjective experiences; one can only listen to it or co-narratively interact with it. Hence, the term “counter narrative” is a most unfortunate misnomer – in the field of counter extremism and prevention. It should be replaced by terms like “narrative interventions” or “deradicalising narratives” – which may then be offset and complemented by activity areas that engage in “counter messaging”, “counter campaigning” and primary prevention.

In summary, if media narratives are to be part of deradicalisation and secondary prevent interventions, it seems that – pending current fundamental research,¹² – the following methodological precautions need to be taken:

- (1) Sustainable media interventions of deradicalisation need to observe the principles of offline good-practice. As stated in this paper this means: What is needed – also in media and internet activities – is, in short: open-process and relational interventions of in-depth story telling/ sharing – both on- and offline in conjunction. This approach does not primarily engage in countering arguments, but it is narrative in the above defined sense of giving first-hand accounts of personally lived-through experiences and actions. Hence these interventions proceed in non-directional, trust-based, confidential, and exploratory ways; they are maximally participatory and allow for emotional investment and the recognition and expression of ambivalence. This implies a dialogue process of shared co-narrativity – and is not easily compatible with pure media production approaches.
- (2) When applied in an intervention, the video or audio materials should always be carefully embedded in a systematic off-line intervention process. Toward that end the media intervention must be both systematically prepared beforehand and elaborated in depth afterwards. The point is to enable viewers to develop, personalise, acknowledge, and reflect upon their subjective reactions to such testimonials, and to express them within the group process of the intervention. Here a 20-80 principle seems advisable, i.e. 80% resources go into the off-line sector of any such intervention.
- (3) The procedures of producing the media narratives should be designed as counselling interventions for the different interviewee groups, i.e. they need to be maximally participative vis-à-vis those that agreed to cooperate in generating narrative material to be used in deradicalisation work. Such a project would no longer act as a ‘media project’. It would not emphasize on the main objective to collect interview material and create from it a ‘tool of on-line intervention’. Rather the project would present itself as simple – off-line – counselling or rehabilitation intervention, specifically targeted to different stakeholders around extremism and hate crime. The only specificity of it is that it also – as an aside – offers the opportunity to produce narrative self-documents/

¹² Within the ISEC project, “European Platform of Deradicalising Narratives” (EDNA, by VPN, Berlin).

testimonials and provides training in basic skills of narrative interviewing, video/audio editing and post-production, thus training basic media competencies.

(4) Finally, any narratives/ testimonials of this kind should be designed expressly for the purpose of deradicalisation and anti-hate-crime interventions. The production should not have further additional purposes in mind or exploit the material for use in contexts other than deradicalisation. For example, the narratives should not be used for purposes of media sensationalism, or misappropriated by political actors for their own ends, such as to stoke populist emotions. At the same time it would be unwise to use such testimonials to drive home ethical lessons within mainstream society, such as that a person should adhere to certain values and pass moral judgments on others. Finally, the testimonials should steer free from catering to the special interests of different interviewee groups (e.g. victimsrights lobbies).

By and large, the content and form of a deradicalising narratives/ testimonial should conform to the spirit of the intervention principles themselves. For example, such testimonial would deal with a variety of experiences and circumstances, including the following:

- how the individual fell into and subsequently disengaged from violent extremism;
- the difficulties and doubts that may have accompanied the exit intervention, including whatever complications may have arisen with family members, peers, co-religionists, etc.; doubts, hesitation and even specific regrets about disengagement that may still linger in certain moments;
- candid accounts of incidents in which the individual may have been a perpetrator (and/or victim) of hate speech or hate crimes;
- possibly also cultural and media products (whether documentary or fictional) that played a role in the individual's personal evolution (cf. footnotes 4 and 8);
- the individual's erstwhile and current social or political grievances;
- allegedly non-radical, yet potentially extremist, attitudes within mainstream society;
- the personal backgrounds, experiences, and motivations of deradicalisation experts, as well as those of the family and community representatives who have been affected by their work.

Narrative interviewing and postproduction methods will aim to promote and encourage the maximum degree of narrativity and authenticity that an interviewee's testimonial can achieve. There are certain criteria that contribute to a testimonial's narrativity – and also lend believability and emotive power to it. These include the following elements:

- the degree of detail and completeness found in the account (e.g., what triggered an episode or incident, what the actor intended to accomplish, what transpired and with what results, and how the actor subjectively evaluated it);

- the extent to which incidents are successfully placed within autobiographical and wider-world contexts;
- the account's consistency, as judged by psycho-linguistic criteria;
- the personal affect and range of emotional expression displayed by the story-teller;
- the degree of introspection and self-awareness in evidence;
- the amount of expressed reality-checking, personal ambivalence, and/or conflict;
- the field-specific credentials of the narrator;
- the interactive quality of the interview process, as evaluated according to the principles laid out above (see footnote 8, 2008).

In short, interviewing and postproduction methodologies follow the very same principles as good-practice interventions themselves.

3.2 Women and gender aspects in extremism and prevention/deradicalisation

European practitioners' experiences throughout the RAN working group on deradicalisation (Radicalisation Awareness Network) as well as from the Women in Extremism Network (cf. WomEx¹³) and similar national initiatives have taught us

- (i) that not only men but also women play a crucial role in violent extremism as perpetrators, ideologues and supporters – which requires the need to adopt a gender systemic perspective,
- (ii) that there is hardly any violent extremist, terrorist, or hate crime offender that does not also hold sexist and homophobic attitudes, i.e. manifests highly conflictive gender issues,
- (iii) and that these conflictive gender issues do not only coincide with violent extremist behaviours and hate crimes but are also key psychological driving forces behind them – which requires the development and employment of gender focused methods.

These insights especially hold true for the two major threats of violent extremism in Europe, rightwing extremism and religious fundamentalism (both from Moslem and Christian background). Plus, un-ideological/ non-religious hate crime perpetrators who constitute a prime recruiting pool for various forms of extremism/ terrorism seem to be particularly sexist, homophobic, and prone to hateful offenses against perceived others. Hence, these individuals' views defy human rights and civil liberties in that they aggressively fuel a resentful or/and violently hostile attitude towards the other sex, people that are sexually different, or persons that, by appearance or behaviour, challenge their rigid gender role order.

¹³ Implemented by Cultures Interactive (NGO), Berlin: <http://www.cultures-interactive.de/womex.html>.

For example, practitioners of prevention and deradicalisation measures have recurrently found that violent and extremist young men who commit hate crimes compensate insecurities of their sense of male identity and manliness by acting-out in hostile ways against women and homosexuals in particular. In consequence, neo-Nazi followers tend to use anti-gay and sexist curse words (e.g. “you bloody fag!”) even when attacking foreigners or coloured persons that do not give any sign of being homosexual. Historically, today’s rightwing extremists often draw from the fact that homophobia was an essential element in historic anti-Semitism during the Third Reich and Jews have thus often been portrayed as being sexualized/ promiscuous or homosexual, or child-molesters etc. which was considered equal to homosexuality.

Moreover, rightwing extremist organisations take advantage of gender issues which are perceived as controversially or are criminalized in society – and lend themselves to being emotionalised through populist propaganda. Case in point is the current German rightwing extremists’ PR strategy which aims at capitalizing on public enragement about child abuse and uses slogans such as: “Death penalty/ castration for child pedophiles/ child molesters!”.

With recruits in Jihadist extremism/terrorism, social work practitioners have often observed that the young men see it as proof of their masculinity when they are chosen as a suicide attacker (“finally I am acknowledged as man/ Muslim man”); and they perceive it as insult/ threat to their male identity if they are not chosen. Furthermore, there have been cases reported in which male suicide bombers have enwrapped their genitals in order for them to not be affected by the bomb explosion, so that their afterlife persona may remain intact in terms of its sexual organs when entering eternity (and is provided with a large number of virgin women).

As to the women that are active in such extremisms, they overwhelmingly agree to and actively reconfirm the restrictive gender role order that is in effect in their milieus. They thus share and defend the sexist and homophobic attitudes and draw motivation from them for their activities – as providers of ideological support und internal group cohesion, as helpers in preparing attacks, and also by directly committing fiercely physical hate crimes and terrorist attacks themselves.

On a different level, extremist movements take strategic advantages of the socially given gender roles in that they position their female followers in places of society that allow them to propagate extremism in tempting ways - and make it look more normal and acceptable. In Germany, for instance, rightwing extremist women enter child day care and parents’ organizations, schools, family welfare and professional social work in order to infiltrate the middle classes and boost the mainstreaming of rightwing extremist attitudes.

In summary, practitioners of prevention and deradicalisation have often concluded that the very basic life duality of female and male constitutes, in each individual’s life, a prime temptation to adopt thought patterns of polarization/ dissociation and behaviours of exclusion – which have

proven to be an element in various forms of violent extremism. Issues of gender may thus psychologically feed into developing rigid black-and-white thinking and in-group-out-group demarcations – and it may potentially support young people in gravitating towards violent extremism. Therefore, gender issues are crucial for any sustainable deradicalisation intervention. Both *gender specific* interventions – with girls/ women and boys/ men separately – and *gender focused* methods across all work settings of deradicalisation and prevention are needed.

Both *gender specific* and *gender focused* interventions particularly aim at making the participants more aware of the intrinsic connection between violent extremism and rigid/restrictive gender roles, reflect upon their personal stance and experience with this topic. To some extent the participants also learn about how it comes that certain biographical and milieu specific conditions (violent/ relational/ sexual abuse, neglect, degradation, trauma) may lead an individual to adopt rigid/restrictive gender role concepts – and how an individual may thus become susceptible to engage in violent extremist behaviour as a result of gender related biographical experiences. Furthermore, gender methods allow becoming acquainted with and experimenting with alternative modes of male and female identity practice which comply with human rights and are based on a pro-social sense of democratic citizenship.

4. Examples of good-practice approaches in anti-hate-crime and deradicalization work

As we have seen, the most successful approaches to deradicalization are open-process, exploratory interventions. Methodologically speaking, they are narrative and relational in their focus, and are based on trust and challenge – and on voluntary engagement. Offering confidentiality and commitment, they are best delivered by skilled, specially-trained non-governmental practitioners who are empowered to act independently within and across statutory institutions and are proactively assisted in their interventions by the institutional staff. Open-process approaches share a number of characteristics. They:

- focus on the development of emotional intelligence;
- occur within group settings;
- touch upon biographical, familial, gender-related, and power issues;
- employ advanced civic education and fictional or cultural texts;
- include representatives of the family, the community and civil society;
- combine both accepting and confrontational modes of interaction; and
- are accompanied by state-of-the-art quality control.

The “European Network of Deradicalisation” website (ENoD),¹⁴ which is being constructed by the Violence Prevention Network and liaises closely with the RAN initiative’s Derad working group in Brussels, will soon be able to supply profiles of deradicalization efforts throughout Europe that utilize, or are in the process of developing, good-practice approaches. In the meanwhile, we can profit from the examples provided by two Berlin-based NGOs: Cultures Interactive and the aforementioned Violence Prevention Network.

4.1. Cultures Interactive

Cultures Interactive (CI) is a non-profit association dedicated to “violence prevention and intercultural education.” Although the group occasionally works in Poland and the Czech Republic, its efforts are concentrated in towns and rural communities in eastern Germany and in inner-city districts of Berlin that suffer from high degrees of social tension.

Methodologically, CI has developed a youth-cultural approach to promoting human rights awareness and democratic values and responding to violent extremism and hate crimes. It delivers both prevention and deradicalization interventions, depending on the context and the target group. CI works with issues of neo-Nazism and similar extremist ideologies, radical Islam and jihadism, everyday racism and xenophobia, and other forms of group-prejudiced, exclusionary and violent behavior, especially on the part of at-risk young people from disadvantaged backgrounds.

The CI approach combines civic and historical education with peer-taught workshops in various youth-cultural practices and styles as well as psychologically-based, open-process interactions, the so-called “We-Among-Ourselves-Group” (WAOG). The civic education modules feature exercises in team-building, diversity training, and anti-bias courses, as well as work in gender awareness and anger management. Meditation techniques are also incorporated into the program. As is the case with the WAOG, group discussions often highlight documentary and fictional media narratives (films, TV, songs) chosen by the young people themselves.

The youth-cultural workshops draw on diverse forms of creative expression, including rap music, slam poetry, break-dancing, comic and graffiti art, skateboarding, techno-disc-jockeying, as well as film and digital music production. Conducted according to principles of informal peer learning, these workshops sometimes incorporate historical materials as well as materials relevant to civil society today. The urban youth-cultural practice workshops enable CI to reach out to individuals who are alienated from traditional pedagogical institutions and approaches, and are therefore difficult to engage by any other approach.

The “We-Among-Ourselves-Group” tries to promote self-awareness by applying principles derived from psycho- and socio-therapeutic casework. Under the guidance of a facilitator, participants enter

¹⁴ <http://www.european-network-of-deradicalisation.eu>

a voluntary, confidential, and open-process setting in which they can converse about experiences and issues that emerge in the group as a whole. Here they discuss their life experiences as well as thoughts and ideas they may have entertained in certain situations. Those discussions may be prompted by the civic-education and youth-cultural modules. Only the most basic rules of mutual respect and protection are obligatory here. Ideally, the facilitator plays a maximally non-directive role; only when necessary does he or she help the group to focus on emergent topics, organize conversational turn-taking, summarize or clarify the session dynamic, or solicit observations and insights gained in the process. Common discussion topics include the youth culture, leisure-time activities, friendships, interpersonal conflicts, instances of violence, betrayal, or delinquency, displays of loyalty and assistance, and above all, issues of gender and identity. Quite often family matters come up, as do experiences participants have had in orphanages, pediatric psychiatry, juvenile detention, or prison.¹⁵

CI has recently instituted and tested a youth-cultural “train the peer trainer” initiative, the Fair Skills training program, designed to help young people from disadvantaged backgrounds to become facilitators of youth-cultural workshops. Fair Skills emphasizes soft skills, as formulated by the “European Framework of Key Competences.” These include “social and civic competences” (i.e., “interpersonal and intercultural skills”), “critical thinking,” “constructive management of feelings,” and “cultural awareness and expression” (EC Recommendation 2006/962/EC). The training is given in three intensive one-week courses, followed up by close supervision on the job.

CI works in different settings, offering one- or two-day workshops in schools and youth clubs located in disadvantaged rural, small town, or inner-city areas. Building on such workshops, CI conducts community conferences and open-space discussions for young people and their local representatives as a way of promoting youth participation and social cohesion. For example, its current Federal Model Project, “Deradicalization Guidelines for Youth Workers,” develops programs, tool kits, and principles for social workers and youth centers in deprived areas where youngsters are attracted by right-wing extremism. Similarly, CI’s WomEx initiative, an EU applied research project on “Women/Girls in Extremism”, examines the roles that girls and women play in extremism and what we can learn from practitioners that work in anti-hate-crime and deradicalisation settings with girls and women, and investigates good-practice gender methodologies. Stakeholders in these initiatives include teachers, social workers, police officers, public administrators, youth clubs and associations, and local media outlets. They receive instruction and training about right-wing-extremism, fundamentalism, and hate crimes, and how to deal with them.

¹⁵ Harald Weirnöck, Silke Baer, and Peer Wiechmann (2012), “Hate Crime Prevention and Deradicalization in Environments Vulnerable to Extremism: Community Work with the Fair Skills Approach and the We-Among-Ourselves Group,” originally published in *Zeitschrift des Informations- und Dokumentationzentrums für Antirassismusbearbeitung in NRW* (February issue); soon available at www.weirnboeck.net and www.cultures-interactive.de.

4.2. The Violence Prevention Network

The Violence Prevention Network (VPN) has developed a particular group intervention approach for incarcerated juveniles convicted of hate crimes rooted in Neo-Nazism, Islamism, or some other violently prejudiced ideology. Two specialized non-statutory practitioners from outside the prison system facilitate the program. These practitioners also cooperate to deliver staff training in the institution. Ex-offenders, family members, and civil society representatives are brought in for special sessions to support the process.

The VPN program focuses on issues of personal biography, upbringing, peer-groups, gender, and delinquency, with special emphasis on dysfunctional family dynamics and incidents of violence, abuse, or disrespect in the client's past. Young offenders are encouraged to explore the connections between past events and their own readiness to act out violently and to hold extremist attitudes in regard to politics or religion. In addition, modules of civic education and political and/or religious debate form a significant part of the intervention.

The VPN's approach puts a premium on not reducing the young adults to their status as criminals. On the contrary, each participant is taken seriously and respected as someone with his own history, conflicts, and potential for personal development. At the same time, the violent act that he committed is systematically analyzed and confronted, as are the illiberal, undemocratic, and anti-human-rights attitudes that helped to motivate it.

Once sufficient trust is established within the group, the central element of the program can be employed: the so-called "violent act session," in which every participant strives to reconstruct the actions, feelings, and thoughts that transpired during the course of his crime. These sessions are highly demanding for the group and the facilitators alike. Perhaps surprisingly, confronting the inhuman brutality, the ghastly injuries, and the hateful fantasies and actions bound up with the crime's commission often proves to be an overwhelming experience for the offenders themselves. But the participants assist each other in this regard, without letting anyone off the hook too easily. In the aftermath of the violent act sessions, most of the individuals in the group are able to accept their responsibility and build a new sense of self and of empathy with others, thus paving the way for a future that is free from violence and hatred.

Most importantly, although the process unfolds within the context of, and with the help of, the group, it is always accompanied by one-on-one sessions. The fellow inmates who also committed hate crimes and/or racist acts of aggression have proven able and willing to support the process of respectful but intense questioning of the other program participants, as well as themselves. Participants join on a voluntary basis only, after having had some prior interviews. They are offered only modest inducements, such as opportunities to play football together. Just as they are not

required to engage in the program, it is not noted on their official records if they choose to drop out. The dropout rate, however, happens to be very low (around 2%).

Civic education – i.e., interrogating the participants’ neo-Nazi, fundamentalist, or otherwise extremist beliefs and helping them to adopt attitudes that are more tolerant, liberal, and respectful of human rights – remains an absorbing and challenging task throughout the whole of the intervention. However, the group work described above makes the task decidedly more achievable. Pedagogical exercises, role-playing about how to deal with situations of conflict, provocation, and insult, and the crafting of autobiographical narratives all assist in this process, as do sessions with carefully chosen family and friends in the prison.

After the training program, a change-management module is employed. This module features developing resource and risk analyses, recruiting helpers from the offender’s family or the larger community, and building up a local support network. Post-release coaching, which may take up to twelve months, is provided by one of the two facilitators to each ex-offender, in order to assist him to make the transition from prison to the larger society. A central goal here is public protection: i.e., reducing the rate of recidivism, which for hate crimes is generally estimated at around 76%. The logic behind this is that working with perpetrators will decrease the number of victims and the amount damage and social costs.

In EU member states, many additional approaches toward deradicalization and hate-crime prevention have been developed, mainly by NGOs. These approaches and organisations soon will be made public through the “European Network of Deradicalization” (ENoD) and through resources provided by the Radicalisation Awareness Network. That, in turn, should improve our capacity to formulate sound policy recommendations for preventing and averting violent extremism.