



# WomEx

women and gender in extremism

Aspects of gender in right wing extremism  
and religious fundamentalism

Guidelines for specific sectors of prevention  
and intervention

gender in extremism

**WomEx**  
prevention | intervention



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## Introduction

When we started our work, many people told: “Oh, you are doing a project on women and extremism? Great! Women should be addressed much more strategically to help dissuade their husbands, brothers and sons from engaging in extremist environments and attitudes.” Looking at women as “peacemakers” is certainly one viable approach. Yet, what about women and girls who develop and spread extremist attitudes themselves or become active members of violent youth gangs, organisations or terrorist groups? Are they on the radar as well? And should special approaches be taken into account when working with women and girls in targeted interventions? Moreover, people often think: Well, gender, this means women. Yet, in our practice field gender mostly concerns gender roles – of masculinity and femininity – and what it means for the young people to be a man or a woman (in the movement). Since there is no violent extremist who does not also hold sexist and homophobic attitudes in some way.

These questions have been guiding the EU project “WomEx Women and gender focused approaches in prevention and intervention”, which we have conducted

from January 2013 to March 2015. One of the project’s results is the brochure at hand. It provides recommendations for action in the fields of prevention against and disengagement from right-wing extremism and religious fundamentalism. Further results and best-practice approaches from various organisations and institutions can be found on the website [www.womex.org](http://www.womex.org).

Finally, we want to express our special thanks to all the people who have supported the project with their experience and knowledge in meetings, expert rounds, interviews or on-site visits, and thus contributed to its success. Another special thanks goes to our financial supporters - the ISEC programme (EU DG Home Affairs), the Federal Agency of civic education, and to the Radicalisation Awareness Network, that brought us in contact with many inspiring practitioners in the field.

Berlin, March 2015

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### The “WomEx” project


#### BACKGROUND / AIMS

The neo-Nazi terrorist death squad NSU (national socialist underground/ Nationalsozialistischer Untergrund) which was uncovered in 2011 in Germany after having killed ten people – nine of which were perceived foreigners – in execution manner, over a period of some twelve years, while also producing denigrating and cynical videos about their victims, consisted of two men and one woman. The NSU gang was part of a wider under-cover militant neo-Nazi network, encompassing approximately 20% females, with tendency to rise.

Contrary to general perception, girls and women have long proven capable of fierce physical attacks, from their teenage days on, and have engaged in various sorts of terrorism throughout Europe. Moreover, women in violent extremist movements seem to assist in preparing and committing crimes, provide ideological support, and strengthen the social cohesion within the movement. This is particularly true for the current development of mainstreaming in which rightwing extremist attitudes and lifestyles infiltrate the middle classes in certain parts and districts of Germany and firmly install xenophobic, hateful and anti human rights stance in general community discourses. Here women seem to play a crucial role.







We do not yet know enough about how and why quite a few young women move into violent extremism – while, in general, women, mothers, families are regarded powerful factors of prevention.

Above all, however, we don't know much about what the gender aspect may mean methodologically for employing impactful interventions of deradicalisation and hate crime rehabilitation – be it in prison, probation or community, both with women and men.

Nevertheless, there appears to be many pockets of specialized experience on the part of first-line practitioners throughout Europe who work directly with violent and/or extremist girls and women in various work areas and milieus – be they afflicted by political, religious or any comparable form of violent extremism. These colleagues need to be brought together and exchange about their work experiences and principles.

Plus, existing best practice research in deradicalisation and hate crime work with men has in various instances given evidence indicating that issues of gender, family, biography, and social milieu may be of particular importance for processes of deradicalisation and rehabilitation.

Especially in Germany there seems to have developed a rather solid tradition of gender methods in the prevention of hate crime and violent (rightwing) extremism.

The Berlin based NGO cultures interactive e.V. started in 2013 the „Women/Gender in violent Extremism - WomEx“ project to:

- identify existing pockets of specialized knowledge about interventions with violent extremist girls/women – mostly in right-wing extremism and general hate crime offenses
- identify and interview practitioners, statutory or grass-roots organisations' practitioners, who work in women prisons, correction-, pre-arrest- and probation institutions, and in preventative community and NGO organisations
- talk ex-offenders/ at-risk young people about the patterns of female radicalisation, the function of girls/ women in violent extremist milieus, and disengagement experiences,
- produce case study materials about successful interventions, good practice and lessons learned,

- describe the first-line practitioners' work-contexts, approaches, methods/tools, and levels of awareness, and identify issues/ criteria of quality control,
- develop guidelines for deradicalisation and anti hate crime work with girls/ women,
- estimate to what extent women prisons are places of radicalisation, and formulate recommendations
- compare existing research and identify added value from deradicalisation work with girls/ women – and pursue indications as to whether sustainable measures need to be 'inter-sectional' and 'systemic' in nature, i.e. incorporate issues of gender, biography, race, class, group dynamic and family history, research intrinsic inter-relations of "women as victims and perpetrators",
- probe assumptions about a 'female deradicalisation potential',
- acquire female 'deradicalising narratives' (formerly called 'counter narratives') from girls/ women who disengaged and cooperate with website tools of deradicalising narratives (EDNA),
- cooperate with the Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN) inaugurated by the EC, DG Home Affairs

- liaise with university research and prepare application for additional academic funds
- identify possible partner organisations in some neighbour countries, meet for practitioner exchange, and prepare a strategy for transfer and network building
- and prepare for building up an EU-wide network on deradicalisation and gender issues.

Drawing on CI's and affiliates' previous EU best practice research and interventions' development, cooperating with the Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN, EU Home Affairs), liaising with the OSCE-ODIHR, consulting with specialized academicians (Prof. Michaela Köttig) and practitioner experts, the WomEx-project has used methodologies from qualitative-empirical social, biographical, and action research.

Stakeholders/ participants have been: deradicalisation practitioners/ trainees, law enforcement, (public) policy planners, NGOs, legal practitioners, university researchers/ experts, the media/ civil society – and the primary target group: young females and males in vulnerable sectors of European societies.



## MILESTONES



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<p><b>12.+13.12. 2013</b>  <b>Berlin</b>  <b>1st international WomEx conference</b>  in cooperation with the EU-wide Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN)  Title: "Women, Girls, Gender in Extremism_Gender Specific Approaches in Prevention/Intervention"</p>	<p><b>International Net-working:</b>  Initially, WomEx only focussed on Germany but, through its cooperation with the RAN Derad working group, it quickly expanded beyond the borders of Germany. The impetus was the WomEx expertise exchange in December, 2013 which was also simultaneously a RAN Derad working group meeting.</p>	<p>The bilingual website womex.org goes online in the second half of 2014.  The work results of WomEx are found here, as well as information about events / trainings for the topics and activities of our partners. An interface between science and practice, the homepage acts as a nationwide and international platform for information and networking.</p>	<p><b>Testing of training modules for different target groups, second half of 2013:</b>  two-day training for social work professionals on right-wing extremism and gender in Thuringia and Saxony. First half of 2014: training trials for trainee teachers as well as students of social work at the University of Applied Sciences in Frankfurt/Main.</p>	<p><b>30.09.-2.10.2014</b>  <b>Frankfurt (Main)</b>  <b>WomEx final conference</b>  in cooperation with the EU-wide Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN)  Title: "Why Gender? – Aspects of gender in right wing extremism and religious militant fundamentalism _Women- and genderfocused approaches in prevention and intervention"</p>
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## RESULTS AND FINDINGS

### Fields of work

Recommendations for gender-focused work with extreme right or militant Islamist (young) women and men in different relevant areas of prevention and disengagement work.

### Collection of best practices and approaches

Recommendations, promising practices and gender-reflective methods for working with extreme right, religious fundamentalist or violence-prone (young) men and women as well as their parents; extending fields of action onto disengagement work as well as family and youth services.

### Further training

As a part of WomEx, further training for pedagogic skilled personnel and multipliers has been developed and tested. A one to two-day workshop format has been created which is aimed at different target groups.

## A BRIEF REMARK ON THE (IN-)COMPARABILITY OF DIFFERENT PHENOMENA

In the course of the project, some doubts have surfaced concerning the fact that we are dealing with gender aspects not only in right-wing extremism but also in Islamic fundamentalism – two phenomena that are often deemed incomparable in Germany. And they are indeed in terms of their historical background, social origin or regional distribution. Regarding gender-specific ideological aspects, however, a comparative perspective can be useful: Thus, we could gain valuable insights concerning the motivations of girls and women for turning towards and engaging in extreme right and militant Islamist groups.

Moreover, a crucial reason for focusing on both phenomena in one project is quite obvious: On the practical level of prevention and intervention work persons, organisations and institutions dealing with right-wing extremism and those concerned with militant Islam can and should learn much from each other. This is even more the case when it comes to – hitherto rare, yet promising – gender-specific and gender-related approaches.

## Why Gender?

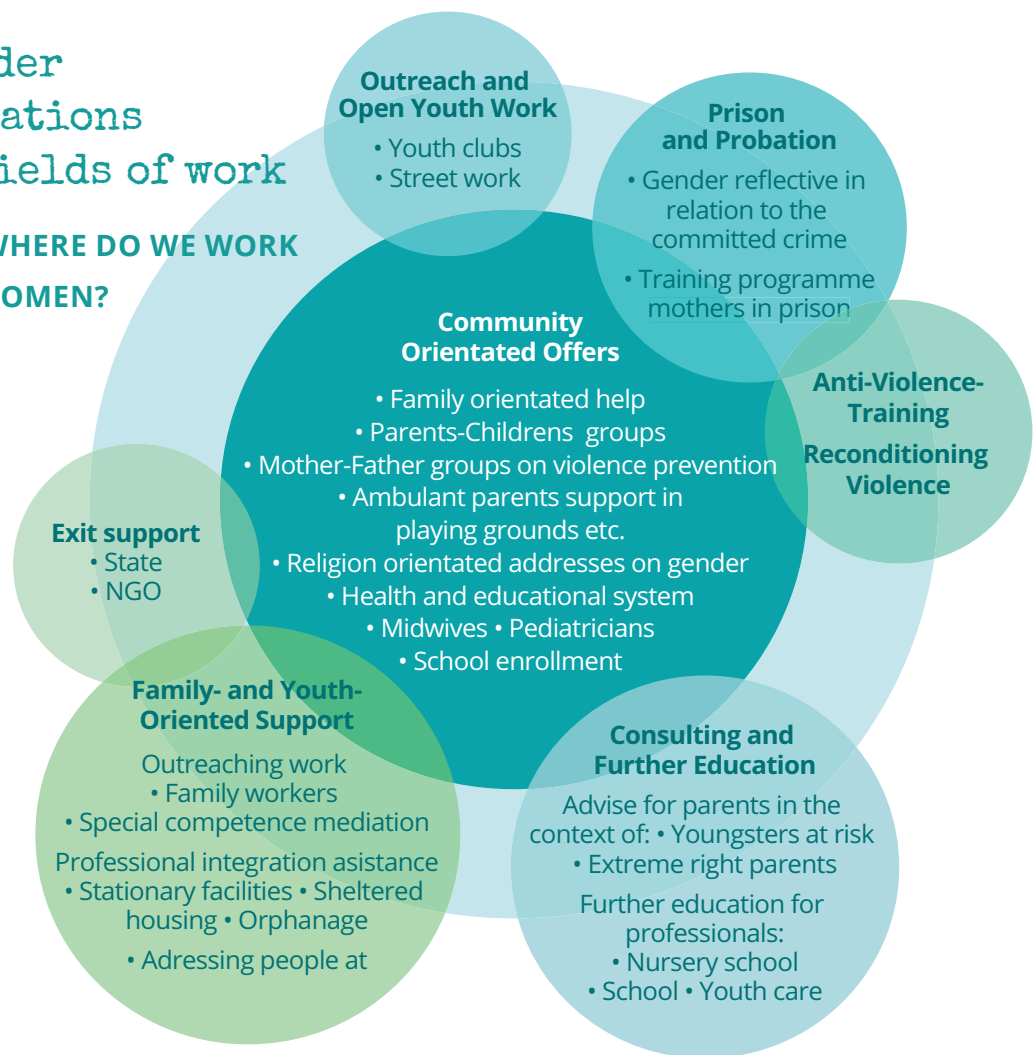
Gender is a decisive factor for the ideological basis of (young) women and men who turn to right-wing extremism, militant Islam or Christian fundamentalism. A few assumptions:

- Extremist groups have gender-specific ideologies and strategies
- Pre-modern gender roles partly shape right-wing extremist, Islamist and Christian fundamentalist ideologies
- How young men and women participate in extremist groups is gender-specific
- Girls and women are not recognised or taken seriously as politically active extremists. This makes it easier to use them strategically whether for community and public relations work or bomb attacks
- Conflict-ridden gender topics are often a reason why young men and women turn to extremist scenes
- Sexism, homophobia and ideas about the inequality of women and men are a key part of right-wing extremist, Islamist and Christian fundamentalist ideology



## Aspects of gender and recommendations in different fields of work

### FIELDS OF WORKS – WHERE DO WE WORK WITH THESE GIRLS/WOMEN?





## COMMUNITY ORIENTED OFFERS

### General aspects: Locally based offers of counselling and support

Community basically means the whole of local civil and civic society combined with all public social and educational opportunities and the local media. The community thus forms a valuable, expansive framework which can support, embrace and integrate various activities of individual, small and large group intervention. The more complex the social need, the more the work will depend on the community and a good mutual relationship and cooperation between citizens active in civil society, local institutions of social and therapeutic assistance, the local media and local government. This applies particularly to the needs of education and youth work because, as we know (since American communitarians reminded us),

***“It takes a village to raise a child.”***

The community is particularly important for the key cross-sections for a peaceful coexistence in our time. Gender and dealing with different types of gender roles and identities is one of these social concern cross-sections, which is of central importance for a democratic and human rights-based coexistence.

Group-focused enmity, right-wing extremist hate groups, political and religious fundamentalism and similar dynamics form another cross-sectional concern which causes eminent threats to the common good. These two issues are usually directly linked to one another.

Furthermore, the effects of issues such as right-wing extremism or gender sometimes reach far into the supposedly non-extremist centre of the respective municipality.

They awaken susceptibilities for an emphasis on populism and resentment laden attitudes – and it is not unusual for them to unveil the dark side of the community. That a real man should be more of a “right” and masculine man and can only also be gay out of necessity, that a mother who does not want a “bad mother” must largely stay at home with the children and should certainly not be too flamboyant, that young people in riot gear and combat boots are “just sowing their wild oats” or “just drink too much,” or that the sudden strict piety of young people from Muslim backgrounds is actually welcomed – such views are just as mainstream in each municipality as they also create a suitable environment, and local niches, for militant extremist and/or fundamentalist organisations.

Perpetrators of right-wing extremist and/or sexist/homophobic offenses often state on record that, in their immediate urban or rural environment, there was “really no one who had a problem with it”, meaning what he/she did to a “foreigner” or person with a gender-identity that differs from the norm.


When it is therefore so often difficult to achieve lasting effects with social-educational interventions, it is usually also due to the fact that the community-pedagogical perspective has been ignored and the village or urban district as a whole not has not been taken into account. This is not without reason, because community work on sensitive cross-sectional issues, such as gender or right-wing extremism, is often very complex and controversial and sometimes also explosive. It will also require the use of methods of constructive conflict consultation in some areas.

### **In individual fields of works – with community reference**

Colleagues who are involved in social issues of violence, extremism and/or gender have often started special (self) help groups and counselling services, which then

became a regular fixture within the community. They are often designed by associations and voluntary organisations which extend furthest into the social field and those which can spontaneously instill more trust than institutions in the public sector. Open group offers for men or women looking for a way to share experiences of conflict, aggression and violence in the family and community that are always gender-specific are of particular importance. This is also about their own involvement in violent behaviour, archaic family ideas and the traditional ways of dealing with their own daughters and sons. How the often conflicting ideas/standards that exist in family and local (or ethnic) backgrounds about what is an acceptable feature or habit of masculinity and femininity are addressed is closely related to this – and could very much affect the beneficial coexistence in the community.

In other communal areas, such as schools and youth facilities, colleagues work in the same fields of experience, although with a low-threshold approach. These colleagues play an important role for creating awareness and competence for inter-religious and inter-ethnic dialogue and the appreciation of diversity and practice of a sound democracy. Different actors can cooperate here, for



example, social space oriented neighbourhood offices, telephone counselling and contact points for parents and teachers whose children and pupils seem to have fallen into militant extremist contexts.

Mobile counselling teams have emerged to deal with right-wing extremism in the local area, particularly in the new federal states. Since the focus of the 2001-2006 federal program “Youth for Tolerance and Democracy – against Right-Wing Extremism, Xenophobia and Anti-Semitism” and its sub-programmes “CIVITAS” , “Xenos” and “Entimon”, the importance of including the stakeholders level of civil society as an essential component for dealing with right-wing extremism was taken into account for the first time: created specifically for the new federal states, the CIVITAS programme aims to strengthen civil society forces locally and includes two priorities:

- (1) to create a counselling network with mobile counselling teams and victim counselling centres, which will continue to exist once the programme has ended;
- (2) make means for local initiatives and projects for the promotion of civil society and democratic structures available in the community with so-called local action plans.

There are currently mobile counselling teams (MBTs) or the mobile advising against right-wing extremism (MBR) in almost all provinces, where they are carried out by different carriers. They share the approach that analysis, information and counselling for dealing with right-wing extremism is connected to the community and are therefore committed to the general goal of strengthening the local democratic structures. However, until now, the importance of gender roles and gender identity issues inherent in right-wing extremist and hate groups has been noted only very occasionally (e.g. Mobile Consulting Hamburg offers “gender-sensitive counselling for incidents involving a right-wing, racist or anti-Semitic background”).

## Gender recommendations

### Suggestions for community-oriented work – community centres / information centres

The international exchange in the RAN network has shown that, particularly in Denmark and the Netherlands, successfully cross-sector local teams and integrated ways of working have been established; the police , social work (fan work, street work, clubs, etc.), protection of the constitu-



tion, penal, schools and youth services (drug counselling, sect counselling, social skills training, leisure time oriented services, career counselling) and health services (social psychiatric services) all communicate closely with one other at the local level. The different local services here have developed intelligent forms of information exchange and concerted intervention. These local labour networks appear outwardly as community / information centres which citizens can use as a trustworthy contact centre.

These community centres have achieved particular relevance since the civil war in Syria and Iraq and the resulting transnational phenomenon of foreign fighters (war volunteers or war returnees). Hereby, religious themes of family counseling, psychotrauma therapy and reintegration measures as new fields of work / colleagues are added to the community centres. After returning very disillusioned and/or shocked from a stay in a war zone of extreme brutality it is a particularly auspicious time for a young person to enter a comprehensive psychosocial intervention process and have the possibility of reintegration. Since 10% of the jihadist war volunteers coming from Germany are girls / women, there will be more gender-specific interventions for radicalised young women developed in the future.

Various community oriented concepts have been developed in Germany for regions vulnerable to right-wing extremism. The main recommendation for action for these concepts is to win over various local institutions and stakeholders for a concerted development of the democratic community – and therefore proactively counter right-wing extremism, fundamentalism and group-focussed hate environments. This includes the following important steps:

- **networking** with functional control of various community institutions (schools, nursery schools, youth work, family and youth services, court assistance, urban planning, regulatory agency, police, clubs, sports, religious communities, traders, etc.)
- **promote awareness** of the problem and its various aspects
- **train first response of skills or specific interaction skills** for each respective institution and their area of responsibility
- **develop an overall concept** for communities and regions
- **include activation and participation** of all segments of the population

- **prevention projects** with children and adolescents
  - **case management** of right-wing extremist (young) people which encompasses all government offices (e.g. cooperation between youth welfare and the judiciary)
  - **trustworthy exchange** with civil society, government institutions and security agencies on an equal footing
- For some regions, it is important to also raise awareness of Islamist extremism in community-oriented concepts and to work with institutions / NGOs who have solid experience and credibility in Muslim social spaces.

### **Specific recommendations for gender-oriented intervention in the community**

The issues of equality, gender roles and gender identity, which are of major importance for extremism / fundamentalism and prevention have been barely considered in the community-oriented concepts up to now. Extreme right-wing women and girls are still often overlooked as the seemingly harmless gender when they are provided with specific strategic community functions or develop influence in the parents' council, social work, in nursery school and in community honorary offices and associations.

Topics targeted specifically from a gender perspective by extreme right-wing organisations (e.g. the conservative culture-minded rejection of gender mainstreaming or the campaign "Death Penalty for Child Molesters") are not recognised or unmasked as being organised strategies.






In Germany, we are still not prepared enough to meet the specific challenges of the so-called “honour-crimes” against girls / women (forced marriage, corporal punishment, rejection, honour killing) in Islamic extremism – or to encounter female forms of Jihand and male polygamy.

Just how important is it to observe gender aspects of the respective extremist milieu is also evident in criminological findings. Certain traditional concepts of the role of women and gender issues are not only systematically used for recruitment and propaganda by extremist organisations, British crime cartographies have also shown that those dis-

tricts in which there are many gender-based conflict situations (which, for example, can be measured by the rate of forced marriages, honour-related crime and the frequency of women’s and men’s houses), are exactly those district in which there is a high density of violent extremist incidents.

In Germany’s rural region it could be observed for some time that, especially in structurally weak regions, too few cultural, sporting and social recreational activities offers exist for girls and young women; opportunities for participation and adequate learning pathways are also lacking. Life in the community is often determined at most by a football club



and the volunteer fire brigade. The municipal local associations and political committees are dominated by men.

This lack of diversity for women / girls means that it is exactly those girls with a higher level education, mobility and ambition who leave these regions. The young people who remain, with precarious job prospects and lower mobility, are predominantly male. These environments are known to be at high risk to turn towards right-wing extremism. A project which deliberately uses gender aspects of right-wing extremism prevention is active in only one East German district (Lola for Lulu). Based in the Ludwigslust district in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, the project offers counselling services and training for day care centres as well as counselling and awareness measures in schools with a special focus on gender and right-wing extremism and has received long-term financing from a private foundation.

**The following general perspectives of gender-conscious community work can be mentioned:**

→ **sensitise and train** municipal stakeholders on the strategic role of women in right-wing extremism and militant Islamism

→ **girl-specific and gender-focussed offers** to strengthen human rights attitudes in rural areas

→ **father and mother groups** for processing experiences of violence and gender-repressive traditions (as mentioned above for inner-city districts indicated)

→ **confront** right-wing extremism locally

This may concretely include the following aspects and measures: Promote the establishment of an interagency cooperation network, which establishes a coordinated, field prevention and intervention approach against extremism / violence , sexism and homophobia, following the Danish model (Info Houses) in that the police, social work (fan-work, street work, clubs, etc.), protection of the Constitution, prison, schools, youth services (drug counselling, sect counselling, social skills training, leisure time oriented services, career counselling) and healthcare (social psychiatric services) communicate closely with each other at the local level.

Connected to this is the establishment of a municipal center or service centre, with overdue interagency cooperation for citizens which is directly accessible in a trustworthy and protected manner.

In particular, measures to empower civil society and local stakeholders on-site seem advisable to

... find effective ways to **counter sexist and homophobic statements in community public space from being normalised and trivialised**, especially if this happens in the context of comments / incidents with a right-wing affinity or which are right-wing extremist

... **support and ensure the protection of those who are stigmatised** in the community, either because they often speak out against sexism, homophobia and right-wing extremism ("traitors") or because they themselves express an alternative gender-identity that differs from the norm.

... **address the widespread pattern of tacit consent**, which often exists for homophobic and sexist incidents – and offer and practice alternative ways of reacting.

... accordingly **counter the strategies of shifting responsibility to others** and to have opportunities to perceive the current on-site situation with personal responsibility as citizens committed to human rights without substantially placing yourself in danger.

... **plan and implement community events** to use extremist, homophobic or sexist conflict and violence which

has occurred in the community and has been widely acknowledged in a systematic way to raise general awareness (e.g. in externally moderated discussion forums, mediation, citizen forums) – and particularly avoid the sexist / homophobic aspects of the incident becoming hidden under the large shadow of violence and right-wing extremism.

... **express solidarity with victims and bear witness to their friends and family** after such incidents and acts of violence occur which have a (right-wing) extremist and/or sexist / homophobic context.

... heed the criteria of sexism and homophobia in the analysis of the community and its **local history of events in terms of extremism and xenophobia**.

... also review potential gender-awareness when assessing **local potentials and options** of human rights-based civil society.

... encourage urban and rural communities who have already formulated **consensus guidelines and models**, which should consist of general rules and the image the municipality wishes to present, to also explicitly formulate gender-oriented models.

... include local associations in a special way and offer specific information events and training for multipliers.

... particularly involve local key individuals who can exercise a high amount of influence on the local opinion of citizens.

... work in solid cooperation with the regional media as well as with national media. With the regional media, this involves avoiding incidents being downplayed or concealed; with the national media it is about ensuring sensational voyeuristic and excessively scandalised reports are omitted. From experience, the latter applies especially for the gender-relevant aspects of incidents. It is more helpful if the awareness of those responsible is supported by showing special attention is paid to the possible sexist and/or homophobic aspects of such incidents and that they require careful handling because they relate to important civil rights and have a high prevention value.

## OUTREACH YOUTH WORK

Other common terms for this field are street social work / streetwork. A key feature of this work is that the social workers visit young people in public places and are virtually guests in squares, park benches, bus stops, but also in self-managed areas where youth cliques hang out. Outreach youth work is oriented on the living environment and social space and combines group work with caseworker and community work. The work involves the voluntary participation of young people and, at first, especially with low-threshold services; however, the working relationship is intense. The work attempts to compensate for the lack of offers in each social area according to need, to moderate existing conflict situations and to give individual adolescents support in special life circumstances.

Outreach youth work has the possibility to directly address actual youth groups in public spaces – especially those groups which attract attention by making statements of group-focussed hate and have right-wing extremist or Islamist implications. This work has many requirements and must be approached very sensitively and can be effective only under certain conditions. This includes employing experienced professionals who work in at least two-

person teams; financing for staff should be ensured long term. In addition to the direct work with young people, it is also necessary to have sufficient time available for reflection and follow-up. Without supervision, case consultation and financial resources – which make it possible to introduce targeted interventions and possibly gender-focussed offers – it will hardly be possible to make an impact.

Very good opportunities for intervention exist primarily among younger adolescents (13 to 16). With this group, the continuous support of social workers, who always offer themselves as alternative role models, can achieve a lot, especially when the youth are otherwise exposed to a very difficult family and social area environment.

## Gender aspects

### Groups with right-wing extremist implications

Particularly in cities one can find several types of right-wing oriented girls / women

- aggressive and militant type of women, assume equal positions to men
- the girlfriends of a comrade, who only see themselves as a companion and silent supporter

→ nationally autonomous women who belong to a right-wing autonomous group

→ women with a manner which is shaped by matriarchal / feminine habits, which have a specifically feminine expression of scene affiliation and claim to power

→ right-wing women from socially disintegrated environments who seeking social connection to a powerful group  
The girls / women are ideologically motivated to different degrees and have become involved in a right-wing environment for a variety of reasons (and gender aspects).

Socio-educational access to the women often arises because of early parenthood or as a result of domestic violence – sometimes because of a fatal combination of both aspects. Gender issues and gender / conflict in the partnership, family and parenting – these aspects take on an important significance in the respective working relationship.

### Groups with Islamist implications

Experience with the social and exit work of girls / women having links with militant jihadist environments is only just beginning in Germany. Reports and research made by colleagues in British cities have shown that the gender-spe-





cific utilisation of girls / women by extremist organisations has reached an advanced stage (e.g. Hizb ut Tahrir, Al Muhadjiroun, Women4Shariah, Muslims Against Crusaders). However, the practitioners of youth and social work intervention are also trying to accordingly adjust and become more professional. This applies similarly in terms of girls / women in organised crime gangs.

The distinction between the various types of female participation in jihadist environments is, in some aspects, quite comparable with the extreme right milieu; these aspects include the follower of a movement / organisation, the family supporter (including sexually), the active organiser, the one who believes in the ideology, who creates propaganda and the perpetrator. Some motives for turning to an extremist milieu also overlap; these include the desire to belong and be respected, as compensation for experiences of humiliation / discrimination, coping with life and emotional crises, the need for social and societal self-efficacy, a variety of moral and political indignation or religious / existential awakenings, as well as the urge to act out aggressive impulses.

Gender recommendations. See [‘Open youth work’](#)

## OPEN YOUTH WORK

The purpose of open youth work is to support young people in their interests and skills, make them programme offers for social participation and provide them with a learning environment for democratic and social action. In Germany, open youth work is usually carried out by independent youth welfare organisations and takes place in youth clubs / youth centres. The equipment and facilities at the youth centres varies greatly and is usually dependent on allocations from municipal budgets.

In recent years, the importance of youth work for primary and secondary prevention for right-wing extremism, militant Islamism and group-focused enmity has been frequently pointed out. Social workers in youth clubs are local people the youth know and trust and who spend time with adolescents over a longer period of time. Provided there is corresponding financial support, these people who instill trust locally are in a good position when vulnerable young people come under the influence of right-wing extremist or militant Islamist movements and show increasing signs of radicalisation. External professional consulting services (cf. Hako\_reJu\_recommendations) could effectively support them in this endeavour.

The requirement of youth work is clearly regulated by law: "In the development of services and completion of tasks are (...) 3. taking into consideration the different life situations of girls and boys to reduce inequalities and promote equality between girls and boys." (§ 9 SGB VIII). Especially in rural areas there are usually too few programme offers for girls and young women that could encourage and appeal to their interests and abilities.



## Gender aspects

The proportion of girls and boys in youth clubs varies depending on the facilities and amenities and also depends on the gender of the social workers engaged at the club. Particularly in rural areas, youth clubs are often boys clubs. The amenities – which may also only consist of a basketball hoop in the yard, a pool table and table football or possibly a band rehearsal room – do not appeal to girls. The boys club character is enhanced when exclusively male social workers are employed or male-dominated cliques spend time there.

The often unappealing aesthetic design can also ensure that girls are more likely to seek out their own safe havens where they can spend time alone with friends. At most, they then visit youth clubs together with male friends and partners. Youth workers continually state that it is extremely difficult to get through to girls.

Often, they are also not able to make a statement about how the girls react to the extremist attitude of their male peers, whether they share them or distance themselves from them. In order for open youth to appeal equally to boys and girls it is – among other things – important that the existing positions are filled with mixed gender groups.

In more urban areas, one can observe that there are increasingly more girls-specific youth centres which pursue the goal of gender-specific empowerment, i.e., to promote strengthening the social and creative skills of girls and support them in family conflict situations. These centres are often visited by girls with migrant backgrounds whose cultures of origin are characterised by very wide-ranging disadvantages and restrictions of for women and girls. Contexts of forced marriage and honor-related crimes require a high level of consulting expertise and youth .

### General observations about working with girls/ women in mixed gender groups

(1) The following general gender roles and circumstances can be found for girls with links to right-wing extremist environment contexts

- the unobtrusive friend / partner, who primarily sees herself as a companion for male group members and is perceived as such. She does not participate – or only indirectly, partially or in hidden ways – in the actions and deeds of the male members.
- the equal group participant, who takes the same forms of action, responsibilities and functions in the

group as the male members – and also carries them out independently.

→ girls / young women from a disadvantaged background. While this is true for the majority of both female and male members in the extreme right milieu, some girls-specific disadvantages, however, are more clearly pronounced, particularly as a result of internal scene ideas about the supposed inequality of the sexes. In the extreme right milieu, problematic family circumstances are, on the whole, caused by small, fragile families in which many family members are not present and little family influence and help is given.

→ Right-wing oriented women among interns, staff and social work students. Young woman with extreme right-wing attitudes and affiliations are becoming increasingly active in degree programmes and areas of youth work practice among the interns, staff and students – and have also been deliberately placed there. .

**(2) The following general gender roles and circumstances can be found for girls with links to militant Islamist environment contexts**

→ the consciously traditionally oriented young woman

(Neo-Muslima), who does not consider the partly restrictive and confining bind to her family to have a significantly negative impact. She is proud of her headscarf and the values and behaviours she associates with it and attempts to also make this obligatory for others. Some of these girls and young women hold this position very strongly. Still others go so far as to incite family reprisals against liberal-oriented girls.



→ the liberal-oriented young woman from a more secular family. Unlike right-wing rural environments, there can sometimes be a wide variety of attitudes and opinion in urban youth centres visited by young women with migrant backgrounds. Therefore, it is more likely to occur that liberal-minded young women, who are aware of and make use of their comparatively great freedom, may possibly come into conflict with more traditionally oriented girls.

→ the young woman stuck in traditional / archaic conditions, who, in all of her family relations, experiences the restrictions imposed on her by the male family members as a painful oppression. There is a risk of forced marriage and extensive honor crimes.

→ girls/young women from disadvantaged backgrounds. Compared to the extreme right milieu, this group is not as large since there are more middle-class families in the Islamist milieu. Problematic family circumstances in Islamist milieus are not so much characterised by small, fragile families – as is the case in right-wing extremist milieus – but rather through large and, in some cases, controlling or intrusive families

## Gender recommendations

### Fundamental principles for gender-reflective youth work

- pay special attention to sexist and homophobic comments
- partisan youth work with a focus on co-educational objectives
- non-discriminatory treatment of types of sexual orientation and gender identity in youth centres
- actively reflect on existing gender relations
- foster awareness of alternative gender roles
- strengthen tolerating ambivalence with regard to sexual orientation and gender – as well as the general enhancement of binary oppositions existing in society

### Gender perspectives in youth work

#### Staffing

- female and male team members
- reflect on one's own ideas about gender roles in the team
- professional expertise exchange about possibilities of gender-oriented work with adolescents belonging to various groups

→ further training on the importance of gender in right-wing extremism, religious fundamentalism and movements hostile to human rights

#### Facilities

- create girls/boys rooms
- when decorating, include pictures/posters, etc. which depict alternative gender identities (e.g. female football players)
- place emphasis on developing rules together with the adolescents in terms of sexist language and manners

#### Structure of programme offers

- make programme offers gender-sensitive : for example, if dancing is offered for girls and street soccer for boys , the possibilities of a coeducation mix / extension should be created and the discussions held on the effects of gender roles in society
- partisan boy and girl work that shakes up gender: create new coeducational experiential spaces (dancing for boys and street soccer for girls)
- gender-reflective programme offers: e.g. adventure-based learning projects with discussion afterwards about

the way girls and boys acted and behaved in certain situations

- conscious experience of self-determination in conflict situations (empowerment ), e.g. through didactic work with relevant case histories
- “cross-work”: female workers work with boys groups, male workers work with girls groups, e.g. adventure camps for boys under female supervision

#### EXIT SUPPORT

The following article focusses primarily on the topic of distancing from right-wing extremist scenes. In Germany, so far comparatively little experience is available regarding gender aspects for targeted exit work in militant religious fundamentalism. In this respect, cooperation with the Radicalisation Awareness Network will be helpful in the future.

In Germany, most offers of exit support are either state offers, which were often set up by the state youth welfare offices, or offers from independent youth welfare institutions in the individual federal states. In some cases, the exit offers from the state offices are connected to the protection of the constitution.



The methodological importance of understanding one's own masculinity and femininity corresponding to the process of working with male and female gender identity has not yet been sufficiently determined. However, it is striking that the percentage of female staff who work as exit support is considerably high. This has also apparently

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## How does exit support function?

There are two fundamentally different approaches in the practical strategic exit support procedure:

→ **The silent exit – “better for the small fry”** In this approach, so-called “legends” are developed by which the individual willing to exit can act in the scene environment without having to fear threats or complete isolation. In this case, harmless lifestyle reasons are developed to explain why one can no longer be actively involved in the scene. It might be for financial reasons (e.g. the need to pay off debt) or career changes (beginning training, applying for or starting a new job which is politically sensitive), or due to family circumstances (taking care of children). Family and gender issues may perhaps play a central role here.

→ **Public distancing – normally chosen for big names in the scene.** Here, the individual willing to exit is supported in explicitly distancing themselves and in publicly taking a stand. This exit path must be carefully prepared and attended to with great care. For one thing, a much greater personal pressure to change is to be expected in this process. Secondly, the person taking this path may possibly also be perceived as a “traitor to the cause”.

## Gender aspects

So far, the gender aspects of exit support have not been systematically and conceptually considered by those working in the field – but they have often been followed intuitively. Therefore, the following gender specific strategies have sometimes been observed in direct practical experience::

### Team composition

Exit support workers offer mostly male – though sometimes female – alternative role models to the previous ideas and experiences of the client. In cases where a person's working relationship with a man or a woman is difficult for personal reasons or causes conflict for some reason, they will work with someone of the same gender. On the other hand, they will deliberately work with the opposite gender when work with someone of the same gender would be filled with conflict (which is sometimes the case with male clients, who are strongly influenced by feelings of competition or have an inhibiting aversion to a person who is not considered to be sufficiently masculine). The option for when, how and to what extent psychotraumatic or gender-related emotional processing can be included in the exit process must be weighed.

### Gender as a topic in exit work

Gender role expectations, which were important in the activities of the extreme right milieu scene, are discussed in the exit process. Until this point, ideas about masculinity were only approached as a general topic. It is rather an exception to include questions about attitudes

Women who seek out right-wing extremist scenes are often fascinated by a physically strong, dominate male appearance and martial forms of expression. A strong need for protection is sometimes included in this. Taking this need for protection into account in an appropriate manner poses a particular challenge in exit support.



towards self-determined women and homosexuals as a systematic part of the exit work. Plans for girl and women-specific exit support approaches have begun sporadically (e.g. with the Arbeitsstelle Rechtsextremismus und Gewalt [ARUG] in Lower Saxony [as of summer 2014]).

Relationships and marriages between right-wing oriented partners are often characterised by domestic violence and abuse. Women willing to exit who are simultaneously leaving a violent partners may be even more threatened by this and its immediate companionship context.


A topic which predominantly comes up with women willing to exit, and may play a role at all levels of psychosocial work with these women, are experiences of sexual assault. In this case, it seems advisable to make additional therapeutic help available to accompany the exit process.

### Thoughts on why girls and women only take part in exit programmes in very small numbers

Since women are rarely arrested or convicted due to (violent) activities motivated by prejudice, they feel the need for exit to a lesser extent; the pressure caused by impending sentences and probation, which often play a crucial role for men willing to exit, does not come into play here. The ways in which people willing to exit find out about locally accessible institutions offering exit support are usually informal and unofficial. Friends, educational caregivers, the working environment, local media or similar channels of dialogue may offer the information. Hearing about a positive exit process completed by an acquaintance or well-known person from the region may help give the impetus to become more aware of exit support. Since not many girls and women exit by means of exit support, there are hardly any example stories about such an offer of support.

Exiting extreme right environments is generally more complex for women than for men and is more difficult to achieve. This is connected to the image of women in the right-wing scene; women have a very gender-defined role, which requires them to provide extensive support men in the scene – particularly their male partner – and to be





available for the political cause in many ways. Women are possessively associated with the cause in a different and more powerful way than the men. These implicit claims of ownership are consciously accepted and lived out by many of the female scene members as models for their femininity so that they become an established element of the scene. A woman exiting is thus often connected to personally leaving a man associated with the scene; even without this, it is perceived as a stronger offense and a double betrayal of the cause.

The exit process of a woman can become considerably complicated when there are also children that resulted from the relationship with a man belonging to the scene.

## **Gender recommendations**

### **Accessibility of girls / women for disengagement processes**

Just as girls and women are often underestimated and overlooked as extremist participants and perpetrators, the need to develop and test specific targeted disengagement services for girls has also often been disregarded up to now. Family-oriented counselling centres, mother and baby units or youth welfare institutions could be par-

ticularly good starting areas and, for domestic violence, women's shelters would also be an option.

Since violent and right-wing oriented girls and women are also found in prison in comparably low numbers, this would also be particularly applicable here. Women's prisons (in Vechta and Berlin) have also already gained experience in this matter, particularly in relation to highly violent women.

Youth and family welfare facilities, on the other hand, tend to especially see their client's need for support in the strictest sense of the word, a need for which they are responsible for as an institution; for example, women's shelter offer first and foremost protection from violent partners and trauma-therapeutic support. The client's scene context processing is generally not part of the support plan. Thus, there is great danger here that the client will return to their former group and behaviour and, therefore, their right-wing extremist affiliation and activities remain completely unprocessed, although they are usually an integral part of the need for support which emerged.

Furthermore, experience has shown that parenthood is a good time to initiate and implement changes in how one


lives. Expectant parents, especially young mothers, also come into contact with a variety of family and youth services offerings. This being the case, it seems advisable to raise the awareness of family helpers, midwives, mother and baby units and youth services among others, and teach them intervention skills.

In the context of family-oriented support, it is more promising to create coaching possibilities for clients so that workers can assist them to gradually and permanently distance themselves from right-wing extremist membership – and to personally process the experience.

### Gender-reflective disengagement: Topics / strategies for girl and women-oriented exit work and addressing those vulnerable

- Strengthen friendships and partnerships to girls / women and boys / men outside of right-wing extremist circles!
- Girl-specific empowerment offers: Safety from a relationship, yes – dependency no! The feeling of safety and strength girls / women experience (as well as boys / men) in a close, intimate relationship with a partner is valuable. The person's need for relationship should most





definitely be taken seriously. Should it, however, result in dependency and oppression, there is reason to encourage processing and ending the relationship. In this case, resource-oriented alternatives of self-empowerment can be supported.

→ Carefully include trauma therapy: Women in exit support often have experiences with family and domestic violence, sexual abuse and abuse from their own clique. These issues can often only be addressed very late and only partially by those exiting.

→ Take up the social and political concerns of young women and strengthen commitment! When personal social and political commitment is apparent, this can be promoted and elicited in applicable areas (environmental protection, criticism of globalisation, human rights work, church social work, social justice, animal welfare, a voluntary social or cultural year).

### **Specific considerations for disengagement work with right-wing parents**

There are particular challenges in working with parents willing to exit when either only the mother or father wish to leave the scene. Exit work will possibly have to be con-

nected with parenting counselling. Child welfare and protecting the children from the possible negative effects of belonging to the scene are a key focus of the work.

Mothers exiting the scene can prove to be especially difficult due to threats of violence / harassment or child abduction. A functional network of exit / disengagement work with youth and family welfare and the case law / criminal justice seems wise as all practitioners need to be aware of particular difficulties in the separation / divorce of parents as a result of exit processes.

### **Raise the pressure to change**

The role women play in the right-wing extremism poses a particular challenge for the work of the police and judiciary. Exit support practitioners report that they barely come into contact with female (violent) participants in the far-right scene because their deeds and activities go unpunished and, therefore, have no influence. Due to so-called “gender blindness”, the police and judiciary tend to underestimate or overlook female perpetrators, so that the girls / women are not held accountable. Thus, for them there is no immediate reason / pressure for them to deal with their own extremist actions. Practitioners there-

fore commonly need to extend the concept of violence and also to acknowledge the fact that prejudice motivates the acceptance of violence. Practitioners see prejudice motivated acceptance of violence, for example, when young women cheer on or support their male clique members in violent attacks (or, in any case, do not prevent or report this behaviour), or when women translate texts and spread them around the neighbourhood and Internet, inciting hatred and violence against third parties. As far as is currently possible in the context of law enforcement and justice, it would be advisable with women in particular to pay more attention to abetting, incitement and the failure to give assistance; when these reliably led to criminal proceedings, starting points for disengagement, withdrawal and rehabilitation would occur

### **FAMILY ORIENTED SUPPORT**

In general, what is meant by family-oriented support is a whole range of socio-educational and advisory services which provide assistance to families in particularly difficult situations. The family welfare formats listed here are those which seem particularly relevant regarding the disengagement and deradicalisation of women and girls. It must be

noted in advance that, particularly in such fields, it is often even more necessary to sensitise professionals towards topics of extremism and gender. In addition, there is a lack of targeted intervention strategies and support services.

### **Health and midwifery services, parent counseling, mother and child groups**

With suitable awareness raising and training of professionals, youth welfare offices and health and midwifery services could be in a position where they could recognise early on when they have mothers or parents in their care who live in an extremist environment. Furthermore, skills can be acquired to reliably assess whether these circumstances put the child's well-being at risk – and how this can be prevented.

Targeted interventions of direct interpersonal work require the appropriate training of the respective employee. Therefore, more extensive training already seems to make sense, since parenting often represents a moment of life where great personal changes and developments are possible. Thus, to distance oneself or leave extremist and latently violent milieus can be within reach. With relevant basic skills and initial contact techniques that can be





learned, even professionals in family welfare can acquire the ability to take an initial exploration in this direction.

To a great extent, it seems advisable to make consulting, training and professional support available so that they are able to intervene appropriately and professionally if, in their work, they encounter families in which right-wing extremist or militant Islamist life contexts are recognisable.

From an international perspective, it is striking that colleagues from Great Britain and the Netherlands have recently systematically included the health sector in their national extremism and terrorism prevention programmes. It has actually happened a few times in the past that,

before committing their act, terrorists saw their doctors and therapists and, as it were, announced their deeds/plans there. The practitioners themselves did not know how to help in this difficult situation and could not prevent the act from being carried out. As a result, the Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN) established the working group RAN Health.

### Parent counseling

Parent counseling has proven to be a key instrument for supporting distancing and disengagement. Of course, it is often parents who first notice when their child withdraws, when it begins to grapple intensively with ext-

remist ideologies and change their outer appearance accordingly, or if they spend a lot of time on the computer, and current friendships fade away and they suddenly have a new circle of friends. At parent counseling sessions, it is essentially a matter of strengthening the educational and self-help skills of parents and accompany them in this particularly dangerous situation.

There are single specific offers for this purpose which:

- advise and accompany parents who want to separate their children from right-wing extremist and militant Islamist environments
- support and facilitate the self-involvement of parents and support and moderate the establishment of parent self-help groups
- conduct training and consulting of trainers (in a train-the-trainer approach) who come into contact with the parents and/or children concerned

### **Impatient mother and child facilities**

In mother and baby inpatient units, particularly teenage mothers or pregnant girls are placed in an assisted living environment to support them in the proper care and

upbringing of their children. The Youth Welfare Office can refer mothers in difficult circumstances, who may pose a threat to the child's welfare, to these facilities. The clientele of mother and baby units / homes often include those young women who live in extreme right contexts.

As a part of WOMEX, we came in contact with women who urgently needed the chance to process their past in the right-wing extremist scene (or still existing membership) as well as deal with their own violent behavior.

However, the pedagogical staff at the homes focus – according to their particular task – especially on education and counseling to avert directly damaging behaviour of mothers towards their children (substance abuse, violence). For disengagement from extremism, it appears to be all the more advisable to organise gender-specific or gender-focused offers for (young) mothers and fathers and provide professional advice for staff in the facilities.

Close, individual coaching of an employee may be necessary, especially if a stable relationship of trust with the client / parent already exists, so that there is a prospective possibility of working more intensively. However, for the additional and intensive work that is necessary in

dealing with right-wing extremism (work up to experience of violence and violent behavior, personal biography and gender perspectives, questioning the ideology, etc.), adequate human resources must be at hand. In addition, so that any security risks are assessed that need to be taken into account for clients and employees, it should be noted that the mother and baby units are often located



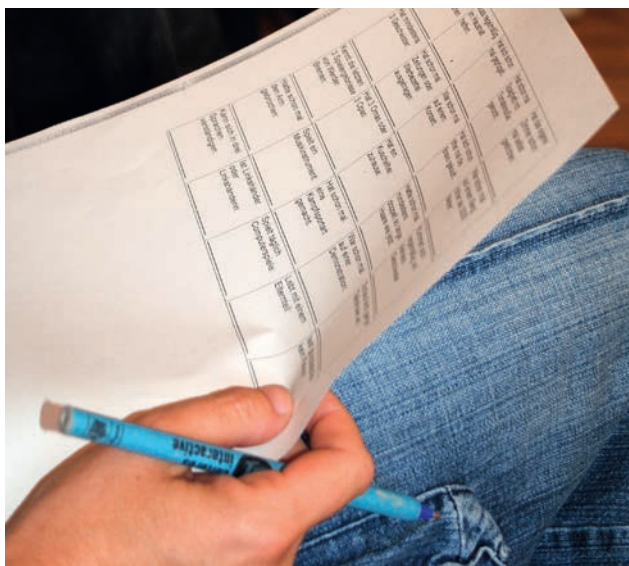
in close regional proximity to the extremist-dominated social space of the client. Above all, in-depth training and advice is particularly necessary because social welfare and health care institutions are regularly the target of infiltration strategies by right-wing organisations. This can be prevented only with an appropriately skilled assessment of competence.

### Outpatient family assistance / homes for children

In socio-pedagogical family assistance, it is with good reason that children are prevented from being taken away from their families, as long as it is not necessary due to an endangerment to the child's welfare. For each burdened, but still sufficiently functional family, a care plan is created on the basis of which the support worker will give outpatient treatment on location and regularly visit the families in their apartments. They also come into contact with extreme right-wing parents.

Some cases in recent years in Germany have shown that family support workers who get into this situation often feel unprepared and left alone. In the meantime, training opportunities are occasionally available which raise awareness and can support family support workers with this

topic. Moreover, it seems advisable to create opportunities for further additional qualifications for family support workers who are willing to address this particular topic in order to perform family and gender-based exit work. Such training could be aimed at (a) working on right-wing and inhuman attitudes through direct contact, (b) encouraging disengagement in the family support process, (c) protecting children from extreme right-wing, militant Islamist or otherwise militant inhuman environments.




### Women's shelters

For women from extreme right-wing background that became victims of domestic (and scene-internal) violence and, therefore, seek protection in women's shelters, must be developed special approaches of support and deradicalisation. It would be much more advisable to sensitise staff in shelters for dealing with extremism and train accordingly.

For this, of course, it would be necessary to develop forms and paths for disengagement work and support that are tailored specifically to the needs and clients of women's shelters.

This is even more important, because women's shelters provide a helpful refuge and opportunity for women willing to exit when detachment from the extremist scene should prove risky. Women – especially those with children – are sometimes exposed to the threat of assault and violence on the part of the scene (and partner) to an increased degree, insofar as their exit is often interpreted doubly as a personal betrayal of the scene. This is apparent in a special way, as it is essential to work in right-wing prevention / intervention with gender-based procedures and methods.



Women from Islamist environments also seek out women's shelters in order to find protection from violent attacks by their husbands / partners or threatening living environments. For them, this also offers the opportunity to disengage from extremist fundamentalist life contexts. A special feature here is that young women from Islamist environments often escape before the threat of forced marriage.

A women's shelter can be even more a place where support can be provided for women from different religious and political contexts to deal with the ideological elements that have shaped their lives. The complexity of the gender aspect in the work of women's shelters in other EU Member States is further increased by the fact that young men are increasingly turning to women's shelters to escape from forced marriages

### **Gender aspects**

In several respects, gender aspects are inherent in all these measures; firstly, insofar as women play a special role in family and parenting and, secondly, because the family can be considered the primary place of socialisation and gender identity.

## **ANTI-VIOLENCE TRAINING | RECONDITIONING VIOLENCE**

Anti-violence training is usually a measure used for juvenile delinquents and offenders or as a probation service. In many cases, participation is mandated by order of the youth welfare office or courts and completed as part of the prison sentence. In some cases, schools or youth workers encourage participation in anti-violence training. 90 to 95 percent of anti-violence training is attended by boys/men and was also specifically created for them..

### **How does anti-violence training function?**

Anti-violence training includes exercises and settings in which the client deals directly with their patterns of aggression and violent behaviour.

Contemporary violence processing measures and acute violence prevention training proceed contextually and systemically and abstain completely from the use of humiliation and provocation. The goal is namely to enable young people to reflect on the deeply-rooted social mechanisms of self-exclusion and acting out anger and process this together in the group. At the same time, key personal competencies such as emotional control, emo-

tional intelligence, empathy as well as personal reflection and relationship skills are strengthened and resocialised

### Different phases of work

A group setting is usually selected for processing violence and anti-violence training. In the first few preparatory sessions of the intervention a lot of attention is spent on allowing a climate of mutual trust to develop and building the relationship between the participants and the social therapist. For this purpose, it is necessary to be together in a way that is based on an open process, intense participation and is voluntary, where a narrative exchange of individual biographies and life experience can take place. One-on-one sessions often help prepare individuals for the challenging group work.

In addition to thinking together about the circumstances of growing up in one's own family, talking about friends is also very important. What is essential for life with peers in the clique? What about those who do not belong and receive hostile treatment? What settings and resentments prevail? Are there any leaders/leading figures? To what extent do they behave fairly, violently or with scheming? Are there compulsions, compulsive actions or

ideological compulsive thinking? What feels good, what is ambiguous? Who provides help there? From experience, when asking these questions – as with family issues – participants quickly reach topics of violence, extremism, fundamentalism and inhumane actions/settings

In the background, there is very often experience of suffering from violence, humiliation and helplessness (especially in their own family) which needs to be addressed with experienced psychotraumatological caution and should not in any case be avoided.

The basic attitude by which the trainer/social therapist is led is one of attentiveness which is simultaneously characterised by incorruptible questioning and analysis as well as personal attention and esteem. On the one hand, the participant's behaviour and opinions are questioned critically, and the professional working with them takes a clear position. On the other hand, the participant as a person is respected unconditionally and valued and supported in their attempts to clarify and process their experience. These two different behavioural strategies hold no contradiction – for example, between an accepting and a confrontational approach. Rather, they represent two

mutually dependent and complementary registers which, with careful adjustment and adaptation, can be used in the respective situation.



Therapeutic treatment of acute action sequences of violence and uncontrolled escalation is at the centre of this form of intervention. An exact reconstruction of the course of events in one's own act of violence in the group or one-to-one proves to be a great emotional, intellectual and linguistic challenge for all parties involved.

The aim is to understand and discuss in detail each individual step initiated and committed in the act. Since personal boundaries are pushed to the limit, trainers do not use a provocative process but, rather, one that is very respectful of boundaries. In addition, exercises for the perception of self and one's own body are offered and skills for self-control in explosive situations are learned. They make it possible to accurately perceive the physical and emotional signs of the impending escalation of violence within one's own self.

### Further gender aspects and recommendations

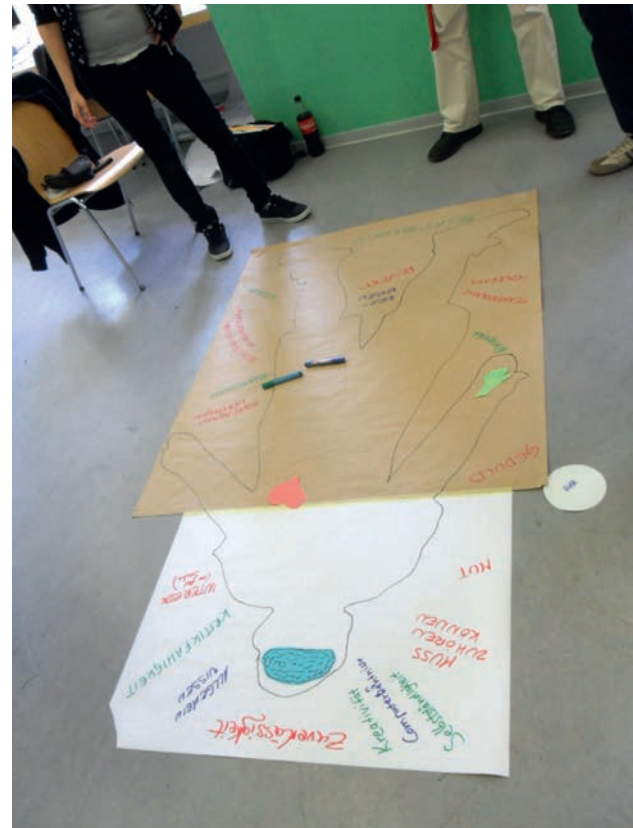
There is no other place where the relevance of gender-oriented work is as apparent as in processing violence and in the work with emotional and intellectual backgrounds that biographically determine and acutely create



violence. A male and female extremist or violent offender who is not also sexist and homophobic and is not characterised by gender issues that are filled with conflict and tension on a personal level does not exist. These topics always coexist.

When processing violence in adolescent and adult women specific characteristics are topics such as self-injury, eating disorders and sexual violence which, although also recorded, is less common among young men (and therefore possibly more difficult to address). Another gender-related issue is the low social status young women have in many background which has led young women to increasingly attempt to gain recognition from the group by committing criminal and violent acts. Working with young women also differs in that that they often employ subtle forms of passive-aggressive provocation, which motivate others (young men) to commit acts for which they are not even recognisable as being the perpetrator.

Many more boys/men engage in physical violence than girls/women. However, women who engage in violence are also often overlooked by police and educators or are not taken seriously. It appears no one believes they are



capable of brutality and militancy. Many extreme right-wing and Islamist organisations use this bias by strategically deploying women, also for acts of violence (bea-

tings of left-wing oriented girls, transport of weapons and explosives, etc.). Youth welfare offices, the police and judiciary need to become aware of the forms of violence that girls/women engage in. It must be understood that the instigation and incitement to violence, verbal attacks, strong group-based rejection and hate speech and their spread in the context of far-right orientations and militant – religious fundamentalism are also an expression of violent behaviour and, therefore, would have to be more strictly punished.

Particularly for young women, institutions often provide anti-violence training in individual settings, not least to meet the low number of cases.

Organisations that offer group training for girls have, in part, difficulties reaching their minimum number of participants.

In addition to raising awareness about forms of female violence in the context of right-wing extremism and militant religious fundamentalism, girl/women-specific anti-violence training needs to be offered more (e.g. in the context of family-oriented support/see field of work description). Training and individual assistance should



connect strengthening the personalities of young women with the reflection of one's own gender identity and existing gender conflict with ideological beliefs and the personal processing of violence.

## Examples of good practice / Projects

### COMMUNITY-ORIENTED APPROACHES

- **Aufbruch Neukölln** fathers group moderated by psychologists / explore masculinity and violence
- **Kitab von Vaja e.V.** advice centre for parents and educators concerning militant Islamic movements
- **Kulturbüro Sachsen e.V.** mobile counselling team (MBT) / expert coaching for youth services / foster democratic participation in the community
- **Lola für Lulu** project in connection with the specialist department "Gender und Rechtsextremismus" (gender and right-wing extremism) counselling and training for parents, nursery school staff, etc. / seek to strengthen local female civic actors in the Ludwigslust district

### OPEN AN OUTREACH YOUTH WORK

- **cultures interactive e.V.** training courses, project days and workshops for young people / gender-reflective youth culture programme offers / target group-specific approach for schools, youth work and youth services
- **dissens e.V.** programmes and services for youth to strengthen alternative role models for masculinity and femininity
- **Heroes project from Strohalm e.V.** / multiplier training for young men in order to, among other things, promote equality and fight against oppression in the name of honour in peer-to-peer workshops at schools
- **Gangway e.V.** streetwork with right-wing oriented youth and others in Berlin
- **Vaja e.V.** streetwork with right-wing oriented youth and others in Bremen. Team "recl" work with right-wing extremist cliques

## FAMILY-ORIENTED SUPPORT

- **pad e.V.: Projekt “Eltern stärken”** support for parents of right-wing extremist children / organise self-help groups / consulting and further training for family support workers on how to handle right-wing extremist parents
- **Lidice Haus** counsel and accompany parents of right-wing extremist children / consulting for youth centres
- **Violence Prevention Network e.V Projekt REXEL** raise awareness about right-wing extremist parents, training offers in prison for right-wing extremist parents

## PRISON AND PROBATION

- **Rollenwechsel pilot project from Miteinander e.V.** / exploring gender role models
- **Violence Prevention Network e.V.: Project REXEL.** “Abschied von Hass und Gewalt” (farewell to hate and violence) – training: exploring images of masculinity in the context of violent right-wing extremism and Islamic fundamentalism is part of the training

## COUNSELLING AND TRAINING

- **ARUG Frauen und Rechtsextremismus** further training and professional exchange / raise awareness about women in right-wing extremism
- **cultures interactive e.V.** Hako\_reJu\_ training module for gender and right-wing extremism / professional support / coaching for communities and youth workers, further training for social work students and nursery school staff
- **dissens e.V.** training and further education for schools and youth work / programme offers for youth / explore personal role models and role models in society
- **Fachstelle Gender und Rechtsextremismus** training and professional exchange / raise awareness about women in right-wing extremism / explore neo-Nazi role models
- **Mut vor Ort** pilot project for providing further training and advising to youth centres / explore neo-Nazi role models

**ANTI-VIOLENCE TRAINING**, which specifically focus on girls and / or reflect on gender roles in the context of violent behaviour

- **Institut für genderreflektierte Gewaltprävention (IfGG) TESSA (Training Empowerment Support Youth and Adults)** systemic solution-oriented anti-violence training for children, youth and young adults
- **Denkzeit** training and programmes against violence, delinquency and disturbed behaviour, Berlin
- **iMMA e.V. “Cool for life”** anti-violence training / EU project “girls using violence” / ZORA – open youth work for girls / residential and non-residential services, Munich

## **EXIT SUPPORT WITH GENDER-SPECIFIC EXPERIENCE**

- **ARUG Ausstiegshilfe Braunschweig** / Lower Saxony
- **JUMP CJD Waren (Müritz)** / social space-oriented exit-support work Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania
- **(R)auswege** exit support / Rheinland-Palatinate
- **Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft “Ausstieg zum Einstieg” e.V. (BAG Ausstiegsarbeit)** Federal Association exit-support work



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