EX POST PAPER RAN EXIT

Minimum methodological requirements for exit interventions

Outline: deradicalisation interventions for violent extremism

Preamble

This outline is predominantly written by exit workers: professionals working on deradicalisation. From their grass root level they wish to share their experiences, based on their work with participants involved in violent extremist movements ([1]).

The three target groups for this document are:

- exit workers (planning to be) active on deradicalisation issues;
- organisations starting or executing deradicalisation programmes in their role of facilitators for exit workers;
- policy-makers commissioning and/or facilitating deradicalisation approaches.

This paper is not intended to be a comprehensive blueprint on how to shape a deradicalisation programme. This would be impossible given the different legislation and infrastructures within the EU Member States. Even within Member States there is huge variety between different fields in which deradicalisation work is done (for example in a prison or youth centre setting). Participants also differ when it comes to ideology, gender and degree of radicalisation, which makes one-size-fits-all solutions impossible. Finally, the acceptance level for radical thoughts is fluent and varied within the general public, media and political debate.

---

[1] This text is based on the discussions of the form RAN Derad working group held during meetings in Warsaw (3-4 December 2014) and Budapest(2-3 July 2015). The input for the two meetings were written by Harald Weilnböck, partly based on his previous publications and partly influenced by previous meetings of RAN Derad. More information can be found on:
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 2013b, p. 379-408.
http://weilnboeck.net/pages_en/essays.html
RAN Derad Declaration of Good Practice – Principles of Sustainable Interventions in Disengagement and Rehabilitation (Deradicalisation) from Involvement in Violent Extremism and Group Hatred – living document.
http://cultures-interactive.de/fachartikel.html

This text is therefore intended as a source of inspiration and advice that can be used to introduce, maintain or improve local approaches.

Terms and definitions

Deradicalisation is a common term in public debate, but not always embraced by most of the people working on it. The term does not reflect everything involved in persons leaving an extremist environment and / or changing their thinking pattern. Apart from shifting mindset and thinking, this process also requires behavioural (like abstaining from violence) and practical (like work, housing and school) changes. Disengagement is the term used for these changes. 'Exit' combines deradicalisation and disengagement. Other terms refer more referring to the goal of a process, such as like 'rehabilitation' or 'resocialisation'. Despite the incompleteness of the word 'deradicalisation', it will be used throughout this document, and is defined as all efforts to leave violent extremism behind.

Use of the word 'radicalisation' is challenged in some countries / languages, where it can convey increased commitment in either a positive or negative sense. In this document, 'radicalisation' is regarded as negative, the process in which people increasingly feel that their opinion is more important than the rule of law and safety of other citizens.

The word 'participants' is used for those who are following deradicalisation programmes. 'Exit workers' are those people implementing the programmes. This group is very heterogeneous: some work full-time on exit, some as just part of their job. Backgrounds may differ, from youth worker and psychologist to religious counsellor.

Principles and Guidelines

Different ideologies, similar pathways

Pathways for both radicalisation and deradicalisation processes share similarities, regardless of their ideological context. The root causes of radicalisation (like discontent and grievances) have common components, as does the struggle a person encounters when leaving an extremist environment and trying to resettle in society. Radical ideology should also be taken into account as this is part of a radicalised individual's personal journey.

Ability to change

A belief in the ability of human beings to change, to abstain from extremism and to reintegrate within society is a prerequisite for the participant and the exit worker, as well for other stakeholders.

Just as the pathways to radicalisation differ and are unique, so do deradicalisation processes. The extent to which people are able to change and at what speed is also unique.

Process ownership

Participants are owner of their deradicalisation process. Nobody can be forced to work on their radicalisation. They must first be determined themselves to changing their lives. Of course one can try to motivate people to join a programme by reaching out to them and / or waiting for the moment when an

intrinsic motivation arises. But giving incentives for change will not work. Facilitating a change desired by the participant will.

A participant's goals may differ from those of society, at least in the terms used to describe them. Not all will acknowledge from the start that they were radicalised, and may instead claim that they are motivated to change for other reasons (for example to start a family or have a rest). In such cases, labelling a process as 'deradicalisation' is counterproductive

The exit worker helps to structure and monitor the process of change. Ambitions to change are structured and translated into realistic steps. The exit worker can involve other professionals to help ensure the necessary steps are taken. In this sense the exit worker is the owner of the facilitating process.

Trust

Participants should trust the exit worker who will accompany them during the process. This takes time. Both exit worker and participants need to have at least some trust in the process of change and the joint pathway they will take in the initial phase. By getting to know each other better and if necessary adjusting the goals, trust will grow.

Trust derives from the credibility of the exit workers on four levels: personality, ability to connect, reliability and being knowledgeable.

The level of trust in the exit worker can be influenced by the organisation he / she is working for and other tasks he / she has. For example, radicalised persons often have very little trust in State institutions. The involvement of NGOs solves this problem. Combining a lead role in the deradicalisation process with responsibility for executing restrictive measures or law enforcement will not work.

Analysis

Good insight into the state of mind and circumstances of a participant is needed to provide effective and tailor-made assistance. Information can be obtained from the participants themselves and others, such as family and any practitioners involved. The analysis both gives insight into challenges and the most logical order for solving them. Obtaining information for analysis (sometimes felt as gossip or spying) whilst building trust at the same time can be a challenge. The process can be smoothed out if by the exit worker being straightforward and explaining what he / she does from the start.

Safe environment

Contacts with exit workers should take place in a setting where participants feel safe, and not where they can be overheard or watched, which could be compromising. The safety of the exit workers must also be safeguarded. Some participants have the potential to be violent and / or are active in a violent extremism environment.

Confidentiality

It should be clear to the participants how provided information to the exit worker will be used. It should be known in advance if exit workers are obliged to report on the process (for example to a judicial institution)

or if danger / criminal activities become apparent. When discussing cases with third parties, non-attribution can be helpful.

Exit worker

There is no such thing as an exit worker who can deal with all possible requirements in terms of facilitating a deradicalisation process. So apart from using his / her own set of professional skills he / she will need networking and case management capacities.

Formers — people who were once radicalised themselves — have personal experiences that make them credible. They are suitable exit workers providing they have the skills for the job. As their personal history is closely linked to their work, particular attention should be given to safety and wellbeing.

When it comes to deradicalisation from religiously inspired extremism, religious guidance may be requested. Religious leaders can be knowledgeable on content and regarded as credible, although they may also be rejected for dogmatic theological reasons. Religiously educated persons also will need to have the right skills to be an exit worker. In the absence of these skills, they can be of added value working under the guidance of an exit worker.

Methods and interventions

A balance between a completely open-process and a fixed curriculum or session plan needs to be found. Both time-pressure and guidance on structuring the deradicalisation process are beneficial. If steps and sessions are too strict, the risk of them not matching with the needs of the participant increases.

Deradicalisation processes can be therapeutic (one-on-one) or socio-dynamic (in a group) intervention. Groups can provide peer group assistance and recognition that an individual's feelings are not unique. Groups have however also brought people together with negative results (moving in wrong direction or peer group pressure). Only working with group sessions will leave no room for addressing very personal matters. Some level of individual counselling should be foreseen.

When it comes to engagement by radicalised persons, a balance between confronting and accepting is key. Accepting a participant as a person is an important part of trust- and confidence-building and facilitates change. 'Acceptance' refers to a professional attitude, and does not mean becoming friends. 'Confrontation' comes into play when challenging behaviour and thoughts during the deradicalisation process. Confrontation should provide participants with building blocks for change and should never be used as emotional relief for the exit worker.

Gender

Both right-wing and religiously inspired extremism have strongly defined gender roles that are partly reflected in society. By consequence, men in radicalised environments are often considered as the macho warriors whereas women are just supporting, bystanders or even victims. These prejudices can result in a misguided approach, for example one that ignores a potential for violence in women or automatically considers the female partner of a participant as a natural ally for the deradicalisation process. A gender-neutral analysis is needed.

Working on personal issues

A participant's current mental state must be addressed. Some participants might have fears, post-traumatic stress disorder, compulsive behaviour or uncertainty. There might also be feelings of shame in relation to the radical movement or family and friends. This can be discussed in one-on-one settings. The exit worker should assess if problems can be handled by him / herself, or whether additional experts such as psychiatrists are needed.

Starting a new life requires coming to terms with your past. Narrative / biographical approaches help participants to do so. Radicalised persons tend to think in mono-causalities (my circumstances made me become radical) and to externalise responsibilities (the group forced me, society made me do it). By rethinking biography and shaping this into a new narrative, participants develop a sense of responsibility for the behaviours they need to change.

Working on ideological and religious issues

Religion and ideology are important subjects during the deradicalisation process. The extent can differ, with some participants having greater needs than others. Talking with participants about ideological and religious issues runs the risk of getting into radical discourses that don't leave room for discussion or change. Instead, change can be stimulated by offering non-extremist alternatives that illustrate how being religious and / or having a strong opinion can fit in a democratic society.

Providing alternatives will not work if the participant isshown an utopic picture of a perfect democratic citizen. This would create an enormous gap between the current and the envisaged situation. Alternatives should be tempting and realistic and in the same time open the debate what is intolerable radical behaviour and what is not.

Practical help

Leaving an extremist group or abstaining from extremist thinking can create a feeling of emptiness and a sense of not belonging. Participants need the perspective of a new life. This can be facilitated with support to find housing, a job, education and sometimes even a whole new environment.

Family, friends and community

The roles of family, friends and the community should be taken in account as each group has an impact on the participant during and after the deradicalisation programme. As during a radicalised period people tend to lose a lot of their social network, family is often the last post standing when it comes to social contact. It is good to assess to what extent they are supportive of the process of change.

During the challenging period of deradicalisation, it is helpful to have persons upon whom you can rely around you. This can be an intense and difficult task for families and friends. Support for those who have a positive influence on the participant can be helpful. Not all family members and friends are good companions during the radicalisation process as they might be permissive to, or part of, the radical movement. This should be assessed before involving them.

Society

(Parts of) society might be tolerant of a certain degree of the radicalism. This leads to questions of what is normal and acceptable. Sympathy for radical thoughts in society is fluid. This can't be changed by the exit worker who can only take this into account when working with participants.

Voices from some sections of society may claim that working on deradicalisation processes is spending taxpayers' money on the wrong people. Being accountable for what you do will enable those who commission deradicalisation programmes to legitimise their actions.

Organisation

Exit workers often operate in one-on-one situations with participants. It is key that some form of peer review and education are organised to discuss dilemmas, improve professional skills and keep an eye on the wellbeing of the worker. Creating opportunities in which exit workers can attend sessions with participants of colleagues can be helpful to learn from each other.

It is crucial that organisations assume responsibility for organising basic work requirements, like good contact with other stakeholders for (multi-agency) cooperation and backing the exit worker when something goes wrong.

Ideally, exit work is embedded in a sustainable organisation. This enables former participants to ask for assistance if necessary (e.g. when confronted with a major life event). It also offers the opportunity to reach out and offer aftercare.

Further reading

Collection of Approaches and Practices

More information on existing deradicalisation approaches can be found in the Collection of Approaches and Practices, and in particular in the chapter dedicated to exit strategies. This publication is available in English, French and German.

http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/ran-best-practices/index_en.htm

Documents describing specific programmes

Exit Sweden:

- N. Oden, *The Way Out. A handbook for understanding and responding to extreme movements* (2010). http://www.polarisatie-radicalisering.nl/fileadmin/user_upload/pdf/The_way_out._Ahandbook_for_understanding_and_responding_to_extreme_movements.pdf.
- T. Christensen, *A Question of Participation – Disengagement from the Extremist Right: A case study from Sweden* (2015).

Documents on deradicalisation in general

O. Ashour, *The De-Radicalization of Jihadists. Transforming Armed Islamist Movements* (2009).

K. Barelle, *From terrorist to citizen* (2011).

T. Bjørgo, *Träume und Ernüchterung. Einstieg in und Lösung von militanten Extremistengruppen* (in: Interventionen Nr. 3, 1013, pp. 38-43).

T. Bjørgo and John Horgan (ed.), *Leaving Terrorism Behind: Individual and Collective Disengagement* (2008).

J. Buschbom, *„Ich bin jetzt was!" Michel, Ex-Kameradschaftsführer aus Brandenburg, über Strafvollzug, „Gefangenenhilfe" und die Grenzen von Distanzierungs- und Ausstiegsprozessen* (INFO-Brief No. 1, 2010. 2-17). www.violence-prevention-network.de/de/component/phocadownload/category/2-infobriefe?download=34:infobrief-1-2010.

J. Buschbom, *Ein Ausstieg macht einsam. Gespräch mit einem Aussteiger aus einer Rechtsrockband* (in: Interventionen No. 2, 2013. 16-20).

J. Buschbom, *Grundzüge niedrigschwelliger politischer Bildung mit ideologisierten Klientelen Entwicklungskrisen* (in: Interventionen No. 4, 2014. 24-32).

N. Chowdhury Fink and E. B. Hearne (rapporteurs), *Beyond Terrorism: Deradicalization and Disengagement from Violent Extremism* (2008).

Ulrich Dovermann, *Mit Rechtsextremisten reden! Wie man Parolen und Argumenten im Alltag adäquat begegnen kann* (in: Interventionen No. 1, 2012. 14-19).

H. Ebaugh, *Becoming an Ex: The Process of Role Exit* (1988).

H. El-Said, *New Approaches to Countering Terrorism: Designing and Evaluating Counter Radicalisation and Deradicalisation Programs* (2014).

H. El-Said und J. Harrigan, *Deradicalizing Violent Extremists: Counter Radicalisation and Deradicalisation Programmes and their Impact in Muslim Majority States* (2013).

International Peace Institute, *A New Approach? Deradicalization Programs and Counterterroris. Meeting note* (2011).

N. Ferguson, *Disengaging from Terrorism: a Northern Irish Experience* (in: Journal for Deradicalization, No. 6 2016 1-23). http://journals.sfu.ca/jd/index.php/jd/article/viewFile/41/36

M. Glaser and S. Schuster, *Evaluation präventiver Praxis gegen Rechtsextremismus. Positionen, Konzepte und Erfahrungen* (2007).

S. Hohnstein, F. Greuel with contribution from M. Glaser, Einstiege verhindern, *Ausstiege begleiten. Pädagogische Ansätze und Erfahrungen im Handlungsfeld Rechtsextremismus* (2015).

J. Horgan, *Walking Away from Terrorism: Accounts of Disengagement from Radical and Extremist Movements* (2009).

M. Kohlstruck, *Pädagogische und soziale Arbeit mit „rechtsextremistisch gefährdeten" jungen Leuten – ein historischer Überblick* (in: Interventionen No. 1, 2012. 4-13).

K. Möller, *Der Einstieg nach dem Ausstieg. Was Distanzierungen von rechtsextremen Haltungen Nachhaltigkeit verleiht. Teil 2* (in: INFO-Brief No. 3, 2010. 24-43). http://www.violence-prevention-network.de/de/component/phocadownload/category/2-infobriefe?download=44:infobrief-3-2010.

K. Möller, *Der Einstieg nach dem Ausstieg. Was Distanzierungen von rechtsextremen Haltungen Nachhaltigkeit verleiht. Teil 1* (in: INFO-Brief No. 2, 2010. 2-23). www.violence-prevention-network.de/de/component/phocadownload/category/2-infobriefe?download=36:infobrief-2-2010.

T. Mücke, *Beratungsstelle Deradikalisierung – Eltern stärken bei Extremismusgefahr. Erfahrungsbericht* (in: Interventionen No. 4, 2014. 40-42).

K. Palloks and A. Steil, *„Eigentlich wäre die Kugel zu schade …" Fallkonstellation – die Dokumentation eines Einzelfall-Coachings* (in: Interventionen No. 5, 2015, pp. 34-39).

F. Reinares, *Exit From Terrorism: A Qualitative Empirical Study on Disengagement and Deradicalization Among Members of ETA* (in: Terrorism and Political Violence, Volume 23, Issue 5, 2011 780-803)

Angel Rabasa et al, *Deradicalizing Islamist Extremists* (2010). http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2010/RAND_MG1053.pdf.

P. Rieker, M.l Glaser, S. Schuster, *Prevention of Right-Wing-Extremism, Xenophobia and Racism in European Perspective* (2006).

P. Steger, *Rechte Radikalisierungen. Auf der Suche nach Lösungen für individuelle Entwicklungskrisen* (in: Interventionen No. 4, 2014. 4-15).

J. Taken, *Radikalisierung und Deradikalisierung im transnationalen islamistischen Terrorismus.* Entstehungsbedingungen und Bewältigungsstrategien (2013).

H. Weilnböck, *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 2013b, pp. 379-408.) http://weilnboeck.net/pages_en/essays.html

H. Weilnböck, *RAN Derad Declaration of Good Practice – Principles of Sustainable Interventions in Disengagement and Rehabilitation (Deradicalisation) from Involvement in Violent Extremism and Group Hatred* – living document. http://cultures-interactive.de/fachartikel.html