

RAN study visit Germany

Ex-post paper

16-17 December 2015, Berlin

Radicalisation Awareness Network



Study visit Germany

On 16-17 December RAN organised a study visit to Germany in collaboration with Cultures Interactive (CI). The objective for this study visit was twofold: First, it intended to create a greater understanding within RAN about the **refugee crises** and its consequences regarding societal polarisation and extremism. Secondly, it aimed to present **best practices** and approaches for combating group focused enmity and right-wing extremism in Germany - at the structural as well as at the practical level.

This ex-post paper will present the main outcomes of the visit and the lessons learned.

Societal polarisation over the refugee crisis

Over a **million¹ refugees** have arrived to EU and refugee crisis is rapidly fuelling narratives and support for right-wing populist parties and anti-Muslim groupings (such as Pegida).

The scale and scope of the enveloping refugee crisis have created complex and cascading policy challenges and risks on different levels. This **polarisation** serves as a great enabler for jihadist mobilisation. It also fuels right-wing extremism and populism as well as anti-Muslim sentiments across several MS in EU. This polarisation and extremism is manifest differently across MS in Europe. The speed of change brought about by refugee crisis and the negative public discourse around risks and threats create a challenging and dangerous dynamic that could prove difficult to control or pushback for policymakers. This societal polarisation over the refugee crisis is at risk of being further exploited by both jihadist forces and right-wing and anti-Muslim forces through propaganda and violence. Extremists could seriously undermine social cohesion and create deep polarisation through an act of violence or through a coordinated campaign of terror.

All projects and organisations that were visited during the study visit recognized this trend. They observed an increase in attacks on refugees, an increase in rwe sentiments and support for Pegida and a growing polarisation in society. Participants discussed to which extent these manifestations are unique for Germany or EU wide. They made a distinction between **gate-way** countries and countries in which refugees seek **asylum**. The growing polarisation and rwe seems to especially be a problem in the latter. It was also argued that opposing to refugees should not be automatically labelled as racism. Silencing these sentiments might even fuel extremism.

¹ International organisation for migration <http://www.iom.int/>

A special feature of Germany in terms of preventing right-wing extremism are nation-wide state funded programmes providing financial support for various NGOs as well as programmes of the single federal states and foundations offering funds for practitioners. The state programmes root in the 1990s and are the result of a political reaction towards an exceptional degree of extreme right violence in Germany. In spite of changing governments, these programmes have been kept until today and allowed the formation of various NGOs, and institutional structures in the field of preventive work could be established. The most important federal programme of this moment is 'Live Democracy!'. The Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth presented this project during the study visit.

Live Democracy!

Live Democracy! Is a federal programme that funds civic engagement and democratic practice at the local, regional („Länder“) and federal level. The programme takes a stand against right-wing extremism, racism and anti-Semitism, the challenges posed by islamophobia, antigypsyism, homophobia and transphobia, violent Islamism and jihadism, left-wing militancy and other movements illustrate the spectrum of anti-democratic and hate phenomena. For the overall programme a total of **50.5 million** Euros has been made available. In order to enhance planning reliability all structural and pilot based projects have a max. **funding period of 5 years**. Special funds for measures against conflicts in the context of the arrival of refugees will be made available in 2017. The use of NGO's and the emphasize on long-term projects are less common in other member states.

The German Youth Institute evaluates the overall programme and is also responsible for providing scientific support in the programme areas of Federal State Democracy Centres.

Figure 1: Overview 'Live Democracy!'

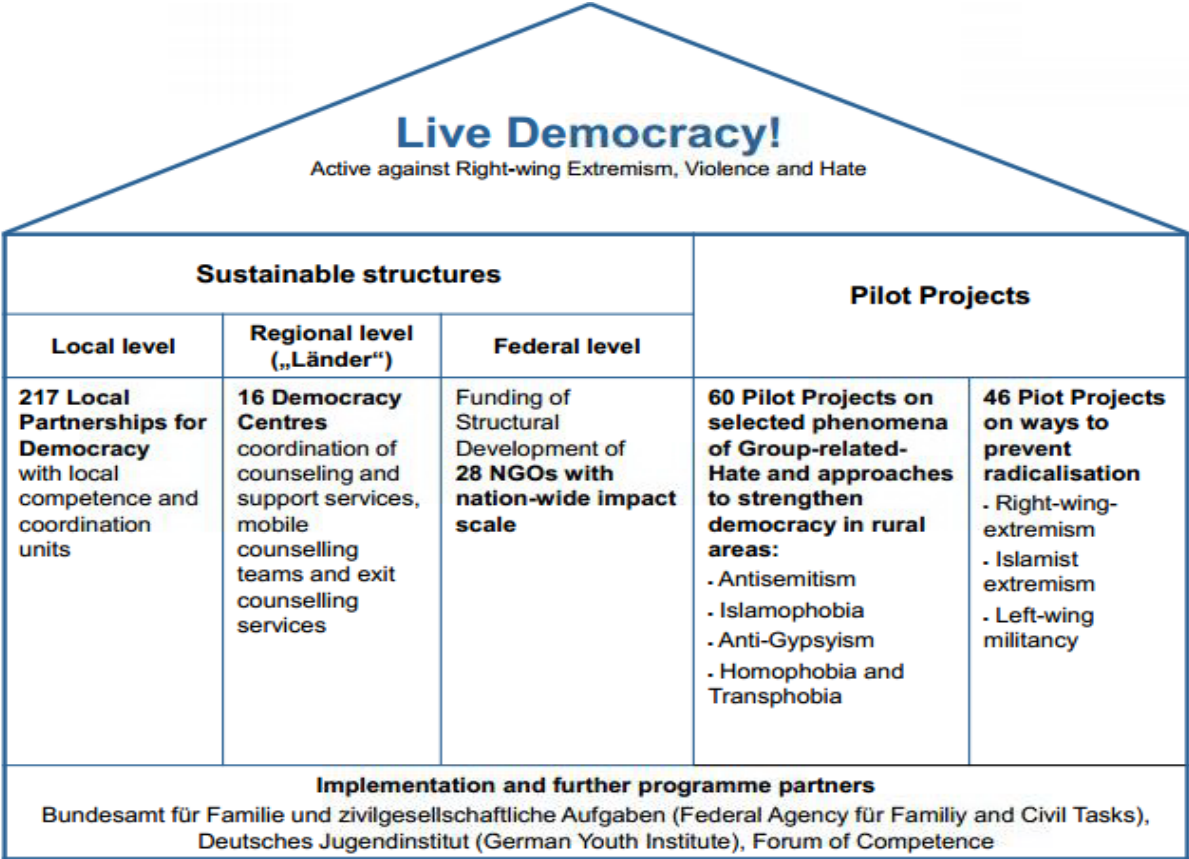


Figure 1 shows the structure of ‘Democracy live!’ and the projects it funds. This represents the framework of the German approach to the prevention of extremism. The distinctions in the framework are not exclusive: some organisations function as Democracy Centre and execute pilot projects as well. RAN visited several of these projects during the during the study visit.

Local Partnerships for Democracy

The federal programme supports 217 local and municipal authorities (towns, municipalities and rural districts) throughout Germany in developing "partnerships for democracy" as structurally based local or regional alliances. These "partnerships for democracy" bring together decision-makers from local politics and administration and people active in all aspects of civil society, from associations and clubs through churches to citizens groups. Starting from local conditions and problems on the ground, they jointly develop a strategy tailored to addressing the specific situation at hand. The need for such local projects is also connected to the strong independence of German federal states.

Democracy Centres

In every federal state, Federal State Democracy Centres support the further development of concepts and strategies to promote democracy and diversity and ensure a networking of local activities, especially those of the local partnerships for democracy. In addition, they coordinate the work of the advisory and

prevention services and act as points of contacts for people seeking help. The core activities of these democracy centres revolve around 1) Mobile counselling teams 2) Victims counselling and 3) Disengagement and exit counselling.

Miteinander e.V.

<http://www.miteinanderleben.com/de>

In the Federal State Saxony-Anhalt the democratic centre is situated within the organisation Miteinander e.V.. The organisation considers working in different fields (prevention, victim support, disengagement) helpful since experiences in each field is relevant to the other. The organisation stated that there are disadvantages as well: by working with both victims and offenders of right-wing extremist violence there is a danger of losing credibility with each group. Some of these other core-values are:

- Miteinander works both reactive (on request) as pro-active (on own initiative).
- The organisation focusses on tailor-made consulting and education. They deem it crucial to adjust to the local situation and develop a programme together with the community.
- Miteinander concentrates on the long-term when working with young people. What are their dreams? Focus on perspective and the positive aspects of democracy.

NGO's with nation-wide impact scale

28 Important non-governmental organisations which are active in the promoting democracy and fighting right-wing extremism and hatred throughout Germany are supported by the federal programme in becoming more professional and in consolidating their work. The objectives of these NGO's are:

- Development of a nation-wide infrastructure with nation-wide impact
- Professional and methodological expertise
- Exchange and networking at the national and international level

Cultures Interactive

The co-host of the study, Cultures Interactive, is one of the NGO's that is supported by Democracy live!. They distinguish three types of projects:

- Primary and secondary prevention: school projects, youth cultural projects, early disengagement trainings, intervention - tools for group work, train-the-trainer.
- Regional work: youth cultural participation projects, community coaching, mentoring of youth workers
- Transfer and Networking: further trainings in practice and at universities, European Fair Skills, WomEx_ genderreflective approaches of prevent and intervention, National and EU-wide networks: RAN, Democracy lives!

Methodologically, CI has developed an approach of youth-cultural social intervention which combines elements of civic education/ pedagogical anti-bias training, psychologically based open-process group-work, and peer-learning in youth-cultural activities. Youth culture is a door opener for discussion: focus on the interest of young people.

Pilot Projects on selected phenomena of Group-related-Hate in rural areas

Democracy live! supports 60 pilot programmes on selected phenomena of Group-related-Hate in rural areas. Subjects range from programmes against anti-Semitism, Antigypsyism, Current forms of Islamophobia and Homophobia and transphobia. Although group-related-hate might function as a gateway to radicalisation and violent extremism, RAN focusses on the latter.

Pilot Projects on Prevention of Radicalisation

A series of pilot projects supported within the federal programme "Live Democracy!" is looking at ways to prevent radicalisation processes in the areas of right-wing extremism, ultranationalism, latently violent Islamism, salafist phenomena and instrumentalisations of Islam, and violently based, anti-demographic forms of left-wing militancy.

The projects are based in social settings that are conflict hotspots and develop conflict management strategies with the aim of identifying constructive, democratic ways of addressing problems and conflicts. In line with social prevalence patterns, the pilot projects seek to trial heterogeneous accesses, different social settings-based approaches as well as a variety of de-escalation and distancing strategies in respect of the above phenomena and the various manifestations, interactions and root causes of radicalisation processes in young people.

IfGG - Praefix R- Coaching for imprisoned parents
<http://www.ifgg-berlin.de/>

IfGG presented 'Praefix R', a project that revolves around coaching for imprisoned parents. The programme is based on the idea that imprisoned parent's children are a group of high risk which is largely unnoticed. The project supports the clients to strengthen the parent-child relationship, to improve their child-raising competences and to reflect their values and attitudes, in which their parenting is embedded. Part of the coaching is also to involve important others such as the (ex) partner, parents, foster parents (if the child lives in a foster family), friends or relatives who can support the process.

Opferperspektive e.V.
<http://www.opferperspektive.de/category/englisch>

The association provides counselling throughout the state of Brandenburg for those who have become victims of right-wing violence, their friends and family, and the witnesses. Opferperspektive takes sides in counselling: the goal is to help

individuals made victims by right-wing aggressors overcome the aftermath of violence and accompany them through this process.

Lidice Haus Bremen - Right wing extremism and Family (RuF)

<http://lidicehaus.de/en/>

A nationwide Institute for right-wing extremism and family is a counselling office for parents whose children are in a right-wing extremism movement or are in danger to get into such scene.

Lichtblicke e.V.

<http://lichtblicke.de/>

Lichtblicke e.V. works with the parents of rwe kids. Children of rwe parents are especially vulnerable and likely to copy their parents ideas and values. Lichtblicke therefore targets this group and introduces them to democratic values and an alternative narrative.

Lessons learned

The participants recognized some key-features of the German approach:

- The German prevention approach was viewed as an example. The funds and experience in the prevention of radicalisation and rwe were considered unprecedented in the EU. Participants also recognized some challenges in the German situation: the strong independence of federal states makes it difficult to implement a uniform national approach.
- Funding prevention programmes for a longer period of time (5 years) can significantly increase the impact. Prevention takes time and long-term funding makes programmes more sustainable. Most participants did question whether there would be budget available to realise this in their own country.
- Germany primarily uses NGO's to combat and prevent radicalisation and rwe. Participants found this to be very different than the approach in their own countries where radicalisation and polarisation are considered a concern for the government/society and not specialised NGO's. The use of NGO's was found to be very useful. On the other hand Germany could benefit from including countering radicalisation and extremism in existing structures.
- The German approach focuses more on emphasising democratic than criticising extremist values.