



European  
Commission

# SEEKING REHABILITATION THAT WORKS

© European Union

**Project name:**  
Integrated exit programme for prison  
and probation – WayOut

## **Purpose:**

Europe needs to agree on how to identify, contain and control radicalised prisoners

## **AT A GLANCE**

### **Geographical coverage:**

**5 countries:** Belgium, France, Germany, the Netherlands and Portugal

### **Project coordinator:**

University of Toulouse II –  
Université de Jean Jaurès

### **Estimated budget:**

€ 697 520

### **EU contribution:**

90% co-funded by the  
European Union

### **Type of funding:**

Internal Security Fund – Police (ISFP)

### **Start date:**

December 2018

### **End date:**

November 2020

## **Overview**

Locked up in Europe's prisons are tens of thousands of people with violent political or religious views. Most of them will be released sooner or later. When that happens, how can we reduce the dangers they pose?

Prison and the probation system are obvious places to try to rehabilitate extremists, but across Europe there is little agreement about how best to achieve that. This wide-ranging project will gather knowledge and opinions on so-called 'exit programmes', create a consensus on what works best and develop training materials for the specialists tasked with this challenging work.

## **We don't yet know the best approach**

Some people go to prison as a result of their extremist views; others become radicalised after being put away for other crimes. Some are Islamists; others are neo-Nazis or political terrorists. Almost all of them will eventually be released – so how can we make sure they do not pose a threat after they leave prison?

In general, EU Member States believe that education in prison can persuade many violent radicals to stay out of trouble after their release. However, agreeing on what works best is challenging.

For a start, experts argue about the extent to which we can change people's thinking. Some believe in 'deradicalisation', meaning that someone abandons an extremist ideology, changes their belief system and accepts the values of the majority.

Others prefer 'disengagement', which means changing people's behaviour – such as getting them to abandon violence – without altering their basic opinions. Supporters believe this approach is more practical than, say, arguing about complex religious matters.



Migration and  
Home Affairs

It's difficult to assess the effectiveness of any particular method of addressing radicalisation. In any case, we need to constantly compare different programmes and tools for deradicalisation and disengagement, both in prison and outside. When experts cannot show that disengagement or deradicalisation is working, it's no surprise that governments and ordinary people are sceptical.

## From evidence to solutions

This project plans to unify Europe's approach to prison exit programmes by bringing together seven partners in five European countries, plus a large number of associated organisations and independent experts.

The project partners will start by gathering evidence from practitioners and academics on what works best in particular situations, and understanding why it works. Following rigorous academic analysis of their findings, they will then create a unified approach that could be adopted across Europe, including training materials.

Another key part of the project will be to spread the word on the effectiveness of exit programmes to lawyers, prison officers, police and probation services, and religious leaders. Politicians are also key targets, since governments keep close control over what happens in prisons and may prefer to follow public opinion rather than evidence.

## CHANGING PRIORITIES IN FRANCE

Countries including Austria, Belgium and Canada have national policies based on deradicalisation – the idea that it is possible to get extremists to renounce beliefs that lead to terrorism. In France, on the other hand, the authorities have traditionally put their faith in disengagement – simply getting people to abandon violent behaviour.

For 2 years now, France has used exit programmes to try to change prisoners' behaviour. Faced with continuing high levels of prison violence, however, the country now believes the solution lies in stopping people becoming radicalised in the first place.

## MORE INFORMATION

**Project reference:** HOME/2017/ISFP/AG/RAD/823690

**Title:** Integrated exit programme for prison and probation – WayOut

**Website:** [www.wayout-prison.eu](http://www.wayout-prison.eu)

