

# Deradicalisation in Prison

Violence Prevention Network's  
deradicalisation programme

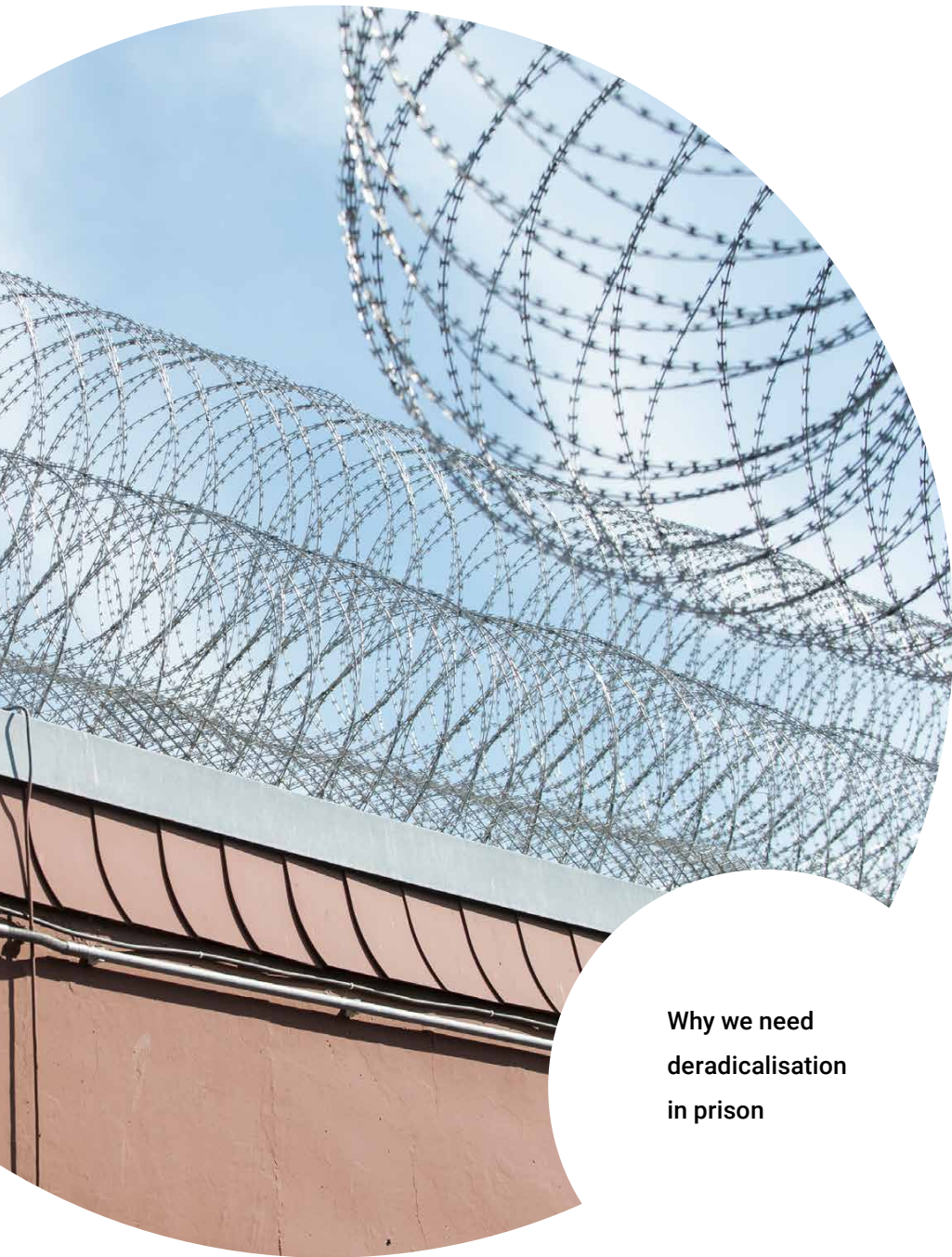


Violence  
Prevention Network

*You have to imagine that, when people go to prison, they feel like victims of the system, which is also a reason for becoming radicalised: "This system is against me. I became a danger to this system! Now I am someone!" This, of course, creates unbelievable hatred during the prison sentence. People try to show the system what they're made of. They refuse to have conversations – such as with social workers. They think in the back of their minds: "These people are trying to re-educate me! These people want to stop me. These people want to fight my attitude and my opinions and beliefs; they want to do that through conversations and therapy sessions with social workers and psychologists." This means there is great resistance from the outset.*

Someone who left the extremist scene

<b>Why we need deradicalisation in prison</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>The deradicalisation programme</b>	<b>7</b>
Goal	8
Trainers	8
Basic principles	9
Trust as a prerequisite	9
Respect and appreciation	9
Voluntary participation	10
<b>The target groups</b>	<b>12</b>
Direct target group: Radicalised offenders	13
Indirect target groups: Relatives and multipliers	15
<b>The modules of the deradicalisation programme</b>	<b>16</b>
Phase 1: Training	19
Individual training	19
Group training	19
Biographical understanding	20
Future and resource work	20
Dealing with inhuman ideologies	21
Investigation of criminal offences	22
Individual sessions	24
Family Day	24
End of the training process	24
Phase 2: Transition management	25
Personal safety plan	26
Networking	26
Phase 3: Stabilisation coaching - reintegration	27
<b>The success criteria</b>	<b>30</b>



## Why we need deradicalisation in prison

## Why we need deradicalisation in prison

Every year, thousands of ideologised juvenile and adult offenders in Germany commit serious and heinous acts of violence. These crimes are motivated by ideologies that legitimise violence, extremism and hostility towards people, as well as by a negative attitude towards people who do not agree with the way they think. The offenders are guided by an image of humanity that contradicts democratic and humanistic values. The majority of prisoners, whose crimes were based on inhuman worldviews, fall under suspicion again after they complete their prison sentence.

In Germany, there is a definite need for deradicalisation, dissociation and reintegration measures following imprisonment. Violence Prevention Network accommodates this need through its non-confrontational approach to deradicalisation of people in prison. Launched in 2001 as a pilot programme, approximately 100 participants per year on average are now reached in correctional facilities alone targeting right-wing extremism and religious extremism. Generally, they complete the programme in two years or less.

Violence Prevention Network starts earlier than usual exit programmes. The deradicalisation programme also targets people who have not yet questioned their ideological orientation or whose ideological attitudes have not yet solidified into a comprehensive worldview. Violence Prevention Network pursues a combination of deradicalisation and dissociation, i.e. the goal is to facilitate dissociation from extremist attitudes and (violent) actions. The concept of 'Education of Responsibility' (Verantwortungspädagogik®) triggers a thought process in participants that initiates an intrinsic motivation to distance themselves by assuming responsibility for their own thinking and actions and thus for their own future.

It is one of the few nationwide programmes that simultaneously works with ideologically motivated offenders, covers the needs of young and adult participants and provides a demonstrably effective concept against violence and extremism. Continuous evaluation ensures flexible reaction to new trends and developments and rapid adaptation of methods, contents and cooperation partners to the needs. The training is widely accepted among judicial authorities, federal ministries and international partners, as well as among participating prisons and inmates.

Violence Prevention Network was commissioned by the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth in 2014 as part of the federal programme 'Live Democracy!' to enhance existing structures in the field of deradicalisation in German prisons. In cooperation with other German institutions, Violence Prevention Network has also coordinated the joint establishment of nationwide standards and quality criteria for prevention of radicalisation and for deradicalisation in prison and probation.

A European comparison shows that the holistic conception, the high acceptance and the long-standing experience in the application and continuous development of the programme as well as the regular and long-term evaluation are a special quality feature of Violence Prevention Network's efforts.

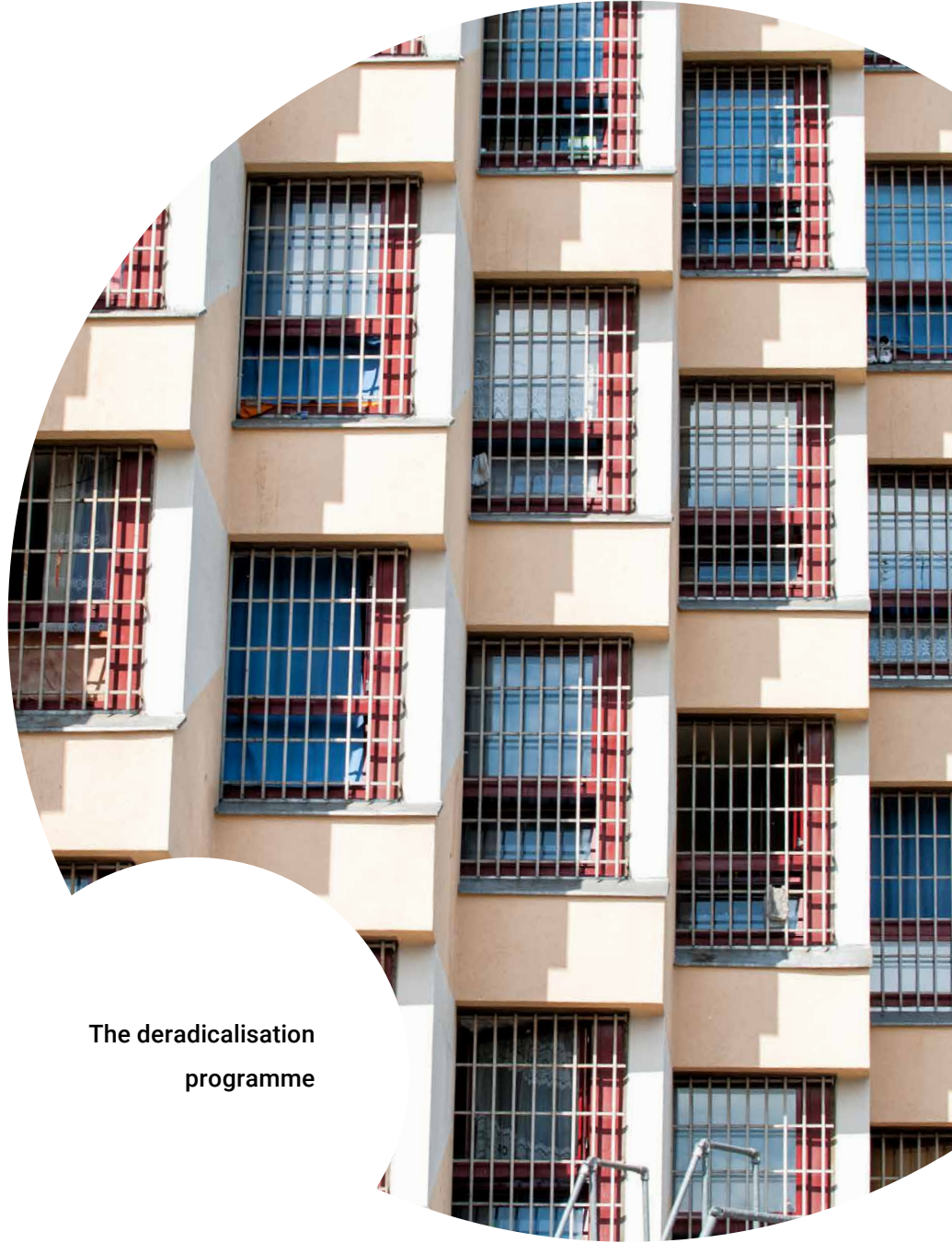
The deradicalisation programme is aimed at (repeatedly) conspicuous, ideologically motivated, juvenile and adult offenders as well as prisoners who are in the process of becoming radicalised. These people have turned to violence because of their hatred of subjectively inferior social groups or because of their perceived victimisation by subjectively superior social

groups. Some of them have increasingly closed themselves off from social discourse with their anti-democratic attitudes. Biographical breaks, social and family experiences of disintegration and disappointment as well as failed life stories, crises and the seemingly unattainable social advancement make it hard for these types of people to develop a proper identity. In turn, these identity problems can make people susceptible to extremist attitudes, because extremist groups and ideologies offer them an explanation for their supposedly failed life courses. At the same time, they offer acceptance and appreciation – something that was missing in their lives so far. As a result, people who are just searching for meaning, end up adopting extremist attitudes and developing anti-democratic and violent attitudes. In worst case scenarios, these attitudes eventually manifest and lead to ideologically motivated behaviour and targeted (violent) actions against people who do not share their point of view.

The renunciation of hatred, violence and extremist attitudes is a long and tedious process. Ideologically motivated thought patterns and violent behaviour are deeply anchored in the self-image of adolescents and adults. Dissociation from this type of thinking takes time, support and trusting relationships, so they can conceptualise and pursue an alternative life path on their own. Based on their personal strengths and the emerging communication, relationship and conflict-solving resources, the young people begin to make positive changes in their lives over the course of the training programme.

Without programmes that support this development through corresponding services and demonstrate alternative living environments, young people and adults are exposed to extremist networks in prisons and after release from prison in the outside world. Integration in society and the pursuit of a positive lifestyle can only be guaranteed with appropriate offers in prison and afterwards.

*Judy Korn und Thomas Mücke*



## The deradicalisation programme

## The deradicalisation programme

Violence Prevention Network's certified deradicalisation programme (Anti-violence-and-competence-training - AKT®) includes preventive and intervening elements to meet the holistic aspiration and target different levels of radicalisation that exist in training programmes. The programme is guided by the 'Education of Responsibility' (Verantwortungspädagogik®) concept:

Acceptance and avoidance of humiliation – these are two of the pillars of the pedagogical concept. The objective of the 'Education of Responsibility' (Verantwortungspädagogik®) concept is to facilitate deradicalisation through understanding and education.

The programme's effectiveness and success is essentially based on a combination of the following elements:

**Individual or group training** during imprisonment with subsequent stabilisation coaching

**Processing biographical information** and inclusion of family members

Scrutinising anti-violence concept, political/historical **education and deconstruction** of ideological chains of reasoning

**Client-centred** deradicalisation training combined with **systemic environmental counselling**

### Goal

The goal of the deradicalisation programme is to trigger dissociation from violence-affirming and extremist attitudes and violent behaviour in the participants. Specifically, it seeks to teach the participants to recognise the dignity and integrity of others, use non-violent ways of resolving conflicts, take responsibility for their actions and future planning, and distance themselves from extremist and anti-democratic ideologies.

### Trainers

Confidence is of paramount importance in pedagogical work with extremist people. Only trust creates the basis for the success of the programme. It is created through relationship work in direct contact with the participants.

Even more so than in other educational fields, the trainers are in demand as personalities in correctional facilities. They are very committed to their work and are convinced of the idea that violent behaviour is motivated by life experiences and that change can be affected through stable relationships and learning processes. In addition to their professional qualifications, they have relevant, long-standing experience in working with violent and prejudiced juveniles and adults. They require authenticity, authority and strength in order to gain the trust and respect of the participants during these tense encounters. Their qualification comprises a high level of methodological expertise. This includes comprehensive historical, intercultural, interfaith, and political knowledge as well as understanding of symbolism and the specific institutional peculiarities of (juvenile) prisons.

In addition, the trainers of Violence Prevention Network have completed a one-year AKT® training course (Anti-Violence and Competence Trainer). The training is geared towards dealing with violence-prone juveniles or adults who exhibit extremist attitudes.



Violence Prevention Network has developed a non-confrontational approach that bridges the gap between accepting and questioning elements based on a pedagogical, resource-oriented philosophy. It also avoids humiliating the participants. The goal of the qualification is to impart knowledge about the psychosocial dynamics underlying violence, ideologisation and radicalisation. It also aims to establish confidence in dealing with ideologised and radicalised clientele

### Basic principles

#### Trust as a prerequisite

An essential prerequisite for the success of the programme is the relationship work with the participants. The programme is designed to place all participants on equal footing. Intercultural competence, empathy for life stories and experiences of the participants along with absolute transparency with regard to the dissemination of information are important prerequisites for building trust and creating a stable working relationship. Only a stable working relationship can withstand the delineation of boundaries, differences of opinion, and critical questioning related to inhuman ideologies. It makes it possible to encourage participants to think and initiate dissociation processes.

#### Respect and appreciation

Deradicalisation is only possible through trust and mutual appreciation. Therefore, participants in training are not reduced to their crime, but treated as individuals with unique strengths and weaknesses – with a very specific biography. However, that does not mean that their actions or attitudes are accepted. The discussion surrounding their prejudiced and even inhuman ways of thinking and acting as well as the processing of their crime is done without humiliation or degradation. The trainers speak on eye-level but never shy away from taboo topics. They allow conflict-laden discourse, so they can reflect on it together with the participants and thus generate new perspectives.

#### Voluntary participation

Extremist orientations and patterns of violent behaviour are deeply rooted in the participants. Confrontational or moralising approaches in an enforcement context may, under certain circumstances, intensify

existing patterns and provoke defensive reactions. These methods are often perceived as questioning the entire person and are therefore rejected in order to protect their own identity.

Participation in the deradicalisation programme by Violence Prevention Network is therefore based on a voluntary principle. Although participation in the programme is often mandated in the correctional plan, the willingness to participate is strongly promoted by the level of awareness and the positive ratings of former participants. Experience shows that inmates are happy to participate in the programme because of its good reputation. In correctional facilities where

Violence Prevention Network has been active for some time, the inmates know that participating in the programme has a positive impact on their personal development as well as their life after imprisonment.



*During the session, the participant confronts the trainer with the statement that infidels belong in hell and follows it up with verses from the Quran and hadiths. The trainer refers first to hadiths and verses that contradict the logic of the participant and thus opens up evaluation options. Initially, this proves to be unsuccessful. Therefore, the trainer sums up what she said:*

*'So you claim these people are infidels because they do these things? And that's why they're going to hell? And because you don't do these things, you are better?'*

*'Yes! Exactly.'*

*'You say what is happening in Syria is right? Takfir, the practice of judging who is a believer and who is an infidel, is right? And the corresponding consequences like beheadings? You should be able to make that judgement?'*

*'Yes! Correct.'*

*'Okay, but if every human being has the legitimacy to be able to make judgements about another human being, in other words, if every human can be a judge, why do you need God or scholars?'*

*The participant is silent. She also remains silent on the way to the cell. Unusual, because otherwise she is very talkative and does not want to end the session yet. During the next session she tells the trainer that she is still thinking about the question. The trainer does not dive deeper into the topic and does not address the subject later in the course of the training process. At the final session of the group training, without anyone bringing up the subject of Takfir, the participant finally says: 'You were right. I can't judge people.'*

*The participant has learned to differentiate between personal opinion and legitimacy through religion and to distance herself from inhuman content. Enquiries by the trainer and the questioning of the participant's thought logic triggered a decisive process of reflection on dissociation.*



## The target groups

## The target groups

### Direct target group: Radicalised offenders

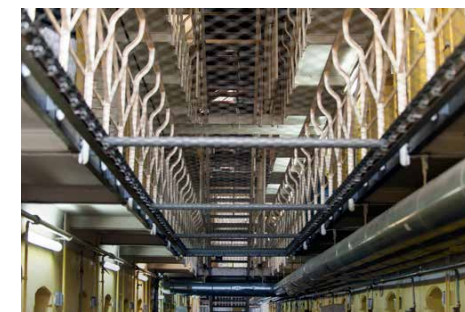
People participating in Violence Prevention Network's certified deradicalisation programme (AKT®) either became violent out of hatred for social minorities or people who do not share their point of view or, regardless of their ideological orientation, exhibited anti-democratic thinking patterns and resentment towards 'others'. The participants have a strong affinity for, or belong to, destructive groups and suffer partly from impaired emotional self-control. The training programme is aimed primarily at sympathisers, supporters and members of extremist groups; in exceptional cases, however, it also works with (ideological) leaders. Accordingly, there is a broad target group:

- Offenders at risk of influence from extremist groups: They do not yet have a coherent, extremist worldview – only isolated ideologies.
- Radicalised offenders: Behaviour and attitudes are defined by the ideology.
- Radicalised offenders with a tendency for violent behaviour: these are people who have already committed violent acts for ideological reasons.
- Radicalised offenders with a high potential for violence: these individuals exhibit strong signs of radicalisation, i.e. their behaviour is completely defined by ideology, and their worldview is coherent. The motivation for targeted acts of violence is high.<sup>1</sup>
- Highly radicalised offenders without violent intent: these individuals exhibit strong signs of radicalisation, i.e. their behaviour and their thinking are com-

pletely defined by the ideology, and their worldview is coherent, but they have no, or a very little, potential for violence.

The decision regarding selection of the participants and the allocation to the respective type of training (group or individual training) takes place after selection interviews. They are used to examine the willingness to change and the approachability of the applicants as well as their suitability for the programme in general and group or individual training in particular.

Although offenders from right-wing and religious extremism partly differ in their enemy portrayals and in their ideological basis of their attitudes, they still have



much in common. They commit their crimes out of hate or as a result of openly expressed ideological motives: 'The nation must be cleansed of such elements!' 'We must free our brothers and sisters from the oppression of the West!' It often unites the emotionally rooted aversion to supposedly weaker populations or even the feeling that they have become victims of discrimination, oppression and persecution.

<sup>1</sup> The term radicalisation was chosen because of its process characteristics. It is preferred over the term extremism, which has a more static character. For a differentiated view, the line-up of the target groups is supplemented by the specific potential for violence.

To justify their actions, they declare themselves and their own group, ethnicity or religion as superior to other social groups. Furthermore, they often interpret violence and rejection of other social groups as a defensive act against hostile groups that oppress them. The hatred is often fuelled by archaic depiction of masculinity and concepts of honour, the idea of cultural superiority of their group and threat perceptions by other population groups. Occasionally, they believe they committed their crime in accordance with religious rules or in defence of their own nation. Anti-Semitic views can be found in both groups, but are justified differently. Even authoritarian values and anti-democratic views are often reflected in the target group. The link between violence and an authoritarian and anti-democratic image of humanity has meanwhile been empirically proven. Many young and adult extremists also look back on a longer criminal and violent career by the time they start their prison sentence.

The profiles of the participants often vary quite a bit. Regardless of whether they come from educationally deprived environments, they are mostly receptive to simple explanatory patterns. Their experiences and perceptions are mostly marked by a lack of social support and recognition – be it in the family, the circle of friends or in society. In addition, they are often victims of addictions and own experiences of violence. They lack the important experience of being recognised and accepted as a person; instead, their lives are marked by violence as a behavioural pattern. In their pursuit of belonging, they mostly look for friends in the same age group. The cohesive group relationship is almost always of utmost importance for the committed act of violence and is a key point of discussion during the training programme.

## Indirect target groups: Relatives and multipliers

### Relatives

They are the protagonists of the work with relatives and provide the trainer with a helpful outside perspective of the participants, which can be incorporated into the diagnostics. At the same time relatives of people,



who are radicalised or at risk of being radicalised, are strengthened in their ability to communicate and manage conflict through the work with relatives. This helps them regain a sustainable and resilient relationship. Following the deradicalisation programme, a social support network thus evolves, which is helpful after imprisonment.

### Multipliers

This refers to people who come into contact with target groups in their professional environment, such as probation officers, prison staff and social workers. In addition to specific counselling, training courses are offered to facilitate recognition of extremist lines of argumentation and possible strategies for the resolution and/or defusion of these lines of argumentation. The goal is to enable multipliers to establish, maintain and endure the dialogue with the target groups.





**Modules of the  
deradicalisation  
programme**

## Deradicalisation programme (AKT®): Setting

### Training

#### Phase 1:

Group Training with accompanying one-on-one sessions

- 23+ sessions in prison
- Coaching duration: 4 - 6 months (115 h)
- Group size: 8 participants and two trainers
- Potential involvement of tutors and lecturers
- Inclusion of family members in preparation for the release

Individual training

- 15+ sessions in prison
- Coaching duration: dependent on requirements
- Inclusion of family members in preparation for the release

### Transition management

#### Phase 2:

- Maintaining contact until the release
- Personal preparation for release
- Involvement of family members/environment
- Collaboration with internal and external professional services
- Follow-up sessions with the group resp. participant

### Stabilisation coaching

#### Phase 3:

- 6-12-month stabilisation coaching by the group trainers after the release
- Intensive initial support
- Regular sessions to review the development process
- Continuous telephone counselling - Crisis telephone
- Involvement of family members/environment

## Deradicalisation programme (AKT@): Content

### Training

- Understanding one's own history
- Identifying the failed self-healing processes of radicalisation and an affinity for violence
- Critical analysis of criminal events
- Developing a safety plan
- Deradicalisation of the residual identity
- Development of an independent identity
- Civic education to practice democracy and tolerance development

### Transition management

- Personal release preparation and the development of future plans
- Resource and risk analysis
- Preparation of basic security following release
- Review of a low-risk return/inclusion of relevant agents
- Involvement of key anchor persons in the preparation for release
- Development of a private support system

### Stabilisation coaching

- Transfer of what has been learned (real-life test), stabilisation of the safety plan
- Return to the social environment (construction of a new environment)
- Establishment of stable relationships
- Dissociation from groups that have an affinity for violence
- Structuring of everyday life
- Support in case of conflicts
- Crisis intervention
- Integration in vocational training/work

## Modules of the deradicalisation programme

### Phase 1: Training

The training is the core of the programme. It is carried out by two trainers. It either takes place as individual training or in juvenile prisons in the form of group training.

#### Individual training

The individual training takes place under the following conditions: Voluntary participation, willingness to reflect, respect and appreciation, as well as the willingness to talk about oneself. Due to more severe radicalisation, the primary goal in individual training sessions is to establish accessibility of the participants and to build a working relationship. The next phase only begins after the first phase succeeds. It involves implementation of additional goals, reflection on the extremist attitudes and (if applicable) the violent career, as well as assumption of responsibility for the future. Individual training takes place in small steps. Usually, this form of training starts with 15 sessions, but is strongly process-oriented and can therefore be extended with additional sessions.

#### Group training

Group training takes place under the same conditions as individual training: Voluntary participation, willingness to reflect, respect and appreciation, as well as the willingness to talk about oneself. It usually comprises of 23 training units and takes place weekly in the prison. The units consist of group sessions and concomitant individual sessions, whereby the design and relationship of the various sessions types are adapted to the needs of the group. These sessions usually last three to four hours.

Group training can be an effective tool for initiating thought and reflection processes. The interaction in the group allows the participants to put themselves in the situation of other participants and to develop understanding and empathy. At the same time the group helps them deal with the unfamiliar learning experience. The group also serves to form and clarify roles and to establish a constructive culture of communication and feedback. Participants learn to express their opinions and listen to the opinions of others. Feedback from people with similar experiences and life histories gives greater legitimacy to the thought-provoking impulses. The trainers provide inspiration and support.

In group training, participants also learn to identify personal boundaries, for example in the form of rules that each group sets for itself. A power-based mindset, hierarchical or (conflict-prone) relationships and provocation, physical contact, personal insults, or humiliation have no room in the training sessions. The group is also a diagnostic instrument for the trainers to classify the behaviour and reactions of the participants within their group and the effect of group dynamics.

The learning objectives of the participants in both types of training are as follows:

- Accepting the fundamental right to human dignity and integrity of every human being
- Understanding and changing their own violent behaviour
- Taking responsibility for their actions
- Developing a distance to extremism and inhuman ideologies

- Solving conflicts without violence
- Planning the future on their own

During the training the participants learn to understand the connections between their own life story and their susceptibility to violence and extremist attitudes. They learn to express feelings and to develop and apply non-violent conflict resolution strategies. However, current political debates and topics that concern the participants are also addressed in order to impart political education in the low-threshold area. Participants are supposed to recognise why they think in inequality categories. Motivations driving their thinking and acting are dissolved by questioning.

### Biographical understanding

A biographical individual interview is conducted with all participants before the training begins. It helps clarify expectations and provides an opportunity to discuss how the radicalised personality evolved. The interview



is also used to clarify training goals and to develop a basis of trust for working in the group. In this interview, the trainers encourage participants to talk about their life stories, their families, their circle of friends, their political and religious orientation, as well as their acts of violence.

After willingness for biographical processing has been determined, the actual biographical work is taken up in the training session. During the biographical processing, the life course is analysed as far as the participants allow it. This process usually reveals breaking points and key events in the participant's history, which provide a possible explanation for the violence or radicalisation at hand. For group training, the biographical work takes place in the concomitant individual sessions.

### Future and resource work

Goal attainment and future-oriented work play an important role within the framework of 'Education of Responsibility' (Verantwortungspädagogik®). In it, the individual goals that they want to achieve are first defined. Throughout the training programme, these goals are continuously referenced and are adapted to new circumstances in case of doubt. This should help the participants find an inner drive that motivates them to successfully complete the training. Resource work is also decisive for achieving the goals. Internal and external resources are identified and activated, which should support the participants in their process of detachment.

### Dealing with violence

For participants who have been convicted of an act of violence, there is a separate training module for dealing with the violence. The module is considered optional, so that in specific cases retraumatisation through forced

*There are plenty of opportunities throughout the training programme to think about and confront inhuman ideologies. The discussion with the trainers on topics such as right-wing extremism, religious extremism, traditionalism, rejection and hostility towards people who do not share their point of view and current socio-political issues enables the participants to enter into a constructive and non-violent discourse with people who do not share their point of view. Violence Prevention Network explicitly does not use a purely counter-ideological approach, but acts on the level of generating empathy with simultaneous ideological discourse, if it is demanded.*

*In a conversation with the trainer, a participant is of the opinion that infidels are worthless. The language and attitude of the participant himself exhibits a coherent, ideological view of the world and can thus be seen as strongly radicalised. In previous sessions, most of the discussions with the participant were also on an ideological level. The trainer reacts by offering alternative interpretations and disrupting thought patterns.*

*He asks: 'Who is Adam?'*

*The participant answers: 'He was a prophet.'*

*The trainer: 'Was Adam a man first, or a prophet first?'*

*The participant thinks about it, but then answers: 'A human being.'*

*The trainer: 'So then you're primarily a human being too, isn't it?'* The participant nods.

*The trainer now continues and connects this realisation with generating empathy in the participant: 'Do you still remember one of our previous conversations, when you said that man is a masterpiece of God, didn't you? How would you feel if you created a work of art, a picture, and someone would come and destroy it without asking you, the owner of the masterpiece?'*

*'Well, I would be angry,' the participant replies.*

*In the end, there is a disruptive argument that alludes to a key narrative of the participant's ideology, the rejection of veneration of saints and polytheism. 'You say that there is only one God and only he can judge. But what do you think you're doing when you say that infidels are worth less than believers?' The participant thinks for a while and finally answers: 'I am violating Tawhid.' The trainer has shown the participant a contradiction in his own thinking and triggered a process of self-reflection.*

Among other things, J. was convicted of bodily harm and the formation of a criminal organisation, and he took the blame for all the accomplices. He initially refuses most of the measures in prison. After several preliminary talks, however, he agrees to participate in the group training sessions because the trainers are not part of the prison system. They also talk to him in detail about the setting and the other participants. During the group training, the trainers work with J. on his past. Together, they examine the lack of support in his family of origin and his negative (violent) experiences with male migrants. And they work with him to figure out where he stands now and what his wishes are for the future. The trainers ask the participant where he sees himself when he grows old. He can clearly articulate that he no longer wants to be part of the scene when he is old or ever go to prison again. He also tells the trainer that he likes to draw and would like to put this talent to use as a self-employed graphic artist. The trainers support this plan and repeatedly encourage the participant to inform himself about the modalities of starting business. After his release from prison, the participant manages to carry out his plan for independence. He has no contact with the right-wing scene and credibly conveys that the right-wing ideology no longer has a place in his life.

processing is avoided. The topic of violence can also be broached in the accompanying individual sessions of the group training, if it agrees with the needs of the participants. Regardless of their individual actions, the participants deal with their respective strategies of justification and trivialisation. The goal is to break up the myths surrounding violence and to understand how violence arises. The main focus is on the role of important influencing factors, such as the group. In addition, part of the approach is to assume the victim's perspective. It can be a building block to restore the empathy of the perpetrators.

The learning objective is to recognise that violent behaviour is not inevitable, but can be controlled and thus avoided. This way, the participants learn that every individual person must take responsibility for his or her actions and that it is possible to renounce violence. The participants are also made aware of the costs (and consequences) of their crimes for them and others. Over the course of the training programme, the participants learn how to deal with conflict situations in a non-violent and confident way. Practical exercises taken from everyday life help them identify their sensitivity thresholds, understand body signals and, in the event of an

escalation, to opt out before they lose control of their emotions. Ultimately, they also learn to discard their patterns of justification.

The so-called 'violence session' lasts about three hours. If the violence session takes place in the group setting, the offence is first meticulously reconstructed. Then the group assesses the violent act and the consequences for the victim. While the participants must take responsibility, the other group members act as 'violence experts' and assume a supporting role. They identify the causes, consequences and noteworthy findings of the act of violence. This conscious assumption of responsibility forms the basis for developing new perspectives and a personal 'violence avoidance plan'. The feedback by the group on the act of violence, as well as its perspectives and opinions support reflection of the act, because impressions and opinions are expressed by people who are in the same position. The violence session is a great challenge for the participants: Every now and then, the confrontation with the brutality and the often gruesome injuries that were inflicted on the victims pushes the participants to their limits.

Within the group, the joint acts of violence committed by two participants is supposed to be dealt with and a cost-benefit analysis should be carried out. The other participants are supposed to make a note of the disadvantages and costs caused by the act and learn what the motivation behind the act was. They will then share their findings with the two participants in a feedback session.

'What day was that? Do you remember?'

'I think it was a Monday, yeah ...'

'Was it summer or winter? Was it during the day?'

'It was pretty chill ...'

'What happened? I have no idea at all, tell me.'

'Well, we skipped school. We met one of our buddies. Then we were looking for some weed, but somehow couldn't find any. We picked up two bottles of vodka and got pretty trashed. We were definitely plastered, but I don't remember exactly anymore.'

'And then what happened; why don't you tell me,' the trainer asks the other one.

'Yeah, then we just wondered if we should take them on now. We went over and asked what their problem was, and they didn't react and then we struck.'

'OK. I'm a bit lost now. So you were mobbed and then you decided, you would 'clarify it', as you called it. And then you went over to them and talked to them?'

'Yes, you could say that; why don't you say what happened,' the participant turns to his accomplice.

'Yeah, so we went over to them and thought, if they are looking for trouble, then they should get trouble. We wanted to be brave.'

'But you could have also just kept walking, right? Why not?'

'Well, when they started bothering us, we just thought, one way or another. And then I just hit him in the face with the vodka bottle.'

'How long did it take for the vodka bottle to fly after they started bugging you?'

'Well, he started pushing us around.'

'What kind of agreement was that? Do I punch him or do I carry on a civilised conversation?' the second trainer asks.

'Yeah, civilised ... it was clear that a civilised conversation wasn't an option any more.'

'So, it was already clear from the start that there would be a fight? Do you see it the same way?' the trainer asks the other participant again.

'Well, yes, I guess so. The other guy didn't do anything else. I saw that he fell onto the street after getting his with the vodka bottle. If someone hadn't pulled him back, the bus would have ...'

'So a third party pulled him away? Were you aware at that moment what could have happened if he hadn't been pulled away? That he would have fallen in front of the bus? Did that not matter to you at that moment?'

'No, it did.'

'So, the day you didn't care and you drank a three-quarter bottle of vodka could have put you in jail and somebody could have ended up dead. What would that mean for you today, if he hadn't been pulled back?'

'Yeah, that would've sucked.'

'How long are you in for?'

'One year in jail.'

'And for letting out a bit of frustration, you're now behind bars for a year?'

'Well, now in hindsight, I have to admit, it wasn't worth it.'

### Individual sessions as part of group training programmes

The individual sessions can be used to dive deeper into topics that come up in the group sessions. This individualised approach covers needs and discussions that cannot be addressed within the group sessions. In addition, the individual sessions provide an opportunity to talk about sensitive topics that the participants cannot, or do not want to, discuss in the group, such as their own experiences of abuse and violence. Some trainers discuss the crime or biography as a matter of principle in the individual sessions for the reasons mentioned above. The individual sessions also offer the opportunity to identify the social support system for the time after imprisonment.

### Family day

During the family member days, the trainers have the chance to talk to parents (or any other key anchor persons) and address problems that have not been dealt with and that became apparent over the course of the training programme. At the request of the participants, the trainers mediate between them and their parents or relatives, for example, to improve communication and conflict management. Involvement of family members enables the participants to get closer to each other and to assess the support available to them after their release from prison.

### End of the training process

The training session ends with a joint assessment. During the group training, all participants present their personal change process and receive feedback from the group. In the individual training, the presentation of the change process and the feedback round only take place with the trainers.

At the end of both types of training, the participants receive a certificate. The handover of the certificate emphasises the significance of the joint work and the hope that the learnt material will be successfully implemented.

For the training to be successful, it is essential to prepare the participants for life outside prison and to transfer what they have learnt to their future day-to-day life and to anchor it there. Transition management and stabilisation coaching serve this purpose.

### Phase 2: Transition management

The release from prison represents a crisis situation for most participants and can quickly lead to a relapse into old behaviour patterns. The purpose of transition management is to maintain contact between the trainer and the participant during the period between the end of the training and release from prison. It is a support system tailored to individual needs and prepares for the expected challenges and problems after release from prison. It primarily focuses on future and resource work, in which perspectives and possibilities for the time after imprisonment are realistically identified. Relatives and family, but also friends acquaintances, are already consulted for the support during the transition management. In coordination with social services and other responsible employees of the prison, local networks are activated as needed. Moreover, contacts to youth and social welfare offices, job centres and similar are established to ensure that they are available in the stabilisation coaching phase after release from prison.

*L. had a childhood marked by drug and alcohol abuse. He uses it to define himself strongly at the beginning of the programme. Over time, however, he develops well, is motivated, participates in the training, and reveals a funny and reflective side. He reports that he has learned to play the drums and guitar and would like to continue playing after his release. He gets recognition for it from the other participants. It becomes clear how much he enjoys this recognition and that he increasingly relies on his abilities. His positive development can also be seen in the preparation for the family day. He buys several cakes to take care of the food. However, he eats one of the cakes in advance with other juveniles from his prison area.*

*On family day, the trainers sit down with the family and praise the fact that L. has taken care of the meals. The mother, however, only criticises that he has already eaten a cake. L. talks about his musical talents, but the mother reacts pejoratively again and criticises him for not being able to sing. Throughout the rest of the conversation there is no appreciation or affection by the mother. L. becomes increasingly calmer. However, instead of falling back into his old habits, L. manages to talk about his feelings, which were triggered by these insults, in the aftermath of the family day.*

*The family day showed L. where possible conflicts could lie in the family situation after his release. The subsequent processing of his experiences and the triggered feelings prepare him for possible situations after his release. At the same time, the trainers can get an idea of the social support network and identify stabilising resources as well as endangering tendencies for the time after imprisonment.*

The risks and problems that await the participants after release are addressed in the transition management: Old group structures, temptations and requirements can quickly overwhelm. In this context, a safety plan will be generated, which the participants can use to tackle risks and conflict situations in a secure manner. For example, situations are acted out and possible options for action are pointed out. Threat scenarios by the old group are also discussed and, if necessary, the move to another city is prepared.

### Personal safety plan

As the date of the release approaches, the transition management team focuses on preparing for the near

future, planning the young peoples' daily lives and cementing the initiated behavioural changes. The participants discuss their future prospects and talk about their goals and fears. At this point, it is important for them to know their strengths and weaknesses and realistically assess their options and limitations in order to avoid renewed frustration experiences. The participants are made aware of which situations trigger their problematic behaviour. The trainers also point out which risks exist, which coping strategies should take place in specific triggering situations and what happens when they return to old social relationships. How can I react when the old group waits 'outside', tries to make contact or even sets up a threat scenario? What

has to happen and what alternatives to old behavioural patterns are there? To what extent can conflicts within the family be dealt with if the family itself is entangled in extremist structures or advocates extremist ideological elements? The safety plan conveys possible coping strategies for these scenarios.

### Networking within the correctional facilities

Within the training sessions and transition management, the trainers communicate with the responsible personnel in the prison. At the end of the training programme, a development report is sent to the prison and, if necessary, it is processed again with the responsible personnel. The participants must consent to the disclosure of information on the basis of applicable data protection laws. An exception to this rule is information that may pose a threat to the participants themselves or to other persons. Due to the previously established trust between trainer and participant, this rarely poses a problem.

### Phase 3: Stabilisation coaching - reintegration

A phase of self-doubt and reflection on one's own patterns of thought and behaviour as part of the training programme in prison is followed by the actual implementation of the targeted change after release from prison. Especially in this phase, the participants are still dependent on support. The stabilisation coaching, the optional support after release, represents the continuation of the training programme after imprisonment. It helps enshrine the newly learned conflict resolution strategies in everyday life and to distance oneself from extremist ideologies and group structures. It lasts 6 to 12 months per individual. A systemic approach is pursued throughout the process, and the results are acti-

vated in stabilisation coaching. In this context, families are also offered the support they need to help a family member reintegrate. The trainers are always available to the family as contact persons. The social support network established in cooperation with the relatives is activated in this phase. Generally, relatives stabilise the participants additionally after their release and support them. They catch them immediately after their discharge and help them keep a distance from the old scene. In this phase, probation officers are also explicitly involved in the stabilisation process. If necessary, they are accompanied by counselling and training programmes for probation officers.



The trainers, with whom a relationship of mutual trust exists through the training programme, are in regular, intensive contact with the participants during this time. They visit them on site and can be reached in case of acute problems. They also offer specific reorientation support. In addition to dealing with conflicts and stressful situations, the focus is now also on work, vocational training and education measures in the interest of a systemic approach. Successful reintegration into an environment of work or vocational training considerably reduces the risk of relapse, because taking responsibility for one's own life is directly linked to the creation of legal income relationships.

This phase is often associated with failures and frustrations, which the participants have to endure. In this difficult situation, there is an enormous risk of relapse and the temptation to rejoin the familiar scene. The trainers help them avoid situations of conflict and maintain self-control. The trainers are also there to help the participants structure their daily and weekly schedules, safeguard their livelihoods and find a place to live. At the same time, key third parties, such as probation officers and other relevant government agencies, are involved. The intensity of the support depends on the needs of the participants. The goal is to only support the participants in their independent actions where it is necessary in order to gradually promote assumption of responsibility for their own lives. The stabilisation coaching provides the participants with important contact partners who know their history and the completed deradicalisation work because they have supported them along the way.

*M. was recently released from prison. He has problems finding a place to live and is repeatedly rejected. At some point he is so frustrated that he damages parts of the facility after being rejected immediately after a visit to the apartment. He knows that this will cause problems. Therefore, he calls his trainer from the programme. He tells him what happened. 'Why did you react like that?' the trainer asks.*

*'Because he wouldn't give me the apartment. Because of my appearance. Because I am a Muslim.'*

*'Okay, I understand. I understand how you felt. My wife has a good job. I do this job here and I also have problems finding an apartment. You have to understand that a rejection is not necessarily due to your faith. Unfortunately, that is the reality on the housing market. It's hard to find an apartment these days.'*

*In the subsequent conversation, the trainer and the participant discuss how they deal with the situation and decide to go to the next apartment visits together. In this specific case, the trainer has decided that additional support is necessary to stabilise the participant and to avoid that the frustration with finding accommodation reduces the success of the training.*



**The success criteria**

## The success criteria

In the course of quality assurance and evaluation of deradicalisation measures, Violence Prevention Network defined the following success criteria:

- ✓ **Accepting** professional support and helping to shape a continuous working relationship
- ✓ Developing and increasing the **capacity for dialogue**
- ✓ Development of **distance** to inhuman attitudes
- ✓ Allowing doubts about one's own beliefs, ability to perform **self-reflection** regarding one's own career progression
- ✓ Developing a **tolerance of ambiguity**
- ✓ **Constructing** a new **private network**, constructing different **social contacts** outside of the extremist scene
- ✓ **Maintaining a distance** from the extremist scene (group, individuals and the media)
- ✓ Orientation in terms of a **personal plan for the future** beyond 'political struggle'
- ✓ **No new crimes**
- ✓ Socio-professional **reintegration**

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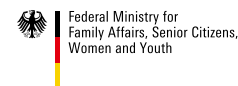
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Demokratie **leben!**



