

# TerRa

## Terrorism and Radicalisation



Prevention, De-radicalisation & Citizenship

Co-funded by the Prevention of and Fight against Crime Programme of the European Union

### Site visit Germany

During our needs assessment, conducted in March 2015, professionals who attended our conference were asked to name projects or approaches currently being conducted in Europe which they felt to be good practices in countering radicalisation or supporting de-radicalisation. Two of the approaches named by respondents were both run by ZDK in Berlin, Germany. Exit has many years of experience in supporting members of the extreme right wing who would like to leave the movement, while Hayat provides family counselling and support to families who are concerned that a family member may be radicalising towards Islamism. In November, TERRA carried out a site visit to Berlin to gather more information about these projects, so that it can feed into the Evidence based policy advice which TERRA will ultimately produce.

### Exit

Exit has many years of experience in working with the extreme right wing, a group which is deeply rooted and continues to cause political unrest and incite hatred and violence in Germany. While Exit will support any member of this group who comes to them for help, it focuses mostly on the upper echelons of the hierarchy within extreme right movements.

During the site visits a member of the TERRA team was able to interview practitioners from Exit, a former radical from the extreme right wing and two representatives from the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth. These interviews further enriched the desk research which had already been carried out by the TERRA research team on the work of Exit. They gave an excellent overview both of where a program of this nature can fit into a national strategy, and how Exit works on a day to day basis. The main points which these interviews highlighted were as follows:

- The program is recognised by the federal government as playing a role in its overall strategy. This recognition is also reflected in the funding situation of Exit, which receives a small but constant amount of money from the government. This financial foundation in turn allows Exit some stability and security that its work is both recognised as valuable, and will continue in the foreseeable future.
- Exit does not actively contact members of the extreme right wing, but its employees are fully updated on the situation within the extreme right wing scene, and know who the main players are. Low budget but impact publicity campaigns ( for example the Trojan Teeshirt campaign, details of which can be found on Exit's website) ensure that Exit's contact details often come into the public eye.
- Interventions can range vastly in time frame, from the moment that a member of the extreme right wing begins to have some first doubts about their membership of the

group to those who, years later, are still troubled by the traces of their past, sometimes within their own social context and sometimes in the form of, for example records of their activities within the scene which can still be found on the internet and which can impact upon their current situation.

- Contact with a member of the extreme right wing can vary enormously in degree of intensity. If someone is in the acute phase of leaving a group, contact can be daily. At the other end of the spectrum, no case is ever considered fully closed, and sometimes years go by between contact moments.
- Support can range from very practical help with matters such as for example help with a change of identity, to afford protection from potential retaliation from the right wing group, or finding a job to psychosocial help through discussions of the ideological aspects of the exit process. No financial support is given, nor protection from criminal proceedings if applicable.

## **Hayat**

Hayat is also run by the Berlin based non profit organisation ZDK. Unlike Exit, Hayat focusses its attention on Islamist extremism. While Exit has many years of experience, Hayat is a fairly new programme, established to tackle the rising problem of Islamist extremism. Its counsellors draw from the expertise built up through Exit's years of experience with the extreme right wing and the two programs are run from the same office, facilitating communication and cooperation between the two.

Like Exit, Hayat receives limited financing from the government, who recognise Hayat as part of a national program.

The most significant difference between the two programs is that Hayat works not directly with the radicalised person themselves, but with their family, friends or other people closely connected to them, using family or friendship ties as a powerful tool to counter the attraction of the radical group.

Some significant points can be highlighted from these interviews and this research process:

- Hayat plays an important role in the federal government's counterterrorism policy, acting as a hotline for the whole of the Eastern part of Germany and dealing specifically with security sensitive cases. In this respect, Hayat maintains an independent identity and agenda, making it more approachable to citizens who are concerned about a family member or friend, but still does the government a valuable service in terms of overall contribution to national security. Interventions of this nature have proved to be not only very effective, but also cost efficient.
- Hayat provides genuine support and help for concerned family members, often mothers, in helping to reinforce family ties which are fraying.
- Its first action is often to distinguish whether a case is simply a question of a harmless conversion to Islam, or becoming more devout, or if there is cause for concern. This is a valuable service which can already prevent strife within a family.
- It provides practical support in terms of help and information surrounding for example the employment situation of the radicalising individual and delivering information about Islam and Islamism and the differences between them.

- Like Exit, Hayat cases can vary dramatically in their degree of intensity, and cases are never considered to be closed.
- Also similarly to Exit, Hayat does not actively target families, instead ensuring that its mission and contact details are publicised and readily available through a variety of media.

The main points of these two cases studies will be laid out in the evidence based policy advice which TERRA will ultimately produce, and a blue print of this kind of project will be derived from it.

The TERRA team would like to extend its thanks to the employees of Exit and Hayat, the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth and other individuals who generously gave their time and attention to this process.