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„Bewährungs- und Straffälligenhilfe
in Zeiten von Populismus“

Work with VEOs. Opportunities and limits

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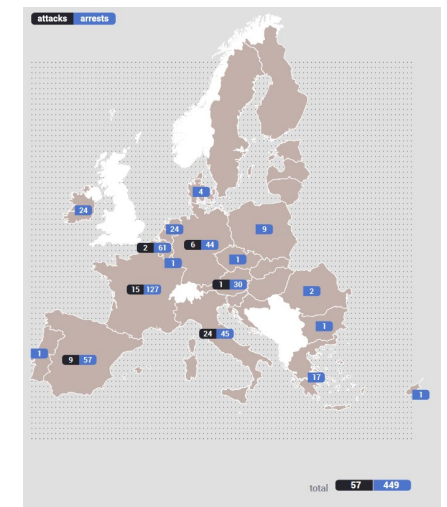
Probation and the work with VEOs

- Probation services – are those services that ensure the supervision of those sentenced to community sanctions and measures. Supervision means both monitoring the compliance with conditions and obligations imposed by the court (and prosecutions in some states) and assisting offenders to reduce reoffending and support desistance from crime.
- Main competencies of probation in relation to terrorist offenders:
 - Provide reports to the court and prosecution office
 - Supervise terrorist offenders in community as alternative to imprisonment
 - Prepare prisoners for release
 - Ensure post-release supervision

Prison and post-prison work of probation

Context - TE-SAT Report 2021

- Number of terrorist attacks appear to be stable – 57 completed, failed and foiled attacks in 2020
- Number of terrorist arrests dropped – 449 in 2020 (about 700 in 2019)
- All completed jihadist attacks were carried out by lone actors
- Diverse background – some EU, some non-EU citizens
- At least 5 jihadist attacks in Europe (Austria, Germany and UK) involved released convicts
- Hundreds of Europeans are still in northeast Syria (maybe about 1000 ?)
- In 2020 – 30 terrorism convicts were released in Belgium, 39 in Spain
- Recidivism is quite low (5%) but dramatic in terms of consequences



International standards that inform practical work of probation – UN, CoE, UE

CoE Guidelines and Handbook for prison and probation services regarding radicalisation and violent extremism. Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/16806f9aa9>

RAN Rehabilitation Manual - Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/ran-papers/docs/ran_rehab_manual_en.pdf

UNODC (2016). Handbook on the Management of Violent Extremist Prisoners and the Prevention of Radicalization to Violence in Prisons. Available at: https://www.unodc.org/pdf/criminal_justice/Handbook_on_VEPs.pdf

Principles of effective practice with VEOs (CoE Guidelines, 2016)

- **Respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms**
- Respect for data protection and privacy:
 - **any supervision should be proportionate,**
 - **information exchange should be based on clear procedures,**
 - appropriate autonomy and independence of rehabilitation.
- Imprisonment as the last resort – youth
- Good prison management
 - Respect diversity, tolerance and human dignity
 - Avoid violence, racism or islamophobia, discrimination
 - Consult with prisoners
 - Staff with intercultural and multi-faith awareness
 - Develop education and rehabilitation activities
 - Adequate resources
- Good assessment
 - Multi-disciplinary teams
 - **Accurate tools used regularly**
- Inter-agency co-operation
 - Within justice, security but also inclusion agencies and faith organizations
- Special programs
 - **Mentoring, former violent extremists**
 - Involvement of religious representatives, volunteers, peers, family members
- Post-release work
 - Links with community organizations
 - Case-by-case – family and networks
 - EM together with other professional interventions

Other sources of knowledge and expertise:

Positive experience from some states – programmes in EU or elsewhere

Evidence for the scientific literature: Barrelle (2015), Christiansen (2015), Dean (2016), Horgan et al (2020), Kruglanski et al (2014), Webber et al (2017) etc.

Recent systematic reviews: Grip et al (2019), Morrison et al (2021)

Case studies – e.g. Maajid Nawaz – ex-islamist

Programmes

- More than 40 programs (El-Said, 2015)
- El-Said (2017) – **four waves** of rehabilitation programs:
 - I. Egypt and Algeria - in the 90s – political reconciliation – lead by their leaders – no attacks after release
 - II. Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Sri-Lanka – after 2000s – mostly religious rehabilitation
 - III. UK, Denmark, Jordan, Kuwait and The Netherlands – after 2005 – combination of elements
 - IV. Germany, UK/Prevent – in the context of Syrian war – focusing on foreign fighters

Interventions in Europe

At least **18 programs** in Europe (Mehra, 2016):

Examples:

- Back on Track – DK (also the Arhus model)
- Entre – Sweden
- Healthy Identity Intervention – UK
- RIVE and PAIRS – France
- TER work - The Netherlands



- Not fully evaluated yet – small numbers, not too many released prisoners, not enough follow up etc.
- Evaluated by peer experts and practitioners – promising – but little ‘hard evidence’.

Programmes at the international level - Deradicalization programme in Sri-Lanka

Evaluated by Webber et al (2018)- Study 1 and Study 2 – de-radicalization (‘as a more permanent desistance from violent extremism than disengagement’: 540) – longitudinal – successful on both!

- Based on **significance quest theory** – 3Ns theory (Need, Narrative, Network)
- On Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) – after 2009 post-defeat
- Prison program with seven elements: educational, vocational, psychological, spiritual, recreational, cultural/family and community
 - Educational – formal schooling or vocational education in **different languages** (incl Tamil)
 - Vocational – training in regionally appropriate vocations (agriculture, beauty culture, wiring etc.). **Business community involved on-site and off-site.**
 - Psychosocial rehabilitation – clinical psychologists and mental health workers, involved prestigious people – as **mentors, creative writing, drama** etc.
 - Spiritual rehabilitation – **various religious organizations** (Hindu, Christian etc.) involved in delivering religious ceremonies, **yoga, mindfulness** etc.
 - Sport & Recreational rehabilitation – sport activities on a daily basis: ‘cricket for change’, regional athletic meets etc., home gardening, art and craft - able to sell
 - Social, cultural and family rehabilitation – call and visit their **families**, prison leaves, **educational tours of Sri Lanka.**
 - Community rehabilitation – **one month out prior to release** and back to provide feedback, meetings with religious and community leaders to discuss reintegration and support, **media campaign to accept them.**

Programmes at the international level - The Saudi Programme

- Started in 2004 by the Min. of Interior
- Heavily resourced
- **Multi-modal**: religious education, psychological counselling, classes in sociology, history, sharia law etc.
- Deep involvement of the **family** – during and after the custody – contribute to the plan, monitor the prisoner's behaviour etc.
- Overseen by a **committee of clerics, psychologists and security officers**.
- Includes a **post-care component** – financial support, work with the family, security monitoring etc.
- Lasts 6 weeks – 2 sessions / week
- More than 4.000 prisoners took part
- Used also for former Guantanamo prisoners – in a separate location – Centre for Counselling and Advice – 10-20% re-offending
- **Adjusted and improved in time** – ongoing evaluation

Evidence from the recent research

Importance of the following factors for probation work:

- Family and friends: connection, parenthood, the shift towards family-based identity; connections outside the radicalised network
- Disillusionment: with members, strategy or daily activities.
- Look also at the obstacles in the reintegration: e.g. fear of retaliation
- Mental health: stress and burnout, resilience
- Identity transformation: alternative identity
- The importance of the type of recruitment – those who entered in an involuntary way – more easy to rehabilitate
- Pay attention to the level of embeddedness – role and time spent in the organization
- Take ideology seriously – or world views
- Education and vocational training – encourages identity reconstruction
- Involve community or local leaders – including religious leaders where relevant – reconstruction of citizenship
- Provide access to economic opportunities – microloans, small bussiness
- Pay attention to PTSD – alcohol abuse, psychologic support
- Pay attention to gender !!!

Current challenges for an effective probation work with VEOs

- Insufficient training and organizational support (e.g. ongoing counselling, or psychological support in case of reoffending)
- Not clear multi-agency protocols
- Not enough resources – staff and time
- Not clear or not stable intervention protocols – they change quite often under political pressure
- ‘The retreat in the office’ – lack of strong community links – difficulties to work with local leaders and local businesses – difficult to take a holistic approach
- Not clear success indicators – is reoffending rate enough?

Questions?

Thanks!

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