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## Closing the “Critical Disconnect“. The establishment of regional prevention networks at the interface of prevention and deradicalisation work using the example of the Federal State Democracy Centre Baden-Wuerttemberg

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### **Abstract**

In many cases of jihadist radicalisation, the direct environment perceived signs and/or knew about the plans of the individual to join a terrorist group (Gill et al., 2014, p. 429). Yet, it can be assumed that only a small number of these persons reported their observations to the competent authorities. The fear of putting the relationship with the radicalising individual or themselves at risk can lead these persons to keep their observations a secret (Williams et al., 2015). This paper argues that the establishment of local points of contact where trained resources persons operate as so-called gatekeepers (Williams et al., 2015, p. 45) could be a meaningful step towards overcoming the lack of trust in the relevant CVE service providers. The establishment of these points of contact as exemplified by the regional prevention network of the Federal State Democracy Centre Baden-Wuerttemberg advances the crucial transition from prevention work to deradicalisation through the qualification of locally embedded resource persons. The points of contact can implement prevention strategies in the districts which are tailored to local requirements and specificities (White House, 2015). Therefore, local points of contact operate at the intersection of prevention work and the federal deradicalisation unit. The concept of a regional prevention network demonstrates the possibility to establish an early warning system with respect to the radicalisation of youths.

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### **1. Introduction**

Across the globe, the implementation of prevention work at the local level taking into account the specific structures and conditions on the ground, is proposed to be helpful for its success –

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particularly, in the long run (Sicherheitsverbund der Schweiz, 2016, p. 11; White House, 2015). When cooperating with local partners from various professional backgrounds prevention work can pay attention to the multi-factored genesis of radicalisation (Vidino, 2010, p. 11).

The conception of preventive measures should be based on specific knowledge of the “why and how” (Koehler, 2017, p. 65) as Koehler emphasises. This holds also true for the inclusion of cooperation partners that should be involved in a prevention project based on their expertise and expected contributions within the framework of existing radicalisation theories.

Beyond the realm of prevention work, it must be noted that scholars have not yet shed much light on deradicalisation work and, in particular, the transitional phases from prevention to intervention. As research suggests, family members are usually the firsts to perceive the early signs of an individual’s radicalisation. However, these persons lack the capacity to adequately read and interpret these signs.

„In 82.4% of the cases, other people were aware of the individual’s grievance that spurred the terrorist plot, and in 79%, other individuals were aware of the individual’s commitment to a specific extremist ideology. In 63.9% of the cases, family and friends were aware of the individual’s intent to engage in terrorism-related activities because the offender verbally told them“ (Gill *et al.*, 2014, p. 429).

Since Williams *et al.* (2015) point out, the psychological barrier of potential informants is very high due to a perception of betraying the individual’s confidence when reporting their observations to the authorities, it can be suspected that information is usually not forwarded to consulting services or security authorities. Hence, this deficit marks the weak spot of the chain of intervention. Moreover, often there is a significant lack of local contact persons as individuals who seek professional advice usually do so in their local environment, for instance at the local police station (Thomas *et al.*, 2017). Thus, there is a strong need for the establishment of local points of contact that are competent to advise persons in need of support. Furthermore, the local contact point should act as a link between those persons who

are close to the individual in question (for example, family members). At the same time, the local contact point must keep an appropriate distance from the potentially radicalising individual to be able to deliver an unbiased assessment of his or her conduct and to introduce the appropriate measures.

The concept of local prevention work which will be introduced in the subsequent chapters is aimed to improve the transitional phases from prevention to deradicalisation work at the local level. In other words, its goal is to close the “critical disconnect” (Williams *et al.*, 2015, p. 46) between persons that are close to the individual in question and those who can provide support and expertise.

## **2. The prevention landscape in Germany: contextualisation of the prevention network PREvent!on**

A great diversity of projects and approaches characterises prevention work in Germany. Kemmesis *et al.* (2016) list 336 prevention projects across Germany established by the state or supported through public funds. These projects are linked to 43 public prevention actors (e.g. ministries or police agencies). It is safe to assume that the number of projects has grown in the last few years (Kober, 2017, p. 222). The federal programme “Live Democracy!” initiated by the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth funds most of these projects<sup>2</sup>. The overall funding amounted to € 104.5 million in 2017. The goal of the federal programme is to promote projects and build structures which nurture “a diverse, non-violent and democratic society“ (Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, 2017).

„The federal programme's target groups include, in particular, children and young people, their parents, relatives and reference persons, and also volunteer, part-time and full-time child care workers, multipliers and governmental and civil society actors.“ (ibid)

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<sup>2</sup> Some states, among these Baden-Wuerttemberg, offer state programmes supported through those funds of the federal budget which are allocated to projects aiming to prevent radicalisation. Those projects are not part of the federal funding measure “Live Democracy!”.

The concept of the federal programme „Live Democracy!“ rests on two pillars. The first of these pillars is the establishment of sustainable structures. These structures provide for the systematic support of the promotion of democracy across Germany and/or capacity-building measures within NGOs which work towards preventing radicalisation. The establishment of the programme *Partnerships for Democracy* – “towns, boroughs and districts throughout Germany [which] are supported in developing and implementing strategies to promote democracy and diversity“ (ibid) as well as the *Federal State Democracy Centres* operating at state level in all 16 states – supplements this pillar. The *Federal State Democracy Centres* facilitate a network of relevant actors within the field in every state; they develop service tools and programmes aiming to prevent radicalisation, promote democracy and operate as points of contact regarding these topics at the state level.

*Pilot Projects* constitute the second pillar of the federal programme “Live Democracy!”. These develop innovative approaches to preventing radicalisation and promoting democracy. The project staff work along seven thematic focus areas towards integrating these model approaches into the pre-existing pedagogical structures.

Beyond the structures of the federal programme “Live Democracy!”, there is another network operating across Germany, and supervised by the Federal Agency for Migration and Refugees (BAMF). The *service hotline radicalisation* constitutes the single point of contact for people who notice signs of radicalisation within a person in their social environment. The staff of the hotline refer persons in need of support to local consultation service points which are partially funded through “Live Democracy!”. Here, trained professionals can offer direct support and advice.

The German landscape of prevention work and its multitude of projects gives rise to many critical voices. Often, critics admonish the lack of a comprehensive national strategy and describe the existing structures as an uncontrolled growth of civil society initiatives (Steinke, 2017). According to Nordbruch however, the potential of civil society actors and the diversity of approaches are the backbone of successful prevention work (Nordbruch, 2017). Koehler (Kompetenzzentrum zur Koordinierung des Präventionsnetzwerk gegen Extremismus

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Baden-Württemberg, 2016, p. 19) also stresses the need for a national strategy but points out that it is especially critical to develop a common set of criteria which offer some guidance for the area of deradicalisation work. Despite the plethora of publications addressing the topic radicalisation prevention, the field still remains at an embryonic state in Germany (Kober, 2017, p. 239).

This article aims to contribute to the systematisation of prevention work. It shall do so by collating a transparent summary of the applied concepts, and theoretical foundations, as Kober (2017, p. 237) and others demand – a crucial step towards the sustainable long-term development of the field. To this end, the article lists the conceptual and academic foundations which have provided guidance for the development of concrete measures, and the implementation hereof.

The prevention network *PREvent!on* which is to be introduced in this article is part of the *Federal State Democracy Centre Baden-Wuerttemberg* and, within the context of “Live Democracy!”, an important manifestation of prevention work supervised by civil society in Germany as the *Youth Foundation Baden-Wuerttemberg*, a private foundation, coordinates the *Federal State Democracy Centre Baden-Wuerttemberg*. For the development of a prevention project, and hence for the project *PREvent!on*, a specific understanding of radicalisation is instrumental. The concept underlying *PREvent!on* will be presented subsequently. The introduction is based on the work of Coquelin and Ostwaldt (2018). Prior to the introduction of the concept, the author will spell out the implications of academic work for the approach pursued by the prevention network *PREvent!on*.

### **3. Radicalisation – a concrete conception of a complex phenomenon**

Whenever we speak of radicalisation, we must be clear about what we mean by “radical”, and how we can define radicalism accordingly. This holds also true for prevention work. Before we can develop preventive measures, we must establish what exactly it is we want to prevent, and how we can assess a problematic behaviour or opinion which need be prevented.

Therefore, first, I must stress the relativity of radicalism. Radicalism is tied to a specific place at a specific time within a specific context. Terms such as “extreme” or “radical” require a certain understanding of what a particular society considers to be moderate or mainstream. Only when possessing this knowledge, one can characterise certain behaviours and opinions as deviant, hence “radical” or “extreme”.

“What one society considers “radical”, will be consensus in another. And what is believed to be “extremist” today, may be a fundamental part of the state order tomorrow.” (Neumann, 2013, p. 4)

Academic debate has produced a number of definitions for the term radicalisation, e.g. the adoption of the ideology of jihadist Salafism (Frindte *et al.*, 2016, pp. 2–3). Another account of radicalisation describes it as a process,

“which results in violent acts conducted by an individual or a group of individuals. Hereby, violence is closely linked to a socially, politically, and religiously motivated ideology which is rejected by the dominant political, social or cultural order.” (Khosrokhavar, 2016, p. 29)

Scholars neither agree on the meaning of radicalisation, nor on the individual concepts amounting to the process of radicalisation (Pisoiu, 2012, p. 10; Sedgwick, 2010). For example, there is no consensus on the question whether or not violence necessarily constitutes an element of radicalisation (Koehler, 2017, pp. 67–68). Consequently, this debate led to the decision to discriminate between violent and non-violent radicalisation (Bartlett and Miller, 2012) and to the introduction of the concept of activism as the antipode of radicalisation (McCauley and Moskalenko, 2009).

Dalgaard-Nielsen defines radicalisation emphasising the personal development, rather than the outcome of radicalisation; it is the “growing readiness to pursue and support far-reaching changes in society that conflict with, or pose a direct threat to, the existing order” (Dalgaard-Nielsen, 2010, p. 798). Ongoing corroborates this understanding:

„[W]e use the term ‘radicalisation’ to refer to a process of personal development whereby an individual adopts ever more extreme political or politico-religious ideas and goals, becoming convinced that the attainment of these goals justifies extreme methods.“ (Ongering, 2007, p. 3)

When attempting to answer the question why first and foremost young people radicalise, scholars and practitioners agree that there is no uniform profile of individuals joining Salafist groups, traveling to Syria or Iraq or planning a terrorist attack in their home country. On the contrary, it is the seeming normality which becomes evident when examining those individuals’ backgrounds and biographies. Al-Lami asserts that “recent studies of ‘jihadists’ have shown that the common characteristic among them seems to be their ‘normality’ [...]. In other words, it could be anyone.“ (Al-Lami, 2009, p. 3; see also Gill, 2007, p. 152; Silber and Bhatt, 2007, p. 8; Hasenclever and Sändig, 2011, p. 208). Based on this assumption, distilling factors with predicative character for the radicalisation of youths presents a major challenge. Without the knowledge of these factors, however, prevention work is groping in the dark.

Building on the insights of the four big theory schools, the *sociological approach* (Roy, 2006; Khosrokhavar, 2016), *framing theory* (Sageman, 2004; Wiktorowicz, 2005), the *empiricist school* (Nesser, 2004), and the *psychological approach* (Horgan, 2005), three levels of radicalisation factors can be mapped out.

### *Three levels of radicalisation*

In the recent past, scholarship on radicalisation has produced a multi-level model featuring – with respect to radicalisation factors – an individual level, a group level, and a society level.

At the **individual level**, we can distinguish a multitude of factors. The International Centre For The Prevention of Crime (2015) lists 14 factors<sup>3</sup> affecting the individual level. Mafaalani *et al.* (2016, p. 6) stress that social disintegration combined with so-called grievances are one of the most important explanatory models. The term grievances

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<sup>3</sup> These are: the socioeconomic level, employment, education, criminal behaviour, personal crisis, age (being young), gender (men), negative experiences, military training, national identity (exclusion and xenophobia), nationals/immigrants, search for identity, religion, mental health (International Centre For The Prevention Of Crime 2015, p. 34).

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encompasses all forms of social or structural discrimination or other negative environmental influences perceived by the individual. According to Neumann (2012), radical ideologies would not resonate with an individual if she or he did not perceive or experience any grievances. Grievances are thus the breeding ground for a radical ideology to thrive.

Sageaman describes youths as “enthusiastic volunteers“ (2007, p. 1), i.e. young individuals aspiring to build a utopia that promises honour, glory, and respect – which life had so far denied them. Kruglanski *et al.* understand this impetus to join a radical group as a quest for significance“ (2014, p. 73) feeding of a deeply rooted human desire “to matter, to be someone, to have respect“ (ibid.). Kruglanski *et al.* (2014) consider this pursuit of control, self-esteem, skills, and success etc. to be a key explanatory variable when examining people’s motives to turn to radical groups.

“In summary, the seeming heterogeneity of motives underlying engagement in terrorism boils down to a major underlying motivation - the quest for personal significance.” (Kruglanski *et al.*, 2014, p. 74)

What remains unclear is why many people who in fact, perceive grievances or experience discrimination do not choose to radicalise in order to escape their lives (Horgan, 2005). Insights on resilience factors remain a crucial research desideratum.

At the **group level**, relationships within social networks are of major importance. Factors taking effect at the individual level are mostly absorbed at the group level and are integrated into dynamic, interdependent structures within the group. This is where grievances take their full effect. The Youth Justice Board (2012, pp. 27–28) summarises all radicalisation factors affecting the group level as pull factors<sup>4</sup>: solidarity, social and personal bonds, higher status within the group, self-confidence, adventure, and membership in the global Muslim community. These pull factors can also be applied to the aforementioned individual and society levels (vgl. RAN Issue Paper, 2016, p. 4). Five essential elements ultimately describe the characteristic interdependences at the group level (Bartlett *et al.*, 2010, p. 31). Beyond the

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<sup>4</sup> Radicalisation can be understood as an interaction between push and pull factors (vgl. RAN Issue Paper (2016, p. 4)). Push factors are those which derive from an individual’s intrinsic motivation. Pull factors are those which refer to external appeals (Horgan (2005)).

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perception of group-specific grievances (for instance, the discrimination or oppression of the Muslim community), an often-rudimentary knowledge of Islam is a key feature. Furthermore, a youth-specific quest for adventure – accompanied by the appeal of being part of a group which opposes common views in society – is a driving force. A third aspect is an increased sense of self-esteem vis-à-vis an individual's status in the group. Within the context of radicalisation, the group level represents a mediating tier between the influential factors at the individual, and the society levels.

At the **society level**, grand narratives take effect, for example the idea of a global war led by the West against all Muslims respectively Islamic states. In addition to incidents of discrimination experienced by a majority of Muslims (Frindte *et al.*, 2012, p. 182; Brettfeld and Wetzels, 2007, pp. 104–108), Islamophobia is on the rise in Germany (Decker *et al.*, 2016, p. 50; Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2015, p. 8). Also, failed social integration can result in an identification with the global community of Muslims, the “NeoUmma” (Khosrokhavar, 2016, p. 50), and a growing solidarity with Muslims living in war zones. The narrative of a global war against Muslims – an often-invoked concept in jihadist propaganda – is a very powerful motif among radical propagandists because in most cases, military intervention of Western states is directed at Islamic countries, notably at Iraq and Afghanistan. This has reinforced the belief in a conspiracy of the West against all Muslims. Not without reason, in a speech before the US Senate (2007) Marc Sageman demanded to withdraw all US troops from Iraq to deprive Al-Qaida of the foundation of their propagandist narratives.

#### 4. Radicalisation – theoretical models for practical application<sup>5</sup>

Prevention work requires a sound, dependable, and in particular, a practical definition of radicalisation. The radicalisation of young individuals must be portrayed in a way that captures the complexities of radicalisation processes on the one hand, and allows for the generalisation of individual types and factors of radicalisation on the other hand. Moreover, in

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<sup>5</sup> Coquelin and Ostwaldt (2018) have produced a comprehensive account thereto.

the specific pedagogical context of prevention service providers, the definition of radicalisation must offer concrete points of reference for the development of measures and projects. A crucial basis for the conceptualisation of radicalisation is the consensus within scholarship on radicalisation: the processual quality and non-linearity of radicalisation which ultimately exclude monocausal relationships and emphasise multi-factored causes for individuals to radicalise (Mafaalani *et al.*, 2016, p. 3; Neumann, 2013, p. 3).

Subsequently, the following part will briefly present a practice-oriented theory hereto, which – supplemented by practical advice and approaches – Coquelin and Ostwaldt (2018) recently established.

#### *Radicalisation as “De-pluralisation”*

Understanding radicalisation as de-pluralisation as suggested by Koehler (2017, pp. 74–80) allows us to grasp the radicalisation process in terms of an ideologization, and along with it, as an

„individual depluralization of political concepts and values (e.g. justice, freedom, honor, violence, democracy), according with those concepts employed by a specific ideology“ (Koehler, 2017, p. 74).

This approach can explain radicalisation in a way that enables prevention workers, and ultimately, pedagogical practitioners to map the constitutive aspects of a radicalisation process and derive suitable preventive measures therefor. An increasing ideologization leads to a growing significance of those perceived problems which are interpreted based on a specific ideology. Therefore, deradicalisation and prevention work can be understood as “re-pluralisation” (Koehler, 2017, p. 80), according to Koehler.

The following fictive example concerning jihadist radicalisation can illustrate the process of ideologization in term of its de-pluralising effects: While prior to the inception of the radicalisation process, an individual may be prone to perceive a cashier’s impoliteness in the supermarket as the result of a bad temper or a short night, an increasing ideologization can result in a shifting evaluation of the very same situation: The radicalising individual may take

the cashier's attitude personally, and interpret the situation based on their acquired ideological frames. Now, the cashier's behaviour is not just the result of a bad temper or a short night; the reason for his impoliteness – as the radicalising individual perceives it – is the cashier's hostility towards the identity of a specific group consisting of Muslims, in the individual's subjective assessment as a Muslim.

This narrow interpretative framework noticeably reduces an individual's options to confront perceived and experienced injustices. Radicalising youths supplement experienced discrimination by adding those incidents (e.g. the fictive situation at the supermarket cash register) which can only be assessed as hostile or discriminatory when viewed through the group-specific lens of growing ideologization. Common daily challenges are augmented with jihadist narratives, such as the motif of a Western alliance of crusaders waging war against the Muslim world, or the idea of an American-Jewish conspiracy against Muslims. These narratives enhance the quantity and force of the youths' perceived problems. Using these ideological strategies, jihadist groups succeed in reducing – de-pluralising – the options at the individual level to such an extent that violence increasingly becomes the only viable course of action.

#### *Relative deprivation and cognitive opening*

Complex processes precede the de-pluralising effects of an appropriation by radical groups, and an accompanying ideologization. These processes can explain the vulnerability of young individuals who are particularly prone to join jihadist groups. Hence, prevention work depends on a theoretical model which can adequately describe the motives for youths to turn towards radical groups, and which can also serve as the basis for pedagogical measures therefor. Hence, this paper takes account of the “theory of relative deprivation” (Gurr (1970) as well as its sociological extension, the “theory of social disintegration” (Heitmeyer, 2008). These two theoretical models are supplemented by the approach of a “cognitive opening” (Wiktorowicz (2005). Subsequently, all three will be examined in terms of their applicability within the context of radicalisation prevention.

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A vertical arrow can illustrate the understanding of relative deprivation underlying this paper (Coquelin and Ostwaldt, 2018). Along an axis from bottom to top, the social status can be noted. Multiple contexts define this status which varies among individuals – a crucial fact: The self-assessment of an individual’s satisfaction is relative and context-dependent. This understanding represents an interpretation of relative deprivation which is specifically tailored to the prerequisites of prevention work. Membership in a specific social group creates expectations towards one’s position vis-à-vis the whole of society. Based on this objectively attributable membership in a social group (for example, persons with a secondary school degree, or children of academics) combined with a subjective sense of belonging, for instance the self-assessment as an intellectual individual, a person formulates certain expectations towards their life and professional career. These expectations manifest at different levels. They cover the pursuit of economic success, and social advancement as well as more individual objectives.

Furthermore, other features and/or affiliations affect a person’s expectations towards herself or himself. Faith, gender, skin colour, native language or other characteristics may constrain a person’s possibilities to participate in social structures. Individual and collective experiences of discrimination lead to the discouraging experience that an anticipated social status cannot at all or hardly be acquired. The discrepancy between an anticipated status, which is the result of various self-assessments and external attributions, objective and subjective experiences of discrimination, and other constraining factors such as calamities or bad health amount to an individual’s relative deprivation.

Consequently, effects of relative deprivation can result in a cognitive opening, provided that they are not absorbed by an individual’s personal environment. Wiktorowicz (2004) depicts a corresponding phase in the *Al-Muhajiroun model* which can explain why particularly young people are susceptible to new and often-radical conceptions of the world. Wiktorowicz describes how youths due to personal crises or traumatic experiences (vgl. Koehler, 2017, p. 15; Fink and Haerne, 2008, p. 3) are prone to question traditional models of society and search for alternative meanings and solutions. Here, the propaganda of radical

actors starts, aiming to link individual experiences of deprivation to respective world views and a clear-cut idea of good and bad while undermining the values of a democratic society.

### **5. Implications for prevention work and deradicalisation**

The summary of the state of research reveals concrete implications for prevention work. Prevention work must take into account a plethora of forms, factors, and trajectories of radicalisation (Koehler, 2017, pp. 70–74). Most importantly, it must intervene where young people experience deprivation and feel limited in their self-efficacy. Treating radicalisation as a youth-specific phenomenon requires a high degree of sensitivity: It involves an unbiased assessment of radicalisation as a process that must not be condemned a priori but should be understood as an expression of perceived injustice.

Consequently, prevention work that operates through pedagogical measures against the aforementioned mechanisms of radicalisation unfolds primarily at the local level (Williams *et al.*, 2015, 45–46). Therefore, the listed elements of religiously motivated radicalisation can be countered primarily at the local level. Understanding radicalisation as depluralization stemming from the perception of individual deprivation and resulting in a cognitive opening allows for the prevention of these factors within an environment that prohibits the stigmatisation of radicalising individuals as “extremists”. The introduced concept can sensitise pedagogical professionals for problematic situations which may favour radicalisation. These situations may be countered by pedagogical measures designed to provide concrete alternatives to the dualistic narratives of ideologizing actors referring to a clear-cut friend-foe scheme take effect. The collaboration of actors with different professional backgrounds is essential due to the multi-faceted patterns of radicalisation. Therefore, prevention work that aims to counter grievances by re-pluralising opportunities at the individual and/or group levels should be rooted within the social environment of a radicalising youth. Furthermore, it must present alternative perspectives tailored to the subjective view of

the individual (United States Attorney's Office Minneapolis, 2015; Los Angeles Interagency Coordination Group, 2015).

The multi-factored genesis of radicalisation and the concept distilled thereof underline that the development of preventive measures requires a scientific foundation guided by (inter)national discourse. Contrastingly, the implementation of preventive measures can take a particularly strong effect within the immediate environment of young people. Hence, this is where prevention work must set in.

Hereupon, prevention work can only succeed as a combination of top-down and bottom-up processes. Consequently, the strategic and structural development of prevention work should be advanced at a higher level. That way, on the one hand structural considerations drawn from the dialogue of academia, civil society, policy-makers and security authorities can be implemented into qualification measures directed at prevention work professionals. On the other hand, practitioners can provide feedback on the target group and the feasibility of proposed measures. This feedback provided by specialists and partner organisations that are in close contact with the young people in question is crucial for the conception of successful preventive measures. It ensures that the measures reach the respective target group and can be applied within the (pedagogical) context of the specialists on the ground. Moreover, it is important to determine the needs of practitioners in order to provide tailored services. This is where the interplay between top-down and bottom-up processes becomes fundamental: On the one hand, the needs of especially trained professionals on the ground are an important benchmark for the challenges which must be tackled. On the other hand, a global perspective entails the possibility to recognise problematic situations at an early stage, to monitor developments at the macro level and to translate them into practices at the micro level.

The often project-centred focus of funding structures in Germany and the goal of prevention work to trigger positive long-term change present a paradox that is difficult to overcome. Thus, the local implementation of projects as well as the interlocking with control structures can contribute to a positive, stabilising long-term effect of prevention work. A great

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number of actors and institutions can directly apply their expertise within the existing structures of youth work, youth social work, social assistance, education, and (social) pedagogy. Moreover, a close networking of civil society and state actors facilitates the positive impact of existing structures. To that end, the establishment of an umbrella institution, which coordinates all activities and supervises the actor networks and initiatives, is fundamental. The subsequently introduced regionalisation concept of the Federal State Democracy Centre Baden-Wuerttemberg supported by its local contact points can exercise this intermediary function.

Furthermore, the insights presented below can also be applied to the purposes of youth deradicalisation work. The advisory system currently present in the German *Länder*, and at the federal level prescribes a central service hotline at the state and at the federal level. When contacted through the hotline, staff send out trained professionals to the individual(s) in need of support. In view of the above-mentioned insights indicating a higher efficacy of prevention work tailored to a specific social environment it is safe to assume that this concept will also prove itself within the context of deradicalisation. At present, the centralised organisational structures of deradicalisation programmes prohibit an adjustment to the local particularities of young people's social environment.

### *The interface of prevention and deradicalisation*

If one thinks the regionalisation of prevention and deradicalisation through, the much-cited *prevention triad*<sup>6</sup> in psychopathology (Caplan, 1964) reveals an intersection of the fields of secondary and tertiary (i.e. selective and indicated)<sup>7</sup> prevention. The first phase of this triad, called primary prevention, does not target a specific group but all persons, based on the resources available in order to empower them to improve their self-efficacy. In contrast, secondary prevention especially targets individuals that reveal a number of concrete risk

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<sup>6</sup> Caplan developed a triad consisting of primary, secondary and tertiary prevention which is central for the current understanding and approach of prevention work (Caplan 1964).

<sup>7</sup> According to Gordon (1983) who coined the terms universal, selective and indicated as an alternative to the prevention triad, the focus here is on the transition from selective to indicated prevention.

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factors. The previous chapter has introduced these factors for the context of jihadist radicalisation. Tertiary prevention is aimed at people who are situated in clearly problematic situations, i.e. on the path to radicalisation. Measures of tertiary prevention attempt to prevent further escalation; they also support individuals to distance themselves from their extremist environment (Johansson, 2012, p. 3).

In view of the practice of prevention work, the theory-based academic debate about the intersection between the secondary and the tertiary prevention has high practical relevance. Even though scholars have discussed the different stages of the prevention triad for years, scholarship has largely neglected the interlocking of prevention and deradicalisation work. Here, “interlocking” does not mean the amalgamation of concrete approaches. Much rather, it refers to a structural symbiosis of approaches when assessing individual cases, at the border area between prevention and deradicalisation. The question at what point one can speak of a risk situation with regard to an individual illustrates the practical necessity to further such a debate. This question goes along with the decision when measures of tertiary prevention should replace approaches of secondary prevention; in other words, which institutions are competent and responsible. In fact, the divide between tertiary and secondary prevention is an important matter of institutional competences in Baden-Wuerttemberg. In the context of risk factors, Beutel and Weinberger call this transitional phase “intervention” (Beutel and Weinberger, 2016, p. 6) and specify:

“Similar to ‘crisis counselling’, this is about helping individuals whom community members and others - peers, friends, family, law enforcement, mental health, education, or social work professionals - identify at risk engaging in violence, but who have not yet taken any significant steps to fulfil that intent.” (Beutel and Weinberger, 2016, p. 6)

In Baden-Wuerttemberg, a largely useful structural separation of prevention and deradicalisation has been established: While civil society and non-state actors, coordinated by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Integration, operate within the realm of primary prevention,

security authorities, i.e. the Ministry of the Interior<sup>8</sup> and the police, supervise the activities in the tertiary sector. Hence, secondary prevention demarcates a sensitive area – the transition from primary-preventive approaches such as individual consultations to interventions of the security authorities. Exemplified in the case of Baden-Wuerttemberg, an expressed need to coordinate the various actors becomes clear: An alignment of prevention and deradicalisation approaches entails great advantages for both fields. Trained staff who have built a trustful relationship with a radicalising youth could intervene through pedagogical measures and avert security hazards reported by a youth's social environment. In cases where these pedagogical approaches fail, deradicalisation programmes can be additionally implemented.

*Overcoming the “critical disconnect” – the alignment of prevention and deradicalisation*

Williams *et al.* (2015) and Thomas *et al.* (2017) have stressed the need to align prevention work and deradicalisation measures in their respective studies on community-based radicalisation prevention, and mechanisms of information flows directed at security authorities and deradicalisation programmes. Gill *et al.* (2014) outline the fundamental challenges in their study on “homegrown terrorism“:

“In 82.4% of the cases, other people were aware of the individual's grievance that spurred the terrorist plot, and in 79%, other individuals were aware of the individual's commitment to a specific extremist ideology. In 63.9% of the cases, family and friends were aware of the individual's intent to engage in terrorism-related activities because the offender verbally told them.“ (Gill *et al.*, 2014, p. 429)

This finding indicates that the direct environment of a radicalising person is the unit which first perceives the specific and less specific signs of the radicalisation process. However it can be suggested that an unspecific part of the information flow ends with the observation of those signs because the psychological threshold to report information appears to be very high:

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<sup>8</sup> The Competence Centre for the Coordination of the Prevention Network against Extremism in Baden-Wuerttemberg (KPEBW), which was established by the Ministry of the Interior, is implementing services for parties concerned by religious radicalisation in cooperation with a partner from civil society.

Williams *et al.* (2015) revealed enlightening information in this context: On the one hand, they pointed out that especially friends, and relatives of radicalising individuals – so-called associate-gatekeepers that are exposed to the same social milieu – are in an excellent position to detect signs of radicalisation. As corroborated by the findings of Gill *et al.* (2014), these results contradict the hitherto pre-dominant assumption that particularly, teachers, social workers and religious authorities are most qualified to identify first signs of a radicalisation process.

Moreover, Williams *et al.* (2015, p. 51) determined that persons who suspect an individual in their environment to radicalise do not report their observations to the competent service providers because they fear to betray the confidence of the person in question, or to endanger themselves or the allegedly radicalising individual. Findings suggest that particularly those professionals, that are not involved in a deradicalisation project, do not dependably pass on any observations or suspicions with regard to a potentially radicalising person to the competent points of contact or authorities. In this respect, professionals and persons who are close to the individual in question behave very much alike. It seems to be irrelevant whether the competent professional is from a security agency or a civil society organisation: The kind and extent of reservations towards competent institutions appear to be the same. This holds also true for the fears regarding the danger for themselves and the relationship of trust with the individual in question (Williams *et al.*, 2015, p. 53).

In a nutshell, this means that in contrast to previous assumptions, especially close friends and relatives appear to be well positioned to detect signs of radicalisation. Furthermore, professionals and friends or family members tend have the same reservations towards civil society organisations and service providers of the security authorities. Williams *et al.* (2015, p. 46) describe these reservations which constrain the flow of information towards consultation services as a “critical disconnect”.

The goal must be to overcome this “critical disconnect” (Williams *et al.*, 2015, p. 46) by strengthening the relationship between professionals on the one hand, and friends and family of the radicalising individual on the other hand. For this purpose, qualification

measures targeted at gatekeepers, i.e. professionals who can act as points of contact within a specific environment, must be implemented at different levels. These measures should aim to counter the reservations of professionals towards their own colleagues who can then serve as contact points in their own ranks. Local structures as well as the subsequently introduced qualification programme can close the gaps in the chain of communication.

Beyond this finding, Thomas *et al.* (2017) point out that professionals that have identified suspicious actions or undertakings prefer to report their observations to familiar points of contact such as the local police station, instead of passing on information anonymously to a staff member of a service hotline (Thomas *et al.*, 2017, p. 9). Evidently, qualified local structures are necessary to ensure that hints are registered and investigated. To this end, professionals must be trained to interpret and categorise different signs of radicalisation in order to successfully liaise with gatekeepers.

## **6. The prevention network PREvent!on established by the Federal State Democracy Centre Baden-Wuerttemberg**

As was shown in the preceding chapters, prevention and deradicalisation work must be embedded in the local context through a bottom-up strategy. At the same time, successful prevention and deradicalisation measures require a scientifically based approach in order to convey relevant knowledge to the partners on the ground. Based on these as well as the previously presented assumptions, an approach towards regionalising and aligning prevention and deradicalisation work is introduced subsequently.

The academic discourse summarises these approaches as “government network approach[es; J.O.]” (Dalgaard-Nielsen, 2016, p. 135). There are a number of government network approaches which have been tested in practice, first and foremost, the British CHANNEL Programme which is one pillar of the PREVENT Strategy targeting multiple phenomena. This strategy implemented in England in 2012 allowed for professionals from various backgrounds to receive additional qualifying measures, and a closer network of

partners in the field. The US model project for the establishment of “community-led multisector CVE programs” (Ambrozik, 2018, p. 2), initiated in 2014, instructed three regions – Boston, Los Angeles, and Minneapolis-St. Paul – to come up with a prevention strategy.

The concept of the prevention network *PREvent!on* also relies on different approaches of community-based prevention work and the establishment of networks at the local level. Thus, it features parallels to respectively advancements of the aforementioned programmes, especially the CHANNEL Programme, which will be addressed in the subsequent section.

The prevention network *PREvent!on* of the Federal State Democracy Centre Baden-Wuerttemberg capitalises the qualification of pedagogical staff in municipal institutions to establish points of contact within existing control structures.

The modular qualification measures are aimed to convey fundamental competences with regard to the implementation of prevention programmes and radicalisation assessments. Furthermore, the points of contact are linked and supervised by a local service provider which ensures the embedment into local structures. This way, prevention can also serve as an early warning system which – tailored to the specific infrastructure – can implement local service and prevention strategies and thus, obviate alarmism.

The little available information about the British CHANNEL Programme suggests that the programme involves so-called “Channel Police Practitioners (CPP)” (HM Government, 2015, p. 9) who coordinate its implementation in the region. The activities of these CPPs vary across regions. They are however always affiliated with the local police station (ibid). This is an important difference compared to the prevention network *PREvent!on*: Even though the police are involved as an external partner in the local network, exclusively civil society organisations coordinate the local points of contact as well as the development of a regional prevention strategy. *PREvent!on* pursues an approach which interferes at an earlier stage, within the realm of primary prevention. While CHANNEL focuses on the identification and support of individuals at risk (HM Government, 2015, p. 5), *PREvent!on* also provides information on the phenomenon of radicalisation as well as services regarding the promotion of democracy

Overall, the prevention network's goal is to support the development of specific prevention strategies in districts through the establishment of local points of contact. Moreover, the prevention network aims to further train pedagogical staff as "resource persons for the prevention of extremism" and thus, embed knowledge about prevention and radicalisation in the local structures.

### *Decentralisation of prevention through local Democracy Centres*

The local Democracy Centres operate as training, service, and networking institutions within the realm of radicalisation prevention. They disseminate prevention programmes in the districts and provide the interested public with information in terms of consulting services and supporting leaflets. Upon request, the Democracy Centres make specialist presentations, workshops, and simulation games available<sup>9</sup> which are either realised by a qualified local resource person or a staff member of the Federal State Democracy Centre Baden-Wuerttemberg. The work of the local Democracy Centres strengthens a pluralist and democratic society and is directed at all forms of politically and religiously motivated radicalisation as well as all kinds of inhuman or anti-democratic attitudes. Subsequently, the concept addressing the prevention of jihadist radicalisation, and the interface of prevention and deradicalisation will be introduced.

After a tender submission period, the Federal State Democracy Centre Baden-Wuerttemberg charges a bearer which operates in a district with the implementation of a local Democracy Centre. This assignment renders possible that the existing regional bearer network can be put to use to reinforce prevention work. The selection of the bearer which is supposed to implement the local Democracy Centre reflects the diversity of network partners within the different districts. While it can be useful to establish an independent point of contact in one district, state agencies, for instance the district administration, may be a better choice in another district. The local embedment of the bearer of the local point of contact is fundamental because the prevention concepts are transposed through existing structures –

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<sup>9</sup> More information on the activities and services of the Federal State Democracy Centre Baden-Wuerttemberg are available via [www.demokratiezentrum-bw.de](http://www.demokratiezentrum-bw.de).

instead of establishing new networks. Practice has revealed that using existing structures to implement strategies and measures is easier and reduces the threshold for all actors involved. The submission of tailored concepts ensures that the resources of the respective bearer and the district are adequately allocated and that there is room for individual adjustments. The contract also obliges the implementing institutions to train their staff by means of the modular qualification programme.

According to Ambrozik (2018, p. 19), successful CVE strategies require – beyond the structural involvement of the cooperation partner – their general interest in CVE, the availability of sufficient resources, motivated employees and a mentoring facilitator. Furthermore, the local Democracy Centres interact with state agencies and partners from civil society aspiring to compile a local prevention strategy involving pedagogical and political considerations alike. Again, a wide network of institutions also encompassing local mosque associations and/or migrant organisations is crucial.

The engagement of migrant and Islamic associations is based on the assumption that these communities contribute to the solution of the problem, not to the problem itself. The British CHANNEL Programme was criticised because it had defined Muslim communities as target group for preventive measures; thus, it did not clearly separate between religiously extremist groups, and those communities exercising their religion in a way that is covered by the right to freedom of religion (Hammonds, 2011, pp. 243–244). Moreover, especially Muslim associations repeatedly claimed that they had been spied on under the cover of the PREVENT Programme (HM Government, 2011, p. 12). An evaluation of the PREVENT Programme addressed these concerns and integrated a more differentiated definition of Islamic communities (ibid). Based on the evaluation, however, it is fairly impossible to tell if the engagement of Islamic and non-religious migrant organisations now relies on a resource-based approach.

The efforts of the local Democracy Centres follow the principle that resources available in the districts should be used and structures built to counter violent extremism must be strengthened from within (Ambrozik, 2018, p. 3).

*Gatekeepers' support of deradicalisation work*

The local Democracy Centre gathers all requests regarding the prevention of extremism, and democracy education within the district and processes them according to the resources at hand. If necessary, the Federal State Democracy Centre Baden-Wuerttemberg is involved which then provides specialist support. Such a prevention network with a local focus, and a centralised, strategy development can also enrich the deradicalisation work of federal service providers. The current service system in the German *Länder* prescribes a centralised service hotline. Upon request, trained resource persons are sent to the persons in need of support. The regional structures of the prevention network *PREvent!on* facilitate the exchange between deradicalisation projects and gatekeepers on the ground by training qualified professionals to become qualified gatekeepers (Williams *et al.*, 2015, p. 45). This way, the aforementioned “critical disconnect” between specialists and individuals in need of support can presumably be overcome.

Information flows via the resource persons in two directions. On the one hand, persons who recognise signs of radicalisation in an individual can approach the resource persons and report their observations. Since the resource persons are members of the social environment of the person that wants to impart their concerns, the presumption is that a conversation can take place with a lesser risk of a breach of trust on the part of the radicalising individual than it would be risked in case of a direct intervention of the nationwide deradicalisation unit. The resource person can then collate a first assessment – if necessary, in consultation with the specialist units of the Federal State Democracy Centre Baden-Wuerttemberg – and provide recommendations for further actions. This way, trained professionals can obviate alarmism while solving a problem within a youth group using pedagogical tools such as workshops.

The federal deradicalisation unit can also approach the local service providers and request the support of a trained resource person. This proceeding is especially reasonable when responding to a case which has emerged in a specific district where resource persons that are integrated in the individual's social environment are available. Personal data are not disclosed. In a large state such as Baden-Wuerttemberg, a comprehensive development of

social structures by means of a federal deradicalisation unit is not always feasible. However, when supplemented by the support of the resource persons trained as gatekeepers as well as the local Democracy Centres, the development of regional and local structures is more comprehensive and adjusted to the resources available on the ground.

*Modular qualification for resource persons*

The qualification of resource persons is based on the previously introduced definition of radicalisation and takes place in a modular training system. The qualification as “resource person for the prevention of extremism in the area of jihadist extremism” encompasses four modules which convey knowledge about radicalisation, the factors and signs of radicalisation, and the tools necessary to determine cases of radicalisation<sup>10</sup>. Expertise is imparted through practice-oriented methods to ensure applicability within the work environment of the future resource persons.

The first module contains basic information about the approaches and structures of the Federal State Democracy Centre Baden-Wuerttemberg and offers annually changing focus topics. Participants receive the opportunity to learn about the state-wide specialist units as well as the qualification programmes. The second module is a two-day introductory course. Participants acquire fundamental knowledge about the Islamic religion, the distinction between Islam and the Salafist ideology, and about the understanding of radicalisation underlying the concept of prevention. These insights are consolidated and complemented with practical exercises in a third two-day module. Furthermore, this module offers a glimpse of the practice of deradicalisation. Participants can choose a thematic focus for the fourth consecutive module. Further information is provided in a reader which participants can use to expand their knowledge. Following the programme, trained resource persons can choose to learn about workshops and simulation games which they can realise in their institutions, and potentially in the catchment area of their contact point. Becoming a gatekeeper, i.e. a

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<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, the Federal State Democracy Centre Baden-Wuerttemberg offers modular qualification programmes for the areas of “Support in cases of right-wing extremist incidents”, and “Advising victims of right-wing violence”.

“resource person for deradicalisation” requires another one-day seminar which provides an introduction of the basics of deradicalisation work. The intersections of prevention work and deradicalisation are pointed out in cooperation with the state-wide operating CVE relevant service provider. Resource persons trained in deradicalisation, Salafist ideology and radicalisation factors that also obtain pedagogical skills can offer crucial support to staff of deradicalisation projects in terms of developing local resources.

## **7. Conclusion and discussion**

The previously introduced concept of a regional prevention network demonstrates the possibility to establish an early warning system with respect to the radicalisation of youths, to align preventive approaches along the stages of the prevention triad and ultimately with deradicalisation measures. Furthermore, the concept provides an opportunity to reconcile local prevention programmes and reduce the psychological threshold for persons in need of support by means of training resource persons as gatekeepers. Embedding prevention in regional and local structures allows for the exploitation of existing networks, resources, and competences which are tailored to the local specificities and requirements. At the same time, the centralised development of qualification measures as well as the cooperation with academia and policy-makers ensures a connection with the relevant (international) discourses and scholarship.

Of course there are obstacles with regard to implementing a contact point within the local context. Due to their interface function, the training of gatekeepers must convey the expertise to adequately assess suspected cases of radicalisation. Yet, the qualification of resource persons must not exceed the budget for advanced training available in an institution. This challenge requires an optimised preparation of training contents. Professionals must be aware of the activities performed by contact points, and gatekeepers in the catchment areas to maximise the effects of the network. Therefore, the embedment of the local bearer should be a key criterion when establishing local Democracy Centres.

Furthermore, permanent positions for trained professionals are desirable to achieve a fast, and comprehensive implementation of the concept. At present, funded points of contact/service providers have been established in five districts in Baden-Wuerttemberg. Within the next years, an evaluation of their activities will provide insights into the challenges, needs and day-to-day work of the partners on the ground. Additional support and adjustments will be implemented based on regional requirements and realities.

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