

European Network of Deradicalisation (ENoD)

Summary of project

Hate crimes, radicalisation and extremists' recruitment leading towards terrorism have increased in numbers and severity throughout Europe and will continue to pose a major challenge for future democratic societies. Community and grass-root organisations, as well as social entrepreneurs such as non-profit NGOs can be essential in preventing polarisation and violence and intervening into emerging conflicts. Thus also the Stockholm Program stresses: "Key to our success (in deradicalisation) will be the degree to which non-governmental groups ... across Europe play an active part". Other than government employees, NGO first-line practitioners find it easier to access even the most vulnerable environments and penetrate the culture and language of (ex-)offenders, their followers and victims alike. For first-line NGO-practitioners it is also easier to build relationships of respect and "mutual trust" which are indispensable to successfully engage in deradicalisation work. Here, NGOs – being in the first line – have often achieved lower rates of recidivism, than governmental bodies, which tend to lack access, respect/ trust and flexibility – and can sometimes even "exacerbate division" (EC Combat.Radicalis. 14781/1/05).

NGOs' practitioners do however need

- professionalisation,
- adherence to quality standards and control,
- methodological transparency,
- academic and consultancy support,
- (inter-) national exchange of good practice,
- a more stable relationship with governmental bodies,

so that their knowledge, skills and services can be systematically preserved, further developed and mainstreamed into ongoing work. Thus, building a network and interactive internet-platform of NGO first-line practitioners performing face-to-face deradicalisation work, could generate significant added value at European level. Information exchange would pertain to methodologies used, target groups, good practice criteria, challenges and (perceived) needs, and institutional standing.

Violence Prevention Network has successfully worked in deradicalisation (right wing and Jihad fundamentalist) and is increasingly requested for consultation from various countries. This has triggered the idea of setting up an NGO-Platform. As a first step it would be required to identify exemplary practitioner-NGOs in different Member States which may serve as multipliers. In-depth interviewing will produce NGO-profiles, helpful for European practitioners, statutory bodies, victims, the media and the wider public alike, and allowing for productive cross-border work-meetings. The final report will contain new issues and questions, guiding the international follow-up project(s) and giving valuable feedback to inform EC policy making. Most concretely, this platform of horizontal local-to-local practitioners' exchange will be most cost-reductive by "creating synergies and avoiding duplication", and may substantially contribute to the build-up of an 'EU Crime Prevention Network', 'Observatory', and 'Best Practice Handbook' scheduled to begin 2013 (Stockholm Program).

Specific issue / question

The main issue is the role which independent organisations – grass-root, voluntary or community initiatives und independent social entrepreneurs (non-profit NGOs) – play in deradicalisation and prevention of hate crime. Since these NGOs possess indispensable specialist's knowledge and are able to reach out and impact on vulnerable social environments, which governmental bodies face difficulties in accessing. They are close to (ex-)offenders/ (ex-)radicals, vulnerable persons and victims alike, as they are close to “moderate voices”. They share their different languages, have their respect and trust, work on a direct face-to-face basis – and are able to both “address grievances” inside the community and counter mis-perceptions outside, thus reducing “societal division”. These first-line NGOs have frequently proven stunningly successful in different national contexts – while governmental institutions often lacked access, community respect/ trust, skills and institutional flexibility.

But: These NGOs are in need of professionalisation. How can state-of-the-art quality control and qualification be extended to them? How can scientifically sound and transparent methodological standards for intervention and prevention be implemented? How can the support of academic resources be provided? How can experience and learning be shared (inter-) nationally among these NGOs and between NGOs and statutory bodies? How can a trustful and stable relationship between first-line NGOs and governmental bodies be established – the latter of which seem prone to neglect, distrust or even hamper their work. How can the services and careers of NGO-practitioners be secured? How can it thus be avoided that their knowledge, skills and experiences are lost, but be instead preserved and mainstreamed? What is the methodological approach by which such rather informal sources of skill and knowledge may be reliably identified, adequately re-constructed, portrayed and disseminated to a wider public?