

Countering Islamist Radicalisation in Germany: A Guide to Germany's Growing Prevention Infrastructure

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Countering and Preventing Violent Extremism (CVE & PVE) has become a main subject for nation states as well as for international organisations, like the UN or the OSCE, which are deeply engaged in finding good practice examples among their member states. Some states such as the UK or the Netherlands have adopted national strategies against violent extremism. Others, such as France have favoured a more securitised rather than a preventive approach. Set against this context, the present policy brief provides a look at Germany's extensive experience with CVE and PVE, which the country has acquired over the last several years, in order to inform the debate and contribute insights to the benefit of experts and policy advisers working on these topics. Although Germany's programs do not use the terms of CVE or PVE they can rightly be attributed to these concepts in that they are based on preventing involvement in extremism or countering its growth, rather than solely on repressive responses to extremist or terrorist incidents. The insights portrayed in this paper are both based on the professional experience of its authors, who have worked in this policy field for the past eight years as well as from open source material.

Introduction

Considerable efforts to improve CVE and PVE work have been made in Germany in the last seven years. A permanent exchange of ideas and good practices between Germany's states and the federal government promoted the implementation of a unique prevention architecture. Here, both the interior, as well as the social ministries at the federal and state levels play a key role. This development reflects the belief of German experts and policy makers that effective measures against radicalisation must not only include police and intelligence work, but also need a strong social work and family support strategy. With the growing political support for prevention work, the funding of projects has become much easier. As a result, from January 2012 onwards, Germany has seen the development of a wide variety of prevention models and projects, making national coordination, transparent regulations for the work of counselling centres, critical evaluation as well as a public communication strategy more urgent than ever.

One distinct feature of the preventative landscape is Germany's federal system, which sets it apart from other countries. Germany has a federal government but is at the same time divided into 16 states, each of them having their own governmental structures, i.e. their own prime ministers, as well as their own ministries for the interior or for social affairs. These states cooperate with the federal government and often receive funds from federal programs. While these funds are generally given subject to certain conditions, the federal government cannot force the states to adopt all of its policies. This is probably the main reason why there is no formal national strategy that prescribes the implementation of specific policies uniformly across all the different parts of the country. Instead, the idea is to provide a common framework of guidelines, which the states should observe when they are designing their specific strategies.

This contribution is intended to give a short overview on the development of the German approach to CVE and PVE and the challenges for the upcoming years. It also tries to delineate the fault lines between the strategies of the main actors involved: the Federal Ministry of the Interior, Construction and Homeland (BMI);¹ the federal social ministry, which is named Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ);² and the state-level ministries of interior as well as those of social affairs.

Background – National Approaches to CVE and PVE in Germany

Countering (violent) extremism in Germany was traditionally primarily a task for both federal and state intelligence services (*Verfassungsschutz*) and federal and local police agencies.³ In late 2009, the first working group on prevention, consisting of intelligence and police personnel, was established within the "Joint Counter-Terrorism Center" (GTAZ) in Berlin. The GTAZ was set up in late 2004 and is a joint co-operation and communication platform used by all offices and agencies responsible for counter-

¹ The Ministry was renamed after the recent German federal elections. For reasons of brevity it will be referred to as Interior Ministry or BMI in the further course.

² Rather confusingly, the BMFSFJ is mainly responsible for social affairs, despite not having the term in its name. So whenever this article speaks of the social ministry on a federal level, the BMFSFJ is meant.

³ Violent is put in brackets because Germany's approach is countering extremism in all forms, be it violent or non-violent. In this respect the law regulating the tasks of the German Intelligence Service "*Verfassungsschutz*" is clearly targeting all forms of anti-democratic activism and makes this the decisive factor for the competence of the "*Verfassungsschutz*".

terrorism, for example the domestic and the foreign intelligence services, the Federal Criminal Police Office (BKA), and the Federal Public Prosecutor General (GBA).⁴ The working group of GTAZ that was established in 2009 and which is still in existence today, gave specialists from local and federal agencies the possibility to exchange ideas, discuss good and bad practices, as well as a platform to formulate recommendations for prevention and deradicalisation approaches in Germany.

Soon after the working group's establishment, a consensus was reached that local approaches suit the federal structure of Germany best and that a national approach was far less desirable. Local approaches were perceived as more effective since they are more attuned to the specific local circumstances and stakeholders who can play a role in implementing concrete measures. Between 2012 and 2014, this consensus came to life when several counselling centres for radicalised persons and their families were established, both on the federal as well as on the state level.⁵ In most cases, the leading coordinative role was taken by the federal and state authorities of the interior. One example is the "Counselling-Office Radicalisation" (*Beratungsstelle*) of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF; a subunit of the BMI), which was created in 2012 and which provides a hotline and advisory centre for radicalised persons and their families.⁶ If a case is observed that involves a form of radicalisation, those seeking advice, for example parents, are referred to civil society partners, which are located in different geographical regions of Germany.⁷ The possibility of having an anonymous hotline for 'first aid', combined with the offer of counselling by a local partner was well received by the target group. Since the establishment of the hotline more than 4.100 phone calls have been received and more than 1100 cases have been handled.⁸

In January 2015, the BMFSFJ initiated "*Demokratie leben!* (Live Democracy)", which is an extensive funding program for initiatives against right-wing and Islamist extremism with a budget that, in 2017, stood at 104.5 million Euro.⁹ With the program "*Demokratie leben!*" the BMFSFJ underlined its capability and its willingness to function as an important stakeholder on the ground.¹⁰ This highlights that responsibility for German prevention-efforts has increasingly begun to shift towards ministries of social affairs, both at the state and the federal level.

⁴ For an overview about the GTAZ and its members see: "Gemeinsames Terrorismusabwehrzentrum," Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, accessed September 11, 2018, <https://www.verfassungsschutz.de/en/fields-of-work/islamism-and-islamist-terrorism/gtaaz-en>.

⁵ See also: GTAZ, "Sachstandsbericht zur Konrektisierung und Umsetzung der Arbeitsergebnisse der Unterarbeitsgruppen der GTAZ-Arbeitsgruppe "Deradikalisierung"," Document 6_IKO-410-550002-50/12/NfD, May 2012, http://www.innenministerkonferenz.de/IMK/DE/termine/to-beschluesse/2016-11-29_30/nummer%204%20zu%20anlange%201_sachstandsbericht%20ag%20deradikalisierung.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=2.

⁶ "Advice Centre on Radicalisation," BAMF, accessed September 11, 2018, <http://www.bamf.de/EN/DasBAMF/Beratung/beratung-node.html>; see also: Hazim Fouad and André Taubert, "Salafismusprävention zwischen Sicherheitsbehörden und zivilgesellschaftlichen Trägern," in *Salafismus in Deutschland. Ursprünge und Gefahren einer islamistisch-fundamentalistischen Bewegung*, ed. Thorsten Gerald Schneiders (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag), 407-408. The Counseling-Office Radicalization solely focuses on Islamist radicalisation. This is because up to that point Germany had several projects for right-wing drop-outs but nothing comparable concerning Islamist radicalisation.

⁷ For the non-governmental institutions which are partners of cooperation see: "Brochure: Faith or extremism?," BAMF, last modified August 6, 2015, http://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/EN/Publikationen/Broschueren/glaube-oder-extremismus.pdf?__blob=publicationFile.

⁸ The numbers were obtained through a phone conversation with the Counseling-Office Radicalisation.

⁹ "About "Live Democracy!"" Federal Programme, Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth. <https://www.demokratie-leben.de/en/federal-programme/about-live-democracy.html>.

¹⁰ For an up to date assessment of programs against extremism of the Federal Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Social Affairs see: Deutscher Bundestag, "Unterrichtung durch die Bundesregierung. Bericht der Bundesregierung über Arbeit und Wirksamkeit der Bundesprogramme zur Extremismusprävention," Drucksache 18/12743, June 14, 2017, <http://dip21.bundestag.de/dip21/btd/18/127/1812743.pdf>. Parts of the program are evaluated by the German Youth Institute: <https://www.dji.de/en/the-dji.html>.

Ministries of the Interior and Social Affairs – Two Different Stakeholders Close Ranks

On the federal level, one particularly important development in Germany's movement towards a broader approach to preventing radicalisation, has been the July 2016 publication of a joint paper by the BMFSFJ and the BMI. This 62-page document, entitled "Federal Government Strategy for Prevention of Extremism and Promotion of Democracy" (*Strategie der Bundesregierung zur Extremismusprävention und Demokratieförderung*), provides the guidelines German authorities should consider when designing their preventative programmes.¹¹

It should be kept in mind that since 2014 Germany has been governed by a grand coalition formed by the two main parties CDU/CSU and SPD (Christian Democrats and Social Democrats). Whilst the CDU/CSU has provided the minister of the Federal Ministry of the Interior for years, someone from the SPD ranks leads the Ministry for Social Affairs on a federal level. From a programmatic perspective on national security, the CDU is more oriented towards a policing approach, while the SPD is more concerned with preserving individual liberties.¹² These different outlooks, the first being more conservative and the other rather social-liberal, are influencing the policies of the two ministries. The funding of prevention, now overseen by Dr. Franziska Giffey (Federal Minister of Family, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, the aforementioned BMFSFJ), was an important paradigm shift which gave social-affairs related ministries more responsibility for issues traditionally associated with domestic security that in the early days were solely the task of the interior agencies. Thus, the BMFSFJ has very recently become an important and indispensable partner in preventing extremism leading to a situation in which it is now in charge of this policy field, together with BMI.

Cooperation or Competition? – Moving on to New Pastures

In 2017, Germany's federal government earmarked additional funds to help prevent radicalisation and extremism. This was at least in part a reaction to the increasing number of penal proceedings related to militant Islamism, as well as an academic and media discourse that highlighted a demand for preventative measures in prisons. An example of a prison related project aimed at prevention is "PräJus" (Prevention in the field of judiciary) in Hamburg.¹³ Projects such as this are aimed at creating preventative and educational settings for young people who have been imprisoned after committing crimes, as well as aimed at supporting them during and after their sentences. In addition, the responsible NGOs in some federal states of Germany also work with inmates who are already radicalised. In cooperation with the regular social institutions operating in the prison sector, they aim to bring about disengagement from radical milieus. In

¹¹ BMFSFJ and BMI, "Strategie der Bundesregierung zur Extremismusprävention und Demokratieförderung," *Die Bundesregierung*, <https://www.bmfsfj.de/blob/109002/5278d578ff8c59a19d4bef9fe4c034d8/strategie-der-bundesregierung-zur-extremismuspraevention-und-demokratieforderung-data.pdf>.

¹² Bernhard Frevel, "Innere Sicherheit in der Programmatik der Parteien. Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung," *Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung*, September 10, 2013, <http://www.bpb.de/politik/innenpolitik/innere-sicherheit/168652/innere-sicherheit-in-partei-programmen?p=all>.

¹³ "Legato – Islamismusprävention im justiziellen Feld (PräJus)," BMFSFJ, accessed September 11, 2018, https://www.demokratie-leben.de/mp_praevention-und-deradikalisierung-in-strafvollzug-und-bewaehrungshilfe/modellprojekte-zu-praevention-und-deradikalisierung-in-strafvollzug-und-bewaehrungshilfe/legato-islamismuspraevention-im-justiziellen-feld-praejus.html.

addition, projects like “*PräJus*” focus on the training of prison staff, with the long term aim of empowering employees to recognize radicalisation and develop and implement appropriate responses. Furthermore, staff is trained to deal with the new ethnic and religious diversity of the European prison population, which is part of a broader approach to prevention.

Interestingly though, funds for prison related programmes are allocated by the BMFSFJ and not by the Federal Ministry of Justice and Consumer Protection (BMJV), as might be assumed, since the BMJV is in charge of prisons and probation. Although the projects are working closely with the justice departments in each state, they are also part of the so-called “state centres for democracy”, which are attached to the respective social ministries and funded by the BMFSFJ under the header of the initiative “Live Democracy”. This underlines once again the considerable role that Germany’s social ministries have taken on in this line of work.

The same is true for another big program which is being implemented in the realm of education. At the end of 2017, the BMFSFJ announced it would be funding projects aimed at prevention of radicalisation at schools. These are going to be conducted by the so-called “*Jugendmigrationsdienste*” (Migrational Youth Services), which are attached to schools but run by civil society organizations. The aim of the projects is to have social workers help youngsters build resilience against Islamist narratives and offer vocational perspectives for those at risk. The underlying assumption is that these narratives are only attractive to those who can identify their individual problems with them. If the underlying vulnerabilities for radicalization are solved beforehand, so the idea goes, less people will become extremist. This development clearly illustrates that the BMFSFJ is funding and overseeing preventive programs in Germany, even if they are implemented by other ministries, which are responsible for prisons and schools, respectively.

At the same time, the BMI has not completely handed over the reins when it comes to preventative efforts.¹⁴ In 2017, the BAMF, located in the Federal Office For Migration and Refugees, which is itself part of BMI, issued a call to apply for funds for preventative projects with refugees for centres coordinating prevention at the local state level. These projects were to be designed to help people working with refugees, refugees themselves, as well as the relatives of refugees. A determining factor for this initiative was most likely the fact that some of the Islamist attacks that took place in Germany in 2016 had been perpetrated by people with a refugee status.¹⁵

Another pressing issue concerns so-called “Jihad-Returnees”, i.e. people who have travelled to conflict zones and have been members or supporters of organisations and groups that are characterised as “terrorist” according to German law. While there are relatively straightforward legal proceedings for dealing with the men that return, who are likely to have participated in combat, the issue becomes much more complicated when it comes to returning, and possibly traumatised, women and children. So far, very few women in Germany have been charged in the context of involvement with the so-called Islamic State (ISIS), something the Federal Prosecutor General sees grounds for to change.¹⁶ However, this is complicated by a recent ruling of the Federal High Court of

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¹⁴ This becomes most vivid reading the evaluation of the “Counseling-Office Radicalisation”, which calls for its long-term institutionalization. See Milena Uhlmann, “Evaluation der Beratungsstelle “Radikalisierung”,“ *BAMF*, https://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/DE/Publikationen/Forschungsberichte/fb31-evaluation-beratungsstelle-radikalisierung.pdf?__blob=publicationFile.

¹⁵ This holds true for the axe attack in Würzburg on July 18, 2016, as well as the attempted bombing of a festival in Ansbach on July 24 of the same year.

¹⁶ See Norddeutscher Rundfunk, “Schärfere Strafverfolgung für IS-Rückkehrerinnen,” *Presseportal*, December 14, 2017, <https://www.presseportal.de/pm/69086/3816137>.

Justice that stated that the mere presence in the territories controlled by ISIS is not a sufficient reason to press such charges.¹⁷ Only in one recent case, the collected evidence was sufficient to arrest and charge a woman, who had already returned two and a half years ago, for having been part of ISIS' moral police.¹⁸ At the same time, there are numerous calls by experts to have programs ready for those who cannot be convicted but still need help to reintegrate into society.

It is likely that BAMF will play a more prominent role with regard to returnees, since this target group is neither going to be reached by the projects of the BMFSFJ, which focus on primary and secondary prevention,¹⁹ nor by the suppressive organs of the state, in case there is not enough evidence to press criminal charges. This development clearly indicates that there will be some work-sharing between both departments on a federal level in the near future. This form of sharing responsibility between the authorities is something we can also observe at the state level.

Prevention at the State Level – a Common Effort

Governments on the state level in Germany are responsible for implementing projects supporting de-radicalisation and/or prevention by increasing resilience in local communities. As mentioned above, police and intelligence services are no longer solely responsible for these efforts. The pre-existing lack of family-orientated prevention and social work approaches towards vulnerable persons, which was flagged by security agencies in 2009/2010, has been successfully addressed by federal and state authorities through the establishment or funding of many local counselling centres. Examples of civil society agents doing the actual preventative work are Violence Prevention Network (VPN) in Bavaria and Hessen; VAJA and its project "Kitab" in Bremen; *Zentrum Demokratische Kultur* and its initiative "Hayat" in Berlin; and *Ambulante Maßnahmen Altona* and the Pestalozzi Foundation with their common project "Legato" in Hamburg.²⁰ These institutions that play a vital role in Germany's prevention approach are mostly run by social workers or people with field experience in working with vulnerable youth.

The relationship between these civil-society based actors and the security agencies is different from state to state.²¹ In Bavaria, for instance, state police has set up a Competence-Centre for De-radicalisation, which is the primary point of contact for the work of the VPN.²² Another approach is taken by the "Wegweiser"-program in North Rhine-Westphalia, which is a state-run program for prevention and de-radicalisation.²³ It is funded and coordinated by the Ministry of the Interior of North Rhine-Westphalia, which has established several counselling offices across the state. These offices are part

¹⁷ See "Bundesgerichtshof Leben im IS-Gebiet reicht nicht für Haftbefehl gegen Heimkehrerin," *Kölnische Rundschau*, May 25, 2018, <https://www.rundschau-online.de/politik/bundesgerichtshof-leben-im-is-gebiet-reicht-nicht-fuer-haftbefehl-gegen-heimkehrerin-30518148>.

¹⁸ See "Als "Sittenpolizistin" für den IS", *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, July 2, 2018, <http://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/terrorvorwurf-als-sittenpolizistin-fuer-den-is-1.4037992>.

¹⁹ While primary prevention generally aims to limit risk factors and is aimed at the general public, secondary prevention targets individuals or groups who already display problematic behaviour. Tertiary prevention can be used synonymously with deradicalisation in that it focuses on encouraging people to leave (violent) extremism. See also European Forum for Urban Security, "Preventing radicalisation leading to violent extremism" in *Preventing and Fighting Radicalisation at the Local Level*, 2016, p. 21-23.

²⁰ "Fach- und Beratungsstelle kitab," VAJA, <https://vaja-bremen.de/teams/kitab/>; Hayat, <https://hayat-deutschland.de/>; Legato, <https://legato-hamburg.de/>.

²¹ For a first assessment on the relationship between the counseling centers and security agencies see Fouad/Taubert 2014.

²² "Kompetenzzentrum für Deradikalisierung," Die Bayerische Polizei, last modified July 31, 2018, <http://www.polizei.bayern.de/schuettzenvorbeugen/index.html/232038>.

²³ "Präventionsprogramm Wegweiser," Ministerium des Innern Nordrhein-Westfalen, accessed September 11, 2018, <https://www.im.nrw/wegweiser>.

of local networks, consisting of mosques, sport clubs, youth coaches and various public authorities.

In contrast to the “*Wegweiser*”-program or the police focused approach in Bavaria, the city-state of Hamburg’s system to preventing radicalisation heralded one of the first visible signals of a shift away from the main responsibility of the Interior authorities towards a new leading role of the state-level ministries of social affairs.²⁴ In the autumn of 2014, a network of public authorities and non-governmental organisations (pedagogic and social work institutions as well as Muslim associations) established a network against religious extremism as well as anti-Muslim extremism. The overall control of the Hamburg network rests within the local Ministry for Labour, Social Affairs, Family and Integration (BASFI).²⁵ The police and the local intelligence agency are part of the network, but not in charge of it. Moreover, the local counselling centre Legato has no formal ties with the security agencies and is funded instead by the BASFI.

In addition to the local and regional counselling centres whose main aim is tertiary prevention, many different projects in the field of primary and secondary prevention²⁶ have been funded by different state actors during the last years. Their targeting audience and their approaches differ and represent the enormous range of the actors involved in prevention work. For instance, there are projects for teachers like “Salam-Online” by the Centre for Islamic Theology (ZIT) at the Wilhelms-University in Münster, which provides guidelines for teachers to counter online hate speech. Another example is Ufuq.de, which is an association that provides pedagogical assistance on various issues in the broader context of migration, Islam and extremism.²⁷ But there are also projects that target vulnerable youth with the aim of preventing their involvement in violent extremism, like “Jamil” in Bremen. There are also projects that cater to a broader interested audience, like a project by the Federal Agency for Civic Education (*Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung*) that produced short movies to explain terms like “Jihad” or “Khilafa” in cooperation with some German YouTube-stars, who have influence amongst youngsters.²⁸

Engaging with Germany’s Muslim Community – Between Scepticism and Necessity

In Germany’s public discourse, one frequently heard claim is the demand for more engagement with the Muslim community in order to effectively prevent and combat terrorism. This perception deserves to be problematized for several reasons. First of all, radicalisation is a process that does not normally start at ordinary mosques but more often within peer-groups, at radical mosques, or is initiated by online propaganda. In other words, it is not a problem for which the Muslim community in its entirety can or should be held responsible. Moreover, all Muslim associations in Germany have

²⁴ In plural, since there are 16 state ministries of social affairs in addition to the federal one.

²⁵ “Mitteilung des Senats an die Bürgerschaft,” Bürgerschaft der Freien und Hansestadt Hamburg, last modified June 28, 2016, <https://www.buergerschaft-hh.de/ParlDok/dokument/53460/stellungnahme-des-senats-zu-dem-ersuchen-der-b%26bcrgerschaft-vom-11-november-2015-%e2%80%9eeffektive-ma%26c3%9fnahmen-gegen-gewaltbereiten-salafismus-und-religi%26b6sen.pdf>.

²⁶ See note 19 above.

²⁷ “Forschungswerkstatt Salam-Online,” Zentrum für Islamische Theologie, accessed September 11, 2018, <https://www.uni-muenster.de/ZIT/Religionspaedagogik/Projekte/salam-online.html> and “Pädagogik zwischen Islam, Islamfeindlichkeit und Islamismus,” ufuq.de, accessed September 11, 2018, <http://www.ufuq.de>.

²⁸ “JAMIL,” Verein zur Förderung akzeptierender Jugendarbeit, accessed August 22, 2018, <https://vaja-bremen.de/teams/jamil/> and “Begriffswelten Islam,” Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, accessed August 20, 2018, <http://www.bpb.de/lernen/digitale-bildung/medienpaedagogik/213243/webvideofomate-begriffswelten-islam>.

denounced terrorism in public and many people of the Muslim community play an integral part in different prevention projects. An interesting example can be found with JUMA (Young, Muslim, Active), which is a project to empower young Muslims by giving them opportunities to discuss social and political issues, like diversity and migration, in an effort to increase participation of Muslims in society and politics.²⁹ Furthermore, Muslim social workers are active employees of many counselling centres.

The political sphere mostly welcomes efforts to involve the Muslim community in prevention work. At the same time, however, some independent political activists are distrustful of any form of Muslim participation in this line of work and try to problematize it. In this context, Germany saw a fervid discussion on Muslims engaged in prevention work in February and March 2017.³⁰ A German blogger linked Muslim employees of VPN in the state of Hesse to Islamist extremists, accusations which then were published by the regional broadcast company *Hessischer Rundfunk*.³¹ Because VPN's work in Hesse is funded by the Ministry of the Interior, the two employees were suspended during the time of investigations. Ultimately, all accusations were dropped but the damage to the image of the involved persons and organisations, as well as to prevention work in general, was already done. The campaign by the blogger also targeted other German Muslim public figures and prevention projects.³²

In some cases, Muslim associations, such as the Turkish DITIB, which is part of the Turkish *Diyaret*-Ministry, make it easy for opponents to scrutinise their willingness and ability to contribute to preventing radicalisation. To illustrate, the city of Cologne stopped its cooperation with DITIB as a partner for *Wegweiser* in September 2016, since in the view of the government DITIB was not distancing itself enough from a flyer created by the Turkish *Diyaret*-Ministry that glorified martyrdom in Islam.³³ In April 2018, the local DITIB mosque in Herford became subject to severe criticism with regard to their cooperation with *Diyaret*, after videos were published showing a theatre play in the mosque where children were acting as Turkish soldiers who fought and died in the First World War.³⁴

Another example, this time from July 2017, provides a further illustration of how engagement with certain Muslim associations remains controversial. At that time, the BMFSFJ was severely criticised for planning to fund a workshop against religious extremism, which was organised by the Shiite umbrella organization "*Islamische Gemeinschaft der schiitischen Gemeinden Deutschlands*" (IGS). Some of its members are accused of having strong ties to the Iranian regime, which adheres to an extremist interpretation of Islam. The BMFSFJ decided not to fund the workshop, but it was still held.³⁵

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²⁹ "Aktuelles," JUMA, accessed September 5, 2018, <http://www.juma-ev.de/>.

³⁰ Volker Siefer, "Prävention als Gratwanderung," *Zeit Online*, March 21, 2017, <https://www.zeit.de/gesellschaft/2017-03/islamistischer-extremismus-radikalisierung-deutschland-praevention/komplettansicht>.

³¹ Danijel Majic, "Streit um Suspendierungen," *Frankfurter Rundschau*, February 2, 2017, <http://www.fr.de/frankfurt/frankfurt-streit-um-suspendierungen-a-1020531>.

³² "Mitarbeiter von Beratungsstelle gegen Salafismus entlastet," *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, March 21, 2017, <http://www.faz.net/aktuell/rhein-main/mitarbeiter-von-beratungsstelle-gegen-salafismus-entlastet-14935915.html>

³³ "Wie schön, ein Märtyrer zu sein!," *Der Tagesspiegel*, August 6, 2016,

<https://www.tagesspiegel.de/kultur/comics/kontroverse-um-comic-wie-schoen-ein-maertyrer-zu-sein/14505862.html>

³⁴ Marc Röhlig, "Türkische Gemeinden lassen Kinder in Deutschland Krieg spielen," last modified April 20, 2018, <http://www.bento.de/politik/ditib-in-herford-und-wien-verkleidet-kinder-als-tuerkei-soldaten-2296792>.

³⁵ Florian Chefai, "Familienministerium spricht sich gegen Workshop islamistischer Organisationen aus," accessed September 11, 2018, <https://hpd.de/artikel/familienministerium-spricht-sich-gegen-workshop-islamistischer-organisationen-14655> and "Junge Muslime organisieren Workshop gegen Extremismus," *Islam iQ*, accessed September 11, 2018, <http://www.islamiq.de/2017/08/12/junge-muslime-organisieren-workshop-gegen-extremismus/>. No information is available on who provided the funds after the BMFSFJ pulled out. It can be assumed that the IGS financed the workshop through its own resources.

As important as engaging with the Muslim community is to prevent radicalisation, these examples also underline that it can lead to controversy, further complicating an already difficult area of work.

Lacking a National Strategy?

Some academics as well as some state representatives on the federal and state level, such as Peter Neumann (International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence) and Holger Münch (head of the BKA), have emphasised the need for a national strategy of prevention in the past few years. The advocates of this approach draw a pessimistic picture of Germany's prevention landscape, as for example Wiebke Steffen (Scientific Consultant of the German Congress on Crime Prevention) did in her speech at the BKA-Autumn-Congress 2015.³⁶ Indeed, compared to countries such as the UK or the Netherlands, Germany does not yet have a fully-developed national strategy. But in the assessment of the actual prevention work we should not give too much attention to official documents outlining federal-level prevention initiatives but look instead to developments on the ground.

Steffen criticised the predominance of security agencies in the field. Indeed, it is a fact that prevention work was developed only within the last seven years and was initially pushed mainly by police and intelligence authorities, which explains why the interior ministries are still influential in shaping this kind of work in Germany. But the balance has tipped during the last two years in favour of a multi-agency-approach. Moreover, the BMFSFJ has begun to provide a great deal of the funding for prevention-related projects.³⁷

Another important development, and a counter-argument to an overly-pessimistic view, is that the GTAZ working group "Prevention and De-radicalisation" serves as a platform for the exchange of best practices. As mentioned earlier in this piece, many ideas which were discussed within the working group have been implemented, which shows the effectiveness of this institution and the authorities participating in it. There would be hardly any federal or state funding for prevention and counselling offices without the advice given by the working group.

Germany is a federal state with strong local governments that have their own local and specific contexts, such as state laws. To address the local environment, you need local actors that work in a regional and nationwide network. The main challenge is the coordination of all efforts and projects and to ensure that relevant information and experience is shared within the prevention community and to identify blind spots of prevention work. This indeed calls for the development of a more clearly outlined national strategy, but that lack of a true coordinating body or effort at the federal level should not be taken as a measure for Germany's prevention efforts overall.

³⁶ "Prävention des internationalen Terrorismus in Deutschland – eine Zustandsbeschreibung," Bundeskriminalamt, last modified November 23, 2015, <https://www.bka.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/Publikationen/Herbsttagungen/2015/herbsttagung2015SteffenLangfassung.html?nn=5418>.

³⁷ For more on the "multi-agency-approach" see Daniel H. Heinke, "Who leads and who does what? Multi-agency coordination, community engagement and public-private partnerships," in *Resilient Cities. Countering Violent Extremism at Local Level*, ed. Diego Muro (Barcelona: CIDOB, 2017), 81-89.

Challenges for the Future

Preventing radicalisation is clearly a policy field with security relevance. This is the reason why the German domestic intelligence service (*Verfassungsschutz*) and the police were the first to establish prevention work in the context of Islamist radicalisation in Germany. This initiative taken by the German domestic intelligence service was very successful, which can be seen when looking at the various projects that exist today. Following on from this initiative by security agencies, other actors have become involved, broadening the field of CVE and opening it for family and social work approaches. Some of those existed even before the prevention of Islamist radicalisation became prominent in Germany, but they lacked public support.³⁸ Recent years saw a shift in responsibility for prevention from the interior to the social portfolio. Furthermore, education and justice departments, both on a national and a federal level, are also affected by prevention measures, since both departments implement projects in schools and prisons. Given all the various stakeholders, working on sufficient coordination between the various initiatives will be an important task for the coming years. Since there is no single coordinating body overseeing all projects in the realm of PVE and CVE, regular exchanges of information and expertise between the actors involved reduces the risk of lost information and unnecessary duplication of work.

Despite the developments outlined in this policy brief, the underlying policy and government structures of prevention and coordination are still more or less the same as in 2009, when prevention became a field of relevance in Germany. Up until now, the primary coordination and exchange platforms are still related to the agencies of the interior.³⁹ As a consequence, there is clearly a demand for the creation of a national coordination centre for the prevention of radicalisation and extremism, as well as for disengagement and ideological deradicalisation.⁴⁰ It is important that a concept for its establishment should be elaborated with participation by leading experts in Germany, both from non-governmental as well as from different government institutions. A central coordinator would require independence from both the BMFSFJ as well as the Ministry of Interior, because prevention is a comprehensive task. One idea would be to have the supervision and control tasks take place within the Chancellery (*Bundeskanzleramt*), which would ensure that political competition between either portfolios or political parties have lesser influence on the work of such a coordinating body.

Another important point is that such a national coordination centre for prevention should not only target violent Islamism but also right-wing extremism, which is on the rise and an essential threat to democracy, both in Germany as well as the wider world. CVE approaches against right-wing and Islamist extremism should be more interconnected and an ongoing exchange between academic experts and practitioners from both still mostly unconnected fields should be fostered. This is due to two main reasons. First, the underlying causes for radicalisation have much in common in both phenomena. Second, both narratives are increasingly referring to another, as can be

³⁸ For example, Hayat or the association ufuq.de.

³⁹ In order to counter the dominance of security related platforms, some of the most influential NGOs in the field of prevention established the "Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft Religiös Begründeter Extremismus (Federal Working Group for Religiously Motivated Extremism)", which is a council consisting only of civil society actors but funded by the BMFSFJ. Accessed September 11, 2018, <https://bag-relex.de/>.

⁴⁰ This was actually also called for by Germany's Green Party. "Kampf gegen Islamismus," Irene Mihalic, accessed September 5, 2018, <https://irene-mihalic.de/berlin/innere-sicherheit/islamismus/kampf-gegen-islamismus-gruene-fordern-nationales-praeventionszentrum/>.

seen by looking at the discourses of anti-Muslim hate groups and parties in Europe and Islamist propaganda.⁴¹ This would be the second important task.

Furthermore, Germany needs to create national standards for the work of counselling centres run by non-governmental organisations. These must indicate how cases are to be shared with security agencies without violating data protection laws, but also relate to other questions, like how and in which cases persons should be referred to the centres. At present, there are various types of relationships between those centres and state departments. In some cases, the centres work closely together with security agencies, in other cases there is a strict separation between them. This leads to a situation in which a radicalised person or his or her family, when seeking advice, cannot always be sure whether information will be passed to security agencies or kept confidential within the advisory service. To build trust, CVE and PVE practitioners therefore need strict and transparent regulations and a public communication strategy harmonised on a national level.

Over the past several years, Germany has made significant strides towards developing a nuanced, multi-agency approach to preventing radicalisation and extremism. Moving ahead, a key challenge will be seeing these various efforts coordinated more effectively.

⁴¹ See Tahir Abbas, "Ethnicity and politics in contextualising far right and Islamist extremism," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 11, no. 3 (2017).
http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/86974/1/Abbas_Ethnicity%20and%20politics%20in%20contextualising%20ofar%20right1.pdf.

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