

Action plan for the prevention of violent extremism and deradicalisation in Austria

Based on the participation study on the prevention of violent extremism in Austria and deradicalization

SWOT analysis of prevention measures against violent extremism in Austria

The civil society action plan was drawn up within the framework of the EU project "Rhizome against Polarization" with the results of the participation study "Prevention of Violent Extremism in Austria", which is coordinated and implemented in Austria by the development policy organization Südwind. The project aims to prevent social polarization and violent radicalization in Europe through a human rights-based approach and to strengthen the social cohesion of civil society.

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Introduction

The participation study, "Prevention against violent extremism in Austria", shows that, due to the developments of the last few years, there is a need for action in the prevention of extremism for and deradicalization work with young people. The most important findings from the ten qualitative interviews with relevant experts, on which the recommendations developed and the action plan are based, can be summarized as follows:

There is not only one reason why young people join radical groups. On the contrary, it is often the coincidence of several or even many key factors, such as experiences of violence, the search for identity, lack of family ties, lack of perspectives, experiences of racism or discrimination, the desire to belong and to join like-minded people, rebellion against one's own family, or even the feeling of being excluded, that make young people seek support in extremist movements. The extremist movements that address these needs seek contact with young people – depending on their social environment – in different places or on different occasions: in youth clubs, sports facilities, music clubs, parks, the Internet, etc. Extremist groups describe, especially for male youth, the hegemonic masculinity that emphasizes the dominant position of the man, not only as something very positive, but given by nature. Thus, at the same time, they convey the attribution of the subordinate woman. Especially at the age when, according to experience, radicalization processes begin (between twelve and fifteen years of age), young boys are not yet aware that the image of the strong man who is not allowed to cry and who decides over the woman does not go down well with every (young) woman. Seen in this light, right-wing extremism in particular is not only behind racism, but also sexism. Violent extremist groups are aware, however, that many ideologies they propagate and represent are accepted without criticism or reflection by their or potential supporters.

Looking at the general developments of extremist movements, the experts surveyed have a similar perception of them: A slight decrease in religiously based extremism in Austria, which is, however, presented differently to the outside world (by the media), on the one hand, and a rise in right-wing extremism in our country, which is characterized by an increasing propensity to violence, on the other.

These perceptions and the expertise of the interviewees, which are described in the report "Prevention against Violent Extremism in Austria" within the

framework of the project "Rhizomes against Polarization", underscore not only the need for political action in Austria, but also the need for action in society as a whole. In the following, recommendations for action are now presented, which at their core always assume that prevention work is the responsibility of the entire society, that self-responsibility among young people must absolutely be encouraged, that a political position is indispensable and that necessary financial resources must be secured unconditionally. They refer to the following eight objectives:

- Objective 1: Follow up on ALL forms of violent extremism
- Objective 2: Strengthen education and resilience at the local level
- Objective 3: Strengthen the responsibility to protect victims
- Objective 4: Protect human rights in anti-terrorist laws
- Objective 5: Promote gender justice
- Objective 6: Reinforce the role of young people as actors for change
- Objective 7: Promote democratic values and protect civil society
- Objective 8: Generate alternative narratives in social networks and media

Plan of Action

Based on the statements of the interviewed experts, the following 58 recommendations for the prevention of extremism and deradicalization are addressed to local, national and international policy makers.

These recommendations and demands partly overlap with the recommendations and demands of the organizations DÖW – Documentation Archive of the Austrian Resistance, ZARA Association for Courage & Anti-Racism Work and bOJA Counseling Center for Extremism.

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Objective 1: Follow up on ALL forms of violent extremism

In everyday language, the terms "radicalization", "extremism" and "deradicalization" are often used without a uniform definition and without a clear distinction. Even among scientists there is no generally valid definition of the terms radicalization, extremism and deradicalization, but there is a consensus in the field of extremism research that these are processes, not static states.

In order to prevent the future emergence of violent extremism and to develop counter-strategies to prevent and combat the various forms of violent extremism, it is necessary to define and delimit the terms radicalization, extremism, violent extremism and deradicalization in each case. It is necessary to investigate the causes and mechanisms that lead to extremist ideologies and group hatred in order to be able to develop and implement concepts for preventing and avoiding them efficiently. Furthermore, it is necessary to study the complexity and multiple factors and their interaction in the emergence of extremist ideologies and violent extremism in all its forms.

Even if one sees extremism as a "political, religious or ideological attitude directed towards the extreme", one should not, as a first step, limit oneself to 'by definition' extremist groups when considering the actors, but should not exclude other individuals, social and economic associations, state institutions, etc. Furthermore, violence can also manifest itself in the most diverse forms: physically, for example as physical violence or corporal punishment, or psychologically, in the form of structural racism or systemic discrimination.

- 1. Definition of the concept and description of actions/activities/deeds that are characterized or accompanied by physical, psychological, emotional violence*

The goal cannot be a simplistic definition or an exhaustive description of the terms and challenges; rather, efforts must be made to use

concrete examples to outline what is meant so that a discussion can be based on as multi-dimensional a picture of the terms as possible.

2. Promotion of public discourse and detailed examination of all forms of extremism in order to remove the basis for radical political arguments

Discourses can be understood as broad, general social discussions. The extensive debates should always take place with the participation and co-design of relevant players to ensure that essential experiences and findings can be exchanged and discussed.

The public sphere is understood to be the place where politicians, relevant stakeholders and citizens can exchange views on topics in the sense of "res publica" and participate in them. Res publica – literally "public matter" is something that serves the common good.

The renowned philosopher and sociologist Jürgen Habermas discusses the significance of the political public sphere in his book: "Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit" ("Structural Change of the Public Sphere"). This has the goal of ensuring that all members of civil society have the opportunity to share information and communication in order to help shape political discourse.

The media, or rather the reporting, play an essential role in today's public discourse with the aim of making relevant information and topics available to a broad public.

Whether and how a particular topic can be discussed in public depends crucially on which topics are included in the reporting and are perceived as important.

Public discourse should be conducted in such a way that a detailed discussion of all forms of extremism can take place. This does not merely involve naming extremist groups, but should rather take a differentiated look at the causes and reasons for and the interplay between them in the emergence of different forms of extremism. Accordingly, topics such as the emergence of prejudices and stereotypes, structural racism, structural sexism, homophobia,

authoritarianism, cognitive dissonance and aggression should be essential parts of these discourses and educational proposals. In order to offer young people the opportunity to remove the basis for politically radical arguments, it is important to address and critically examine the background and the emergence of these mechanisms.

3. Identify and sanction structural racism and structural discrimination

Structural racism and structural discrimination, prejudices and stereotypes are disadvantaging structures and racist decision-making processes. Structural racism and institutionalized discrimination are reflected as entrenched mechanisms in society, and are consciously or unconsciously adopted by its members. These mechanisms lead to discrimination of whole groups and are not only committed by individuals. The structures of this discrimination, which are aimed at disadvantaging whole groups of society and which are often inherent and permanent in institutions and their processes and approaches, need to be recognized, addressed and questioned. In this context, institutions in positions of power and power-maintaining positions play an essential role, and it is in their sphere of effectiveness to sanction structural discrimination and structural racism.

A sensitization in the area of structural racism and discrimination is necessary in order not to reproduce these issues unquestioned.

At the individual level, it is necessary on the one hand to contribute to the recognition, identification and naming of structural racism and discrimination by individuals and to report it where necessary. Furthermore, a self-reflective, questioning approach is necessary on both the structural and the individual level.

4. Identify the contexts in which extremism prevention and deradicalization are relevant

*Kindergarten/School/Politics/Enforcement/Education/Labour
Market/Social Security/Health/Science and Research/Internet/Media*

Prevention work can be divided into three areas: primary, secondary and tertiary prevention. In education and pedagogy, it is aimed at the first two levels of prevention, primary and secondary prevention, where its effectiveness is most easily measurable.

A detailed investigation of those areas in which extremism prevention can be possible and relevant at the respective prevention levels is still necessary.

While the first two stages of prevention, primary and secondary prevention work, are primarily concerned with conveying democratic values and democratic action, critically questioning and promoting critical thinking, prejudice reflection, and conflict management, and secondary prevention is concerned with conveying knowledge about the causes and reasons for the emergence of, for example, misanthropy and extremism, and promoting a sustainable relationship, deradicalization is to be found at the tertiary prevention stage. Deradicalization aims at dissolving extremist world views and turning away from violent extremist social groups, and should always be oriented towards the individual needs and possibilities of the persons concerned.

In these contexts, it is important to promote relevant bodies such as schools and youth work institutions in primary prevention and to investigate in which areas relevant bodies for deradicalization work can be identified.

This should always be done in participatory processes, involving experts from scientific research, stakeholders and agents from civil society, practitioners from various social security and educational institutions, NGOs, persons from police and judicial authorities, and (former) affected persons.

5. To present the background and methods of extremist movements in a manner appropriate to the target group on various platforms and channels and to disseminate them via social media

Social media offer the advantage of a wide reach and networking, especially among young people. They not only serve as social relationship networks, but can also be used as platforms for the dissemination of news, information and knowledge in general, as well as in didactic and pedagogical contexts such as teaching, learning and practice spaces. It is precisely here that many young people run the

risk of being approached by extremist groups and going through processes of radicalization. Nowadays, many extremist media sites are characterized by professional marketing and targeted community management catering to the world and interests of young people. Accordingly, digital spaces offer good opportunities to counteract radicalization processes in a way that is appropriate for the target group and, for example, to communicate and show young people the background, methods and dangers of extremist groups as well as alternative narratives by means of content-based online streetwork.

6. Continuous reporting on right-wing extremism

Right-wing populism and right-wing extremism have increased sharply in recent years in Austria. A public media debate, in the form of continuous reporting to highlight the potential dangers of right-wing extremism is necessary.

Objective 2: Strengthen education and resilience at the local level

Education is enshrined as a human right in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights and must be promoted and strengthened as a fundamental development goal at all levels. Education is initially provided and mediated primarily by the family, and subsequently primarily by public, but also in part by private institutions; these are therefore also the fundamental stakeholders that must be strengthened and nurtured in order to promote a viable and lasting resistance to unilateral tendencies. To further inclusive education, parents, and as far as possible, the whole family should be involved in the education and training system. Furthermore, it is necessary to enable greater integration of young people and equal access to education at the local and overall societal level in order to promote a robust democracy. In order to strengthen the public education system for current and future challenges, such as fighting populism and extremism, and to keep it resilient, and to protect democratic civil society organizations and educational institutions from extremist ideologies, education must be promoted as progress for society as a whole and more public funds must be invested in it.

7. More offers for permanent social reintegration for released prisoners

After release from prison, people are often stigmatized, discriminated against and rejected by sections of the society. These circumstances make it difficult for the people concerned to find their way back into a life full of prejudices. Accordingly, there is a great need for a variety of offers in which experts support released persons in finding work, a home and confidence in themselves and in society. Particularly when there is no social safety net to provide support and assistance to ex-prisoners, politicians must provide for that there are sufficient offers and contact points for these people to prevent them from returning to a life of crime.

8. Promoting dialogue between different players (e.g. police, social workers, youth workers, policy makers, etc.) and stakeholders (peer-to-peer campaigns)

The exchange between the various organizations and individuals involved is crucial to desired success of both extremism prevention and deradicalization lead to the desired success: The more information is exchanged, especially between (former) victims and different contact agents with their respective experience and expertise, the more precisely can measures be designed and implemented to protect young people from radicalization processes or make it attractive for them to drop out of those.

9. To anchor anti-racism, anti-sexism and anti-Semitism sensitization work for pedagogues in the course of pedagogical training and further education

Even though there already seems to be a great deal of knowledge about racism, sexism, anti-Semitism and other forms of discrimination within the Austrian population, particularly those persons who spend a lot of time with young people in the course of their professional activities (especially in kindergarten, school or in the wider professional context) must receive professional training on the above-mentioned topics in order to be able to recognize initial tendencies at an early stage – not only with children and young people, but rather also with themselves – and to be able to react accordingly. Knowledge

of the backgrounds and mechanisms behind the emergence of forms of discrimination and the development and implementation of strategies against discriminatory behavior should be anchored as part of the training for educators.

10. Anchor anti-racism-, anti-sexism- and anti-Semitism trainings for pupils as part of the main curriculum or as an elective subject

An age-based education in and engagement with the topics of prejudice, racism, sexism, anti-Semitism, antiziganism, Islamophobia and Muslimophobia, homophobia and transophobia, discrimination, authoritarianism and the possible consequences of these is indispensable not only for teachers, but equally for children and young people. The more pupils know about these topics and the more comprehensive the information is (history, background, motivation and goals of those involved, experiences and emotions of those affected, etc.), the greater the chance that young people will understand at an early stage what is actually behind (systemic) exclusion and discrimination and what scope for action each individual has to prevent or combat racism and discrimination.

11. Anchoring diversity, human rights and democracy education in the training of educators as well as in school curricula

Equality and equal treatment of all people as well as the principles behind democracy must be self-evident for children from an early age. If these values are not already given to them from home, teachers must take on or expand this task and actively integrate these topics in the classroom. This requires appropriate consideration in the training of teachers and training for practical implementation.

12. Encourage the strengthening of critical thinking at an early age, i.e. from kindergarten, at school and within the family, through appropriate materials and handouts for guardians

Parents and other legal guardians must be empowered, if necessary with the help of appropriate professional support (such as visual, audio or written materials), to teach their children to question things critically

and to form their own opinions by providing objective information. With the help of the materials that are to be made available to them through the kindergarten or school and, if necessary, offer advice on how to use them, it is important to start the support as early as possible.

13. Interdisciplinary training and sensitization workshops for students, teaching staff, police and justice

Extremism is a complex subject area: There is not only a historical background that needs to be known by society as a whole, but also psychological, sociological, political, and economic causes, interactions, and the resulting consequences. This diversity and concepts of backgrounds and effects must be anchored in sensitization workshops that are conducted for young people on the one hand and for groups of people who deal with young people in the course of their professional activities on the other. It is specifically recommended that the topic be approached in an interdisciplinary manner in this setting in order to discuss the entire scope of extremism in detail with the workshop participants.

14. Increased training offers for youth workers on the topic of confidence building and professional relationship work with young people

A good basis of trust has proven to be very useful in working with young people to be able to have open discussions about thoughts, emotions and needs. Some people possess this gift "by nature" due to their own history, others can learn it in appropriate training and further education programs. It is considered very useful to integrate the topic of confidence-building into the training of those professions that are active in open youth work or have regular contact with young people in other settings.

15. Offer more argumentation training against discriminatory slogans at schools, with the aim of achieving greater competence to act and interpret the world

It is not enough to have listed arguments ready, in the regularly held trainings possible backgrounds and scope for action can be thematized, counter-strategies can be developed and tested for their psychological effectiveness, as ca one's own inner attitude, why one wants to oppose injustice. In addition, argumentation training in this way promotes presence of mind, possibilities for action and democratic ability, as well as the recognition of demagogic rhetoric.

16. *Strengthening resilience of young people through increased offers in youth work*

Humans are naturally endowed with a resilience. However, this ability may suffer due to experiences made during the first phase of life (up to and including adolescence). For this reason, there is a need for appropriate offers and measures from contact points for young people in open youth work, which help those affected to strengthen their psychological resistance and their ability to survive challenging life situations without long-term impairment, and to promote the ability to deal with conflict. Correspondingly, regular training and further education measures are indispensable for occupational groups working in these settings.

17. *Participation offerings for young Muslims to strengthen their sense of belonging to Austrian society*

Young Muslim people in Austria are often confronted with racism, discrimination and rejection. It is important to actively counteract this by providing active participation opportunities so that these people have the opportunity to share their views and experiences with others by participating in public discussions or to help shape the most diverse living environments. Access to participation in various social processes must be easily available for young Muslims to help them overcome possible inhibitions.

Objective 3: Strengthen the responsibility to protect victims

Even if one must always bear in mind the overall social context with the respective civic commitment, it is useful to first focus on state and subsequently public institutions, whose essential tasks include the protection of victims and the strengthening of victims' rights. On 24 June 2020, the European Union presented an EU strategy to strengthen the rights of victims. The package of measures includes the opportunity for vulnerable victims to have non-discriminatory access to justice and to report crimes, to claim and to obtain compensation for violence suffered and to obtain compensation for violence suffered, as well as the development of cooperation among agents in the field of victims' rights. It will be of great importance to establish permanent and transparent quality control of the tasks, working procedures, and protocols of these institutions by external experts, to strive for cooperation and exchange between state and public institutions in order to use synergies and to promote trust and support of the most vulnerable people, so that these crimes can be reported and victims can be guaranteed their respective rights.

18. Consider prevention work as a societal approach (this should be treated and regarded as a goal by all responsible persons)

Every society has a responsibility towards its members and lives up to this responsibility, for example through civic engagement. Accordingly, prevention work for young people in the area of extremism must not be attributed to individual parts of a society, but must be supported and shared by all. Possibilities and approaches must therefore be anchored with the main protagonists of social organizations, such as the educational system, security agencies, political parties and institutions.

19. Establishment of a coordination office for drop-outs

For those young people who have joined an extremist movement but wish to leave it or are in the process of leaving it, a coordination centre is needed, which they can contact in the course of their project, where they can receive advice and, according to their needs, information or low-threshold access to support services, as well as continuous, individual support in the deradicalization process.

20. Establishment of a coordination center for returnees

For those people who joined an extremist movement abroad but have decided to leave and return to Austria, a coordination office is needed which they can contact in the course of their project, where they can receive advice and information or low-threshold access to support services according to their needs.

21. Opportunities for young people to participate in social processes

Young people must be given the opportunity to become involved e.g. in social discussions or decisions. This requires a suitable framework that gives these events the necessary public significance. Appropriately organized opportunities to establish contact with politicians, to participate in public debates or to promote the presentation of their views must be increasingly established and made "attractive" to young people.

22. Establish programs and offers for drop-outs

Members of extremist movements who have decided to leave, often need support for this difficult step, which involves breaking with the previous social and political environment. Exiting extremist groups is a longer process, on an individual and voluntary basis, and those who wish to leave often distrust state authority. In Austria, the support offered to these individuals is not well enough developed to reach all of them and to help them with a planned exit and the associated process. For this reason, there is a need for adequate facilities that offer assistance to drop-outs, help them build new relationships and facilitate their return to a "normal" social life.

23. Developing shelters for women and men affected by violence

Overcrowded shelters in Austria show that the number of contact points for women and men affected by violence is insufficient and that there is a need for more. In urban areas in particular, more anonymous options are needed for this group of people seeking protection.

Objective 4: Protect human rights in anti-terror laws

Every society needs laws within the framework of its legal system, and special circumstances often mean that legislation needs to be adapted to them. The situation is no different for laws to combat or prevent terrorist activities, which have been created within the framework of all states. Especially when the call for "stricter laws and harsher penalties with greater deterrent effect" rings out, security policies must be introduced transparently and in the spirit of democratic constitutional states. The fight against terrorism must always go hand in hand with respect for human rights and must not run the risk of committing or legitimizing serious human rights violations under the pretext of fighting terrorism.

24. *Promoting the protection of human rights as a state duty*

The state has a duty to uphold and protect human rights. This means not only that human rights violations alleged by those affected must be investigated, but also that the observance and protection of human rights must be actively promoted and demanded. It is not only the duty of the state to respect human dignity, but also to protect it.

25. *Protection of human rights, evaluation and combating extremist views and representations (insults, hate speech, hate campaigns ...) in the media and on online platforms*

In order to guarantee the protection of human rights in the media and online platforms, appropriate nationwide monitoring is needed. For example, in cases of hate campaigns, which can lead to discrimination against the respective population groups or in cases of hate speech, appropriate action (blocking, forwarding to the relevant authorities, etc.) is initiated. The necessary resources must be made available.

Objective 5: Promote gender justice

A persistent imbalance in gender relations, such as patriarchal structures, is an expression of unequal power relations and leads to stereotyping and discrimination of the sexes. An essential aspect of this goal is the visualization and deconstruction of prejudices and stereotypes aimed at inequality and discrimination based on gender in order to prevent and

sanction structural injustice and structural discrimination, especially against girls and women.

26. *Anchor and implement gender equality*

The equal treatment of men, women and other gender forms must be taken for granted in every society. Accordingly, the issue needs to be addressed from early childhood to old age: In particular, kindergartens, schools and vocational and/or higher education institutions must train their staff to ensure that all pupils, students, trainees, etc. are always treated equally, regardless of their gender. Sanctions for non-compliance must be established.

27. *The equal treatment of men, women and others Targeted work with boys to promote "flexible" gender roles and to reduce hegemonic images of masculinity*

Young men who either run the risk of turning to extremist movements or want to break away from them need targeted support that, for example, specifically addresses the role models of men and women represented in extremist groups, and can also reflect on their significance and impact with boys.

28. *Protection and social security for persons affected by marginalization*

The social process of marginalization pushes groups of the population to the "fringes of society" and makes it difficult for them to participate in economic, cultural and political life. For these people, who are often marginalized because of their cultural, religious or ethnic identity, appropriate protection and social security must be provided so that they receive sufficient social support to remain a part of society.

29. *Strengthen self-motivation and self-determination among young people*

Young people should be encouraged to take responsibility and self-determination for their lives through accompanied reflection processes, for example in the course of open youth work, whereby

they learn to take responsibility for their actions and deeds. By encouraging them to shape their own lives, the self-motivation to achieve certain things is also strengthened. Appropriate offers of support in open youth work must be expanded.

30. *Promotion of social-emotional intelligence among young people*

This topic cannot be tackled too early, the involvement of the parental home and a close cooperation with the earliest educational institutions, taking into account the findings of developmental psychology, achieves the best results. Here both the area of complex changes in social structure and the area of general everyday human problems overlap, because the development and cultivation of empathy must go hand in hand with a profound knowledge of one's own nature and the skills of both opening up and drawing boundaries in all kinds of relationships.

31. *Opportunities for young people to participate in social processes*

Young people must be given the opportunity to become involved in social discussions or decisionmaking. This requires a suitable framework that gives these events the necessary public significance. Appropriately organized opportunities to establish contact with politicians, participate in public debates or promote the presentation of their views must be increasingly established and made "attractive" to young people.

32. *Formation of lobbies to make greater use of social media for awareness-raising campaigns (e.g. on gender justice, possible causes of injustice, etc.)*

Social media such as Instagram, Facebook, YouTube and Twitter serve not only to cultivate relationships, but also to convey information and form opinions, as well as to practice reflection and criticism. These should be used by lobby groups specifically and increasingly for awareness-raising campaigns on the possible causes of discrimination and unequal treatment based on gender, and the ability to critically question one's own online behavior should be taught.

Objective 6: Reinforce the role of young people as actors for change

In the search for answers to the challenges facing young people, such as populism, climate change and social exclusion, it is essential to provide opportunities and forms of participation and empowerment for them. Strengthening the role of young people as agents towards positive societal change, as well as promoting self-confidence, empathy and solidarity, access to reliable information and opportunities for learning together and from each other should be essential aspects and take place in direct contact with this group. Furthermore, cross-border opportunities and peer-to-peer encounters should promote the active participation of young people in political, economic and social change. It is important to empower and strengthen independence through appropriate tasks and duties as well as appropriate feedback, while constantly taking into account individual development and the increase in resilience and potential assumption of responsibility.

33. Social integration of young people at risk through adequate facilities and measures

Those young people at risk of radicalization and extremist ideologies need alternative environments and scope for action. This means that on the one hand, sufficient and adequate facilities are needed to "intercept" these processes in good time. On the other hand, society as a whole, including politics, must ensure that appropriate measures, such as training for teaching staff or trainers, but also forms of support for relatives are in place to counteract these processes of radicalization and ensure ongoing participation in society.

34. Adequate access to education and training opportunities for all young people from different social backgrounds

Their own social, cultural or ethnic background must not be the deciding factor in determining which schools children and young people can attend or which education is accessible to them. Rather, all young people, regardless of their social, cultural or ethnic background, must be guaranteed equal access to education and employment, and

sanctions must be imposed by those responsible in education or employment policy in the event of discrimination.

35. *Opportunities for young people of non-Austrian nationality from the age of 16 to vote if they live in Austria or were born here*

One way to be included in political decisions and to help shape one's own future as a fundamental form of political participation is through the right to vote, the right by which active and passive participation in political elections is granted. This should not be tied to Austrian citizenship, but rather be based on whether people were born in Austria, for example, or whether they live in Austria. People who live in Austria should be able to vote without restriction as a means of participation.

36. *The involvement of young people in participatory processes within the framework of civil society*

The aim is to give young people the feeling that their opinion is important in social and political decisions and processes. Through active participation in civil society, which is to be strengthened and promoted even more through appropriate measures and opportunities, young people can play a role in shaping the present and future of society.

37. *Biography work as a method in individual and social therapeutic change processes*

When working with young people at risk, biography work is a useful and efficient method of identifying possible individual (e.g. family or socio-political) causes and thus unmet needs of individuals, which may underlie radicalization tendencies or extremist ideologies. These aspects can be explicitly taken up in therapeutic interventions, for example to help the young person leave the radical group or to prevent them from joining such a group.

38. *Strengthen creativity and innovation in young people and use them for prevention work*

Prevention work can build on the experiences of those affected and thus benefit from them. In order to see how other young people can best be protected from similar experiences, it is necessary on the one hand to recognize (concrete) unfulfilled needs and desires, and on the other hand to know how to reach potentially endangered young people. The creative and innovative potential that young people carry within them can be consciously employed and used for this purpose.

39. Co-creation together with young people and experts to develop exit and prevention tactics

The cooperation between young people and persons from exit and prevention assistance for the joint preparation of support structures is considered to be useful, since young people naturally know what they need or what they would appeal to them from their own experience and due to the awareness of their own wishes and needs, and thus will more readily accept prevention or exit offers.

40. More and better targeted information on contact points for young people experiencing discrimination and racism

In addition to an expansion of the range of offers, information as to their existence and location is also needed. This means that appropriate information must not only be made available to young people in schools, youth centers, sports clubs, etc., but should also be disseminated in social media. The Internet presence of these contact points should be designed to appeal to a broad target group, especially young people.

41. Increased financial support for former prisoners

People who are released from prison have a particularly hard time finding their way back into social life. Their reintegration is often marked by stigmatization, prejudices and obstacles of all kinds. For many of those released from prison, the period after release is particularly marked by financial crises. In order to help them to become part of society again, i.e. find work and a place to live after

their release and gradually build up a social network, more financial support is needed than is currently available, to help secure their existence, but also to provide psychological support.

42. More opportunities for the social reintegration of former prisoners

The recidivism rate among those released from prison is too high and is due in part to inadequate support services for social reintegration after prison. For this reason, there is a need to expand support services for ex-prisoners to help them regain their footing, i.e. work, housing and psychological stability, in order to prevent a potential relapse.

43. Increased financial support for open youth work

There is a great need for open youth work, which among plays a significant role in Financial resources are needed to provide young people with as many different offers as possible, and thus counteract the rise in crime at an early stage. In addition to the promotion of youth work, it is also necessary to show more appreciation for the work of the relevant professionals.

44. More (free or low-cost) services for young people to satisfy their need for a sense of community (such as youth centers or online streetwork)

Those young people who, for various reasons, cannot experience the feeling of cohesion in their own family or in society and are therefore looking to satisfy their needs elsewhere, should be given the opportunity to experience this in a protected, safe environment. To prevent young people at risk from joining extremist groups for this reason, it is recommended that the range of free or reduced-cost facilities with appropriate personnel be expanded.

Objective 7: Promote democratic values and protect civil society

Democratic values are based to a large extent on achievements, protocols, and ways of dealing with people, which have been developed and fought for in decades of civic participation. These basic values, whose essential characteristics are human dignity, the rule of law, social security, free elections and free expression of opinion, as well as tolerance and freedom, must be learned and protected, occasionally renewed and developed, but in any case always nurtured. Cultivating and modifying seem to be contradictory, and even often conflicting demands and modes of action, yet they require both the consent and participation of society.

In this area, the maxim of caution applies; the challenge will be to ensure that, if innovations are necessary, even those sectors of civil society that are endowed with greater powers of perseverance are not left behind, and to shape democracy in such a way that information, opportunities and chances are accessible to all people equally.

45. Avoiding sweeping judgements about groups in public debate, in the media and by politicians

Members of various groups are often at risk of being presented in a generalized, simplified and undifferentiated manner. As a result, generalized images including evaluations of these groups are communicated, which no longer allow for the fact that those groups are constituted by individuals. In order to avoid this, any form of public sweeping judgement and generalization, whether in public discourse, in the media, or by politicians, must be avoided.

46. Strengthening the public image of NGOs and promoting their work

The staff of open social work and those NGOs working in the field of prevention and deradicalization do important work and provide support for affected or potentially vulnerable young people. Through their services they can help many young people and their families not to be tempted by extremist ideologies or to distance themselves permanently from potentially violent extremist groups, thereby making a highly relevant contribution to security and social cohesion in Austria. This work must be publicly appreciated and promoted by individual members of society and by politicians alike.

47. To establish a supportive and inclusive labor market policy for all people living in Austria

A person's ethnic, religious and/or cultural background can be decisive for access to the labor market in Austria. Likewise, a burdened past history can negatively impact the chances of finding a job. The goal should therefore be equal, legally regulated access to the labor market for all people living in Austria. In addition, more support measures are needed to (re)integrate disadvantaged persons into the labor market in the long term.

48. Identify the contexts in which extremism prevention and deradicalization are relevant: Kindergarten / school / politics / law enforcement / education / labor market / social security / health / science and research / Internet / media

Since those key factors that promote (often later) radicalization processes among young people occur in early childhood, it is necessary to identify them early on in the appropriate contexts such as kindergarten, school, Internet/social media training center or workplace and to take pertinent steps or preventive measures. In addition, further responsibilities and contexts must be identified in an open discourse, and, in addition to prevention and deradicalization services, appropriate educational work must also be implemented.

49. Cooperation and networking between persons and/or organisations working with young people

The exchange between agents working in the field of prevention and deradicalization is essential for success. This exchange must be strengthened and extended so that relevant information can be passed on promptly and young people can be helped in the best possible way.

50. Offer more contact and advice points for relatives of affected young people and affected adults

Opportunities for relatives and especially for parents of young people at risk or involved in extremism, are not yet sufficient in Austria. However, since it is precisely these groups of people who are affected and at the same time have an important influence on young people, and can actively support them, e.g., in exit processes, more contact points are needed throughout Austria (not just in urban areas) where sufficient and adequate information and support can be obtained.

51. Establishment of independent, systematic and interdisciplinary research on extremism in order to further analyze extremist tendencies and their causes

More overall funding is needed to research , with which relevant aspects in greater depth in order to further develop and optimize work in the prevention of extremism and deradicalization.

52. Commitment to implement the recommendations

In Austria, the political and social players must the need for, and broad agreement on, the recommendations for action and their implementation. If there is a lack of political support in particular, there is the risk that the recommendations will not be taken seriously and that no positive effects will materialize. Within a very short time, this could be reflected by rising numbers of extremist ideologies.

53. Financing of the above measures

The implementation of many of the measures described requires sufficient financial support. Even once this is secured, it also requires conscious approval of the recommendations for a successful implementation.

Objective 8: Generate alternative narratives in social networks and media

We are living in the age of narratives. The term, which comes from journalism and literary theory, means a story context with factual or fictional background and narrative elements. In a fictional context, the rule of

'suspension of disbelief' applies; one gets involved with the 'story' without constantly and repeatedly questioning it.

Exactly these kinds of awareness, sensitization and also skills are indispensable dealing with today's media (classical or social): We must never lose sight of the potential fictionality of even the most plausible narrative, we must recognize it as one of several or many possible narratives, and develop the skills and abilities to construct and communicate ones that deviate from it or are opposite to it, possibly with a higher degree of plausibility and practicability.

54. Intensification of awareness-raising for the topics of racism and discrimination in politics, administration, on internet platforms and in the media

It is essential that the main institutions and media platforms in Austria maintain a permanent and moderated discourse and dialogue on these issues, on the broadest possible basis and with the involvement of all stakeholders.

55. Providing counter-narratives or alternative narratives through online platforms and media to challenge extremist ideas

It is essential to react quickly to emerging narratives and currents. Forward-looking strategies are also desirable. An option e.g. could be some task force to observe the media in question and react quickly to anything that may emerge from the respective camps, and also to provide possible patterns for potential future narrative.

56. Promote media competence among young people to recognize extremist narratives (hate speech, fake news, calls to action, etc.) and distinguish them from facts

Through adequate support services in schools, youth facilities, contact points, etc., young people in different media landscapes such as print-, electronic or social media should learn to recognize extremist thoughts as such at an early stage and to question their content through reflection.

57. Forming lobbies to make greater use of social media for awareness-raising campaigns (e.g., on gender justice, possible causes of injustice, etc.)

Social media such as Instagram, Facebook, YouTube and Twitter serve not only to cultivate relationships, but also to convey information and form opinions, to practice reflection and criticism. They should be used by lobby groups in a targeted and focused manner for awareness-raising campaigns on the possible causes of discrimination and unequal treatment on the basis of gender, and to teach the ability to critically question one's own online behavior.

58. Expanding exit strategies online – using the example of the "Redirect Method"

Following the example of Moonshot CVE, a UK-based for-profit social enterprise that specializes in combating violent extremism on the Internet, there is an increasing need to develop and disseminate alternative narratives and convincing counter-arguments for people interested in extremist online content. The "Redirect Method" is a relay method that provides specially curated web content, campaigns and intervention services for Internet users who deal with dangerous extremist content. It also provides new content, alternative narratives, exit programs and access to new communities.

SWOT Analysis of prevention measures against violent extremism in Austria

The SWOT analysis describes **Strengths (S)**, **Weaknesses (W)**, **Opportunities (O)** and **Threats (R)** of the goals to be achieved by objectives 1–8, as well as those of the activities identified in the recommendations for action, and points out implicit interactions.

Strengths

Prevention work (as a broad definition) must start as early as possible. This includes motivating and encouraging children and young people to think critically, making it possible for them to experience and live opportunities for action, showing them participatory opportunities for co-design and strengthening their ability to reflect and to change perspectives through discussions and exercises.

Strengthening resilience aims at awakening and improving the emotional stability of children, adolescents and adults. In a constantly and rapidly changing world, young people in particular are challenged and often at a loss to manage uncertainties and conflicts in a solution-oriented manner. The willingness to accept and apply new things and the ability to clearly differentiate between what needs to be retained and what needs to be let go are ways to minimize stress and strengthen one's own resilience. Resilience support programs should always be developed and applied in a target group-oriented manner. It should be taken into consideration whether the programs to strengthen resilience are aimed at young families, kindergartens, elementary school, developmental counseling centers or young people.

It is useful, and therefore also a strength, to build and maintain a solid and sustainable basis of communication with young people, starting of course with the relevant state and public institutions. This means talking to them in their own language, communicating about their issues and problems, and thus meeting them 'at eye level'. Since language also shows significant differences between generations, this implies a new level of multilingualism in society, on which ideally a 'lingua franca' can be established.

It is essential to address areas that play a role in the lives of many children and young people, such as multilingualism, gender roles, discrimination and racism.

Relationship work in social work and in open youth work with an exemplary effect for other institutions and areas of society is the basis of every successful communication: Only when an intact relationship based on trust

has been established between young people and adults can the technical and factual processing the content begin, e.g. in the case of deradicalization.

The clear commitment to the issues of gender and anti-racism contributes to the elimination of a large part of the hierarchies and barriers that have been built up in most societies, and often unnoticed by many people. With regard to the issues of gender and anti-racism, it is necessary to identify indicators to curb gender inequality and disadvantage based on appearance. Furthermore, it is necessary to show which measures have been taken by management and employees of the respective institutions (companies, educational system, politics, health sector) and how they were applied or need to be applied

Police officers must be encouraged to identify and investigate crimes motivated by prejudice.

Weaknesses

One challenge is to ensure sufficient financial support.

The distribution of responsibilities between the individual areas involved must be carefully thought through.

In our fast-moving times, estimating the required time horizon may also be difficult: Implementation and realization of the recommendations require different amounts of time and patience, and adequate controlling is a prerequisite for successful implementation.

A lack of interest on the part of some key actors may be an obstacle to promoting important issues such as democracy building and social participation.

Deradicalization is ultimately based on voluntariness. Letting go of internalized worldviews and values, but above all separation from the (extremist) social environment requires effort and perseverance, it can be a long-term process and must be accompanied by the building of new relationships. Therefore, alternatives must be shown and examples given to affected young people to support their choice of new paths.

Opportunities

The topic of generational change with gradual assumption of responsibility on the part of young people and adolescents offers a wealth of opportunities.

The great task of consciously avoiding and completely preventing exclusion makes it possible to integrate marginalized groups in the educational system, on the political level and in the context of labor market policy.

Multilingualism must be understood and communicated as a benefit and not as a social disadvantage.

Direct learning by those affected and involved is practice-oriented and thus not (primarily) theory-based. The advantage is that through the case studies of these persons, many more details become visible, which will be invaluable when implementing projects in practice. The range of different personalities and their stories is thus a gift for prevention work and at the same time offers a wealth of approaches for work in deradicalization.

Exchange is to be seen as a profound and very practical way of transferring knowledge between different people.

A great opportunity for projects in upcoming years if not decades lies in the possibility of anchoring gender-specific aspects in education and prevention work in a way that is fruitful, enriching and supportive for all involved.

Threats

If, in the spirit of democracy promotion, everyone is invited to participate in public dealings, important questions must be clarified, such as who determines the criteria, whose ideas are to be implemented, who controls the processes, and much more. If these aspects are not clarified in advance, there is the danger that lobbying with all its problems will occur and majorities rule.

It is important to ensure the work of independent, renowned scientists in the field of extremism by providing appropriate funding. Particular attention

should be paid to participatory approaches in which (former) affected persons are actively involved in the studies.

As with many larger inclusion projects, it cannot be completely ruled out that there may be attempts at sneaking in and taking over, infiltration and infiltration, espionage and acts of sabotage. In this and similar contexts, interviewees have also used terms such as 'nipster' and 'pin-stripe salafists'. Appropriate attention is necessary, as are strategies to react swiftly.

Finally, it should be noted that only the most essential points were elaborated in this SWOT analysis, further aspects could be added with the analysis extended and deepened accordingly.