



**Results report of the participation study**

# **PREVENTION OF VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN AUSTRIA**

Analysis of causes and needs of Austrian extremism  
prevention



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**SÜDWIND**

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### *Analysis of causes and needs of Austrian extremism prevention*

The participatory study was conducted within the framework of the EU project „Rhizomes against Polarisation“, 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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# Summary

Due to the increase in extremist movements, especially in the field of right-wing extremism and religiously based extremism in recent years, European politics is facing new challenges. The present study „Prevention of violent extremism in Austria” deals with the questions of the causes of these developments and the circumstances that lead young people in particular to join extremist groups and ideologies, and in some cases to translate these ideologies into violent acts, and which preventive measures need to be taken at the national level in primary, secondary and tertiary prevention.

A close examination of national and international literature, and in particular of empirical studies, has been incorporated into the development of the interview guide. A total of ten experts from various organizations working in the field of extremism prevention and deradicalization in Austria were interviewed qualitatively.

The main findings of the study cover several thematic areas: For example, many of the respondents agreed that there is no single trigger that tempts young people to approach violent extremist groups. Rather, in the view of the interviewees, there is a wide range of causes, such as precarious family circumstances, lack of identification figures, the desire to belong to a group, the search for one's own identity, experiences of discrimination and marginalization, experiences of violence, and much more, that encourage radicalization tendencies among young people: ideological groups address precisely these needs. The interviewed actors were also of a similar opinion with regard to the place of indoctrination, namely that there is not one place, but that there are many other possibilities besides the Internet where recruitment takes place. With regard to right-wing extremism, the interviewees noted an increase, even though this may not correspond to media coverage, and thus might give the public the impression that it is religiously based extremism that has increased much more significantly. The gender aspect was also discussed as essential in the interviews: the patriarchal understanding of roles and the thesis held in extremist movements that male dominance is natural, according to the experts, requires special attention in prevention work and at the same time offers starting points for relevant educational work.

The experts surveyed recommend an overall societal approach to curbing extremism in Austria, which includes in particular the promotion of democracy and participation. This can only be achieved with the aid of secure financing and the support of political will.



It is also important that we do not rely exclusively on democracy as an institution in the fight against extremism, but that we all confront extremism individually, according to our respective possibilities and scope of action.

In tertiary prevention, where the focus is on the deradicalization of affected persons, this should be seen as a longer learning and counselling process than has been the case so far. Deradicalization should be seen as a longer process of learning and consultation; it must be shaped together with the respective experts, and the necessary resources must be made available.

Based on the results of the interviews and taking into account relevant literature, a total of 58 measures for the prevention of violent extremism in Austria have been developed and subjected to a SWOT analysis in the course of the project „Rhizome against Polarisation“. A mapping of those institutions that were represented in the interviews and expressly agreed to the publication of these, including best practice examples, completes the present report.

# Introduction

Polarization, violent radicalization and extremist ideology have increased strongly in Europe in recent years. The issue is politically topical and poses great challenges both to the Austrian and the international society, since young people in particular (though not exclusively) represent an important target group for extremist groups.

The nationwide Network for the Prevention of Extremism and Deradicalization (BNED) therefore points out that intensive engagement with extremist groups and individuals, and with vulnerable groups such as young people is unavoidable (BNED 2018). The project „Rhizome against Polarisation“, which is funded by the European Commission, 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.

Based on a comprehensive international literature search, the key questions for the broad-based qualitative study were developed. Experts from various organizations in the field of extremism prevention were interviewed about the main causes of the emergence of violent extremism in Austria. Building on these, the next step of the project was to develop recommendations for political institutions for measures to counteract violent extremism in a preventive manner.

The results of the scientific study „Prevention of violent extremism in Austria“ will serve as a basis for political measures to prevent violent extremism.

Chapter 1 of this report provides an overview of the methodological procedure, before summarizing the most important results of the guideline-oriented interviews with relevant actors involved in prevention work and deradicalization in Austria in Chapter 2, taking into account current literature. First of all, the anti-terrorism policy in Austria and its impact on human rights (2.1) is described before the key



factors that can lead to violent extremism in Austria (2.2) are presented. Places of indoctrination in Austria (2.3), as well as current developments on the extremist scene there, and gender aspects in the prevention of extremism and deradicalization are dealt with in this chapter, as is the issue of political and social responsibility for curbing extremism in Austria.

The main conclusions of the study are summarized in Chapter 3.

A brief description of the institutions represented by the interviewees, with examples of best practice in the prevention of violent extremism in Austria, as well as the guide used in conducting the qualitative interviews, can be found in the appendix to the document.

# 1. Methodical procedure

The guideline-based interview (Atteslander, 2000) was chosen as the survey technique. This form of questioning methodology, which focuses on the personal perspective of the interviewee, enables the researcher to ask central questions at the appropriate moment and, if necessary, to ask further questions. The open questions of the guide allow the interviewees to formulate the answers completely independently (Ebster, Stalzer 2013).

The selection of the interview partners was carried out in two steps: first, relevant organizations from the field of extremism prevention and deradicalization were identified by means of Internet research and contacted with the request for an interview. Following the interviews, the interviewees were asked to give recommendations for further interesting and relevant persons and/or organizations. This is how the ten interviews resulted.

The author points out that, due to the procedure used, this is not a completely random sample of people. This circumstance is also due to the fact that the community engaged in prevention work and deradicalization in Austria is not infinitely large.

In order to maintain the desired anonymity, only those organizations that have expressly agreed to this are mentioned by name in the mapping (see appendix).

The respondents were between 35 and 55 years of age with varying degrees of professional experience.

The interviews, which were conducted between May and August 2020, were partly conducted online (via Skype and Zoom) or face to face, depending on the agreement, at the premises of the respective organization or at the researcher's office.

The individual interviews lasted between 60 and 120 minutes, on average about 90 minutes per interview. Before the interview began, the experts were informed about the objectives of the survey and the content of the declaration of consent, which includes data protection aspects: consent to the recording of the interview, information about the transcription of the interview, anonymization, and the information that no personal information and/or materials will be passed on to





third parties. Furthermore, the respondents were informed that a report of the most important results will be published.

The interview guide, which was based on the results of an extensive international research of relevant literature and studies on extremism, covers the following topics:

- Key elements that may encourage young people to join extremist groups and adopt their ideologies
- Relevant national incidents of extremist movements in recent years
- Change of extremist scenes in Austria
- Places where young people are most often victims of indoctrination
- Opportunities to involve young people more closely in democratic processes and to strengthen civil society, so that violent extremism can be prevented or averted
- To provide opportunities for radicalized young people to return to a life free of prejudice
- Laws on national counterterrorism from a human rights perspective

The content analysis of the interviews was based on the qualitative content analysis of Mayring (2010).

## 2. Analysis and summary of the main study results

### 2.1 *Anti-terrorism policy in Austria and its effects on human rights*

Terrorism, in the form of systematically prepared, terrifying violent attacks against the political order from the underground, aims to spread insecurity and terror, but also to generate sympathy and willingness to support its aims. (Waldmann 2005). It can be understood as a conflict of asymmetrical relations that involves inequality in terms of resources, legitimacy, methods and media orientation. Here, small, politically motivated groups face the state. Even if the starting position and equal opportunities are unfavorable, terrorist groups often succeed in opposing even powerful states, since the weaker side can also gain advantages from power asymmetries. Terrorist organizations are characterized by their mobility and independence from national laws or state borders. They often change their structures and compositions faster than security measures can adapt to them (Kolnberger 2012).

In keeping with pertinent literature (e.g. Kolnberger 2012, Gartenstein-Ross 2011, Marchi 2013), the experts surveyed underscore the ability of terrorist organizations to adapt to circumstances, as is evident e.g. in their recruitment measures: in order to appeal to the broadest possible strata of the population, some of the interviewees believe that radical groups make an effort to appear modern and up-to-date. In this context, Wasserziehr (2014) also speaks of „Nipster“, a neo-Nazi who dresses like a hipster<sup>1</sup> and is active in social media to attract attention.

Islamist-extremist organizations also quickly adapt their narratives and their appearances to the respective circumstances. After the loss of territory of the so-called Islamic state, which a few years ago called for people to travel to Syria and Iraq and join the global jihad, Islamist terrorist organizations are now using new narratives such as „the war is not over yet“ (Munoz, 2019), and that it does not necessarily require the physical caliphate to achieve the set goals in the fight against

<sup>1</sup>Hipsters are well-educated young people from the upper middle class who grew up in the age of mobile communication and whose clothing style is reminiscent of the vintage look with the original aim of standing out of the mainstream.

the West. At the same time, however, offshoots of the IS in Yemen, Afghanistan, Pakistan, the Philippines and West Africa are present on those new battlefields, and people are being encouraged to travel there and fight. (RAN, 2019:1) The apparent inconsistency of this propaganda reveals how various recruitment techniques are used to reach as many and diverse people as possible. (RAN, 2019:2)

The interviewed experts also emphasized the role of the Internet, according to which radicalization and international networking of the right-wing communities could flourish online for years without being observed and find their way into everyday life. Schwarz (2020), for example, describes a similar situation, according to which right-wing radicals would no longer meet primarily at concerts or demonstrations, but would be able to network and present themselves worldwide with the help of the Internet and a well thought-out, modern marketing strategy.

In 2014, Austria introduced the Symbols Act, an extension of the 1960 Badge Act, which bans National Socialist symbols, while the extension of the Symbols Act punishes the use of symbols of other extremist movements, such as fascist salutes and Ustasha symbols, symbols of the Islamist Muslim Brotherhood, symbols of the extreme right-wing Grey Wolves, and many more.

Some of the experts stressed the importance of the ban on symbols, according to which the loss of symbols through illegalization and criminalization would mean severe losses for the extremist scene.

However, the ban on symbols of extremist organizations alone would not achieve the desired effect, and a far more important counter-strategy was to focus on and disseminate information about extremist groups that were prepared to use violence.

Some of the interviewees were of the opinion though a ban on anti-constitutional symbols alone would not be sufficient to end extremism, it is nevertheless an essential and necessary first step, which should be followed by a broader discussion and transfer of knowledge about the motives and effectiveness of extremist groups, so that young people are given the opportunity to critically question them.

In Austria, the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution and the Fight against Terrorism (BVT) is responsible for combating extremist and terrorist phenomena, espionage, the international arms trade and organized crime. In addition, the nine State Offices for the Protection of the Constitution and Counter-Terrorism (LVT) function as state protection authorities by the police. The BVT is organizationally integrated into Section II, General Directorate for Public Security, of the Federal Ministry of the Interior (BMI). The LVT is also part of a security authority through its affiliation to the respective state police directorates (LPD).

The legal basis is the Terrorism Act §278c of the Austrian Criminal Code (StGB).

Under the then Austrian government of ÖVP and FPÖ the desire for a tightening of the anti-terrorism law was expressed in 2018.

According to the respondents, when laws are tightened, special attention must be paid to the protection of human rights and security policy must be made transparent. 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.

The current EU Directive 2017/541 of the European Parliament and the Council of 15 March on combating terrorism was implemented at national level in 2018 by extending the following points in the Austrian Criminal Code (StGB) (Criminal Law Amendment Act 2018):

- Extension of domestic jurisdiction in connection with terrorism
- Extension of the catalog of terrorist offences
- Expansion of the catalog of crimes suitable for financing
- Introduction of a new criminal offence „travel for terrorist purposes“
- Extension of the group of persons entitled to legal assistance as victims of terrorist crimes
- Creation of an offence criminalizing the obstruction of assistance

In individual discussions with the experts, the point on „travel for terrorist purposes“ with regard on human rights in particular was criticized because it would mean

asking every single person on a trip about their travel destinations. It is unclear what concrete criteria will be used and how punishment will take place before the actual crime (terrorist act) is committed.

In regard of human rights, the interviewed experts are critical of the procedure for data retention, as it is carried out arbitrarily on suspicion of terrorism and does not indicate a more structured approach.

## *2.2 Key factors that can lead to violent extremism in Austria*

In the interviews, the interviewees talked about their daily experiences in the prevention of extremism and deradicalization in counseling, support and documentation centers. In addition, they were asked explicitly about their assessment of possible key elements in radicalization processes and about recommendations for the prevention of violent extremism. The most important results of the interviews are summarized in the following chapter and supplemented with relevant literature.

Most of the interviewees are of the opinion that, in terms of key elements, there is not just one single cause why young people join extremist movements, but that a wide variety of influencing factors can promote this.

In very few cases is it initially political sentiment, although there is a political interest among some young people; much more often, according to Erin Marie Slatman (2017), it is the need of a sense of community. Even if young people are not the only target group of extremist communities, many of the experts agreed that radicalization processes and extremist ideologies are more effective in adolescence because of the insecurity and search for identity prevalent in this age group.

Many of the experts surveyed assume that each history of radicalization is an individual one that must not be generalized. Nevertheless, feelings of exclusion, a lack of opportunities and perspectives, experiences of marginalization, racism and/or discrimination, the desire to belong as well as the search for one's own identity according to the opinions of the interviewees are possible experiences and reasons

that can be favorable to radicalization tendencies among young people. Similarly, Roy (2004) or Khosrokhavar (2005) describe social oppression, lack of anchoring, discrimination, socio-economic injustice, and alienation as possible influencing factors in radicalization processes.

Some of the interviewees cited (early childhood) experiences of violence in the family or social environment as significant factors why young people join extremist groups. „If a child is never beaten, is brought up lovingly and appreciatively, it will not fanaticize. (IP7)

This is also confirmed by empirical studies, according to which causes of extremist propensity to violence often follow the learning theory. (Stöss, 2010)

According to Hößl (2019) or Fahim (2013), Islamist or neo-Salafist groups in particular can appear very attractive to Muslim youth if they have experienced exclusion, social isolation, alienation, humiliation, and ongoing marginalization due to discrimination, as they convey a sense of (exclusive) community, belonging, recognition, and activities to reduce insecurity and problems. At the same time, Islamist or neo-Salafist groups argue that Muslims are a community whose existence is threatened, and that they can only protect their identity by separating from others and keeping together.

Similarly, the desire to actively turn away from family or even society (in the sense of a culture of protest) or political interest and/or lack of or limited access to political education can be factors that lead young people to become radicalized.

In accordance with relevant literature (e.g. Pisoiu 2015, Walther 2014, Korteweg et al. 2010), the experts also indicate that family circumstances such as the absence of an important reference person in the nuclear family, precarious economic conditions, or the failure to satisfy emotional needs can play a role. At the same time, some of the experts surveyed also took the view that family exclusion alone is not sufficient to explain right-wing violence. (cf. Peham (2019:2).

In addition to the above-mentioned favorable factors, the desire to change the world, to fight for justice, a particular relevant experience (cognitive opening), the search for one's own identity or for a meaning can also lead young people towards extremism. Correspondingly, some of the experts surveyed take the view that radicalization processes can begin as early as 12 and 13 years of age, at a time when active desire for change becomes particularly strong, and not, as one might assume, at a later



date. Böckler & Zick (2015), who believe that people are particularly susceptible to radicalization processes during adolescence, take a similar view. Some of the actors surveyed hold the view that radicalization can also begin later, namely in the course of a cognitive opening through a relevant experience such as a blow of fate.

Several respondents indicated that ideological groups are addressing the needs of young people: the desire to feel a sense of belonging, orientation and support, to distance themselves from society, their own family and their understanding of religion, and to be seen in their demarcation. One interviewee described the feeling behind this, following Jacob Holdt (2015), as follows „I want to be loved. If I am not loved, I want to be seen. If I am not seen, I want to be respected. And if I can't have all that, I at least want to be feared". (IP2)

Recruitment attempts by right-wing extremist or neo-Salafist groups often make young people feel seen, valued and accepted by a group. This can in turn lead to a lack of criticism and the unquestioned acceptance of ideologies. The process of indoctrination, according to the interviewees, is favored by indicators such as one's own socialization, i.e. family relationships and/or interests or even one's circle of friends have an influence on whether a young person may feel attracted by radicalization intentions.

According to the experts, Salafism<sup>2</sup>, like right-wing extremism, is often a form of protest culture that is visible in symbols, lifestyle and clothing. In addition, similar to right-wing extremist groups, there is the fun factor, simple messages and, according to Melzer & Serafin (2013), a way of reassigning blame that is easy to understand and attractive to young people seeking meaning.

“Othering”, the process in which people are often turned into strangers or others by force or power (cf. Mecheril et al. 2010; Fereidooni 2016), is also mentioned in an interview as a motive for radicalization among young people.

The hegemonic image of masculinity was addressed in many interviews, since one of the attractions of extremist groups for males may be that they positively convey the dominant social position of men, which ascribes a subordinate role to women, which also shows in daily life. This attribution can lead many people to perceive young women wearing headscarves as oppressed persons. On the other hand, however, women wearing headscarves are also associated with terrorism, which makes them dangerous for their surroundings. Both ways of considering

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<sup>2</sup> Salafism represents a literal interpretation of the Koran and the Sunna (teachings, duties and rules of conduct) and is interpreted by Salafists as the only true definition of Islam. Relations between Muslims and non-Muslims are clearly regulated. Salafists believe in the absolute authority of God and therefore reject man-made, parliamentary democracy (Kelvington 2019).



the „headscarf-wearing woman“ entail forms of discrimination, which Hößl (2019) also describes in his book: the headscarf itself seems to need an explanation, which often reduces the women concerned to this. This statement was also emphasized by the experts interviewed.

## 2.3 Places of indoctrination in Austria

When asked where young people most often fall victim to attempts at indoctrination, the majority of those interviewed<sup>3</sup>, were of the opinion that there is not a single place where young people are „encouraged“ to become radicalized, but that there are many possibilities: depending on where young people spend their free time, such as at events, in youth - or sports clubs, on the Internet, in the music club of rural areas, in the park, in the mosque, etc., opportunities for recruitment arise.

In right-wing extremist communities, recruitment of young people also takes place, for example, at concerts (Stöss 2010), via the weekly newspaper „Junge Freiheit“ or via internet portals and right-wing extremist blogs such as Politically Incorrect (Melzer, Serafin 2013).

The recruiting techniques of numerous radical right-wing groups have changed in the process: For example, they use modern online marketing strategies to recruit people, often insist on the right to freedom of expression when spreading extremist propaganda and present their own right-wing ideology as conservatism.

Right-wing extremists search the Internet for potential followers to inspire. They also search Facebook profiles to identify people who might be open to right-wing extremist ideas. Particular strategies aim at recruiting women (Dienstbühl & Weber 2014).

If the initial contact takes place online, the experts assume that sooner or later there will have to be a real meeting with adult radicals for young people to become radicalized. Online and offline relationships are mutually dependent on each other, online encounters often turn into face-to-face encounters, and conversely social relationships and especially networking online are expanded. Junk (2018) and Sold (2018), for example, also see it this way, according to which nobody would have radicalized themselves without personal contacts in the real world.

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<sup>3</sup> cf also Hans-Gerd Jaschke (2018)





A study commissioned by the Federal Criminal Police Office, the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution and the Hessian Information and Competence Center against Extremism in 2016 showed that of 311 people who left Germany, friends and acquaintances were decisive for the radicalization process in 54% of cases. 48% cited relevant mosques influenced by Salafism and 44% the Internet as reasons for their own radicalization. A similar assessment was made by the experts surveyed.

Fireside conversations with two dropouts, one a former jihadist, the other an East German right-wing extremist who was also in the cadre, revealed parallels in their stories: both felt too little perceived at home and missed a father figure. Between the ages of 12 and 13, both began to look for their place in society and were radicalized: one in a sports club, the other in a mosque. This shows that attempts at indoctrination and radicalization processes can begin in many places. As this example illustrates<sup>4</sup> the respondents agreed that similar emotional and social predispositions can be found among young people who join extremist movements. In addition to factors such as family or other role models, the place of indoctrination has an influence on the direction radicalization can take.

This case study demonstrates the need for early causal control and prevention work at an early age, before ideologies, misanthropy, and stereotypes can become entrenched, the importance of which was also emphasized by most of the experts surveyed.

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<sup>4</sup> cf Jaschke (2018)

## 2.4 Current developments in extremist communities in Austria

The current situation (2018) of extremist communities was explained on August 14, 2019, by the presentation of the 2018 Report on the Protection of the Constitution at the Ministry of the Interior in Vienna. In 2018, significantly fewer crimes motivated by left-wing extremism were reported than in 2017, and an increase was noted with regard to crimes by right-wing extremist.

The 2018 Constitutional Report shows that the number of left-wing extremist-motivated crimes fell significantly in 2018: 137 offences were recorded, 35.1% less than in 2017, compared to 1,075 in 2017, slightly more (1.1%) right-wing extremist-motivated crimes than in 2017.

The number of right-wing extremist crimes has once again increased in 2019, according to a parliamentary inquiry reply by the Austrian Minister of the Interior, Karl Nehammer (ÖVP). According to this, in the year 797 „acts with a right-wing extremist background“ were registered in Austria.

The number of jihad travelers from Austria remained unchanged compared to the previous year and the number of returnees was lower than assumed. In general, the report describes Islamist terrorism as the greatest threat to Austria's security. In particular, returnees with military training and combat experience are described as difficult to assess in terms of the use of force. The 2018 Report on the Protection of the Constitution states that by the end of 2018, 320 persons from Austria were known to have travelled to the war zones of Syria and Iraq or wanted to travel there to fight. Of these persons, 62 were prevented from leaving the country, 93 returned to Austria and 58 were most likely killed. At the end of 2018, 107 so-called „Foreign Terrorist Fighters“ from Austria were still in the crisis area.

In this context, the interviewed experts pointed out that deradicalization or exit work is a longer process, which is based on voluntariness and requires the radicalized person's willingness to break up completely with the previous social and political environment.

Furthermore, deradicalization can only be successful through relationship work if the work to end the radicalization is supported by an intact relationship. Only then can the content-related, ideological debate take place.



The 2018 Constitutional Report shows that the number of left-wing extremist-induced crimes declined significantly in the year 2018: 137 offences were recorded, 35.1 % less than in the year 2017. In comparison, there were 1,075 right-wing extremist-induced crimes in 2018, slightly more (1.1 %) than in 2017.

On October 23, 2018, the National Network for the Prevention of Extremism and Deradicalization (BNED) presented the „Austrian Strategy for Extremism Prevention and Deradicalization“ at the annual prevention summit at the Ministry of the Interior. With regard to the current situation of extremist movements in recent years, the interviewees reported in the interviews that this has changed somewhat: Islamism, in its jihadist or neo-Salafist forms, has declined somewhat in its spread in the form it took a few years ago, but has not disappeared.

The Islamist community has also changed in public perception. Central figures have either ended up in prison as a result of state action, returned to Syria and died there, or disappeared in other ways. Involved persons have also become more cautious, hardly wearing symbols (such as the IS logo) in public anymore, also because most of these symbols are now forbidden.

In the talks it is emphasized that the attraction to young people has also partly subsided because the so-called Islamic state has lost its territory and has not been able to build anything similar in the meantime.

In addition, according to the experts, for many young people the initially attractive phenomenon, also faded away due to its confrontation with reality.

An additional feature is the publication of cruelties with their repulsive effect on the majority of young people. The number of relevant mosques has decreased in comparison to the years 2013, 2014 or 2015, which means that radicalization is no longer so visible, but in the discussions it is emphasized that „the scene still exists, it is no longer so obvious on the streets, but it is still present“ (IP3). For example, there is a large influx of people from the groups „Generation Islam“ and „Reality Islam“, who are successfully marketing their work on social media channels and addressing a broad target group. The respondents also observe an increase in the number of offshoots of the Islamist-extremist organization Hizb-ut-Tahrir, which is banned in Germany. The interviews report that, for example, demonstrations with several

thousand representatives of these groups were observed in Germany and that online public relations work is thus also shifting to the streets.

Right-wing extremism has increased in the observation of the interviewees, but according to the experts, it receives less media attention than, for example, Salafism or Jihadism. This is explained in the interviews by the history of right-wing radicalism that has accompanied us for a very long time, which means that the conspicuousness of this radicalization is no longer perceived and addressed in the media to the same extent as Islamist extremism.

Some of the experts interviewed argue that although right-wing extremist radicalization is just as significant as Islamist radicalization, in the public's perception radicalization is increasingly linked to Islamist groups and their way of looking at the world.

The interviewees emphasized the necessity of making right-wing extremism a topic of discussion in the media not only in the case of sensational events, such as serious right-wing extremist violence, but also to ensure continuous reporting, for example on the potential dangers of right-wing extremist groups to avoid trivialization of right-wing extremism.

Right-wing extremism is not an exclusive youth problem, especially group-related misanthropy increases with age (Zick, Küpper, Hövermann, 2011:1), nevertheless the number of xenophobic and racist world views is highest among 16 to 21-year-olds. (Zick, Küpper, Hövermann, 2011:2) In this context, the respondents agreed that there is a need for continuous thematization and sensitization to the topic. In particular, this should take place at school and more attention should be paid in reporting to ensuring that it is specifically designed and continuously communicated, both „in the language of young people“ (IP8) and for older people.

A further observation of the interviewees is an increased systemic racism in Austria, especially one towards Muslims and black people. Some argue this with a kind of normalization of micro-aggressions<sup>5</sup> and an increased reduction of linguistic inhibitions when talking about refugees, Muslims or other groups of people. The increased criminalization of refugees and black people in Austria is also confirmed by Ottomeyer (2019), for example.

<sup>5</sup> Microaggressions are small, everyday attacks which individually do not cause any harm, but which are racist and discriminatory in their frequency and which give rise to feelings of exclusion. Often the repeated need to explain leads to questions such as „Why do black women speak such good German?“ or „Where do you come from?“ leads to exhaustion among those affected.



Above all, an increase in hate news and insults in the social media, but also incitement to hatred toward certain population groups in relevant tabloid newspapers are to be noted, according to the respondents.

Representatives of contact points for affected persons report a change in their inquiries: Five years ago, the number of first-time callers was still higher than that of repeat callers. This has now changed: currently there are more requests for follow-up appointments. From this it can be concluded that the number of professional relationships has increased: an important indicator of successful prevention work. The actors attribute this development on the one hand to the resources available and on the other to a better understanding of the processes.

At the same time, the level of alarm about religiously motivated extremism within the Austrian population has decreased during this period, which, according to the interviewees, can be attributed to the increased appearance of religious Muslim symbols in everyday life.

In parallel to this development, some of the respondents who work in corresponding counseling centers note that the number of calls from young people regarding right-wing extremism has approximately doubled, which means that it is addressed to about the same extent as Islamism.

This is explained by the experts consulted with a growth of right-wing national groups, but also with the presence of right-wing populist parties of the European Right or the Identitäre.

As already emphasized, according to the observations of the interviewees, right-wing extremist groups receive less attention in the media than other radical groups on the one hand, and on the other „this does not scare you that much, even if I find it terrible when someone says something [...] but I am not that helpless, I know what I can say, where I can turn to“. (IP2).

Often, attention is only focused on isolated symptoms instead of questioning causes and environment. As one of the interviewees pointed out: „There is always more to „WHAT am I looking at“ than „What are the causes? It doesn't make sense to look at it very closely. If I look very closely, I lose a lot of information and access to the people. (IP2)

## 2.5 Gender aspects in the prevention of extremism and deradicalization

In the opinion of the experts interviewed, the issue of gender equality in the field of extremism prevention and deradicalization receives too little attention.

The fact that extremist movements insist on a natural assignment of roles is a recurring theme in the literature. Richard Stöss (2010), for example, discusses the question of why women turn to right-wing extremism despite or perhaps precisely because of a prevailing reactionary, sexist ideal of femininity that is directed against democratic emancipation efforts. In right-wing extremist movements, a natural assignment of roles is assumed, which must be preserved and strengthened. Stöss (2010) refers to a study that shows a strong correlation between right-wing extremist and sexist attitudes, although this correlation is found more often among men than among women. The increasing emancipation of women leads to the uncertainty of some men in the perception of their own role. Since the strong man is postulated in right-wing extremist movements, the proportion of men is considerably higher than that of women.

The German Federal Ministry, for example, named the proportion of women in 1996 as four percent of violent acts with either proven or suspected right-wing extremist motivation. The percentage of women who were considered xenophobic suspects increased from five percent to nine percent in the 1990s. It is assumed that this number has increased to date (Stöss 2010). This form of ideology of inequality thus refers not only to persons with a migration background, but also to women. This means that discrimination occurs not only on the basis of ethnic origin, but also in connection with gender. For this reason, right-wing extremism can be associated not only with racism but also with sexism as some interviewees have also confirmed. Compared to right-wing extremist movements, significantly more men than women are involved in the Salafi scene, the proportion of the former is about 75% (Stöss 2010).

Men who conform to the Salafi role model are more likely to be found in public than those who feel they belong to the group and contradict the role model. Studies have shown that radicalization in Salafi movements takes place increasingly in the private social environment. This means that women in the Salafi scene who have left for Syria or Iraq have increasingly acted through the influence of the private environment. This is also confirmed by the statements of the interviewed experts.

These statements indicate that gender equality is something that extremist movements reject, so prevention work should focus more on this aspect: by making young people aware of this form of discrimination, they can recognize which values are represented in extremist groups and what this means for the associated (young)



women and men. It is important to communicate to young people that extremist groups support the thesis of innate male dominance and that women are therefore naturally obliged to be housewives and mothers.

On the other hand, there are also boys who are affected by forced marriage and, especially when the parents realize that they may be homosexual, are married off particularly quickly. One interviewee pointed out that in patriarchal, traditional groups (or societies), extremist ideas that focus precisely on the role models of „strong man“ - „right woman“ as biologically given roles, have very narrow views and these role attributions are often adopted without reflection.

Without critical consideration of role models, extremist thoughts can take hold much better, because in these forms of society a strict black and white thinking is valid. This shows, as Radvan and Lehnert (2013) also emphasize, that gender is attributed a structuring meaning that can vary depending on the form of society.

The reflection of role attributions and deconstruction of corresponding images with the knowledge that gender roles are not innate but socialized and can therefore be changed, as well as the recognition of the right to gender equality can and must be used in prevention work to show young people prevailing inequalities and to demonstrate the power of these images and their use by extremist groups.

In this context, Peham (2019) emphasizes the need to anchor the critical gender aspect as a so-called meta-measure in all political education and prevention programs. Gender-specific offers, such as those of reflected critical masculinity, for example, in order to dissolve certain deadlocked gender conceptions and the associated dynamics, should be part of education and prevention measures.



## 2.6 Political and Social Responsibility to Contain Extremism in Austria

When asked about possible solutions that either prevent young people from becoming radicalized or help them to get out of an ongoing radicalization process, the experts interviewed answered as follows: Of particular relevance to the prevention of extremism and deradicalization work is an approach to solutions for society as a whole to strengthen the culture of democracy and the rule of law, since extremism does not only affect a small part of the population, but represents a problem for society as a whole that must be viewed and treated accordingly in a holistic manner. The respondents emphasize that solution strategies can involve various reference persons of the target group (some international examples are presented in RAN Collection 2019). One approach mentioned in the interviews is to give teaching staff in schools or training centers a share of responsibility, so that they can arouse interest in preventing extremism or deradicalization among young people and know and act accordingly when someone is in danger of becoming radicalized.

As a methodological approach, individual interviewees discuss specifically participatory processes that open up young people to the issue and enable them to become actively involved in developing solutions. However, this approach and task not only requires appropriate expertise, but also a very sensitive approach to potentially endangered or affected young people. It is important to question whether teachers alone are up to this challenge and/or whether it does not at least require cooperation with appropriate institutions.

Another approach is to look for the causes among parents: failure in their role as parents, lack of presence or even authoritarian behavior are often used as reasons to explain radicalization tendencies among their children. From the perspective of the adolescents, responsibility for their own behavior is shifted to their parents, so in their view no need to put in any effort to change. This is a starting point for prevention work to develop perspectives together with the adolescents and young adults and at the same time to promote self-responsibility.

In order to counteract racism, according to the interviewed actors, everyone should consciously and actively redefine multilingualism, and not see it as otherness but rather as added value and profit for people and their environment. The interviewees underline this necessity, but admit that this change in thinking could trigger fear in many people, which in turn may be and should be addressed in adequate settings. Furthermore, according to the interviewed experts, there is a general need for more information about racism for young people so that they can develop a structural understanding of this topic. Young people must be supported in their empowerment,





so that they know, for example, where to turn when they experience racism and racist attacks and where or how they can take the first legal steps (such as filing a complaint) in the case of individually experienced racism.

According to the experts, it is necessary to deal with structural disadvantage and systemic racism, since racism and discrimination do not only take place on the individual level and are committed by individuals, but these mechanisms are structurally anchored, whereby racist and discriminatory structures are reproduced in society.

According to the interviewees, deradicalization should be understood as a beginning for dealing with developments in radicalization among young people, and not as the end, the final step in this process. Individual experts go a little further, and believe that deradicalization is even a further development of democracy. However, this process can only succeed if it is based on voluntariness and if the radicalized person is willing to break away from the previous political and social environment. Also, deradicalization should always start individually, with the actual situation of the young person, in order to avoid so-called „one size fits all“ attempts at solutions. This implies that experts who deal with affected young people should engage well with their counterparts and take their individual situation into account in their discussions. Deradicalization can therefore only succeed through relationship work, and the content-related discussion of ideology should only take place after the relationship has been successfully established.

The issues and causes surrounding radicalization and violent extremism are complex, and not every form of radicalization should necessarily be viewed negatively. On the contrary: the interviews have shown that it does not necessarily have to be a bad thing to represent one's own thoughts radically, and sometimes, as in the case of environmental movements, it is even experienced as a likeable feature by many people. Taking this into account, extremism prevention must start at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels. At the level of secondary prevention, young people should be taught to reflect on statements that are taken for granted and not simply adopt them. In addition, representatives of relevant institutions should provide them with opportunities for reflection, which will encourage them to abandon dualistic approaches such as black and white, right and wrong, good and bad, and to learn to question things critically and reflectively. This includes, for example, juxtaposing theses and antitheses and considering what is actually behind these statements. Education, according to the interviewees, plays a decisive role here too in order not

to fall blindly for simple messages. At the same time, a certain level of education is no guarantee that young people will not get involved with extremist groups, because „Intelligence also makes it possible [...] to quickly advance to a cadre. That is power. That is money. That is prestige. That is why intelligent people are also involved.“ (IP3)

These facets show that only a holistic and correspondingly comprehensive approach to prevention and deradicalization makes sense for children and adolescents. Something can only be achieved „If we have the staying power. No ad hoc Solutions!“ (IP6)

In order to reduce radicalization among children and adolescents and to promote appropriate prevention work, changes or improvements are needed in several areas, according to the respondents:

First, awareness must be raised that this is a problem affecting society as a whole. This means that it is not individual groups of people who carry more risk potential, but every young person can ultimately be tempted to become radicalized, and society as a whole is called upon to counteract this.

The interviewees who work with drop-outs also emphasize that there are not enough drop-out and deradicalization programs for young people in Austria. In their opinion, more safe women's shelters and safe houses for drop-outs are needed to support affected young people.

In addition, there is a need for an adequate coordination center for young people coming from war zones.

It was also mentioned several times in the interviews that more budget is needed for the reintegration of those released from prison.

In order to be able to guarantee assistance for (potentially) radicalized young people in Austria in the long term as well, larger and smaller NGOs that offer these services or offer youth centres must receive sufficient financial support. By this the actors interviewed do not mean one-time, project-related funds or one-year funding for these organizations, but rather secured funding permanently or at least for a few years.

In terms of social policy, the experts surveyed call for more political education in schools, with a focus on polarization, radicalization, extremism and the effects of discrimination and racism at individual and societal level. Furthermore, according to



the interviewees, there is a need for more public discussion of the topic by politicians and social workers. They also call for an expansion of democracy-building measures such as discussions in which different opinions may be expressed and discussed, so that young people can experience and live out a change of perspective, action competence and participation. This means that (more) enabling opportunities must be created for young people to participate in democratic processes, at the same time requiring them to assume more responsibility and strengthening their resilience<sup>6</sup> (cf. Mayrhofer 2017).

In order to promote exchanges between organizations working with young people at risk or affected, and which offer prevention and deradicalization programs, the actors interviewed call for sufficient funding, appropriate jobs and networking opportunities for these organizations.

In addition to the need for an intersectional<sup>7</sup> approach, the experts surveyed see the need to implement the National Action Plan against Racism. Many of the interviewees support the implementation of the BNED strategy paper on the containment of radicalization processes, but mention the need of financial support for the implementation of the measures contained therein. In addition to more training measures on extremism for police students as well as for persons in the educational and social sector, the interviews also repeatedly expressed the need for more research by renowned scientists in the field of extremism prevention, for which corresponding funds must be made available by the political sector.

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<sup>6</sup> Resilience means the ability to manage crisis situations successfully

<sup>7</sup> Intersectionality describes the clash of several forms of structural discrimination, such as racism, sexism and discrimination based on religion

# 3. Conclusions

The quoted study „Prevention of 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 and deradicalisation work with young people. The most important findings from the ten qualitative interviews with relevant experts can be summarized as follows:

In the search for the reason why young people join radical groups, it must be assumed that there is not a single cause that leads young people to become radicalized. On the contrary, it is often the coincidence of several or even many key factors such as experiences of violence, lack of family ties, lack of perspectives, experiences of racism or discrimination, the desire to belong and to join, rebellion against one's own family, or even the feeling of being excluded, that makes young people seek support in extremist movements. These groupings, which take advantage of the needs mentioned, and try to address the widest possible strata of the population, seek out young people where they spend their free time: depending on the social environment, this can be a youth club, sports facilities, the music club, the park, the Internet or other places. Especially to boys, they present the hegemonic image of men with its male dominant position not only as highly positive, but given by nature, which at the same time requires the subordinate woman. Particularly at the age of twelve to fifteen, the age range in which radicalization processes begin, male adolescents are not yet aware that the images of the „strong man“, who is not allowed to cry and who dominates the woman, are not the attributes that make every (young) woman attractive. Thus right-wing extremism in particular is not only racist, but also sexist. Extremist movements, however, generally take advantage of the fact that many ideologies that they propagate and represent are accepted without criticism or reflection by potential supporters.

These and further perceptions of the respondents described in this report and largely confirmed in relevant literature, underscore not only the need for political action in Austria, but also in society as a whole.

The present study describes the results collected in the course of the project „Rhizome against Polarisation“ with the help of the available resources and therefore does not claim to be complete. It rather represents a relevant starting points for further research.



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# Appendix I: Mapping

*bOJA – Counseling center against extremism. Nationwide network. Open youth work*

<https://www.beratungsstelleextremismus.at>

KEY DATA	1	GOALS	4
Main sponsor: Federal Ministry of Labour, Family and Youth Commission		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Multilingual advice and support on prevention of extremism and radicalization</li><li>• Sensitization through information, reflection and dialogue</li><li>• Promotion of Democracy</li><li>• Prevention of Extremism</li><li>• Promotion of the own ability to act in practice</li><li>• Mediation of practice-oriented intervention possibilities</li></ul>	
TARGET GROUP(S)	2		
All persons who are confronted with the topic of extremism in their environment.			
AREAS	3		
Counseling and support for relatives and multipliers. Exit and distancing work, further education and training, participation in research projects, regional, national and international networking			

## PROGRAMS and ACTIVITIES/OFFERS

5

- Multilingual advice and support on extremism and radicalization
- Analysis of situation and background
- Development of solution strategies and steps of action
- Mediation of offers of support
- Networking of helpers
- Counseling of relatives, multipliers and affected persons (exit support)
- Expert advice and long-term support for institutions and organizations
- Free Helpline
- Information and expertise
- Website [www.extremismus.at](http://www.extremismus.at)
- Workshops and further training on topics such as ideological/political extremism, diversity/interculturality, gender aspects, youth cultures

## BEST-PRACTICE PROJECT:

6

### Advanced training program of the Counseling Center against Extremism

Starting from a critical examination of the concept of extremism, the prevention concept of the Counseling Center against Extremism aims to expand the scope of action in everyday life and to promote a non-discriminatory coexistence. Tailor-made offers are made for psychosocial institutions, educational institutions, etc. New topics are constantly being added to the training and further education offerings. They take their starting point in the concrete life-world of the involved persons. The Counseling Center works with a critical diversity concept, based on the analysis approach of intersectionality.

### More information:

<https://www.beratungsstelleextremismus.at/fortbildungen/>

# ***DERAD – Social Cohesion Network for dialogue, extremism-prevention and democracy***

<https://www.derad.at>

<b>KEY DATA</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>GOALS</b>	<b>4</b>
<p>NGO / Established December 2015</p> <p>Member of RAN - Radicalisation Awareness Network (European Commission)</p> <p>Fields of activity: Austria and Germany</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changing and avoiding dangerous and violent attitudes and practices of radicalized people</li> <li>• Successful prevention work to avoid violent radicalization (three levels of prevention and multi-agency approach)</li> <li>• Scientific research and knowledge transfer to make experience and expertise available</li> </ul>	
<b>TARGET GROUP(S)</b>	<b>2</b>		
<p>Teenagers and young adults, teachers, social workers, law enforcement officers, executive officers, multipliers, affected persons</p>			
<b>AREAS</b>	<b>3</b>		
<p>School, university, social space, family</p> <p>Prisons, police officers, scientific studies on extremism and deradicalization</p> <p>Care after detention</p>			

## PROGRAMS and ACTIVITIES/OFFERS

5

- Risk assessment, intervention and consulting work in the judicial context
- Support and aftercare of imprisoned or sentenced persons
- Educational offers, training and seminars in the field of prevention of extremism and deradicalization
- Scientific studies for BMEIA 2017 (Jihadists) and BMEIA 2018 (Radicalization of women)
- International exchange and networking (OSCE, UNODC, NRW, RAN)

## BEST-PRACTICE PROJECT:

6

Intense political education and narrative discussion-groups at schools in rural and small-town areas

Deradicalization work in prisons

**More information:**

<https://www.derad.at/>

# ***DOKUSTELLE – Documentation and advice center against Islamophobia and against anti-Muslim racism***

<https://dokustelle.at>

KEY DATA1		GOALS4	
NGO / Established in 2015		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The documentation of Islamophobic incidents and civil courage of the society</li><li>• Media Monitoring</li><li>• Educational work</li><li>• Consulting and mediation</li></ul>	
TARGET GROUP(S)2			
People who experience Islamophobia and anti-Muslim racism			
AREAS3			
Panel discussions, conferences, symposia and workshops for the education sector. Social space, civil society, Affected			
PROGRAMS and ACTIVITIES/OFFERS5			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Documentation and statistical recording of Islamophobic incidents and racist attacks</li><li>• Seminars and workshops to raise awareness and reduce Islamophobia</li><li>• Counseling center against Islamophobia and antimuslim racism</li><li>• Assistance with notifications and legal proceedings</li><li>• Information to civil society</li><li>• Workshops</li></ul>			
BEST-PRACTICE PROJECT:			6
<p><b>Documentation:</b> Recording of facts and figures of Islamophobia and anti-Muslim racism in Austria</p> <p><b>Consulting:</b> Support and information about registration offices</p> <p><b>Workshops:</b> Awareness and empowerment work in the form of seminars and workshops</p> <p><b>More information:</b> <a href="https://dokustelle.at/">https://dokustelle.at/</a></p>			



# ***DÖW – Documentation Archive of the Austrian Resistance***

<https://www.doew.at>

<b>KEY DATA</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>GOALS</b>
<p>Founded in 1963 by former resistance fighters, persecuted persons and scientists</p> <p>1983 Establishment of the DÖW Foundation - supported by the Republic of Austria, the City of Vienna and the DÖW Association</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>„Remember - Explore - Recognize“</li> <li>Transfer of knowledge about National Socialism</li> <li>Historical-political educational work, scientific research, scientific projects, documentation and educational offers:</li> </ul> <p>History of persecution, especially of Jews, but also of other groups, history of resistance</p> <p>Main topics: Holocaust, Roma and Sinti, resistance and persecution, post-war justice, compensation for NS victims, right-wing extremism</p>
<b>TARGET GROUP(S)</b>	<b>2</b>	
Teenagers, young adults and adults		
<b>AREAS</b>	<b>3</b>	
<p>Scientific research activities, scientific studies and documentation, Mediation and educational offers:</p> <p>School, university, social space, family, politics, public spaces</p>		
<b>PROGRAMS and ACTIVITIES/OFFERS</b>		<b>5</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Scientific projects and publications</li> <li>Database projects to record the names of NS victims and biography work</li> <li>Research (archive, library, photo archive) and media watchlist</li> <li>Exhibitions and travelling exhibitions</li> <li>Educational programs for youngsters and in the field of adult education</li> <li>Educational offers, training and workshops in the field of prevention of extremism and deradicalization work</li> </ul>		
<b>BEST-PRACTICE PROJECTS:</b>		<b>6</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Scientific research and publication</li> <li>Documentation and knowledge transfer</li> <li>Exhibitions</li> <li>Media Watch List</li> <li>Further education and mediation offers in the field of right-wing extremism, prevention of extremism, deradicalization, anti-racism, anti-Semitism</li> </ul> <p>More information: <a href="https://www.doew.at/erkennen">https://www.doew.at/erkennen</a></p>		

# ***HEROES – Against oppression in the name of honor. For equal rights in Styria***

<https://vmg-steiermark.at/de/heroes/projekt>

KEY DATA <b>1</b>	AREAS <b>3</b>
Developed in Sweden, successfully implemented in Germany. 2007 Heroes was also established in Salzburg and in Styria, Austria	Youth work  <b>GOALS <b>4</b></b>
<b>TARGET GROUP(S) <b>2</b></b>  Young men from so-called “honor cultures” Young women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Equal living together of women and men</li> <li>• Partnership-based and non-violent gender and generational relations based on human rights</li> </ul>
PROGRAMS and ACTIVITIES/OFFERS <b>5</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One-year training phases for young men with weekly training sessions to deal intensively with topics such as honor, identity, equal rights, equal opportunities, gender roles and human rights</li> <li>• Critical reflection of traditions and search for new approaches and possible solutions</li> <li>• Heroes certificate after a training phase of almost one year</li> <li>• Educational offers, training and seminars in the field of extremism prevention</li> <li>• Male youths work with their peers in peer groups on topics such as equal rights, violence, dismantling of stereotypes and women's rights and thus stand up against the oppression of women in the name of „honor”</li> </ul>	
BEST-PRACTICE PROJECT: <b>6</b>	
<p>The special feature of the project is that male youths themselves work on different topics in peer groups and exemplify an „image change“, or stand up for common values of living together in full authenticity and conviction, thus creating a multiplication effect.</p> <p>The goal is to break down prejudices, show alternatives and role models, and initiate reflection.</p> <p>The main idea is that the project is only carried out with young men, but young girls and women benefit most from it.</p> <p>In addition, broader circles of friends, school classes, youth groups and family systems are encouraged in this way to question and develop their own values together.</p> <p><b>More information:</b> <a href="https://vmg-steiermark.at/de/heroes/projekt">https://vmg-steiermark.at/de/heroes/projekt</a></p>	





## ***KJA - Ombudsman for Children and Young People Vienna – A Service of the City of Vienna***

<https://kja.at/site>

<b>KEY DATA</b> <b>1</b>	<b>GOALS</b> <b>4</b>
Ombudsman's office of the City of Vienna, which represents the interests of children and young people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public relations and lobbying work for child and youth rights</li> <li>• Compliance with and improvement of child and youth rights</li> <li>• Raising awareness of the extent of sexual violence against children and young people</li> <li>• Prevention of sexual assault</li> <li>• Assistance in cases of sexual violence against children and young people</li> <li>• Prevention of radicalization and extremism</li> </ul>
<b>TARGETGROUP(S)</b> <b>2</b>	
Children, adolescents, young adults and adults, if it concerns the interests or problems of children and adolescents.	
<b>AREAS</b> <b>3</b>	
Kindergarten, school, family, training place, public, politics, social space, networking with relevant organizations, associations and institutions of the City of Vienna	

## PROGRAMS and ACTIVITIES/OFFERS

5

- Representation of the interests of children and youth rights
- Advice and information on children and youth rights
- Demand for compliance with children's rights
- Development of sensitization and information material
- Workshops at schools and youth-relevant magistrates of the City of Vienna on the following topics: prevention of radicalism and extremism, „bullying“ and mobbing
- Workshops and training in targeted projects, for example the training of swimming pool staff to prevent sexual assaults

## BEST-PRACTICE PROJECTS:

6

**Radicalization and extremism:** Network of Culture of Democracy and Prevention: successful municipal strategy against extremism and devaluation ideologies involving and co-operating with existing institutions and structures

**Mobbing among children and young people:** Development of an information brochure on the prevention of mobbing.

Prevention of sexual violence against children and young people

**More information:** <https://kja.at/site/praevention>



# ***NEUSTART – Probationary assistance, conflict resolution, social work***

<https://www.neustart.at>

KEY DATA 1	GOALS 4
<p>NGO/NPO founded in 1957, far-reaching organizational reform and restructuring 2002</p> <p>One of the largest non-profit organizations of the social economy in Austria</p> <p>Field of activity: whole federal territory</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changing and avoiding dangerous and violent attitudes and practices of radicalized people</li> <li>• Successful prevention work to avoid violent radicalization (three levels of prevention and multi-agency approach)</li> <li>• Scientific research and knowledge transfer to make experience and expertise available</li> </ul>
TARGETGROUP(S) 2	
<p>Adolescents and young adults, affected persons, teachers, social workers, law enforcement officers, multipliers</p>	
AREAS 3	
<p>Justice related social work, probation assistance, prison release assistance, victim assistance and prevention, school social work, addiction prevention</p>	

## PROGRAMS and ACTIVITIES/OFFERS

5

- Online consultation
- Consulting, training, crisis intervention, information events and school social work
- Drug consulting for addiction prevention
- Process support and information about assertion of legal claims
- Crime settlement
- Parole assistance, support in reintegrating into society, support in finding accommodation and a job, support in financial crisis, psychological and social support, prevention of relapses by dealing with the background of the crime
- Mediation of charitable services as a diversionary measure
- Help after experiences with violence

## BEST-PRACTICE PROJECTS:

6

**School social work // Prevention: counseling, crisis intervention and customized programs for schools to prevent extremism**  
**Crime settlement: 30 years of experience with approx. 168,000 crime settlement cases.**

(According to the latest study on legal probation, the recidivism rate in offence settlement is 13 percent after a positively completed offence settlement. This means, that 87 percent do not relapse after a crime settlement).

**Non-profit work: Non-profit performance as a diversionary measure**

**Court hearing support**

**Compensation of crime / Crime settlement**

**Workshops on violence prevention and deradicalization**

**More information:**

[https://www.neustart.at/at/de/unsere\\_angebote/index2.php](https://www.neustart.at/at/de/unsere_angebote/index2.php)

## **TURN – Association for prevention of violence and extremism**

<https://www.turnprevention.com>

<b>KEY DATA</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>GOALS</b>	<b>4</b>
NGO / Established in 2017		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Content based online streetwork based on alternative narratives of ideologies of inequality</li><li>• Production of online formats to challenge the propaganda of folk nationalist, jihadist Islamic and patriarchal structures</li><li>• Online distributions of alternative narratives</li><li>• Low-threshold social work care services in public spaces</li></ul>	
<b>TARGET GROUP(S)</b>	<b>2</b>		
Teenagers and young adults, teachers, social workers, multipliers, affected persons			
<b>AREAS:</b>	<b>3</b>		
Open youth work, education sector, social space, family, scientific area			
<b>PROGRAMS and ACTIVITIES/OFFERS</b>			<b>5</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Political education for youth and adults</li><li>• Trainings on violence prevention</li><li>• Workshops and lectures on the topics of youth work, prevention of extremism and radicalization</li><li>• Individual case work in the areas of delinquency, jihadism and right-wing extremism</li><li>• Digital youth work, online streetwork and social media interventions</li><li>• Scientific publications</li></ul>			
<b>BEST-PRACTICE PROJECTS:</b>			<b>6</b>
<b>DIGITAL STREETS – Online Streetwork, Social Media Interventions and Digital Youth Work using the example of the project „Jamal al-Khatib - My Way! (lecture/workshop)</b>			
More information: <a href="https://www.turnprevention.com/angebote">https://www.turnprevention.com/angebote</a>			

# ZARA – Civil courage and anti-racism work

<https://www.zara.or.at>

KEY DATA1	GOALS4
NGO / founded in 1999 with the aim to promote civil courage and a racism-free society in Austria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• ZARA’s work is based on three pillars: Counseling, prevention and sensitization of the public</li><li>• The aim is to contribute as an intersectoral group, with different perspectives and expertise, to shaping a society that critically questions exclusion and counteracts racial discrimination and hatred in public spaces and on the internet</li><li>• Annual publication of the Racism Report as a source of information and the only qualitative data source on all forms of racism in Austria</li></ul>
TARGET GROUP(S)2	
Children, adolescents and young adults, teachers, social pedagogues, multipliers, affected persons	
AREAS3	
School, university, social space, family, adult groups, politics, public, affected persons	
PROGRAMS and ACTIVITIES/OFFERS5	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Documentation of detailed and anonymous individual reports about racist attacks and incidents</li><li>• Advice against racism and hate speech on the internet</li><li>• Support in cases of racial discrimination</li><li>• Trainings, workshops and lectures for school classes, for adult groups and for companies</li><li>• Promotion of digital civil courage and avoidance of hate on the internet</li></ul>	
BEST-PRACTICE PROJECTS:6	
<p><b>Advice against racism and/or hate online and offline</b></p> <p><b>Anti-racism trainings online and offline :</b> Training concepts for children, teenagers and adults against racism, against hate on the net, on the subject of civil courage and counter narratives, that have been tested for years</p> <p><b>More information:</b> <a href="https://zara.or.at/de/training">https://zara.or.at/de/training</a></p>	





# Appendix II: Interview guide

1. Which important prevention measures do you think have already been implemented since the BNED strategy paper was published? Which have not been implemented?
2. Which prevention measures from the strategy paper do you think need to be urgently implemented next? What does it take to implement those prevention measures?
3. Do you have any suggestions for improving cooperation between policymakers, civil society organizations and NGOs, the scientific community, those affected and groups at risk with regard to the implementation of prevention measures?
4. In your experience / expertise / opinion, what are the key elements why young people join extremist ideologies and violent extremist groups?
5. How do you anchor counter-narratives as a prevention measure in your work with young people? How can these counter-narratives be given even more value?
6. Which national incidents / incidents of extremist movements have been of importance in the last 2-3 years according to your observation and why?
7. How and in which areas do you think extremist scenes in Austria have changed in the last two years?
8. How, in your opinion, are recruitment efforts / indoctrination of all violent extremist movements monitored in Austria and how is this countered?
9. Where do young people most frequently fall victim to attempts at indoctrination? Where else? Are there differences between the different extremist movements in this respect?
10. What do you think would help to prevent young people from indoctrinating?
11. (Your experiences / what can you report about indoctrination in Austrian juvenile prisons?) (Not for all interview partners)
12. In your opinion, how should/could the social cohesion of civil society be strengthened to prevent violent extremism? Do you have concrete examples/ideas?



13. What does it take to raise awareness?
14. How would you involve young people more closely in democratic processes as actors of change? What do young people need for this?
15. Which kind of protection do victims of extremist attacks receive, and where do you think protective measures need to be expanded?
16. What is your position on the laws on national counter-terrorism from a human rights perspective?// How can human rights be guaranteed in the laws on counter-terrorism? (Criticism of anti-terrorism policy 2018: <https://www.noen.at/niederoesterreich/politik/politik-empoeerung-ueber-neues-anti-terror-gesetz-extremismus-gericht-nationalrat-terrorismus-oesterreich-96690493>)
17. What, in your opinion, could help de-radicalized youth to re-enter a life free of prejudice? What measures do you think are necessary (possibly „from politics“) to achieve this?
18. What other demands do you have for local and national policymakers and for the coordinators of the European Counter-Terrorism Strategy?

