

The Advice Centre on Radicalisation of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees

Florian Endres¹

Introduction

In an interview with the Turkish newspaper *Hürriyet* in January 2014, Dr. de Maizière, the German Federal Minister of the Interior, was questioned about the approximately 270 persons with German connections who have travelled from Germany to Syria (among other issues). The Minister's comments included a statement concerning the possible danger posed by jihadists who have undergone extremist radicalisation and been tested in combat. He also spoke of the role of the parents of potential "foreign fighters". De Maizière appealed to such people not to remain silent out of shame when confronted with a radicalisation. The Minister also called upon these parents to maintain contact with the radicalised individual at all costs.²

The Minister's statement reflects one of the central strategies of the approach to a counselling approach adopted by the Advice Centre on Radicalisation of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF). The employees who work for this advisory body provide support not just for the relatives of such individuals, but also for those within the individuals' social environment, such as friends or teachers, giving them help and advice on how to deal with this difficult situation and, if required, also supplying a local cooperation partner capable of providing counselling in situ. The initial aim is to provide reinforcement for the radicalised individual's social environment, lessening the strain on the persons involved and thereby preventing any breakdown in communication between those in search of counselling and the individual in question. The relatives may well be the very people who are

¹ Florian Endres is the Divisional Head of Division 416 at the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees.

² Cf. Federal Minister of the Interior Dr. Thomas de Maizière, in an interview in *Hürriyet*, 25.01.2014.

in a position to prevent any further radicalisation, or to act as the final remaining link between the radicalised individual and society.

Since January 2012, the BAMF has been providing a nationwide Advice Centre for all persons who are seeking advice and help because they feel, or have concrete reasons to believe, that someone within their social environment is becoming increasingly radicalised in an Islamist direction. The counselling on offer here was set up on the initiative of the former Federal Minister of the Interior Dr. Friedrich, his security services and various Muslim organisations.

The following paper is intended to provide an overview concerning the origins of the Advice Centre on Radicalisation, the counselling network and the cooperation partners involved, and the case load dealt with to date.

Frame of reference

It must be understood that deradicalisation, just like radicalisation, is a protracted process, and that there is no such thing as an ideal or typical course of events or procedure. Just as every process of radicalisation is unique, so too the same applies to deradicalisation.³

Essentially, the term “deradicalisation” denotes measures taken with the aim of inducing persons or groups to give up extremist modes of thinking and/or acting, and above all the endorsement of violence as a means of implementing their objectives. These measures may be initiated and implemented by interventions involving suitable structures (e.g. offers of counselling, EXIT programmes etc.) at the earliest possible stage.

³ Cf. Dantschke, Claudia/Köhler, Daniel: The counselling of relatives and deradicalisation. The theoretical and practical implications and an initial report on the activities of the Hayat Counselling Centre, in: Journal EXIT-Deutschland. Zeitschrift für Deradikalisierung und demokratische Kultur (= “Journal EXIT-Deutschland. The Periodical for Deradicalisation and Democratic Culture”), Berlin, 01/2013, p. 188.

If one considers the impact levels of deradicalisation, for the most part three approaches can be discerned: affective, pragmatic and ideological. A cognitive or ideological deradicalisation process involves working at weakening and disproving the theory and rationalisation for extremist or terrorist behaviour. This, however, is a protracted and difficult process, particularly if the radicalisation in question is Islamist or Salafist in nature.

A pragmatic approach to deradicalisation concerns itself primarily with curbing or eliminating extremist behaviour, and in particular the use of violence. However, the renunciation of violence is not in itself any indication that the subject is beginning to exercise his or her critical faculties on an ideological level, or that a withdrawal from extremism is imminent.

The affective aspect, as explained by Dantschke and Köhler, aims to provide the individual with emotional support and to create an alternative peer group to counteract the radical affective structure of the individual. In this context, the counselling of relatives plays a central role in slowing down and reversing the radicalisation process.⁴

The aim of the counselling provided is to offer relatives and the social environment of the radicalised individual help and support, and hence to create the kind of support system necessary for a deradicalisation process. For an individual who is becoming, or has already become radicalised in an Islamist sense, the subject's family and/or social environment are for the most part the final point of contact with mainstream society. As such, the relatives play a vital role. They are in a position to recognise early on that radicalisation is taking place (thereby making an intervention possible), to prevent their relative or friend drifting off further into extremism or terrorism, or to function as a connecting link back into society. A further important element here is to reinforce the social environment in its dealings with the

⁴ Cf. Dantschke, Claudia/Köhler, Daniel: The counselling of relatives and deradicalisation. The theoretical and practical implications and an initial report on the activities of the Hayat Counselling Centre, in: Journal EXIT-Deutschland. Zeitschrift für Deradikalisierung und demokratische Kultur (= "Journal EXIT-Deutschland. The Periodical for Deradicalisation and Democratic Culture"), Berlin, 01/2013, p. 186ff.

radicalised individual to such an extent as to ensure that mutual communication and support is not broken off, but rather revitalised. It is also essential to the counselling process that vulnerabilities and any lack of safeguards in respect of the radicalised individual be detected as quickly as possible, in order to be able to offer the individual alternatives. Experience to date points to the conclusion that the affective portion of the proceedings will generally constitute the basis for successful pragmatic and cognitive approaches to deradicalisation.

The framing context for the origins of the Advice Centre

During the period leading up to the German Parliamentary Elections in 2009, the Federal Republic of Germany felt itself to be at risk from an increased threat of international Islamist terrorism – particularly in connection with an increase in the number of German Islamists, willing to engage in violence, who were leaving the country and travelling to Afghanistan and Pakistan, where they not only joined jihadist organisations but also issued terrorist threats against Germany.⁵ In addition to taking a large number of measures, the security services of the Federal State and of the individual German Federal States recognised the need to begin playing an active role in the prevention of Islamism and in deradicalisation. With this in mind, and within the framework of the “Gemeinsames Terrorismusabwehrzentrum” (GTAZ)ⁱ the AG Deradikalisierungⁱⁱ was brought into being, and this in turn is divided up into a variety of different sub-working groups. Within this structure, the widest possible assortment of topic ranges relating to the area of deradicalisation is dealt with. To take a few examples: among other things, on the one hand the experts from these official bodies addressed the deconstruction of the jihadist ideology (cognitive/ideological components) and the issue of the early recognition of radicalisation processes; and on the other, they also dealt with methods by which it might be possible to work with radicalised individuals through direct communication in order to effect a deradicalisation.

⁵ Cf. “Situation report by BKA (= German Federal Criminal Police Office) fears terrorist attack prior to the Parliamentary Elections”, in the Südestrundfunk TV programme “Report Mainz”, 07.09.2009.

The fact that the relatives and social environment of radicalised individuals find themselves in a situation of particular strain, and at the same time may well be able to play a significant role in a successful deradicalisation, was also recognised by the security services, who responded by establishing a corresponding sub-working group within the AG Deradikalisierung.

The working group that concerned itself with the issue of providing counselling and support for the relatives and social environment of radicalised individuals was led by the BAMF. As early as the conception phase, the experts were in agreement that because of the profile of the profile of the assignment, in order to provide such a counselling service it would be necessary on the one hand for partners from civil society to be involved, and on the other for a central state-run contact and coordination point to be established, points that were finally also taken into account in terms of the concrete implementation.

Given that the level of danger in the abstract remained high, and in particular in response to the attack on Frankfurt Airport, in early summer 2011 Dr. Friedrich, who at the time was the German Federal Minister of the Interior, convened a "Prevention Summit" in Berlin in association with various Muslim organisations. During this summit, it was promptly decided to create a counselling facility that would cater to individuals affected by this issue and seeking advice. The Federal Office for Migration and Refugees was entrusted with this task. Significant criteria here were the fact that because of the wide range of areas of activity in which it is involved in respect of the integration of migrants, there is a positive perception of the Federal Office. In addition, because of its leadership of the working group within the GTAZ, the BAMF already had at its disposal some initial concepts as to how such a facility might be operated. The Advice Centre was therefore officially established on 01.01.2012, with the activation of the hotline and with counselling made available nationwide.

The cooperation partners

As envisaged in the concept drawn up by the AG Deradikalisierung, right from the start the Advice Centre on Radicalisation has collaborated with institutions from civil society. The employees within the respective organisations might, for example, be experienced social education workers, Islamic scholars, psychologists or political scientists. Many of the counsellors have already had experience in the counselling of relatives in this field of extremism, either of a right-wing or an Islamist nature. The positions are financed by the Federal Ministry of the Interior. The following institutions are currently in partnership with the BAMF:

The Hayat Counselling Centre is located within the Zentrum Demokratische Kultur – ZDK Berlinⁱⁱⁱ. This body also operates “EXIT”, a programme known throughout Germany dedicated to helping people break their ties with right-wing organisations. Among other activities, much experience gleaned from working in the field of far-right extremism has been adapted to suit the requirements of providing counselling within an Islamist context. Furthermore, the ZDK has already been looking after relatives of radicalised individuals in the field of Islamism for a few years now. The Hayat team has been a cooperation partner of the BAMF right from the start, as has the “Counselling Network for Tolerance and Cooperation” operated by the Bochum-based association IFAK^{iv}. IFAK has been established in Bochum for a number of years, and is active in many areas relating to counselling on migration issues, with activities that include daytime nurseries.

Since September 2012, VAJA^v and its “kitab” counselling centre^{vi} in Bremen have been a part of the network, with particular responsibility for looking after cases in North Germany. VAJA too has for some years also been implementing projects aimed at preventing right-wing extremism, and the wide-ranging activities of its street workers have given it a large number of contacts with teenage migrants. Furthermore, VAJA has an extremely good network in Bremen and the northern German Federal States. As regards South Germany, 2013 saw the

advent of another partner: the Violence Prevention Network (VPN). The employees of the VPN already have years' worth of experience in the deradicalisation of incarcerated convicts with extremist motivations, and are able to adapt much of this experience when counselling relatives.

The counselling process

Persons in search of advice generally contact the BAMF's Advice Centre by calling the hotline 0911 – 943 43 43 or by mail. During the initial conversation, the callers describe the situation – this usually includes an account of their worries and fears. The BAMF employees help to determine what is actually required, and initial advice is given. Many of those seeking advice will often be suffering from a very high level of psychological strain, describing their problems quite extensively and in a highly emotional manner. In many cases, the caller will give a very detailed account of the changes that have occurred in their relative or friend. This means that even in the initial conversation, it will be possible to discern key factors (identity crises, problems at school or at work, conflicts within the family etc.) that have caused the individual to turn towards Salafist Islam and to become correspondingly radicalised.

The BAMF employees offer to pass those calling for advice on to one of the cooperation partners, free of charge. For the most part, this offer is accepted willingly, since in some constellations a wide range of assistance will already have been contacted without any success. However, for these purposes those seeking advice must provide a telephone number and their name. Anonymous counselling conversations will not, as a rule, lead to the caller being passed on via the BAMF hotline to any of the cooperation partners. As regards which partner the case is passed on to, this is determined partly according to region and according to whether any of the cooperation partners may in the past already have worked on a similar case.

The Advice Centre guarantees that the caller will be called back promptly by the cooperation partners. In the event of the caller having little or no German, the BAMF team and the cooperation partners are in a position to conduct the conversation in a variety of languages as required (Turkish, Arabic, Russian and English).

The persons seeking advice will be guaranteed confidentiality throughout the counselling process – unless, that is, aspects should emerge that are of relevance in security terms. In such cases, it will be made clear to the caller that in such a situation, there can be no getting round the need to involve the appropriate security services and make them aware of the issue.

Along with the concrete cases requiring counselling, there are phone calls enquiring about the topics of Islam, Islamism, Radicalisation or jihadism, and here the employees will provide the appropriate clarifications.

The concrete advice provided

Once the situation and the caller's contact details have been passed on by the BAMF to the relevant cooperation partners, the partners will get to work immediately. Initial contact will be made by telephone. As matters proceed further, there will frequently be personal meetings between the counselling teams and those seeking their advice. This will generally make it possible for the counsellors to build up a trusting relationship with the persons in search of help quite quickly.

In many cases, right from the start it is important to clarify which scene the potentially radicalised individual is frequenting, and which concrete reasons for their turning towards an Islamist or Salafist tendency are present in this case. In respect of contacts on the scene, parents, for example, will often have a very good intuition, and may also be able to provide

concrete information concerning their children's visits to mosques and activities on the Internet, thereby making it easier to evaluate the situation.⁶

One significant role played by the cooperation partners lies in working with those in search of advice to develop a strategy as to how to initiate the initial moves towards deradicalisation. In this respect it is also necessary to recognise the needs of the radicalised individual and, if appropriate, to implement these in a form that is acceptable to all concerned. Initially, the counselling process pursues the goal of restoring a bond between the relatives and the individual who is becoming radicalised. To this end it may, for example, be helpful in some cases involving conversion to start by supplying the subject with general information concerning Islam, thereby conveying acceptance of the new-found religious beliefs of the young person in question. It is also important, depending on the given situation, to analyse, and if necessary to change, the manner in which the parents of the young person communicate with him or her. There then follows a stage during which, depending on the circumstances of the case, the cooperation partners introduce further appropriate protagonists from their own networks and structures (e.g. family counselling centres, official bodies, schools etc.) into the counselling process. With the help of non-extremist protagonists from the social environment, the aim is to make the radicalised individual aware of suitable alternatives (alternative peer groups). It might, for example, be appropriate to involve imams, in order to give the individuals in question – who will mostly be teenagers – an understanding of non-extremist readings of Islam. Meanwhile, the partners provide the BAMF with regular updates on the progress of the counselling process. And should developments emerge that are of relevance in security terms, or should it become necessary to involve the security services, the BAMF coordinates these cases, acting as the interface between these authorities and the cooperation partners.

⁶ For more on the factors promoting radicalisation, please see the section below headed "Radicalised individuals".

In some cases, the help required can be provided in the form of a one-off counselling service. In general, however, a number of conversations and/or face-to-face meetings will be needed. The form taken by cases requiring counselling and by contacts with those in search of advice can vary tremendously. Cases in which the counselling services are made use of on a regular basis are designated as *active*. *Inactive* cases, on the other hand, are situations in which the persons who have sought advice are not counselled on a regular basis, and in which there may be gaps of several weeks between each respective approach. Cases designated as *closed* are situations in which the need for counselling on the part of the person/s seeking advice has been satisfied and – ideally – there has been a discernible improvement. More than 75% of all cases fall into either the *active* or the *inactive* category. In cases that are highly relevant in security terms, there is a particularly pronounced tendency for the persons requiring advice to seek out contact with the counselling centres on a regular basis. Cases may be classified as *inactive* for a wide variety of reasons. Most commonly, this happens when the counselling provided seems to have been sufficient for the persons seeking advice given the situation at that point in time, and they appear to feel that there has been an improvement. It has, however, proved to be quite a frequent occurrence for these persons to contact the counsellors once again, reporting that the situation has deteriorated once more. Should this occur, the case would again fall into the category of an *active* counselling.

A further element in the counselling service is the organisation and facilitation of meetings between relatives of such individuals. Many of those in search of advice find the opportunity to compare notes with people who find themselves in similar situations helpful, and a useful complement to the available counselling. Getting together with others who are affected by this issue can have an emotionally stabilising effect, helping people to discuss their worries, fears and problems with others on equal terms. By now, such meetings have been successfully carried out by almost all of the cooperation partners. For further information

concerning the methods used in organising and conducting meetings between such relatives, please see the relevant remarks by Dantschke and Köhler.⁷

An initial progress report

Since the Advice Centre began to offer counselling services and the hotline went live, a good 800 calls have been received, as a result of which more than 200 persons seeking advice have received intensive long-term care. Since 2013, in particular, it has been possible to discern a massive increase in cases requiring counselling. At present, an average of three to four such cases per week are being passed on to the network to be dealt with. The majority of cases requiring counselling are passed on by the BAMF to the cooperation partners, although those seeking advice also have the option of contacting these institutions directly.

Persons seeking advice

Enquiries to the BAMF and its cooperation partners come from all parts of the Federal Republic. It is, however, possible to discern some regional focal points. In a manner similar to the areas of activity of Salafistic structures, it is North Rhine-Westphalia that has to date shown a high concentration of cases requiring counselling alongside Berlin, Bavaria, Hesse and Bremen. The majority of those seeking advice come from the close family environment of the radicalised individual. Very often, it is mothers who come seeking help in the form of a concrete counselling service – however, fathers or grandparents also come to the BAMF with their problems. In recent times, there has also been a recognisable trend for teachers in particular to contact the Advice Centre, either in search of information concerning Islam

⁷ Cf. Dantschke, Claudia/Köhler, Daniel: The counselling of relatives and deradicalisation. The theoretical and practical implications and an initial report on the activities of the Hayat Counselling Centre, in: Journal EXIT-Deutschland. Zeitschrift für Deradikalisierung und demokratische Kultur (= "Journal EXIT-Deutschland. The Periodical for Deradicalisation and Democratic Culture"), Berlin, 01/2013, p. 193 ff..

and/or Islamism or to describe concrete cases from their school and to ask for support. Overall, it is discernible that rather more than a third of those seeking advice have a migratory background. Since autumn 2012, in particular, there has been an increase in persons seeking advice who have a migratory background and come from the Muslim community.

In many cases, it has turned out that the persons seeking advice will often be suffering from an enormous level of psychological strain, and that this will be what finally drives them to get in touch with the BAMF and ask for professional help. As regards how long those who come seeking advice have already been dealing alone with this usually quite conflict-laden situation, this will sometimes vary tremendously. In general, it is recognisable that a good half of those seeking advice are getting in touch with the Advice Centre very shortly after becoming aware of the individual taking his or her first steps onto the scene, or very shortly after the associated problems have become apparent. As such, it might, for example, be that the individual in question has undergone conversion to Islam or made corresponding changes in their day-to-day life – which in turn has led to conflict in that individual's (family) environment – just a few weeks prior to contact being made with the Advice Centre. Equally, people who have already been confronted with these problems for some years are also quite strongly represented. In many such cases, the persons seeking advice report that prior to the establishment of the Advice Centre, there was no comparable service available, and that other counselling bodies were not equipped to deal effectively with such matters. When dealing with such cases, it can indeed be discerned that in many instances, the radicalisation process is correspondingly far advanced, and that likewise, direct contact with the radicalised individual has been lost entirely or almost entirely.

Persons

Many of the findings that have been emerging from research into radicalisation have been borne out by the experiences to date of the Advice Centre.⁸

According to Wictorowicz, personal conflicts of identity, experiences of marginalisation or of discrimination and indeed social and political tensions are all capable of producing a “cognitive opening”. At this point, the individual is ready to reconsider his or her own thought patterns and to experiment with new ideas and moral values.⁹ In this context it is relevant to mention that in the experience of the Advice Centre, again and again, persons seeking advice speak of the relatives (or boyfriends, girlfriends or fellow students) who are undergoing radicalisation as not being very successful at school or at work. In some cases, the individual had failed to graduate from secondary school, which might in turn have proved to be a stumbling block on the way to a satisfying professional qualification and led to persistent status problems within the individual’s social environment. On the other hand, many parents have also emphasised that they had always done everything they could for their children – made it possible, for example, for them to get a decent education and qualifications, etc.; this made the situation that had now arisen even more perplexing and impossible for them to understand. In a few cases, it would seem that parental expectations, in respect of their children, some of which might have been excessive, had been a factor in this reorientation. Likewise, in most cases, rebellious attitudes and provocative behaviour towards their surroundings to date also played their part in prompting these individuals to turn towards Salafist tendencies and the potential radicalisation associated with them. Some other radicalised individuals were described by the persons seeking advice as being intelligent, certainly, but also as “always having lacked the ability to present themselves with self-assurance, self-confidence and personal goals”. Still other affected individuals had experienced social marginalisation and isolation as a result of deficiencies in their outward

⁸ Here, cf. Sageman (2004)/(2008), Neumann (2013), Bakker (2006), etc.

⁹ Wictorowicz, Qunitan: *Radical Islam Rising: Muslim Extremism in the West*, London, 2005, p. 20 ff.

appearance (obesity, for example), or had been unable to find a partner because of these. A few affected individuals had clearly failed to define any kind of meaningful goal for their lives, or had not been able to obtain any meaningful answers from anyone in respect of important questions relating to personal reorientation.

In respect of many of the radicalisation processes recorded by the Advice Centre, problematic circumstances within the individual's own family would also seem to have played a role. In more than a third of all cases, the duty of care and supervision was being handled by a single parent. Furthermore, in nearly 15 percent of all cases, "patchwork" family circumstances were described. The associated strains affecting the individual's development (changes in attachment figures, loss of loved ones) have already been addressed in the study by Lützing. It would seem that the teenagers in question were therefore not equipped with the appropriate strategies for dealing with such developments.

In some cases, the parents too play a not insignificant role in the radicalisation process. Similarly to what has already been set forth in the study by Lützing, many of the radicalised individuals feel themselves to be subject to control by others including, *inter alia*, persons within their own family. In this context, approaching extremist groups can be designated as a form of resistance, undertaken in order to control one's own social situation more effectively.¹⁰ This too is reflected in a few counselling situations.

Likewise, religious practice within the family often plays a corresponding role. In this respect, Waldman has explained that in the course of a radicalisation process, on the one hand an intense devoutness present in some families may be heightened still further, while on the other a near-total lack of religious upbringing and a mostly lay environment may be replaced by a resocialisation of a fundamentalist and/or Salafist nature.¹¹ Many teenagers seem to feel a craving for "religion". In the majority of cases, this reorientation leads to increasing conflicts within the family.

¹⁰ Lützing, Saskia: Die Sicht der Anderen (= "The sight of others"), Köln, 2010, S.36 f.

¹¹ Cf. Waldmann, Peter: Radikalisierung in der Diaspora (= "Radicalisation in the diaspora"), Hamburg, 2009, S. 102.

The overwhelming majority of individuals affected by radicalisation were aged between 18 and 24, with a good 20 percent falling between 12 and 17. Over-25s likewise made up around 20 percent. Approximately one third of these individuals were female.

When faith turns to ideology – links to Salafism

All in all, among the various different kinds of heavily radicalised individuals, nearly 65 percent have converted to Islam. In many cases, those seeking advice relate how they learned of the conversion either after the event or by chance. For some persons seeking advice, the very fact that their child has converted is in itself a factor motivating them to get in touch with the Advice Centre in order, for example, to obtain general information about Islam.

It is not possible in every instance to determine the age at which the individuals converted to Islam. However, from the cases that it has been possible to analyse, it can be seen that many conversions occur between the ages of 18 and 24. As regards any potential radicalisation following the conversion, the findings in respect of the age distribution fall into a pattern corresponding to the above. It is also interesting to note that some individuals have already converted before the age of 18. In general, the willingness of a given individual to convert seems to decrease as his or her age increases (over 24). Furthermore, an analysis of the configurations bears witness to the fact that a not inconsiderable portion of the individual converted while in direct contact with a Salafist milieu. In around 75 percent of all cases, it is possible to discern unmistakable connections to the various Salafist structures within Germany.

In many extremist structures, and particularly within Salafist structures, processes of group dynamics can be recognised. In many of the configurations, the act of turning to a given

group, most commonly a Salafist one, was obviously a potent step towards resolving previous difficulties, since within the new environment, neither problems with social status – for example – nor physical shortcomings counted for anything. The affected individuals had the feeling of being “accepted” within the new community without any reservations – in some instances, for the first time in their lives. In many cases, the new “brothers” would also seem to have assumed the role of the individual’s family.

In Germany, initial contacts with the Salafist milieu, and the point in time at which the individual first enters this scene, potentially permanently, generally occur between the ages of 15 and 20. A radicalisation then occurs between the ages of 20 and 30. In the study by Sageman, the age of the radicalised individual is usually higher.¹² A general tendency is emerging: the age at which the individual first enters the scene is continuing to drop, and as such, the start of the radicalisation processes is also occurring earlier and earlier.¹³

Cases that are of relevance in security terms call for particularly close-up, time-intensive care and attention. In most such cases, a high level of radicalisation will be discernible, often coupled with connections with international networks who are willing to resort to violence. In 2013, for example, case configurations emerged in which departures were planned or had already been put into effect. Cases of this type constitute a large proportion of cases that are of relevance in security terms. Along with Egypt and Saudi Arabia, one particular primary destination in recent months has been Syria. While the principal reason given for visiting Saudi Arabia and Egypt was the furtherance of the individual’s religious education, in the case of Syria, the most common motives of individuals travelling from Germany to this country are increasingly including not only humanitarian assistance for the civilian population but armed resistance against the Assad regime. A further significant factor is the effects of the increasing amount of (German-language) jihadist propaganda and the local

¹² Cf. Sageman, Marc: *Understanding Terror Networks*, Philadelphia, 2004.

¹³ Cf. Dantschke, Claudia/Köhler, Daniel: *The counselling of relatives and deradicalisation. The theoretical and practical implications and an initial report on the activities of the Hayat Counselling Centre*, in: *Journal EXIT-Deutschland. Zeitschrift für Deradikalisierung und demokratische Kultur* (= “*Journal EXIT-Deutschland. The Periodical for Deradicalisation and Democratic Culture*”), Berlin, 01/2013, S. 188.

structures, which are by now firmly established; these effects reverberate in Germany, serving to mobilise German Salafists and recruit them as potential fighters. In these case configurations, the corresponding national and international Salafist networks play a key role. Further motives described by persons seeking advice include the fact that the radicalised individuals no longer wish to live here in Germany, the country of the “unbelievers” and of the persecution and oppression of Muslims, and therefore wish to emigrate to an “authentically Islamic country”. In this context, there are in some cases connections with international Islamist terrorist organisations. Here, the corresponding individuals will often be profoundly locked into the corresponding structures, which of course is a source of tremendous stress for the persons receiving counselling in Germany – especially since their loved ones will often be in conflict areas such as Syria, Somalia and the border area between Afghanistan and Pakistan, and any contact with them will therefore be extremely sporadic.

Prospects

There can be no doubt that the need for such an Advice Centre, as perceived in many quarters, is a genuine one. In the field of deradicalisation, the BAMF and its cooperation partners have created new structures and set up the first nationwide point of contact for those in search of advice, an initiative promoted and encouraged by the Federal Ministry of the Interior.

The counselling system, using one authority as the initial point of contact and coordinating body in conjunction with civil society institutions as cooperation partners, has turned out to be highly efficient. In respect of the counselling of relatives, the interaction between state structures and the experience of private agencies has become firmly established in practical terms, enabling those in search of advice to benefit from close support. This is also reflected in the feedback from such persons.

To date, no counselling structures of this type can be found in any other European country. As a result, on an international level, the entire network operated by the Advice Centre on Radicalisation is much in demand as a contact partner because of its activities. The high level of national and international public interest in the Advice Centre can also be seen in the large number of press enquiries relating to its working methods, to case configurations and to the issue of Islamist radicalisation. This much has been evident ever since the Advice Centre was established, and once Salafists with connections to Germany began to travel from Germany to Syria, the trend increased further. The BAMF and its cooperation partners fully intend to continue to improve and develop both the counselling services on offer and the deradicalisation work carried out with individuals from extremist spectrums.

Literature:

Bakker, Edwin: Jihadi terrorists in Europe. Their characteristics and the circumstances in which they joined the jihad: an exploratory study, Netherlands, Institute of International Relations, 2006.

Federal Minister of the Interior Dr. Thomas de Maizière, in an interview in *Hürriyet*, 25.01.2014, at:
<http://www.bmi.bund.de/SharedDocs/Kurzmeldungen/DE/2014/01/hurriyet-interview.html>
(accessed on 03.02.2014).

“Situation report by BKA (= German Federal Criminal Police Office) fears terrorist attack prior to the Parliamentary Elections”, in the Südwestrundfunk TV programme “Report Mainz”, 07.09.2009, at:
<http://www.swr.de/report/presse/-/id=1197424/nid=1197424/did=5339916/vmhsay/>
(accessed on 04.02.2014).

Dantschke, Claudia/Köhler, Daniel: Cf. Dantschke, Claudia/Köhler, Daniel: The counselling of relatives and deradicalisation. The theoretical and practical implications and initial report on the activities of the Hayat Counselling Centre, in: Journal EXIT-Deutschland. Zeitschrift für Deradikalisierung und demokratische Kultur (= “Journal EXIT-Deutschland. The Periodical for Deradicalisation and Democratic Culture”), Berlin, 01/2013.

Lützinger, Saskia: Die Sicht der Anderen (= “The point of view of others”). A qualitative study of biographies of extremists and terrorists, Köln, 2010.

Neumann, Peter: Radicalisation, deradicalisation and extremism, in: Deradicalisation, from politics and contemporary history, a supplement included in the weekly journal *Das Parlament* (“Parliament”), 29-31/2013.

Sageman, Marc: Understanding Terror Networks, Philadelphia, 2004.

Sageman. Marc: Leaderless Jihad, Philadelphia, 2008.

Waldmann, Peter: Radikalisierung in der Diaspora (= "Radicalisation in the diaspora"), Hamburg, 2009.

Wictorowicz, Quintan: Radical Islam Rising: Muslim Extremism in the West, London, 2005.

ⁱ = German Joint Counter-Terrorism Centre

ⁱⁱ = "Working Group for Deradicalisation"

ⁱⁱⁱ = "Centre for Democratic Culture – ZDK Berlin"

^{iv} = "Initiative für ausländische Kinder" = "Initiative for Foreign Children"

^v = Verein zur Förderung akzeptierender Jugendarbeit e.V., Bremen = Registered Society for the Promotion of Accepting Youth Work, Bremen (Translator's note: here, "accepting" is used in the sense of "tolerant", "non-judgemental," "all-inclusive")

^{vi} Arabic word meaning "book", both in general terms and THE book, i.e. the Koran. Intended here as a symbol of religious enlightenment. [cf. footnote at <http://www.vaja-bremen.de/teams-vaja-kitab.htm>]