

## **National Programme to Prevent Islamist Extremism**

During this legislative term in particular, the Federal Government has significantly increased its efforts to prevent extremism. With its Strategy to Prevent Extremism and Promote Democracy adopted in 2016, it also created a strategic network linking the various areas of action. Building on the prevention measures carried out by the Federal Government in previous years, the National Programme will take the conclusions drawn from the evaluation of these measures into account. The Federal Government has already earmarked more than 400 million euros for the period up to 2020 to support measures promoting democracy and preventing all types of extremism. Before the end of this year, it will present a report on the activities and the effectiveness of the federal programmes designed to prevent extremism.

However, Islamist extremism represents a huge challenge for our society as a whole. We are still registering an increase in the number of potential Islamist terrorists, numerous departures to relevant war zones and a great number of people joining the Salafist scene. Most recently, the Islamist-motivated attack in Berlin in December killing 12 people and injuring many more demonstrated how real this threat is.

Repressive measures alone are not enough to counter these challenges. We must take action before radicalized people become terrorists. This is why prevention and repression must go hand in hand. Sustained prevention efforts therefore reflect the strength of our democracy.

Here, all levels of government must take action within their areas of responsibility. While primary responsibility for prevention rests with the federal states and the municipalities, the Federal Government also plays a vital role. In recent years, the federal and state governments and the municipalities have launched numerous measures and programmes and stepped up cooperation. The commitment of civil society, notably self-help organizations set up by migrants and Muslim associations, could also be incorporated. At various levels, we want to continue to make sure that particularly teenagers and young adults do not fall for the doctrines of Islamist extremists and that good work, decent education, social integration and participation and a network of counselling services and information centres protect them against radicalization. Effective prevention focuses on the root causes of radicalization and illustrates the need for pluralistic ways of

political and religious interpretation. Civic education as an instrument for social participation plays a key role here. In this context, it is also necessary to increase efforts to prevent anti-Semitism at an early stage.

On 7 March 2017, the coalition committee decided to develop, in cooperation with the federal ministries and in close coordination with the federal states, an effective national programme aimed at preventing extremism on the basis of the following key elements, taking into account federal responsibilities and building on the Federal Government's Strategy to Prevent Extremism and Promote Democracy and the numerous existing measures.

## **1. Places of prevention**

Regarding civic education and youth work, the different target groups are offered a wide range of services in various places of prevention. The Federal Government has considerably expanded its prevention services on (religiously motivated) extremism for in-school and out-of-school education. With a network of counselling services and the national hotline provided by the information centre on radicalization set up at the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, we have continuously expanded our services available to the persons concerned and those around them. Bearing in mind that the vast majority of Muslims in our country rejects terrorism and violence, we would like to call upon this group to continue to counter any form of hatred and violence, thereby making a major contribution to our prevention efforts.

**Municipalities as a starting point:** On the basis of existing programmes and in close cooperation with the federal states and municipalities, we will step up community work to deploy coordinators to problem neighbourhoods and link these activities to municipal prevention councils all over Germany, taking federal responsibilities into account. We will provide support where necessary. However, we must also go to places where young people spend their free time and where they are approached. The goal is to bring civic education to social areas dominated by youth culture.

**"Family and social environment" as a starting point:** We will continue to expand our counselling services for persons affected and their social environment, such as the information centre on radicalization, and increase its visibility, also in terms of refugees. Furthermore, we will qualify and increase the awareness of family counselling services and mobile counselling at the democracy centres at federal state level. By helping clubs and associations of organized sports, the Federal Agency for Technical Relief and other welfare organizations and organizations of volunteers, the public employment service and the private sector even more to enhance their intercultural skills, we aim to open up existing structures and create new possibilities of participation and new models of identification that could result in resilience to

extremist messages.

**Education and educational institutions as a starting point:** Taking federal responsibilities into account, we will expand our out-of-school efforts to prevent radicalization on the school ground throughout Germany and step up our counselling services in places and facilities regularly frequented by young people. Peer multipliers using civic education approaches to teach democratic skills play an important role here. We can, for example, take targeted measures to make children and young people more resilient to Islamist agitation and propaganda. Another objective is to increase the possibilities for persons no longer required to go to school to receive general school education.

To integrate the prevention of extremism and promotion of democracy into all areas of education at an early stage, these issues must be considered to an even greater extent in the basic and advanced training of educational staff in all stages of education. Responsibility for developing such modules in the curricula lies with the federal states which are supported in their task by the Federal Government.

Taking federal responsibilities into account, we want universities to put a greater focus on Islamist theology to prepare students for religious instruction in Islam or a career as teachers, social workers or chaplains.

**Mosque communities as a starting point:** The Federal Government welcomes all measures already taken by mosques and their congregations to prevent radicalization and calls upon all mosques to increase these measures. The Federal Government supports the mosque communities in their efforts to prevent radicalization. This includes model projects to develop preventive educational approaches, advanced training and awareness-raising measures regarding radicalization, developing structures and supporting volunteers in the mosque communities whom we want to qualify, strengthen and provide with advice. It is essential to step up measures to prevent radicalization all over Germany. To this end, Muslims who are members of mosque communities in Germany must continue to make an active contribution. Together with mosques, we want to adopt low-threshold approaches to reach also families and begin with prevention measures at an early stage.

## **2. Prevention on the Internet**

To effectively counter the increasingly professional extremist propaganda on the Internet, we must – as an integrating alternative – convey viable messages, provide alternative interpretations and strengthen the users' ability of judgement and discourse. We are already directly reaching out to various user groups with targeted information on civic education, for example in the form of online videos. In this context, we will develop joint guidelines for strategic communication and alternative narratives. To this end, we must enter into an intensive dialogue with platform operators, and these operators must be willing to actively address criminal content and messages ("joint and shared responsibility"). We will continue to monitor Islamist websites and to observe and analyse new developments, and we will expand these activities also in the future.

We support measures which raise awareness among users, multipliers and platform providers of dissemination strategies and mechanisms of Islamist propaganda. In cooperation with civil society and platform providers, we fight hate crime, and in particular Islamism, online. In this respect, we also rely on the willingness of providers to actively address criminal content and messages ("joint and shared responsibility"). Another important measure is to widely improve media literacy of target groups and multipliers.

## **3. Prevention through integration**

Together with the heads of the state governments, the Federal Chancellor adopted the joint federal-state strategy for the successful integration of refugees on 22 April 2016. The Federal Cabinet adopted the government's draft Integration Act, which is based on the principle of offering help and requiring effort in return, together with the Meseberg Declaration on Integration on 25 May 2016, making it clear that the joint task of integrating refugees is extremely important, also to ensure social cohesion.

By offering integration services and granting access to the labour market, we help create opportunities and prospects for the people in Germany and prevent radicalization. We have already expanded these services and will continue to improve them. In addition, we all agree that people whose chances of staying in Germany are unclear, are given access to initial orientation services.

Strengthening democratic attitudes requires social participation at all levels. We will therefore continue to boost social integration and participation and take preventive action, for example by providing language courses. However, social cohesion must also be strengthened in the fields of culture, sports, media and voluntary commitment. Migrant self-help organizations, Muslim associations and the wide range of educational institutions are important partners in this context.

#### **Prevention regarding persons to be returned**

Unemployed persons without prospects are particularly vulnerable to radicalization. This applies in particular to those persons who are to be returned to other countries. We therefore give such persons the chance to take up a job before they are returned. This job, however, is not intended to ensure integration.

#### **4. Prevention and deradicalization in prisons and probation assistance**

Many federal states are already taking diverse measures in this area that focus on prevention and help those already radicalized leave the scene. The Federal Government supports these measures by funding model projects in all federal states. However, it is necessary to continue to expand these measures as needed. Furthermore, the Federal Government supports the efforts of the federal states to establish Muslim chaplaincy in prisons. Such chaplaincy is not primarily intended to prevent radicalization but can lead to preventive side effects.

#### **5. Increasing effectiveness**

**Expanding research:** The Federal Government embraces knowledge- and evidence-based strategies. Federally funded measures are therefore accompanied by research and evaluated so that they can be improved continuously. This is why the Federal Government will continue to press ahead with the development of suitable evaluation and quality assurance instruments. To increase the effectiveness of efforts preventing extremism, it is necessary to take stock of prevention and de-radicalization measures taken in Germany, obtain a comprehensive understanding of root causes and processes of individual and collective radicalization and make this knowledge available to active players. The Federal Government will continue to increase its research funding in these areas. Furthermore, it will support practice-oriented research on developing preventive/educational efforts and on approaches to help radicalized persons leave the scene.

**Additional efforts to combine measures:** Our goal is to improve the sharing of information and combine the Federal Government's measures to an even greater extent. In the long term, we want to merge the National Centre for Crime Prevention with the German Forum for Crime Prevention, add the prevention of extremism to the portfolio of these two institutions and strengthen them permanently. Pooling these research and transfer skills will make it possible to provide the relevant authorities better with relevant knowledge about the impact and effects of preventive approaches.

**Risk management:** We will coordinate prevention measures and strategies even more closely. Given the increased security relevance, we must raise the awareness and enhance the skills of all stakeholders, including providers of measures preventing extremism. We also need viable instruments to carry out risk analyses, and we must make sure that security authorities are informed immediately, where necessary. The reverse applies in individual cases. We must focus on effective mechanisms and standards.

**International and European exchange and cooperation:** We are facing threats posed by global extremism that do not stop at national borders and that question the liberal lifestyle of the western world as a whole. We must therefore find also international solutions, which is why we will intensify the international dialogue.

We are in favour of setting up a European centre for prevention and deradicalization to improve the sharing of information and pool measures. Furthermore, we will continue to strengthen the exchange of information and best practices (e.g. within the framework of the Radicalization Awareness Network) which has been established on many channels in Europe. In a European area of freedom, security and justice, we need services and measures throughout Europe, particularly with regard to the Internet, strategic communication and cooperation with platform operators to convince them to take action on a voluntary basis.

### **Outlook**

In addition to strengthening and expanding measures, we will step up the close cooperation and coordination between federal, state and local governments, security authorities and civil society at political level.

Together with the federal states, the national associations of local authorities, security authorities, religious communities and civil-society actors, we are concluding a Pact for Prevention. Working together on a regular basis, we want to pool the wide range of activities to an even greater extent and further develop measures to prevent

Islamist extremism at the places of prevention mentioned above. We will carry out regional prevention conferences and award a National Prize for Prevention Efforts.

Funds amounting to 100 million euros have been earmarked for the National Programme to Prevent Islamist Extremism in the budget for 2018.

Under the joint leadership of the Federal Ministry of the Interior and the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, the Federal Government will implement the programme in cooperation with the federal states, other stakeholders, the remaining federal ministries and the Federal Government Commissioner for Migration, Refugees and Integration.