Taking Responsibility –
Breaking away from Hate and Violence

Deradicalisation in prison
"You have to imagine that, when people go to prison, they feel like victims of the system, which is also a reason for becoming radicalised: 'This system is against me. I became a danger to this system! Now I am someone!' This, of course, creates unbelievable hatred during the prison sentence. People try to show the system what they're made of, refuse offers of conversations – such as with social workers. They think in the back of their minds: 'These people want to re-educate me! These people want to stop me. These people want to fight my attitude and my opinions and beliefs, they want to do that through conversations and therapy sessions with social workers and psychologists.' This means there is great resistance from the outset."

Someone who left the extremist scene
Taking Responsibility – Breaking away from Hate and Violence
The deradicalisation programme in prison by Violence Prevention Network

What’s deradicalisation in prison good for? 4

The target groups 7

The deradicalisation programme. Goal and basic principles 10
  Voluntariness 10
  Group principle 10
  Respect and appreciation 11
  Transfer of learning experiences 11
  Transition management, stabilisation coaching and re-integration 12

The trainers 13

The modules of the deradicalisation programme 14
  The training 14
  The biographical interview 15
  The group meetings 15
  The act of violence 20
  The individual violence session – critical analysis of the crime 22
  The family days 27
  Preparing for release – The personal safety plan 27
  Transition management and stabilisation coaching – re-integration into the labour market 28

Contact form 30
What is deradicalisation in prison good for?

In Germany, every year, around 2500 ideologised young offenders commit serious or very serious acts of violence, and a majority reoffend after a prison sentence. Background and motive: a propensity to violence, coupled with right-wing extremism or extremism on religious grounds, xenophobia and a conception of humanity that is at odds with democratic and humanist values.

The "Taking Responsibility – Breaking away from Hate and Violence" programme is a non-confrontational approach to deradicalising young people in prison. It is the only training programme in Germany that has been evaluated over a number of years and proven successful, and that works with ideologically motivated young violent criminals; it is an effective concept for combating violence and extremism. The programme started off in 2001 as a pilot project in Brandenburg and is based on the concept of “Education of Responsibility”.* In 2007, it was expanded to involve the target group of fundamentalist and neo-Salafist young people. The training programme enjoys a high degree of acceptance among the judicial authorities, the federal ministries and international partners as well as on the part of the participating prisons. Evaluation results indicate a significant reduction in the re-imprisonment rate.

The deradicalisation programme reaches out to repeatedly conspicuous young violent offenders whose anti-democratic attitudes mean that they are increasingly closed off from social discourse. Experiences involving social and family disintegration and disappointment – accompanied by feelings of low acceptance and problems with group dynamics – often lead to difficulties with
identity formation. In the absence of an independent identity, however, there is the danger of the "radicalisation of residual identities". This can lead to young people adopting extreme, fundamentalist or traditionalist viewpoints, developing opinions that are pro-violent and dissociated from democracy, and undergoing a "failed self-healing process", i.e. the solidification of their career of violence and radicalisation.

The renunciation of hatred, the propensity to violence and extremist tendencies is a lengthy learning process, because ideologically motivated ways of thinking and a readiness to use violence are deeply rooted in the personality of the young people. To become detached, they need time, accompaniment and trusting relationships to be able to take responsibility for themselves. Based on their personal strengths and the emerging communication, relationship and conflict-solving resources, the young people begin to make positive changes to their lives over the course of the training programme.

The young people can achieve this only with accompaniment from others. Without preventive offers in prison, young people at risk are left to the mercy of informal right-wing extremist or neo-Salafist networks in the prisons, which, in turn, prevents them from becoming integrated into society.

Judy Korn and Thomas Mücke

*Verantwortungspädagogik
Since 2001, more than 900 ideologised young violent offenders took part in the programme (last updated in 2015). A relapse would have created more violence, new victims and imprisonment costs of more than 20 million euros. The re-imprisonment rate due to a new act of violence is 13.3%, almost 70% below the German average of 41.5%.*

* Source: Study about legal probation of the participants in the VPN training courses in youth prisons, Lukas, 2012

### Phase 1: Group training
- 23 meetings in prison: Group training with accompanying individual discussions
- Training duration: 4 - 6 months (115 h)
- Group size: 8 participants and two trainers
- If applicable, Involvement of tutors and lecturers
- Involvement of relatives in preparation for release

### Phase 2: Transition management
- Maintaining contact until release
- Personal preparation for release
- Involvement of relatives
- Collaboration with internal and external professional services
- Follow-up meetings with the group

### Phase 3: Stabilisation coaching
- 6-12-month stabilisation coaching by the group trainers after the client’s release
- Intensive initial accompaniment
- Regular meetings to review the development process
- Continuous telephone counselling, crisis phone line
- Involvement of relatives
The target groups

Right-wing extremist oriented young violent offenders
Islamist oriented young violent offenders

Those who participate in the deradicalisation programme of Violence Prevention Network became violent out of hatred for "foreigners", "gays", "tramps" or "infidels" or are caught up in a conspicuous image of "the enemy". By the time they are imprisoned, many young people have already had a long history of violence behind them. To justify their violent act(s), they invoke the supposed superiority of their own group, ethnicity or their own religion over those who do not belong to this group. The strong link between pronounced anti-democratic convictions, authoritarianism, an anti-democratic conception of humanity and a high propensity to violence has been empirically proven by now.

Right-wing extremist violent offenders often commit their crimes out of pure hatred – "niggers stink!" – or because of openly expressed ideological motives: "The nation has to be cleansed of such elements!" What Islamist oriented violent offenders and right-wing extremist young people usually share is a deep-seated affective animosity towards supposedly weaker population groups. The hatred is often fuelled by archaic images of masculinity and concepts of honour. Anti-Semitic attitudes can be found among both criminal groups, but are rationalised in different ways. Occasionally, the young people believe that they committed the crime in accordance with religious laws. The training programme primarily addresses the group of followers; the ideological masterminds are admitted in exceptional cases.

Most of the participants come from a very uneeducated background and are very susceptible to simple explanatory models. Almost all of them have dysfunctional family backgrounds marked by relationship conflicts, non-acceptance, alcoholism, humiliation and violence. They lack the important experience of being approved of and accepted as a person; instead, their biography is marked by violence as a behavioural pattern. They generally look to their peers, their clique or their mates for a sense of belonging. The group context is almost always of utmost importance for the committed act of violence and is a central point of discussion during the training programme.
The perpetrators are waiting in the street. Across the street is a dark-skinned family loading shopping bags into their car. An older comrade gives the go ahead: "You see, there, the Negro family?" The young people run to the car and thrash the man, while the other two perpetrators keep the wife and 10-year-old boy back. The victim lies bleeding on the floor. The perpetrator stands up on a park bench to jump with combat boots on the head of his victim. The older accomplice says, "That's enough." The perpetrators leave the scene and celebrate the involvement of the younger one in the group. He has passed the obedience test.

"It was exhilarating. I could decide over life and death."
"No you couldn't; you had to obey, others made the decision."
"I would have done it, though, the man didn't mean anything to me and I would have beaten the woman to a pulp, too, all niggers."
"And the child?"
"That question isn't fair, there are just too many of them."
"Did you hear the child screaming?"
"I didn't want to."
"What feelings do you think the little boy had when he saw that his father was fighting for his life?"
"Powerlessness ... anger ... helplessness ... despair ... incredible fear ... But I don't have any sympathy for them, if that's what you mean!"
"How do you think that boy will deal with those feelings one day?"
"One day he'll jump on someone's head..." – silence.

(shortened dialogue from the violence session)
The deradicalisation programme
Goal and basic principles

Voluntariness
The renunciation of hatred, the propensity to violence and extremist tendencies is a lengthy learning process, because right-wing extremist or Islamist ways of thinking and a readiness to use violence are deeply rooted in the personality of the young people. To become detached, they need time, accompaniment and trusting relationships. There is a great need for educational concepts and qualified staff who are able to take on this task; current approaches in a mandatory setting (confrontation, lecture-style teaching, behavioural training or history courses) often tend to give rise to defensive reactions. Participation in the deradicalisation programme of Violence Prevention Network is therefore based on the principle of voluntariness.

Group principle
Group training is an effective method for effecting behavioural changes. The group allows the participants to put themselves in someone else’s position and to develop understanding and empathy. At the same time, the group helps them deal with the unfamiliar learning experiences, for which the trainers provide impetus. The group training sessions also teach the young people to identify their own personal limits. A power-based mindset, hierarchical or conflict-prone relationships and provocation – physical

Not just an offender, but an individual with personal strength and weakness.
contact, personal insults or humiliation – have no room in the training sessions.

**Respect and appreciation**
Subsequent socialisation free from humiliation calls for mutual appreciation. During the training, the young people are not reduced to their criminal offence, rather, they are perceived as young people with personal strengths and weaknesses and with their own specific biography. But this does not mean that their crime is accepted. However, the discussion surrounding their prejudiced and even racist ways of thinking and acting and the processing of their crime is done without humiliation or degradation. The trainers are generally experienced as adults who talk to them as equals and do not shy away from taboo subjects. The group principle, coupled with a humiliation-free and critical approach to relevant political and social issues, can provide new perspectives.

**Transfer of learning experiences**
Quite often, after being released from prison, old group structures with the same pressures and temptations, lie in wait for the young people: they can expect threats, frustration and setbacks. The young people have to be able to responsibly deal with feelings of aggression and renounce violence outside the secure environment of the training programme and in stressful situations. For the training to be successful, it is essential to prepare the participants for life outside prison and to transfer what they have learnt to their future day-to-day life and to anchor it there.

---

**Education of Responsibility®**
Acceptance and renouncing humiliation – these are the cornerstones of the educational concept of Violence Prevention Network. The aim is to enable understanding, not sympathy, and to explain actions, not to justify them. The programme’s effectiveness and success is essentially based on a combination of the following elements:

1. Group training during and stabilisation coaching after imprisonment
2. Processing biographical information and the involvement of relatives
3. A Questioning anti-violence concept and civic and historical education.
Transition management, stabilisation coaching and re-integration

After their prison sentence, the young people still need accompaniment on the "outside". The best possible accompaniment after their release, the stabilisation coaching, is an indispensable continuation of the training programme, which allows the learnt conflict solution strategies to be anchored in everyday life. During the stabilisation coaching, the former trainers are available to the young people as persons of trust, and they regularly call on them. They can be contacted easily when there are problems or crises.

After the training programme and prior to their release, the young people are individually prepared for their release — this is called transition management. The aim here is to prevent them from falling back into old (violent) behavioural patterns and to cement what they have learnt. Important relatives and attachment figures are involved during the training; they have the important role of stabilising the young people after their release, of preventing them from becoming delinquent again and helping them maintain a distance from their old milieu. Re-integration into the labour market is also very important. To be successful in the labour market, which is becoming increasingly differentiated, personal and social skills as well as conflict resolution skills, being reflective and the ability to work with a group of co-workers who may be bi-cultural are absolutely essential.

Participating the stabilisation coaching is an indispensable factor of success for the training programme.
The trainers

In the educational work with right-wing extremist and Islamist young people, face-to-face work, the relationship component, is of immense importance. Building relationships of trust with the participants is an integral part of this process. Even more so than in other educational fields, the trainers are in demand as people. In addition to their professional qualification, the trainers of Violence Prevention Network have completed a one-year AKT® trainer (anti-violence and competence trainer) course and have many years of experience in working with violence-prone and prejudiced young people. For these tense encounters, they require authenticity, authority and strength in order to gain the trust and respect of the participants. Their qualification involves a high level of methodological competence. This involves comprehensive historical, intercultural, inter-faith and political knowledge, and understanding of symbolism and the specific institutional features of juvenile prisons.
The training
The core of the programme are the training units, which are hosted by two trainers each. The training is primarily aimed at male, ideologised violent offenders. It usually comprises of 23 training units and takes place weekly in the prison.

The criteria for participation are voluntariness, being prepared to openly talk about your life and the crime within the group and to adhere to the agreed rules within the group.

After the training programme and until the release, the young people receive personal counselling as part of the transition management to maintain contact until the stabilisation coaching phase. The trainers make decisions about the composition of the group based on interviews that assess the suitability of the candidates, which are suggested by the prison.

The learning objectives of the participants are:

• understanding and changing their violent behaviour
• accepting the basic right to human dignity and integrity of every human being
• solving conflicts without violence
• taking responsibility for their actions

Young, hate-filled, violent, in prison - often the beginning of a desperate circle.
• maintaining a distance to extremism and inhuman ideologies
• planning their own future

The biographical interview
The biographical individual interview is held before the start of the group training to clarify expectations and training goals, to create a basis of trust for the work in the group. In this interview, the trainer encourages the young people to talk about their lives, their family, their friends, their political and religious orientation and about the acts of violence they have committed.

The group meetings
During the first group meeting, the trainers explain how the upcoming training course will proceed. The young people get to know each other and agree on rules that are to apply to the group work. During the subsequent meetings, they will slowly learn to understand the connection between their biography, their propensity to violence and their prejudiced attitudes. Gradually, they develop a foundation of trust within the group using a variety of methods. All training units start off and end with a flash light round, during which the young people can talk about what moves them. This allows any disrup-
M. is taking part. He is willing to talk to the group about his crimes, his views and his past life. Today will be his one-on-one interview with the trainer; the first group training session will start later. Nevertheless, it is clearly hard for M. to talk about himself. He thinks that he should immediately talk about his offence, explain himself and show understanding. He is all the more surprised that the conversation is not about what happened that day. The trainer has a lot of time. He asks M. how he is doing and asks him to talk about himself, his childhood and his youth. M. is suspicious, but he starts to talk. About the district where he grew up, his father (who was barely there), his mother (of whom he speaks very highly). The trainer listens and asks questions. He does not judge. M. goes on to tell of the mosque community, his fellow believers, with whom he feels he belongs. He talks about his hatred of the infidels and the injustice experienced by Muslims around the world. His hatred runs deeply, just like his distrust of Western culture. And it becomes clear how much this has influenced his daily life on the outside. M. reacts suspiciously to everyone and everything. He interprets each utterance as a potential attack, to which he knows only one answer: defence and violence. The trainer shows understanding for his distrust, his resistance, and his fears. Not for what has happened, though. At the end of the meeting, M. is frightened at how much of himself he has exposed. But he also notices that there is someone interested in him, in M., not only in what he has done. The trainer makes clear what the goal of the training session is: what do you need to overcome your hatred, to get by in the outside world without violence? That is what it’s about: M. and his future. M. can gauge the trainer after this meeting. The basis for the work in the next few weeks and months has been established.
tions to be uncovered and the young people have the opportunity to practice expressing their thoughts and feelings. Together, the group looks for opportunities for change and the participants can see that they are taken seriously in this situation. Occasionally, the group meetings conclude with a sports activity – depending on available equipment and facilities in the prison. The joint sports activity allows the trainers and young people to meet on an equal footing and provides an authentic field of observation for the learning processes (e.g. emotional control). If required, individual discussions with the participants will be conducted after the group meeting.
The first group meeting

Eight inmates of the juvenile prison are sitting in a circle, between them, two trainers who run the course. It’s their first meeting. The situation is alien to them. Ice-breaker activities allow them to relax. Nobody is unduly challenged. Nothing embarrassing happens. The ice is broken. Now the task is to clarify what their expectations of the course are; they have to say what they want to learn here. This is different for everyone: being in control of yourself and not striking out in certain situations; being in control of yourself even if you feel you are being provoked; understanding the reason for going berserk and how to get this under control; not to commit another crime and have to go back to jail; not to slip again and be seduced by “old mates”, not talk “bullshit” and do stupid things, how to prepare for life after prison... Everyone has their own story, and they all want to learn different things.

Rules on which to base their working together in the course have to be defined. They have to define these rules themselves. What they expect from the trainers also needs to be clarified. This is alternately discussed in small groups and then again in the whole group. Nobody here is interested in indoctrination or even brain washing. They talk about respect and acceptance. The trainers ask for what they mean by that. “Well, when I give an opinion and nobody says it’s wrong.” It’s astonishing. The group establishes its own democratic rules that are
to apply. A first step has been taken: wanting to be respected by others and experiencing what it means to be taken seriously, having a say and this having an effect.

**Group training**
- Understanding one’s own history
- Identifying the failed self-healing processes of radicalisation and affinity for violence
- Critical analysis of criminal events
- Developing a safety plan
- Deradicalisation of the residual identity
- Development of an independent identity
- Civic education regarding the practice of democracy and tolerance development

**Transition management**
- Personal release preparation and the development of future plans
- Resource and risk analysis
- Preparation of basic security following release
- Review of a low-risk return
- Involvement of key anchor persons in the preparation for release
- Development of a private accompaniment system

**Stabilisation coaching**
- Transfer of what has been learned (real-life test), stabilisation of the security plan
- Return to the social environment (construction of a new environment)
- Establishment of stable relationships
- Distancing from groups that have an affinity for violence
- Structuring of everyday life
- Accompaniment in the case of conflicts
- Crisis intervention
- Integration in education/work
Religion and violence

The participants talk about their religion. And what their religion implies for them. "Islam is the best religion in the world, because it has no contradictions. All you have to do is abide by it, you don't have to think about it. I have not read the Quran, I simply do what it tells me to." "The main thing is that I believe in my God. It's still better than the infidel, even if he is not a criminal. The infidels are the worst." "When my victims are infidels, my sin can't be that bad." "Our religion gives us men more rights, that's simply how it is. We have to make sure that women do what we tell them to. I will now tell my girlfriend that she has to convert to Islam." "We are not allowed to be friends with Christians or Jews, it makes us dirty." "Islam allows me to defend myself when I am attacked or someone insults me."

One of the trainers is an imam. He discusses religion with the participants. His remarks confuse and alienate the young people: "People have to accept and respect each other, whether they are religious or not. The underlying aspiration is the same for all religions: respecting life, peace and freedom from violence." "Islam does not say that men are above women. Everyone is equal before God." "If Muslims are not allowed to have friends who are Christians or Jews, why are they allowed to marry?" "Religious affiliation is a personal decision, and nobody should be talked into it." "In Germany, religious freedom is an inalienable basic right. For Muslims there is no religious justification for acts of violence." "Your faith in our God does not free you from the responsibility for people. When I have injured and harmed other people, I have a responsibility towards that person, i.e., making amends and the obligation not to hurt people anymore in the future."

There are plenty of opportunities throughout the training programme to think about and to confront inhuman ideologies (s. p. 20). Thinking about and dealing with right-wing extremism, Islamism, traditionalism, xenophobia and current socio-political issues together with the trainers allows the participants to enter into conflict and violence-free discourse with political opponents.

The act of violence

A separate training module is dedicated to the act of violence. During this module, the group, independent of their individual crimes, deals with justification and trivialisation strategies. The aim is to break up the myths surrounding violence and to understand how violence arises. The main focus here is on the role of important influencing factors, such as mates and the group. In addition, the trainers encourage the participants to put themselves in the role of the victim to enhance their ability to empathise. The learning objective is the realisation that violent behaviour is not inevitable, but rather, that the individual is responsible for his acts of violence, and that it is possible to renounce violence. Over the course of the training programme, the participants learn how to deal with conflict
Dealing with the act of violence

The trainers form two groups: group A has to describe what’s great about violence, and group B has to describe its disadvantages. In group A, the participants are almost bursting with advantages: “When I punch someone, I am in control, nobody can hurt me”, “it’s like being on drugs”, “it gets me what I deserve”.

The boys in group B find it much more difficult to find arguments against the use of violence. Only gradually do they realise that an act of violence is the reason why they are in jail right now. Only once asked about it do they realise that the crime will continue to play a role after their time in jail. They have a criminal record and have to expect to encounter prejudice and rejection as well as difficulties with finding an apprenticeship or a job. During the discussion afterwards, it becomes clear that the supposed advantages of violence often means a basic need for recognition and appreciation. And that’s precisely what they almost always lacked in their lives. This basic need has to be accepted – satisfying this need through violence must not be accepted. What they take away from this meeting does not of course change their deep-seated acceptance of violence – but the discussion does contribute to creating uncertainty. The myth of violence, its fascination, has been demystified a little.
situations in a non-violent and confident way. Practical exercises taken from everyday life help them identify their sensitivity thresholds, understand body signals and, in the event of an escalation, to opt out before they lose control of their emotions.

The individual violence session – critical analysis of the crime
Right-wing extremism and Islamist ideologies legitimise violence as an inherent element. Dealing with one's own violent act is therefore of central importance. Over the course of the training programme, every participant has to attend such a violence session.

The violence session is approx. three hours long. Once the crime has been meticulously reconstructed, the group analyses and evaluates the violent behaviour and its consequences for the victim. While the young person himself has to take responsibility, the other group members act as "violence experts" and take on an accompanying role. This deliberate assumption of responsibility is the basis for being able to develop new perspectives and a personal "violence avoidance plan". The violence session is a great challenge for the participants: The confrontation with the brutality and the often gruesome injuries that were inflicted on the victims often pushes the participants to their limits.
The flash light round is over. Now the time has come and T. is the focus of attention. The trainers prepare the other boys for their role in today’s meeting. They have to listen, but also question T’s story, comment on it and be critical. Above all, they must help him process his crime. The interview about the crime is starting. One trainer focuses on T., the other on the group. T. is convicted of joint murder and was 18 years old at the time of the crime. He is asked to recount what happened that day. What exactly happened? What happened before the crime? What happened during the crime? Who else was there? T. tells the story. The victim owed him money, he says. He and three mates went to his house. Then the guy got what he deserved. He himself, he says, only punched him at the beginning. It was the others who thrashed him, and it was they who were responsible for the victim’s death, he says. He himself didn’t really notice what exactly happened, he says. The entire story takes just under a minute to tell.

The trainer confronts T. with the sentence for joint murder: Are you guilty? Are you a murderer? No, says T. without hesitation. Initially, nobody comments on or judges T.’s story. Then the sequence of events is reconstructed in slow motion. The trainers take on the role of detectives, ask about specific details and observations that seemingly have nothing to do with the murder. T. does not yet make the connection between that and the crime itself. He spent that day with three mates (18, 15
and 14 years old) and with his girlfriend. When they arrived at the victim's house, T. knocked down the door and punched the victim to the ground. Then he smashed the furniture. Together they "worked on" the victim. T. then went to the kitchen with his girlfriend while the others continued, with kicks and heavy tools. The trainer asks about seemingly minor details. What did T. talk to his girlfriend about? What was on the table? T. remembers very well that he talked about the pubs nearby. There was a bottle of beer and an ashtray on the table. After a while he said to his mates that it was enough. Then they left, leaving behind the victim covered in blood. A short time afterwards, the man died of his injuries.

The trainer involves the group in the discussion, and they ask: "Who was the main man?" The young people have listened carefully and are analysing things. T. started it all. It was on his initiative that he and his mates went to see the victim. He was the oldest and he set the tone. He took the first step, smashed the door in and knocked down the victim. And it was he who ultimately put an end to the crime. The group all agree: T. was the main man.

Is it really possible that T. can remember the details of his conversation with his girlfriend in the kitchen, but didn't notice that a few meters away someone is being brutally beaten? The questions of the group and the trainer are coming to a head. T. can no longer dodge them. He can no longer claim it wasn't his fault. He has to take responsibility for his action.
Dealing with right-wing extremist ideology

The group discusses the social problems in Germany: unemployment, social welfare benefits, white-collar crime, corruption. "What are the causes? Who is responsible?" One of the boys has the answer: "It is the Jewish finance capital! They have the money. They pull the strings and drive Germany into the abyss". The trainer pauses and gets involved in the debate. "O.k. – Where is the finance capital in Germany concentrated? With the banks, that's right. I see, so Josef Ackermann from Deutsche Bank is a Jew? No! No, he isn't. I see." The trainer mentions the major banks in Germany and their chief executives. One by one. He is well informed, and knows all about it. The young people can’t help but be impressed. They can’t find a single Jew in the boardrooms of the banks. The boys are confused. The trainer takes a turn. And what about Frank Schwerdt, member of the party executive committee of the NPD (a nationalist right-wing party) party and head of the NPD party headquarters in Berlin? Is he Jewish? The group are horrified. "What’s that all about, do you want to provoke us?" "No, I am just continuing your arguments. Mr Schwerdt has a lot of money, he is a big player in the property business, he speculates on the stock market. He exercises power through his money and uses it for political interests. By your definition, should he not be a Jew?" The boys are confused. The discussion is having an effect. That is intentional. They have been given food for thought. The issue has not been settled. The trainers will pick it up again later and continue the discussion.
The family days

“What did you do when you noticed that your son has slipped into the Salafist scene?”, the trainer asks the parents of M. They hesitate and think. “We were horrified. And at first, we fought it.” Then the trainer asks how M. experienced the situation at the time. The parents never really dealt with the topic of "Salafism", says M. Even though he would have liked them to. Instead, his parents punished him with disrespect, berated him and threatened him. M. felt rejected as a person. At some point, the parents stopped, they say. His fundamentalist orientation, being part of the Salafist scene, then simply became a taboo subject. “How could things get so out of hand? Why is M. in jail today?”, the trainer asks. The parents know the reasons for this: he had the wrong friends, everything went wrong when he dropped out of school, the judge had his eye on him. They don't consider that something might have been wrong with the family. “What are your son's strengths? What is he particularly good at?” The mother looks puzzled, shrugs and looks at the father in a questioning way. No answer. They don't know. The parents are confused. Perhaps this set in motion thinking about M.'s development and their role in it. Perhaps. The trainer also warns them: “Don't immediately expect to see a 180 degree turnaround. Something has been set in motion in your son. We can clearly see that during our training sessions. But he will not return to you a completely changed person.”

Talking to the trainers, relatives realise that they can make an important contribution.
The family days
During the family member days, the trainers have the chance to talk to parents and address problems that have not been dealt with and that became apparent over the course of the training programme. On request of the young people, the trainers act as mediators between parents and participants in order to improve communication and conflict management. The family days quite often help the young people and their parents get closer again. What’s more, involving relatives means that it is possible to assess what accompaniment the young people have available to them once they are released from prison.

Preparing for release –
The personal safety plan
As the date of the release approaches, the group focuses on preparing for the near future, planning the young peoples’ daily lives and cementing the initiated behavioural changes. The young people discuss their future prospects and talk about their goals and fears. At this point, it is important for the participants to be able to identify their strengths and weaknesses and to realistically assess their options and limits. There is a need to talk about the risks they can expect "on the outside" and about what happens when they return to their old social networks. What if the old clique is waiting "on the outside", comes to their house on the weekend, asks them to join them, or even develops a threat scenario?

What to do, when the old gang appears all of a sudden?
What has to happen and what alternatives to old behavioural patterns are there? From now on, accompaniment and assistance has to be provided that can have a stabilising effect on a new beginning after prison. In addition to dealing with conflicts and stressful situations, the focus is now also on work and training measures. A successful re-integration into the world of work or education also significantly reduces the risk of a relapse.

Transition management and stabilisation coaching – re-integration into the labour market

Transition management is the preparation for the stabilisation coaching after the release. This is because the success of the training programme only becomes apparent when the young people face reality outside the prison walls. The time after their release from prison is hard and there are great risks and problems the young people have to deal with: old clique structures, temptations and demands that can quickly become overwhelming. Most of the participants therefore take advantage of the further accompaniment services that are available to them after their release (six to a maximum of twelve months). During this time, the trainers that have gained their trust during the training programme remain in regular contact with them, visit them...
Stabilisation coaching

The trainer’s phone rings. It is P., he seems nervous and discomposed. “I messed up. I need your help.” He was released from prison ten months ago. P. wanted to go back to his home town, but not move back in with his parents. The trainer helped him find his own flat. Now P. has a flat and a job in construction, which he takes very seriously. He doesn’t earn a lot of money, but he does get by. To get rid of his old debts, he went to debt counselling with the trainer. He keeps a distance from his old mates in the right-wing milieu. Occasionally, he comes across them. Right after he got out of prison, they regularly came to his house, called him and wanted to do things with him. But P. refused. He knows how quickly something can happen when he is out and about with the group and they’ve had a few beers. He has become boring, they now say in the scene. This has bothered him.

He gets on much better with his parents since he no longer lives with them. His mother is particularly supportive. P. has learnt to talk about his feelings, including with his parents. They talked about the past a lot, and about what’s gone wrong. P. understands many things better now and can explain them. And he has learnt how to deal with criticism and not to see it as an attack. Even though P. learnt to accept other people’s opinions and not to exclude people because they are different, he got involved in a violent confrontation with a Turkish colleague. Because he was still in the trial period, he was dismissed without notice. He is now keen to talk to his trainer. You can clearly feel his insecurity on the phone. They meet up a few days later. As before, P. tries to blame others. Only gradually, while reconstructing the incident, is it possible for the trainer to make it clear to P. that he was himself responsible for the fight. The trainer tries to encourage P. as much, as she condemns his relapse into violent behaviour. The fact that he approached her to talk about the crime is a good sign. The trainer will now help P. find a new job. It becomes clear how difficult it is to change your behaviour for good and to live a life without violence.

and can be reached around the clock in the case of acute problems. They offer specific reorientation accompaniment. The search for an apprenticeship or a job is of central importance during this time. Quite often, this period is associated with failures and frustrations that the young people have to cope with. In this difficult situation, the temptation to go back to the familiar scene is great. The trainers help them to maintain a distance from and to have self-control in situations of conflict. The trainers are also there to help the young people structure their daily and weekly schedules, safeguard their livelihoods and find somewhere to live. Relatives and friends are asked to lend their accompaniment, local networks get involved if needed and contacts to the youth welfare service, the job centre etc. are initiated.
Violence Prevention Network e.V.
Alt-Moabit 73
D-10555 Berlin

Please send me the following materials:

- "Taking Responsibility - Breaking away from Hate and Violence" brochure, _____ copies
- “Advice Centre Hesse” brochure, _____ copies
- Violence Prevention Network – Deradicalisation • Intervention • Prevention brochure, _____ copies
- Evaluation report on the re-imprisonment rate, 2012 (PDF)

I would like to make an appointment for an interview.
Please call me: ________________________________

I have the following request:

Name/Institution: ________________________________
Address: ________________________________
Telephone: ________________________________
Email: ________________________________

Do you have questions concerning the topics of right-wing extremism, Islamism, traditionalism or unconstitutional symbols? Our team of experts will answer any questions you may have. Please call them on +49 30 – 917 05 464.
The deradicalisation work in prison by Violence Prevention Network is funded as part of the federal programme "Democracy lives!" by the Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth.