



A framework for the design and
implementation of exit programmes



Way Out




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Introduction

This brochure provides a description of the report D4.1 - Methodological framework exit programme, which can be found on the WayOut website (www.wayout-prison.eu).

The report is about intervention programmes used in prison and by probation services for the purpose of deradicalisation or disengagement, and which aim at reintegration or rehabilitation. So-called exit programmes. Although the focus is on prison and probation, an explicit link is made with other organisations related to the reintegration of violent extremist offenders such as local authorities, law enforcement agencies and community organisations. These organisations play an important role, for example, in the post-release period. The report is not aimed at a specific target group (e.g. left-wing terrorists, right-wing terrorists, leaders, followers, short-term or long-term imprisonment). It is explicitly advised to tailor an exit programme to the context in which it is used and to the risks and needs of an extremist offender. The social environment of an extremist offender should not be overlooked (e.g. family members, friends and even the broader community). Active involvement and support of family members appears, among other aspects, to be crucial in facilitating a peaceful return to society.

The report is based on scientific and practice-oriented literature, with an accent on the latter. A gap between science and practice seems to be present, with practice-oriented literature generally providing more specific information about the design and implementation of an exit programme. The usefulness of insights and theories related to the reintegration of non-extremist offenders, and more common social work and probation practices, stands out. Desistance, restorative justice, a systems approach (involving and supporting family and social network), risk assessment, creating a proper working alliance between client and worker are, among others, all valuable in working with violent extremist offenders.

The report provides the following six categories of standards and practices related to designing and implementing an exit programme. In this brochure a brief outline is given of each categorie.

- **1. Objectives and organisation.**
- **2. Risk analysis and classification of violent extremist offenders.**
- **3. Engaging with violent extremist offenders and encouraging their participation.**
- **4. Interventions.**
- **5. Good practices for aftercare.**
- **6. Monitoring and evaluating.**

Objectives and organisation

Objectives of an exit programme need to be specified and operationalised. Conditions need to be established to properly develop and implement an exit programme (e.g. humane prison regime and available management). Staff need to be qualified and well trained. Security and the sharing of information needs to receive proper attention.

Objectives

- Specify the goals of an exit programme.

Indicators of success

- Operationalise the goals of an exit programme (select indicators to measure success).

Facilitating the programme (including the role of the prison environment)

- Establish the conditions under which an exit programme can be properly developed and implemented.

Management and personnel

- Guarantee that senior staff (e.g. management and team leaders) are well qualified.
- Hire staff that are well qualified to work with extremist offenders.
- Execute the programme by an interdisciplinary team of experts (including psychologists, former extremists and religious experts).
- Have frequent team meetings and discussions of cases.
- Respect good practices on the use of psychology/psychologists in the exit programme.

- Properly select, train and supervise a former.
- Make use of a former for a limited amount of time.
- Ensure that team members are familiar with the role of the religious expert.
- Provide training to all staff working with extremist offenders.

Security

- Ensure the safety of personnel and their families (including the psychologist, former extremist, religious expert and, somewhat broader, well-known members of the community that actively support the programme).
- Ensure the safety of violent extremists that are reintegrating into society and ensure the safety of their family members.

Transparency

- Be clear about what information will, and will not, be shared.
- Facilitate and specify the sharing of information between organisations.
- Do not completely isolate an exit programme.
- Make use of the media to show the possibility of change.
- Prepare for media attention in case of an incident.

Risk analysis and classification of violent extremist offenders

Specific tools have been developed to assess the risk of radicalisation. Risk assessments should be conducted prior to the start of an exit programme, and on a regular basis. A structured procedure for intake, assessment, reception and classification of cases needs to be in place. A programme should be tailored to risks and needs. This includes deciding how a violent extremist offender could properly be housed (in the least restricted setting possible).

Procedure

- Have an effective and structured procedure for intake, assessment, reception and classification in place.

Risk assessment

- Methodologically sound risks and needs assessments should be conducted prior to the start of the exit programme and on a regular base.
- Assessments should cover a broad variety of risks and issues, based on multiple resources and be carried out by different specialisations.
- Assessments should be conducted by trained and certified staff.
- The assessed risks and needs are critical for tailoring an exit programme.

Risk analysis methods

- Use a specialised risk assessment tool (e.g. VERA-2R, RRAP or ERG 22+).
- Combine specialised risk assessment tools with more general assessment tools when necessary.

Classification

- Classification based on the risk and needs assessment is necessary to allocate prisoners to a suitable unit and programme.
- Prisoners must be categorised according to their security risk and control risk.

Target group

- Exit programmes need a clearly defined target group.

Exclusion criteria

- Clear exclusion criteria are important to decide if prisoners should be accepted in a programme or organisation.

An extremist's position in the group

- Exit programmes should be tailored to the position of individual extremists and it should be considered if interventions focus on lower and mid-level extremists, those in leadership positions or both.

Individual or collective level

- Decide if an exit programme focuses on an individual or a collective level.

Allocation and housing

- Decide how an extremist should be housed (e.g. separated from general prison population, with other extremists and within what sort of regime).

Engaging with violent extremist offenders and encouraging their participation

Staff members need to invest in a relationship of credibility and trust with the extremist offender. Extremist offenders cannot be forced to change their world views; intrinsic motivation is required. Different approaches can be used to stimulate participation in a programme (e.g. involving family members and friends at the onset or during a programme). Specific guidelines exist concerning direct communication with an extremist offender.

Building a relationship of trust

- Invest in a relationship of credibility and trust.
- A non-governmental organisation may execute an exit programme with more support from extremist offenders.

Encouraging an extremist offender to participate in an exit programme

- Encourage participation by raising doubts about world views and mental constructions.
- Involving family members, friends or important community members may stimulate participation in an exit programme.
- Incentives may be used to encourage participation in an exit programme.
- Punitive measures can be applied when cooperation is lacking. The option to use punitive measures should be made clear at the start of a programme and to all actors involved.

Guidelines on direct communication

- Being credible, genuine and explicit about the professional role are important aspects in communicating with extremists.
- Motivational interviewing is a method that can be used to stimulate change.



Interventions

A variety of interventions can be included in an exit programme. These interventions should be based on a sound theory of change and address (individual) factors and mechanisms related to the process of radicalisation. Interventions can focus on cognitive skills, psychosocial issues, education, vocational skills, family and social network, religious counselling, arts, sports, and involving victims, former violent extremists and influential others. Incentives may be provided, although with care, to stimulate change.

Theoretical basis

- Interventions must be based on academic research and a sound theory of change.
- A handbook in line with the latest research is a necessity for caseworkers.

Pilots

- Pilots must be conducted, assessed and evaluated.

Tailor-made

- Exit programmes must be tailor-made based on local cultures, conditions, legal traditions, individual extremist offenders (risks and needs), the nature of the violent extremist group and the environment where the extremist offender is going to live after release (social network).
- Specific goals should be determined.
- Programmes must be strongly linked to underlying factors for radicalisation.
- Intensity of treatment should be linked to the indicated risk level.

Cognitive skills programme

- A cognitive skills programme must be considered. It can support critical reflection on an individual's environment and behaviour.

Psychosocial interventions

- Psychosocial interventions must be considered, as they can facilitate disengagement and desistance.

Education courses

- Appropriate educational courses are considered to be one of the core elements of an exit programme.

Vocational skills training

- Vocational skills training and employment are important.

Involvement of family and social network

- A safe and trusting social network is necessary to maximise the chance of successful reintegration.
- Family involvement can play a role in the success of an exit programme.
- Maintaining and strengthening family ties in prison increases emotional support after release.
- Help should be given to family members to understand the process the extremist offender is going through.
- Social networks can provide useful information concerning the role and involvement of the extremist offender and others.
- Families can also be used as partners in early prevention and intervention work, through family counselling.

Involvement of religious experts

- Religious counselling can have a positive effect on not re-offending and can induce a motivational or attitudinal change.

Involvement of victims

- Contact between victims of terrorist violence and offenders may be considered.

Involvement of former violent extremists

- Former violent extremists who have been through rehabilitation can influence extremists following the programme and make a powerful statement for the benefit of change.

Involvement of influential personalities

- Involvement of charismatic members of the community or celebrities can be considered to inspire change among extremist offenders.

Incentives

- Incentives can be considered to reward and activate pro-social behaviour.

Creative, cultural and recreational activities

- Participation in arts- and sports-based interventions can contribute to desistance in indirect forms.

Good practices for aftercare

During imprisonment reintegration needs to receive early attention. An exit programme should be linked to a long-term aftercare plan. The extremist offender should be involved in such a plan (i.e. co-ownership). A multi-agency approach with enough flexibility to meet an extremist offender's needs is advised. Material support needs to be provided. The community should be involved in the reintegration process to reduce prejudice, and families of extremist offenders need to be supported when necessary. Security threats should be minimised.

Good practices for aftercare

- Aftercare is important to prevent recidivism and re-joining an extremist group.
- An exit programme should be linked to a long-term aftercare plan.
- During imprisonment reintegration already needs to receive early and sufficient attention.

Flexibility and collaboration

- Aftercare should be flexible because of extremist offenders' specific needs.
- Setting small achievable goals is preferred.
- A multi-agency approach is required and should be long-lasting.
- Organise collaboration in a practical manner.

Reducing prejudice and preparing for stigmatisation

- Preconceptions about extremists should be reduced. The community should be involved in the reintegration process.
- The capacity of extremist offenders to deal with ambiguity in their communities needs to be increased.

Building trust and fair treatment

- Actors (including the community) involved in the reintegration process should trust each other.
- A close relationship with the community can prevent the perception of unfair treatment of a returning extremist offender.

Clarity about roles, responsibilities and goals

- Roles, responsibilities and goals should be clear to all actors involved in the reintegration process.
- Close collaboration and organisations having appropriate knowledge and expertise is required.

Support of social networks

- Acquire insight into relevant (family) relationships.
- Social support should be arranged when possible.
- Families of extremist offenders should be supported.

Religious support

- Support may be provided by religious actors and organisations to extremist offenders and their families.
- The involvement of religious support is context-dependent and should be tailored to individual circumstances.

Material support and mental health

- Material support should be provided after release.
- Assessments and treatments of mental health problems are required in prison and after release.

Co-ownership

- The extremist offender needs to be actively involved in plans concerning reintegration (including setting achievable goals).

Risk assessment tools and security measures

- Risk assessments provide information valuable for the reintegration process (needs, protective factors and resilience factors).
- Security threats should be minimised, and recidivism monitored.



Monitoring and evaluating

An exit programme should be evaluated by an independent third party on a regular basis. Internal quality assurance needs to be established. It is useful, for the development of the programme, to know if the programme is executed in accordance with contemplated goals, standards and processes. The work done in an exit programme should be well documented to facilitate progress reporting and decision-making. Cases should be evaluated before closure and lessons need to be learned from unsuccessful cases.

Monitoring and evaluating

- An exit programme needs to be evaluated by an independent third party on a regular basis.
- See WayOut deliverables 3.1 (Literature review report) and 3.2 (Exit interventions evaluation framework report) that are downloadable here: www.wayout-prison.eu, for more information on the evaluation of an exit programme.

Monitoring (internal quality assurance)

- Internal quality assurance should be in place and support the further development of the programme.
- Activities should be well documented to facilitate regular reporting on the programme and decision-making.
- Cases should be evaluated before closure and lessons should be learned from unsuccessful cases

Consortium



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