



The penal system in Hesse

Correctional facilities are a mirror of society. Of course problems relating to radical or extremist attitudes exist in the penal system too, but it must not be allowed to act as a breeding ground for radical ideology. Correctional facilities are therefore a particular focus in the fight against extremist radicalisation. The task and challenge facing the penal system with regard to extremist detainees is, on the one hand, to prevent inmates from radicalising themselves or others in the penal system or being radicalised and, on the other, to work towards the implementation of all possible measures for de-radicalisation to ensure effective protection of the general public after a possible release.

A particular risk of radicalisation in the penal system results from the fact that prisoners live together in difficult circumstances with, in some cases, problematic personality traits in a relatively confined space. By the same token, the circumstances prevailing in a correctional facility enable monitoring, control and influence through treatment, which is of course impossible in this form for a person living in freedom in the outside world.

To that end the penal system in Hesse has already made considerable efforts in recent years and developed an extensive package of measures. Since 1 April 2016 all these measures and programmes, as well as the individual cases of the extremist prisoners, have been supervised and controlled by the newly created administrative office **NeDiS** (**NeDiC** = **Network for De-Radicalisation in Corrections**).

Successful prevention and combatting of Islamist aspirations cannot be accomplished through uncoordinated action. With a view to achieving that goal an extensive concept was developed, which includes the following four key pillars:

- Identification
- Prevention
- De-radicalisation
- Coordination



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 Department of Press and Public Relations Work
 René Brosius
 Luisenstr. 13
 65185 Wiesbaden
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 Email: NeDiS@hmdj.hessen.de
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Hessisches Ministerium der Justiz
 Luisenstr. 13 · 65185 Wiesbaden

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NeDiS/NeDiC



**Network for De-Radicalisation
 in Corrections**



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IDENTIFICATION

The identification of extremist prisoners is one of the fundamental pillars of the NeDiC concept.

Identification is achieved through:

- Evaluation of information from the law enforcement documents and treatment examination
- Careful monitoring in the penal system
- Recording of tattoos
- Continual exchange of information with the police and domestic intelligence service
- Deployment of structural observers in the Hessian correctional facilities in which most of the prisoners with extremist tendencies are held
- Employee training courses for the recognition of radicalisation tendencies and to increase intercultural competence
- Use of instruments for assessing the risk of violence (risk assessment tools) for extremist/terrorist prisoners willing to engage in acts of violence

PREVENTION

Ordering security measures and treatment measures

Identification and risk assessment form the basis for necessary security measures (such as monitoring, increased control of external contacts, reduction of contacts within the institution, case conferences, etc.), but also for treatment measures.

Preventing the formation of groups

As a rule, prisoners who at least show signs of radicalisation are accommodated separately from comparable prisoners or prisoners at risk. To avoid the formation of groups, these prisoners are relocated within their institution or from institution to institution.

Adaptation of the Hessian Prison Act

To improve the combatting of extremist aspirations of any kind, with the Act Amending the Hessian Prison Act (Gesetz zur Änderung der hessischen Vollzugsgesetze) of 30 November 2015 (Federal States' Law Gazette p. 498), regulations were introduced into the Hessian Prison Act which make it easier to prevent contacts of the prisoners from or with the outside world or to order special security measures in the event of a suspicion of extremism. A background check for third parties recruited to work in the institution and visitors was also legally enshrined, in order to prevent harmful influences.

Prison chaplaincy for Muslim prisoners in the Hessian penal system by imams

The share of Muslim prisoners in Hessian correctional facilities has steadily increased in recent years. In the Hessian penal system the development of a needs-based prison chaplaincy for Muslim prisoners by German-speaking imams was therefore begun at an early stage. Prison chaplaincy for Muslim prisoners is currently comprehensively ensured in all Hessian correctional facilities.

Offering prison chaplaincy for Muslim prisoners by imams that goes beyond basic religious care not only serves the purpose of adequately ensuring religious freedom – it can also make an important contribution to the prevention of extremism. Prisoners with a (new) religious interest but a limited educational background in theological questions may be negatively influenced by religiously tinged political ideologies.

The work of the imams can thus counteract religiously motivated misconceptions through culturally sensitive access to prisoners, as well as helping to prevent such ideas from arising in the first place.

DE-RADICALISATION

Rehabilitation/the elimination of educational and training deficiencies

The best way to protect the population is by getting a prisoner to desist from violence/extremism through rehabilitation. Besides general treatment and monitoring, deficiencies in education and vocational training in particular should be reduced and as a result a significant factor in radicalisation eliminated.

Imparting democratic values and fostering a critical attitude towards the media

There must also be increased efforts to impart democratic values and encourage a critical attitude towards the media. Appropriate measures such as anti-violence training and projects to increase tolerance, personal responsibility and self-determination (empowerment) are carried out for that purpose.

Involvement of NGOs

As early as 2014, the independent organisation Violence Prevention Network e.V. (VPN) began work in the Hessian penal system on carrying out de-radicalisation measures (individual coaching and group training). The employees of the NGO combine detailed knowledge of Islamic theology and its dangerous extremist excesses with extensive practical experience in so-called anti-violence training and relationship building.

COORDINATION

In order to implement and further develop prevention and de-radicalisation measures in the penal system, central coordination of the prevention and de-radicalisation projects of the Hessian penal system is required, i.e. a network, and a central point of contact which collects knowledge and competence through the information gathered in the projects and makes it accessible for other institutions.

The administrative office coordinates, supervises and supports the exchange of information:

- within and between institutions
- with the security and judicial authorities and the Hessian Information and Competence Centre against Extremism (HKE)
- with the ministries
- the federal states

- the federal government (Federal Ministry of Justice and Consumer Protection; Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth)
- and at an international level (UNODC, EuroPris, RAN)

The administrative office further develops the Hessian NeDiC concept with the following targeted measures and projects:

- Regular exchange of experiences with the structural observers in the penal system and optimisation of their technical equipment
- Regular exchange of experiences with the imams in the penal system
- Training of employees in the handling of extremist prisoners and increasing intercultural competence from the period of their career training
- Carrying out funding projects
- The provision of Muslim literature in prisoners' libraries in consultation with the imams
- The provision of specialist literature for the imams
- The SESAM web-based training programme for the improvement of the intercultural competence of penal system personnel
- Implementation of structured professional judgement instruments for assessing violent tendencies and for making decisions on appropriate treatment measures (VERA-2R)
- Development of standards for the prison chaplaincy for Muslim prisoners and for the qualification of imams
- Needs-oriented assignment of hour allotments for prison chaplaincy for Muslim prisoners
- Development of treatment concepts for radicalised prisoners in the different fields of extremism
- Development of stabilisation coaching for the period following release, with greater consideration for the social surroundings, family, and community post-release

