Recommendations of the Task Force to Prevent Islamist Radicalisation

Preventing radicalization in the age of societal insecurity

IMPRINT

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THE PRESENT RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION WERE AUTHORED BY THE TASK FORCE TO PREVENT ISLAMIST RADICALISATION

The various strains of Islamist extremism are both a security issue and a social policy challenge. The threat of Islamist extremism, as well as generalising debates over this threat, can reinforce tendencies in society to polarise and stigmatise, thereby further encouraging radicalisation, recruitment and mobilisation among Islamists and other extremists. Solutions in the field of prevention must be able to address the many different facets of this challenge; they can never only be one-dimensional. Germany has already done a great deal in international comparison, by pursuing a wide range of preventive approaches, professionalising civil-society providers and offering funding instruments in federal and state-level programmes. The services and measures of the existing systems (schools and youth welfare in particular) generally show further room for improvement. Above all, more staff are needed for social work at schools and for municipal youth services. In addition, further measures are advisable in view of the following challenges:

1. As the phenomenon of Islamist extremism continues to change, everyone involved in preventing Islamist extremism must keep adapting, updating their knowledge networks and sharing insights with each other, particularly with regard to larger trends as well.

2. New regulation is urgently needed to respond adequately to changing technologies and media use. As artificial intelligence (AI) assumes a growing role in almost every area of life, the use of technologies that are equally future-oriented is of decisive strategic importance for the work of preventing extremism and terrorism.

3. In view of long periods in which the Federal Government has had to operate on a tentative budget and against the backdrop of generally tight budgets, a firm commitment to long-term support for the relevant federal and state-level programmes and to predictable funding instruments is needed. Additional resources should also be invested in the existing systems (schools and youth welfare services).

4. Dealing with Islamist extremism continues to be an extremely sensitive political issue and area of public concern. In response to attacks, for example, the causes should first be systematically analysed; hasty promises of supposedly simple solutions should be avoided, as should premature classification of the attack as having been motivated by Islamist extremism.

The following overview is made up of four parts. Each part contains key recommendations formulated by the Task Force to *Prevent Islamist Radicalisation*. The Task Force was asked to focus in particular on online prevention. Parts 2, 3 and 4 therefore address this issue.

The individual recommendations for action:

Part 1: Overarching recommendations for action against the backdrop of the most recent Islamist extremist attacks

- Recommendation 1: Maintain professional working structures in the field of prevention and significantly strengthen existing systems
- Recommendation 2: Implement comprehensive monitoring and case management in the field of psychosocial welfare services related to flight and asylum; expand cooperation between security authorities, health-care services and civil society
- Recommendation 3: Create a shared, agile and permanent knowledge network for security authorities, researchers and practitioners to study recent attacks.

Part 2: Online prevention: Restrictions on and removal of anti-democratic content in social media, messaging and gaming servicesn

- Recommendation 4: Effective age restrictions for social media, messaging and gaming services: access only for persons aged 16 and over (pass legislation, possibly based on the Protection of Young Persons Act (*Jugendschutzgesetz*))
- Recommendation 5: Remove anti-democratic content from social platforms. Strictly enforce existing regulations and require operators to provide significantly more effective and active monitoring

Part 3: Online prevention: Enable prevention in social media, messaging and gaming services

- Recommendation 6: Social media, messaging and gaming services must actively assist in making prevention services more visible. This should also be required by law. Strengthen digital prevention and exit programmes
- Recommendation 7: Strengthen alternatives to Islamist narratives and propaganda online and offline
- Recommendation 8: Increase media literacy of family members of individuals who are at risk of radicalisation in dealing with extremist content
- Recommendation 9: Increase media literacy of counsellors and their clients specifically with regard to online radicalisation and online prevention
- Recommendation 10: Create a nationwide knowledge portal for the prevention of extremism and build it up from existing components over the long term
- Recommendation 11: Set up a nationwide learning/teaching platform for instructors and ensure its long-term funding

Part 4: Cooperation of security authorities and other government and civil-society actors to ensure comprehensive case management

- Recommendation 12: Create and expand effective multi-professional structures to assess and process cases of (suspected) radicalisation in the framework of case management within the area of responsibility of security authorities and other government and civil-society actors
- Recommendation 13: Provide training for staff of security authorities to enable them to recognise the potential for prevention when handling operational case