**School of
Social Work**

Institute of Diversity and Social Integration

Updated review and developments in jihadist radicalisation in Switzerland – updated version of an exploratory study on prevention and intervention

Research report
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Prof. Dr. Miryam Eser Davolio, Institute of Diversity and Social Integration, ZHAW School of Social Work
Dr. Mallory Schneuwly Purdie, Swiss Centre for Islam and Society, University of Fribourg
Fabien Merz, Center for Security Studies (CSS), ETH Zurich
Johannes Saal, Faculté des sciences humaines et sociales, University of Lucerne
Ayesha Rether, Institute of Diversity and Social Integration, ZHAW School of Social Work

1 Executive summary

Based on the study 'Background to jihadist radicalisation in Switzerland' (Eser Davolio et al. 2015 with a sample of 66 jihadist-motivated travellers), the research status and current level of data available are analysed using an increased sample of jihadist-motivated persons. In comparison to studies from neighbouring countries, a largely similar picture emerges in terms of relevant push and pull factors. Male, Muslim, second-generation persons aged between 21 and 35 years of age with a relatively low level of education and links to peers with similar orientation are overrepresented in the sample. Particular importance is also attached to the phenomenon of conversion. In view of the fact that around 40% of the persons surveyed (N=130) receive state welfare benefits, relevant follow-up questions are raised here with regard to resocialisation and reintegration.

In relation to the challenges in the prison system, the interviews with prison directors show that considerations are made and strategies applied regarding placement, execution of sentence, separation and institutional and individual monitoring when dealing with radicalised jihadist inmates. As long periods of pretrial detention are common in such cases, there is generally little scope for measures, such as therapy and reintegration. Concepts for dealing with radicalised inmates and promoting resocialisation and disengagement must be developed, approaches regarding cantonal 'core extremism groups' or the involvement of Muslim spiritual advisers must be further elaborated and monitoring of potential risks – particularly concerning the protection of potentially endangered fellow inmates – must be driven forward.

As far as prevention is concerned, the extremism specialist units have increased from two in 2015 to nine now and the bridge-building specialist units from three to eight (as at May 2019). In particular, cities and cantons which experienced high levels of jihadist radicalisation have recruited specialists and developed expertise on prevention. As low-threshold points of contact, they can usually clear up the uncertainties that radicalisation phenomena or associated situations can trigger and contribute towards resolving issues by advising the persons involved as second-level prevention. In contrast, the bridge-building specialist units primarily focus on building trust and dialogue with mosque associations as well as providing information in the field of asylum as part of radicalisation prevention. This means they play a key link role between the Muslim organisations and the police and other administrative bodies.

In summary, individual cantons and cities expanded prevention units between May 2015 and May 2019, but they are still far from available nationwide in the overall context of Switzerland. While progress has been made and experience accumulated in prevention and intervention, there are still gaps in the fields of disengagement and reintegration of radicalised jihadist persons.

2 Research design

2.1   Research question of the exploratory study

The strengthening of the jihadist groups operating in the context of regional trouble spots in the Middle East has triggered a wave of radicalisation unprecedented in its scope since 2013. Europe has not escaped this either. This is indicated, amongst other things, by the number of people who have travelled from European states to conflict regions since 2013 to join jihadist groups or who have taken part in terrorist activities – in the name of a group – in their native or host countries.

The 'Islamic State' group (IS) – which is probably the main driver of this trend – has come under severe pressure militarily since mid-2016 and has had to relinquish its model based on territorial control over the last few years. In light of these developments, the number of jihadist-motivated travellers has fallen sharply since mid-2016. The trend, which has been observed globally, is also evident in the context of Switzerland. However, the danger presented by people who have been radicalised without necessarily seeking to leave the country continues to exist in European states, including Switzerland. Questions are also increasingly being raised at the moment about how terrorism-relevant cases are dealt with by the judicial/legal system and what approach should be adopted towards these persons before, during and after imprisonment. Preventative measures to stop violent extremism, the question of incarceration and reintegration may therefore continue to present significant challenges for the relevant actors in future – including in Switzerland.

This is why the exploratory study focused primarily on questions related to new findings about radicalisation processes in Switzerland, in order to set out recommendations on prevention, intervention as well as reintegration from the knowledge acquired. The emphasis was placed on the following research questions:

    a) What are the individual, psychological, socio-demographic and group-specific backgrounds of the young people and adults who are categorised as radicalised jihadists?

    b) What preventative and risk-increasing factors and contextual conditions have to be taken into account in the prison system in relation to jihadist radicalisation?

    c) Which prevention and intervention strategies have proven effective for the extremism and bridge-building specialist units?

2.2   Approach and acknowledgements

Various approaches, which are explained in greater detail in the following chapters, were selected to answer the research questions raised as part of this exploratory study:

1. A quantitative analysis of anonymized data of selected cases of radicalisation. The Federal Intelligence Service (FIS) provided the anonymized data.
2. Structured interviews in the **prison system**[1] and expert interviews
3. Structured interviews on the determination of **means of prevention and intervention**

We wish to thank the FIS for the completion of the grid on the background to jihadist radicalisation for 130 people and the interviews used to address the first research question. The mediation and expertise of the Federal Office of Police (fedpol) was also very helpful in carrying out the study. With regard to the

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[1] See Schneuwly Purdie (2014). 'Formatting Islam versus Mobilizing Islam in Prison. Evidence from the Swiss case.' and Schneuwly Purdie (2011) 'Silence… Nous sommes en direct avec Allah. L'émergence d'intervenants musulmans en contexte carcérial'. Also see articles like 'La prison face au djihad' (prison faced with jihad) in Esprit 2016/11 or the observations of Farhad Khosrokhavar (2013) in 'Radikalisierung' on prisons as a melting pot of hate for society in a reinterpretation of the frustration experienced. The extent to which such conclusions can be applied to the Swiss context or to which other assumptions should be made must be considered.

approach to the second part, we wish to express our thanks to the Office of the Attorney General of Switzerland (OAG) and all prison system managers interviewed for the insights into how issues of extremism are dealt with. For the third part, we are grateful to all the bridge-building and extremism specialist units for their willingness to cooperate. Not least, we wish to thank the focus group for their input and critical feedback and greatly appreciate the active support of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA), represented by the Division for Security Policy, which commissioned the study.

2.3 Classification of terms and definitions

Various interpretations and definitions exist for the term 'radicalisation'. What 'radicalisation' refers to and how the term is used can therefore vary.[2] Some universal elements can nevertheless be identified in the commonly used definitions. Radicalisation is often defined as a process that leads to an extremist[3] belief system being accepted which legitimises, supports or facilitates the use of violence with the objective of achieving social change.[4]

Salafism is an ultra-conservative movement within Islam. Followers of this movement interpret the Koran literally and attempt to emulate the everyday lives of the first Muslims in their own lives.[5] The current Salafist movement is nevertheless extremely heterogeneous.[6] While acknowledging the oversimplification of such categorisation, the Salafists can be divided into three categories. Quietist Salafists attach great importance to strict adherence to religious laws by the individual, but are apolitical. Political Salafists aim to reshape the society or state where they live according to their vision through peaceful means. Jihadist Salafists seek to implement the targeted social and political change by means of violence.[7]

[2] Beelmann, A. (2019). Grundlagen eines entwicklungsorientierten Modells der Radikalisierung. Expert opinion for the 24th German Prevention Day on 20 and 21 May 2019 in Berlin. http://www.praeventionstag.de/dokumentation/download.cms?id=2792&datei=DPT24_Stellungnahme_Beelmann_web-2792.pdf ; Sedgwick, M. (2010). The concept of radicalization as a source of confusion. *Terrorism and Political Violence, 4,* 479-494.

[3] 'Extremist' refers to a relative position on a continuum of organised opinions. See: Sedgwick, M. (2010). The concept of radicalization as a source of confusion. *Terrorism and Political Violence, 4,* 479-494. 'Extremist' generally refers to movements and parties, ideas and attitudes as well as patterns of behaviour which reject the democratic constitutional state, the separation of powers, the multi-party system and the right to opposition. In place of political opposition, extremists differentiate between friend and enemy. As a result, they strictly reject other opinions and interests and believe in specific, supposedly irrefutable political and social objectives or laws. See: The Swiss Confederation's Report on Extremism of 14.3.2004, p. 5019.
https://www.admin.ch/opc/de/federal-gazette/2004/5011.pdf

[4] Vidino, L. (2013). Jihadist Radicalization in Switzerland. Center for Security Studies (CSS) study. p. 6.

[5] The first Muslims of the congregation of the Prophet Mohammed and the subsequent two generations are called 'al-salaf al-salih' (the righteous predecessors) in Arabic. See: Bolliger, M. Steinvorth, D. (2018). Islamisten, Salafisten, Jihadisten: Eine Begriffserklärung. Neue Zürcher Zeitung. https://www.nzz.ch/international/islamisten-salafisten-jihadisten-ld.1392932

[6] Vidino, L. (2013). Jihadist Radicalization in Switzerland. CSS study. p. 6; Wiktorowicz, Q. (2006). Anatomy of the Salafi Movement. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*. 29:3. p. 207.

[7] Amghar, S. (2011). Le Salafisme d'Aujourd'hui: Mouvements Sectaires en Occident. Paris: Michalon. Wiktorowicz, Q. (2006). Anatomy of the Salafi Movement. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*. 29:3. p. 207-239.

3   Backgrounds to jihadist radicalisation in Switzerland

Authors: Fabien Merz and Johannes Saal

3.1   Trends from neighbouring countries

Attempts to shed light on and compare the backgrounds to jihadist radicalisation are challenging[8]. Empirical national studies are usually based on different categories of person due to the lack of data – for example, persons who travelled to a conflict zone where they joined a jihadist group (jihadist-motivated travellers[9]) or persons who have committed offences related to terrorist activities and have been sentenced accordingly are included in the sample. However, as individual categories of person only ever represent some of the radicalised persons with a tendency for extreme violence, these studies can also reflect a sub-segment of the phenomenon of jihadist radicalisation. Different survey methods, time periods and divergent definitions of the applicable categories of persons and key concepts also make it difficult to compare the results.

Despite these reservations, the following brief overview aims to identify recurring trends in the backgrounds to jihadist radicalisation from the results of the studies of neighbouring countries discussed here.[10] The overview provided here should help the reader to better classify the results explained in the next chapter on the background to jihadist radicalisation in Switzerland.

In Germany, the Federal Criminal Police Office (BKA), the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (BfV) and the Hesse Information and Competence Centre against Extremism (HKE) analysed radicalisation backgrounds and histories in a study published at the end of 2016.[11] Information on the socio-demographic background and radicalisation factors of a total of 784 persons was collected and evaluated where the German interior security authorities knew that they had or had actively attempted to travel from Germany to Syria and Iraq up to the end of June 2016.

The analysis of this data shows that 79% of the persons who travelled were male and 21% female. The average age (at the time of initial departure) was 25.8 years of age. The biggest age group numerically is 22–25, followed by the 18–21 age group. However, the age at the time of departure ranges from 13 to 62 years of age. The study authors also have information about the highest school-leaving

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[8] For reasons of space and in view of the substantial preliminary work already carried out in this area, systematically exploring the various theories of radicalisation, in other words what causes radicalisation, has been intentionally avoided. The following overview, for example, is recommended in this regard: Jost, Jannis (2017). Der Forschungsstand zum Thema Radikalisierung. *SIRIUS – Zeitschrift für Strategische Studien*, vol. 1, issue 1, p. 80–89. Where relevant, the applicable theories are selectively covered in the following sub-chapter (3.2.).

[9] In the study, the term 'jihadist-motivated traveller' is used explicitly and not the term 'foreign terrorist fighters' (FTF) which is common in English-language literature. Whereas the latter is defined in Resolution 2178 of the UN Security Council as individuals who "travel to a State other than their States of residence or nationality for the purpose of the perpetration, planning, preparation of, or participating in, terrorist acts or the providing or receiving of terrorist training", the term does not differentiate between the various ideological motivations that may lie behind such travel. In contrast, the term 'jihadist-motivated traveller' refers to the ideological motivation without overlooking the variance in actions related to the jihadist-motivated travel as set out in Resolution 2178. Neither the term 'jihadist-motivated traveller' nor 'foreign terrorist fighter' are used in Swiss criminal law. Instead, prosecution of jihadist-motivated travel has been carried out under the Federal Act on the Proscription of Al-Qaeda, Islamic State and Associated Organisations since 12 December 2014: "Any person who on Swiss territory participates in a group or organisation proscribed under Article 1, supports such a group in human resources or material terms, organises propaganda campaigns for them or for their aims, recruits for them or promotes their activities in any other way shall be liable to a custodial sentence not exceeding five years or to a monetary penalty. Any person who commits any of the foregoing acts abroad also commits an offence if he or she is arrested in Switzerland and not extradited." (Article 2). Please also refer to: United Nations Security Council (2014). Resolution 2178. 24 September. https://www.un.org/sc/ctc/focus-areas/foreign-terrorist-fighters/; Swiss Federal Council (2014). Federal Act on the Prohibition of Al-Qaeda, Islamic State and Associated Organisations. 12 December. https://www.admin.ch/opc/en/classified-compilation/20142993/index.html

[10] For reasons of space it was decided to restrict the scope to a few key studies from neighbouring countries (France, Germany and Italy). The studies were selected based on the criterion of their meaningfulness in relation to the phenomenon of radicalisation in the context concerned, which means that – based on the sample sizes used – it can be assumed that the studies can at least make a valid statement about part of the phenomenon of radicalisation in the applicable context.

[11] This is the continuation of a study previously published in 2014 and 2015.

qualifications of 289 of the 784 persons in total. 36% obtained grammar school university-entrance qualifications or subject-specific university-entrance qualifications, 27% secondary or elementary school diplomas and 23% middle school diplomas or preliminary secondary school-leaving qualifications. 166 persons were unemployed before travelling and the study authors assume that 111 persons were in employment before/up to their departure. In terms of geographical distribution, an urban concentration (89% lived in urban environments) and key regional locations (over half of the travellers come from just 13 cities) can be observed.

Four out of five travellers (81%) have a migrant background.[12] The majority of the persons who travelled were nevertheless primarily socialised in Germany (61% were born in Germany and of the persons born abroad, just under 40% came to Germany during their childhood or early youth, i.e. under the age of 14). Information about converts is available for 134 persons (around 17%).[13] Of the 778 people for whom information exists, two-thirds were known to the police (26% for violent offences, 24% for offences against property and 18% for drugs-related offences) and were predominantly multiple offenders.

While internet propaganda is a factor, contact with like-minded people in the real world – particularly in mosques, with friends, at Islamic seminars and at Koran distribution initiatives – seems to play a much more important role in radicalisation. The time period from the beginning of radicalisation to the point of departure is over a year for the vast majority of persons. A fifth (22%) were radicalised within six months prior to their departure.

Using legal sources, Hecker from the 'Institut français des relations internationales' (Ifri) created a database on 137 individuals who were convicted of terrorism-related offences in France between 2004 and 2017. The study published in mid-2018 showed that the persons included in the sample were 26 years of age on average at the time of the events that resulted in their conviction.[14] They generally have a low level of education[15] and were less well integrated in the labour market than the average population before their conviction (36% unemployed, 22% in precarious employment relationships). There are also key regional locations in terms of geographic distribution.

Most of the persons convicted were born in France and grew up there. According to the study's author, they are what are known as 'home-grown terrorists' in most cases. Many of the persons convicted have a migration background from the Maghreb and sub-Saharan Africa.[16] 74% of the persons in the sample

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[12] According to the official definition, persons who travelled with migration backgrounds include "all persons who emigrated to the current territory of the Federal Republic of Germany after 1949 and all foreign nationals born in Germany and all persons born in Germany as German citizens with at least one parent who emigrated to or was born in Germany as a foreign national." See: German Federal Criminal Police Office, German Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution and the Hesse Information and Competence Centre against Extremism (2016). Analysis of the radicalisation backgrounds and histories of persons who travelled from Germany to Syria and Iraq for Islamist reasons. 7 December. https://www.bka.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/Publikationen/Publikationsreihen/Forschungsergebnisse/2016Analyse-RadikalisierungsgruendeSyrienIrakAusreisende.html

[13] By comparison: It is estimated that of the 4.95 million Muslims living in Germany in 2017, between 20,000 and 100,000 have converted to Islam. It can therefore be assumed that converts account for 1% to 5% of the Muslims living in Germany. See: Ozyurek, Esra (2014). *Being German, becoming Muslim: race, religion, and conversion in the new Europe. Princeton University Press, Princeton, USA.*

[14] However, the fact that around 70 young people who are being prosecuted for terrorism-related offences at the time of the survey are not included in the sample must be taken into account. The proportion of women in the sample was around 4%. As women have long been less systematically prosecuted for terrorism-related offences than men in France, the study author assumes that women make up a much higher proportion of radicalised jihadists in France than the sample reflects. Based on a study by F. Benslama and F. Khosrokhavar, it is assumed that women account for around 30% of the jihadist-motivated travellers with a connection to France. See: Benslama & Khosrokhavar (2017). Le jihadisme des Femmes. Paris: Seuil. p. 13.

[15] Of 68 out of 137 persons for whom information about level of education exists, 47% had not attended secondary school and only 24% had obtained university-entrance qualifications, for example. According to the study's author, these figures are very low.

[16] Of the persons for whom information on ethnic background exists, a majority (74) have parents who come from the Maghreb, 22 have French parents and 12 have parents from sub-Saharan Africa.

were born into Muslim families and 26% were converts.[17] A relatively high rate of criminality is also evident: Of the 126 persons for whom information on this exists, 50 had at least one previous conviction (often for violence-related, theft, fraud, drug-dealing and motoring offences). 22 of them had served a prison sentence prior to their conviction for terrorism.

In an in-depth analysis of the profiles, Hecker (2018) also observes that radicalisation tends to be a long process (lasting between several months and several years). While the internet seems to act as a catalyst for radicalisation, the consumption of propaganda material online alone is not sufficient. The study author highlights the importance of group dynamics and contacts in the real world to a much greater extent here.

Marone and Vidino (2018)[18] analysed data on 125 jihadist-motivated travellers in total for Italy. Their analysis reveals the following picture: 90.4% are male. The average age at the time of departure was 30. The majority of jihadist-motivated travellers were born abroad, in particular in Tunisia (40), Morocco (26), Syria (14) and Iraq (6). Only 8.8% were born in Italy and a further 19.2% are Italian citizens. In contrast to Germany and France, two-thirds (66.4%) are first-generation immigrants. 66.6% of the persons included, for whom the study's authors have information on their place of residence, lived in northern Italy before their departure, the main region being Lombardy (39.4%). The level of education is predominantly classified as low, with just 12.3% holding average to high educational qualifications. 34.4% were unemployed before departure and another 44.8% performed unskilled jobs. Converts account for 11.2% of the sample and almost half of them are women.[19] 44% had committed previous offences and 22.4% had served a custodial sentence – drug use is on record for 19.2%. Less than half (46.4%) were identified due to their online activities and a further 42.2% had links with other jihadist-motivated travellers. The study's authors underline that the relationship with peers often appears to have played a significant role.

Whereas the German and Italian studies concern jihadist-motivated travellers, the French study focuses on persons convicted of terrorism-related offences. Here it should be highlighted once again that the studies selected only reflect part of the overall phenomenon in the respective context due to the fact that the different categories of persons observed, survey methods and time periods as well as the partly divergent definitions of the key concepts cannot be compared with one another directly. Certain trends can nevertheless be identified.

The following observations can be made about the socio-demographic background of the persons in Germany, France and Italy affected by jihadist radicalisation:

- Men are clearly overrepresented.
- The 18 to 30 age group seems to be the most significantly affected, but a wide age range can be observed.
- Persons with a low level of education are overrepresented.
- Those observed seem to be poorly integrated into the employment market.
- Persons with a migration background are overrepresented. They are nevertheless mainly born, or at least socialised, in the western country concerned (second generation) – with the exception of Italy where the first generation is predominant.
- Geographical hotspots exist.
- There is a rather high rate of criminality prior to jihadist radicalisation.

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[17] By comparison: It is estimated that of the 5.7 million Muslims living in France, around 100,000 have converted to Islam. It can therefore be assumed that converts account for around 1.8% of the Muslims living in France. See: Galonnier, Juliette (2017). L'islam des convertis. La Vie des Idées. https://laviedesidees.fr/L-islam-des-convertis.html#nb1

[18] Marone Francesco, Vidino Lorenzo (2019). Destination Jihad: Italy's Foreign Fighters. International Centre for Counter Terrorism. https://icct.nl/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Marone-Vidino-Italys-Foreign-Fighters-March2019.pdf

[19] By comparison: It is estimated that of the 1.2 million Muslims living in Italy, between 20,000 and 35,000 have converted to Islam. It can therefore be assumed that converts account for 1.6% to 2.9% of the Muslims living in Italy. See: United States Department of State (2014). International Religious Freedom Report. https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/238606.pdf

- Converts are clearly overrepresented.

The following observations can be made about the social context and the radicalisation factors.
- Consumption of relevant content on the internet appears to play a supporting role, but is rarely a sufficient factor alone for radicalisation.
- Group dynamics and contacts in the real world with like-minded persons seem to play a decisive role in the radicalisation process.
- Radicalisation tends to be a long process. 'Blitz radicalisation' within a few months appears to be the exception.

3.2 Grid and analysis of jihadist-radicalised persons in Switzerland

3.2.1 Data and categories of person

The quantitative data on which the following analysis of Islamic extremism in Switzerland is based was provided by the FIS.[20] The FIS was provided with a grid for this purpose. The variables defined in it can be divided into four larger groups:

1) socio-demographic information, such as age, gender, relationship status, origin, place of residence, level of education and occupation;

2) social context and personality, such as family problems, use of drugs, psychological abnormalities, criminality and experience of violence;

3) radicalisation factors, such as peer groups, the internet, missionary activities and contact with Salafist preachers;

4) jihadist activities with particular emphasis on jihadist-motivated travel.

The sample includes 130 people in total. It is a selection by the FIS of cases which have been dealt with as a priority by the FIS over the past ten years. The selected persons meet the following criteria: Their place of residence is or was in Switzerland and they can be assigned to the jihadist spectrum as they have exercised violence or at least legitimised it ideologically in the context of their ideological and religious beliefs. The persons selected by the FIS are or were mainly 'high-risk persons'. The only exception are a few older cases when the term was not yet used. The FIS uses the term 'high-risk persons' to designate persons who "present an increased risk to Switzerland's internal and external security."[21] They are determined "using a combination of very precise criteria where a specific connection to violence is the decisive factor."[22] However, it does not just include violent extremists, but also supporters and propagandists of jihadist groups. These high-risk persons also include persons who have come to the attention of the FIS due to jihadist-motivated travel as well as persons who have been identified due to indications of radicalisation, whether through internet activities or specific patterns of behaviour.

More than half of the sample (55.4%) consists of cases of jihadist-motivated travellers. In addition to the 72 jihadist-motivated travellers,[23] nine other persons are listed (6.9%) whose departure was prevented. There is no direct relationship with jihadist-motivated travel in the other 49 radicalisation cases selected (36.7%).

The data grid completed by the FIS is a list cumulatively compiled over a period of time and not a list of all persons currently under observation. In particular, socio-demographic variables and information on jihadist-motivated travel are complete in almost all cases. In contrast, we only have information for half or sometimes even fewer persons in the sample for some variables on social context and radicalisation factors. On the one hand, the evaluation of these variables only has limited meaningfulness due to the incomplete data set. They are neither representative of Swiss jihadists in general nor of the sample itself and consequently only have limited meaningfulness for possible conclusions. We will present these results with information on the low number of cases so that the fragile data basis in the individual areas is transparent to readers. On the other, we hope to obtain a broader and more precise insight into the phenomenon due to the various categories of actors in contrast to previous studies which concern a particular group in the jihadist milieu (e.g. jihadist-motivated travellers, convicted terrorists).

Descriptive statistical methods, such as frequency distribution and averaging calculations, are used in the following analysis. More complex, multivariate analytical methods are not used in view of the significant variations in the depth of information. A more in-depth qualitative analysis is also refrained from as this would require qualitative data on the individual cases in the form of expert psychiatric opinions, records of hearings and court records. This means the data analysis method selected here is largely determined by the data available to us.

To ensure additional anonymisation of the cases, the following results of the descriptive, statistical data analysis are only presented as aggregate data and no individual biographical details are used. This excludes the possibility of individual persons being traced from the outset.

3.2.2 Socio-demographics

The phenomenon of jihadist radicalisation in Switzerland seems to concern a disproportionately high number of young men as only 14 women (11%) of 130 persons recorded in total are listed in the sample. The small proportion of radicalised women in Switzerland is rather low compared to the proportion of women in most other European countries which stands at around 10% to 30%.[24] The average age of the persons in the sample is 28 years and corresponds to the results of comparable studies in other European countries such as Germany[25] and France[26]. A breakdown into the various age groups[27] shows that two-thirds were aged between 21 and 35 at the time of their radicalisation. However, a quarter of the individuals can be assigned to the older cohorts aged over 30 and 10% even to the over 40-year-old group (see fig. 1).

Repeated warnings have been made in recent years about the increasing radicalisation of minors in particular. However, the radicalisation of young people (aged 14 to 18), such as the siblings from Winterthur whose departure to join the 'Islamic State' at the end of 2014 attracted media attention,[28] seems to be an exception in Switzerland. In fact, in 18% of cases the persons were still young adults under the age of 20 when they were radicalised, but only a third of them were minors (6% of the sample).

[24] German Federal Criminal Police Office, German Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution and the Hesse Information and Competence Centre against Extremism (2016). Analysis of the radicalisation backgrounds and histories of persons who travelled from Germany to Syria and Iraq for Islamist reasons. 7 December. https://www.bka.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/Publikationen/Publikationsreihen/Forschungsergebnisse/2016AnalyseRadikalisierungsgruendeSyrienIrakAusreisende.html; Benslama, Fethi and Farhad Khosrokhavar (2017). Le jihadisme des Femmes. Paris: Seuil; Marone Francesco, Vidino Lorenzo (2019). Destination Jihad: Italy's Foreign Fighters. International Centre for Counter Terrorism. https://icct.nl/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Marone-Vidino-Italys-Foreign-Fighters-March2019.pdf

[25] Ibid.

[26] Hecker, Marc (2018). 137 Shades of Terrorism: French Jihadists Before the Court. Institut Français des Relations Internationales. https://www.ifri.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/hecker_137_shades_of_terrorism_2018.pdf

[27] The age of the persons was recorded at the time when they first came to the attention of the FIS.

[28] Pelda, Kurt and Knellwolf, Thomas (2018). Mutter riskierte ihr Leben um IS-Geschwister zu retten. Tages-Anzeiger. 1 December. https://www.tagesanzeiger.ch/schweiz/standard/die-odysseeder-isgeschwister/story/26224134.

The breakdown of ages suggests that the radicalisation of young people in Switzerland tends to be a marginal problem.
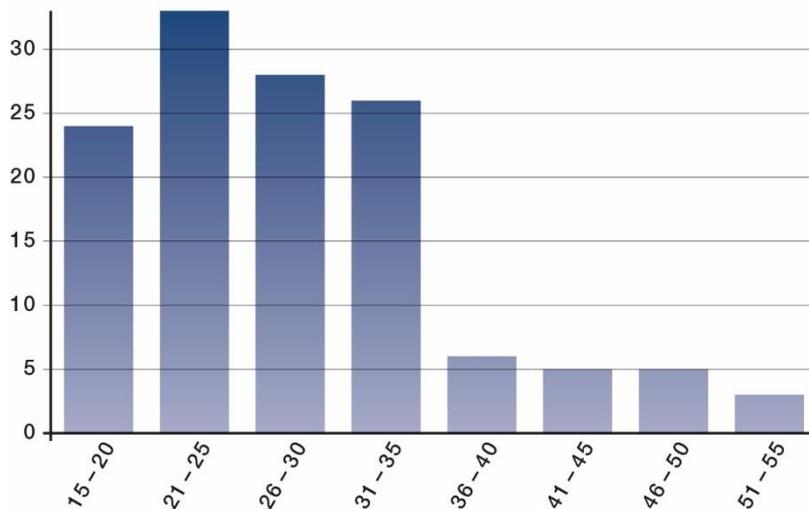

Fig. 1: The age distribution of jihadist-radicalised persons in Switzerland (in absolute figures).

The political commitment of young (male) adults is explained in the research on social movements by their 'biographic availability', i.e. lack of family and professional commitments.[29] This explanatory approach was also used in the research on radicalisation.[30] In the context of jihadist radicalisation in Switzerland, this hypothesis only seems to apply to our results on family status, education and occupation to a certain extent. With regard to relationship status, half of the cases contained in our sample are single (40%) or separated (13%). The other persons are either married by civil ceremony (22%) or at least by religious ceremony (22%)[31]. The distinction between civil and religious marriage is only relevant to a certain extent in our study as the differentiation from an existence as a single person is of primary importance. Half of the persons married entered into a life partnership with persons from the Salafist/jihadist milieu. Half of the persons recorded are parents of one or more children (17% even had three or more children). This finding could in turn have implications for group-specific radicalisation processes within family relationship structures (also see 3.2.4.).

Six of 96 persons (6%) about whom we possess information on the highest educational qualification only completed primary level (elementary school). Over 88% of the 96 cases have secondary level education whereby most of the cases are professional training in the form of an apprenticeship. The apprenticeship was abandoned in eight cases. Only 6% of the persons recorded hold a baccalaureate qualification and only 5% were educated at tertiary level.[32] Almost a third of the persons surveyed were unemployed before their radicalisation (including seven persons who received disability benefits), while 58% held a job and another 11% were still attending school or studying. This indicates that persons

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[29] McAdam, Doug (1986). Recruitment to High-Risk Activism: The Case of Freedom Summer. American Journal of Sociology 92/1: 64-90.

[30] e.g. Lyall, Gavin (2017). Who are the British Jihadists? Identifying Salient Biographical Factors in the Radicalisation Process. Perspectives on Terrorism 11/3. http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/609/html; Vergani, Matteo et al (2018). The Three Ps of Radicalization: Push, Pull and Personal. A Systematic Scoping Review of the Scientific Evidence about Radicalization Into Violent Extremism. Studies in Conflict & Terrorism. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/1057610X.2018.1505686?journalCode=uter20.

[31] Religious marriage in the Salafist milieu has a higher status than civil marriage.

[32] By comparison: Just under 40% of young adults had obtained a baccalaureate qualification in 2016, for example. Federal Statistical Office (2018). Baccalaureate quota. 29 November. https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/de/home/statistiken/bildung-wissenschaft/bildungsindikatoren/bildungssystem-schweiz/themen/abschluesse/maturitaetsquote.html

undergoing radicalisation are much more frequently affected by unemployment than the Swiss average (unemployment stood at 5.1% in 2017). However, this is also due to the fact that during their radicalisation some individuals mainly spent their time on new religious practices, activism (such as the Koran distribution initiative 'Lies') and their social peer group which means they neglect or completely give up other activities, such as training or careers. The FIS data available also shows that the proportion of unemployed almost doubled from around 33% before radicalisation to around 58% during radicalisation which may also be linked to the increased difficulty in finding potential reintegration opportunities after criminal proceedings. Around 41% of the cases analysed indicate financial dependence on state support in one form or another (e.g. social welfare office, invalidity insurance, unemployment benefit, refugee assistance).

The results of the data analysis also indicate that jihadist-radicalised persons in Switzerland primarily live in urban centres and their agglomerations. Only 11.5% of the persons included live or lived in a rural area. Jihadist activities are also primarily concentrated in French-speaking and German-speaking Switzerland. While just over half of the sample live in German-speaking Switzerland (70 persons), 42.3% live in French-speaking Switzerland and just 3.8% in Ticino (see fig. 2). Measured against the total population of the respective linguistic regions, individuals classified as being on the jihadist spectrum from French-speaking Switzerland (24% of the total Swiss population) seem to be overrepresented and those from German-speaking Switzerland (71%) under-represented. With regard to the major Swiss regions,[33] the variance of geographical distribution of the cases can largely be explained by the respective regional populations, but not by the proportion of Muslims (see table 1). The Central Plain (Bern, Fribourg, Neuchâtel, Solothurn and Jura) and Zurich regions, where 26 and 21 of the cases lived respectively, are amongst Switzerland's most heavily populated regions, while only few cases live in Central Switzerland and Ticino, which have low populations. The Lake Geneva region is an exception (cantons of Geneva, Vaud and Valais). 31.5% of all persons in the database come from here which means its ratio is almost twice as high as in other major Swiss regions. The Lake Geneva region also stands out in relation to the Muslim population in the respective regions and has a much higher proportion than the Swiss average. Various studies have drawn attention to the importance of radical hotspots at local level[34].

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[33] The places of residence could not be broken down by canton or city due to the anonymisation of the data.
[34] Varvelli, Arturo (ed.) (2016). Jihadist Hotbeds Understanding Local Radicalization Processes. Italian Institute for International Political Studies. https://www.ispionline.it/it/pubblicazione/jihadist-hotbeds-understanding-local-radicalization-processes-15418.
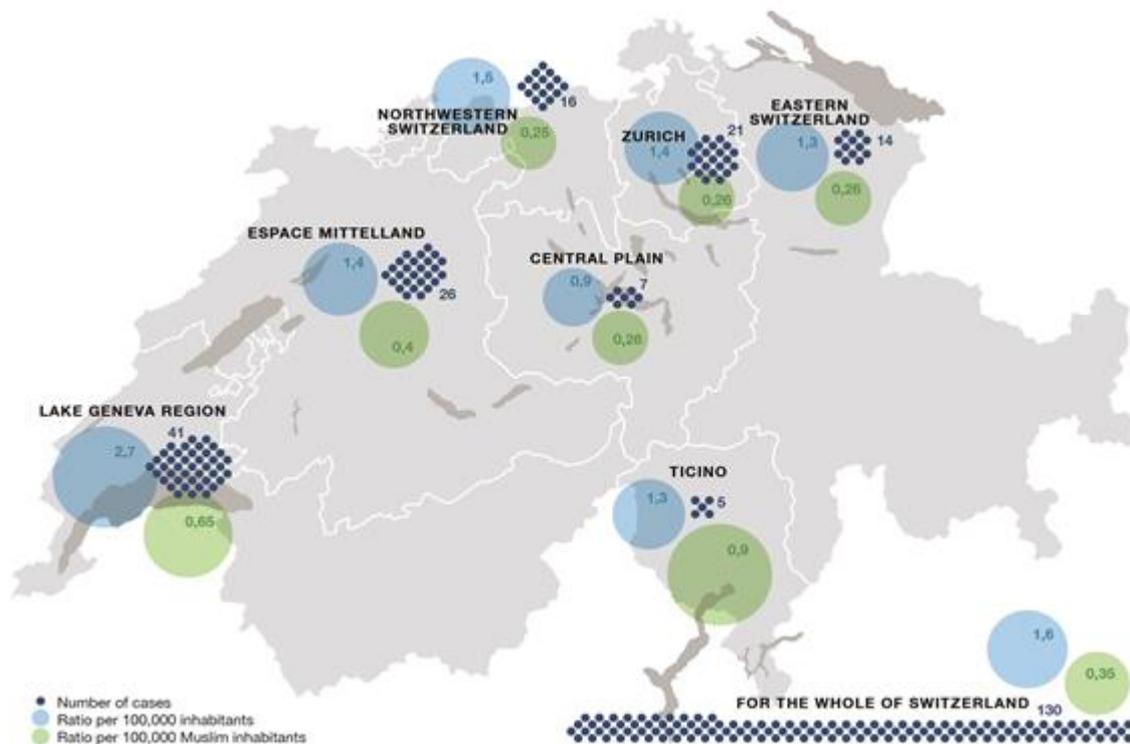
Fig. 2: Regional distribution of jihadist-radicalised persons in Switzerland

The data also enables statements to be made about the migration background of the persons analysed. According to the FIS's official statement in November 2018, only around a third of the jihadist-motivated travellers with close connections to Switzerland actually held a Swiss passport.[35] We also determined from the data available to us that just 21.5% of the persons originally come from Western and Southern Europe[36] (including Switzerland). At first glance, such figures may fuel the public debates over migration, asylum and religion, which are often indiscriminately grouped together with issues such as internal security and the fight against terrorism. However, analysis of other variables in our sample reveals a more complex picture. 35.2% of the persons in the sample were born in Switzerland, a further 21.1% arrived in Switzerland before the age of 12 and another 10.2% came here before their 18th birthday. This means that over half of the sample – and therefore also a large number of the persons with migration backgrounds – were socialised in Switzerland during their childhood and two-thirds during their youth. The frequently used term 'home-grown' therefore also applies to the majority of radicalisation cases in Switzerland.

The information on the regional origin of the families of the persons concerned is also interesting. 32.3% of the persons recorded have roots in the former Yugoslavia, 20.8% in North African countries and 15.4% in Middle Eastern countries. A small proportion also have a migration background from countries in Asia (Middle East) (8.5%) and sub-Saharan Africa (4.6%), see fig. 3. Considering that 57% of all Muslims in Switzerland come from the former Yugoslavia[37], radicalised persons with family connections

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[35] Federal Intelligence Service (2018b). Jihadist-motivated travel – figures for November 2018. https://www.vbs.ad-min.ch/de/themen/nachrichtenbeschaffung/dschihadreisende.html

[36] The data in its anonymised form does not allow more specific statements to be made about the national origin of the families in the respective cases. This means that further differentiation according to ethnic affiliation, which can be very heterogeneous in the case of the Balkans for example, is not possible. The authors are also aware that people can often be of multi-ethnic origin, especially in pluralistic societies. However, as the database for this variable only ever shows one attribute, differentiated analysis for this purpose is unfortunately not possible.

[37] Allenbach, Brigit and Martin Sökefeld (ed.) (2010). Muslime in der Schweiz. Seismo Verlag: Zurich.

to the Balkans – minus the converts from Western and Southern Europe – are under-represented in the sample. Persons from the Balkans are nevertheless the most frequently represented group. In line with the general geographical distribution of the Bosnian and Kosovan diaspora in Switzerland, a large number[38] of the persons from the Balkans in the sample live in German-speaking Switzerland, followed by the Lake Geneva region. While a remarkably high number of persons with roots in the Middle East live in German-speaking Switzerland, persons of North African origin predominantly live in French-speaking Switzerland and, in particular, in the Lake Geneva region (see table 1).
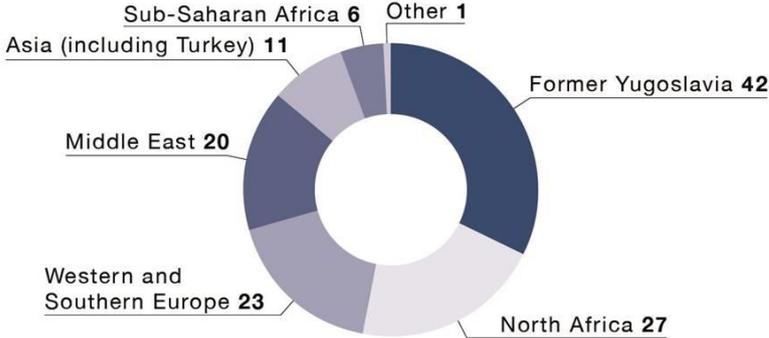
Fig. 3: Regions of origin of jihadist-radicalised persons

Origin	Linguistic region	Broad region
Former Yugoslavia	69% German-speaking Switzerland 31% French-speaking Switzerland	31% Lake Geneva region 21% Zurich
North Africa	82% French-speaking Switzerland	59% Lake Geneva region 30% Central Plain
Central and Southern Europe	57% German-speaking Switzerland 35% French-speaking Switzerland	26% Lake Geneva region 26% Zurich
Middle East	80% German-speaking Switzerland 20% French-speaking Switzerland	30% North-western Switzerland 20% Zurich 20% Central Switzerland
Total	54% German-speaking Switzerland 42% French-speaking Switzerland	32% Lake Geneva region 20% Central Plain 16% Zurich

Table 1: Regional distribution of jihadist-radicalised persons by origin

3.2.3   Social context

Despite the incomplete data set, it is evident that some of the persons analysed have been faced with a number of social problems over the course of their lives. Around 27 of 41 persons (66%) grew up in

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[38] Iseni, Bashkim et al (2014). The population from Bosnia and Herzegovina in Switzerland. State Secretariat for Migration and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation. https://www.sem.admin.ch/dam/data/sem/publiservice/publikationen/diaspora/diasporastudie-bosnien-d.pdf; Burri Sharani, Barbara et al (2010). The Kosovan population in Switzerland. State Secretariat for Migration. https://www.sem.admin.ch/dam/data/sem/publiservice/publikationen/diaspora/diasporastudie-kosovo-d.pdf.

dysfunctional or at least problematic family circumstances. In most of these cases the parents are separated, but in some cases there are also indications of domestic violence. The analysis of the family situation also revealed that 22 of 52 (42%) had experienced the loss of a family member or other persons close to them. Most frequently the father (seven cases) had died, the mother or both parents (three cases each). In the case of four other individuals we had information indicating that they had lost a sibling during childhood and two had experienced the death of their own child.

The data also indicates that 29 other persons were faced with various life crises, such as separation from their partner, impending deportation, illness or loss of employment. In some cases the life crises occurred shortly before radicalisation. It may be assumed that dealing with the death of someone close to them causes people to reflect on their own life and to question its meaning, making them more open to new world views. However, a fragile identity can also be caused by other social problems and these factors are often interrelated. There was information about drug use on 69 of the 130 persons in total, 22 of whom used drugs (mostly soft) regularly. There were indications that 33 persons had experienced frustration due to their private, professional or family situation. 27 of 31 persons, about whom information exists, experienced discrimination during the course of their life which presumably makes them potentially more susceptible to the victim narrative propagated by jihadists.[39] Finally, 29 of 74 persons, about whom information exists, showed signs of psychiatric problems. These ranged from common psychiatric problems, such as learning difficulties, ADHD, a lack of impulse control, instability and depression, to severe psychiatric illnesses, such as schizophrenia and suicidal tendencies, which required inpatient or outpatient treatment. Psychiatric problems should probably generally be regarded more as the consequence of the social context rather than the cause of radicalisation. At least most psychological studies refute the assumption that extremists often have psychiatric illnesses.[40]

In recent years, criminality was a social problem to which special attention was paid in research on terrorism as a 'crime-terror nexus'. This theory is based on a combination of criminal and radical milieus where a person's criminal past can influence the process of radicalisation.[41] However, in the case of Switzerland at least, there is not enough evidence for this theory. In our sample, a quarter of the persons had committed criminal offences prior to their radicalisation and 16% had served a custodial sentence. Only few of them were imprisoned repeatedly or for several years and there is little evidence of radicalisation processes which began or took place in the prison system. It is interesting to take a closer look at the type of offences where, in addition to property and drugs offences, cases of bodily harm are predominant. With regard to the latter, it is evident that 36 of 60 persons for whom this information is available have experienced violence during the course of their life, whereby half were perpetrators and the other half victims of acts of war or domestic violence.

3.2.4   Radicalisation factors

In addition to the push factors described above, the data also allows us to make statements on possible pull factors in radicalisation, such as extremist propaganda, preachers, mosques, groups or missionary work (Dawah). Contrary to the position often expressed in public debate that Islam per se represents a radicalisation factor, the results of some studies[42], which consider individual religiousness to perform a secondary function as a pull factor, also seem to apply to the Swiss context. In comparison to the entire

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[39] Aarten, Pauline G. M. (2017). The Narrative of Victimization and Deradicalization: An Expert View. Studies in Conflict and Terrorism 41:557-572.

[40] Horgan, John (2008). From Profiles to Pathways and Roots to Routes: Perspectives from Psychology on Radicalization into Terrorism. Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science 618: 80-94; Weenink, Anton W. (2015). Behavioral Problems and Disorders among Radicals in Police Files. Perspectives on Terrorism 9/2: 17-33. http://www.terrorismana-lysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/416/html.

[41] Basra, Rajan and Peter R. Neumann (2018). Crime as Jihad: Developments in the Crime-Terror Nexus in Europe. CTC Sentinel 10/9: 1-6. https://ctc.usma.edu/crime-as-jihad-developments-in-the-crime-terror-nexus-in-europe/.

[42] Vergani et al 2018.

Muslim population, the 20% of converts are overrepresented in the sample[43]. Of the 34 cases of persons with Muslim roots for which we have information on the religious family background, five persons grew up in secular family homes, 14 in liberal, eight in observant and only seven in fundamentalist (but not necessarily jihadist) ones. Only seven of 59 persons for whom information is available underwent a form of education in Islamic theology.

Both in media coverage and in academic research, jihadist propaganda online has received increasing attention in recent years as a potentially significant radicalisation factor[44] as it creates low-threshold access to extremist ideology. The FIS also underlines that the consumption of such online content plays a significant role in jihadist radicalisation in Switzerland.[45] In the group of persons we analysed, this applied almost definitely to 21 of 50 (42%), probably to another 18 (36%) and not at all to 11 persons. However, extremism researchers largely agree that the consumption of IS propaganda videos and speeches by radical preachers online alone rarely leads to radicalisation. A study on the dissemination of extremist views among Swiss young people recently indicated that 31% of young Muslims had previously consumed Salafist or jihadist media content, but only 2.8% agreed with extremist items (Manzoni et al 2018).

Furthermore, these cases of 'online radicalisation' do not occur in isolation, but are influenced in particular by social contacts in the milieu in the real world. With regard to the results concerning contact with Salafist preachers, of note is the extremely low number of persons, just 35 of 130 in total, for whom relevant data exists. Four-fifths of these 35 persons were in contact with Salafist preachers, some of whom, according to the FIS, were recruiting supporters for jihad.[46] Interestingly, these preachers mainly come from neighbouring countries, like Mirsad Omerovic from Vienna or Bilal Bosnic from the Balkans. This also illustrates the transnational network of the Swiss scene, but also the clear lack of its own prominent preachers with far-reaching religious authority in the milieu. Further evidence of cross-border links in the various linguistic regions is the joint missionary activities, known as 'Dawah', in which at least 29 of 99 persons from the database took part, such as the distribution of the Koran through the 'Lies!' campaign in several Swiss cities, which was also initially organised by activists from southern Germany.

The social contacts in the jihadist milieu, which had a major influence in the radicalisation of our sample, were primarily made through peers: 93 of 97 persons were influenced by people of the same age from their personal environment during their radicalisation. For most of the 45 people for whom we have detailed information on the nature of these 'strong links' it was individual (11) or even several friends (25). In five further cases, which exclusively concerned women, the partners had a major influence on their radicalisation. These results correlate to some extent with social and religious studies on political activism[47] and religious conversion,[48] both of which are channelled, in particular, through the personal social networks of potential supporters. These research results and our data suggest that jihadist

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[43] Estimates from the Swiss Centre for Islam and Society (SZIG) in 2016 indicate there are between 8,000 and 11,000 converts in Switzerland, which equates to 1% to 2% of the Muslim population: file:///C:/Users/eser/AppData/Local/Microsoft/Windows/INetCache/Content.Outlook/GSSW70FL/A5_SZIG_Themenheft_4_D_FINAL_WEB%20(002).pdf

[44] Meleagrou-Hitchens, Alexander and Nick Kaderbhai (2017). Research Perspectives on Online Radicalisation: A Literature Review, 2006-2016. VOX-Pol Network of Excellence. https://icsr.info/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/ICSR-Paper_Research-Perspectives-on-Online-Radicalisation-A-Literature-Review-2006-2016.pdf.

[45] Federal Intelligence Service (2018c). Sicherheit Schweiz: Lagebericht 2018 des Nachrichtendienstes des Bundes. https://www.newsd.admin.ch/newsd/message/attachments/52215.pdf.

[46] Ibid.

[47] Nepstad, Sharon Erickson (2004). Persistent Resistance: Commitment and Community in the Plowshares Movement. Social Problems 51(1): 43-60; Kotler-Berkowitz, Laurence (2005). Friends and Politics: Linking Diverse Friendship Networks to Political Participation. In: Alan S. Zuckerman (ed.). The Social Logic of Politics. Temple University Press: Philadelphia, 152-170.

[48] et al. Stark, Rodney and William Sims Bainbridge (1980). Networks of Faith: Interpersonal Bonds and Recruitment to Cults and Sects. American Journal of Sociology 85 (6): 1376–95; Barker, Eileen (1984). The Making of a Moonie: Choice or Brainwashing? Oxford: Blackwell Publishers; Coleman, James S. (1988). Free Riders and Zealots: The Role of Social Networks. Sociological Theory 6 (1): 52-57.

radicalisation and religious conversion are generally a long-term process and the phenomenon of 'blitz radicalisation' is the exception. Only three of 82 persons from the sample were radicalised in less than three months, five in less than six months and 15 in less than 12 months. For 72%, radicalisation took over a year. The persons concerned often experience personality changes during this process (54 of 61 cases). They not only spend time with old and new social contacts in the radical milieu, but often also isolate themselves from friends, acquaintances and family members who do not share their new ideological convictions (24 of 38) and increasingly shut themselves off in their radicalised groups.

3.2.5   Activities

Unfortunately, the data available does not permit a representative picture of the nature of the involvement in jihadist activities in Switzerland or abroad, but at least provides an indication that the legitimisation of violence does not necessarily lead to a propensity for violence or even terrorist attacks. Around two-thirds (36 of 53) of the persons in the database primarily came to the attention of the security services due to support activities, the majority of which were of a propagandist nature (58%). Most of these persons came to the attention of the intelligence service between 2013 and 2015.

In comparison to some other European countries, departure to join jihadist groups fighting in conflict zones is relatively new in Switzerland, although arguably no less urgent an issue. In relation to the total population, Switzerland has a much higher ratio of jihadist-motivated travellers than Italy, for example, and a slightly lower ratio than Germany, but is not as severely affected by the problem as France, Belgium or Austria (see table 2).

Country	Jihadist-motivated travellers (Syria/Iraq since 2011)	Population (in million)	Ratio (per million)	Muslim population (in million)[49]	Ratio (per 10,000)
Belgium	413[50]	11.4	36.2	0.9	4.6
Germany	1050[51]	82.8	12.7	5.0	2.1
France	1910[52]	67.1	28.5	5.7	3.4
Italy	125[53]	60.6	2.1	2.9	0.4
Austria	300[54]	8.8	34.1	0.6	5.0
Switzerland	77	8.4	9.2	0.5	1.5

Table 2: A comparison of jihadist-motivated travellers from selected European countries

[49] Hackett, Conrad (2017). 5 facts about the Muslim population in Europe. PEW Research Center. November, 29. https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/11/29/5-facts-about-the-muslim-population-in-europe/

[50] Scherrer, Amandine (Hrsg.) (2018). The return of foreign fighters to EU soil. European Parliament. http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/621811/EPRS_STU(2018)621811_EN.pdf.

[51] Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz (2018). Islamistisch motivierte Reisebewegungen in Richtung Syrien/Irak. 18. Dezember. https://www.verfassungsschutz.de/de/arbeitsfelder/af-islamismus-und-islamistischer-terrorismus/zahlen-und-fakten-islamismus/zuf-is-reisebewegungen-in-richtung-syrien-irak.

[52] Scherrer, Amandine (Hrsg.) (2018). The return of foreign fighters to EU soil. European Parliament. http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/621811/EPRS_STU(2018)621811_EN.pdf.

[53] Vidino, Lorenzo und Marone Francesco (2017). The Jihadist Threat to Italy: A Primer. Italian Institute For International Political Studies. 13. November. https://www.ispionline.it/en/pubblicazione/jihadist-threat-italy-primer-18541

[54] 54 Van Ginkel, Bibi und Eva Entenmann (Hrsg.) (2016). The Foreign Fighters Phenomenon in the European Union. International Center for Counter-Terrorism. https://www.nctv.nl/binaries/icct-report-foreign-fighters-phenomenon-full-version-including-annexes_tcm31-30169.pdf

With the exception of a few persons who travelled to Iraq, Afghanistan or Somalia to join al-Qaida-related groups, there were hardly any departures from Switzerland before 2010. The recent 'wave of departures' did not begin until 2013 and is directly related to the outbreak of the Syrian civil war and the emergence of the 'Islamic State' in Syria and Iraq. The vast majority of jihadist-motivated travellers from Switzerland joined the 'Islamic State' group and chose Syria or Iraq as their destination. Only in isolated cases did they join the ranks of other jihadist rebel groups, such as the 'Nusra Front' or 'Jaish al-Fatah'. Eight persons from the sample joined 'al-Shabaab' in Somalia. There was a significant increase in jihadist-motivated travellers from Switzerland, particularly in the years 2014 and 2015, when IS took on quasi-state characteristics and its leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi declared a "caliphate". The imminent collapse of the "caliphate" and the increased difficulty in relocating to Syria presumably led to a significant fall in travellers over the following two years, including from Switzerland. The FIS has not recorded any departures to Syria or Iraq since 2016. Although one person joined the offshoot of the 'Islamic State' group in the Philippines in 2017, the data does not currently provide any indication of developments of departure trends to other conflict zones that would be comparable with the Syrian civil war.

Only in the case of half of the 30 persons in our database for whom we had relevant information was it observed that they were active fighters for the 'Islamic State' group or other organisations. It must be underlined that 'civil' or less important military activities, such as guard duty or support activities for jihadist organisations abroad, are taken into account, but no more specific information on the role of 'non-combatants' can be provided based on the data available, which is also generally difficult to verify and could be provided as self-serving claims.

According to the FIS official statement,[55] at least 31 Swiss jihadist-motivated travellers are highly likely or are presumed to have been killed abroad, most of them in Syria or Iraq (27). A further 16 persons have returned to Switzerland in recent years, while others have been imprisoned by Kurdish security forces in Northern Syria.

3.3   Conclusion

The evaluation of the FIS data indicates the individual, psychosocial and socio-demographic backgrounds of persons classified as being radicalised jihadists. Here extensive correlations with studies from neighbouring countries are observed, such as the fact that jihadist radicalisation mainly concerns men aged between 18 and 35 who are second-generation immigrants[56] socialised in Switzerland, live in urban or suburban areas and tend to have a low level of education and to be poorly integrated into the employment market. As in other European states, converts are disproportionately highly represented amongst jihadist-radicalised persons, accounting for around a fifth. As also observed in Germany and France, it seems that the consumption of applicable content on the internet also plays an important supporting role in Switzerland, but is only a sufficient criterion for radicalisation alone in very few cases. Instead, group-dynamic influential factors through like-minded peers and recruiters also play a key role in Switzerland. Switzerland is not an exception in terms of the proportion of radicalised persons in relation to the total population either – it stands at a similar level to that in Germany, while Italy lies below it and France above it. The fact that around 40% of the persons analysed depend on state support (welfare benefits, unemployment benefits, invalidity insurance or refugee assistance) raises questions about their possible distancing from society, the social work approach to these persons and their economic and social reintegration opportunities.

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[55] FIS 2018b.
[56] In this respect, Italy diverges from the norm with initial immigrants predominantly accounting for the persons affected by radicalisation.

4 Overview and challenges in detention

Author: Mallory Schneuwly Purdie

4.1 Introduction

The issue of radicalisation in prisons has been written about extensively (Neumann 2010, Mulcahy 2009, Trujillo 2009, Garapon et al. 2016). As places containing multiple vulnerabilities and frustrations (emotional, psychological, physical and spiritual etc.), prisons can be an environment conducive to radicalisation. According to one prison director in Switzerland, "Prison is a place where people can develop negative thoughts and can be radicalised in a very general sense – hate for society, reinforcement of criminal attitudes etc. Inmates can also have a reciprocal negative influence on one another." The paths of Kelkal, Merah, Coulibaly, the Kouachi brothers (France) and Reid and Muktar Ibrahim (United Kingdom) are often used as prime examples. Promiscuity, the closed environment in terms of social relationships, the control of communication and information, the importation of pre-prison alliances, the transposition of a pre-existing identity problem to the prison context and social discontinuity imposed by incarceration are factors which, combined with the aforementioned vulnerabilities, contribute towards making prisons an environment conducive to radical representations of the world and behaviours. Ouisa Kies remarked: "Prison seems to be a fertile breeding ground because it's a violent environment." The French sociologist nevertheless qualifies its impact by underlining the importance "of looking at the pre-prison period and observing the paths with violence suffered earlier." (Kies 2016). Farhad Khosrokhavar adds that while the process of radicalisation in western prisons exists, it does not constitute radicalisation on a large scale, but more a situation concerning small groups. Cells rarely exceed two or three people, a strategy that allows them to remain under the radar of the surveillance authorities (2013, p. 288).

4.2 The challenge of 'radicalisation in prison'

What does 'radicalisation in prison' mean? On the ground, the phrase covers various situations.

- The process of cognitive and behavioural acceptance (Hafez and Mullins, p. 961) of a set of radical ideas in prison.
- The imprisonment and management of persons sentenced for common law offences radicalised upon entry.
- The management of persons detained and convicted for violation of federal law prohibiting the groups 'Al-Qaïda' or 'Islamic State' (SR 122) or supporting a criminal organisation (art 260ter SCC).

These three positions cannot be explored within the limited scope of this exploratory study. Academic research on the processes of being radicalised in prison would require long-term work on the ground within the establishments and the collection of extensive ethnographic material. At a time when the first sentences for violation of SR 122 or article 260ter SCC are being pronounced and when there is heated political and media debate about the repatriation of 'Swiss jihadists', it was decided to focus on the third, and, to a lesser extent, the second aspect. This chapter nevertheless has two objectives: on the one hand, to provide information on the impact that accommodating persons incarcerated for violating SR 122 and article 260ter SCC as well as persons identified as radical from the perspective of their world view (Wilkinson 2018) has on the day-to-day running of prisons. On the other, as the role of imams/Muslim chaplains in prison is often a topic of debate, it also aims to outline the views of the directors on the benefits and drawbacks of such collaboration and to obtain the views of the imams and chaplains on the phenomenon of radicalisation in Swiss prisons.

4.3   Methodological approach

To meet these objectives, semi-structured interviews with five categories of person were carried out:

1) Prison directors
2) Heads of security
3) Christian chaplains
4) Imams or Muslim chaplains
5) Extern experts (criminologist, federal prosecutor)

The sample of persons interviewed was compiled using a multifaceted approach. Firstly, the prison directors dealing with the incarceration of detainees suspected of violating SR 122 or article 260ter SCC were contacted. Secondly, the names of prisons faced with situations involving radical profiles were provided by the interviewed professionals to us. Thirdly, the prison imams/Muslim chaplains were contacted.

Finally, 15 persons performing various roles in 18 establishments in seven different cantons (3 in the French-speaking part and 4 in the German-speaking part) were interviewed between December 2018 and February 2019. Establishments dealing with pre-sentencing detention, custody on remand, short custodial sentences and execution of sentences are represented. Most of the establishments accommodate men (12), some of which have a section for women (3), two are establishments for women and one for minors.

Prison directors	6
Heads of security	2
Christian chaplains	2
Imams or Muslim chaplains	4
Extern experts	3
Total	17

Table 3: Overview of the number of prison system experts interviewed

This chapter is divided into two parts:

1. The first underlines the challenges presented by the presence of radicalised inmates for day-to-day management, combining the views of the directors and heads of security.
2. The second focuses on the role of imams/chaplains in the establishments. Seen as potential agents of radicalisation by some and actors in prevention by others, the aim is to outline how they themselves see their position and role in the institutions.

4.4   Swiss prisons faced with jihadist radicalisation

While this exploratory study does not seek to discuss what the category 'jihadist' covers, it nevertheless seems necessary to differentiate between what concerns the cultural practices of Muslim inmates and that which characterises a radical or jihadist attitude or world view. (Almost) daily prayers, participation in the Friday sermon or prayers, fasting for a day or a month (Ramadan), a beard, a chechia or a qamis[57] are religious practices (prayers and fasting) or cultural customs related to practice. None of these practices or customs constitutes a radical experience, even if they can, depending on the circumstances,

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[57] A head covering and a long tunic which extends to just above the ankles worn by some Muslims (in Europe and in countries with a majority Muslim tradition), in particular when going to the mosque.

constitute indicators. However, the presence of Muslim inmates is sometimes very high in Swiss prisons: in 2016, for example, the faith of 43% of inmates in prisons in the canton of Vaud was Muslim (Canton of Vaud prison service, 2016, p. 74). This socio-demographic situation is relatively recent and presents a large number of questions and challenges in terms of the actual organisation of freedom of conscience and religious worship for the directors, the security personnel and the Christian chaplains (Schneuwly Purdie 2013). The indicators of radicalisation are instead found in attitudes and relationships with others (in the wider sense), such as strict opposition between an 'us' and a 'them', complete rejection of the democratic system, an exclusive allegiance to a higher law because it is divine, a dehumanisation of 'other people', discrediting the institutional actors of Islam or religious justification of violence. Such indicators clearly require a more subtle understanding than a claimed affiliation to a religious sub-system, such as Salafism for example (Khosrokavar 2018, Crettiez and Ainine 2017). It is also a challenge identified by one director interviewed. He said: "It is very difficult to monitor all the activities, relationships and behaviours of an inmate. Some can seem completely normal in their relationships with other people and eat pork, but still become radicalised behind our backs. You can't pick everything up. However, if they are stupid enough to walk around barefoot, pray all day long and not talk about anything else but Allah, then of course they will be noticed. But if the process is subtle, secret and takes place in a sophisticated way, we have no chance." (Dir1, 20.12.2018). While the affirmation of a strict or fundamentalist religious identity and the entry into a process of radicalisation leading to violence cannot be correlated statistically, suspicions and fears are still very prevalent on the ground. Assertions related to religion are today often read through the prism of radicalisation and cast a shadow, sometimes a dark one, over inmates of Muslim faith. The agents are aware of and admit their lack of knowledge on the subject, their difficulty in finding useful information for their professional practice and certain shortcuts that these shortcomings can sometimes lead to.

To understand the scale and indicators of such a complex phenomenon extending beyond the scope of this study, the text below focuses on the actual experience of the establishments with the day-to-day management of inmates (already) known for their radicalisation (in particular those imprisoned for violation of SR 122 or article 260ter SCC). According to the respondents to this study, the challenges vary significantly between pre-sentencing detention establishments and execution-of-sentence institutions. For the first, it is the securing and separation of the inmate for the purposes of investigation and procedures that take priority. As one director said, the pre-sentencing detention institutions are "at the start of the chain, our role is not therapeutic and we are not responsible for resocialisation measures." (Dir2 21.02.2019). For the second group, the equation is more complex – as well as ensuring the conditions for execution of sentence (punishment) and the security of the prison, they also have to implement resocialisation measures.

4.5   Challenges of pre-sentencing detention

The prison directors interviewed are unanimous: on the one hand, they are aware that the risk of radicalisation in prison is real, but, on the other, even when faced with inmates with radical potential, they evaluate this risk as being relatively low in the pre-sentencing detention establishments. Their arguments are based on two main reasons.

1. On the one hand, the inmates (independently of suspicion of radicalisation) are held in a high degree of" isolation"[58].

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[58] The term "isolation" does not indicate a strict regime of isolation disaccording with the guidelines of the penal system and with humanrights (see European Committee of Crime Problems/ Council for Penological Co-operaton 2016; Guide of the European Council for the penal and probation services regarding the radicalisation and extremist violence 2016, p. 34-35), but a limitation of the contacts with co-prisoners and external persons (especially regarding the communication). The author chose the term isolation as the interview partners used it in the interviews to describe the quality of the contacts of radicalised inmates.

2. On the other, there is significant turnover of prisoners between different sectors of the same prison and between penal institutions.

Contact between inmates is therefore kept to a minimum as is any exposure time between two inmates. One of the directors indicated that separation measures had actually been stepped up and compensated for inmates imprisoned for suspicion of terrorism: "A minimal programme of activity and leisure was put in place. We nevertheless tried to reduce the psychological pressure by organising two daily visits to the yard and access to sporting activities." (Dir2 19.02.2019).

The directors also pay attention to placement in cells. They take account of the number of inmates imprisoned in the same aisle and their profiles. The preventative measures also include increased control of any communications, visits and material read. One director mentioned an occasion when he suspected radicalisation: "It started with a book (with Salafist content) and complaints from fellow inmates who said they had been threatened when they went to see the Christian chaplain. This inmate also had a follower who distanced himself when he noticed that we were watching him." (Dir5, 25.01.2019). The directors also pay special attention to the external inaccessibility of the cell: for urban prisons, for example, this means that the windows of the cell cannot look out over the street. The surveillance of the sky, particularly due to drones flying over prisons, presents new security challenges in general.

The presence of detainees and persons convicted on terrorism charges also poses an internal security challenge. One director said: "It is better if the fellow inmates are unaware that a prisoner amongst them has a terrorist background. If this information gets around, there is a high risk that this person will become the target of threats from other inmates." (Dir2 19.02.2019). Another director also admitted sometimes being concerned about the external security of personnel, if an accomplice or follower should find out where an inmate was being kept.

4.6 From security to resocialisation - the challenges during imprisonment

The period of detention, the relative freedom of movement in a secure perimeter and the opportunity to establish contacts and form relationships with other inmates have more serious consequences for the management of radicalised inmates during imprisonment. The number of inmates radicalised upon entry or convicted for violation of SR 122 or article 260ter SCC is currently still low. According to the director of a large prison in the German-speaking part of Switzerland, their internal monitoring unit observes the presence of two to three cases on average. He believes this figure is relatively constant (Dir1). Dir5 said that Islamist radicalisation is not a significant issue in prisons in the German-speaking part of Switzerland. He added that they are vigilant about all forms of extremism, in particular the Grey Wolves[59], the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), the Tamil Tigers and eco-terrorism. This establishment is also equipped with a coordination unit for matters related to various forms of extremism. Another director took a more nuanced view of the phenomenon. He believes that while radical indications remain limited quantitatively, they are significant in the actual management of prisoners qualitatively. He compared some radicalised inmates with 'black boxes', intelligent people who stay under the radar and for whom interdisciplinary monitoring is vital (Dir6). He believes the difficulty of evaluating an inmate in prison is much greater upon departure, particularly in the absence of a probation plan.

There are challenges in the prison system and the directors take measures concerning external communication, on the one hand, but above all with regard to the type of detention. In contrast to the pre-sentencing detention establishments surveyed, the execution-of-sentence establishments included in our survey do not adopt a policy of particular separation of the inmates concerned. They favour the separation model, which means inserting the person into a limited group of fellow inmates whose profile

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[59] Turkish extreme right organisation

is analysed beforehand. The aim is to restrict contact between the inmate known for radicalisation with prisoners who could share their worldview and fragile inmates who could be influenced by their charisma or ideas: "We put a monitoring system in place. We monitor the various persons and can inform colleagues in various fields: social care, security and the chaplaincy, in particular the imam. This means everyone is aware of any changes in a person's behaviour or the atmosphere in a sector." (Dir1, 20.12.2018). This form of detention ensures better respect for human rights (Neumann 2010; European Council 2016). It also helps to minimise the inmate's opportunities to advance a victim narrative conducive to radicalisation. According to Silke and Velduis (2017)[60], separation, without isolation or concentration, can also have a positive impact on the person sentenced. Contact with fellow inmates who do not share their worldview can also contribute towards disengagement. Current experience indicates that the organisation of the prison around this type of inmate is manageable. One director sees organisation into small units of life, combined with a high level of supervision and an appropriate framework, as a prevention measure. She believes: "The possibility of somebody becoming radicalised without anyone noticing is relatively low." However, she adds: "If somebody really gets caught up in radicalisation, there is not a great deal we can do to stop it. We will nevertheless be close to them and can attempt to intervene through targeted sessions or meetings with the chaplain. But I don't know how we would manage the phenomenon if more than two or three people were involved." (Dir4, 11.02.2019). This view is shared by another director who added: "It's manageable with one or two. You can set up special groups and make sure they don't associate with and encourage one another. If there are more than five, you cannot keep such a close eye on them all." (Dir1, 20.12.201).

4.7   Experience on the ground

Apart from close monitoring of the person, their relationships and the challenges presented by their detention in the institution, the everyday life of inmates imprisoned for violation of SR 122/article 260ter SCC or who were radicalised before entering prison does not differ from that of other inmates. They are obliged to work, have the same free time and the same access to sporting and leisure activities.

While one director pointed out that the inmates he had encountered tended to keep themselves to themselves and did not easily form relationships with fellow inmates, one head of security indicated that this type of inmate is difficult to integrate into the prison population. He remarked: "Some tend to perform a missionary role which provokes strong rejection from fellow inmates. Others seek to isolate themselves from 'non-believers'. We've had some radicalised inmates who have completely renounced the consumption of media to dedicate themselves entirely to God. This self-exclusion from social circles, but also the environmental context makes resocialisation difficult, if not impossible." (Head of security 1, 20.12.2018). This attitude of withdrawal can sometimes also be explained by a lack of language skills or psychiatric problems.

4.7.1   A difficult relationship

One director noted that it had been difficult to distinguish between psychiatric problems and religious radicalisation. She outlined the major difficulties experienced in communicating with one of the people convicted for supporting the activities of a terrorist group due, in particular, to great mistrust of anyone who represented the state (conspiracy theory) and a very strong victim narrative: "There was complete distrust upon arrival. We were clearly the representatives of the state which wanted to destroy her and only sought to do her harm... Only Allah was on her side. We were all enemies." (Dir4, 11.02.2019).

4.7.2   Religious practice

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[60] Cf. Silke Adrew and Veldhuis Tinka (2017), p. 2

Research shows that Islam (the religion in general) can play a significant role at various points in the prison experience (Beckford and Khosrokavar 2006; Becci et al. 2009; Béraud, de Galembert, Rostaing 2016, Sarg, Lamine 2011; Schneuwly Purdie 2014). In some cases, this practice can be (or become) demonstrative. For others, it is more confined and discreet. With regard to the manifestation of religious practice, there is great disparity between the establishments. In some, prison officers have witnessed recurrent calls to prayer through cell windows, the organisation of clandestine collective prayers and complaints over failure to respect religious norms concerning food. In others, such events are the exception. When reading the data collected as part of this exploratory study, three approaches may help to explain these divergences: the socio-demographic characteristics of the inmates (age, status, national origin), the degree of organisation of cultural practices in prison (organisation of prayers, celebration of festivals) and regular access to an imam or Muslim chaplain (particularly one-to-one sessions). However, the time available for this exploratory study did not allow us to examine these three aspects in depth.

The following paragraphs will therefore only describe the religious visibility of detainees and persons convicted for violation of SR 122/article 260ter SCC. In the view of the directors concerned, the radicalised inmates who they have held conducted themselves discreetly, including in their religious practices. To their knowledge, they had not taken part in the Friday prayers that some establishments organise at regular intervals and had not met with the prison's imam (where such a service is available). The same observation was made by the Muslim chaplains interviewed. Only one of the persons interviewed had been in contact with a person convicted of violating SR 122. This had been informal contact without any connection to a religious matter or practice when they met within the perimeter of the prison. Imam2 believes that radicalised inmates do not speak with them because they consider them to be traitors who are working for the authorities. One director also said that when she offered to put an inmate in touch with a representative of a Muslim association for a personal meeting, she had laughed and said that they were not true Muslims. The directors believe that these inmates have kept up their religious practices, in particular praying and reading the Koran, in their cells. They have not observed proselytising or extraordinary requests for religious purposes. At first glance, it would seem the sets of beliefs of this type of inmate have not had an impact on the everyday working life of prison staff. However, a longer period of imprisonment or an increase in the number of inmates sharing the same ideology or propagating the same conspiracy theories and victim narratives could create a breeding ground for recruitment of other inmates.

4.8   After prison

The issue of resocialisation is only dealt with to a small extent by pre-sentencing detention establishments. As one director said: "We're at the start of the chain. Our role is not therapeutic and we are not responsible for resocialisation measures." (Dir2, 21.02.2019). Another interviewee took a more nuanced view: "in the event of extended pre-sentencing detention, working on resocialisation would seem necessary. On the one hand, to minimise the damage caused by imprisonment, and, on the other, to increase the safety of the population." (Head of security 1, 20.12.2018). This view is shared by Dir1 who believes the planning of resocialisation should begin as early as possible. Pre-sentencing detention was sometimes longer than the duration of the period of imprisonment. In such cases, it is difficult to set up implementable reintegration programmes. These observations concern the resocialisation of inmates in general and not the disengagement and reintegration of radicalised inmates inside or outside of prison. The directors and heads of security interviewed identified three specific challenges in relation to these inmates:

1. Very little desire from this type of inmate to work either inside prison or upon release. They only show commitment to God and not to the state or the society.
2. Little interest in thinking about their offence which they often do not see as a crime. They are often not interested in working on themselves, convinced that their actions serve a higher goal.
3. Evaluation of the risks that encouraging the acquisition of new skills (in languages or multimedia) to persons who, once released, could use them against society by recruiting in the language learned or by propagating extremist material online.

Various problems that are found in other types of prison population must also be mentioned: lack of a probation plan in the event of early release (fear of excessive detention), relevance of a resocialisation plan in the event of deportation, evaluation of outside network before approval and release and evaluation of level of danger.

In conclusion, the risk of radicalisation in prison is a reality. An increase in such cases cannot be excluded. One director said: "The prison system reflects society. If radicalisation increases on the outside, we can assume that more people will be convicted and that it will then also increase inside prison. (…) We must also be aware that developments can occur explicitly within a prison." (Dir2, 21.02.2019). Some cases, most of which are isolated, slip under the radar of the internal security management systems in prisons. Some prison officers working at large prisons, which are often overpopulated, also indicated they had observed behaviour they deem radical or at least problematic. Calls to prayer from the windows of a prison, excessive proselytising behaviour, sometimes accompanied by threats, towards fellow Muslim prisoners and exclamations like 'Allahu Akbar' heard in attacks are some of the incidents that raised questions in their mind over the provocative or ideological nature of some inmates.

However, it seems the small size of the Swiss prisons by international standards and the forms of management, which respect diversity and fundamental freedoms, constitute preventative measures in relation to radicalisation. Some directors said that the regular and institutional presence of a Muslim chaplain or imam also acted as a preventative measure. This is a moot point and this view is not shared by all the directors interviewed.

4.9   Muslim chaplains and imams in prisons

4.9.1   The views of the directors

The more or less regular and institutionalised presence of a Muslim chaplain or imam is part of the challenge of managing not just radicalised inmates, but the spiritual guidance of Muslim inmates in general. The views of the directors interviewed are polarised: some see collaboration with an imam/Muslim chaplain as a specific prevention and detection measure. "We have an imam here. It's a huge advantage. He has been coming here for 20 years. It's a good partnership. He also supports us, for example, when we have questions about an inmate's behaviour. He can also advise us on the approaches to adopt towards an inmate if something concerning happens." (Dir2 21.02.2019). Another director believes the presence of an imam is a prison competence that should be established upstream of radicalisation issues: "I work with an imam. I see him three or four times a week. He practically lives here with his work. He's a professional. It's also important that we discuss matters on a professional level and share knowledge and experiences. When I talk to the imam about problems with Muslim inmates, he knows that I don't have an issue with Islam as a religion or with him as a Muslim. We communicate as professionals. I think that prisons without an imam today will face more problems,

especially if they suddenly find themselves faced with the issue (of radicalisation). They will have to make up ground to deal with these situations. The imam is a necessary measure to gauge the climate and to discuss cases and concerns." (Dir1, 20.12.2019).

The difficulty of finding a person of trust who meets the wide range of socio-demographic profiles of the Muslim prison population (branches of religion, languages) is an obstacle for others. They fear that their presence will only heighten intra-community tensions. They also indicated that they do not know which theological criteria to apply when working with someone. They are waiting for state impetus to establish criteria allowing them to evaluate potential candidates. One director said: "I'm reluctant about the significant involvement of an imam because it would be difficult to choose one. For the Kurds, it couldn't be a Turk, most of them receive guidance remotely from Turkey anyway. Then there's also the issue of whether to work with a Sunni or Shia or an imam who speaks Albanian or Arabic. I would apply some basic requirements – that they had completed training in chaplaincy and that the prayers were said in German. We have two Christian chaplains here who work on an interdisciplinary basis. Some Muslim inmates turn to them." (Dir5, 25.01.2019). It emerged from these interviews that the directors in favour of an imam/Muslim chaplain manage establishments that have been working with their Muslim partners for some years, often even before radicalisation became such a topical issue inside and outside of prison. For those who have not yet had positive experiences with imams/Muslim chaplains, the public debate about radicalisation, the training of imams and hate preachers present a significant obstacle in establishing trust and good working relationships.

4.9.2   The views of the Muslim chaplains

The four Muslim prison contact persons interviewed did not all have the same status in the establishments that they visit. The activities they conduct and their proximity to the inmates also vary a great deal from one prison to another (Schneuwly Purdie 2011). However, they all have over ten years of experience working in the prison system. Three of them work in more than one prison and the interviewees gained their experience in 12 prison institutions in five cantons (three in French-speaking Switzerland and two in German-speaking Switzerland).

4.9.3   Radicalisation – a shrouded phenomenon

The Muslim chaplains and imams interviewed share the view of the directors in our survey. Persons who are radicalised or demonstrate potentially radical behaviour are still exceptions, but there are cases and others could occur at any time: "Radicalisation is a shrouded phenomenon. It's there without really being tangible. You can sense it, but under the surface. (…) It's there in the discussions that some inmates have and you pick it up through questions and some complaints." (Imam3, 18.01.2019). This Muslim chaplain added that when an inmate associates imprisonment with a feeling of injustice in relation to his own history and religion, "the ingredients for radical thinking are there." The imams and Muslim chaplains also observed that the phenomenon fluctuates depending on the context and, above all, on current international developments: "I would say it comes in waves and that depends on current developments to a great extent. I heard some rather alarming conversations after the Charlie Hebdo and Bataclan attacks, like "they got what they deserved." That's the moment when you have to confront them and tell them that if you claim to be a Muslim this is what it involves and to try to reframe things." (Imam3, 18.01.2019). Neither naive nor alarmist, the respondents in this study are vigilant and are trying – within the scope of their role in prison – to contribute to the barometer of the general climate on the subject within prisons.

4.9.4   When international developments enter prison

The interviewees said that questions about religious norms have been asked since they started. However, they have observed that over the past 12 years, inmates are asking them more questions about geopolitical developments in the world: Palestine, Afghanistan and, of course, Iraq and Syria. "The questions about what was going on in the world began in 2010. Do we have the right to fight against people who occupy our territory? Can you do this or that from a religious perspective? Is jihad being fought in Syria?" (Imam4, 09.01.2019). The Muslim contact persons in prison therefore anticipate and address issues related to current affairs in their preaching. They take advantage of these opportunities to provide another interpretation of the Koran to those put forward by the ideologists of groups associated with 'Al Qaïda' or 'Islamic State': "I like to 'vaccinate' the people who come to see me to prevent them from falling prey to others. To stop them from being targeted and manipulated. That's why I try to take preventative steps, to ask burning questions and to address issues related to the international situation and current affairs. I try to provide clear and precise answers that set out values. Unequivocally condemning terrorist acts throughout the world underlines that killing innocent people is forbidden." (Imam4, 09.01.2019). The clear condemnation, the re-framing of the arguments and putting texts into context are the main tools used by Muslim contact persons in prison as means of prevention.

4.9.5   The dimensions of radicalisation

The Muslim chaplains differentiate between those who they deem radical and those whose rhetoric or behaviour are sometimes extreme. They say the first group are exceptions. In 17 years of working in prisons, an imam indicated that he had rarely encountered very concerning cases which he had to refer to the director. In contrast, problematic rhetoric and behaviour are a constant. One imam, for example, said that there are Salafists in prison just as there are in free society. A reflection of society, both inside and outside of prison, he said that some people think that "if they wear a long beard, dress like the prophet Mohammed and pray more strictly than their fellow believers, they will go to paradise and that they are practising good Islam." (Imam1, 20.12.2019). He nevertheless points out that such conduct is not an indication of violent behaviour or radical ideas and that care must be taken to avoid systematically associating Salafism with violence. Imam2 also observed the presence of inmates with Salafist tendencies, some of whom would have been in contact with an Islamic association run by converts in the outside world.

Cases therefore exist but their number varies: one of the interviewees believes he encounters between three and five cases a year, while two other respondents said that there are always one or two people they keep a close eye on and who need a 'vaccination' (Imam4, 09.01.2019) or individual monitoring.[61]

4.9.6   Some concerning indicators from the imams

Religious practices, however devout, are not an indicator of radicalisation in the view of the Muslim chaplains. They see the combination of a victim narrative, a desire for revenge (or vengeance), a dichotomy of the world into 'us Muslims' versus 'you' and a legitimation of their ideas through religion as being a relevant indicator. One imam said: "one of the indicators is when an inmate starts to politicise their rhetoric and begins revengeful narrative in relation to the system and everything they have endured and they associate this with all the atrocities in the world and start saying things like 'us Muslims' etc.

This discrepancy between the observations of the directors and the Muslim contact persons is explained, in particular, by the fact that the latter do not generally have access to all the inmates. They also visit the prisons intermittently, often for no more than an hour a week.

And it's this narrative that I find concerning. When you start to look at things in a partisan way, everything seems unjust and you begin to see things as the prison system, the judge, the warders, the state, society and, of course, you the poor little believer who just wants to pray." (Imam3, 09.01.2019). In relation to isolation and negative ideas, he added: "If people in prison stay in their cells and start to get very negative thoughts, they will be very radical. Because they don't feel at ease inside, they regard themselves as victims of society and seek revenge. They see nothing but vengeance. Nothing else. All the texts are interpreted from the perspective of vengeance as their memory is reduced to revenge because there is injustice in the world and in their lives. (…) Their behaviour and their way of putting the texts into practice is all based on the notion of vengeance." (Imam3, 09.01.2019). Imam2 indicated that frustration was an indicator: "There are inmates, but not just inmates, who are very disaffected. Frustration is the first stage in fanaticism. If that's overlooked, people can become radicalised and turn into extremists. This energy put into radicalisation must be diverted into other things." (Imam2, 21.01.2019). He warns that "if someone is strict in terms of religion" they can also use religious arguments about the culpability of other people and legitimise a separation of society into 'us' and 'them'.

Religion alone is therefore not a radicalisation factor in the view of the Muslim prison contact persons interviewed. It can nevertheless be used to frame arguments legitimising frustration, discontent or the desire for revenge.

4.9.7 The Muslim chaplains as actors in prevention

According to the Muslim prison contact persons, their presence and activities are essentially preventative and include answering questions of a religious nature, giving sermons that address the problems of society, reading, contextualising and explaining religious texts and de-constructing extremist interpretations. However, they also indicate that if the authorities expect them to counteract radicalisation, "they need to give them the resources. The work currently being done is good but not sufficient. Specialist and highly skilled imams working directly with persons who are at risk or fragile are required. (…) When the imam comes and holds sessions with small groups, he gains their trust, helps to resolve their problems and to address false views of religion and misguided interpretations of reality (…) the imam acts as an educator. They need a place and the opportunity to hold ongoing meetings with persons at risk. That takes time. It's not a matter of one session and that's it." (Imam4, 09.01.2019). This correlates with what was said by Imam3 who, with the time he had available with the inmates, is not able to adequately assess the level of their knowledge or the development of rhetoric or concerning attitudes. He explained that he can conduct four individual 15-minute interviews a month with the inmates as part of his role. He is currently working with around 20 people: "I don't think that's enough to assess the level of danger or to set up personalised individual support. While these 15 minutes are important, they do not meet requirements and do not tackle the issues. In relation to potential radicalisation, posing a threat and dangerous narratives, they (potential recruiters) are a step ahead. If there is someone who propagates this kind of narrative, they may have five months ahead of them to sow the seeds before I can see the inmate again to answer the questions that somebody else had sown." (Imam3, 18.01.2019). The proximity to and regularity of contact with an inmate enables a relationship of trust to be established which is vital if progress is to be made. Professional follow-up, including on religious matters, would enable measures to be put in place for release from prison: "You can also help the person to prepare for their release and find out the ideas that they'll leave with. If they have dark ideas about society, which are legitimised by religion, and can progressively be identified with profiles that could turn." (Imam4, 09.01.2019). He continued by suggesting: "that a permanent imam position in prison is required for several reasons. Religion – providing correct religious education for everyone. They need to know how to pray, what to do during Ramadan and how to make invocations,

all of which are cultural aspects. Then there are all aspects associated with prevention and radicalisation at a psychological level. Some people feel worthless and radicalisation makes them feel valued. They say: 'I was nothing before but look what I've become now. I know the truth.' And that makes them feel good. It makes them feel that their life is of value. Before they weren't recognised by society and now they are bringing the truth. That also has to be dealt with. "

The Muslim contact persons also underline that the organisation and management of Swiss prisons are preventative per se – the modulation of small-sized units, the structuring of time between work, training and leisure, efforts to make the inmates assume responsibility and the dignified treatment of inmates. Imam2 also believes that equal treatment applied independently of skin colour, language, nationality or religion is a preventative measure because it helps avert the development of a victim narrative. On this subject, Imam1 said: "The inmates are kept busy with work, continuing education, training courses, treatment, etc. The entire system is geared to ensuring they have practically no time to think about such matters. That's the first thing. The second is that the imams are also there. The inmates need them. It means they can live here as Muslims. They can talk to us. As you've seen, prison takes account of special diet preferences, Ramadan and religious festivals. There are lessons on the Koran and Friday prayers. Everything is available." (Imam1, 20.12.2019). These special arrangements can place a burden on prisons. However, according to the interviewees, they contribute towards reducing the sense of discrimination from which a victim and revenge narrative can develop.

4.10   Conclusion

The phenomenon of radicalisation exists in Swiss prisons, even if the cases are still negligible today for the establishments interviewed. The number of cases fluctuates depending on various parameters: international developments, the rise in the number of charges, overpopulation and the increase in victim narratives based on religious principles are a few examples. The directors are aware of this and are using various measures to address the situation: detection protocols, internal regulations, coordination positions for extremism issues, ongoing staff training and, for some, the presence of an imam or Muslim chaplain.

At a time when the return of jihadist-motivated travellers and proven combatants is a topical issue, placement in prison establishments and cells, institutional and individual monitoring of radicalisation and risk management are areas where prisons still have work to do. As one director said, while the number of cases remains low, rotation between the floors or between prisons is still an effective management tool. However, an increase in such cases would require reflection from the partners on incarceration, but also on probationary support measures..

5 Prevention and intervention

Authors: Miryam Eser Davolio and Ayesha Rether

5.1 Introduction

The section of the study on prevention and intervention focuses on the extremism and bridge-building specialist units which – in cooperation with other specialist units (e.g. youth forensic service and the protection against violence service) – are taking preventative measures in the two key areas of 'cases of radicalisation' (extremism specialist units) and the 'radicalisation context of the mosque' (bridge-building specialist units). They also represent two strategies which are set out in the NAP (2017) under measure 10 'Competence and advice centres for the issues of radicalisation and violent extremism' and measure 13 'Intensification of police networking.' Their resources, structural integration, approaches and procedures with regard to preventative activities are explained in more detail below. As well as the bridge-building specialist units, the cantonal and city integration specialist units for religious affairs (Canton of Basel-Stadt) also maintain contact with mosque associations and other religious communities, which means overlapping can occur here, that can be used positively in mutual exchange. In the field of prevention, there are other existing programmes, such as the project concerning counter-narratives and alternative narratives of 'youth and media' of the Federal Social Insurance Office, which was evaluated (Baier et al. 2019), as well as local projects of NGOs, such as Tasamouh in Biel or JASS and TransEducation in the Zurich and Aargau region. This study focuses on the extremism and bridge-building units integrated into administrative structures – such as in the core groups model (together with the specialist integration unit) in the case of the City of Winterthur – which are in close contact, allowing them to respond to questions and challenges as well as to problem situations at individual and community level promptly and in a coordinated way.

5.2 Extremism specialist units

5.2.1 Methodology

A total of 12 interviews were conducted with all ten extremism specialist units (Geneva, Lausanne, Biel, city of Bern, Basel-Stadt, Aargau, city of Zurich and canton of Zurich, Winterthur and Lugano) on the existing personnel resources, the integration of the specialist unit, target groups, their consultation and case-work activities and their intervention strategies. The content of the written notes on the interviews was evaluated and sent back to the participants for review beforehand.

5.2.2 Personnel resources and case volumes of the extremism specialist units

While there were few extremism specialist units, except for in the two cities of Zurich and Bern, when jihadist-motivated travellers peaked in 2015 and this pioneering work was previously carried out across city and cantonal boundaries (see Eser Davolio et al. 2015), there are now specific consultation services in quite a number of cantons and cities (Geneva, Lausanne, Biel, Bern, Basel, the city and canton of Zurich, Winterthur and Lugano). These specialist units do not just provide advice and support for institutions and the public, but also perform a guidance role within administrations (threat management, knowledge transfer, networking, answering of parliamentary questions etc.) as well as public relations work (meetings, brochures, communication, media relations). At the newer specialist units, such as those in Lausanne, Biel and Lugano, the positioning and raising awareness of the point of contact is still in progress, while others already have a certain profile, clarity in relation to methods and networking capacity. The personnel resources differ greatly and a comparison of the percentages of working time

available is complicated by the fact that the staff are not generally just responsible for and employed to deal with the issue of radicalisation.

Since 2017 and 2018, a slight levelling-off of suspected cases and reports of Islamic extremism has been recorded at all specialist units (not the case with right-wing extremism, sects etc.), but reports of suspected cases continue to be received, albeit at a lower level than in 2014–16. In addition to the military defeat of IS in the Middle East, the reasons for this decline also include the wave-shaped pattern of public attention, which can increase sharply, for example, after attacks or due to current challenges, such as the issue of the returning fighters, but then ebbs away again. When public awareness of Islamic extremism is low, the actors in the field (teachers, school social workers, healthcare and asylum professionals) are less anxious and seek advice less frequently.

Some specialist unit heads also believe that the awareness of professionals in their catchment area has been increased through targeted training on radicalisation processes and that suspected cases are being classified and responded to better as a result. It was also observed how quickly awareness of the issue in everyday life dwindles if the pressure is relaxed due to a lack of media presence. Even though alarmism is deemed completely counter-productive by the heads of the specialist units, they do not believe the risk potential has been eliminated, owing to the continued existence of the breeding ground. They also believe that social polarisation processes remain relevant with regard to both Islamism, on the one hand, and Islamophobia on the other. As far as the dissemination of extremist views amongst young people is concerned, in particular approval of jihadist radicalism, the representative study by Manzoni et al. (2018) produced results which prove the need for prevention and intervention.

5.2.3   Target audience of the specialist units

Half of the target audience of the specialist units is made up of the authorities, in particular school heads, teachers, social workers and asylum professionals, while the other half is composed of parents and other key persons. "There is often an inhibition threshold for teachers when it comes to religious extremism. They often tend to hesitate for longer because they don't want to be invasive and are uncertain." (Prev5, 09.01.2019)

Accessibility, profile but also possible inhibition thresholds play a major role in the structure of the target audience. The fundamental integration as an authority in the administrative context can represent an obstacle for reporting cases, in particular for marginalised population groups. This is illustrated by the example of Tasamouh (a Muslim NGO providing prevention services from Biel) whose integration into a community facilitates access to it, whereas the specialist units firstly have to establish such trust.

"Initially, when the initiative was launched, there was significant reluctance on the part of the Muslim organisations, teachers and social workers. Transparency is extremely important in relation to this contentious issue, otherwise it will not work. We saw that we had to go from door to door to provide information, above all for the Muslim organisations. Only then did they understand how the system works." (Prev4, 30.11.2018)

On the other hand, the state's (religious) neutrality can be an advantage because most of the target group want this. Integration of the specialist unit into the police force may make the service inaccessible. It nevertheless gives the specialist unit employees certain advantages related to police and security policy when dealing with cases. Integration into the Office of the Central School Board could result in parents no longer making reports for fear of the teaching staff finding out. Each form of integration has specific advantages and disadvantages. Low-threshold accessibility is important, particularly for initial contact, then consultation expertise seems to be the decisive factor: "It all depends on whether a good relationship with the person is established." (Prev2, 23.08.2018)

The specialist units work with various partners and authorities in their respective settings, such as school social work or school psychological service, police, threat management, victim support and coordination

units for religious affairs: "We then decide together how to proceed and discuss solutions to complex situations which must first be analysed properly." (Prev4, 30.11.2018)

5.2.4   Initial evaluation

All specialist units dealt with cases concerning conversion/reconversion, which caused concern for parents and teachers, particularly in conjunction with conflicts, school-leaving, travel to Muslim countries to attend a Koranic school and choice of partner etc. In these cases the specialist units attempted to obtain a clearer picture through the interview with the converted young persons and key persons around them and to assess the extent of the problem. They usually encourage parents to treat the young persons respectfully, to maintain contact with them and to avoid complete estrangement.

An analysis of the 47 consultation cases recorded by the city of Bern specialist unit reveals that the issue of conversion arises in a quarter of the cases and conspicuous external changes or the expression of conspicuous views occur in around half of cases. Forms of strict religious practices, such as refusing handshakes, are evident in a further quarter of cases. Conspicuous circumstances, such as the expression of political/extremist views, missionary work, visiting problematic mosques or the possession of weapons, tend to occur rarely in the registered cases. The following images show the frequency at which individual issues occur in consultation cases, which were coded for content analysis purposes

Possible risk of radicalisation	Type and number of radicalisation phenomena for the registered cases (N=47)
Personal crisis/change	External change (12) Stress situation (7) Absenteeism (4) Isolation (2)
Commitment to Islamist ideology	Conversion (10) + reconversion (4) Strict religious practices (11) Missionary work (5) Mosque/Koranic school abroad (4)
Violence-related communication	Conspicuous views/statements (14) Extremist content on social media (9) Hate speech (2)
Capability	Religiously-motivated announcement of travel abroad (7) Conspicuous behaviour (5) Weapons (5)
Social environment	Risk due to romantic relationship (6) Isolation/withdrawal (5) Abrupt change in social relationships (2)

Fig. 4: Most common issues in the consultation cases (N=47) of the extremism specialist unit in the city of Bern (based on the main categories of the Winterthur specialist unit, see fig. 4)

Many reports involve dealing with events that cannot usually be classified as radicalisation upon closer analysis – but where the expertise of the specialist unit is required as the persons faced with the problem feel anxious and lack the background knowledge required to assess the situations.

"Islamic radicalisation has never actually been prevalent. It's more often the case that somebody has taken a copy of the Koran to school with them or shouted 'Allah-Akbar'. (…) In most cases it was nevertheless threatening and also often related to not being able to cope or feeling insecure at school." (Prev6, 20.12.2018)

Some specialist units use tools, such as RaProf, which allows the persons making reports to carry out a self-assessment where they can enter their evaluations anonymously via an online questionnaire and then receive feedback on how the case should be categorised.

"We answer the telephone and carry out an initial evaluation and if we think that things could be heading in a certain direction we send a RaProf. The persons making reports find the questionnaire reassuring and informative." (Prev5, 09.01.2019)

We also contribute to the information brochures and processes drawn up for threat management so that school heads and teachers receive guidance: "We also use RaProf. This kind of questionnaire can help alleviate or dissipate the uncertainty or fear that arose." (Prev9, 13.12.2018)

Only the Basel specialist unit also provided training on dealing with conflict and violence. The individual young people are given training in dealing with conflict as a measure by the Office of the Juvenile Prosecutor or by the child and adult protection authority (CAPA). Relationship work also plays a key role in this respect: "The relationship work is valuable and is often successful. There are always young people who come back to us after undergoing this kind of training." (Prev5, 09.01.2019)

5.2.5 Case work

"It takes time to really understand a situation. You need indications that the young person is progressing. If they are looking for information, they need people who can influence them, which is why long-term support is required." (Prev7, 05.03.2019)

If a case is complex, then more in-depth investigations are carried out, contact persons and other professionals are called in to work with the young person concerned and further information is gathered. A joint analysis of the available resources, strengths and weaknesses is then carried out: "We contact the platform, then mobilise the key persons and resources around the person, we try to calm the situation down and to provide support, we listen and adopt the resources-based approach to provide the parents, key persons and teaching staff with the tools they would not otherwise possess. In this way, we tackle the problem together and those involved are not on their own. We then remain available if we are needed. After a few weeks or months, depending on the case, we then call again to review the situation with the persons concerned." (Prev10, 29.01.2019)

This kind of monitoring supports the key persons intervening as they know they can get in touch at any time. It is usually them who implement the jointly drawn-up strategies and, for example, remain in close contact with the young persons concerned through less contentious discussions or by opening up new prospects with them.

If necessary, the police (youth service, protection against violence unit) are involved: "…on a basis of trust, that remains protected; even if we have to press charges, we discuss it together. We are also in close contact with the FIS. Sometimes they will have cases where they come to us, or give our details to persons concerned, where security issues are not involved." (Prev3, 24.01.2019). Most specialist units report constructive collaboration with the police by establishing a good interdisciplinary working relationship.

In most cases queries from professionals usually concern second-level consultation without the need for direct contact between the specialist unit and the young person concerned. This usually involves the teaching relationship and the identification of changes and crisis potential, calls for help or signals which cannot be interpreted in a satisfactory way due to the professionals' lack of background knowledge. In such situations there is often also a lack of acceptance and insufficient integration experience from the young persons concerned, who may turn to radical positions due to their experience of being marginalised and discriminated against, which results in them seeking to provoke persons responsible for looking after them. The consultation work carried out by the specialist units can analyse the causes and factors of radicalisation and help to promote ways of defusing the situation.

In view of their interdisciplinary link role, the specialist units play an important part in triage and cooperation with the various partner institutions. They act as a bobbin as the various threads of the issue of radicalisation come together there (core group, round table, bilateral cooperation). Their expertise in additional prevention activities, such as public relations work (presentations, media relations, training etc.) is greatly appreciated and is called upon. With such a complex issue as radicalisation where psychological, pedagogical, sociological, political, legal, media and cultural factors must be taken into account, only an interdisciplinary approach seems to provide an adequate solution as this means the appropriate contact partners are called in for each situation.

Some specialist unit heads indicated that they had received requests from the police in view of their expertise to make suggestions on issues concerning the interviewing or legal proceedings involving high-risk persons. Conversely, cases are passed onto the police if there are significant security concerns because radicalisation is at such an advanced stage.

"We carried out a kind of triage role with the specialist group in one case and passed it over to the police who then gave the all-clear. The exchange in the specialist group works well - we all know each other and have the same instincts. Here we discuss who is already working on the case, otherwise we pass it onto the protection against violence specialist unit." (Prev3, 24.01.2019)

In Geneva, the cantonal security service passed the socio-pedagogical support of a young radicalised returning fighter to the FASE which is also involved in the 'Gardez le lien' initiative. A FASE social worker was assigned to the young man, supported him with his reintegration and, for example, tried to clear up any security concerns that employers had by acting as a guarantor. He established good contact with the parents and now also has a reasonable relationship with the young person who contacts and consults him when making decisions. The social worker and the security service regularly exchange information and are pursuing joint goals. This support represents a pioneering approach which may also be significant for future cases (Prev.12, 30.11.2018).

5.2.6 Case vignettes

We obtained case descriptions (N=89) from all specialist units which we have put together in anonymised form as case vignettes. They provide interesting insights into the requests received. The specialist units attempt to alleviate the anxiety of the persons making the reports and provide them with questions and tasks to understand the situation in a differentiated way and to then produce an evaluation in discussion with the expert.

A social worker contacted the specialist unit about an 18-year-old young person, originally from Bosnia, due to his increasingly radical views. He had no religious background but found radical content on YouTube and thought his father had strayed from the right path. He had a cousin who he got interested in religious matters. Over time, both young men became strictly religious and their relationships with the father and uncle deteriorated. Both have the impression that people want to

change them, which they do not want. They want to make their religious practices (prayers etc.) compatible with everyday life in Switzerland.

The mother of an adult daughter, who is married to a man from Egypt and has two children, contacted the specialist unit. Her daughter's family was considering emigration to Syria. The husband practised his faith and frequently attended the mosque with the eldest son.

A secondary school teacher made a report about a pupil with an Algerian background who started displaying unusual behaviour after the holidays. The pupil had been to France where he had attended an Islamic centre. He had also watched jihad videos on YouTube.

The school head made a report about a 14-year-old boy who posted an image of himself brandishing a weapon on social media. A home visit was made by the police. He then no longer attended school for several days and did not return home either during this period. His parents were very concerned.

A German language teacher made a report about a young adult from Iraq who claimed not to be religious. He lived in a large shared flat where he was put under pressure to adopt a devout lifestyle by other Muslims. The teacher noticed changes in his appearance and the expression of very provocative views.

A school social worker reported a 13-year-old girl who was interested in the Koran and wanted to wear a head scarf. In school she wrote in an essay that she did not know whether she would complete the school year and therefore wished she was in the war zone in Syria with a weapon. Her parents seemed to be making a big effort but were unable to cope with the situation.

The school head contacted the specialist unit about a 15-year-old boy who said in school that he wanted to join the army and would kill everyone as his relatives had also been killed. He made the shape of a weapon with his hands and shot symbolically at fellow pupils and teachers and refused to attend religious education lessons. He was also conspicuous on account of his provocative behaviour and concentration difficulties. The parents distanced themselves from his behaviour.

A work coach was supporting a client from Iraq with psychiatric problems. He had been recruited for jihad via Facebook by a colleague from Libya. Even though the client distanced himself from this, the work coach was concerned, due to his client's psychological instability, that he may get involved in something he could then not get out of, even though he distanced himself from extremism during their meetings.

At this point, we now look at a more detailed case vignette with the account of an intervention carried out by one of the extremism specialist units involved.

A mother contacted the specialist unit because she was concerned about the conversion of her son, who was previously a practising Catholic, to Islam. She feared there were negative outside influences, but did not really know her son's circle of friends or whether he attended a mosque. She was also concerned by the fact that he had given up his vocational training to pursue a career in sport. As she was a practising Catholic herself, she found discussing religious matters with her son very difficult. During the consultation it was explained to her how she could improve the dialogue about religious matters with her son to better understand his new life circumstances. In a second step, a meeting was organised at the mosque with the son, the mother, the head of the specialist unit and a Muslim mediator. The aim of the joint meeting was to allow all parties to address their expectations, fears and any other questions. The mother remained dissatisfied with her son's change of religion, but her fears over the risk of radicalisation were allayed.

The choice of case vignettes shows the situations at the outset which are very specific and individual and require in-depth analysis in order to identify the issues that lie behind the symptoms. All of the case vignettes compiled are made available to all specialist units so that they can be used for internal staff training purposes. Due to the individual nature of each particular situation, added value can only be achieved from the findings through case learning which enables the development of good judgement and enhancement of the repertoire of intervention measures of the specialist unit employees.

5.2.7 Conclusion

The extremism specialist units provide support, in particular, for professionals working in the public administration, but also private persons, especially from the family and social environment, who are faced with situations related to jihadist radicalisation, ideologisation, violent tendencies or possible travel abroad and therefore trigger a sense of being unable to cope, anxiety and fear. In particular, rapid changes in young people and young adults, strict religious practices, turning away from their previous environment, radical views and behaviour deemed 'irrational' by those around them (see also Eser Davolio 2017) cause incomprehension and fears amongst persons around them. The specialist units are low-threshold points of contact to examine the existing cases, to provide advice, to act as a mediator and to carry out networking activities, to support cases and to pass them onto the police if security concerns arise. In most cases it turns out that personal crises or conversions have led to concerning situations and the persons making the reports receive reassurance and advice that helps them to resolve the situations. The extremism specialist units meet an existing requirement in the cities and cantons and perform an important link role through triage and cooperation with other specialist units. A small proportion of the cases turn out to involve serious radicalisation which is why the specialist units have to pass them onto the police. The specialist units do not find out what happens or what is corroborated in these cases for data protection reasons, which could nevertheless be important to their learning process in relation to the evaluation of cases. It is therefore worth considering whether an exchange with the security services in anonymised form (by changing the case data) could be achieved to help optimise the prevention work.

In addition to the case work, the specialist units also make an important contribution to education and knowledge transfer in relation to extremism and violence – through public relations work, presentations and the answering of parliamentary questions etc. – which makes them a very important actor in terms of raising awareness. These skills could be used for further prevention work (e.g. in schools, parents' evenings or in youth work) and thus have an even wider impact.

5.3 Bridge-building specialist units

5.3.1 Methodology

A total of seven interviews (five verbal and two written) were conducted for the study with the existing specialist units in the cantons of Zurich, Bern and Fribourg as well as in the cities of Zurich and Winterthur. The new specialist unit in the canton of Schwyz was also interviewed by telephone but they have not obtained any experience yet. The new bridge-building units in Lugano and Baden operating in an urban environment and the coordination unit for religious issues in the canton of Basel Stadt were not included. The content of the interviews was recorded with written notes and was analytically evaluated. The text and the interview quotes were sent to the participants for review. The interview questions covered both the existing resources of the specialist units and their areas of activity, networking, prevention strategies applied and their effectiveness.

5.3.2 Structure and resources of the bridge-building specialist units

Various cantonal and city police forces have set up specialist units for community policing under the title of 'police bridge-builders' in recent years which carry out networking activities and the establishment of dialogue and good relations with migrant communities, the field of asylum and religious associations. In addition to fostering contacts, the aim is to establish mutual trust and to address integration issues (fundamental values, violence etc.) as well as to discuss security policy matters, in particular issues of extremism, whereby extremism prevention accounts for just one part of bridge-building activities.

To obtain an overview, we asked about the resources available (percentage of working hours) which are designated for the individual specialist units (in descending order):

City/canton	Cumulative percentage of working hours	Composition of the teams
Canton of Zurich	380% (100% head plus 14 team members each working at 20% per region)	Tandems, sometimes mixed
City of Winterthur	150%	Mixed tandem
City of Zurich	100%	Single position (male)
Canton of Bern	80% (50% head plus 5-10% in four regions)	Head (female), mixed in the regions
Canton of Fribourg	70% (since April 2018, previously just 50%)	Single position (male)

Table 4: Overview of the percentages of working hours and the team composition of the bridge-building specialist units (the new units in the cantons of Schwyz and Ticino and in the city of Baden are not listed).

Some of the bridge-builders interviewed highlighted the importance of teamwork to exchange information as a tandem and to discuss the situations encountered together. The desire for mixed teams was also expressed on several occasions as the use of female police officers is regarded as having a less distancing effect.

"We see our role as cross-cultural community policing and we regard ourselves as the driving force to get this process on track so that contact with the police is established. We are not seeking to forge personal links with key persons, but rather to establish the relationship with the police at a structural level." (Bridge-builder4, 21.11.2018)

5.3.3 Cooperation and networking

The bridge-building specialist units all have a broad-based network of cooperation and exchange partners which can be grouped as follows:

- Asylum (SEM/AOZ/ORS/HEKS/SAH/ECAP/Caritas/cantonal office for population and migration, migration service)
- Security (state security, protection against violence, security directors, judicial and prison system, cantonal commission for prevention and security).
- Social affairs (youth welfare office, department of social affairs, youth employment, child and adult protection authorities, extremism specialist unit)
- Integration (integration specialist unit (cantonal/communal), racism prevention, specialist unit for forced marriage, FOM domestic violence, churches and forums for inter-religious exchange)
- Judicial system (Office of the Juvenile Prosecutor, public prosecutor)

In addition, there are also other contact partners, such as the office of economic affairs and employment, to obtain legal certainty for the work permits of imams as well as regional NGOs and prevention projects, such as gggfon in the canton of Bern or TikK/NCBI in the canton of Zurich. Another important network exists with the Islamic umbrella associations with which regular contact is maintained and who approach them concerning events, festivities etc. The exchange with mosque associations, but also other religious communities and migrant associations is maintained with one to three meetings a year on average, but meetings can take place more frequently depending on current developments.

Three of the specialist units interviewed are in close regular contact with the extremism specialist units and the integration specialist unit – for example, in the form of a core group – on the coordination of mosque visits etc. This exchange of information is deemed very important and enables a coordinated approach to be adopted. The cantonal bridge-builders also exchange with the city bridge-builders on the distribution of tasks and current developments and there is also a national committee of Swiss bridge-builders which meets on a half-yearly basis under the leadership of the cantonal police forces of Bern and Zurich.

5.3.4 Areas of activity

Through regular contact and exchange, the bridge-builders attempt to establish a basis of trust, not least with the Muslim organisations. Some set fixed discussion topics, such as family and the position of women, while other specialist units address different topics at the joint exchange meetings, depending on the situation.

"This is an important aspect but it's not the only one, we are not an extremism specialist unit, but we do have an influence over the prevention of extremism." (Bridge-builder4, 21.11.2018)

While some specialist units indicated that mosque visits and Islamic extremism were their main fields of activity, others focus on the field of asylum and information events as part of German language courses to present the police and contact opportunities to migrant associations. Other activities are also carried out depending on the specialist unit. For some specialist units these include consultation work for institutions (school, youth work) and parents, for example in relation to the conversion of young people, in consultation with the extremism specialist unit responsible. They also carry out other tasks for training

activities, such as the design and production of information brochures/materials, which are primarily used for training in the field of asylum, and other resources used for police training on 'intercultural skills'.

There is usually more contact with the leaders of the mosque associations than the imams who, in some cases, change every few years and do not usually speak German very well. The extent to which the bridge-building specialist units support the interests of the mosque associations varies, but an intermediary role seems to build trust.

"If requests are made in other areas, such as a planning application at the moment to build a new mosque, I refer them to people if I'm able to help and then support them because this helps to build trust." (Bridge-builder 1, 18.12.2018)

The situations facing the mosques in the local district are also a major topic of discussion. There have sometimes been minor neighbourhood disputes in areas near mosques, for example over cars not being parked properly. The bridge-building specialist units act as intermediaries in such situations as part of community policing and can play an important role. The bridge-building specialist units act as information hubs – in particular between associations and the police – where lots of information comes together and is collected.

"We also do educational work, for example on the 'Lies' campaign, foster relationships, establish contacts and carry out behaviour prevention activities whereby they receive the knowledge required from us to better assume their responsibility and can obtain advice – including in anonymised form – if someone is radicalised or brandishing weapons." (Bridge-builder4, 21.11.2018)

5.3.5 Prevention strategies

Serious issues are also discussed with the mosque leaders and imams by establishing trust and constant dialogue, such as domestic violence, the Federal Constitution, adherence to Swiss law, equality and violence in public places, which may be related to police work or also go beyond it. These discussions are also often linked to security advice in the interests of the mosque associations, for example by calling in internal police experts on anti-burglary protection etc. In turn, they also promote the assumption of responsibility for events within the mosques (e.g. in 'back rooms') and can promote and call for radicalisation prevention (also see Müller et al. 2018 and Ülger and Çelik 2018). The specialist units are also contact partners for police interventions (searches, arrests etc.) and act as an information hub so that the police approach can be understood.

"One mosque association called me immediately when the police carried out a major operation. Now my colleagues in the police force also contact me beforehand because it puts me in an awkward position if I don't know what is going on. So I now act as an intermediary and was able to hold a follow-up meeting with the mosque leaders afterwards." (Bridge-builder2, 21.09.2018)

Here they enable direct dialogue and can explain the background to and reasons for a search, thus providing a direct link to the police. In addition to the personal contact via a Facebook page (one page per religious community), in the city of Zurich this direct contact also takes place through a closed group as part of NETPOL (pilot project of the Zurich city police force) to exchange information on current incidents concerning religious institutions, such as spray-painted graffiti.

The differentiation from the repressive function of the police is important for all specialist units, even if this distinction is sometimes made to a greater or lesser extent. Trust-building nevertheless also seems to take place even during repressive activities, such as if rooms are opened voluntarily during searches and a debrief on the situation is then provided afterwards. With regard to training in the field of asylum, it is primarily about tackling feelings of uncertainty, prejudices and mistrust of asylum seekers towards the police and ensuring rights and obligations are understood.

"We mainly carry out very detailed work and can spend half a day in a class, for example – it's a big investment, but it helps to alleviate fears. We provide advice and promote a respectful approach from both sides." (Bridge-builder 1, 18.12.2018)

Not just asylum seekers, but also their mentors receive training from the bridge-building units. Internal police training on migration and religious issues is carried out and e-learning modules are produced in some cantons. Information about security-relevant developments is also passed on to better evaluate problematic behaviour by individuals or groups.

"Every community police officer, but also every other cantonal police officer can obtain information about radicalisation when on duty. We collect, analyse and process all of this information at a central unit. Security issues are also looked at here, for example in relation to demonstrations that may present problems." (Bridge-builder5, 26.02.2019)

In the past, this has led to the closure of problematic mosques or a clear line of action towards the 'Lies' campaign in individual cases.

5.3.6   Impact of the prevention strategies applied

All study participants interviewed found it difficult to determine the preventative impact, as assessing the direct effects is not straightforward. However, they all confirmed that progress on trust-building had been achieved by maintaining contacts, making it more effective. Early recognition would appear to be important in the field of extremism and violence.

"Mosques are open houses and they now understand that they need supervisors (people who carry out checks) to obtain an overview of what is going on in the rooms, but also around the mosque and in the neighbourhood. Checks are required as what goes on inside is often not clear." (Bridge-builder2, 21.09.2018)

A further recognisable effect is allaying fears and overcoming a perception of distance. The associations would usually only ask the bridge-builders for support if they were under pressure and could not resolve a matter themselves (Bridge-builder 1, 18.12.2018).

"Estimating the impact is always difficult – I'd be cautious about that. It primarily concerns prevention of behaviour by providing knowledge about what is legal etc. That is definitely more firmly established. Another significant effect is that people tend to come to us, not necessarily with a deep trust, but the contact threshold is lower. We cannot change attitudes and we cannot get involved in religious debate. We do not perform an advocacy role." (Bridge-builder4, 21.11.2018)

Establishing contact and trust-building also have a positive impact on the attitude of the target group towards the police in general.

"We can show the police in a different light through the bridge-building work, which presents a different picture to the target group and has an effect on all police work – including within the police force." (Bridge-builder 1, 18.12.2018)

Conversely, the trust established can be quickly lost if repressive police interventions fuel mistrust and rejection. The bridge-builders obviously cannot give warning of planned raids, but they can speak to the intervention team beforehand and deal with any unresolved issues with the mosque associations afterwards which can help to calm situations down.

"Trust is extremely complex and lots of things can go wrong during a major police operation. That's why it's important that I know about it. The fine line between repression and trust-building in the police force is always a contentious issue." (Bridge-builder2, 21.09.2018)

This is why communication and the procedure during mosque searches are vitally important and personal contact can be very useful. If the concerns of the police are understood and the procedure is carried out correctly, rooms are opened voluntarily and there is no lingering resentment.

The knowledge of the bridge-builders is also useful in case work on the prevention of violence with adults and young people, especially in work on a personal level, with home visits to persons suspected of presenting a risk. Situations can be better evaluated and approached through contact with key figures in the Muslim communities.

5.3.7 Conclusion

The prevention strategies in the individual cantons and cities are generally based on a common understanding of community policing, focusing on dialogue and trust-building, low-threshold consultation and interdisciplinary and inter-institutional cooperation, with differentiation from the repressive functions of the field of security (the extent of this distinction varies depending on the specialist unit).

In view of the usually limited personnel resources, the question is raised as to whether either the educational work in the field of asylum or the development of contacts with the mosque associations should take priority or whether both areas should be pursued with equal intensity. From the perspective of extremism prevention, the prioritisation of developing contacts with the mosque associations would be preferable, as the field of asylum usually involves universal prevention and only basic knowledge can often be conveyed due to the language barrier. In contrast, a level of trust is established in the work with the mosque associations that is a key requirement in order to address sensitive extremism issues and allows for jointly supported prevention measures based on a relationship of partnership. The bridge-building prevention approach goes beyond fostering relationships in relation to state security and therefore represents added value.

With regard to the approach of the bridge-building specialist units, there is reciprocal 'give and take' in the establishment of contacts and trust-building with the mosque associations when a supporting role is performed, for example with issues like neighbourhood conflicts or security concerns. The bridge-building units also provide an important link in exchange with other prevention agencies. The impact of their prevention work could be better determined by using a comparative effectiveness evaluation of cantons with and without bridge-building units.

6 Focus group feedback

The two focus group meetings – at the start (06.07.2018) and towards the end of the project (28.02.2019) – provided suggestions and allowed a critical discussion of the procedure and a validation of the results which were incorporated into the research report. They were attended by experts from the Office of the Attorney General of Switzerland, the Federal Office of Police, the Federal Intelligence Service, the Swiss Security Network, the FDFA's Section for International Security, the Swiss Competence Centre for the Execution of Criminal Penalties, the Center for Security Studies at ETH Zurich, the Institute of Delinquency and Crime Prevention, the Department of Social Work at the Zurich University of Applied Sciences, the Institute of Practical Theology at the University of Bern, the extremism specialist units in the cities of Bern, Basel and Winterthur, the canton of Geneva and the Zurich cantonal police force. including their bridge-building specialist unit.

7 Summary and conclusions

Radicalisation background: The evaluation of the data provided to us by the FIS enabled a differentiated picture of the jihadist-radicalised persons in Switzerland to be presented. The comparison with corresponding studies from the neighbouring countries of Germany, France and Italy allows certain correlations to be identified, such as the fact that jihadist radicalisation mainly concerns men aged 18 to 35, second-generation immigrants[62], persons living in urban areas who tend to have a low level of education and who are poorly integrated into the employment market. As in other European states, converts are disproportionately highly represented amongst jihadist-radicalised persons, accounting for around a fifth. As also observed in Germany and France, it seems that the consumption of applicable content on the internet also plays an important supporting role in Switzerland, but is only a sufficient criterion for radicalisation alone in very few cases. Group dynamics and contact in the real world with like-minded people also play a decisive role in Switzerland.

Radicalisation and the prison system: The prison system must meet the challenges of jihadist-radicalised inmates with regard to placement, execution of sentences and institutional and individual monitoring. The prison system institutions have to draw up plans to deal with the existing risks in a targeted way. This means involving professionals in the fields of medicine, psychology and social work, pastoral carers, prison officers and the probationary service and providing them with targeted training so that they possess sufficient background knowledge and skill sets to deal with radicalised persons vigilantly and professionally. The (relative) lack of resocialisation measures during pre-trial detention (particularly for longer terms) is sometimes underestimated by the prison authorities as a risk when assessing developments after release from prison. The prison institutions that work with imams and Muslim chaplains, who are recognised based on their professional and theological competencies, believe their involvement is important which is why it is recommended that this experience is taken into account to a greater extent in institutional reflections on prevention and disengagement.

Prevention and intervention: In the field of prevention, the extremism and bridge-building specialist units have been expanded since 2015, particularly in the cities and cantons which were or are affected by jihadist radicalisation to a greater extent. The level of resources, the integration of the specialist units, their tasks and their approaches differ but common intervention strategies and forms of interdisciplinary cooperation can be identified. In view of the great variance, the development of minimum requirements regarding resources, frequency of contact and inter-institutional cooperation would represent an appropriate approach in order for effective prevention work to be carried out. On the other hand, in view of the differing number and variety of cases (frequency of various phenomena, every case is individual etc.), exchange of experience between the specialist units to develop expertise is vital so that the evaluation capacity and repertoire of intervention measures can be continually extended and enhanced.

Finally, in comparison to the 2015 study by Eser Davolio et al., both the knowledge about the background to jihadist radicalisation and the strategies in the field of prevention and intervention have been refined, which means better coordination between early recognition, investigation, diagnosis and consultation etc. can take place – provided the relevant specialist units and resources are available in the individual cantons. The alignment of the specialist units towards a general form of extremism and violence prevention makes these services more independent of changing current forms of extremism and guarantees investment in optimisation of prevention and intervention over the long term.

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[62] In this respect, Italy diverges from the norm with initial immigrants predominantly accounting for the persons affected by radicalisation.

8 Recommendations

Recommendations regarding radicalisation:

1. The conspicuous features of jihadist radicalisation point to a shift away or distancing from society. Early recognition in such cases can increase the chances of successful prevention and intervention.

2. A multifaceted approach should be adopted for the reintegration of radicalised persons, able to adapt to various shortcomings (academic and professional, economic, delinquency) and requirements.

3. Targeted protective measures are required to protect vulnerable groups of persons against propaganda and recruitment by peers and recruiters who exploit their needs and shortcomings and can also use religious lines of argument to persuade them, as most have little theological knowledge (particularly converts), and lead them into the spiral of radicalisation.

Recommendations on the challenges faced during imprisonment:

1. The communication between the various authorities involved (Office of the Attorney General of Switzerland, Federal Intelligence Service, fedpol, State Secretariat for Migration, cantonal prison authority) is vitally important. Each partner must have the relevant information in their professional field to ensure effective management (for example, information on psychological profiles).

2. The creation of penitentiary centres specialised in the placement, management and monitoring of this type of inmate, based on the main population groups affected by radicalisation, may represent a suitable approach. Expertise and experience could then be optimised from two or three competence centres in Switzerland.

3. The disengagement plans in prison should take account of the reality of the situation in the establishments. Their nature will differ according to the type of sentence, the population, current events and the general climate in the prison itself. While guidelines can be a useful comparative tool, the establishment must be given room for manoeuvre with regard to the internal system of security management. Furthermore, optimisation of the probationary and therapeutic follow-up services for this type of former prisoner is also desirable.

4. For the prisoners identified as radicalised at their entry in prison, measures of resocialisation aiming to a disengagement should be implemented in short times. Indeed, the pretrial detention can sometimes exceed the length of the sentences, and therefore an anticipation of the implementation of a follow up is desirable.

5. The Muslim chaplains and imams[63] play a key preventative role. Their knowledge and skills can also serve the interest of prison staff, in particular in relation to matters concerning religious practices, but also sentences or slogans written in Arabic found in cells, the interpretations of certain works and authors and the relevance of translations of the Koran etc. However, it is important that they are part of the approach adopted by the chaplaincy, but also towards the challenges of imprisonment.

Prevention and intervention:

1) The cities and cantons concerned have set up extremism specialist units over recent years that cover a wide range of extremism-related issues. This seems sensible as the forms of extremism

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[63] Chaplains with Swiss educational qualifications and security checks by the FIS

are constantly changing. Further expansion of regional alliances is recommended here so that points of contact offering consultation services are available nationwide.

2) Networking between the specialist units and other specialised units (such as the school psychology service) enables a broad-based approach for both the initial assessment as well as for consultation work. The extremism specialist units should therefore be provided with sufficient resources and structures to carry out such interdisciplinary collaboration.

3) The decisive factor in the level of competence of the specialist units is their experience horizon and expertise in the specific case work on extremism, which is why the exchange of experiences between the specialist units in the form of case meetings and peer consultation should be stepped up.

4) The objective of the bridge-building specialist units is to establish trust with mosque associations in order to prevent extremism. To assess the attainment of objectives and the level of impact, a comparison of cantons with and without bridge-building specialist units would be an appropriate method.

5) In the case of existing bridge-building specialist units, intercultural networking with mosque associations and Islamic umbrella associations should be prioritised over the field of asylum.

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Zurich University
of Applied Sciences

School of Social Work

Institute of Diversity and Social Integration

Pfingstweidstrasse 96
PO Box
CH-8005 Zurich

miryam.eserdavolio@zhaw.ch
www.zhaw.ch/socialwork