



MINISTRY OF CHILDREN, GENDER EQUALITY,  
INTEGRATION AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS

KRIMINAL  FORSORGEN

# BACK ON TRACK

A PILOT PROJECT ON THE PREVENTION  
OF RADICALISATION AMONG INMATES

Final report June 2014

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## INTRODUCTION

Through the pilot project *Deradicalisation - Back on Track*, the Danish Prison and Probation Service has cooperated with the Ministry of Children, Gender Equality, Integration and Social Affairs to develop and test a mentor programme intended to support clients of the Prison and Probation Service in finding a way out of their criminal environments and extremist communities. In this way, the mentor programme may contribute to prevent extremist crime. The mentor programme was targeted specifically at clients of the Prison and Probation Service (prison inmates, remand prisoners and clients under supervision) charged with or convicted of terrorism, or at cases in which it had been stipulated as an aggravating factor in the judgment or indictment that the crime was motivated by the victim's ethnicity, political persuasion, sexuality or the like (a hate crime). The target group also included clients deemed to be vulnerable to radicalisation.

Prisons have a significant impact on the risk of increased radicalisation and strengthening of extremist communities, but also on the potential confinement of such communities and the creation of a positive change. Prisons are often referred to as having a negative impact on the risk of radicalisation, but it is possible to use the contact between staff and clients to foster a positive development and utilise new methods and approaches to facilitate life after prison.

The objective of the mentor programme was to make each individual inmate better at handling everyday situations, problems and conflicts. The mentors should support and improve the motivation of inmates to pursue a positive change towards a law-abiding life and to opt for affiliation with new non-criminal and non-extremist groups.

This document is the final report on the *Deradicalisation - Back on Track* project. It gives an overview of the main learning points from the project in relation to the mentors, the mentor training programme, the mentees, practical and administrative procedures and international cooperation in this field, and to future possibilities and consolidation of efforts. The report also addresses some of the special challenges faced during the project, such as the challenge of measuring the rate of success of such projects. Subsequently, the mentor programme will be evaluated from the mentors' perspective based on their experiences with mentor/mentee matching (and relations), the application of methods, tools, knowledge and experiences gained from training and supervision, and more specific details on the individual mentoring plans.

Due to the project experiences, the Prison and Probation Service has decided to continue and further develop the mentor programme and the training concept. An analysis is therefore being conducted together with other relevant authorities to identify how to set up a more specific and formalised cooperation regarding target group clients, to establish whether additional resources can be allocated to this field, and to examine how to continue the development and consolidation of efforts.

## MENTORS

### Recruitment and Selection

*Back on Track* is based on other current projects commissioned by the Prison and Probation Service and the Ministry of Children, Gender Equality, Integration and Social Affairs. Most mentors were recruited from the current mentor scheme of the Prison and Probation Service and from a current EU-funded mentor project on the prevention of radicalisation (*Deradicalisation - Targeted Intervention*) developed in cooperation between the Ministry of Children, Gender Equality, Integration and Social Affairs, the City of Copenhagen, the City of Aarhus, the East Jutland Police and the Danish Security and Intelligence Service. Moreover, a few mentors were recruited after they had learned of and become interested in the project through their employment with the police, the social service sector or the Prison and Probation Service.

In order to assess whether the individuals interested would be suited as mentors, a two-step procedure was launched. First the Project Manager of the Prison and Probation Service made an initial phone interview with everybody interested. At this interview, information was given about the project, the mentor training programme and the organisational and formal structure of employment. Questions were also asked about motivation, background, qualifications and competencies for the project. After the interview, the persons who were still interested and deemed suited were assessed by Navigent, the consultancy in charge of the mentor training. The assessment was made by a psychological test and a subsequent interview.

Based on the above recruitment procedure, the project started up with 12 prospective mentors. They had different backgrounds in terms of age, ethnicity, education and gender. The mentors were trained from March 2012 to March 2013. In January 2013, the matching of mentees and mentors was commenced. Two mentors dropped out of the mentor training programme for personal reasons, and the group currently comprises 10 mentors.

It was not difficult to find suitable mentors. The experience gained from the project is, however, that there is a need for ongoing recruitment of mentors because some mentors drop out of the programme, and there is a need for a wide variety of personal profiles among the group of mentors. Personal relations are crucial for successful mentor/mentee matching. Therefore it is crucial to take this into account when recruiting potential mentors in order to have a group of mentors of different backgrounds and personalities.

### Mentor Training Programme

Mentors perform a complicated job. Some mentoring plans take you one step up and two steps back. The relationship between a mentor and his or her mentee may be put to test, and the mentor may feel that his or her own ethics and personal views are being challenged. In addition to the mentorship training, the mentor recruitment and selection process described above is also intended to deal with

such potential challenges and make sure that the mentors are equipped to perform the complicated work that the relationship to their mentees may entail. Some of the keywords describing successful mentoring are a relationship of mutual trust and well trained mentors who are familiar with different techniques, but also able to use personal experiences and become inspired by others, and who are able to use personal reflection of their own techniques to revise procedures to the benefit of mentees.

The mentor training programme was developed by the consultancy firm Navigent and psychologist Malene Winfeldt. The Project Manager of the Prison and Probation Service attended all activities under the training programme and taught the mentors about the Prison and Probation Service, the procedures and framework of mentoring and employment issues, including requirements for EU reporting. It was also essential for the Project Manager to be involved in the mentorship training to be able to assess the competencies of the individual mentors in view of the subsequent mentor/mentee matching. Another objective of this involvement was to assess the contents of the training programme in view of the training of future mentors for the Prison and Probation Service.

The training programme comprised three two-day seminars and two follow-up seminars. The Ministry of Children, Gender Equality, Integration and Social Affairs and the Danish Security and Intelligence Service supplemented the mentor training programme with a targeted two-day course on extremism and radicalisation. Moreover, networking days for mentors were organised during the programme. The purposes of the networking events were to give the mentors a chance to meet each other and exchange their mentoring experiences during and after the end of the training programme and to supplement the training on an ongoing basis by presentations and discussions about relevant subjects.

Four mentor coaches were trained concurrently with the training of mentors. In addition to being mentors themselves, they also acted as supervisors for their fellow mentors and provided ongoing support. The mentor coaches completed the ordinary mentor training programme and were moreover given two separate days of training to become qualified to coach their fellow mentors.

Two facilitators with considerable experience in procedural training and knowledge of the Prison and Probation Service were the regular facilitators during the training programme. The facilitators' professional insight into relational work and their knowledge of the Prison and Probation Service and the target group benefitted the training process, which was adapted specifically to the project.

The training programme was ambitious relative to the time available for training the mentors. The elements of the training programme were deemed to be highly relevant by the participants, but it was not realistic to expect that the mentors would become fully equipped for using all tools in a strictly methodical manner right after completing the training programme. It is therefore recommended to reduce the ambitions for the mentor training and to maintain focus on improving the skills of mentors in the motivational interviewing method (see the booklet entitled *Deradicalisation - Back on Track - Concept for mentor training programme with a focus on extremism and radicalisation*). The mentors may

benefit from being offered supervision in the use of that method to focus attention on what they have learned.

The mentoring plan was adjusted on an ongoing basis. Radicalisation and extremism are areas and knowledge fields undergoing change, and the mentors' needs and situations also changed during the process. It is essential that updated knowledge about the field becomes available to the existing group of mentors as the focus areas relative to the target group undergo constant changes. One example is the urgent situation with especially young people who want to go to Syria to take part in the conflict. The ongoing development in the field made demands of the facilitators, who were required to adjust priorities as they went along while keeping a sense of perspective of the goal of the training programme. It might have been beneficial to include other theories and perspectives, and the challenge was to strike the best balance between what was necessary and what was interesting.

In connection with the mentor training, the consultancy firm Navigent and psychologist Malene Winfeldt produced a booklet entitled *Deradicalisation – Back on Track – Concept for mentor training programme with a focus on extremism and radicalisation*, which describes in detail the contents and structure of the training programme as well as the facilitators' experiences and narrations from the mentors already trained about their impression of the training programme.

On a general level, the training programme was one of the most essential outputs of the project, and the training concept has contributed positively to the development of further mentor training plans within other fields and has provided great inspiration to mentor programmes in general. One example is the current training of mentors for the gang exit programme of the Prison and Probation Service, which has also drawn inspiration from *Back on Track* and the experiences from this project.

## MENTEES

### Identification

One of the major challenges of the project was to identify, analyse and assess mentees. The Prison and Probation Service has not yet developed any specific tools for this target group, which made the work more time-consuming and challenging. Potential candidates were mainly identified by the Security Unit of the Prison and Probation Service because this unit currently has the best overview of the clients of the target group who are either inmates of an institution of the Prison and Probation Service or under supervision by the Probation Service. Other mentees were identified at the institutions of the Prison and Probation Service. Most of them were clients whose behaviour had changed and who were suspected of undergoing radicalisation.

After the initial identification of potential mentees, the Project Manager of the Prison and Probation Service was contacted, and a thorough and often quite long process began. The relevant institutions and other relevant authorities were involved in this process of assessing whether the individual clients fell within the target group. Afterwards the motivational work started. The purpose of this work was to encourage the clients to enrol in the project.

The work of identifying mentees was commenced late 2012 because it was deemed more expedient to fully equip the mentors with the skills needed before matching them with mentees.

The experience gained from the project is that it would be an advantage to place greater focus on the process of identifying clients who may benefit from being given a mentor. Based on the experiences gained from this project, the Prison and Probation Service will focus on improving the mentee selection process in future.

### Motivation and Retention

Personal motivation is a very fundamental prerequisite of change management. One of the challenges of the mentor programme was that the clients were not motivated for any change from the outset, and several refused to have a mentor or dropped out during the project despite thorough motivational work. That made it difficult to find clients from the primary target group. Moreover, the lack of assessment and motivational tools that the Prison and Probation Service could have used to motivate individuals of the specific target group was also a challenge to the project. Based on the experiences gained from the project, the Prison and Probation Service will aim to improve the motivational work among the target group.

### Target Group Size

Despite the challenges experienced along the way, a total of 13 mentor/mentee working relationships were established during the project period. The project received suggestions for 22 potential participants in the target group. Six clients in the primary target group are currently having or have had a mentor, and more cases are being examined to clarify whether those individuals are to be offered a mentor. The number of individual mentoring plans set up must also be viewed relative to the size of the target group.



Within the past ten years, the Prison and Probation Service has registered 33 persons as being 'prone to terrorism'. This means that they have either been suspected of or sentenced for violation of the anti-terrorist provision. Moreover, institutions of the Prison and Probation Service have reported a number of clients who have given rise to concern because it is feared that they have been on their way into an extremist environment. In other words, the target group comprises a fairly small number of clients, and in this situation it is therefore considered satisfactory that six mentor/mentee relationships were established with members of the primary target group during the relatively short project period and in view of the limited resources available.

In addition, seven other mentor/mentee relationships were established with clients of the Prison and Probation Service who were affiliated with criminal gangs and who wanted to exit the gang environment. It is becoming more pronounced that extremist environments are interconnected with criminal environments and that more criminals are affiliated with extremist groups. Accordingly, there are many similarities between the primary target group and the clients from the criminal gang environment, for which reason it is fruitful for the mentors to possess knowledge about and experience from both fields. On the basis of experiences from both projects, it is the assessment of the Prison and Probation Service that the mentoring competencies and tools acquired are useful in both groups. Moreover, this is also the feedback from the mentors involved in *Back on Track*.

## Involvement of Families and Networks

From the very beginning, the idea of involving the family and social networks of the individual inmate outside the prison and attempting to involve them in a positive manner while the inmate was in pre-trial detention, while he or she served a sentence and during the period preceding and following the actual release from prison, was an essential element of the project. It was also the intention that the individual mentor should assist his or her mentee during the pre-release and post-release periods to solve specific challenges, such as a place to live, training, job opportunities and support for identifying alternative social networks.

However, this turned out to be a difficult task for several reasons. The first challenge was that the mentor/mentee relationships were established during the sentence enforcement period, and it was not possible to involve the mentees' families in a relevant manner in the current mentoring plans since the date of release was not in the immediate future. Additionally, two of the mentees wished not to involve their families, and therefore family involvement was not a possibility.

In future, priority will still be given to family involvement if possible since family and other networks may be very crucial for a successful exit from an extremist environment. It is particularly important to involve former networks outside the extremist environment, such as family and old friends, as a way of creating new personal networks since those fora may contribute as a positive resource to those efforts.

## PRACTICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE ARRANGEMENTS

The practical arrangements related to the group of mentors (payment of salary, matching of mentors and mentees, conclusion of agreements with mentors and their place of employment, ongoing follow-up on the efforts, and ongoing contact to the full group of mentors) were handled by the Prison and Probation Service during the entire project. From the very beginning of the project, the mentor programme of *Back on Track* was, as mentioned above, developed in close cooperation with those developing the mentor scheme of the gang exit programme of the Prison and Probation Service, and several of the mentors trained had clients enrolled in the gang exit programme.

### Resources and Consolidation of Activities

The work of managing the group of mentors, identifying mentees and matching mentors and mentees as well as the ongoing follow-up on the initiatives is a time-consuming process. The Prison and Probation Service has decided to continue the mentor programme after the end of the project. To this end it will be investigated how to obtain resources for managing the mentor programme and how to better integrate it in the organisation.

During the project period, various activities were conducted to make the project known to the Prison and Probation staff in general and to make them help identify mentees. One of the activities was to organise a number of informational meetings at relevant prisons together with the Ministry of Children, Gender Equality, Integration and Social Affairs. Meetings were held both before and during the project period. Information was also posted on the intranet of the Prison and Probation Service and given at meetings, networking days and seminars for relevant employees.

The project period showed that it may be beneficial to improve the information to the staff of the Prison and Probation Service, and as a consequence of the experiences gained from the project and other experiences, the Prison and Probation Service has made a strategy for improved training of its staff in future.

### Cooperation among Authorities

The project period made it apparent that there is a need for a more formalised cooperation among authorities regarding the target group. Initiatives for this target group involve several authorities with different working methods, resources and objectives, and effective cooperation is therefore essential. As mentioned above, the mentor programme of *Back on Track* was established within the scope of the existing mentor scheme of the Prison and Probation Service. The project was carried out through cooperation between the Prison and Probation Service and the

Ministry of Children, Gender Equality, Integration and Social Affairs, and the Danish Security and Intelligence Service was involved in an advisory group to make sure that efforts were coordinated. The cooperation between the three authorities was good, and it was an excellent example of the importance of close coordination to a project like *Back on Track*. Each of the three authorities has its own focus areas for which reason they can contribute different perspectives, experiences and overviews of the current initiatives from their respective fields.

The fact is, however, that at the practical level there is currently no formal cooperation regarding inmates in this specific target group – not even in relation to their release – which is inexpedient both from a security perspective and for the planning of relevant measures related to their release. It should be examined whether special procedures and cooperation networks should be set up to support the target group, or whether to integrate the work in one of the existing fora. As mentioned regarding the mentor programme, the project made use of experiences gained from the gang exit programme. For that programme, cooperation has been established between different authorities as have also procedures for managing cases at local level and for transferring cases when inmates are released. Several speakers attended the final conference to make presentations on enhanced cooperation between authorities regarding similar target groups. They had been invited because they were experienced in the cooperation between the Prison and Probation Service, social welfare authorities and the police and/or in the project called ‘God Løsladelse’ (Good Release), which covers the coordinated cooperation between the Prison and Probation Service and the local authority of the municipality in which a particular citizen will live after his or her release.

The first point emphasised at the conference was that all authorities involved in dealing with releases need to take ownership of the process and the relevant case to make the case proceedings successful. Secondly, regular procedures that are clearly defined and agreed upon by the authorities involved are crucial to the cooperation. Finally, it was emphasised also in this respect that the efforts to counter extremism and radicalisation must be linked to the other exit efforts, such as the gang exit programme, and be made an integral part of the existing structures.

It may be beneficial to look at the experiences from those efforts and from the experiences gained from the cooperation between the Prison and Probation Service, the social welfare authorities and the police and from the ‘God Løsladelse’ project. If existing experiences are used, there is no need to set up new, parallel structures for the specific target group; rather it is possible to integrate efforts with the common crime prevention measures.

## Evaluation and Documentation

The Evaluation Unit of the Prison and Probation Service will supplement this report with a collection of experiences from the mentoring activities seen from the mentors' perspective. Accordingly, the objective is to study the experiences gained by the mentors from the mentoring activities performed, including describing the reasons why some mentor/mentee relationships were prematurely terminated.

More specifically, the collection of mentoring experiences will include experiences with mentor/mentee matching (and relations), with the application of methods, tools and knowledge, and with training and supervision, as well as more specific details on the individual mentoring plan. The experiences of mentors are valuable for a future improvement of existing and new mentoring plans. The collection of mentoring experiences will therefore help clarify both challenges and positive outcomes of the mentor programme seen from the mentors' perspective. Moreover, input from mentors for the future handling of challenges will also be collected, as will also their feedback on what worked well during the mentoring and may be useful in future.

In general it is difficult to document the effect of the project if it is to be based on a measurement of how many target group members will abstain from committing extremist crimes in future. Moreover, the mentoring has been going on for a relatively short time, and accordingly it is yet too early to give a definite response.

Despite those reservations, the assessment is that the mentoring plans implemented have had a positive outcome. All mentoring plans were based on a mentoring agreement describing the relevant mentor's tasks. All agreements were revised every three months at meetings between the Project Manager, the relevant mentor and staff from the institution of the mentee in question. The areas described in the mentoring agreement are areas that are known from research to have an impact on the risk of reoffending, and which can help protect the individual mentee from reoffending through the support of his or her mentor, e.g., by support for finding employment or commencing training and for establishing contact to alternative networks. It is therefore essential to work on and develop those fields.

## INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

The European countries can learn from each other in several essential fields in which it is relevant to share experiences and find inspiration from each other. Many individuals of the target group have or have had relations with extremist networks in other European countries and accordingly have similar backgrounds to and the same motivation as them. Moreover, the correctional services of several European countries have similar structures and are faced with the same general challenges, and those similarities can be utilised when sharing experiences. For this reason, an essential element of *Back on Track* was to develop best practices across national borders and to share experiences from projects with and learn from other countries.

Denmark therefore participated in several European networks during the project period in which experiences from *Back on Track* were shared. A very significant element was the involvement in the *Radicalisation Awareness Network* (RAN). RAN is an EU-wide umbrella network of practitioners, authorities and local actors involved in countering violent extremism. The Prison and Probation Service participated in the *Prison and Probation* working group. Meetings are held every six months in this thematic working group in which relevant knowledge and experiences are shared. The Prison and Probation Service has presented the Danish efforts and challenges on a number of occasions, including the experiences gained from *Back on Track*. The experiences from *Back on Track* were also selected for presentation at the *RAN Plenary and High Level Conference* in Brussels on 16-17 June 2014.

Denmark has also played a major role in the *European Network of Deradicalisation* (ENoD), an interactive platform cooperating closely with RAN to gather experiences from various NGOs and practitioners working 'face to face' with deradicalisation in the EU Member States for the purpose of developing a set of best practices. *Back on Track* presented its experiences to the network through presentations given at meetings and at a conference in Berlin in December 2013.

Finally, Denmark has also played a major role in the international *Policy Planners Network* (PPN). The PPN was established in 2008 to create a dynamic network between European civil servants within the field of the prevention of extremism, which focused specifically on the sharing of experiences and recent research and practices concerning extremism and prevention. The network has contributed to creating strong, targeted partnership relations between the countries involved.

Denmark has benefitted considerably through its involvement in the network by learning from the experiences of others and by spreading its own experiences and approach to the preventive work, including in connection with *Back on Track*.

Moreover, good partnership relations were established with a number of authorities and NGOs abroad during the project period. To mention an example, the Prison and Probation Service exchanged experiences with the Norwegian Correctional Service regarding security measures in Norway and the Danish

experiences from mentoring in connection with *Back on Track*. The most essential foreign NGO partner is *Fryshuset* in Sweden, which has, for several years, made targeted efforts to develop exit and mentoring strategies among the target group. Additionally, the Prison and Probation Service has shared experiences with the German NGOs *Exit Germany* and *Violence Prevention Network*, which are carrying out mentor programmes for the target group in German prisons.

During the *Back on Track* project, priority was given to the cooperation with HM Prison Service in the United Kingdom and particularly with the *Central Extremism Unit* (CEU) of the London Probation Trust, which is in charge of dealing with persons from the target group. Since 2009, the CEU has developed methods for cooperating with public authorities (the *multi-agency public protection arrangements* (MAPPA) model), risk assessment tools, the cooperation with relevant NGOs, the training of relevant staff, the use of mentors, and specific initiatives for the work with clients. The CEU also has a special team of case managers to deal with specific cases. During the project period, experiences were exchanged between *Back on Track* and the London Probation Trust.

Moreover, two study tours to London were organised for the Prison and Probation Service, a facilitator from the mentor training programme and the Ministry of Children, Gender Equality, Integration and Social Affairs in November 2012 and May 2014. In November, the project team actually visited the *Central Extremism Unit* of the London Probation Trust and its most essential local partners.

In May, the Danish delegation had meetings with the British *Office for Security and Counter Terrorism* (OSCT), an executive directorate of the Home Office. Presentations were given by the *National Offender Management Service* (NOMS) and by representatives of *Channel*, an allocation mechanism supporting the ordinary referral system in the United Kingdom. Finally the OSCT presented its work of countering online radicalisation and foreign fighters, and the delegation met with representatives of the *West London Initiative* (WLI, previously *West London Impact*), an NGO that aims to prevent disengagement among young people at risk of developing extremist beliefs, the focus being on Muslims.

## SUMMARY AND FUTURE INITIATIVES

Altogether the project has been fruitful and the experiences highly valuable relative to the future preventive work. As mentioned in the introduction, prisons may have a considerable impact on the risk of increased radicalisation and stronger extremist communities, but also on the potential confinement of such communities and the creation of a positive change. *Back on Track* and mentor programmes in general focus in particular on promoting such positive changes, and in connection with releases on supporting the transition of individual inmates into society in a positive manner that will give them a chance of a new law-abiding life.

A major contribution of *Back on Track* is that the project has clarified which specific fields need to be developed by the Prison and Probation Service to improve the work among members of the target group. Based on the experiences gained from the project, the Prison and Probation Service has decided to continue working on and developing the following fields:

- The mentor programme and the training concept will be continued and further developed based on the experiences gained from *Back on Track* and the mentor scheme of the gang exit programme of the Prison and Probation Service.
- Increased coordination of initiatives under the gang exit programme.
- It will be examined in cooperation with the relevant authorities whether it is possible to set up a more specific and formalised cooperation on clients of the target group, whether they are clients of the Probation Service or serving a prison sentence. It may be beneficial to start this cooperation under the auspices of one of the existing cooperation fora.
- The procedures of the Prison and Probation Service in this field, including monitoring, placement, reporting, assessment and analysing, will be developed in accordance with the future action plan of the Danish Government on the prevention of radicalisation and extremism.
- Continued development of the training programme for the employees of the Prison and Probation Service.
- Identification of potential new resources for this field.
- Continued involvement in RAN and other relevant fora abroad.
- Continued cooperation on the development of initiatives together with relevant authorities and relevant NGOs in Denmark and abroad.

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