



EVENT REPORT

URBAN PARTNERSHIP SEMINAR ON YOUTH

17 – 18 May 2018

Diakonie Düsseldorf, Platz der Diakonie 1, Düsseldorf, Germany

Welcome and Introduction

From 17-18 May 2018, Eurodiaconia organised a 2-day “Urban Partnership Seminar on Youth” around the topic of political radicalisation prevention of young people through social inclusion in urban areas, hosted by our member Diakonie Düsseldorf. The aim of the event was to share projects from within the Eurodiaconia network and to better equip our members to detect radicalisation early on and to get input from international experts on the topic. Based on their work and the inputs of the seminar, participants developed a set of policy recommendations towards national and European decision-makers.

The seminar was opened by our host **Thorsten Nolting, Chief Executive Officer of Diakonie Düsseldorf** and **Florian Tuder, Policy and Research Officer of Eurodiaconia**.

Keynote presentations & Discussion

Tanja Schwarzer, Director, Council for Crime Prevention City of Düsseldorf (Germany) was the first speaker presenting her work on “[Radicalisation prevention on a local level](#)”.



She mentioned that Düsseldorf is not a stronghold for right wing extremism, because there are no functioning and well-established structures, compared to other urban areas of Germany. However, they have witnessed an increasing number of Salafist extremist related offences in North Rhine-Westphalia. The Council for Crime Prevention is part of the [European Radicalisation Awareness Network \(RAN\)](#) and is made up of a crime prevention board with 43 members, including representatives from local authorities, police, churches, voluntary organisations or trade associations. They have several expert’s groups, with one specialist group focusing on





„extremism“. She then talked about the programme “Respect and Courage”, where they deal with a variety of topics like democracy, racism and tolerance in the work with migrant groups. Finally, she highlighted the project “Schools without Racism - Schools with Courage” for all school members. It offers pupils the opportunity to actively shape the climate at their school and to develop civic engagement. This is the largest school network in Germany, with more than 2,400 schools participating (including two from Düsseldorf).

Deborah Erwin, self-employed youth engagement consultant, has a particular interest in work with young people in ‘contested spaces’ as well as youth civic engagement. She grew up in the context of the conflict in Northern Ireland and emphasized the fragile peace status that is nowadays even more threatened by Brexit. In her presentation [“Recalling our radical roots - Radicalisation prevention of young people in urban areas through social inclusion”](#) she challenged the status quo of today’s approach in social work. In her introduction remarks she mentioned the origins of the Latin word



‘radic’, which means ‘root’ and should not have a negative connotation per se. It used to be the role of Youth work to be more critical and youth workers have the chance to equip youngsters with the tools to take their own future into their own hands and change systems in a democratic way. Therefore, Ms Erwin is advocating for an active citizenship approach to support young people to be involved in social action projects and to let young people participate in decision-making processes to ensure their voices are heard. “To tackle youth radicalisation, you need to build strong relationships to the youngsters, you need to be willing to learn from them, be a ‘critical friend’ and provide them with opportunities for encounter and dialogue“, she stated. A paradigm shift from focusing on deficits to focusing on young people’s capacity to be agents of change is needed. That needs time, skilled and open workers/volunteers, appropriate training and supervision for workers and volunteers as well as adequate funding & resourcing.

Michaël Privot is the Director of the European Network Against Racism (ENAR) in Belgium and held his presentation with the title [“The nexus of radicalisations: getting it right to develop coherent policies”](#). First, it is important to look at the topic from a macro (broader picture) and a micro (intra-community) level perspective. In the last decade we have seen a deficit on democratic, economic and social issues. The EU and member states lack a clear vision and strategy for a more common and fair Europe and the “politics of grievance” seems



to be on the forefront. Pattern of radicalisation usually stay the same, whether it’s religious or left-wing or right-wing based. Often the lack of perspective, the lack of inclusion, the feeling of (not) belonging to a group and economic struggles are vulnerability factors. Extremists groups, especially IS, used the tools of Social Media very effectively for their recruitment. Second, he stressed that for a lot of minorities in Europe there is no space for them in the political spectrum. In counteracting radicalisation, a focus on the local community level is crucial. With a view to reducing the risk of radicalisation he



highlighted the need to invest more in strengthening communication/relationships with younger cohorts of Europeans including using social media. It is crucial to listen to these people and it is important that European Institutions and Member States treat radicalised individuals (or those on the way to becoming radicalised) as a part of the society and part of their value-based or religious environments, and not exclude them. Talking to them, understanding their feeling and motives is essential to create coherent policies and counter radical narratives.



After a short break, the panellists and participants came together to deepen their discussions on the topic in a roundtable setting. Participants from Belgium, Germany, Italy, Spain, Sweden, the UK, and Ukraine entered a fruitful discussion with the keynote speakers on how social inclusion and the work of diaconal organisations can counter political radicalisation.

After a lunch break, the seminar continued with project presentations of local urban initiatives in Düsseldorf and the best practice sharing session by Eurodiaconia member organisations, followed by a policy development workshop to formulate concrete policy recommendations for the national and EU-level.



Local Project Presentation by Hatice Durmaz (Düsseldorfer Wegweiser)



The programme “[Düsseldorfer Wegweiser](#)” started in 2014 with the goal to prevent young people from becoming religiously motivated extremists. Their objectives are, among others, to give advice in questions of religiously motivated radicalisation and to educate about Islam and the different schools of thoughts within the religion. Furthermore, they support preventing and/or disrupting radicalisation processes or counsel people, who are at risk of becoming

religiously motivated radicals or have been in touch with extremists. The focus lies on individuals who are at risk of or who have started the process of religiously motivated radicalisation. Other target groups include parents, friends, other relatives etc. of the above-mentioned persons as well as professionals, such as teachers, youth workers, counsellors or local authorities. Wegweiser offers daily walk-in possibilities at their advice bureau, they have a daily phone hotline to answer questions or organise workshops for other professionals or specifically aimed at teenagers to build up resilience against extremism. Finally, they offer support to local networks in specific neighbourhoods, in which young people are particularly at high risk of radicalisation.

Best practices by Eurodiaconia members

Mareike Grewe from Diakonie Germany in Berlin stated that exclusion and group-focused enmity are not marginal phenomena but exist in all parts of society and that increasingly an attempt is being made to play off people who are dependent on social solidarity in different ways. Therefore, Diaconia Germany considers it necessary to combine specific prevention and combating of right-wing extremist/populist positions with activities to promote democracy and participation for the formation of an open, diverse and inclusive society. This is precisely where the pilot project “[Shaping diversity - Resisting exclusion](#)” sets in, which Diaconia Germany implements by the end of 2019 as part of the federal program “Live Democracy!”. It aims to strengthen the democratic forces and civil society structures in Diaconia and society, to qualify them and to promote social cohesion. The project follows three approaches. First, the traveling exhibition “Kunst trotz(t) Ausgrenzung” seeks public discussion of social exclusion phenomena. Artists who place themselves in very different ways, socially and culturally, invite a wide audience to gain new perspectives on a society of diversity and want to help them find their own position in the political debate. Second, empower diaconal workers and leaders who are increasingly confronted with racist statements and other phenomena of group-focused enmity in their work, or are being attacked because of their commitment to a diverse society. Third, to support local civil society groups in their engagement, a “democracy kit” will be tested as a flexible and easy-to-use facilitation instrument for on-site discussions and networking events.

Nicole Borisuk from the NGO Living Hope in Odessa (Ukraine) talked about [early prevention as a key to tackle radicalization of young people in urban areas](#). The most vulnerable to radicalization and violence all around the world are children and young people. Radicalization is best understood as a dynamic, multi-staged



and multifaceted phenomenon that occurs at the interaction of individual vulnerabilities (biographical exposure) with an encouraging environment and is therefore always context-specific. Living Hope focuses its efforts on the fight of violent radicalisation through a holistic approach, looking at the children but also at the family, the school, the religious setting and the peers. Since the war in the Donbass region started in 2013 and the annexation of Crimea through Russia, youngsters increasingly have engaged themselves in radical ideas/movements again. Possible drivers of radicalisation in Ukraine include political, socio-economic, cultural (e.g. when the war with Russia started, some young people stopped speaking Russian and started speaking only Ukrainian) and media/social media factors. Corruption in Ukraine remains high and is one reason people lack trust in their government. In addition, there are many problems regarding free media, fake news and hate speech that can contribute to radicalisation. The low level (10%) of young people interested in politics is very problematic. Living Hope tackles radicalization tendencies, for instance, through educational and cultural trips, when youngsters from different communities and different countries come together and spend time with each other or they offer volunteering possibilities. The Living Hope day care centres create an inclusive and stable environment for disadvantaged children and youth, where they teach skills for communication, problem solving, conflict resolution and peace making.

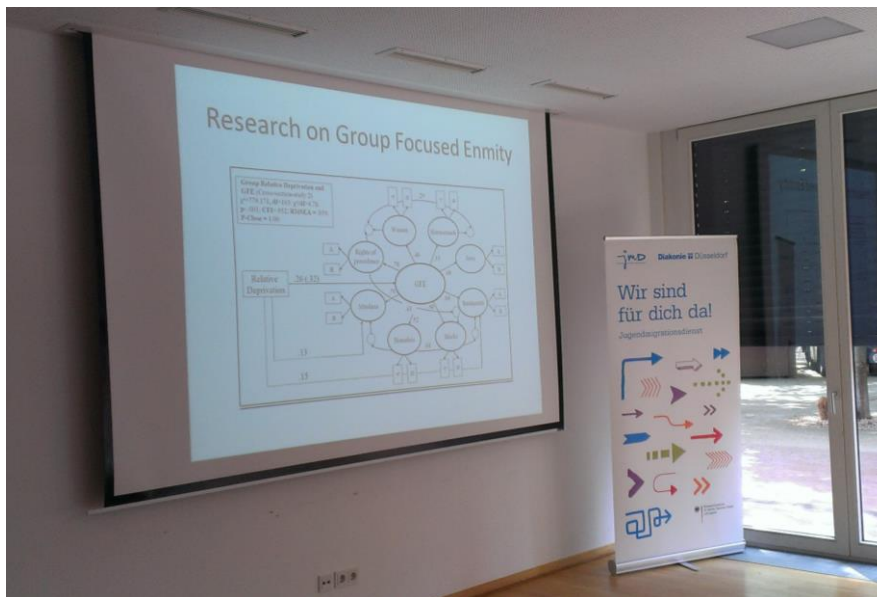


Tim Krause and Jasmin Groos from Diakonie Düsseldorf (Germany)

introduced the work of the [Youth Migration Service in Düsseldorf](#). In 2017 they had 582 clients with various national backgrounds that they were consulting (individual case management). They offer weekly dance courses, German language classes and several recreational activities. Then they introduced the project

“RAPLAB” that gave young people the opportunity to produce professional music/dance videos about Düsseldorf from their point of view. Cultural participation as a radicalisation prevention tool, because the youngsters had to learn to take responsibility and developed social, educational and democratic competences. Finally, Mr. Krause and Ms. Groos gave an outlook on the project “extremism prevention” that starts in June 2018. It focuses on youth with and without migration background in the transition from school to work. The main goals are to develop a coherent concept, to initiate and support a network, offer support for schools and the protection of students against radicalisation. The Youth Migration Service supports young people against radicalisation through group activities, such as social participation, democratic thinking or intercultural and interreligious exchange and providing individual advice.

Petter Karlsson from Svenska Kyrkan, Diocese of Västerås (Church of Sweden) provided examples of projects being undertaken in Sweden to [combat marginalisation and radicalisation](#). He began by setting the scene in Sweden regarding the existence of neo-Nazi and other extreme groups in communities such as Borlänge. Mr. Karlsson introduced the TV2 Denmark video/advertisement “All That We Share” that was putting people into boxes and then breaking them up again. He then expanded on the ‘St Michael project’ being carried out in the Mora diocese for community development, to bring people together through sport and other activities. The project represents a local attempt to facilitate and organize different partners for social inclusion and to counter violent extremism and anti-democratic movements. The sport initiative uses ice hockey to get young people, many of whom might be new in Sweden, to join community activities, and as a gateway to further participation in educational or extracurricular activities developed on the sports pitch.



As a second step, the project also brings hockey players to meet the project leaders for two hours before training twice a month, so that the group can have a safe space to listen and talk to one another. This initiative of bringing people together is one way that Svenska Kyrkan are offering alternatives to young people who might find themselves susceptible to radicalization or extreme movements. Although one example among many activities conducted by our member in Sweden, this project upholds the aims of Svenska Kyrkan's community and social work, to develop a targeted and

preventive model for long term investment in communities, to promote dialogue on the risks and factors relating to radicalisation and exclusion, to create safe spaces and trust for young people, and to keep youth at the centre of their work.

Tijana Vidovic from the Ecumenical Humanitarian Organisation in Novi Sad talked about [street children and \(self-\) radicalisation in Serbia](#), which is often triggered by the sense of not belonging to a group of peers and a lack of self-awareness and identity. Biased media coverage about street children often fuels their own misperception and prejudice in society. EHO provides services through street work activities, when they meet the children on the street and try to support them as best as they can, e.g. offering food and clothes, but also educational activities. She presented a photo-book as a result of a project, where street children were given cameras to portrait themselves. Novi Sad is becoming the European Capital of Culture in 2021, which creates opportunities for EHO to get support from the municipality.

Jürgen Stein from the Diakonische Werk Bremen (Germany) talked about [the importance of networking in the prevention of radicalization with a special focus on the challenges in the internet](#). NGO, CSOs, and other organisations need to work together and create networks and alliances to guarantee a sustainable and holistic approach in tackling radicalisation online. Digital literacy training for youngsters (and adults) is an important skill in the prevention process, especially in times of fake news. Diaconia Bremen is part of the city network against hate and radicalisation. Mr. Stein stressed the importance to give organisations a strong and qualified presence in the internet, to use the skills of youngsters and include them in the digital parts of the youth work (social media, website...), but also organise internet-free-times.



Policy Development Workshop

The meeting concluded with a policy development workshop. Based on their work and the inputs of the seminar, participants developed a set of policy recommendations towards national and European decision-makers and how Eurodiaconia can support these efforts. Eurodiaconia will publish a comprehensive paper in the coming months on these recommendations which were developed around the following questions:



(1) What is the biggest challenge to tackle radicalisation prevention

Eurodiaconia members mentioned the lack of sustainable, long-term funding; From Eurodiaconia members' experience, short-term projects are not suitable to create and retain knowledge and to create real impact in communities. On a European level, participants felt that the EU is lacking a clear vision about where the union wants to go when it comes to the important balance as

regards radicalisation prevention: social justice – security. Eurodiaconia members urged to see social inclusion and equal opportunities as the key to a successful security debate. Poverty must not become a security issue, but there needs to be a holistic approach to tackle radicalisation before it evolves at all through smart social inclusion actions and structural change.

(2) Which European/national policies are needed to tackle radicalisation from a social inclusion point of view – and what needs to be avoided

Eurodiaconia members stressed to increase transnational exchange of good practices in Europe in order to learn from different experiences and contexts. What the participants felt is also still underdeveloped among many Europeans is media literacy in terms of fake news and the responsible use of social media – there is a wish to have sustainable funding also from the European Union available for increase capacity-building in local communities through local organisations which are working on a grass-root level.

(3) What can Eurodiaconia and its network do to support reaching policy change and common goals.

Eurodiaconia members acknowledged the role of the network as a bridge between the EU and the Member States, to translate European policies to the local, implementing level. Also, Eurodiaconia offers the right platform for exchange and to bring a large variety of stakeholders together – including young people themselves as they have to benefit from policies developed at EU and national level. The dissemination of European initiatives was mentioned, but also the identification not only of best practices – bad practices as well, as we learn most from mistakes, which also includes Christian organisations; honesty needs to be at the centre of the debate regarding all policies and actors involved in the field.