

How to manage returned foreign fighters and other Syria travellers?

Measures for safeguarding and follow-up

Tina Wilchen Christensen and Tore Bjørgo



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Contents

Foreword	4
1. Introduction	5
The reintegration of former extremists is a controversial project	9
Methodology, selected literature and suggestions for further reading.....	12
2. Syria travellers - what is the problem?	15
The legislation in this field	15
A historical and ideological view	17
Potential motivations for departure.....	21
Characteristics of a typical jihadist from Norway.	21
3. “Syria travellers” - a new form of extremist?.....	25
Returned Syria travellers and other extremists - differences and similarities	25
Men, women and children - different problems and risks	27
4. General knowledge of and experiences with “disengagement” and “deradicalisation”	34
Push, pull and barrier factors	35
“Radicalisation” and “deradicalisation” - unclear terms and loose connection.....	39
Deradicalisation, disengagement and reintegration - what should the focus be?	41
Initiatives for supporting people in a disengagement process - inside and outside of prison... ..	44
Focus points in a (re)socialisation and reintegration process	47
5. Factors of importance for managing the “radicalised” in prisons.....	51
Together or individually? Managing extremists in prison	52
Factors in the development or change of an extremist identity and use of violence	54
6. Management of foreign fighters, returned Syria travellers and (former) extremists:	
International experiences and strategies	58
The Netherlands	58
The United Kingdom	61
Sweden	64
Denmark - an exemplary case	66
7. Norwegian experiences and models for managing violent extremism	72
How do the returned foreign fighters fit the established practice in Norway?	76

The management of returned Syria travellers in prison.....	79
8. Some conclusions and recommendations	86
Bibliography	91

Foreword

This report is the result of a research assignment from the Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Public Security. The objective of the assignment was to obtain more knowledge about measures that may be employed for managing, following-up and safeguarding foreign fighters who return to Norway, including imprisonment and different models for reintegration. More specifically, the objectives were to:

- Increase knowledge about potential measures for managing and safeguarding individuals who have returned to Norway after having been foreign fighters.
- Increase knowledge about the challenges faced and measures initiated by selected European countries in the work on managing, following-up and safeguarding foreign fighters.
- Identify and describe one or more particularly successful models for reintegration.
- Identify the roles of different sectors, as well as required expertise in the reintegration work.
- Identify good models for coordination between the different stakeholders in the reintegration work, including statutory basis, options and practices.

The Center for Research on Extremism (C-Rex at the Department of Political Science, University of Oslo) was awarded the project following a tender process. The work commenced in April 2017 and was concluded in December. Tina Wilchen Christensen (Danish social anthropologist with a PhD in the Swedish Exit Project) was engaged by C-REX as the senior researcher in the project and was responsible for most of the data collection, interviews and analysis. Tore Bjørgo has also contributed with guidance, text (particularly Chapters 7 and 8), quality control and revision. The majority of the text was originally written in Danish, but was translated into Norwegian by Tore Bjørgo and Emilie Silkoset.

We would like to thank the experts who were willing to devote their time and energy to participate in the interviews. For reasons that are incomprehensible to us, we have been instructed by the Privacy Ombudsman to anonymise the names of these experts to avoid having to apply to the Norwegian Data Protection Authority for authorisation.

We would also like to thank Police Superintendent Beate Lauritzen and the Ministry of Justice and Public Security's reference group for their cooperation, their interest and constructive input, as well as for their remarks to the contents of the report.

The report was translated into English during Summer 2018. Some updates and revisions have been included in this new English edition.

Tina Wilchen Christensen and Tore Bjørgo
Oslo, 21 December 2017 and 25 September 2018

1. Introduction

Jihadist groups such as Islamic State (IS), Al Qaida and Al-Shabab have for many years attracted thousands of men (and in recent years also a significant number of women and entire families) who have, across different nationalities, travelled from their homelands with the goal of joining these groups and their fight. Islamic State (which is also known under the abbreviations of IS, ISIS, ISIL and the Arab acronym Daesh) has particularly attracted a motley crew of people, not least in connection with IS having in June 2014 proclaimed a caliphate in an area within and across Syria and Iraq. However, for various reasons, Syria travellers have in recent years returned to their home countries, including Norway. This report will provide a picture of the returned participants who are often referred to as “foreign fighters”, and who have been active in extreme Islamic or jihadi oriented groups.¹

The objective of this report is to actualize multiple issues linked to individuals who return to Norway after having travelled to Syria and Iraq, and to discuss how state, municipal and voluntary stakeholders can manage these returned Syria travellers. The different agencies and private stakeholders have, both individually and collectively, the objective of protecting the population and rehabilitating and reintegrating the returnees - normally after a brief or longer period spent in the criminal justice system. However, even those who receive long prison sentences will returned to Norwegian society. How shall society manage this?

It is our hope that this report can assist in the development of a joint understanding across agencies and stakeholders, since this work relates to complex issues such as radicalisation, extremism and terrorism. This particularly applies to the specific target group that we refer to here as “returned Syria travellers”, but much of this is also relevant to the management of other individuals and groups who act based on different forms of extreme political and religious ideologies.² Research shows that individuals’ paths into extremist groups, the development of an extremist identity and peoples’ way out of such environments, have more features and processes in common across extremists groups than factors separating them (Bjørge & Horgan 2009; Bjørge 2011).

The report is also relevant to the integration of refugees who arrive from areas in and across Syria and Iraq that have been under the control of the “Islamic State” or who come from countries where similar groups have terrorised the population through public displays of extreme violence, murder and execution. Like those who were part of the “Islamic State”, people from

¹In addition to Islamic State, foreign fighters have also joined several other groups in Syria and Iraq such as the Syria-based, al-Qa’ida affiliated Hay’at Tahrir al-Sham (which is an amalgamation of a number of other groups, including the Al-Nusra Front). Over the years, foreign fighters from Europe and Norway have also joined a long list of other groups with differing ideologies.

² Ideology is a system of ideas that provides explanations about how the social world should be, the individual’s place in that world and what is expected of them. Ideologies are a framework for interpretation and understanding that comprise beliefs and expressions that represent the context in which people interpret and evaluate the world. Ideologies can be used to mobilise, direct, organize and justify certain modes and courses of action (Schmid 2013).

these areas may also have been exposed to and/or witnessed many forms of extreme violence and may therefore display similar types of trauma and/or transgressive behaviour identified among those who have returned to Europe from the “Islamic State” (Meines et al. 2017).

This report focusses on returned members of extremist jihadist groups, particularly in the area in and across Syria and Iraq, due to the vast majority of those who are expected to return having been part of the “Islamic State”. This is also due to the fact that this organisation is considered particularly dangerous since the “Islamic State” is assumed to have had links to 38 of the 42 terrorist attacks directed at the West between 2014 and 2016 (Meines et al. 2017).

A brief numerical overview of the situation in Europe emphasises the seriousness of the situation. The figures below demonstrate how there has been a historically high level of terrorist activity from jihadist terror groups in Europe in recent years:

- Deaths: Between 2014 and 2016, jihadist terrorist groups killed 273 people in terrorist attacks.
- Attacks: In 2015 and 2016, jihadist groups carried out 14 attacks.
- Foreign fighters: Between 2011 and 2016, over 5,000 European Muslims travelled to Syria and Iraq. That is more than five times the total number who had previously travelled to all destinations for foreign fighters (Hegghammer 2016: 155-156). Around 100 travelled from Norway during this period (Norwegian Police Security Service - PST 2017).

Based on this, the fear is that people who potentially return may represent a particular threat to Norwegian society since, they may retain their ideological beliefs, maintain contact with an international terrorist network, and may be prepared to commit violence, following their return to Norway. Several of these returnees may also have weapons training and combat experience (PST 2017).

When we use the term “Syria travellers” in the report, this is primary with reference to the returnees who are expected to return from the “Islamic State”. However, the term also refers to those who have been involved in other jihadist inspired militias internally in Syria. The term “Syria traveller” has a broader meaning than “foreign fighter” because it also includes people who have travelled to jihadist controlled areas, but have not participated in military activities.

It is those who have had military training and been involved in combat operations who should be referred to as “foreign fighters”. This is a more recent term and has become part of everyday language where it is used when referring to the volunteers who travelled to join up with non-governmental actors in the war in and across Syria and Iraq (Larsen et al. 2016, Coolsaet 2016a). However, the issues that are described and the possible initiatives that are identified in relation to them also apply to individuals who have returned after having been involved with and/or fought for Al-Shabaab, Boko Haram, Taliban or other jihadist groups. These groups are ideologically related, inspire one another and endeavour to achieve their goals with the help of the same extreme violence practiced by IS and similar actors in the Middle East.

Despite many having departed with the intention of fighting for IS or other jihadist groups and who can thereby be described as “foreign fighters”, this term has become misleading. The reason is that the group of departees has become increasingly complex. We therefore use *Syria traveller* as a generic term in the report to indicate that this does not exclusively refer to “fighters” but to several different types of departees and potential returnees. These are people who, when (and if) they return, should be managed in different ways as each of them can represent a threat, constitute a risk and/or have a variety of problems that require support for them to be able to be (re)integrated into Norwegian society.

The term “Syria traveller” is used to emphasise that while the majority engage in combat as fighters, there have been an increasing number of different categories of people who travelled to the “Islamic State”. For example, women did gradually constitute a larger proportion of those who have joined the “State” and thereby represent a part of those who return. They may also bring with them (unregistered) children who are born and partly raised in the “State”. Women’s participation could be based on complex hopes – such as breaking away from the restrictive bonds of the family, achieving independence, the desire to assist with the development of the “State” or a belief that it was only by living in the ‘State’ that they could act out “the true religious life” (Seierstad 2017).

The Norwegian Police Security Service (Politiets sikkerhetstjeneste (PST)) has knowledge of about 100 people with links to Norway who have joined groups such as ISIL, the Al-Nusra Front and similar groups. PST cannot quantify the number of foreign fighters who have travelled to other conflict areas to join extremist Islamic groups, but this number is marginal compared with those who have joined groups in Syria/Iraq. This number of 100 Syria travellers from Norway corresponds to 19 people per 1 million inhabitants having travelled to these areas in Syria and Iraq. The number of departees in Norway is relatively low compared with other European countries such as Sweden, Denmark, France and Belgium where between 20-40 per 1 million inhabitants have departed (Carlsson 2017, General Intelligence and Security Service 2016). PST has estimated that at the end of 2016/start of 2017 there were about 40 people (PST 2017)³ with links to Norway residing in the “Caliphate” or “State”, but it is probable that some of these lost their lives in the heavy fighting that took place in 2017. PST estimates that approximately 40 people who originally left Norway to travel to Syria/Iraq to join groups such as ISIL, al-Nusra and the like have returned to Norway. The majority returned in 2014/2015 and the number of returnees has strongly declined since then.

As of the end of November 2017, five of the returnees have received final and enforceable judgments and two have been sentenced by the district court. However, these judgments have been appealed. The sentences were approximately 4.5 years for involvement and approximately

³ The figure of 100 also includes all those who have travelled to Syria and become involved with a terrorist organisation with links to the conflict in and across Syria and Iraq. The figure therefore includes both foreign fighters and people wanting to play a civil role. Of the 100, PST estimates that 40 are still in areas controlled by Islamic State. The remainder have either returned to Norway or other areas or are presumed dead. Approximately 20 are confirmed to have been killed (Carlsson 2017, PST 2017).

8 years for terrorist conspiracy together with participation.⁴ The sentences were based on new legislation which entered into force from 1 July 2016. Among other things, this new legislation prohibits Norwegian citizens and people residing in Norway from participating in armed conflicts on behalf of non-government groups. Trips and other preparations, including recruiting, for illegal military involvement in armed conflicts, were also criminalised.⁵ The Syria travellers who have returned to Norway and who have not been prosecuted have most probably avoided prosecution because they departed before the introduction of the new statutory provisions. However, several of the convicted persons who departed at an earlier stage have been convicted in accordance with other statutory provisions.

Despite the number of departees having fallen in the past two years, there may be reason to expect that the number of returned Syria travellers will increase due to the “State” having lost its territory, supply lines and strength. However, unlike in several other countries, thus far no such increase in the number of returnees has occurred in Norway. As of the end of 2017, the “Islamic State” was regarded as a defeated “State” in the process of losing territorial control. However, in autumn 2017 they continued to exercise control over a few limited areas in Syria and Iraq. As an organisation, IS is far from having been destroyed, and will most likely be able to continue with guerrilla fighting in Syria and Iraq and with terrorist activities, not least in Europe.

There are many and complex motivating factors for departing. These can relate to both idealism and solidarity, while ideology, moral or (perceived) religious duty are also important reasons for many. While others may be drawn towards conflict areas in search of excitement, companionship or recognition (Lia & Nesser 2014). These complex factors also apply to the returnees, something that is important to pursue in order to be able to identify the complex social and individual challenges which this gives rise to. Not least, it concerns being able to reduce potential terrorist threats and prevent further recruitment to extremist groups by generally facilitating the reintegration of the returnees into society - in most cases after shorter or longer prison sentences. However, to achieve this, the efforts towards reintegrating them as peaceful citizens must commence already while they are serving their sentences.

The Government’s *Action Plan against Radicalisation and Violent Extremism* (from June 2014, but continually updated) listed increased information as an important prerequisite for being able to develop effective measures against radicalisation and violent extremism. In line with this, the objective of this report is to increase knowledge about the general challenges facing (former) extremists and the description of this target group in order to be able to identify possible measures for managing, safeguarding and following-up returned Syria travellers, with a particular focus on highlighting and describing:

- General knowledge of “disengagement” and “de-radicalisation”.

⁴ This is based on data from PST communicated via an email of 30 November 2017.

⁵ See <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/status-for-oppfolging-av-handlingsplan-mot-radikalisering-og-voldelig-ekstremisme2/id2579415/>, particularly section 20, opened on 26 September 2018.

- Measures implemented in three selected European countries in the work on managing, following-up and safeguarding foreign fighters, including a case that deals with the reintegration of Neo-Nazis.
- Suggestions for collaboration between the different stakeholders in the reintegration work, including statutory basis, options and practices.
- The roles of the different sectors and agencies and the required expertise in the reintegration work.

The report will provide an overview of selected parts of the existing literature in this area. Based on this, we will provide an insight into our general knowledge of differences and similarities between the present target group and other forms of extremism and processes that can result in “disengagement” from extremist groups and violent activity and “deradicalisation” - changes in values and attitudes (Bjørge & Horgan 2009) – among former extremists and terrorists. Furthermore, we will identify important aspects in the process towards reintegration of extremists in general and returned Syria travellers in particular, and how they can be supported in this process. We will also describe four selected cases which focus on and have specific experience with the reintegration of former extremists/terrorists and/or Syria travellers, of which an exemplary model is described in more detail. In conclusion, we will highlight existing experiences from the anti-extremism work in Norway as well as successful initiatives, but also weakness and deficiencies, identified by selected employees in the public system and certain private stakeholders.

In the report, we will continually identify, highlight and emphasise aspects that appear to be of decisive importance to the efforts of the Norwegian authorities in managing the problems associated with returned Syria travellers and their reintegration.

The practices and programmes that are described in the report were selected based on these having been initiated in European countries with a developed welfare state and a liberal democratic form of governance. These are factors that make them comparable with Norway.

The reintegration of former extremists is a controversial project

Reintegrating former extremists is controversial in itself, something that particularly applies to returned Syria travellers who may potentially still sympathise with IS and/or similar organisations and groups.

A much debated case in Norwegian media concerning Aisha Shezadi (26) who joined IS in 2014 is indeed illustrative of the ethical, legal and political issues and dilemmas cases concerning sympathisers and (former) members of extreme groups induce and why they are controversial in nature. Shezadi’s story exemplify how such cases tend to polarise public debates and potentially societies regardless of whether the debated approach aim at rehabilitation and reintegration or a “lock them up and throw away the key” form of response.

Shezadi's story touches upon the range of difficult questions making foreign fighters and other Syria travellers such an arduous issue. The young women initiated her travel to join IS at a time when the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs advised against all travels to Syria⁶ and had likewise criminalised 'foreign fighters' and the support of a terrorist organisation (Andersson et al. 2017). Shazadi propagated on behalf of the 'State', recruited Norwegian youth to join the terror organisation and is still an 'enthusiastic supporter of IS' according to Norwegian media. She does not condemn any of the organisations actions and show no remorse.⁷

Since Shezadi joined IS in 2014⁸ the 'State' has lost its territory, many of the people supporting it have been killed, have escaped or are captive in prisons and camps across Syria and Turkey. Aisha Shezadi is one of them. She is being held in a refugee camp in Syrian territory⁹ with her infant son, who is a Norwegian citizen and the reason why she has addressed the state in a call for assistance to return to Norway.¹⁰

Shezadi's case is like many other cases concerning foreign fighters and other Syria travellers difficult to investigate and thus to established to what extent has she been involved and the sort of actions she might have been involved in. It is hard to scrutinize these cases and thus to answer as in the present case if e.g. Shezadi has just been, as she claims, a housewife in Syria and has not worked for IS even though she did live in IS territory and supports the cause of the 'State'¹¹. As Shezadi emphasis, if it was not for her child she had not wanted to return a country, as she states: '... where I was constantly suppressed and looked down on and where it was impossible for me to practice my religion'¹².

The case of Shezadi unavoidably addresses the already heated debate linked to questions of emigrations and 'foreigners' in the Norwegian political landscape. Touching upon questions of whether she is an 'enemy or traitor' and should be left to her own fate, as one of the arguments from a far right politicians of parliament goes, or if she should be assisted by the Norwegian Foreign Ministry to return, as one liberal politician argues.¹³ The questions remain unsolved about the child, who did not go to Syria base on his own choice and who has a legal right to protection? Cases about foreign fighters inevitable also brings with them questions of states' international responsibility and thus the position of the Norwegian state and its share in hindering its citizens to potentially pose threats to citizens in other countries. If so, Shezadi and others in her situation need to be brought back to Norway to face trial.

⁶ <https://www.nrk.no/urix/norsk-syriafarer-vil-hjem-til-norge-1.14057801>, opened on 18 September 2018.

⁷ <https://www.nrk.no/urix/norsk-syriafarer-vil-hjem-til-norge-1.14057801>, opened on 18 September 2018.

⁸ <https://www.aftenposten.no/verden/i/7lwkyK/Aisha-Shezadi-etterforskes-av-PST--mistenkt-for-deltagelse-i-en-terrorgruppe>, opened on 18 September 2018.

⁹ <https://www.aftenposten.no/verden/i/7lwkyK/Aisha-Shezadi-etterforskes-av-PST--mistenkt-for-deltagelse-i-en-terrorgruppe>, opened on 18 September 2018.

¹⁰ <https://www.aftenposten.no/meninger/debatt/i/6n7kvL/Det-er-stille-om-andre-norske-syriafarere-Om-meg-er-det-spetakkel-Hvorfor--Aisha-Shezadi>, opened on 18 September 2018.

¹¹ <https://www.aftenposten.no/verden/i/7lwkyK/Aisha-Shezadi-etterforskes-av-PST--mistenkt-for-deltagelse-i-en-terrorgruppe>, opened on 18 September 2018.

¹² <https://www.aftenposten.no/meninger/debatt/i/6n7kvL/Det-er-stille-om-andre-norske-syriafarere-Om-meg-er-det-spetakkel-Hvorfor--Aisha-Shezadi>, opened on 19 September 2018.

¹³ https://www.nrk.no/norge/raja_-norge-ma-hente-hjem-is-barn-1.14066032, opened on 19 September 2018.

An increasing number of Syria travellers have already been charged in Norway for joining foreign paramilitary groups as foreign fighters. However, people who are convicted of terrorism-related crimes are eventually released and will also return to society (Schuurman & Heide 2016).

In recent years, many countries both in and outside of Europe have implemented different measures with the objective of reintegrating both (former) political extremists/terrorists, foreign fighters/Syria travellers and gang members. Despite extensive research activity in this field, there are still many aspects of these processes and the projects that have yet to be adequately clarified, among other things due to the absence of evaluations and detailed insight into what “actually occurs” in various exit programmes. This also means there is an absence of an empirical-based understanding of the types of efforts that actually work or do not work, and why. This is knowledge that is continually requested by practitioners, policy makers and researchers. As stated in the report, only certain programmes have been evaluated or analysed by external parties. This field therefore offers up more unanswered questions than established insights and understanding of contexts and processes.

Our empirical-based knowledge of the importance of interventions that focusses on the reintegration of returned Syria travellers or political extremists/terrorists is therefore limited. This is further reinforced by the fact that there is sparse data pertaining to recurrences that can confirm or disprove whether these groups are more difficult to reintegrate than, for example, common criminals (Schuurman & Bakker 2016). In addition, it is important to emphasise that the reintegration of common criminals can generally be a difficult goal to achieve. For example, a Dutch study shows that 50% of former criminal offenders commit new offences within the first two years of completing their sentences (ibid). The percentage of those who recommit is significantly lower in Scandinavia where, for example, only 20% of Norwegian inmates and people under surveillance recommit crimes¹⁴ (Graunbøl et al. 2010). The Norwegian society is characterized by generally being less punitive than most other countries (Green 2008; Waggoner 2016), which is reflected in a criminal justice system that places a high priority on rehabilitation. A study on the public and political debate on returning Syria travelers revealed that among Norwegian parliamentarians there was "a striking consensus on the need for both reintegrative and legislative responses" (Fangen & Kolås 2016).

In spite of a general low relapse percentage in Norway for ordinary criminal, the figures across countries indicate that the expectations of success, particularly in this area, should be realistic. Like ordinary criminals, former Syria travellers must be expected to face significant challenges in relation to adapting to life after returning to Norway. These challenges are based on the special context and extreme anti-humanitarian and violent practices exercised by IS and other jihadist groups, combined with the general public's expected stigmatisation of the target group.

¹⁴ Recidivism rates differ greatly as they are depending on how prison population are categorised in the different countries, which varies considerably.

Methodology, selected literature and suggestions for further reading

This report is based on existing literature, reports and research on “foreign fighters” and other Syria travellers, as well as research into political extremism and exit-processes more generally. This is combined with expert interviews of several researchers, including from the University College of Norwegian Correctional Service (KRUS), an expert on the prevention of extremism from the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (KS), and an employee from a non-governmental organisation (NGO) in Norway. In addition to providing readers with an insight into the knowledge the report is based on, in this section we will enable readers to learn more about existing literature on foreign fighters and other Syria travellers, as well as related topics. We will therefore highlight selected internet resources, reports, articles and books.

We would, first and foremost, draw attention to the EU anti-radicalisation network: European Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN). Their website provides access to extensive materials pertaining to (de)radicalisation, (dis)engagement, extremism and exit processes, both in and outside of prison, that have been prepared in a collaboration between researchers and practitioners:

https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network_en.

Furthermore, in connection with this we would place particular emphasis on the report: *“Responses to returning foreign terrorist fighters and their families”* (Meines et al. 2017), which is a highly informative review of aspects relating to the management of returned foreign fighters and other Syria travellers. Many of the recommendations in the report have also been incorporated into the following report:

https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/ran_br_a4_m10_en.pdf.

There is also a great deal of information about extremism, both in general terms and classified into “right-wing, left-wing and Islamic”, from the Danish Center for Prevention of Extremism: <http://stopekstremisme.dk/ekstremisme-og-radikalisering/ekstremistiske-miljoer-i-danmark/ekstrem-islamisme-ideologi>.

RVTS East ¹⁵ (in cooperation with the Norwegian Directorate for Health, Regional Centre for Children and Adolescent’s Mental Health and the Norwegian Correctional Service), is responsible for the knowledge portal www.utveier.no. This is a resource site with the primary intention of assisting the inter-agency support service with a broad range of expertise in a number of areas concerning extremism and radicalisation. The portal now also contains relevant information regarding the management of returned foreign fighters. The Norwegian Correctional Service has its own information page with a particular emphasis on inmates and conditions in prisons: <https://utveier.no/krus/>.

¹⁵ RVTS stands for ‘Regional Resource Centre for Violence, Trauma and Suicide Prevention’ and consists of five regional resource centres that are subordinate to the Ministry of Health and Care Services.

Relevant information can also be found at:

<https://www.regjeringen.no/no/sub/radikalisering/id2001759/>

The books, articles and pamphlets listed below shed light on jihadism as a political, cultural and social phenomenon and its growth. Full references can be found in the bibliography at the end of this report. The articles and books also provide some information about the attraction of movements such as the “Islamic State”. In connection with this, we wish to make mention of the following: The article by Brynjar Lia and Petter Nesser (2014) on *Norske muslimske fremmedkrigere* (Norwegian Foreign Fighters), Rasmus A. Boserup’s (2016) book *Hvad svarer vi Jihadisterne?* (How do we respond to the Jihadists?); Rik Coolsaet (2016a), *Facing the Fourth Foreign Fighters Wave, What drives Europeans to Syria, and to Islamic State? Insights from the Belgian Case*, and Thomas Hegghammer’s (2017) book *Jihadi Culture: The Art and Social Practices of Militant Islamists*.

There is also a recently published anthology that has a particular focus on the many legal aspects of the phenomenon: *Fremmedkrigere - Forebygging, straffeforfølgning og rehabilitering i Skandinavia* (Foreign Fighters - Prevention, Prosecution and Rehabilitation in Scandinavia) by Anne Andersson, Sofie A.F. Høgestøl and Christine Lie (2017).

When concerning general knowledge about whether mechanisms and social processes appear to influence the involvement of young people in extremist groups (across ideologies), the following reports and articles may provide an insight: Tore Bjørgo, Yngve Carlsson and Thomas Haaland (2005), *Conflict Processes between Youth Groups in a Norwegian City: Polarisation and Revenge*, and chapters 5, 6, and 7 in Christensen, T. W. & Mørck, L.L. (2017), *Bevægelser i og på tvers av ekstreme grupper og bande- og rockermiljøet - En kritisk undersøgelse og diskusjon av ”Cross-over”* (Movements in and across extremist groups and gangs - A critical investigation and discussion of “Cross-over”).

Another useful report concerning the efforts of the municipalities is Stian Lid et al (2016), *Forebygging av radikaliserings og voldelig ekstremisme: Hva er kommunenes rolle?* (Prevention of Radicalisation and Violent Extremism: What is the role of the municipalities?).

Finally, the titles below provide an understanding of paths out of extremist groups and different circumstances that can support people in leaving extremist groups. Here we refer to Anja Dalgaard-Nielsens (2013) “*Promoting Exit from Violent Extremism: Themes and Approaches*”. The articles summarise the factors that we currently know are of major importance for initiating and maintaining motivation in an exit process. Sarah Marsden’s (2017) book “*Reintegration Extremists, Deradicalisation and Desistance*” focusses on “reintegration” rather than “de-radicalisation” in the intervention process. Kate Barrelle’s (2014) article “*Pro-Integration: Disengagement and Life after extremism*” highlights the importance of formal exit programmes and informal factors that are decisive to the individual's disengagement process. We would also mention Tore Bjørgo’s (2011) article “*Dreams and disillusionment: Engagement in and disengagement from militant extremist groups*” and Tore Bjørgo and John Horgan’s anthology

“Leaving Terrorism Behind: Individual and Collective Disengagement.” The articles highlight aspects that play a role when individuals seek to remain in or disengage from extremist groups. Tina Wilchen Christensen’s (2015) PhD thesis *“A question of participation - Disengagement from the extremist right. A case study from Sweden”* sheds light on certain forms of dialogue, activities and mentor relationships that can be of major importance in supporting people who seek to leave an extremist group under the direction of an exit programme and details the type of expertise a mentor should have for being positive support for the individual receiving mentoring. Last, but not least, further information can be found about the “Danish model” or Aarhus Model, which is emphasised as being an exemplary case in this report by Ann-Sophie Hemmingensen (2015) *“The Danish approach to Countering and Preventing Extremism and Radicalisation.”*

2. Syria travellers - what is the problem?

What is the problem with the returning Syria travellers? What hopes and dreams lie behind the departure of the various individuals?

The focus in the first part of this chapter is to present the applicable legislation in this field based on an extensive rendering of Sofie A. E. Høgestøl, Anna Andersson & Anne Christine Lie's (Ed., 2017) "Introduction" in the book *"Fremmedkrigere - Forebygging, straffefølgning og rehabilitering i Skandinavia (Foreign Fighters - Prevention, Prosecution and Rehabilitation in Scandinavia)"*. In other words, this applies to the provisions and rules that have introduced prohibitions against involvement in terrorist organisations, receiving terrorist training and for Norwegian citizens and Norwegian residents participating militarily in armed conflicts on behalf of non-governmental groups.¹⁶ Travel and other preparations, including recruitment, for illegal military involvement in armed conflicts, were also made criminal offences.

In addition, we review the features that PST denotes as being characteristic of Norwegian Syria travellers and militant Islamists, as well as Norwegian Defence Research Establishment (FFI) researcher Peter Nesser's (2015) typology of four principal types of participants in jihadist terrorist cells in Europe, which can also be applicable for foreign fighters. The chapter also places the phenomenon of "foreign fighters" into a historical context and the ideological conceptions that are at the heart of IS and jihadist groups in general. In the final section, we focus on scenarios that have motivated people to depart and potential problems they may face upon returning to Norway.

The legislation in this field

In 2014, the United Nations Security Council agreed to criminalise the involvement of individuals in armed conflicts abroad through Resolution 2178 entitled "Foreign Terrorist Fighters". This resolution defines foreign fighters as: "*individuals who travel to a State other than their State of residence or nationality for the purpose of the perpetrating, planning, or preparation of, or participation in, terrorist acts or the providing or receiving of terrorist training, including in connection with armed conflict.*" The Security Council's definition therefore emphasises that foreign fighters are individuals who travel to countries other than the country in which they reside or are a citizen of to receive training in being able to commit terrorist acts or contributing to, planning, participating in or committing such acts (Andersson et al. 2017). As previously mentioned, the motivation is often idealistic and is seldom financial or material, despite the majority of fighters until recently having been well-paid by IS.

The Resolution instructs states to use criminal legislation to prevent citizens from travelling abroad to commit such acts. This form of criminalisation has been followed-up by many

¹⁶ Participation in military activity in an armed conflict abroad may be a criminal offence, but the wording of the law clearly states that involvement on behalf of governmental forces does not apply.

countries, including Norway, by criminalising all involvement in non-governmental military operations in armed conflicts abroad. Therefore, pursuant to applicable Norwegian law, it is a criminal offence to participate in military groups irrespective of whether or *not* they are engaged in terrorist activities. This means that it is illegal for Norwegian citizens to participate in armed conflict abroad on behalf of a non-governmental force, irrespective of the military group one may be fighting for. More specific is the foreign fighter provision established in Section 145 of the Norwegian General Civil Penal Code:

Section 145

Participation in military activity in an armed conflict abroad

Any person who illegally participates in military activities in an armed conflict abroad shall be subject to a penalty of imprisonment for a term not exceeding 6 years, unless such person participates on behalf of a government force.

In addition, Sections 131 and 132 of the Norwegian General Civil Penal Code criminalise acts of terrorism and acts of assistance, including travelling with the intent of participating in a terrorist organisation in Sections 133-138. Norway introduced a terrorism section in 2013 that is more extensive than the UN resolution since it both criminalises “participation in and support to terrorist organisations” in Section 136 a of the Norwegian General Civil Penal Code (Section 147 d of the previous Penal Code) and also multiple preparatory acts linked to terrorism. The provision stipulates the following:

Section 136 a.

Penalty for participation, etc. in a terrorist organisation.

A penalty of imprisonment for a term not exceeding 6 years shall be applied to any person who forms, participates in, recruits members into or provides financial or other material support for a terrorist organisation, when the organisation has taken steps to achieve the purpose by unlawful means. Complicity is not penalised.

Therefore, people who are found to have the intention of committing a crime by commencing their journey to the area or carrying out actions that facilitate or indicate such implementation are also punishable. Attempted acts are subject to milder penalties than committed violations. However, it has been made a punishable offence to *attempt* to depart, to *depart* and to *participate* in or *recruit* members to a terrorist organisation such as the “Islamic State”.

In May 2016, the Norwegian Parliament (Stortinget) also passed three amendments to the Norwegian General Civil Penal Code relating to “military activities in an armed conflict”. The first amendment criminalised attacks by Norwegian citizens on Norway’s military forces and their allies, while amendments two and three criminalised recruitment to and participation in “*military activities in an armed conflicts abroad*”. The two latter-mentioned statutory amendments entail direct criminalisation of foreign fighters. Section 145 of the Norwegian

General Civil Penal Code therefore applies to “any person who illegally participates in military activities in an armed conflict abroad” and Section 146 applies to “any person who recruits another person to participate in unlawful military activity”. The two new foreign fighter sections entered into force on 1 July 2016, with maximum sentences of three years’ imprisonment for recruitment and six years for participation. These sections do not differentiate between the ideological beliefs the applicable military group is fighting for and also do not differentiate between terrorist groups and other insurgent groups¹⁷ (Andersson et al. 2017). However, they differentiate between whether the military group is categorised as governmental or non-governmental. The Peshmerga - the armed forces of the autonomous region in Iraqi Kurdistan - are considered a governmental force in Norway and are also an ally in the Western coalition’s military efforts against the “Islamic State”. Norwegian foreign fighters who have joined the Peshmerga in the fight against IS have therefore *not* been prosecuted.

In 2017, four court cases will be conducted against a total of five accused persons concerning foreign fighter activities in Syria/Iraq. A similar number of court cases is expected in 2018. As of 30 November 2017, judgments have been pronounced for seven people concerning foreign fighters in Syria/Iraq. Two of these judgments are not yet final and enforceable. Charges have been brought against a total of approximately 30 people.¹⁸

A historical and ideological view

The involvement of individuals in foreign conflicts and armies is not a new phenomenon. In the 1930s, approximately 300 Norwegians travelled together with political sympathisers from the entire world to join the international brigades in Spain under the banner of “combating fascism” and supporting the Republican Army’s fight against the Nationalists led by General Francisco Franco (Greve & Julsrud 2014, Lia & Nesser 2014). 895 Norwegians also volunteered to fight against the Soviet Union during the Finnish Winter War of 1939-1940. Some of these volunteers were among the approximately 1,000 Norwegian who were recruited by Nazi Germany during the Second World War in the “fight against Bolshevism”, while others became active resistance fighters against the German occupation in Norway.¹⁹

During the 1980s, young Muslims travelled to Afghanistan from places such as Chechnya, Uzbekistan and Iran to become “holy warriors” (Mujahideen) in the fight against the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. The Algerian Civil war in the 1990s and the war in the former Yugoslavia attracted young people who fought for Muslims and Islam. European Muslims have, particularly from the 1990s and beyond, joined Islamic and jihadist rebel movements, often in conflicts against foreign occupation in countries such as Afghanistan, Algeria, Somalia, Mali, Nigeria, Kenya, Bosnia, Libya, Iraq and Syria. However, it was not until 11 September 2001 that

¹⁷ For further information and insight regarding the Norwegian legislation and foreign fighters as a phenomenon, refer to the book which this section is largely a rendering of: Andersson, A, Høgestøl, S. A. E, & Christine, A. L. (2017). *The Introduction in Andersson, A, Høgestøl, S. A. E, & Christine, A. L. (Ed.), Fremmedkrigere - Forebygging, straffeforfølgning og rehabilitering i Skandinavia (Foreign Fighters - Prevention, Prosecution and Rehabilitation in Scandinavia)*. Oslo, Gyldendal.

¹⁸ These figures originate from email correspondence with PST on 23 October 2017, 30 November 2017 and 1 December 2017.
¹⁹ <http://www.hlsenteret.no/kunnskapsbasen/folkemord/folkemord-under-nazismen/bakgrunn/aktorer/norske-frivillige-i-waffen-ss.html>, opened on 3 August 2017.

several Scandinavian citizens joined Al-Qa'ida in Afghanistan and other militant Islamist groups as foreign fighters (Lia & Nesser 2014). "Foreign fighters" also includes Scandinavian right-wing extremists who have participated in foreign conflicts. One example of this is the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, where several have joined either the Russian or Ukrainian side. Therefore, being recruited to fight in a foreign country to support ideological brethren is not a new phenomenon and is also not restricted to Islamists.

The majority of the current group of foreign fighters are therefore part of a longer tradition in which young people from countries both in and outside of Europe have become involved in wars by joining militias that are fighting for "Muslims" and identify with the jihadist interpretation of Islam.

Al-Qa'ida, Islamic State, Boko Haram and Al-Shabaab are all examples of jihadist groups that have attracted foreign fighters. Jihadism is a common term for the ideology and movement that a number of violent, extremist Islamic groups act with reference to. The ideology developed in Saudi Arabia during the 1970s and includes the ideological mind-set that the above-mentioned groups promote when they call to battle and encourage and commit terrorist acts against people who they categorise as "unbelievers" *kafir/kuffar* (singular/plural) (Lia & Nesser 2014). According to jihadist groups, people who are defined as "unbelievers" are all of those who do not fully profess to Islam. However, this also includes Muslims who believe in different forms of Islam to the extreme interpretation of Salafi Islam practiced by the jihadists.²⁰ In the view of the jihadists, having different beliefs makes one a legitimate target for violence, murder, rape and slavery.

The US-led invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq in 2001-2003 appear to have confirmed the jihadist view that the US and other global powers were the actual rulers in the Islamic world (Boserup 2016). These wars in particular appear to have laid the groundwork for the jihadist interpretation that regards the wars as a fight *for* Muslims *against* the US-led coalition. This is a fight that has gradually taken the form of a war against what is principally regarded as the "West" and its values (Gule 2016).

The jihadist ideology is based on a worldview whereby everything is divided into opposites - pure versus impure (Meines et al. 2017). The ideology thereby also contributes to establishing a picture in which there is a general, value-based clash between Muslims and non-Muslims (Hemmingesen 2017). The fight *for* "Muslims" *against* the "West" is therefore an ongoing theme that is based on an understanding that Muslims in general are the victims of injustice and oppression in a global and local context, when wars around the world are linked together with conflicts and problems in a local context (Hemmingesen 2017).

Under this interpretative framework, (all) Muslims are made the victims of Western policy and values due to these not being based on a God-given order. Man-made rules and systems - liberal democracy and capitalism - are depicted as being steeped in hypocrisy, exploitation and abuse of

²⁰ This mind-set towards rival faiths can also be found among jihadist movements other than Salafi jihadists.

power. The “Caliphate” stands as an alternative to a non-divine social model, and is presented as the ultimate fair and just society. Under the special IS interpretation, the Caliphate is a strictly regulated and authoritarian society where there is no place for diversity.²¹ Based on this, the jihadists encourage revolutionary change that can only be achieved through the use of terrorism. This involves dehumanisation, ostracism and murder of those who think differently and of people with a different way of life (ibid).

This ideology, together with the continually more relentless immigration and “foreigner” debate that has been occurring in Norway and Europe more generally in the past decades, must also be considered to contribute to it being increasingly more difficult to be a Norwegian Muslim. Both sides demand an “either-or” form of identity instead of “both-and”. This feeling can pave the way for recruitments to extreme groups. Currently the Government’s *Action Plan against Radicalisation and Violent Extremism* identifies two major extremist environments in Norway, both in strong opposition to each other: al-Qaida-inspired extremism, and anti-Islamic right-wing extremism. In the worst case, further polarisation of the Norwegian society might lead to increased recruitment to existing groups, the emergence of new organisations and the radicalisation of existing ones on both sides (Fangen & Kolås 2016, p.421).

While many Muslims in Europe feel they are under pressure due to their ethnicity and religious affiliation, both the moderate and jihadist interpretations of Islam emphasise that all Muslims, regardless of ethnic affinity, are “brothers and sisters of faith”, where the affinity with the religion theoretically creates equality for all. This is a representation that in the present political climate in Europe must be expected to create fertile ground for polarisation and recruitment to extremist Islamic groups. In addition, the Jihadists also offer a “great vision” of unity and a world in which to fight for something greater than oneself. In an increasingly more individualised Europe, this can apparently appear to be visionary, different and attractive for certain segments of European youths. This also applies to some who are not Muslim but convert to a radical form of Islam.

More than 42,000 people from 120 countries have travelled to join IS and associated groups. Of this number, it is estimated that 5,000 departed from Europe during the period from 2011 to 2016 (Meines et al. 2017), of whom approximately 100 were from Norway (Hegghammer 2016, PST 2017, Carlsson 2017). However, while the number of departures reached a peak in 2015, there was a dramatic slowdown in this number in 2016. The fall of the Islamic State also resulted in the expectation of a (potentially) strong increase in the number of returning Syria travellers. However, this has only occurred to varying degrees. 30% of the departees are generally expected to return to Europe, while the figure is higher for Denmark, Sweden and the United Kingdom, where 50% have already returned (Meines et al. 2017). However, the violent hostilities against IS in Syria and Iraq could mean that many of those who are still in these areas will most probably lose their lives. This means that the potential number of future returnees has been

²¹ Several caliphates have existed previously and have not necessarily oppressed non-Muslims in the manner IS has done.

significantly reduced. However, there is still a great deal of uncertainty regarding where the surviving foreign fighters linked to IS are located.²²

The number and proportion of returned Syria travellers appear to be somewhat lower for Norway than for Sweden and Denmark. As of autumn 2017, PST estimates that of the around 100 Norwegian Syria Travellers, approximately 40 have returned to Norway, the majority of whom returned in 2014/2015, and the number of returnees has strongly declined since then.²³ PST is not aware of any having returned to Norway in the past year (2017).

A likely contributing factor for very few Syria travellers returning to Norway in 2016 and 2017 is that participation in a terrorist organisation, receiving terrorist training and being at a location where terrorist training is occurring were criminalised in 2013, and that the involvement of private individuals in armed conflicts on behalf of non-governmental groups was also criminalised from 2016. The statutory amendments were intended to improve the efficiency of the system for prosecuting people who had participated militarily in armed conflicts on behalf of non-governmental groups and to provide the authorities with better opportunities to prevent the departure of people intending on engaging in combat.²⁴ However, the most probable unintended consequence of these statutory provisions was that the Syria travellers who in 2016 and 2017 were disillusioned about the Caliphate and IS not meeting their expectations, or who wished to leave and return to Norway for other reasons, no longer saw returning home as a possible way out. The majority who returned in 2014 and 2015 have either been charged, prosecuted or convicted under the new penal provisions and their sentences have ranged from between imprisonment for 4.5 years and 8 years.²⁵ The prospect of a lengthy prison sentence has most likely deterred potential defectors from leaving IS and returning home and not just deterred people from departing their home countries, which was the original intention.²⁶

It is unknown whether the number of returned Syria travellers will again increase to the level from 2014/2015 in the coming years. Irrespective of this, the principal challenge in future years will be following up the returned foreign fighters and other Syria travellers who have been through the court system and have served sentences. The first of these people have already been

²² <https://www.aftenposten.no/verden/i/7lnkkV/IS-kollapser-men-farre-krigere-enn-ventet-vender-hjem-Det-er-et-mysterium-hvor-de-er-sier-ekspert>, opened on 26 September 2018.

²³ This is according to communication with PST on 30 November 2017.

²⁴ See section 20 of this status document: <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/status-for-oppfolging-av-handlingsplan-mot-radikalisering-og-voldelig-ekstremisme2/id2579415/>, opened on 26 September 2018

²⁵ Charges have been brought against approximately 30 individuals for, among other things, participation in a terrorist organisation (some have also been charged with financial or material support, recruitment, training, incitement or terrorist conspiracy). Some of these have returned after stays in the conflict area. Others have never been in the conflict area. Some of the returnees returned to Norway before it was made a criminal offence to participate in a terrorist organisation (21 June 2013). For some of those who returned after the law entered into force, the assessment has been that there are no grounds for commencing an investigation against them. As of 30 November 2017, there are two district court judgments for which the convicted persons have appealed the decisions regarding terrorist conspiracy and participation. The judgments are therefore not final and enforceable. There are also multiple cases that are under investigation. Some cases have been dropped, either due to doubts concerning sanity or due to the evidence situation (this is according to information from PST).

²⁶ Another unintended consequence of the strict penal sanctions for Syria travellers is that some of those who chose to remain in Syria/Iraq have most likely lost their lives (perhaps also some of the children) in the heavy fighting and the surviving Syria travellers continue to be involved with IS and possibly travel to other countries where IS has a foothold. If Norway disposes of its foreign fighters in this manner, other countries will then be left to deal with them.

released after serving their sentences and the number of those being released will increase in the coming years.

Potential motivations for departure

The jihadist ideological narrative that “Islam and Muslims” are under attack by the “unbelievers” is flourishing in many Islamic religious communities, on certain social networks and in online propaganda materials. IS makes active reference to wars in the Islamic world and how “every Muslim has a duty to support his brothers”. The war in Syria and the many documented atrocities against the civilian population have also given many the desire to travel to the area, either to fight or to assist in establishing the Caliphate in some other manner. The propaganda materials in general, and the Islamic State’s videos in particular, have aimed at shaping young people’s perceptions of what the problem is and how it can be solved, as well as their role in this context (Hegghammer 2016). The propaganda materials from IS give the viewer a feeling of injustice, but also create anger by showing multiple images and footage online of the horrors of war in Syria (Meines et al. 2017). The propaganda principally incites young people in the Muslim community in Norway and other countries to travel to what is presently the best known jihadist terrorist organisation, “Islamic State”.

While to outsiders IS is synonymous with death and destruction, to the dedicated followers, the same “State” represents an opportunity to participate in something that gives them meaning and direction in life. This applies both to the ones fighting to defend and expand the “caliphate” and to those seeking to become a part of a community of likeminded people who live a strict religious life in the struggle for a vision that is much greater than the individual (Hegghammer 2015). “Islamic State’s” propaganda therefore talks about a Utopia where anyone can live a life in accordance with the “true” interpretation of Islam, which at the same time positions the individual as morally superior to others. In this utopian caliphate, those who join shall be given a home with plentiful amounts of food, where there is order in the form of waste management and other social services, and top class health care (General Intelligence and Security Service, 2016).

Thomas Hegghammer, a researcher at the Norwegian Defence Research Establishment (FFI) has described what it is like to be a part of the IS caliphate based on autobiographies, video blogs and accounts from defectors. People who abide by the rules are given the opportunity to live a spiritual life, in which ideology, music, poetry and aesthetics are integrated into an equality-focussed and strongly ideologically-oriented community with great visions for the future. They can live an intense, satisfied life associated with the fight, the losses, the joy of camaraderie and religious experiences (Hegghammer 2015, 2017). The opportunity to be part of this appears to provide some explanation for why many different individuals of both genders and entire families have travelled to Syria.

Characteristics of a typical jihadist from Norway.

Participation in extremist groups occurs based on a multitude of very complex interactions between the individual and the group situated in a historical, political and social context

(Christensen & Mørck 2017). These are dynamics that must also be assumed to apply for the Syria travellers. While there is generally a lack of empirical-based knowledge regarding the reasons for the Syria travellers' departure, PST (2017) has identified an overall profile of the Norwegian travellers. Known Syria travellers and other members of the militant Islamist community in Norway represent a multi-ethnic and socially marginalised group, the majority of whom are first generation immigrants to Norway. At the same time, every fifth participant is a convert to Islam and the majority of these converts have a Norwegian background. The group in PST's study have an average age of 27.5. The vast majority are young men with a low level of education and weak history of employment and hardly any have completed higher education (in comparison, a much greater number of the departees from the United Kingdom and France have a high level of education). Many have a criminal background and potential for violence that the police were already aware of prior to their departure (PST 2017, Carlsson 2017). This also applies to a significant number of foreign fighters from other European countries.

According to an interview with an employee at KRUS²⁷ who has met with prison inmates after their return to Norway, this principally concerns men of both Norwegian and other ethnic backgrounds, several of whom were involved in less serious crimes such as selling drugs, abuse and violence. The group of departees are characterised by having difficult family situations and social marginalisation. Those who distance themselves from what they were involved in can be characterised as "seekers" who have often been part of many different, alternative groups such as skateboarders, gangs or similar marginalised groups. These are the types of groups they are able to negotiate access to because they lack the types of formal qualifications society otherwise requires. For this group, irrespective of ethnic affiliation, conversion to Islam represents inclusion in a community that also offers one the chance of a new life, forgiveness for past sins and thereby a form of rehabilitation based on a new opportunity to renegotiate one's position in one's surroundings. They no longer identify themselves as Norwegian-Somali or Norwegian-Pakistani but as Muslim, with the advantages and disadvantages this entails. As those interviewed explained, this means that, regardless of gender, the individual is treated with respect and status as an equal. Inclusion in an internationally-oriented community across ethnic and national lines gives them a feeling of inclusion, whereby they no longer consider themselves marginalised. They also have a cause to fight for: "Muslims in Syria" and the "Caliphate".

Based on a detailed review of al-Qa'ida inspired groups and their members in Europe, Petter Nesser at FFI has identified four general typologies of participants in Islamic terror groups (2006). The typology provides a detailed description of different personality types and their motivation for their participation and position in jihadist terrorist groups. The typology provides an insight into the participants' level of education, social position, relationships and skills in relation to the group. The four types can be described as follows (Nesser 2010, 2015):

²⁷ We have been instructed by the Privacy Ombudsman to anonymise our interview subjects to avoid having to apply to the Norwegian Data Protection Authority for full authorisation, despite these experts themselves having no wish or need for being anonymised.

1. The “*Entrepreneur*” is the most important person in the development of an extremist Islamic cell. He is analytical and very proactive and who is driven by an interest in political and social issues. He is motivated more by intellectual process than by personal needs. He can “translate” social injustice into political goals in order to improve conditions for those who, based on ethnicity, common background and the idea of a common destiny, he regards as “his people”. He is often older than the other members, who he recruits, radicalises and trains based on his ideological beliefs. The entrepreneur establishes contact with militant groups and maintains the cell’s links with the jihadist infrastructure, militant groupings and mentors (for example, prominent radical religious leaders). Inspired, supported and, in part, controlled by these people, the entrepreneur manages the cell’s activities and members. He will often have been a foreign fighter in other jihadist combat areas, for example in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Chechnya and now Syria/Iraq.

2. The “*Protégé*” is a person who, compared with the other members of the group, stands out as being particularly intelligent and talented. The protégé is the person the leader trusts and who is assigned particularly trusted tasks, while for his part, the protégé looks up to and admires the leader. The protégé is generally a resourceful person who is educated and possesses other skills. By virtue of his education, he is the person who provides the cell with knowledge about developing a bomb, IT expertise or similar. Like the entrepreneur, the protégé is a man of action and has a well-developed sense of justice. He is young and inexperienced and therefore an easy target for manipulation and praise from an older leader.

3. The “*Misfit*” often has a problematic background. Unlike the entrepreneur and the protégé, he is neither idealistically nor ideologically motivated. He is involved with the group to distance himself from his own problems and/or due to loyalty to friends. He may be recruited while in prison or via other criminal networks. He is often uneducated, “street smart” and fit. He is usually also younger than the entrepreneur, who he is friends with and/or others in the group who offer him the opportunity of getting on the right path by engaging in jihad. Several of the misfits have violent tendencies and some of them have previously been convicted of violent offences. The misfit is physically strong, has a tendency towards violence, and seeks excitement, factors that make him suited to having an operative role in obtaining weapons and materials for explosives.

4. The “*Drifter*” does not have a clear profile. He has a tendency to be the type of person who often unthinkingly “goes with the flow”. Ideological orientation does not appear to be much of a driving force behind his involvement in the jihadist group. He is often involved by coincidence and/or social ties to the wrong people. It is his social network (friendships, common background and joint experiences/reference points) that determine where he ends up, rather than a feeling of social injustice. It can be difficult to differentiate between the drifter and the other profiles because he has a similar background in terms of education, occupation and family ties. Drifters are not typically assigned important tasks in the group and are perhaps also not given details about the terrorist operations (Nesser 2010, 2015).

Tore Bjørge (1997: 48–53, 2011, 2015: 218–219, 2015: 248 – 249) has also developed a similar typology, but with an emphasis on the possibilities of prevention and exit strategies. Three of Bjørge’s types: the “ideological activists”, the “drifters and followers” and the “socially frustrated” fully correlate with three of Nesser’s types. However, while Nesser describes type 2 as being the *protégé*, Bjørge has classified a type known as the “adventurers”, who are primarily motivated by a desire for excitement, action and hero status. Bjørge also principally uses his typology to demonstrate that these four different types engage in militant activism based on completely different motives and dreams, and that they also become disillusioned for very different reasons. When viewed in light of a rehabilitation and reintegration process, the typologies provide an insight into the types of initiatives different categories of returned Syria travellers may require and can potentially be motivated to participate in, something that can provide important insights for being able to organise tailored preventive initiatives for these different groups (Bjørge & Gjelsvik 2015: 142 -143). We will return to Bjørge’s typology and further elaborate on this in Chapter 3.

The most frequently occurring profiles among the Norwegian Syria travellers are the “misfit/socially frustrated” and the “drifter/follower” in both typologies. However, there are also “entrepreneurs” and “adventurers” in the Norwegian jihadist community.

3. “Syria travellers” - a new form of extremist?

This chapter provides information about Syria travellers, the complexity of this category and the similarities they share with other types of terrorists and extremists. The identification of differences and similarities with other forms of extremism permits the identification of whether and how existing national and international experiences with the management and reintegration of extremists and terrorists are relevant when concerning the returned foreign fighters.

Based on the fact that IS is the best known jihadist terrorist organisation and that by far the largest proportion of the departees have attempted, sometimes in vain, to travel to IS, in this chapter we have chosen to identify some of the different scenarios that men, women and children may have experienced in the “State”. This can illustrate scenarios that the returnees may potentially have been involved in and problems that they may face upon their return to Norway. We will also highlight whether and how returned Syria travellers actualise problems that there are already experiences from in connection with managing and reintegrating other types of political extremists and terrorists.

Returned Syria travellers and other extremists - differences and similarities

Returned Syria travellers can represent different problems. Some have possibly committed serious war crimes, some are traumatised, while others may represent a terrorist threat in Norway - or a combination of these. In addition, not all returnees were in active combat, but had other roles. Young people who have been stopped at the airport must also be considered to sympathise with or be ideologically oriented by “Islamic State” and their actions, something that can make it necessary to conduct a risk assessment of them and deal with them in some other manner.

The Syria travellers are a complex group of individuals with different experiences and problems, depending on the position they had during their stay in Syria and Iraq. Managing women, children or youths who carried out aid work or were involved in the administrative part of the “State” requires one type of initiative, while strongly ideologically oriented men with combat experience necessitate the use of a different type of initiative. At the same time, men, women and children have been part of a social context in which the distinct use of social control, denunciation and extreme violence have been part of everyday life. “Law and order” in areas that have been under the control of the “State” have been maintained through public amputations, crucifixions, decapitations and (mass) executions. These are conditions that have also characterised other areas where jihadist groups such as Boko Haram have control. These methods are used as shock tactics, often both in and outside of the combat zones, with the objective of terrorising the enemy and subduing the occupied population in order to be able to maintain control over the conquered territory (Meines et al. 2017).

Every returned Syria traveller *—including children—* must therefore be considered to have been exposed to, have committed and/or witnessed extreme violence/torture, rape and (mass) executions. This may be combined with the effects of having lived under intense bombing

attacks and other conditions that are generally part of living in a war zone. There are thus examples of children who have killed prisoners and who have trained to become suicide bombers. However, the children of the Norwegian departees were most likely born in the “State” and are therefore too young to come under this category. However, we know of examples of slightly older children from Syrian and Iraqi families who have fled to Norway from IS controlled areas who have been subjected to heavy indoctrination and training in the use of violence and who bear strong signs of having suffered traumatic experiences. The Norwegian support services therefore have some experience with managing these types of traumatised children and families. Therefore, the part of this section that concerns the problems men, women and children may have after having been part of the “Islamic State” can therefore also provide an insight into the problems that refugees from these areas can generally be expected to be afflicted by.

Being part of the “Islamic State” shapes and changes those involved in the same way as members of other extremist groups or organisations (Bjørge 1997, Chapter 6). Despite this, it is important to maintain a focus on returned Syria travellers also being different to one another and that they have individual differences in terms of personality, experiences, motivations for participation, skills and expertise, and have various degrees of ideological convictions or disillusionment.

Compared with national-based extremist groups across Europe, “Islamic State”, Al-Shabab, Boko Haram and similar groups are a distinctive phenomenon by virtue of the fact that they are involved in armed conflicts and commit enormous human rights abuses and war crimes that certain individuals have potentially been part of and/or have witnessed. In addition, jihadist groups operate in rather different (inter)national contexts. At the same time, the returned Syria travellers must be considered to have a large number of the problems that generally characterise (former) participants across extremist groups both in and outside of Europe. Therefore, a number of factors have been identified that, in general terms, prevent or result in disengagement from different types of extremists communities/groups, as well as the subsequent problems that are characteristic for the former members of such groups (Bjørge & Horgan 2009).

The actual participation in an extremist group is of decisive importance to how individuals develops an ideologically-oriented interpretative framework and changes their basis for reflection, self-perception, view of the world and societal institutions and their legitimacy, action repertoire and capacity for violence (Christensen & Mørck 2017). Identity and action repertoire are typically developed *based on participation* in the groups, since participation in social groups always entails a form of situated learning, i.e. that the new arrival acquires the group’s social ground rules, values and norms (Christensen 2009, 2009B, 2015, Christensen & Mørck 2017). This means that participation results in the establishment of an alternative interpretative framework that subsequently causes the individual’s identity and action repertoire to also change over time. From this perspective, the returned Syria travellers were initially part of a community in Norway, whether this be social, virtual or both. This has motivated them to depart and be an active part of IS or equivalent groups. Those who have been able to depart have then become part of an extremist group in a conflict and war zone and continue the process in which they

develop an ideologically oriented worldview. They also develop new social abilities and skills to achieve acceptance in the group, but also in the use of threats, committing violence/torture and using weapons. It must therefore be assumed that the returned Syria travellers, and particularly those who have been trained as fighters, have developed:

- a black/white mind-set,
- a belief that those who are not part of the group are enemies to be fought,
- an understanding that violence, threats and harassment are legitimate tactics in this fight,
- experience in the use of weapons and violence.

Returned Syria travellers will potentially have the following problems when they return:

- threats of punishment for their involvement,
- post-traumatic stress and trauma,
- loneliness, loss of meaning in life and disillusionment,
- aggression,
- difficulties in handling stress and resolving conflicts,
- violent response patterns,
- potential feelings of guilt and shame,
- ideologically coloured black and white mind-set,
- mistrust of other people,
- lack of employment opportunities and stigma from society at large,
- need to establish a new reference framework,
- need for further contextual learning about Islam, politics and similar topics.

The next section discusses problem areas which have been managed in different exit programmes, projects and/or interventions that focus on resocialization and reintegration of former extremists.

Men, women and children - different problems and risks

This section describes potential scenarios for men, women and children, as well as the types of problems, threats and risks that they can particularly represent upon their return. In addition, as previously mentioned, some of the young male deportees have been members of criminal networks. Therefore, upon returning to Norway they can contribute to a marked increase in the tendencies of existing criminal and violent groups due to their experience from the violence and moral transgressions in the “Islamic State” (Meines et al. 2017).

Common for individuals who have crossed the border into areas controlled by IS is that men, women and children have periodically lived separately and under violent circumstances (General Intelligence and Security Service 2016). In addition to this are the pressures from the heavy fighting and hostilities that have occurred since 2017 and the fact that they have had limited access to essential items such as food, water, medical aid and health care personnel.

Men, women and children represent different problems, but one should also distinguish between first and second-generation departees and returnees when concerning how they are managed. The *first generation*, who departed at an early phase of the “Arab Spring” to fight against the oppression of the Assad regime in Syria, were generally more disillusioned, potentially less violent and have been able to leave the area at their own choosing. The *second generation*, those who departed to be part of the establishment of the IS caliphate from 2014 and who have, in part, returned home in the past few years, are considered to have more combat training and stronger ideological convictions. They have also most probably been trained in how to act in an interrogation situation and how to address both formal and informal questions (Meines et al. 2017:42). In this context it is important to emphasise that disillusioned individuals can still be ideologically committed and still have intentions of committing terrorist acts and harming other individuals who they view as legitimate targets (ibid).

The Syria travellers who were stopped before departure also represent a special group. Irrespective of their gender, these individuals are part of a jihadist group and must therefore be considered to have the potential to act in accordance with their ideological convictions. The people who do not succeed in reaching their destination can, for this precise reason, have a greater feeling of having been unfairly treated. Their picture of the caliphate that they have acquired from IS propaganda has also not been corrected because they have not faced the realities of life in a war zone under the control of an extremist group (Meines et al. 2017:43).

When managing Syria travellers it is important to investigate the most probable scenarios that men, women and children have been involved in when they return to Norway, in order to be able to identify the problems their involvement in an Islamic terrorist organisation has given rise to.

As an organisation, IS has been responsible for *committing particularly gross violence and physical as well as psychological torture and terror*, which have been directed at both the inhabitants in the occupied areas and against those who are part of the “Islamic State” when they violate any of the strictly defined and randomly administered rules and thereby, according to IS, are guilty of a crime (Speckhard et al. 2017).²⁸ Therefore, like other members of extremist groups, returned Syria travellers can have been both the perpetrator and the victim of violence, torture and other forms of abuse. Some of them may also be addicted to amphetamines.²⁹ However, it must be emphasised that in the court cases against the Norwegian Syria travellers, no evidence has been presented that any of them were involved in war crimes or similar.

In the following chapter, we provide an insight into some possible scenarios and the resulting potential physical and mental trauma/injuries the returned Syria travellers may have.

²⁸ This article provides a particular insight into the “Islamic State’s” prison system, administration of “law and order” and methods of arrest, interrogation and torture. The article therefore also provides an insight into the extent of the injuries/trauma returned Syria travellers may have.

²⁹ <http://edition.cnn.com/2015/11/20/world/syria-fighters-amphetamine/index.html>, opened on 26 September 2018.

Men in the “Islamic State”

Most men who are recruited to IS undergo a military training programme that focusses on combat or suicide missions. In addition, selected men are trained to be able to return to Europe and commit attacks, while others are trained as snipers and in bombing attacks. Some men are employed as religious police, while others have recruited and issued propaganda. Irrespective of their position in the organisation, all men have a duty to fight for IS when this is required and all have participated in courses lasting from a few weeks to three months on the “Islamic State’s” ideology and their understanding of Islamic law and other religious topics (Meines et al. 2017).

Men: participation scenarios and potential problems upon return:

Men who have fought for IS have possibly been ordered (or perhaps at their own initiative) to carry out executions, commit rape and/or torture (ibid).

It can therefore be expected (to varying degrees) that men may have:

- participated in armed conflict and combat,
- been involved in war crimes such as genocide, executions, systematic rape of/murder of people from selected ethnic/religious groups and slavery,
- witnessed or committed extreme violence, torture and murder,
- lost wives, children and other family members or next of kin,
- been affected/traumatized by their presence during a bombing attack and combat,
- been subjected to enormous ideological influence and training.

In terms of following up, managing and reintegrating, the following scenarios should be considered in relation to the fact that men who return from participating in foreign conflicts and terrorist organisation can potentially:

- represent a terrorist threat in their home country due to their anti-Western attitudes, combined with their expertise in committing violence and weapons training (they may have both the intent and ability),
- regard others as potential enemies who must be attacked,
- be mentally unstable, traumatised and/or violent in their families and communities,
- radicalise others with propaganda espousing anti-Western views in local communities, inciting polarization and creating conflict,
- represent a risk by appearing as “heroes” and functioning as recruiting agents by virtue of their contacts in the different combat zones and terrorist organisations and cells,
- become seriously ill or injured due to the lack of access to doctors and health care personnel.

Women in the “Islamic State”

Despite some of the women having followed their husbands to the “State” they must generally be assumed to be the driving force behind their own involvement and therefore also motivated by ideology. Therefore, they should not, first and foremost, be regarded as victims, which is what

there has been a tendency towards doing. It must be emphasised that both women and men are attracted to IS for many different reasons. However, gender perceptions of violence and extremism influence how women, both in the “Islamic State” and among the returnees, are generally viewed, presented and reacted to. A number of court cases throughout the West have resulted in shorter sentences, pardons and/or acquittals for returned female Syria travellers (Strømmen 2017). Judgments and reports relating to females in IS have often been presented from a gender perspective which reduced the women to “misunderstood victims”, rather than participants or agents with their own motivations. Generalising women in the “Islamic State” as misguided victims must be avoided due to both legal precedent and from a security perspective. Therefore, as a starting point, women should be considered and treated as fully-fledged members of IS who are also potential perpetrators of terrorist acts. In addition, a person who is assigned the role of victim is generally deprived of the capacity and power to act (Meines et al. 2017). With that said, there are also certain examples, including from Norway, of some women genuinely having been deceived by their husbands into entering IS-controlled areas.³⁰

Despite women generally not having undergone the same training procedures as men, they have an active role in the “State”. The primary task of women in the “Islamic State” was to give birth to as many children as possible, which many did during their time in the “State”. The woman was positioned as the heart of the family and as being responsible for raising and indoctrinating children in accordance with the “State’s” ideology. In addition, the task of women was to recruit other women. However, women could be involved in producing and disseminating propaganda, working as teachers, health care personnel and doctors etc. Women could also be part of the female section of the religious police where they would punish/torture other women if their behaviour was considered “un-Islamic” (Speckhard et al. 2017). When going out in public, women had to be fully covered and clothed in a niqab. If this was not complied with, both the woman and her husband were brought before a Sharia court and the punishment could be anything from a fine to lashing or execution. Enforcement of the sentence could be carried out by men, but also by other women (ibid). In general, women were not permitted to leave their homes while alone since violation of this rule was a breach of the principle of separating the genders. However, there are also a good number of examples of women in IS having a more active role as suicide bombers. After a Norwegian-Chechen foreign fighter from Fredrikstad was killed in the war in Syria, his pregnant 18 year-old widow travelled to Istanbul and blew up herself and her unborn child, killing a Turkish police officer in the process.³¹

Women: participation scenarios and potential problems upon return:

Women can potentially be expected to have some experience in the use of weapons and possibly combat experience. To varying degrees, women can be expected to have:

- been subjected to punishment, confinement and (sexual) abuse,

³⁰ <https://www.vg.no/nyheter/innenriks/fra-senja-til-raqqa-og-tilbake-igjen/a/23545489/>, opened on 26 September 2018.

³¹ <https://www.vg.no/nyheter/innenriks/terrorisme/jihadist-ekteskapet-som-endte-i-doen/a/23453828/>, opened on 26 September 2018. The widow of the Norwegian foreign fighter was originally from the Russian region of Dagestan.

- subjected others to punishment/torture/execution,
- committed or been witness to (extreme) violence, torture and murder - and potentially participated in war crimes,
- lost husbands, children and other family members or next of kin,
- been affected/traumatized by their presence during a bombing attack and combat,
- recruited others to the “State”,
- been involved in the production and dissemination of propaganda materials.

When concerning follow-up, managing and reintegration, the following scenarios should be assessed based on the women potentially:

- having lost children, spouses or other next of kin,
- having children who are traumatised or indoctrinated,
- being mentally unstable, traumatised and/or violent in their families and communities,
- being seriously ill or injured due to the lack of access to doctors and health care personnel.
- being uncertain about and having problems with leaving the home without being accompanied by others,
- representing a risk by functioning as recruiting agents by virtue of their contacts in the different combat zones,
- radicalising others with anti-Western views in local communities, inciting polarization and creating conflict,
- potentially representing a terrorist threat in their home country due to their anti-Western attitudes, combined with their potential expertise in committing violence and willingness to use violence.

Children: life scenarios and potential problems upon return:

Children in the “Islamic State” and children who have generally lived in areas controlled by the “State” may be traumatised due to brutal living conditions, bomb attacks and the fighting in the area, and particularly due to the ideological indoctrination and brutality the children have witnessed, and potentially been exposed to and/or participated in. The previously cited report, “*RAN Manual – Responses to returning foreign terrorist fighters and their families*” (Meines et al. 2017) encourages the initiatives directed at returned Syria travellers to have a *particular* focus on children both in the “State” and in areas under its control, and to have an understanding *of the extent to which* they may have been exposed to traumatic living conditions. Children in the “Islamic State” have also been subjected to active indoctrination for absolute loyalty to IS, with “martyr status” as the ultimate goal. Therefore, *both children in the “Islamic State” and children who have fled from areas occupied by “Islamic State”* must be specially monitored by the support services.

From the age of nine, children in the “Islamic State” are placed in camps for the purpose of indoctrination and combat and weapons training. The children are used as spies and are

encouraged to be informants (including against their own parents) (ibid: 27-28). Therefore, several countries regard children from the age of nine as being returned jihadists because they may have functioned as soldiers and executioners and have been trained as suicide bombers. Children should be assumed to have been heavily indoctrinated into an ideology that proclaims that anyone who does not live in accordance with the “Caliphate’s” extremist interpretation of Islam is *kufar*, “unbeliever”, and should therefore be killed (ibid).

Children therefore constitute a particularly vulnerable group while at the same time also potentially representing a major risk. In addition, children may be unregistered and have lost one or both parents. Depending on age and life situation, returned children may therefore, to varying degrees, be expected to have:

- knowledge of and/or participated in committing extreme violence, executions, amputations and generally having seen many dead and mutilated people,
- functioned as spies, executioners and potentially having training as suicide bombers,
- participated in armed conflict and combat (child soldiers),
- lost a mother and/or father or other family members and next of kin,
- been given away for marriage from the age of nine and potentially subjected to sexual abuse,
- been subjected to/having subjected others to punishment, confinement and abuse,
- been subjected to heavy indoctrination and one-sided religious education,

In terms of safeguarding, managing and reintegrating, the following scenarios should be considered. Children may:

- have injuries as a result of torture, punishment and rape,
- be severely traumatized, resulting in loss of speech, development of serious aggression and other signs of post-traumatic stress (Meines et al. (2017),
- be mentally unstable, aggressive and/or extremely disruptive in his/her family and immediate surroundings,
- be seriously ill or injured due to the lack of access to doctors and health care personnel,
- have neurological problems, as well as difficulties concentrating and sleeping,
- be violent/threatening/commit physical violence against others, for example, children at school, who they consider to be apostates/unbelievers and therefore legitimate targets of violence and harassment,
- have destroyed loyalties and family ties,
- radicalise others with extremist or discriminatory views in local communities,
- have deficient cultural and social knowledge in relation to basic social interaction, behaviour and norms in European countries.

In addition, there should also be a focus on the interaction of these children with adults, because they can be subjected to stigmatisation from both adults and other children in Norway and may

therefore have difficulties in being rehabilitated and reintegrated into society (McDonald-Gibson 2017).

As previously mentioned, it is probable that the majority of children of Norwegian Syria travellers are so young that they could not have been very involved in indoctrination and training in the use of violence, but they may have been subjected to other pressures. However, we know that some children of Syrian/Iraqi refugees who have come to Norway have been subjected to indoctrination and training by IS and have had very problematic behaviour in school situations.

When preparing initiatives for returned children, guidance should be sought from the rather extensive literature and experience that already exist regarding the rehabilitation of child soldiers. A great deal is available online by searching for “Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR)”. Due to the limited project period, we have not had time to review this literature.

4. General knowledge of and experiences with “disengagement” and “deradicalisation”

The objective of this chapter is to provide an overview of some important issues regarding efforts focussed on supporting former and/or current extremists in the disengagement process³². The section also highlights issues that would appear to be of importance to the individual disengaging from or remaining with an extremist group and factors that prevent disengagement. These are generally divided into push factors, pull factors and barrier factors. In addition, the chapter will discuss the understanding of terms such as radicalisation/deradicalisation and disengagement, something that is relevant when concerning objectives, methods and problems in connection with such efforts.

Despite unclear definitions and ambiguous application, the terms “radicalisation/deradicalisation” have gained widespread use in the field. The terms are used despite the ambiguities creating confusion and uncertainty among the different stakeholders. We will therefore introduce and highlight how a goal of “reintegration” can give the efforts a more specific focus. An individual’s reintegration requires specific knowledge about the person’s needs and preferences and what fundamentally triggered his/her commitment and involvement. It is therefore important to identify the specific factors at a micro, meso and macro level that have motivated the individual’s participation in a specific extremist group situated in a political, social and historical context.

The majority of individuals who have been involved in extremist groups and/or terrorist organisations leave the group sooner or later, both voluntarily and involuntarily. However, it is unclear as to how many return to the extremist group, since there is inadequate data about former terrorists and extremists returning to their former activities (Schurmann & Bakker 2016). A larger proportion leave these groups at their own initiative, and for the majority of these, disengagement takes place without support from exit programmes or other forms of intervention (Schurmann & Bakker 2016, Barrelle 2014, Bjørge 1997, Bjørge & Horgan 2009).

For example, several studies suggest that an individual’s contact and establishment of relationships outside an extremist group can initiate a desire to leave the group and/or accelerate a disengagement process (Dalsgaard 2013). Multiple studies have identified factors that influence the individual’s personal motivation to leave an extremist group, and the importance of alternatives (Bjørge 1997: 193-246, Bjørge & Horgan 2009, Dalsgaard 2013, Barrelle 2014, Christensen 2015). Insights based on the assumption that stakeholders outside the extremist group *can and do* make a difference and that reasons for involvement in, but also disengagement from, extremist groups, communities and ideologies, appear to depend to a large extent on a social process (Christensen 2015).

³²The term “disengage” in this context refers to ending one’s involvement in (extremist) groups or activities.

There is implicit agreement among practitioners and academic groups about the positive importance of exit programmes and interventions. However, the criticism of the lack of conceptual clarity and transparency and dearth of external evaluations remain (Köhler 2017, Sedgewick 2010).

Despite the lack of evaluations of existing exit programmes and interventions (Köhler 2017), the above-mentioned factors talk of a promising assumption regarding specialised programmes and measures that aim to support the individual in leaving extremist groups and/or terrorist organisations (Schuurman & Bakker 2016).

Several projects and programmes focussing on “deradicalisation”, “disengagement”, “desistance”, “rehabilitation” and “reintegration” from extremist groups have been established both nationally and internationally in the past 20 years. At the same time, it is continually an unanswered question as to how success, and thereby the quality of various types of interventions and programmes, shall be assessed. This may be one of the reasons for, with a few exceptions, the lack of research in connection with the positive and/or negative importance of various measures (Köhler 2016).

Intervention that seeks to strengthen a democratic social development and/or reduce the risk of terrorism is not a new concept. A known example of developing democracy via the dismantling of a totalitarian political culture - where extremism is linked to both social institutions and to certain individuals - is the Allied denazification process in Germany following the Second World War. As part of these efforts, the Allies banned the Nazi party (NSDAP) and related organisations, imprisoned and prosecuted certain leading Nazis and removed other party members from important societal functions (Lammers 2017). In 1946, England established a programme that sought to “retrain” about 4,000 Germany Nazi prisoners of war by educating them in democratic processes.³³ In addition, in the 1970s the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) had success in dismantling the terrorist group “Black September” and reintegrating the group’s dedicated young men into the rest of society by offering them marriage, cash and homes in return for laying down their weapons. Italy had a great deal of success in the 1980s in dissolving the left-wing terrorist group “The Red Brigades” by offering the imprisoned members of the group reduced sentences in return for leaving the terrorist group and testifying against other group members (Dechesne 2011, della Porta 2009; Bjørge & Horgan 2009).

Therefore, a diverse range of intervention methods have been used in an attempt to reintegrate terrorists. This has often involved legislation, judicial authorities and cross-sectoral collaboration between social stakeholders in both the public and private sectors.

Push, pull and barrier factors

Participants in extremist groups develop an identity and a view of society and the world that is based on the group’s ideology, norms, values and the associated action repertoire (Christensen &

³³ See: <https://www.wiltonpark.org.uk/about-us/history-of-wilton-park/>, opened 4 September 2017.

Mørck 2017). The complex process that fundamentally led to participation in an extremist group and development of an identity as a jihadist, neo-Nazi or the like is equally complex when individuals disengage from the extremist group and develop an alternative view of their identity and the world. The process is difficult, often takes place over a long period of time and is neither linear nor continuous (Horgan 2009).

Most of the successful examples of extremists who have left an extremist group, ceased using violence (disengagement) and developed an alternative identity, normally involve a person with a high degree of self-motivation and a desire to leave the group. At the same time, external factors such as imprisonment have also shown to be able to contribute to stopping the violent activities of extremists and in some cases also triggering a change process in terms of attitudes (Ferguson 2011 in Schuurman and Bakker 2016), provided that punishment and rehabilitation are combined (Neumann 2010). In the coming section, we will further elaborate on examples that indicate that motivation for change can potentially be initiated by external factors and that circumstances while serving a sentence are of (major) importance to the inmate's potential reintegration.

Despite many Syria travellers returning to their home countries as a result of IS having lost its territory, it can be expected that several of the factors that both motivate or constitute barriers to disengagement across different extremist groups will also apply for this group. On the whole, the returned Syria travellers can be roughly divided into several categories. Some return because they are:

- sent on assignments to carry out terrorist actions in Europe,
- captured and forced to return,
- opportunists and people seeking better living conditions, but retain their ideological convictions,
- disillusioned and remorseful of their participation,
- ill/injured - require medical treatment (Meines et al. 2017).

Very few “defect” and suddenly leave an extremist group and are also unable to (immediately) change their associated identity and action repertoire. This also applies to the returned Syria travellers. However, a break typically occurs after a gradual disengagement process in which the individual has wanted to leave the group over a long period or has perhaps been motivated to do so. This particularly applies to those who are disillusioned and regret their involvement.

Factors applicable to different extremist groups that initiate the desire to disengage from extremist communities can be divided into push factors and pull factors and are defined as follows (Bjørge 2009:36 - 42):

- Push factors refer to negative social forces and (specific) circumstances that make it unattractive to remain in a specific social environment.
- Pull factors draw the person towards a more attractive alternative.

- Barrier factors that hinder disengagement and reintegration

Push factors are factors that contribute to motivating members of extremists groups to disengage:

- *The feeling that “things have gone too far”* - particularly in the form of violence. There are many examples of participants who have fled from jihadist groups precisely due to disappointment, moral distancing or disgust at the extreme violence that is committed.
- *Disillusionment* towards the group/organisation and its internal dynamic, for example, over internal conflicts. Former foreign fighters have felt they had been subjected to differential treatment, or been manipulated, abused or viewed with suspicion by others in the militant group.
- *Loss of belief in the ideology and the group’s political goals.* “Islamic State’s” propaganda has continually presented victory as being inevitable, something that has mobilised many people. The current situation that involves loss of territory and a “State” that is in the process of collapse, creates doubts regarding ideology and goals for even dedicated members of the “Caliphate”.
- *Exhaustion - not enough energy to continually withstand the pressure.* Life as a member of an extremist organisation is demanding and many find themselves emotionally and physically burned out, often combined with post-traumatic stress. This must be assumed to particularly apply to foreign fighters and other Syria travellers.

Pull factors are linked to factors that apply for members of extremist groups in general and which are of varying degrees of importance to foreign fighters and Syria travellers:

- Establishing a family with responsibility for spouse and children and the desire to give them a good life. We have examples of a foreign fighter returning to Norway from Syria with his entire family when his children became seriously ill. There are also examples of people who have volunteered as suicide bombers starting to have doubts when they are expecting or have children.
- A longing for freedom, security and the possibility of living a “normal” life without the dangers, fear and stress that are the result of being part of violent extremism or acts of war.
- Age - at some point the majority of members of a violent organisation find that they become too old to continue as part of the group/community. Some feel that they have done their part.
- The fear that career opportunities and future personal prospects are at risk.

There are also barrier factors that restrict disengagement in general across different extremist groups and conditions, which must be assumed to apply in particular to (former) jihadists:

- *Strong friendships, community and social bonds with others in the group.* The entire family may be involved in the group, whether this be in Syria/Iraq or in Norway. In this context, it must be assumed that familial relationships can keep an individual in the

group, despite a complete loss of faith in the ideology. A break with the group would also mean a break with the family.

- *Mothers not being able to take their children with them if they attempt to leave the “Islamic State”* is a probable reason for why almost no female Syria travellers from Norway have returned home.
- *People who leave extremist groups fear that they will have nowhere to go.* Extremist Islamic groups, and “Islamic State” in particular, are among the most stigmatised groups that one can (in 2017) be associated with. The knowledge that a large percentage of the Norwegian population potentially want the returned Syria travellers to be put in prison and that many believe that they should not receive any form of support, are presumably a factor that prevents disengagement from the extremist group and reintegration into society.
- *Fear of stigmatization.* It may be assumed that the general population, public employees and other prison inmates stigmatise returned Syria travellers. Public employees may have difficulties maintaining a professional attitude when dealing with this target group. This can be due to the many terrorist attacks in Europe that IS has taken responsibility for and the extreme use of violent assaults and grotesque murder of people that the “Islamic State” has made public via video clips on the internet.
- *Fear of negative sanctions from the group.* It is normal that violent extremist groups carry out reprisals against defectors who fail the group, but it is known that IS are especially brutal in punishing foreign fighters and other Syria travellers who wish to disengage or travel home. Defectors are routinely executed and there is a major risk associated with attempting to sneak out of IS controlled areas without permission. There are also examples of returned Syria travellers who have cooperated with the authorities and testified against others in return for release having felt threatened or experienced having been threatened by other returned Syria travellers who live in the same city or area (Meines et al. 2017:43).
- *Loss of protection against previous enemies.* This can be both former enemies or other (religious) groups that have been identified as targets, but also “normal” citizens who are not (necessarily) interested in whether the former participants are genuine about their distancing themselves from IS or equivalent groups. This can constitute a particular problem in connection with members and sympathisers of extremist Islamic groups, both in and outside of prison. Returned Syria travellers can also contribute to conflicts arising both in and across local communities/families/workplaces/prisons and may also risk being subjected to reprisals and revenge.
- *Awareness of sanctions from the criminal justice system* is potentially increased by the fact that some of the returned Syria travellers have committed serious crimes. One of the unintended consequences of the Norwegian authorities having in 2016 criminalised participation in “*military activities in an armed conflict abroad*” in the form of strict sentencing is that a very strong disincentive was created for not returning to Norway. This can result in even strongly disillusioned IS members choosing to continue in the group despite no longer believing in the cause.
- *The fear that a “normal” life may be boring, dull and empty* without the excitement of fighting for a higher cause against actual and perceived enemies.

- *The fear of destroying future prospects.* It may be difficult to find employment after having served a prison sentence as a returned Syria traveller - something that can also hinder reintegration and resocialisation.
- *Loyalty to the ideology and the cause.* Even if one acknowledges that the dream of a Caliphate has turned to ruins, there are probably many who still believe in the cause. They have also invested so much of their lives in the cause (“sunk costs”) that it would be too much of a loss to pull out now.

“Radicalisation” and “deradicalisation” - unclear terms and loose connection

Many initiatives for preventing and combating extremism and terrorism relate to terms such as “radicalisation”/“deradicalisation” and “extremism” (Schmid 2013). These terms, and not least the use of these terms in parts of this field, are problematic and unclear. It should therefore be considered as to what terms should be applied for assessment criteria for who and/or why someone is deemed to constitute a risk, a threat or requires support. This particularly applies to initiatives that shall function across different public and private sectors with many different stakeholders, who potentially work based on different understandings of terms and different objectives.

Initiatives that aim to (risk) assess and reintegrate former extremists, generally differentiate between behaviour or attitude. This relates to the analytical difference between the terms *radicalisation/deradicalisation*, which concern changes in attitudes/ideology, and *engagement/disengagement*, which involve changes in behaviour and involvement in violent groups and activities, or desisting from this. “Disengagement” is generally used to indicate that the person has left an extremist group and refrains from participating in violent activities on behalf of the group or the group’s political fight. “Deradicalisation” on the other hand relates to a change process in terms of attitudes and involves changing one’s values, beliefs and worldview (Bjørger & Horgan 2009, Bjørger and Gjelsvik 2015: 15-17). In order for an individual to become “deradicalised”, he/she must first have been “radicalised”. But what does that mean?

The term radicalisation is used in a large number of contexts, but often in very different ways (Sedgewick 2010, Coolsaet 2016b). In addition, the meaning of the word is different based on the context in which it is interpreted (Schmid 2013, Marsden 2017). This has resulted in continued criticism of the term by both practitioners and researchers due to it being unclear and creating confusion about what we specifically mean when talking about “radicalisation” or that someone has become “radicalised” and has since been “deradicalised. An unclear and implicit assumption of what “radicalisation” is creates confusion about the target group - who are they? What does the problem entail? And when can someone be considered (so) radicalised that they represent a risk and should therefore be handled (Christensen & Mørck 2017:38 – 44)? This creates fundamental uncertainty about the individuals who can be specifically considered as part of the target group for a specific initiative.

Another problematic point when concerning the understanding of “radicalisation” is the widespread notion that “radicalisation” is a necessary precursor to committing political violence. This presupposes that there is a clear and linear connection between intent and action in the process. For example, in the Ministry of Justice and Public Security’s “Action Plan against Radicalisation and Violent Extremism” (2014: 7) radicalisation is defined as:

- a process whereby a person increasingly accepts the use of violence to achieve political, ideological or religious goals. A process of radicalisation that results in violent extremism is characterised by:
- a cognitive development toward a steadily more unilateral perception of reality, where there is no room for alternative perspectives,
- thereafter, a further development where the perception of reality is experienced so acutely and seriously that violent actions appear necessary and just.

This definition places an emphasis on the individual and his/her ideological convictions by equating cognitive development of a perception of reality that eventually leads to or necessitates action. The process will therefore appear to be linear, individual and rational. Extensive research demonstrates that links between attitudes and actions are far more complex (Horgan 2014).

While previous initiatives were focussed on changing a person’s behaviour - disengagement - through imprisonment and/or offering them attractive alternatives in return for them refraining from committing violence, the current programmes and intervention processes emphasise “deradicalisation” via counter narratives intended to challenge extremists’ perceptions of reality (Institute for Strategic Dialogue and RAN 01/2015) or dialogue. The above definition, which is widespread across nations, may be one of the explanations for why most interventions in recent years have focussed on “deradicalisation”, i.e. changes in attitudes and values, and are therefore based on counter-narratives and/or dialogue. The implicit logic appears to build on the assumption that people are rational; they act based on individual and rational considerations - think first, then act. But is the connection so clear?

The assumption is problematic because an overwhelming majority of those who are considered “radicalised” - when they for example agitate for the use of violence as a legitimate means of achieving political change - never personally engage in politically motivated violence. Some of those who are actually involved with violent groups and activities develop a radical worldview that is a consequence of - rather than a reason for - their involvement (Bjørge & Horgan 2009). Others may express themselves using ideological slogans and participate in violent activities, either to live up to the group’s expectations or simply just for the sake of committing violence.³⁴ For many of these people, the ideological conviction is only superficial, whereby the individual talks about what is expected in the group but without internalising the group’s framework of understanding and interpretation (Bjørge 2011).

³⁴ This was stated by a former member of a right-wing extremist group in an interview (Christensen & Mørck 2017: 104).

Well-established findings from research into extremism, anthropology and psychology also indicate that only a loose correlation exists between changes in attitudes and changes in behaviour (Horgan. 2014). Most people who develop radicalised attitudes never become involved in violent activities themselves. Correspondingly, there are many examples of people who disengage from violent and extremist groups and activities who continue to have extremist attitudes and views. They are “disengaged without being deradicalised” (Bjørge & Horgan 2009). A change in behaviour will not necessarily result in a change in attitude, and a change in attitude will therefore not necessarily result in a corresponding change in behaviour, and this applies both when joining and leaving extremist groups.

Radicalisation and involvement with violent extremism are therefore only loosely associated and the link between these processes is far from clear. This also entails that “deradicalisation” is equivalently unclear, because when there is uncertainty about when the individual is radicalised how can we then know when a person is “deradicalised”?

At the same time, it is also important to establish that “deradicalisation” does not signify a return to a type of “pre-radicalisation”, i.e. the state the individual was in before he/she became a part of the extremist group. Like other life experiences, involvement with an extremist group will remain a part of the individual’s history, but the objective must be to make the experience something that the individual, those around him/her and the rest of society can live with. In addition, the programmes that exclusively involve dialogue and counter narratives do not make the individual conscious of the many physical reaction patterns and action repertoire that are also part of the social learning the individual acquires via involvement in an extremist group. For example, this applies to the use of violence to resolve conflicts, intimidating others via body posture and the like (Christensen 2015, Christensen & Mørck 2017). In general, there should be a much greater focus on behavioural patterns, norms and embodied practices in exit programmes and interventions than what is currently standard practice (Christensen 2015).

Despite many unclear links, the difference between *deradicalisation* and *disengagement*, i.e. between a change in “attitude” and “action/participation”, may contribute to demonstrating that these are connected, albeit loosely connected, processes. An understanding of the complex links between these processes can thereby contribute to clarifying the objectives of the interventions and for evaluating the results.

Deradicalisation, disengagement and reintegration - what should the focus be?

Recent research argues that initiatives focussing on (former) jihadists and other extremists should first identify political, social and relational factors to then be able to determine circumstances that have defined the specific person’s involvement in an extremist group (Marsden 2017: 7). The understanding of the process that has resulted in the individual having legitimised and potentially committed violence, can often be linked to a social framework in which there is continually greater polarisation with increasingly more uncompromising attitudes between social

and political groups/stakeholders (Karpantschhof 2014 in Christensen & Mørck 2017). However, participation can also be defined by a desire for excitement, community and other more personal factors. An individual's "radicalisation" should therefore be interpreted based on personal and local, national and international (power) relations and agendas, since insight into these relations can be of importance to, and provide specific information about, how the individual can be integrated into society (Marsden 2017).

The sense of community in extremist groups, whether this be right-wing, left-wing, jihadist groups or the like, is of major significance to individuals' involvement and their associated development of an alternative identity and action repertoire. Among other things, the sense of community in extremist groups is based around, and strengthened via, the relationship to an external enemy, which contributes to the members developing a strong feeling of affinity and a collective identity that is defined by the collective's view of the world and the members' place in it. A framework of understanding and interpretation that is more or less shared by the members is generally established through propaganda materials. This includes music, videos and written sources in combination with the members' discussions and interpretations of incidents and trends in a national and international context. However, this also occurs through interpretations of joint situations, activities and events they are involved in, centred around certain "friends and enemies" they are fighting with or against (Christensen & Mørck 2017). Societal conflicts and the community's interpretation of them may in time result in the individual developing a framework of interpretation and understanding in line with the group through which new things, events, situations and people are perceived (ibid).

When the individual participates in an (extremist) group, the group will also, via subtle signs and by making specific viewpoints and assumptions taboo, gradually contribute to him/her developing a black/white mind-set, whereby it becomes legitimate to attack those who do not represent one's own beliefs. This is a factor that also demonstrates how it is largely participation in the group (involvement) that results in further radicalisation. The development of a black/white mind-set and a strong ideological belief are therefore often the result of such involvement (Bjørge 1997, Christensen 2009, 2009b).

The individual will potentially also develop an action repertoire that reflects the group where violence, harassment and intimidation can be an accepted and integrated part of the social interaction and something that is therefore encouraged and acknowledged. These factors result in a state that is defined as (violent) "radicalisation" or extremism.

It should also be emphasised that the use of violence, terrorism and kidnapping is never unproblematic, including in extremist groups, while not all members of a group necessarily agree with these methods.

The discourse surrounding causes of terrorism and extremism has shifted focus and this also includes the understanding of what results in an individual's "radicalisation" (Christensen & Mørck 2017). Until the start of the 2000s, terrorists and/or extremists were most often interpreted

with reference to an ideological context and hence the subsequent political fight. The individual who was classified as being “radicalised” or extremist, was previously viewed based on a wider social context, fundamental political conflicts, an ideology and a group. However, after 11 September 2001 and with the present use of term “the radicalised” among the broader public, “extremist” and/or “the radicalised” are often linked to a psychosocial and socioeconomically marginalised and individualised framework without reference to a broader national/international social context, conflict or struggle. These links are toned down, rejected or often disregarded (ibid: 40). It is not our claim that some of the participants in extremist groups are not marginalised and/or have psychosocial problems, but these background factors should not be singled out in the understanding of why the individual has become part of an extremist group. Terrorism and extremism are not an individualised phenomenon and need rather to be perceived as an outcome of a whole range of factors at individual level, society level and political/social level, which interact in highly complex ways (Boserup 2016, Christensen & Mørck 2017).

There are many examples of former right-wing extremists who have left extremist groups, but who are unable to find employment because of their past (Bjørge 1997, Olsen 2011, Christensen 2015). Such factors demonstrate how the attitudes of society at large also play a part in former extremists being able to establish an alternative life and reintegrate into society.

By focussing the efforts for the individual based on the identification of circumstances he/she went into high-risk activism for, can provide an insight into conditions that potentially can motivate the individual’s specific reintegration. Ambiguous goals such as “de-radicalisation” and changes in attitude can therefore be abandoned, while one instead seeks to identify specific actions, values and norms that can motivate a certain individual to change (Marsden 2017, p. 6 - 7).

As mentioned above, the four types of extremist actors (Nesser 2015, Bjørge 2011) demonstrate that there are essential differences in terms of the individual’s path towards involvement, reasons for involvement and role as a participant in the group. The initiatives should therefore examine the goals the individual has sought to achieve. What dreams and desires on the social, spiritual and political levels motivated the individual to become involved and what actions resulted in his/her membership in an extremist group (Bjørge 2011, Marsden 2017:88). Identifying these factors can provide an insight into how preventive initiatives both inside and outside prisons can assist in redirecting the individual’s motivation and thereby engage him/her in lawful activities. These may still have a religious/political objective, but can also involve other types of social relationships and a tolerant and non-violent form of religious practice that does not dehumanise, hate or fight against other people with other beliefs, convictions or lifestyles.

It is also important to focus on the returnees who were involved with violence and crime and had serious social challenges before their departure. During and after serving time in prison, this target group must be supported in refuting an extremist agenda, but they also need help to manage the problems they had to begin with. In such instances, there may be a particular need for attempting to identify a possible future goal and contribute to formulating a future vision that

can motivate the individual to become involved in social activities, education and employment that can strengthen his/her reintegration into Norwegian society (Christensen 2015).

In this context, it should also be emphasised that the individual's admission of his/her crimes is of major importance since such an admission also involves an understanding of the pain and loss suffered by the victims. This can (with time) pave the way for acknowledging the legitimacy of established social institutions and applicable law (Marsden 2017:89). The above-mentioned factors demonstrate that there is no one method or practice that works for everyone, but that individual solutions are required. As will be shown in the following, there are good practices that are flexible enough to both accommodate and respond to the many individual needs and personal histories.

Initiatives for supporting people in a disengagement process - inside and outside of prison

It is difficult to leave an extremist group and former members struggle with problems of a psychological, social and practical nature when they are no longer an active part of an extremist group. This also applies to returned Syria travellers, for whom certain factors are accentuated to an even greater extent. Former extremists who require assistance or support should always undergo a risk assessment of themselves and their situation to determine whether they may represent a threat to the group of personnel who will work with them. This does also apply to returned Syria travellers. As a starting point, they should always undergo an examination of their physical and mental health and a risk assessment before further initiatives are commenced. There are examples of risk assessment tools that are used internationally such as "Returning Terrorist Suspect Prioritization Model" (RTS) that is used in Australia, the Dutch "the Dynamic Assessment Framework" (Dynamisch Beoordelingskader), the "Extremism Risk Guidance 22+" (ERG22+) which was developed in the United Kingdom, the Violent Extremist Risk Assessment (VERA2) and the Significance Quest Assessment Test (SQAT), both of which are used in North America and other places (RAN 2016).

It is also important to identify the individual's narrative, network and needs at an early stage. In addition, the child welfare service should always be included from the very start if children are involved. Possible foster homes should also be identified in advance since a serious need for relocating a child may arise. Parents (including mothers) will normally be imprisoned after returning to Norway if they have been linked to IS or equivalent groups (Meines et al. 2017: 38).

What measures should also be considered at early stages of initiatives that aim to support the individual in leaving an extremist group and assisting with the person's reintegration? As previously described, the individual and his/her path towards involvement in extremist groups are very different. This requires that the different agencies involved and the initiatives used are flexible in relation to the target group. There are no standardised solutions, but the development of a flexible individual-based policy is important for the success of the initiative. It is therefore of vital importance that initiatives can respond to the social, psychological and practical issues

the individual may have. Therefore, as described below, there are specific factors that should be an integrated part of an initiative, including in prisons, mentor arrangements, exit programmes or general municipal initiatives.

As previously mentioned, research on disengagement from extremist groups has identified specific factors which are of major importance in the actual process towards disengagement. This research can also provide insight into specific methods that may be of importance to the ability of former members to develop alternative identities and action repertoire.

Three principal factors are of importance for the individual's way in, but also way out, of extremist groups, and the change in identity that characterizes both processes. This involves *trust* of others, *motivation* for change and *participation* in activities and the community around them. (Christensen 2015).

We previously described how Nesser (2015) and Bjørger's (2011, Bjørger & Gjelsvik 2015: 143-144) typologies could act as a tool in a reintegration process since they both provide an insight into different factors that motivate participation in extremism and factors that can cast doubt on his/her continued involvement. Bjørger's typology provides an understanding of how and why four different types of participant become involved in militant activism based on completely different motives and dreams, but also that they become disillusioned for completely different reasons. This insight is useful from a preventative perspective because it demonstrates how these different categories of participants require very different measures for prevention and reintegration.

- *The ideologically motivated activists* can be challenged on their ideology or dialogue can be commenced regarding the political issues they are concerned about.³⁵ Some ideologically motivated participants will become disillusioned because they realise that it is impossible to achieve their goal or that they acknowledge that terrorism does more harm than good. To prevent them from radicalising others, one strategy may be to reduce the possibilities of contact with potential supporters through imprisonment if they have committed crimes, expulsion from the country or a job offer at a distant location.
- *The drifters*, who are primarily drawn towards extremist groups based on a need for belonging and fellowship, may be offered an alternative network of friends, fellowship and social obligations. These types of people often become disillusioned because the leaders and the group do not live up to their expectations. They find that the leaders manipulate them and that the group is characterised by a lack of genuine loyalty and paranoia about possible infiltrators. One of the most common reasons for such people withdrawing from extremist groups is that they find a partner or have children. The new obligations become stronger than the loyalty to the militant group.
- *Adventurers and thrill seekers* can be offered other and more pro-social opportunities for excitement and action than becoming terrorists or foreign fighters. They often become disillusioned because the existence as a terrorist proves to be characterised by idle

³⁵ It should also be noted that it is a major topic of discussion as to whether confronting a person's ideology can be counterproductive.

waiting and boredom. The opposite may also be the case if they have an overdose of action. They may not be as heroic as they thought when their best friend is screaming in pain and dies a slow death with his intestines spread over the ground.

- When concerning the *socially frustrated and marginalised*, social preventative measures for better integrating them into society and the workforce may contribute to attracting them away from militant and criminal activities. Many of these individuals require extensive psychosocial follow-up, and many have a long road to travel in order to return to a law-abiding life.

The reason for involvement is therefore very complex for these four different types, which requires that the preventative measures are diverse.

Like Bjørge's type 1 – *the ideologically convinced* – other research also indicates that exit mentors can play on the doubt the individual may have about continued participation in an extremist group by using subtle means of reinforcing these doubts and thereby contributing to a change in attitude. It should be emphasised that the aim here is not a discussion about ideology and its potential legitimacy, because this will often have the opposite effect (Christensen 2015). However, it should be an objective, via the use of dialogue, to identify what is important to the individual's sympathy for the jihadist cause and what he/she has doubts about, is disappointed about, has lost trust in etc. Statements, stories, examples from a person who the individual considers trustworthy and legitimate can also strengthen or cast doubt over the group's legitimacy and its political project. It may be possible in subtle ways to ask questions about the project or place it in a larger contextual framework that can lead to reflection and thereby reinforce the doubt and push them towards a disengagement process³⁶ (Christensen 2015: 203-204). Furthermore, in the long-term there may be an opportunity to introduce the former member of an extremist group to people who represent "the enemy", something that can create or increase openings in their perception of reality because it casts doubt over the ideologically based stereotypes. For example, EXIT Sweden, an exit programme for former right-wing extremists, invited former Swedish-Chilean gang members, who worked as mentors, to join in at mentor/mentee meetings with former right-wing extremists. The result was often that the former member of a right-wing extremist movement discovered that they had many shared experiences and issues (ibid).

In addition, the following factors are of decisive importance to any type of initiative directed at (former) extremists:

³⁶ In order to determine what is meant by 'reinforcing doubt in a subtle manner', the following is an example of such a strategy: An active right-wing extremist calls EXIT (Swedish NGO that works with supporting people who are disengaging from extremist groups) due to his doubts about his continued involvement in the group, as the political influence failed to materialise. The EXIT employee, who was himself a former neo-Nazi, listens to the man's doubts and confirms these by noting that he is probably right because, as he says; 'when I was part of a neo-Nazi group 15 years ago, they had the exact same amount of influence as they do today'. The person calling was listened to and his doubts were reinforced by the employee mentioning the 15 years, thus confirming the lack of progress. The answer implicitly suggests that it is not a good idea to continue one's involvement with such groups. This occurs without the employee going into an ideological and potentially moralising discussion about the illegitimacy of right-wing extremist movements (Christensen 2015).

- *Trust* is vital for the person who wish to change to become open to input from a person who is positioned as a role model. Both parties must view one another as “someone worth listening to”. (Christensen 2015). A person can provide the best and sharpest arguments, but if there is no trust, this will have no effect (Dalsgaard- Nielsen 2013). It can take a long time to establish trust, but is something that should be an absolute priority in the initiative. Trust is vital for the initiative being of importance to the person who shall be reintegrated (Christensen 2015). Trust can be strengthened by prison staff and/or mentors using their own personal names and being open (if security is not an issue) about their own lives. In addition, no direct questions should be asked, but instead interest should be shown when topics relating to the person’s departure and life in Syria/Iraq or other places arise (Meines et al. 2017: 48). Their role is to assist, not to investigate.
- *Vulnerable situation*. People appear to be more easily influenced in vulnerable situations when concerning both becoming involved in extremist groups and with leaving such groups. Research has noted that the individual can be more responsive to external (both positive and negative) influence, for example, while serving a prison sentence (Dalsgaard-Nielsen 2013).
- *Timing* is decisive and an inmate should therefore be ready to address those who express motivation for change. Such motivation may only arise once and could be brief, and therefore ideally it should be possible to initiate measures at very short notice. This means that, for example, a specific employee, hotline or other service is available to be contacted and which has specialist knowledge about extremism and mechanisms relating to participation in and disengagement from extremist groups. The person in question must understand the importance of motivation and be able to meet the person who is asking for help within 24 hours. The precise idea behind exit programmes is that someone shall be able to step in at very short notice.
- *Familiarity* - the support person should preferably have some common interests and be able to be friends with, relate to or have a certain shared history with the person he/she shall support. It may be an advantage to find people who have a common background or history, are of the same gender and age and who have the same experiences and reference basis as the target group. Former members of extremist Islamic groups can make a positive difference in these situations, provided that they have an insight into the mentor role and sufficient distance from their past. It is not sufficient to have a common history and empathy. The person in question must have a strong knowledge of the process of reintegrating someone after his/her involvement with extremism and potentially following a prison sentence, in order to be a good mentor/role model. Familiarity is of major importance at the start, but not necessarily later in the process (Christensen 2015). Furthermore, in this context there should be awareness of the fact that people with the same minority background can be a poor match, because social control and issues relating to fear of gossip and shame on the family may have a negative effect on the relationship.

Focus points in a (re)socialisation and reintegration process

Social relationships play an equally important role in an individual’s reintegration as they do in the proceeding radicalisation processes (Christensen 2015). The learning of new social skills and behavioural norms, development of an alternative identity, i.e. a different identity to that of a

jihadist, and a desire for social involvement in society, are necessary for preventing the individual from (re)engaging with violent groups. This increases the chances of his/her (re)integration into mainstream Norwegian society (Barelle 2014, Christensen 2015). It is therefore important to identify the types of factors and social relationships that can motivate the individual to be involved in a community where he/she can develop an alternative identity and change his/her action repertoire. The development of relationships with others outside the group and social support, irrespective of whether this occurs under formal (mentor/employee from the municipality or NGO) or informal (friends/family) direction, is of decisive importance (Barelle 2015, Christensen 2015, Christensen & Mørck 2017).

(Former) members of extremist groups generally appear to require the following social/psychosocial support with a view to achieving their reintegration into society:

- **An open and non-judgemental dialogue.** It may be difficult for outsiders to develop a positive relationship with a former extremist due to their previous dehumanisation of others and the group's acts of violence/terrorism and other human rights abuses. Despite this, it is important that the person who commences the dialogue is able to maintain an open and non-judgemental attitude, as this is of major importance to whether the person who is to be motivated dares to establish a relationship and open up, which is decisive to the individual's desire for change (Christensen 2015).
- **Open interpretation of identity.** It is important to use strategies that do not confirm or reinforce the identity as (in this instance) a jihadist. It may be important when in dialogue with (former) jihadists to be conscious of "speaking to" - both directly and indirectly - other parts of a person's identity and self-understanding.
- **Action repertoire and embodied routines.** Former members of extremists groups may have difficulties in coping outside the group. They may not know or no longer know what is legitimate in mainstream society due to an inadequate understanding of general social norms and values. They may therefore have difficulties understanding how they should act in social situations. Knowledge of how the individual should behave in order to become a legitimate part of Norwegian mainstream culture is not something that is innate, but an acquired behavioural norm that is vital to develop in order for them to be (re)integrated. Therefore, returned Syria travellers may require assistance in acquiring an alternative action repertoire that can, with time, become embodied practices. This can occur by giving support to discover other means of behaviour to what has been a normal part of life as a member of an extremist group (Christensen 2015). A mentor can facilitate the individual's involvement in alternative social networks, as well as he/she can argue in ways which encourage the individual to expand his/her reflections. If the individual is given the opportunity to establish a trusting relationship that lasts over time, this can also create scope for more in-depth conversations. In this way, he/she can receive input from someone who thinks differently. The mentor/mentee can do activities together which will enable the returned Syria traveller (possibly after having served a prison sentence) to view him/herself and others in new ways and thereby acquire other means of "doing and understanding things." In other words, meeting a different person or being part of a new environment also involve a relationship with a reality that is based on other ontological

assumptions about the world and which at the same time open one up to other positions in it. This means that old belief systems and action repertoires are no longer socially acceptable and will potentially be sanctioned by others. Potentially this will lead to questions and reflections about one's own identity and the belief system the individual has developed as the result of his/her participation in an extremist group, as well the legitimacy of it. When this is discussed with, for example, a mentor, it may contribute to making the individual aware of the necessity of developing other action repertoires to thereby be able to negotiate other ways into and positions in society (Christensen 2015:280 - 294).

- **Reflection tools.** In addition to it being important to initiate reflection via dialogue and participation in new social interaction, it may be important for some to obtain assistance in asking critical questions - both about his/her own beliefs and those of others. In other words - how does one reflect? How can something be further examined based on "critical thinking"?
- **Contextual knowledge.** Returned Syria travellers may have a limited insight into national and international political matters, as well as possessing knowledge of Islam that has only been interpreted and contextualised by jihadists. Therefore, any initiative should focus on the returnee potentially acquiring greater self-insight, contextual understanding of Islam and social and political conditions in general, whereby grey areas can be introduced into a black and white worldview (ibid). Contextual knowledge is linked to creating awareness about the importance of reflection and must therefore be viewed in connection with the points mentioned above.
- **Identifying new or rekindling old interests and hobbies** can be a means of motivating the individual to change. Hobbies or leisure interests are easier to engage in than work and education and can be the method for rediscovering feelings of joy, enthusiasm and eagerness to participate, something that can, in the long-term, lead to a willingness and desire to work, study etc.
- **Specific practical assistance for education, work and housing.** With regard to supporting returned Syria travellers, the initiative should also focus on getting the individual involved in education and/or work, as well as providing assistance with housing. It may be necessary to house the individual at a different location to where he/she originally lived. For some there may be a risk of reprisals if he/she has shown a willingness to cooperate with the authorities or has broken away from jihadism and the network. Furthermore, it is extremely important that the transition from prison to release is planned such that the released prisoner does not end up in an "empty space" without a plan for the future or anywhere to stay.

The above-mentioned factors are examples of aspects that should be included in interventions that aim to support returned Syria travellers. This applies both to those who are already motivated and those for whom attempts are being made to motivate to reintegrate into Norwegian society - before, during and after a prison sentence is served.

Despite the many aspects that are common in a disengagement process across extremist groups, there are also factors that are specifically linked to the individual and the group he/she has been

involved in, as well as the context in which attempts are being made to integrate him/her. Therefore, it may be of decisive importance that employees and mentors are well-informed and preferably also specially trained in relation to the target group and the specific cultural, political and especially religious issues and norms that are special for this target group (Christensen 2015:290). In this context, it should be considered including people with specialist knowledge of Islam in the initiative to both assist in the development of a more complex form of religious understanding by the returnee and to prevent potential incorrect interpretations by personnel involved. More on this in Chapter 5.

5. Factors of importance for managing the “radicalised” in prisons

Prison radicalisation is a phenomenon that PST (2017) expects will be of increased importance in Norway in future years. This is due to multiple people most likely being prosecuted and imprisoned for terrorism-related crimes, because terrorism laws have become increasingly comprehensive in recent years, and several offences are categorised as being terrorism-related. Based on this and due to an expectation of the “Islamic State’s” collapse in Syria and Iraq, PST assumes that the number of prisoners with extremist views and operational experience will increase (PST 2017:14).

While in this section we focus on general and special factors, as well as international experiences with prison conditions and managing people convicted of terrorism, in Chapter 7 we will provide specific examples of how Norwegian prisons can strengthen the positive initiatives that are already an integrated part of the Norwegian prison practices. These are measures that aim to reduce the possibility of the individual’s return to crime after he/she has served a prison sentence by improving the individual’s possibilities of (re)integration into society.

Returned Syria travellers have potentially had extreme experiences and hold extremist views. Therefore, we would again note that an inmate with this type of background should undergo a risk assessment in which factors such as suicide risk, mental instability, and mental/physical illness are examined and where there is a risk assessment of the likelihood of them committing violence against prison staff, other inmates and the general public. In addition, inmates from this target group may require special supervision from a psychologist/psychiatrist/doctor or other specialists (RAN P&P Working paper 2016).

Here we would again emphasise that the link between radical views and committing violent acts is highly complex and research thus far has not provided any clarification. There are many examples from other countries of former inmates having been involved in terrorist acts following their release, something that has created an increased fear of “prison radicalisation” and a tendency towards explaining a terrorist’s actions as being a result of this. However, the terrorism committed by former inmates has occurred between one and seven years after they finished serving their sentences (Hamm 2017). There is therefore often a lengthy period of time between release and when terrorist acts are committed, something that makes it difficult to identify the factors that have had a decisive influence on the individual’s involvement in terrorism-related activities and the decision to commit a terrorist act. Is it the interaction between the individual and his/her physical and psychosocial surroundings when serving a prison sentence? Does he/she meet with a specific person/group in prison prior to release or in the period following release or something completely different? It can be difficult to determine and thus also identify the precise circumstances that have been of decisive importance (Neumann 2010, Hamm 2017).

A dilemma associated with introducing extensive special measures against a small number of radicalised inmates is that this can take focus and resources away from other necessary efforts

towards vulnerable inmates in the general prisoner population. Many of the prerequisites required for successful reintegration of inmates in the target group apply for all inmates. Prioritising certain inmates over others can create challenges, not least because staffing in the prisons is already under strong pressure.

Together or individually? Managing extremists in prison

Research into how incarcerated extremists and terrorists specifically influence social interaction in a prison context, both in relation to inmates and staff, has received particular attention in the aftermath of 11 September 2001 (Silke 2014:5). Unfortunately, insight into the underlying ideas and evaluations of applied practices are lacking when concerning the significance of prison interventions and rehabilitation of inmates. Like exit programmes and general interventions, there is still relatively little research in the field (Dean 2014:89). This makes it difficult to have a solid empirical basis for identifying *what works and what does not work* and why this is the case. At the same time, several researchers (Hansen 2018 *in press*, Neumann 2010, Hamm 2013, Marsden 2015, Silke 2011, Ferguson 2011) and the EU's RAN P&P (Radicalisation Awareness Network's Prison and Probation Working Group 2016) have identified factors that are of importance to a social climate that promotes the inmates' possibilities of rehabilitation and possibilities for establishing an alternative life without crime after serving their sentences (RAN P&P Working paper 2016).

However, we would, first and foremost, emphasise that while Islam is often highlighted as being a radicalising factor, several studies indicate the opposite, i.e. that the religion primarily appears to play a positive and transformative role for inmates in prisons the world over (Hansen 2018 *in press*, Hamm 2013).

Prisons create conditions and social situations that can particularly contribute to increasing the individual's risk of developing radical/extreme views. For example, leading terrorism researcher Peter Neumann (2010) refers to prisons as "places of vulnerability". In other words, the prison as a closed institution can contribute to the inmate being or becoming socially exposed/vulnerable and it is assumed that the individual will be more susceptible to radical messages. This can be due to the inmate potentially experiencing a personal crisis, where imprisonment may be a factor that makes him/her be confronted with his/her crime(s). In addition, the inmate will typically experience a loss of meaning and social stability because imprisonment entails social exclusion. The individual must also be assumed to become involved with the community of criminals that the prison enables the creation of, which means that he/she becomes a part of a social situation that the individual would not have become involved in under other circumstances. In addition, the person may also require protection from other individuals or groups while in prison and may therefore seek to join a group. These are factors that are often identified as risk factors or precursors to "radicalisation" (Neumann 2010 in Hansen 2018 *in press*). Prison gangs can also use "religious" rhetoric to, among other things, strength the "us and them" conflicts (Liebling, Arnold & Straub 2011). Other research brings further nuance to these factors since the risk of

supporting extreme views and behaviour is further increased when the conditions in prison increase the strain of being in prison. In other words, under conditions such as:

(1) Overfilled prisons, undignified living conditions, chronic understaffing, low level of activity, poor rehabilitation services, exaggerated use of force by staff and inadequate safety and control routines become applicable, it increases the probability of prison conditions resulting in counter-reactions from the inmates. Values such as respect, trust, safety, hope and contact with family often deteriorate when the prison is “understaffed and overcrowded” (Liebling & Arnold 2004). In addition, it is also important as to whether:

(2) this increases the possibility of social bonds being established between people with extremist attitudes/actions and “ordinary” inmates, a situation that can also arise through the use of radical preachers (Orban in Hammerlin et al. 2012).

Point 2 is the subject of a great deal of discussion since prisons are presented as an arena that could potentially enable inmates with extremist political objectives to build networks, compare and even develop strategies or initiate violent actions outside of the institution (Global Counterterrorism Forum 2012, RAN P&P). The question of whether inmates with the same ideological convictions or group affiliation, such as gang members or people convicted for terrorism-related offences, should be together in the same areas is therefore of major importance.

There are examples of advantages and disadvantages of both forms of organising inmates. In the United Kingdom, jihadists were placed together in the same high security prisons. This resulted in the development of what have ironically been referred to as “terrorism universities” because the command structure among the inmates eventually started to reflect the structure outside the prison. In addition, the inmates started to organise the teaching of topics regarding the movement’s history and structure, the political context and the movement’s politics, as well as methods for constructing bombs (Silke 2013:125). However, there are corresponding positive examples of inmates with links to ETA,³⁷ who were also in the same prison and were therefore able to discuss strategies and goals with other ETA members. This resulted in them maintaining their ideological beliefs, but also led to a collective belief that the struggle should be won without the use of violence. As this example shows, Spain initially gathered ETA members together in a few prisons, but the authorities have since spread them around the entire Spanish prison system, something that resulted in a marked increase in the number of ETA supporters who left the movement (Silke 2013:125 – 126). Gathering the imprisoned ETA members together therefore contributed to a collective deradicalisation of the group, but it was spreading the members out among different prisons that made them individually leave the group (disengagement). There are equivalent experiences in Egypt with allowing people convicted of terrorism to be in the same prison wards, where the leaders of the terrorist groups Gama’a al-

³⁷ ETA (Euskadi Ta Askatasuna: Basque Homeland and Liberty) is a militant, Basque separatist movement that is fighting for a Basque Country independent of Spain. ETA declared a permanent ceasefire in 2007. ETA is listed as a terrorist organisation in both the EU and USA. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/ETA>, opened on 11 October 2017.

Islamiyya and Jihad were able to convince their members that it was time to cease the armed struggle, i.e. deradicalisation (Rashwan 2009).

The two models have been tested for many years in different prison situations. The prison authorities in many countries have found that placing prisoners with links to the same political/religious terrorist organisations and/or gangs/mafia together has more negative consequences than when the members/participants are spread out. The same applies to the use of special sections for specific inmates. These may have a stigmatising effect on the inmate, something that reduces his/her motivation for change and strengthens his/her connection to extremism. In addition, being placed in a special section may be a source of prestige among the internal prison hierarchy and strengthen the inmate's sense of belonging, something which in turn strengthens his/her identity as a religious/political terrorist and/or gang member and thereby reduces the motivation to change (RAN Working paper 2016). However, prison authorities in some countries are also of the view that there is a need to both spread and assemble, not least if they have so many radicalised inmates that there are not enough prison wards to spread them out among. England and Wales have now decided to focus on special sections for such inmates.

Factors in the development or change of an extremist identity and use of violence

Prisons are a closed environment where the conditions of imprisonment and radicalised inmates are generally emphasised as being negative aspects. Despite this, it is precisely the closed prison environment, with a fixed timeframe for the individual's period spent in prison, which potentially provides unique opportunities. These opportunities can influence the inmate in a direction that can assist in strengthening or increasing the individual's social or professional skills. This can be of importance to his/her ability to establish an alternative life when he/she has finished serving the prison sentence, something that can potentially be a motivating factor for the inmate during imprisonment (Neumann 2010). Unfortunately, the problem is often that these opportunities are not identified or that the trust, courage and belief in them may not exist on the part of the politicians and authorities. This can in turn have a knock-on effect in public discourse and thereby the employees in general.

At an overall level, factors that influence an inmate with extremist views can be divided into internal/external categories. External sources include books, articles, emails, telephone conversations, videos, websites and visitors (including radical imams and others with extreme views). Internal sources can be other charismatic/extremist inmates who can potentially, via offers of sanctions/protection/companionship/unity, influence an inmate who is potentially in a vulnerable situation due to the above-mentioned factors (Hansen 2018 *in press*). Classifying into internal and external sources makes it possible for authorities and staff to be aware of the opportunities for exercising influence that exist and how these can be handled and utilised in rehabilitation efforts.

Prisons, both in the past and present, have played and continue to play a historically significant role in narratives that are part of any radical and/or extremist group. Therefore, prisons and ethically acceptable prison conditions, with an emphasis on compliance with human rights and respectful treatment of the inmates, are of decisive importance when concerning prevention and rehabilitation for convicted persons in general and especially with a view to those who are serving a terrorism-related sentence (Orban in Hammerlin et al. 2012).

Irrespective of the context, the decisive factor is that the inmate is treated in accordance with applicable laws and human rights and that the prison staffs' management of and relationships with inmates convicted of terrorism also include due care for the individual's rights, health and life situation.

Practical experience and research demonstrate that daily interaction between inmates and staff is of major importance to the inmate's positive development. This can in turn assist in increasing the inmate's sense of security, since the inmate's experience in prison must be assumed to be based on an interpretative framework which potentially includes clear categories of "friends and enemies". The quality of the time spent in prison may have decisive influence on whether such interpretative frameworks are broken down or further reinforced (Neumann 2010, Christensen & Mørck 2017, Hansen 2018 *in press*).

The inmate's experiences while serving his/her sentence will also be significant in strengthening or weakening the individual's ability to (re)integrate. Therefore, good prison conditions and the opportunity for the inmate and staff to develop trusting relationships are decisive prerequisites for reducing resistance from the inmate and potentially motivating the inmate to change by developing alternative relationships and opportunities while in prison (RAN Working paper 2016). When staff express trust in certain inmates it may be of decisive importance to his/her development and self-confidence and could be what initiates change (RAN P&P Working Group paper 2016, Christensen 2015, Hansen 2018 *in press*).

When concerning inmates convicted of terrorism, one particular factor may still assert itself. Returned Syria travellers have been found by prison personnel across national borders to be trained in displaying certain forms of behaviour in relation to people in authority, and particularly in contexts such as questioning and addressing formal and informal questions, both in and outside of prison. They therefore possibly do not reveal their actual thoughts and feelings and staff should therefore be extra aware that there may be a hidden agenda behind their comfortable behaviour and demeanour (Meines et al. 2017: 42 - 46).

Furthermore, like other (violent) extremists, returned Syria travellers can be expected to seek to dehumanise prison personnel by challenging the staff member's political stance, slandering the staff member (calling him/her a dog etc.), in order to test his/her professionalism and temperament. Therefore, it can be decisive that prison staff receive training, teaching and the option of guidance with regard to associating with this group of inmates. Training can assist the staff member in identifying and recognising behaviour on the part of the inmate, and thereby

enable the staff member to manage such forms of abuse. In this way, the staff member can gain a better understanding of the inmate's potential probing, challenging and abusive approach (RAN Working group paper 2016: 6-7).

Extra teaching and an understanding of the target group's potential behaviour and strategies can also assist in safeguarding the employees and other inmates. This applies in particular if the selected staff member obtains extra expertise in recognising potentially violent inmates and people who become increasingly more extreme in their words and/or behaviour. Such expertise can thereby assist in preventing violent attacks by recognising potentially dangerous inmates in time. In connection with this, it should be emphasised that this does *not* involve identifying "signs of radicalisation", but rather gaining an insight into and understanding of the *individual* prisoner and the prisoner's situation. This means enabling some staff members to identify factors that can potentially be a reason for the individual inmate's frustration, rage, insecurity, fear of other inmates and similar factors that can have a negative influence on an inmate who has been convicted of terrorism (ibid).

It is also important that staff members have good multicultural expertise³⁸ and learn to identify differences in expressing a religious belief and extremism/radicalisation, such that any expression of support for Islam or religious practice is not (mis)interpreted in a context of a diffuse perception of "radicalisation" (Liebling, Arnold & Straub 2011). Such oversimplified interpretations may be stigmatizing and create (further) frustration on the part of the inmate such that the staff member can unintentionally contribute to initiating the "radicalisation" that the staff member actually wanted to combat. Most who convert to Islam or who actively practice Islam do so with a peaceful purpose. As previously mentioned, this most often has a positive influence on their behaviour and self-esteem by the religion giving them meaning and a direction in life and provides them with certain behavioural and value norms that they can follow. Therefore, it is also important to note that the possibility of negative influence and support for extremist views is strengthened by the absence of access to moderate imams in the prison, because they can assist in ensuring that the individual inmate can commence a dialogue with a religious authority. This can contribute to him/her having opportunities to have serious, well-informed and nuanced spiritual guidance, explanation and discussion of Islam and religious questions and perhaps also conversations about the inmate's reflections of his/her own actions. If and when a well-informed imam is not available for the inmate, manipulative inmates may fill the void and promote an extreme version of Islam (Neumann 2010 in Hansen 2018 *in press*, Hamm 2013).

Imprisonment creates calm around the inmate, in contrast to the intense activity people involved in extreme social movements, terrorist groups or gangs are often used to living with. The calm and absence of friends in the group and the larger political network can contribute to the individual having the opportunity to reflect over the sequence of events that have resulted in his/her imprisonment (Christensen 2015). Offering the inmate education and access to creative

³⁸ As noted by an employee at the Norwegian Correctional Service, the recruitment strategy is important. The Norwegian Correctional Service must avoid only having middle-aged men from rural areas supervising urban youths. Knowledge of multiculturalism cannot simply be created in the lecture hall.

opportunities for development can motivate the individual's personal development. In addition, good opportunities for meeting family and friends can be very important. These can be of major importance to an inmate convicted of terrorism having a social (and preferably non-criminal) network of friends and family to return to after serving his/her sentence. It is also important that the inmate can feel safe in prison. This also reduces the risk that the inmate has the need to join extremist groups and gangs in prison to obtain protection (RAN P&P Working paper 2016).

To conclude, it is important to emphasise that there must be a plan for the inmate's conditions for release, such that his/her rehabilitation can be maintained and strengthened. This can occur by linking him/her to a mentor at an early stage in the process who the inmate can meet in prison and who can be a contact person when his/her prison sentence is over. The choice and use of mentors must also be thoroughly assessed. Very few are able to remain a loyal mentor during a long prison sentence of, for example, six years. Rehabilitation generally occurs together with others who can show the way to an alternative life, since it is rare that the individual can change exclusively through his/her own efforts (Christensen 2015).

6. Management of foreign fighters, returned Syria travellers and (former) extremists: International experiences and strategies

In this section we will shed light on four different methods of managing extremists and parolees who have served a sentence for terrorism or terrorism-related offences. We will describe in greater detail a model from Denmark which is emphasised internationally as being exemplary. Among other things, the review will focus on factors such as the background to the interventions, who is responsible, the objective and the implicit and explicit assumptions that are behind the initiative, as well as the intended target group.

The models that are described differ in many ways. Three of them are managed and stipulated by the authorities in the individual countries, while one case is a dedicated exit programme managed by a NGO. Two of the four are particularly focussed on people who have been imprisoned and are on parole/have been released and are therefore part of a larger national strategy, while the exemplary case is a more overall description of an entire national strategy. Irrespective of this, the goal for all of the described strategies is to reintegrate the individual (former) extremist and protect the population.

The Netherlands

In the Netherlands, approximately 220 people who were residents in the country departed to participate in the war in Syria and Iraq. When taking the size of the country into consideration, the Netherlands therefore has a relatively high number of departed foreign fighters and Syria travellers (Bakker & Bont 2016). The Netherlands has implemented an overall strategy that aims to prevent radicalisation, extremism and terrorism. However, this section focusses on the measures the Netherlands has initiated for people convicted of terrorism who have been released from prison and is based on an evaluation of this initiative. The case study only concerns people who have been released after having been involved in jihadist terrorism (ibid).

Context for intervention and the institutions behind this: Until 2012, three separate institutions were responsible for Holland's organisation and follow-up of parolees/released prisoners who have been under suspicion or who served a terrorism-related sentence. In 2012, the National Coordinator for Security and Counterterrorism (NCTV) and the Dutch correctional service launched a joint project with the objective of improving the efforts in reintegrating people convicted of terrorism in Holland both during and after their imprisonment. The new programme was launched based on NCTV's assumptions that: (1) Dutch prisons did not have adequate measures that focussed on reintegration of inmates convicted of terrorism. (2) The follow-up of people released from prison who had been convicted of terrorism and extremism was inadequate.

Goals of the initiative: The three goals of the coordinated initiative were: (1) that they should prevent those who are released from recommencing their involvement in terrorism-related crimes by initiating measures that strengthen the released prisoner's social and professional skills, combined with improved follow-up of the individual after he/she had completed his/her sentence. (2) Providing the Dutch authorities with greater authority to monitor the released prisoner by making it compulsory for the authorities to monitor and follow-up the released prisoner. (3) The initiative should be an improvement of the Dutch government's overall preventative anti-terrorism efforts (ibid:70).

The target group for the initiative: The target group consisted of two categories. (1) Inmates convicted of terrorism-related crimes, and (2) inmates suspected by the authorities of such crimes and who were to be paroled.

Staffing, qualifications/training and organisation: The people who are assigned to the follow-up of the released prisoner are under the direction of the Dutch correctional services and qualified for the assignment. They are specifically qualified to provide assistance to released prisoners who have been involved with jihadist terrorist organisations. As a starting point, there were five employees who met every month in The Hague to discuss their own challenges and those of their client and his/her progression. The meetings also included lectures/teaching in topics relating to the assignment and the target group. The employees receive guidance and are supervised by a sixth employee who is group leader, as well as a regional leader who monitors the initiative and reports to a higher regional management level. An employee from the Dutch correctional service coordination group participates at the meetings and is also responsible for obtaining the necessary funds for releasing the five employees from their day-to-day obligations (ibid: 70).

Initiatives to achieve the goals: First, using the assessment tool "RISc" Diagnostic (Recidive Inschatting Schalen), the authorities identify factors that can be a particular cause of the individual committing crimes. Based on this, the prosecuting authority sets conditions for release on parole. Some of the conditions for parole are that they must not be seen in the company of other known extremists or people who can be linked to the groups/networks the released prisoner was previously a part of. In addition, the individual must be followed-up by a supervisor from the Dutch correctional service who monitors whether all of the conditions for parole are being complied with and evaluates whether the person is (re)integrating into society. The assumptions behind these initiatives are that if the released prisoner is given new opportunities and does not associate with people with known links to extremism/terrorism, the person will disengage from the extremist environment and abstain from further involvement in violent activities. This is equivalent to what we describe as disengagement in Chapter 3, which involves changes in behaviour and refraining from being involved with violent groups and their activities. Through collaboration with the local police, compliance with these conditions is monitored. The supervisor (the employee from the Dutch correctional service) must also identify factors that can be of particular support to the individual in a reintegration process. Thereafter, in close cooperation with the municipalities, the correctional service and the supervisor assist the

individual with finding employment and/or education, housing, treatment from a psychologist and re-establishing ties to and reuniting with family. Furthermore, in collaboration with the local police, the supervisor carefully monitors whether the released prisoner makes contact with former or new extremist networks.

In addition to engaging the released prisoner in new activities, there are also initiatives focussing on his/her cognitive orientation. Therefore, the supervisors also attempt to discuss the released prisoner's worldview and religious orientation with him/her in order to introduce less extreme interpretations of Islam. If the supervisor does not have sufficient knowledge for this type of discussion, the authorities have contact with theologically educated personnel who have additional specific knowledge to be able to enter into a discussion with a (former/current/in-between) jihadist.

A weakness of this (and something that also proved to be the case in the Dutch example) is that it is difficult to evaluate the external partner. Is he moderate or is the consultant himself involved in crime and/or very orthodox in his interpretations of Islam (ibid, page 72)

As part of the initiative, the authorities can also deviate from the principle that the released prisoner has to be linked to a supervisor in the local section, such that he/she instead has a supervisor with specific expertise. In addition, the authorities actively seek to strengthen the cooperation between the police, municipality, prosecuting authorities and other agencies that are involved with the initiative (ibid).

Legislation: Legislation can be a double-edged sword in the sense that a law may have unintended negative consequences in relation to the reintegration of people who have been convicted of terrorism-related offences. For example, in this instance there are special conditions such as the "Regulation on sanctions for the suppression of terrorism" (*Sanctieregeling Terrorisme*). The regulation makes it extremely difficult for the released prisoner to open a bank account and thereby access his/her first financial benefits and later access his/her salary or be given a bank card. This can have a negative effect on the individual's motivation to reintegrate and can increase the individual's opposition to the system (ibid:76).

Strengths/weaknesses of the initiative: It is considered a strength that the initiative focusses both on the individual's extreme views (deradicalisation) and breaking away from the old environment (disengagement) by also seeking to involve the person in other activities and networks. This makes the initiative flexible, since the different measures can always be adapted to the individual's needs. The initiative's goal for success was that the person was not returned to prison, and the behavioural dimension was assigned the most value. It is also considered a strength that employees who work with crime prevention work on a daily basis also have a good starting point for following-up the initiative in this context. It is also considered a strength that the initiative has a major focus on close follow-up of the individual at several levels simultaneously.

However, it can be a weakness if a municipality is principally concerned with not being “vilified” for having a person convicted of terrorism in the local area. Persons convicted of terrorism who are released and are known regionally and nationally from the media due to the nature of the crime, can represent a particular problem if employees in the involved agencies do not maintain their professionalism and refuse or seek to avoid addressing the matters that apply to the released prisoner (ibid:75).

Another weakness/challenge is that employees who are assigned the task of supervising the released prisoner may often feel trapped between two types of work assignments, with different expectations for both of these. Therefore, the duties of the individual employee and when these are to be carried out must be clarified and maintained. Clear and present leadership is also of major importance to the selected employees and their wellbeing (ibid: 78 -79).

The United Kingdom

In the United Kingdom (UK) it is presumed that 850 people have travelled to the area in and across Syria and Iraq. The general trend is that an increasing number of people are being convicted of terrorism-related offences, something that is also due to the fact that several offences that were previously legal have now been criminalised. This is a trend that is asserting itself throughout all of Europe (Marsden 2016:157). In this section we will focus on the part of the initiative aimed at people who have been released after serving a terrorism-related sentence.

Context for intervention and the institutions behind this: The UK’s principal strategy for preventing terrorism - CONTEST - consists of four elements: (1) Prevent terrorism by addressing factors that lead to radicalisation. (2) Pursue terrorists and their sponsors. (3) Protect British citizens and authorities. (4) Prepare to manage the consequences of a terrorist attack (Rabasa et al. 2010).

The UK has had long experience with managing people convicted of terrorism in connection with the IRA (Irish Republican Army). However, in recent years most of those convicted of terrorism have been linked to militant Islamism. Behind the model that is described in this section is the National Probation Trust’s (NPT) Central Extremism Unit (CEU) which has developed a new strategy based on the new type of extremism.

Goals of the initiative: (1) Protect society through restrictions and monitoring of the released prisoner. (2) Reintegrating the parolee by motivating him/her to: a) comply with the conditions of his/her release, b) cooperate with the contact person, c) not act in a manner that may give the authorities cause for concern (ibid: 151).

The target group for the initiative: People who are released on parole after having served a terrorism-related sentence.

Staffing, qualifications/training and organisation: CEU is a special unit that was formed in 2009 and which coordinates the rehabilitation efforts together with the person convicted of terrorism who is on parole. CEU develops and offers training/teaching and initiatives that

encourage these individuals to refrain from committing crimes and that seek to prevent a return to crime. CEU also offers assistance to the representative of the correctional services who is in contact with the released prisoner. In addition, the unit is a link between legal bodies and other agencies that are engaged in supporting the released prisoner's reintegration and supervision and which principally consists of an inter-agency team.

Specially trained contact persons from the correctional services work together with other societal stakeholders. This includes Islamic organisations, whereby selected people function as mentors to the released prisoner. In dialogue with him/her, they raise issues such as identity, religion and social perspectives. The most important prerequisites for this model - and for protecting the public - are facilitating cross-sectional and inter-agency cooperation, sharing of information and allocation of resources (ibid:152).

Initiatives to achieve the goals: The community is protected by the correctional service's ongoing risk assessment of the released prisoner, combined with the inter-agency team monitoring and providing information about the released prisoner's potential violations of the conditions for his/her release. Furthermore, in this strategy the parolee has restrictions on who he/she is permitted to associate with.

In cooperation with CEU, the contact person establishes contact with the person convicted of terrorism while he/she is still serving his/her sentence. The contact person has day-to-day responsibility for the released prisoner and they meet once a week. The inmate therefore has a government official/contact person who supports him/her until, during and after release. The contact person works together with the released prisoner and prepares all of the institutions that the inmate will come in contact with following his/her release. Like ordinary criminals, the released prisoner will receive assistance in finding housing and with applying for education and/or employment.

During this release process, the contact person also has a particular focus on the released person's ideological, religious and political orientation. With support from CEU, their training, and written materials/manuals, the contact person will attempt to "reintegrate the parolee" (section 2 under "Goals of the initiative"). The materials are modular and include specific exercises/questions relating to identity, life story, attitudes and understanding of others, about victims of violence, and about the reasons for violating the rights of others (ibid:147). In addition, section 2 is specified in the form of a whole range of detailed sub-goals which shall be achieved through dialogue between the contact person and the released prisoner that concern the released prisoner's general attitude and beliefs. These are points that address denial and minimisation of abuse, developing critical thought, developing a contextual understanding of Islam, developing a balanced and multifaceted identity, rejecting legitimising the use of violence/crime as a response to injustice, developing a positive social network and disengaging from negative social networks, strengthening or re-establishing familial relationships, developing a constructive relationship to a mentor, and participating in training, education and the workforce.

The contact person does not seek to deconstruct the individual's political engagement, but to redirect the methods by which the person can promote his/her political objectives through non-violent means. It is also considered important that the released prisoner accepts the social contract that exists between the citizen and the authorities in a democratic society.

Legislation: The released person is not permitted to leave the UK or use a computer and must also comply with a curfew. The rules are principally in place to protect the community and the released prisoner is closely monitored to verify that these rules are being complied with. However, these rules also have unintended and negative consequences for the reintegration of the released prisoner, since the individual's reintegration into society partly depends on his/her participation in work and/or education, something that requires access to and use of a computer and other electronic equipment, which are devices that the released prisoner is prohibited from using. In addition, it may be difficult to find an employer where it is possible to comply with the curfew. The requirement that the parolee can only associate with certain people and is restricted from associating with others, prevents reintegration but potentially protects the population. The released prisoner can be imprisoned immediately if the conditions for his/her release are not complied with³⁹.

Strengths/weaknesses of the initiative: The model is based on a collaboration involving many different stakeholders. The collaboration can be complicated by the involved stakeholders having different agendas. For example, the focus of the police is to protect the population, while the correctional services are responsible for the rehabilitation and reintegration of the released prisoner - something that can be difficult to achieve simultaneously. There is a major focus on ideology in the approach and, irrespective of this, ideology must be considered to be of varying importance to the released prisoner. This is further reinforced by the fact that the convicted persons represent a broad range of offences since "terrorist acts" under British law cover activities such as protests and activism to the use and committing of violence (ibid: 158).

The model provides the opportunity to adapt different topics depending on whether the individual has social and/or ideological challenges. In addition, the subjects can be important tools for identifying why the parolee has believed that the use of political violence has been necessary. In this manner, one can redirect the energy the individual has towards other and non-violent objectives and initiate activities that can contribute to involvement and reintegration in more pro-social areas.

The model's emphasis on the parolee's involvement, rather than focussing exclusively on risk factors and the individual's risk of reoffending, is considered positive because political extremists often have a high degree of decisiveness and "agency" (ibid:160). In addition, problems relating to ordinary criminals such as homelessness and abuse are not a problem for this target group. It is important to note here that the departees from the UK do not represent the same types of people as those who have travelled from Norway. Syria travellers from the UK

³⁹ 28% of those convicted of terrorism offences were re-incarcerated for violating the conditions of their parole, compared with 4% of general criminals (Marsden 2015:152).

have much more often been individuals with a good education and job, despite there being many who are socially marginalised among them.

At the same time, reintegration can be hindered by the released prisoner not accepting the secular British society, combined with him/her being stigmatised by the public and the media. There is also much more of a punitive culture in the UK, where people are generally less inclined to accept that convicted persons should be able to return to society. The released prisoner can be highly suspicious of strangers and be apprehensive about speaking to others, because he/she is afraid that the other person may be identified as a risk by the system and thereby under observation. This makes it difficult to live up to the requirement that the parolees themselves must seek to be part of society.

Sweden

In this section we will provide a description of EXIT, a Swedish NGO that since 1998 has supported right-wing extremists in leaving the White Power movement. EXIT is an integrated part of Northern Europe's largest youth centre Fryshuset, an NGO and umbrella organisation that works with marginalised youths. EXIT works in accordance with Fryshuset's vision that, by participating in activities and being part of an inclusive community, young people can develop confidence and self-esteem, which can improve their social position in society. EXIT is based at Fryshuset in Stockholm.

Context for intervention and the institutions behind: From the late 1980s and during the 1990s, the extremist right-wing movement garnered support from an increasing number of young people in Sweden. Fryshuset and EXIT work based on the belief that the involvement of young people with gangs and extremist groups is primarily due to social marginalisation. Therefore, at the end of the 1980s, Fryshuset took the initiative to establish a meeting place for extremist right-wing skinheads on Fryshuset's premises in order to break through their social isolation and involve them in democracy-based and non-violent environments. Among other things, this contributed to the neo-Nazi Kent Lindahl leaving the movement. A few years later, and with help from staff at Fryshuset and inspiration from the Norwegian Exit project, he started the organisation EXIT Sverige (EXIT Sweden) in 1998 (Christensen 2015).

Goals of the initiative: EXIT's goal is to strengthen and reinforce the individual's motivation for disengaging from the right-wing extremist community. This is done by motivating (mostly) young people to participate in alternative activities and communities in order to develop or improve social, cognitive and formal skills, as well as access to other networks and friendships that enable the development of a different self-understanding and the establishment of a different life (ibid).

The target group for the initiative: People, regardless of age, who are seeking to leave the White Power movement at their own initiative. Most people contact the actual organisation, but some are referred to EXIT by youth workers, the police, teachers, parents or other family

members. Participation is largely voluntary and most often takes place at the individual's own initiative.

Staffing, qualifications/training and organisation: Due to the fact that EXIT is located at Fryshuset, the organisation is able to offer those who seek to disengage from the extreme right the opportunity to engage in a number of sporting and creative activities. Fryshuset can also offer assistance with questions relating to work and education, because the counsellors and case officers from the Swedish Public Employment Service are present at the centre, as well as priests, imams and the police. In addition, all staff from the different organisations present at Fryshuset receive ongoing additional training in multiple different topics. EXIT's employees consist of former right-wing extremists who work as mentors/coaches. Based on their own experiences, additional training and education, they seek to motivate and support young people in leaving the White Power movement. These mentors work in close collaboration with social workers, academics and former gang members who are also part of EXIT's team. The staff who have backgrounds from gangs and/or extremist groups receive guidance from social workers and also continually undergo additional training. Several of them have also completed basic psychotherapy training. EXIT also cooperates with a whole range of institutions and specialists such as psychiatrists, psychologists and substance abuse workers. In addition, EXIT's staff are involved in both national and international networks as advisors where they provide information about extremism, radicalisation and the path to disengagement (ibid).

Initiatives to achieve the goals:

The starting point for EXIT's work is the assumption that the individual acquires extremist views as a consequence of his/her membership in an extremist group which they have become involved with for social or other reasons. Ideological beliefs are thereby not considered to be the reason for the individual's involvement with an extremist group. EXIT's support of the individual is therefore based on the individual's extreme views being changed *as a consequence of having left the group*, rather than *being the reason for leaving it* (Bjørge 245-246). The intention behind EXIT's practices is based on the goal of reintegration. It is therefore decisive to identify the individual's interests in order to be able to engage the individual in an activity he/she is motivated to be involved with. This also contributes to him/her becoming part of a community, something that has an influence on the development of his/her identity and sense of belonging. EXIT therefore focusses on behaviour as a means of changing the individual's self-understanding and ideological orientation (Christensen 2015). EXIT therefore links those who they describe as their clients, i.e. people in the process of leaving the extreme right, to a coach. This is normally an employee with a past as a member of the extreme right. The client's motives and security risk are evaluated via a conversation between the individual and two experienced EXIT coaches. The approach involves the client and coach meeting, talking and engaging in different activities together. The principal aim of these activities is to establish trust between coach and client and later to develop/improve the client's personal, social and professional skills.

Legislation: Due to the fact that EXIT is an NGO, the organisation is only required to register information about clients in accordance with informed consent. In some cases, this can make it

difficult to record personal data and thereby harder to disseminate information about a client across, for example, a group of personnel.

Strengths/weaknesses of the initiative: EXIT's status as an independent NGO and the fact that several of EXIT's employees have backgrounds from the extreme right give the organisation a high degree of legitimacy and trust among a target group that traditionally is hard to reach. EXIT's independence of the authorities also makes them extremely flexible in terms of handling motivated clients, irrespective of age. EXIT's status as an NGO makes it possible to approach their clients' issues in a holistic manner, which potentially runs across what are distinguished categories in the public welfare system. Based on this, the clients receive support which coherently seeks to assist them in this process. It is therefore not a requirement to prioritise problems. The anti-drug initiatives can take place at the same time as individuals meet with their coach, psychologist or start playing a sport. However, on the other hand, EXIT's status as an NGO means that the organisation is strongly dependent on funds it has earned and support from funds raised and the like, something that makes the financial situation continually uncertain. This makes it difficult to retain an experienced staff, something which can be very harmful for the organisation, because this expertise and continuity are vital to EXIT's work, not least because the support of clients takes many months and years to build up. It is also difficult to find suitable coaches among former clients. EXIT's starting point that "membership in extremist groups is due to social marginalisation" can also contribute to specific explanations for involvement in extremist groups taking preference over other perspectives, perceptions and explanatory models. Bjørgo and Nesser's typologies demonstrate that there are several types of members of extremist groups with different motivations and backgrounds.

Denmark - an exemplary case

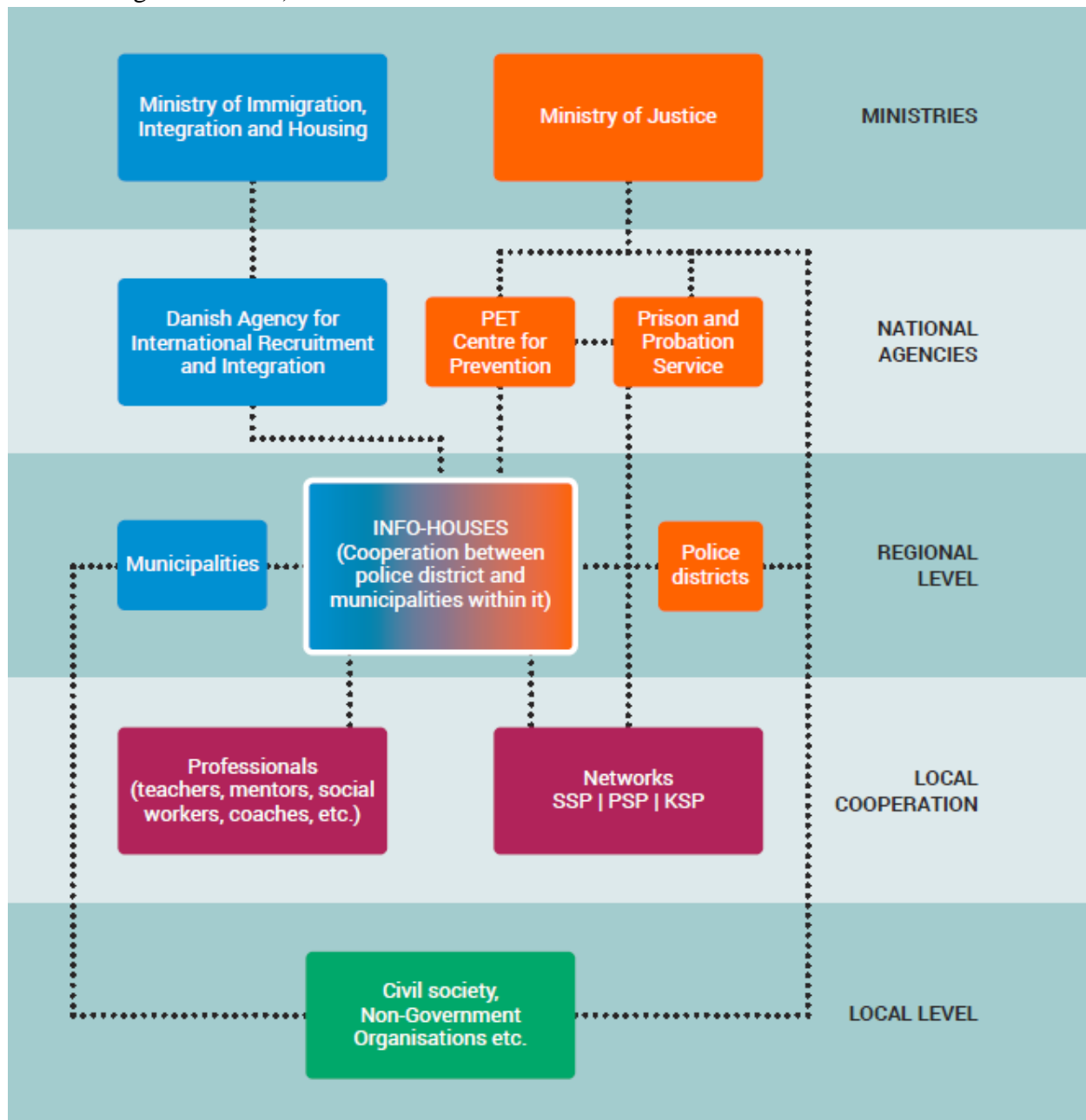
Since the mid-2000s, the prevention of and measures against violent extremism and radicalisation have become an increasingly bigger part of the traditional anti-terrorism efforts in Denmark. Since 2012, at least 145 Danes have travelled to Syria/Iraq, while just under half of these are assumed to have returned. In the government's action plan from 2014, foreign fighters and other Syria travellers are identified as a particularly urgent problem. The Danish Security and Intelligence Service's (PET) Centre for Terror Analysis (CTA) still considers the terrorist threat against Denmark to be serious, despite very few people having departed in recent years. According to CTA's findings, most of the more recent departees have been younger women, and some Danish foreign fighters have also been involved in several terrorist attacks in recent years (CTA 2017). In addition, the efforts of the authorities before, during and after the Copenhagen attack in 2015 were evaluated, and this resulted in the reinforcing of the existing efforts as well as an increased focus on the role of the Danish Prison and Probation Service in it (Hemmingsen 2015).

Context for intervention and the institutions behind this: The emergency preparedness of the Danish efforts involves state, regional and local stakeholders that are linked together in various networks coordinated by central units in each police districts which are known as "Info-Houses".

The Danish model involves a broad collaboration across public social authorities and services, the education and health services, and the police and intelligence services, who act in accordance with systemised practices. This is based on the standard measures that are generally initiated to improve conditions for marginalised individuals and groups in society, including both extremist individuals and groups, as well as individuals who are involved in, or considered a risk of becoming involved in, criminal activities (ibid.:5). In addition, the Danish model is based on an understanding that the involvement of (mostly) young people in terrorism and/or extremist groups entails a legal offence in line with other crime. Terrorism is not considered to be an existential threat to the state and the existing order (ibid.:18).

The Danish model has been developed based on a principle of “learning-by-doing” and the continual identification of errors and improvements. The model is therefore a result of a close and long-time collaboration involving various practitioners and, in recent years, also academics who work with topics such as “radicalisation and terrorism” based on social psychology and political science (ibid. 2015:7). The practices are continually improved with input from top to bottom as well as from the bottom and up. This means that local practitioners receive guidelines from the state which they test the applicability of in the local cases. Information about experiences is sent back to government stakeholders such as ministries, politicians and the Danish Security and Intelligence Service (PET), who further refine the guidelines and legislation. There is a great deal of responsiveness and transparency at state level when concerning the implementation of methods that have been developed by local practitioners and academics, and which have proven to be extremely effective. Disseminating such experience and knowledge-based methods to the rest of the country is an equally important part of the model (ibid.: 8). As shown by the overview below, the Ministry of Justice and possibly other ministries in collaboration with the Danish Security and Intelligence Service and Danish Prison and Probation Service, are the stakeholders that coordinate and/or provide guidance at an overarching level. At regional and local level, the principal stakeholders are the police and social authorities that collaborate with other social authorities, but also with schools, leisure clubs and the like.

An overview of the model in the form of a diagram is illustrated here (Gemmerli & Hemmingsen in Hemmingsen 2015:16):



Goals of the initiative: Denmark's model for preventing terrorism has two goals: (1) protecting the state and the population from terrorist attack, (2) the obligation of the welfare state to protect the wellbeing of the individual, including the obligation to protect the individual from self-harming behaviour (ibid.:15) This means that the starting point is twofold: both the requirement for criminalisation and punishment, as well as protection and prevention.

The target group for the initiative: Due to the efforts directed against people at risk of departure and returned Syria travellers being an integrated part of the existing crime prevention initiative, the target group includes both the returned Syria travellers and other, mostly young

people, who are involved in extremist groups and gang environments, or are considered as being at risk of becoming involved with such groups. Like young people who are the target group for general crime prevention efforts, returned Syria travellers and other people who participate in terrorism and extremist groups are considered to be misunderstood and unreflective about their own opportunities (ibid.:20)

Staffing, qualifications/training and organisation: The “Danish model” or “Aarhus model” is based on previously established inter-agency initiatives such as the crime prevention network that was established in 1977, consisting of schools, social authorities and the police - SSP (equivalent to SLT in Norway). In addition, a network was established in 2009 known as PSP, consisting of the police, social authorities and psychiatric service, which focusses on preventing the mentally ill from being involved in crime. The most recent network was established in 2010 (KSP), which is a collaboration consisting of the police, social authorities and Danish Prison and Probation Service, which focusses on released prisoners and aims to prevent a return to crime. Furthermore, in 2007 all 12 police districts initiated a PET campaign known as “Police against terrorism”. This campaign kicked off a pilot project that, after being inspired by a project in the Netherlands, was commenced in Aarhus by the eastern Jutland Police. The project was linked to SSP in Aarhus and consisted of:

- An Info-House, which assesses and coordinates the prevention of radicalisation and which is staffed by personnel with specialist expertise in matters relating to radicalisation and extremism.
- Counselling by professionals on radicalisation.
- Specially trained mentors for prevention or other efforts when concerning radicalisation.
- Counselling and exit programmes for individuals who are considering travelling to Syria or who have returned from there.
- Outreach work focussing on the local community and/or stakeholders that are in contact with radicalised individuals.
- Counselling parents of young people who are radicalised.
- Dialogue-based workshops for schools regarding radicalisation (ibid.: 31).

The current anti-terrorism efforts are integrated into already existing structures and networks across different bodies, authorities and ministries in Denmark. In order to satisfy the objectives for the initiatives, it is decisive that all involved government personnel, social workers and other prevention stakeholders act in accordance with (1) a fundamental understanding of the welfare state’s institutions and their work areas and powers, (2) the understanding of the reasons for and social processes behind the crime, and (3) insight into how the individual’s behaviour can be changed (ibid). In addition, knowledge sharing, collaboration, transparency and use of general and already existing measures in the welfare state, as well as continually identifying possibilities for improvement, are absolutely essential values in the continued development of the practices. In order to ensure this occurs, so-called Info-Houses have been established in all 12 police districts in Denmark. They assess/process all enquiries from citizens, steering groups, municipalities and other bodies relating to concerns about radicalisation, extremism and

terrorism. In addition, the Info-Houses coordinate the initiatives and the relevant parties. The Info-Houses assess the nature of the enquiry and whether there are grounds for “concern” and, if yes, who the relevant authorities are. Is it a security issue? Or is it perhaps a matter for the social welfare authorities? The assessment is made in relation to whether measures shall be initiated in response to the concern and who can best handle this. If the assessment shows that this involves a security risk, an enquiry is sent to PET and the Danish Prison and Probation Service. If it is not considered to be a security risk, the matter is forwarded on to the bodies that have been specifically developed to prevent radicalisation and extremism. If they also do not consider this to be a matter involving extremism, it is then forwarded on again and ends up as part of the general efforts of the police and municipality, who will then attempt to resolve the case based on the established methods and social services. If the individual is found to require extra support, possibilities for this are sought among teachers, leisure educators and other staff who the individual already knows. A request can therefore involve all stakeholders from PET and the Danish Prison and Probation Service to the social welfare authorities. In addition, since 2015, a national hotline has been established which parents, next of kin and others who have concerns about radicalisation among their own children or other next of kin can use to make contact.

Initiatives for achieving the goals: The model has three levels. There is (1) The general level - which generally works with prevention by strengthening the understanding of democracy and improving the practitioners’ general insight into extremism and radicalisation. Level (2) The specific level – is aimed at non-violent individuals involved with extremist or problematic social groups. Mentor support is offered, as well as assistance in obtaining support from next of kin and dialogue with local areas on how they can, for example, prevent more people from travelling to conflict areas. (3) The targeted level - which is specifically aimed at individuals who are involved in criminal offences or who are considered to be a high risk of this. The focus is on preventing specific criminal offences. The initiatives are exclusively based on individual services such as exit programmes, monitoring and coaching in developing social and vocational skills. This is combined with municipal initiatives aimed at resolving the individual’s housing situation, as well as psychological, medical and/or therapeutic support. All measures are still coordinated by an Info-House. Due to the fact that the model is multi-faceted, trust between the involved stakeholders and reasonable agreement about the objective of the initiative are vital.

The model includes individual conversations/counselling and offers of mentor support for people who had plans on travelling to Syria/Iraq. That part of the model was established after eastern Jutland police had achieved good results with this method. In addition, the ministries released a manual for “Prevention of extremism” in 2012. Both parts are examples of collaboration and development of the model with input from both the overarching level and regional/local level (Gemmerli & Hemmingsen in Hemmingsen 2015:16-17).

Legislation: The legislation in Denmark has been formulated such that the possibility of close cooperation across the government apparatus is prioritised. This means that the authorities can exchange and share information about the individual if this is deemed necessary to prevent crimes from being committed. In practice, this enables cooperation and the exchange of

information between, for example, the police, social authorities, mental health service and health care system if this is considered necessary for assisting a person who is considered to be at risk of radicalisation or is in some other way considered to be a risk of committing crime. However, the information and exchange of this information cannot be used to investigate or solve crimes.⁴⁰

Strengths/weaknesses of the initiative:

The benefit of the Danish model is the possibility of conducting preventative work based on solid information about the individual, combined with well-developed specialist expertise possessed by selected employees (the info-houses) who can guide others across institutions and agencies. The model is also multifaceted and can therefore be used by already existing competencies and knowledge across many involved stakeholders. The collaboration between practitioners and academics also strengthens both the knowledge behind the initiative as well as the ability of researchers to access the field of practice and information for use in research, something which in turn strengthens the efforts of the practitioners. In addition, the model makes it possible to use social services to a large extent, something for which there is already financial coverage, since these are already part of the general municipal welfare system.

The disadvantage of this practice and model is that the authorities have very extensive powers. The legislation has been drafted in such a manner that it may be unclear to the citizen as to what information is actually exchanged and with whom. For example, the authorities can exchange data orally rather than in writing, something that makes it impossible for a citizen to have an insight into the exchanged information and thereby ensure that the rule of law is being upheld. It can also be difficult to determine what the limits are for an individual being monitored by the authorities by virtue of the state's "obligation" to protect the individual from self-harming behaviour. What does this involve and where is the limit? The model also has potentially negative consequences due to it possibly being difficult for practitioners at ground level (for example, teachers or outreach contacts) to earn the trust of young people, particularly in exposed residential areas, due to these young people being aware that they are working together with the police and possibly the intelligence service PET (ibid.). In addition, initiatives aimed at a target group that is defined as "radicalised" are problematic because (as described in Chapter 3) there is generally no final consensus on what radicalisation actually is. This is a factor that also makes it extremely difficult to evaluate the initiative.

The Danish model is focussed on the individual, something that depoliticises the fact that radicalisation is linked to a political agenda, i.e. conflicts, terrorism and the fear of this. This is a problem that is further reinforced by an ever-present public debate that directly links extremism and radicalisation to Islam and Muslims. This can result in the initiative and the daily media discourse merging together and the worst possible result would be the stigmatisation of a minority group. Therefore, there is a genuine risk that the prevention will develop into a self-fulfilling prophecy (Gemmerli & Hemmingsen i Hemmingsen 2015).

⁴⁰ For the full wording of the act see: <https://danske.love.dk/retsplejeloven/115>, opened on 27 September 2018.

7. Norwegian experiences and models for managing violent extremism

Many of the present Norwegian policies and practices for managing violent extremism are based on the experiences and the research from the start of the 1990s and until the mid-2000s concerning the management of xenophobic violence and right-wing extremist groups. Experiences and research-based knowledge are described in detail in a number of research reports, books and articles, and are summarised in the report “*Forskning på forebygging av radikalisering og voldelig ekstremisme: En kunnskapsstatus*” (*Research on the Prevention of Radicalization and Violent Extremism: A Status of Knowledge*), (Bjørge and Gjelsvik 2015, p. 40-72), and the article “*Right-Wing Extremism in Norway: Prevention and Intervention*” (Fangen and Carlsson 2013). We will therefore not repeat this in detail here, but will simply provide a brief summary.

An important turning point came in 1991 after a series of violent xenophobic incidents in the town of Brumunddal, where local unemployed youths had for several years attacked, threatened and harassed immigrants and refugees while local police or other public agencies remained rather passive towards this. Critical media reports and riots in connection with immigration opponent Arne Myrdal holding a “public meeting” in Brumunddal resulted in the heavy stigmatisation of the local community. A local initiative and the government financed “Action Plan Brumunddal” became the starting point for a strong focus on research and knowledge-based measures. An important lesson was that targeted measures require that the problem is well-identified, which in Brumunddal’s case was shown to be that a marginalized part of the youth population took out their aggression and anger on foreigners in the town. Instead of focussing exclusively on anti-racist denunciation and further marginalisation, research indicated that inclusive measures for these youths were a more effective method - something that was also proven to hold true.

These experiences from Brumunddal contributed to the development of three important initiatives: “Advisory Service for Local Action against Racism and Xenophobia”, “Early Intervention Conversations” and “Project Exit”. The advisory service consisted of 17 researchers and experienced practitioners with different backgrounds (police involved in preventative work, social workers, mediators and others) and complementary skills. Municipalities that required assistance in managing a problem relating to xenophobic violence or gang problems could receive assistance at relatively short notice, normally with a team of two professionals who could assist with analysing the problem and providing guidance regarding possible measures. The Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI) administered the scheme and covered the costs for 1-2 days of guidance. More than 20 municipalities received this type of assistance during the second half of the 1990s. The Norwegian advisory service inspired similar initiatives in several other countries such as Denmark and Germany (Fangen & Carlsson 2013).

Furthermore, in the mid-1990s, the preventative service at Manglerud Police Station in Oslo developed a dialogue-based methodology for “early intervention conversations” with youths who

were involved in the extremist right-wing Viking group from Nordstrand in Oslo, which also involved parents in the preventative conversations. The objective was to identify the reasons for young people being drawn to these groups and to make them and their parents aware of the consequences of continuing along this path. This proved to be an extremely effective method of getting the youths to withdraw from the extremist group, not least when this was combined with establishing network groups for the parents of these youths. The methodology for the early intervention conversations was later standardised by the Norwegian National Police Directorate and is part of the police “toolbox” nationwide and is used for a broad range of concerning behaviour that youths may display. PST has also made this a key tool in their preventative efforts against extremism.

A third innovation was the establishment of Project Exit in 1996-1997. The project was based on the lessons from Brumunddal and the methods for early intervention conversations and parent network groups, as well as Tore Bjørgo’s research into what makes youths join and leave extremist groups (Bjørgo 1997, Chapter 6). The research demonstrated that many of the processes that attract young adults to right-wing extremist groups can be influenced. It is not only possible to reduce their motivation for joining extremist groups, it is also possible to increase their motivation for leaving such groups and reduce the obstacles preventing them from leaving such groups. The Exit project had three objectives:

1. Providing practical assistance and help to people who wanted to withdraw from racist and right-wing extremist groups.
2. Assisting parents in getting their children away from such destructive environments through, among other things, the establishment of parent networks.
3. Providing the police, municipalities, schools and voluntary organisations with knowledge about exit processes and how they can work to get youths out of such groups.

The Norwegian Exit project was rather successful when concerning points 2 and 3, but not as successful with regard to point 1 in terms of providing assistance to people leaving such groups. This worked well in the local Exit project in Kristiansand, but not as well in the rest of the country. However, this assistance to “formers” had great success in the Swedish offshoot of Exit (established in 1998), where those who ran the project were themselves people who had left Nazi groups (see the previous chapter). The Exit model has also spread from Norway via Sweden to other countries, including Germany, Finland, the Netherlands, United Kingdom, Australia and USA. The most important contribution to the Exit project was to demonstrate that it *is* possible to get members of extremist groups to disengage and that it is beneficial to make the exit initiative a central element in an overall strategy against violent extremism and terrorism (Bjørgo & Horgan 2009; Bjørgo 2013).

Experiences with efforts to disband right-wing extremist youth groups in the 1990s and beginning of the 2000s also demonstrated that it was vital to develop different forms of collaboration across the municipality, police, voluntarily organisations, researchers and parent groups (Bjørgo & Carlsson 1999, Fangen & Carlsson 2013, Carlsson 2017). The positive experiences from such inter-agency collaboration were transferred to the management of other

forms of crime and anti-social behaviour among youths, not least the efforts to combat criminal youth gangs. This inter-agency collaboration took place to an increasing extent within the framework of SLT (Coordination of Local Crime Prevention Measures), a model inspired by the Danish SSP collaboration. SLT coordinators employed by the municipality were assigned responsibility for coordinating the inter-agency efforts (more on this below). Schools and leisure organisations constituted part of the natural arena for young people, where teachers, youth workers and other staff had in-depth personal knowledge of the young people and their parents. Social workers, the police, judiciary and municipality were involved in the initiative and these stakeholders could therefore, together with trusting and cooperative parents, and based on their knowledge of the participants' ages, criminal activities, degree of ideological conviction, social environment, leisure interests and family situation, cooperate in creating a joint initiative. In addition, the police and judiciary had knowledge of the acts that were of a violent or criminal nature which the youths could have been involved in and the circumstances surrounding these. Therefore, using solid information and good cooperative relationships, it was possible to prepare a strategy that could influence the individual's course in life and existence and the social environment around him/her (Carlsson & Haaland 2004, Fangen & Carlsson 2013, Carlsson 2017).

The strategies often involved leading figures in these groups being removed through prosecution, judgment and imprisonment for criminal offences, while youth workers, schools and voluntary organisations instigated positive integration measures for youths on the edge of these groups. They were offered leisure activities, education and employment. These were measures that, to a large extent, contributed to the groups eventually being disbanded (Carlsson 2017).

The increasing threat from Islamic terrorism in Europe from the mid-2000s created a need for a new focus in the work on preventing and combating violent extremism. The government's first action plan against radicalisation and violent extremism was launched in December 2010. This plan was relatively general and did not contain much new information. The revised action plan that was presented in June 2014 was significantly more specific and ambitious and contained several new initiatives. The action plan is dynamic and is continually updated as required. This new action plan must be viewed based on the fact that in 2014 violent extremism and terrorism appeared to be a far more serious problem for Norwegian society. The 22 July 2011 attacks and the many Norwegian Syria travellers meant that both right-wing extremism and Islamic terrorism became far more relevant and motivated stronger efforts from multiple sectors at national and local level. The feedback from the field of practice is that the action plan has now become a useful aid in the anti-extremism work.

Several of the initiatives in the action plan involved strengthening regional expertise in the management of extremism, particularly in the health sector. The five Regional Centres for Violence, Traumatic Stress and Suicide Prevention (RVTS), supported by the Norwegian Centre for Studies on Violence and Traumatic Stress (NKVTS), were assigned the task of developing and disseminating expertise and services for both victims of terrorism and civil war, but also people who have been involved in violent extremism and as foreign fighters. RVTS has also

been assigned a key role in Measure 23 of the government's action plan against radicalisation and violent extremism when concerning municipal and inter-municipal networks for following-up returned foreign fighters and their families. There has also been competence building, the initiation and assessment of measures, guidance and evaluation with decision-makers and practitioners as the target group. Among other things, RVTS has assisted the Østfold municipalities of Moss, Halden and Sarpsborg with developing good municipal routines for following-up returned foreign fighters and their families.⁴¹

In cooperation with the Norwegian Directorate of Health, Regional Centre for Child and Youth Mental Health and Child Welfare and (from autumn 2017, the Norwegian Correctional Service, RVTS East is responsible for the knowledge portal www.utveier.no. This is a resource site with the primary intention of assisting the inter-agency support service with a broad range of expertise in a number of areas concerning extremism and radicalisation. The portal now also contains relevant information regarding the management of returned foreign fighters. The five RVTS regions also conduct courses for the local support services further down the system. Since RVTS has its roots in the health sector, the psychosocial dimensions have been assigned a prominent position, among other things, with emphasis on training in trauma expertise.

About half the country's municipalities have established the SLT model for coordinating local crime prevention measures, whereby an SLT coordinator coordinates the initiatives of different municipal agencies, schools, health services and police services. However, there is major variation between the municipalities in terms of the percentage position, resources and mandate of the SLT coordinator. In many municipalities, the SLT collaboration has been vital in the efforts against extremism in general and the challenge of departees and returned foreign fighters in particular. At the same time, the SLT model has a limitation in that it is generally aimed at youths under the age of 18, but the majority of Syria travellers are young adults in their 20s and 30s (Lid et al. 2016). Some municipalities have raised or removed that age limit, though.

An important measure in the Action Plan from 2014 was that the police districts should have their own radicalisation contact, with extremism as a specialist field. The particular role of this person is to act as a link between the Norwegian Police Security Service (PST), local police, the municipalities and, not least, the SLT coordinators when these exist. The task of this person is to disseminate relevant information both from PST down to the local level and from the local level up to PST centrally or locally. Some of the radicalisation contacts have lengthy experience from local preventative police work and often work on an individual basis with people who are in the process of joining extremist groups, people who are already active extremists or people who are on the way out, including returned foreign fighters. The municipal prevention apparatus (particularly the SLT coordinators where these exist) and local police are close collaborative partners of the radicalisation contacts.

⁴¹ <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/status-for-oppfolging-av-handlingsplan-mot-radikalisering-og-voldelig-ekstremisme2/id2579415/>, section 23, opened on 26 September 2018.

Another important development is that in recent years PST has become significantly more outward looking, and provides considerably more information, advice and input to local authorities and practitioners than it did previously.⁴² Measure 22 of the Government's action plan against radicalisation and violent extremism pertains to notification when persons who have taken part in foreign fighter activities return home. This states that PST has established routines for notifying the home municipalities when foreign fighters return to Norway and that the chief town administrator is the local point of contact. Municipalities with departed foreign fighters have long lamented the fact that PST has been very reluctant to provide information, something that has made it difficult for the municipalities to know who has departed, who has returned and what measures are required. This new arrangement is intended to contribute to satisfying this need for information. However, our feedback indicates that there are still major differences around the country in terms of how well this is functioning.

One of the most important new initiatives from 2015 and into the future is that the Norwegian Correctional Service has commenced the development of a mentor scheme for radicalised inmates, for which people convicted of terrorism, Syria travellers and people at risk of radicalisation are the principal target group.⁴³ For those inmates offered a mentor it is voluntary to participate. The first mentor relationships commenced in spring 2016. There are currently fewer than ten inmates who are part of the mentor scheme, but the number is expected to rise as an increasing number of returned foreign fighters who are now in different stages of the court process are convicted and commence prison sentences.

In parallel with the Norwegian Correctional Service's mentor scheme, a number of municipalities have also started developing their own mentor schemes based on slightly different models, in part in cooperation with RVTS. A challenge is to coordinate the mentor systems of the Norwegian Correctional Service and the municipalities, such that released inmates can retain their established mentors when responsibility is transferred to the municipalities. Such agreements are entered into at some locations, but no national coordination is yet in place.

How do the returned foreign fighters fit the established practice in Norway?

The description above includes experiences, options and methods that are also relevant for returned Syria travellers, while there are also a number of factors that must be critically reviewed. In the extension of this, there must be an assessment of whether there is a need to

⁴² This resembles the development that commenced in Denmark a few years prior in which the Danish Security and Intelligence Service (PET) became heavily involved in the preventative efforts in the municipalities.

⁴³ This is Measure 18 of the Action Plan, see <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/status-for-oppfolging-av-handlingsplan-mot-radikalisering-og-voldelig-ekstremisme2/id2579415/>, opened on 26 September 2018.

develop new measures and structures or whether these are challenges that can be managed within the structures and methods that are already established.

When we look at the previous initiative, it appears as if detailed information about the target groups and their activities are of major importance in order to identify applicable efforts and the stakeholders that are relevant and in what contexts. When comparing the previous right-wing extremist target group with Syria travellers as the new target group, there are several significant differences that must be taken into consideration. These apply to the target group's age, (un)certainly of possible crimes they may have committed and the seriousness of these, the individual's ideological convictions, the threat level he/she potentially represents, psychosocial challenges and, not least, the problems that can emerge when concerning the establishment of trusting cooperative relationships between representatives of the authorities and the individual, as well as his/her next-of-kin.

The first challenge is the difficulty in documenting what the individual has actually been involved in. Most of the returned Syria travellers are convicted of participation in a terrorist organisation or terrorist network, something which has not been difficult to prove under the current legislation. However, it is very difficult to obtain definitive knowledge about the specific actions the person in question has been involved in, for example, whether these are serious breaches of human rights, war crimes or terrorist acts. This is a particular challenge for the judiciary that shall pronounce sentence, but it has also relevance to the process of serving a sentence and returning to society. It is also very limited as to what the stakeholders that shall be responsible for much of the rehabilitation during and after imprisonment can know about the individual's background, what motivated him/her to travel to Syria/Iraq and then return, and not least, what he/she was involved in.

Even though the motivations for departure may differ, many of the Syria travellers have had an understanding of the West having been at war with Islam. This perceived hostility towards Islam is also linked to the Norwegian authorities. This can make it more difficult and time-consuming to establish the trust-based relationship that is vital for commencing a rehabilitation initiative. The development of the relationships between the prison staff and the returned inmates while in prison may therefore be of major importance to the trust these people will be able to establish with those who shall further assist them in the rehabilitation process both during and after release. This applies to mentors, NAV, the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration,⁴⁴ health care personnel and others in the public support services.

A challenge is that practitioners within different agencies often have inadequate information about the circumstances of this target group, combined with an inadequate insight into Islam in general, and not least, what is considered mainstream versus extreme religious expression. If religious practices are incorrectly interpreted as an expression of Islamic extremism, this may

⁴⁴ NAV administers a third of the national budget through schemes such as unemployment benefit, work assessment allowance, sickness benefit, pensions, child benefit and cash-for-care benefit. <https://www.nav.no/en/Home/About+NAV/What+is+NAV>, opened on 17 september 2018.

undermine the relationship of trust on both sides. We will address this in further detail later in this chapter.

The present-day foreign fighters differ from the previous generation of extremists (which were generally young right-wing extremists in terms of their ages and types of issues). This requires innovation when concerning the bodies and agencies that are relevant for managing them after they potentially have served a prison sentence. The municipal system could manage the right-wing extremist youths from the 1990s and 2000s because the majority were under the age of 18, which is the core group for the standard municipal crime prevention efforts. Therefore, schools, youth workers, leisure activities and SLT were vital preventative and integration stakeholders. In comparison, the Norwegian militant Islamists and Syria travellers are typically aged in their 20s to mid-30s (according to PST's assessment the average age is 27.5 years) and are therefore outside the range of most of the municipal policy instruments. Therefore, Yngve Carlsson (2017), special advisor at the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (KS) has claimed that the municipalities are not the correct bodies to be assigned primary responsibility for efforts focussed on returned Syria travellers. The municipalities have an important role to play in relation to the general crime prevention efforts, i.e. prevention of extremism and crime among young people *under* the age of 18, as well as after the individual has finished serving his/her sentence. However, in most municipalities the SLT model is limited to collaboration in connection with youths under the age of 18 (some municipalities have expanded this to 23), which is a significant limitation in the anti-extremism work (Lid et al. 2016). After they have finished serving their sentences, the returned Syria travellers will be significantly older than this.

However, the municipalities still play an important role in the cooperation relating to the follow-up of returned Syria travellers and their need for housing assistance, medical follow-up etc. The parts of the welfare system that will typically apply for returned Syria travellers are agencies that are under the jurisdiction of NAV and the health services. In most municipalities, the employees probably have no experience or training in managing the particular challenges that this target group may have. It can therefore be difficult to identify the special considerations they should take if the client represents a risk or has an extraordinary need for assistance (Carlsson 2017).

However, some municipalities have made significant strides in working with (potential) Syria travellers and their families. They have developed a level of local expertise and strategies for the initiative and perhaps also have previous experience to build upon when concerning working with extremist groups. This relates to recruitment patterns. Even though some have come in contact with the militant Islamist groups through social media, most of the recruitment has taken place through existing networks of friends and social acquaintances, something that has in turn had a local geographic basis. In Norway, the majority of Syria travellers have come from municipalities around the Oslo fjord area, particularly Fredrikstad/Sarpsborg, Oslo, Bærum, Nedre Buskerud, the Vestfold towns and cities, the Grenland area⁴⁵, and in certain isolated instances from Sørlandet and Vestlandet and Trøndelag. Some of the larger municipalities have

⁴⁵ A part of Oslo.

had so many such cases that they have built up extensive experience and expertise in managing foreign fighters and other extremists and, not least, in following up their families. These few municipalities will largely be able to also manage this new group on their own. Some municipalities (for example, Fredrikstad, Sarpsborg and Kristiansand) have established an operational coordination group that can be engaged for serious cases. Such groups can also have an advisory function for the municipal activities and are also responsible for developing the work in this field. This emergency response and guidance function is intended to ensure better follow-up of both minor and more serious individual cases and to follow-up staff (Lid et al 2026).

However, it is not very realistic that smaller municipalities that perhaps only have a single returned foreign fighter must themselves have the requisite expertise for being able to follow-up and rehabilitate these special types of clients. All municipalities will be able to provide the “standard package” from NAV which includes housing, training, employment initiatives and health services, but people with such extremist backgrounds will normally also require more specialised follow-up which is outside of what the smaller municipalities can be expected to provide themselves. The five RVTS regions (Regional Centres for Violence, Traumatic Stress and Suicide Prevention) are well-placed to be able provide much of the follow-up that is required, not least when concerning trauma treatment of people who have committed or been the victims of violence or been influenced by extremist ideology. The RVTS regions have used significant resources in the past years in building up such expertise and collating experiences and will have a key role in assisting the municipalities.

The management of returned Syria travellers in prison

As previously mentioned, approximately 40 of the around 100 Norwegian Syria travellers have returned to Norway. Most of these returned in 2014/2015 and this number has strongly declined since then.⁴⁶ The primary challenge in future years will be to manage the returnees before, during and after imprisonment. The first of these have already been released after serving prison sentences, several more are approaching release and the number of released prisoners will increase in the coming years. Even though only seven have been convicted thus far, with sentences of between 4.5 and 8 years’ imprisonment (some of these judgments are not yet final and enforceable), charges have been brought against close to 30 people with related cases. Therefore, it will be a significant challenge in the future to rehabilitate convicted Syria travellers and other extremists. In practice, actual rehabilitation will not be able to occur before the sentence has been served, but the efforts for preparing this must commence long before and preferably already from the start of the sentence. This entails that the Norwegian Correctional Service, and particularly the prisons, will have to be responsible for the most important effort in managing this group for the initial years after they return to Norway. The prisons are responsible for executing the sentences and for protecting the community from potential threats (incapacitation), and also for facilitating rehabilitation by the inmates being prepared as best as possible for a life in the community after they are released. Based on interviews with several

⁴⁶ This is according to communication with PST on 30 November 2017.

experts in the field, in this chapter we examine in further detail certain issues that particularly apply to the key role of the Norwegian Correctional Service.

The prison authorities around the world have chosen different strategies for managing inmates convicted of terrorism-related crimes (see Chapter 5). Some countries have chosen to assemble this category of inmates into separate sections that are strictly segregated from normal inmates. The advantage of this is that it reduces the risk of these ideological prisoners from radicalising and recruiting other inmates and enables the staff who work in these special sections to obtain and build up expertise. The disadvantage of this strategy is that it becomes more difficult for those who are placed in such a strongly ideological prison population to be able to break out of the group and be reintegrated back into society. Norwegian prison authorities have chosen the opposite strategy by separating inmates convicted of terrorism from each other by dispersing them as much as possible to different prison institutions around the entire country. This is possible because there are a relatively low number of such inmates in Norway. The benefit is that this breaks the affiliation to the extremist group they belonged to and exposes them to other impulses and views of reality. This most probably improves the possibilities of reintegration. However, the strategy also has some disadvantages. It can entail a certain risk of extremist ideas being spread to normal inmates. However, probably the biggest disadvantage is that expertise on this special category of inmates has to be established in many prisons around the entire country, even if the prisons only have a single inmate who has a background as a foreign fighter or has been convicted of terrorism. This necessitates a considerable need for training in the Norwegian Correctional Service, which is already under strong pressure when concerning having sufficient numbers of personnel. However, this is sensible prioritising of resources when viewed in light of the overwhelmingly positive effects of dispersing this category of inmate rather than assembling them together.

In Chapter 5 we focussed on some of the general situations in prison that can improve the security of the staff, as well as some of the factors that are of importance to the inmate's motivation to increase or develop skills that can improve his/her opportunity to have a crime-free live after completing his/her sentence. The prison authorities generally have a number of options for motivating inmates to participate in courses and education by giving the inmate extra privileges and/or imposing penalties depending on the inmate's willingness to cooperate, on condition that the inmate's rights are upheld at all times (Ganor 2013). These options should also, in this context, be utilised and planned in the strategies that are prepared for returned Syria travellers.

“In Norway, the crime is punished while attempts are made to rehabilitate the offender,” is a quote from one of the researchers who was interviewed for the report⁴⁷ when concerning Norwegian incarceration practices and the intentions behind these. In principle, Norway has a well-functioning prison system and practices that, to a large degree, have the aim of

⁴⁷ The Privacy Ombudsman has instructed us to anonymize these interview subjects, despite the interview subjects themselves not having expressed any desire or need for this.

rehabilitating the inmates, something that is also confirmed by only 20% of those who are released from Norwegian prisons being re-incarcerated. This is a low percentage, even compared to other Scandinavian countries, even if the explanation for the lower percentage in Norway is also due to reasons other than the rehabilitation work in Norway being that much better than in other countries (Graunbøl et al. 2010: 46-48).

As was stated by an employee at the University College of Norwegian Correctional Service (KRUS), the Norwegian prison model is based on trust. The staff seek to strengthen and rehabilitate the inmate's trust in themselves and others. It is therefore established practice to seek to strengthen the inmates' trust and ability to cope with social situations and to develop new formal skills with a view to enabling the inmate to establish a different position in society after he/she has left prison to what he/she had before being imprisoned.

The Norwegian Correctional Service's particular prioritisation of the development of trust from the inmate is reflected in the employment procedure for prison personnel, where there is a focus on the individual's suitability and ability to establish trusting relationships with the inmates. It is precisely the inmate's experience of being shown trust that will also contribute to strengthening his/her sense of belonging, which is of major importance for motivating or maintaining the inmate's desire to become a part of Norwegian society. Therefore, with an eye to reintegration, it is also important to identify the factors that resulted in the individual travelling to Syria in the first place. Such background knowledge is necessary for developing a targeted strategy for the individual inmate and the continued path back to being a member of society.

Staff should also be given special training with regard to knowledge of this relevant target group of radical Islamists and to increase staff awareness of behaviour, questions, statements, and not least, body language, that can increase the feeling of inclusion or exclusion. The increasingly harder tone of the Norwegian immigration debate in recent years means that topics such as affiliation are delicate. As was noted by a KRUS employee, there is a major difference in wording if a member of staff asks "who are you?" rather than "where are you from?" By asking "who are you", the member of staff allows the inmate him/herself to define how he/she wishes to present him/herself. Factors and details such as this are important in relation to the target group. Therefore, prison staff throughout the entire country should be given extra training in intercultural dialogue, religious practices, Islam, signs of post-traumatic stress and other mental disorders, as well as conversation/questioning techniques. Training and the development of handbooks should form the basis of a joint policy in the prison system because special categories of prisoner have been spread among Norwegian prisons and are moved around across the country. Knowledge of such factors can contribute to rehabilitating the inmate, while also reducing the risk to the member of staff. The more staff are aware of the inmates' particular cultural, psychosocial and person circumstances and risk factors, the easier it will be for them to act in a manner that can, over time, contribute to establishing a trusting relationship with the inmate. This appears to be important for other efforts succeeding and thereby also significantly improving staff safety.

A KRUS employee also made note of the necessity of training personnel in identifying extreme religious practices, how to manage this, and the importance of the system having people with specialist expertise in managing returned Syria travellers. The staff can then report to the resource person when they observe changes in the inmate and ensure that changes are registered in the system. The resource person must be able to collect information about, if and when something particular is underway, and shall be able to forward on communication to a higher level if an inmate represents a threat and provide advice about whether the person in question should be moved, isolated or similar.

The Norwegian Correctional Service also has an expectation that staff have conscious attitudes and consideration regarding issues such as integration and rehabilitation of the inmates, something that KRUS further reinforces via continual training or further training. As a KRUS employee also noted, there are sometimes unfortunate episodes in which prison officers have taken prayer rugs, Korans and other religious items from inmates in an attempt to prevent what certain officers have misunderstood as being “signs of radicalisation”. Such failed “solution models” and methods of response have directly harmful effects, because the inmate is subjected to discrimination, something which naturally increases the inmate’s frustration and desire to oppose the system. In addition to potentially creating general distrust towards all members of staff, individual episodes of this type will quickly become a general narrative among inmates, which in return reinforces an “us vs them” thought process. Discrimination of inmates on the basis of ethnic background, religious belief or the like is particularly important to manage in a prison context. Differential treatment can result in the inmate who is treated in a condescending manner and subjected to discrimination potentially reacting with frustration, anger, hate and/or a desire for revenge. It is therefore important that topics such as racism, discrimination, international politics and different views regarding the political agenda are topics that staff are able to discuss with resource personnel at KRUS. This can provide prison personnel with input on how differently, for example, US foreign policy, can be interpreted based on different positions around the world.

In addition, everyone we interviewed emphasised the importance of having imams permanently affiliated with the prisons, preferably imams who, if and when this is possible, are educated in Norway. Measure 16 of the action plan stipulates that the Norwegian Correctional Service shall establish an interfaith team, however this has yet to be fully developed and initiated. Irrespective of their background, the imams should receive extra training and follow-up under the direction of KRUS in relation to the special factors that are applicable when the imam works in a Norwegian prison context.⁴⁸ Imams in the prisons are of particular importance for the inmates who have returned from Syria/Iraq having the opportunity to discuss religious matters with an authority in the area, something that can contextualise both their religious considerations, but also other related issues. However, the big questions still remain unanswered: Who shall decide what

⁴⁸ For this it is also possible to tap into the useful experiences and assessments of the Norwegian Armed Forces when employing field imams.

denomination of Islam the imam shall represent? Who shall pay the imam? And who shall determine whether he is moderate?

Another factor that the KRUS employees have identified as being important is the ongoing assessment of the inmate. The inmate's progression is already now continually assessed in terms of security and his/her personal development. The Norwegian Correctional Service has primary responsibility for this, but thus far has not used dedicated assessment tools such as VERA2 or ERG22+ for risk assessments of extremists. The risk assessment takes place through a degree of cooperation with PST and the police regarding the risk associated with the individual, particularly when his/her release date is approaching. Coordination meetings and follow-up plans have now been established for what requirements the individual must satisfy in order to eventually be transferred to serve his/her sentence at a lower security level. This is in connection with the inmate potentially becoming burnt out if he/she has demonstrated a good level of progression, but is still kept in a high security section. A potential policy could be that everyone who returns from Syria or has been convicted of terrorism is screened with the assistance of the assessment tool VERA2 or other assessment tools that were referred to earlier in the report.

In order to ensure there is a high level of professionalism, those who conduct the assessment should be a team composed of inter-disciplinary expertise which includes prison personnel, a psychologist and possibly other relevant experts. The assessment should not be conducted by an individual officer and the assessment must be made on a regular basis. Therefore, such an assessment will be able to both document the inmate's progression over time and whether the individual shall have his/her security level downgraded. It will also be possible to identify the inmate's challenges, ability to cope with social and personal issues, education and other factors. The assessment must be made based on informed consent and can potentially be part of a conviction, whereby the individual is obligated to undergo this type of risk assessment. This is a policy that has been implemented in both the United Kingdom and the Netherlands and something that was referred to earlier in the report.

The transition from imprisonment to release must also be carefully planned. This means that the released prisoner must be followed-up and, prior to release, there must be contact with NAV, a plan for work or education/training, housing and possibly contact with a psychologist and mentor. In addition, there should be a body that, following release, conducts risks assessments of him/her for a stipulated period of time. Returned Syria travellers can expect long prison sentences and can therefore be expected to undergo rather major changes in identity while in prison. This can make it even more difficult to re-establish/find a place in society upon release. A mentor may be of assistance with this.

Establishing a mentor scheme for people who have been convicted of terrorism-related offences and inmates who are vulnerable to radicalisation and recruitment is one of the Norwegian Correctional Service's most important initiatives for this group. The scheme was commenced in 2016. A "mentor corps" with different skills and backgrounds was also recruited and trained.

KRUS has started evaluating the mentor scheme, but it is currently still too early to draw any conclusions about how this is working.

The Norwegian Correctional Service's mentor scheme has several objectives. It shall prevent or discourage the person from accepting or encouraging others to use violence to achieve political goals (radicalisation) and contribute to the person severing contact with other extremists (disengagement). At the same time, the mentors shall also contribute to the process of the inmate finding that the mentor relationship can continue after his/her release. As mentioned, a number of municipalities have established their own mentor schemes. Therefore, work is underway to establish agreements that will enable the municipalities to use the mentor (including responsibility for financial remuneration) when the former inmate becomes a resident of the municipality.

A mentor must be a social contact or a professional friend who has sufficient clout to also be able to discuss political/religious issues with the inmate both before and after release. The mentor should be a person who has adequate insight and overview to also be able to assist with carving out a path forward for the released person. It should be carefully considered as to when mentors shall be linked to the person since it can be difficult to be a mentor during a long period of incarceration and for a person who has serious problems. It should also be considered as to what matching features the mentor and the person receiving mentoring need to have. Should they be the same gender, have the same level of education, be the same age, have had the same experiences (former extremist) and/or be the same ethnicity? Ethnicity represents a particular problem in this context if the inmate has a minority background because he/she will perhaps not be willing to open up to someone with the same minority background as him/herself due to fear of gossip, shame and reprisals. Trust is the most important prerequisite for a successful mentor relationship.

The transition from serving a sentence to a normal life among society is a general challenge for reintegrating common criminals and the Norwegian Correctional Service's probation service has measures aimed at following up released prisoners during this transitional phase. However, the challenges are significantly greater and more complex for released prisoners who have served sentences for terrorism-related crimes. This is partly due to some of the released prisoners potentially representing different forms of risk relating to societal safety, whether this involves them committing terrorist acts or that they can radicalise others and become key figures in extremist groups. Released prisoners who have been linked to IS or other terrorist organisations will also be strongly stigmatised and have difficulties being accepted in the local community. It is therefore easy for them to end up in groups with other outcasts. In addition, many of the released prisoners will have a serious need for psychological and social follow-up. In order to succeed in integrating these released prisoners, it is necessary that there is good cooperation and information sharing between the Norwegian Correctional Service, PST, the local police service, and multiple municipal agencies (including SLT, NAV and the health services). This form of cooperation has previously been lacking, however arrangements and agreements are starting to become established through the introduction of a routine for notification between PST, the police

and the municipalities regarding returned foreign fighters⁴⁹. Correspondingly, a collaborative arrangement has also been commenced between the Norwegian Correctional Service, PST, the police and the municipalities for creating a template for how the follow-up can best be maintained in connection with the transition from prison to a new life in a home municipality.

⁴⁹ <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/status-for-oppfolging-av-handlingsplan-mot-radikalisering-og-voldelig-ekstremisme2/id2579415/>, particularly Measures 22 and 23, opened on 26 September 2018.

8. Some conclusions and recommendations

The objective of the report has been to highlight aspects that are of importance to the efforts of the Norwegian authorities in managing problems relating to returned Syria travellers and their return to society. The development in some areas has taken place at such a fast pace that on certain points we have, in a positive sense, been overtaken in our research. Several measures that we considered to be good proposals for relevant measures at an early stage of the process have already been started or initiated during 2017. Among other things, this applies to the knowledge portal developed by RVTs East in cooperation with, among others, the Norwegian Correctional Service, and which from autumn 2017 also includes relevant knowledge about the managing of returned foreign fighters and the role of the Norwegian Correctional Service and interaction with other stakeholders. Several municipalities have commenced the training of mentors who can follow-up people involved in violent extremism, and not least, people who are released after serving sentences and who shall return to their home municipalities. A separate guide for a mentor scheme to combat radicalisation and violent extremism was also issued in October 2017.⁵⁰ The flow of information between PST, local police services and the municipalities has improved. A process for strengthening the cooperation between the Norwegian Correctional Service, PST and police while serving a prison sentence, upon release from prison and following release is also an important measure that has been initiated in 2017, although much remains to be put in place.

An organisational structure and plans for skills development have now been established which are largely well-suited for dealing with the challenges associated with the managing of violent extremists in general, but also returned foreign fighters. It is an important point that the structures and work methods are largely generic, i.e. that they are suited for managing different forms of extremism and related problems, even if returned foreign fighters also represent certain special challenges. This regardless involves a relatively small and limited target group and it does not appear that the number of returnees will increase beyond what is manageable within the structures that have already been established or that are in the process of being put in place. It would not be the most appropriate use of limited resources to initiate extensive and specialised initiatives in the country's municipalities in order to manage a relatively limited problem relating to returned Syria travellers. The efforts should therefore also be applicable as much as possible for other groups, such as convicted right-wing extremists or people who have been imprisoned (and released) for other serious crime. This report will therefore not put forward proposals for *new* organisational structures or measures for managing returned foreign fighters in particular, but will rather identify certain areas that may require extra attention, knowledge and initiatives directed at this group.

⁵⁰ <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/sub/radikalisering/veileder-til-mentorordning-mot-radikalisering-og-voldelig-ekstremisme/id2573369/>, opened on 26 September 2018.

There is a great deal to learn from how other countries have managed these challenges. From the United Kingdom, we would particularly emphasise the use of systematic risk assessments of inmates who have been convicted of terrorism, if not necessarily the special assessment programme that is used (ERG22+).⁵¹ The Netherlands appears to have a good training programme for prison staff who will work with radicalised inmates. In some areas, Denmark has advanced further than Norway when concerning inter-agency collaboration. Part of this can be attributed to the fact that Denmark has a separate “SSP Act” that authorises the exchange of information pertaining to individuals between schools, the police and social administration for preventative purposes, while the equivalent exchange of information between agencies in Norway must be subject to an exemption from the duty of confidentiality. The Danish “info-houses” are an interesting model for dealing with concerns relating to radicalisation and extremism. However, Norway has selected a different model involving a radicalisation contact in all police districts and should preferably continue to develop this model rather than introduce another new structure. A weakness of the Norwegian model is that it is far less robust than the Danish model. The Norwegian radicalisation contacts are often enthusiasts who build up strong personal expertise, local knowledge and an extensive network of contacts, but if they burn out or change job, this must be largely built up again from scratch. The Danish info-houses consists of multiple people in a team and the knowledge and networks are thereby institutionalised to a much greater extent, something that in turn makes the model less dependent on individuals. However, the Danish model is also more resource-demanding than the Norwegian model.

This report should be considered as a tool for making the issues represented by Syria travellers recognisable, foreseeable and manageable for the practitioners in the different agencies. Below we present some points which practitioners and policy developers should be particularly aware of in the work with returned foreign fighters and other Syria travellers. We will also make some recommendations:

- Those who have voluntarily travelled to areas controlled by IS and other terrorist organisations have violated Norwegian law in doing so and will normally receive lengthy prison sentences that are typically between four and nine years. The closed prison environment and a fixed time horizon for the individual’s stay in prison can provide a unique opportunity for influencing the inmate in a direction that can assist in strengthening the individual’s social and professional skills. Initiatives for facilitating rehabilitation into society should start as early as possible and already during custody on remand and while the sentence is being served. This requires that prison personnel have the necessary expertise and motivation for being able to work constructively and in a targeted manner with this special group of inmates. Since the Norwegian Correctional Service has the policy of dispersing this category of inmate among correctional institutions throughout the entire country rather than assembling them at one location, this

⁵¹ A critical analysis (Knudsen, in review) of the British risk assessment tool ERG22+ indicates that it is too narrowly individualised and does not include the social and societal context the person has been in. The tool is based on “an idea of radicalisation as a risky psychological condition that can be tracked down within individual patterns of cognition”. However, ERG22+ is under review and will release a new version.

means that the requisite expertise must be found among personnel in all prisons that may take former foreign fighters. This requires a systematic training programme on the part of the Norwegian Correctional Service. This must include knowledge that can assist the staff in distinguishing between religious beliefs and religious extremism for them to avoid misinterpreting religious practices as being an expression of radicalisation.

- It must be expected that there are major differences among the returned Syria travellers in terms of how they view their participation in IS and the future risk that they represent. While some will be disillusioned and will only desire to return to a peaceful life, others may be mentally unstable and full of aggression, while some may still hold extremist ideas or even have plans of committing acts of terrorism in Norway. This category of inmates should be subject to a separate risk assessment at multiple stages of the prison sentence in order to identify their propensity for violence towards others - prison staff, inmates and the public - as well as issues relating to mental health (suicide risk, mental instability, mental/physical illness). This may reveal a need for supervision and treatment from a psychologist, psychiatrist, doctor or other specialists. The Norwegian Correctional Service should consider using one of the tools that have been specially developed for assessing the risk of violence among incarcerated extremists (for example, VERA2 or a revised edition of ERG22+).
- Each returned Syria traveller can be assumed to have witnessed, been a victim of or even perpetrated extreme violence, rape and (mass) executions, combined with the effects of having lived in a war zone. This can also apply to children of Syria travellers or refugees from the war zones. In many instances, this will have caused trauma that requires special psychological follow-up from therapists who have the necessary specialist expertise and approaches for being able to manage this group of clients. Treatment should commence as soon as possible and preferably already during custody on remand and while serving the prison sentence for those who are in the criminal justice system.
- Following their release, many former Syria travellers will require considerable support and follow-up to establish a foothold in society. Many already had a weak connection to the workforce, education, family and other social institutions before they ended up in the militant Islamist community and/or travelled to Syria and have few points of contact when their prison sentences are over. The link to IS or brutal terrorist organisations can contribute to their further stigmatisation and marginalisation. Getting them into training or work can contribute to establishing new pro-social networks and ties to societal institutions.
- Many of the young male Syria travellers were members of criminal networks before they departed. Their criminal tendencies may have been strengthened and the barriers to committing gross violence may have been weakened due to their experiences of life in IS. Weak links to pro-social groups in Norway can also complicate their return to a law-abiding life in normal society. The rehabilitation efforts following release from a prison sentence must not only focus on keeping the former Syria traveller away from militant

Islamist groups, but also away from involvement in criminal groups and activities. These people had serious social challenges before they travelled to Syria. They must not only be supported in abandoning an extremist agenda, but the fundamental problems the person had must also be dealt with. In such instances there may be a special need for attempting to identify a possible future goal and assist in creating hope about the future. This can motivate the individual to become involved in social activities, education and employment, something that can strengthen the individual's reintegration into Norwegian society.

- Knowledge of how the individual should behave in order to become a legitimate member of Norwegian middle class culture is not something that is innate, but an acquired behavioural norm that is vital to develop in order for him/her to be (re)integrated. People who have participated in violent extremist groups have acquired ways of behaviour that can make it difficult to establish social relationships and to interact with people outside of the extremist groups from which they come. Therefore, returned Syria travellers require assistance in acquiring an alternative action repertoire that can, with time, become embodied practices. This is an important task for the mentors.
- A significant number of young women have travelled to Syria and the IS controlled areas. Very few of these women have returned to Norway, however many have returned to other European countries. A series of court cases against returned female Syria travellers has resulted in short sentences or acquittal based on a gendered perspective that reduces the women to “misguided victims” rather than people acting of their own free will. While there are instances in which women have been deceived into travelling to Syria (including from Norway), these women should generally be treated the same as the male Syria travellers, with independent criminal liability and also as a potential security risk, particularly with regard to influencing and/or recruiting others.
- Based on the information available, the majority of the female Syria travellers have had children with foreign fighters, while only a few have taken older children with them from Norway to Syria/Iraq. Those who were born there are so young that it is unlikely that they have been subjected to much ideological indoctrination, but they may still be heavily traumatised due to acts of war and other incidents. Older children (particularly those over the age of 9) may have trained as soldiers, executioners or suicide bombers and been indoctrinated into an ideology that stipulates that anyone who does not live in accordance with the “Caliphate’s” extremist interpretation of Islam is “kufar” (unbeliever) and therefore should be killed. Children therefore represent a particularly vulnerable group, while they may potentially also constitute a significant risk. The Norwegian support services have experience with families who have fled from IS controlled areas and where children have been subjected to this type of ideological influence and trauma. If female Syria travellers return to Norway with their children, the child welfare services should be involved from the very start. Possible foster homes should be identified and prepared as early as possible since a serious need for relocating a child may arise. Parents (including mothers) will normally be imprisoned after returning to Norway if they have been linked

to IS or equivalent groups. However, this represents a major dilemma: When female Syria travellers know that they will most probably be imprisoned and have their children taken from them if they return to Norway, they will then most likely choose *not* to return and rather remain in Syria or other war zones with their children, with the harmful effects this will have on the children.

- When special measures are planned for (returned) Syria travellers, it is important to assess whether the measures may have unintended and negative consequences that perhaps outweigh their benefit. One example is from the United Kingdom. When released foreign fighters are banned from using the internet (because this can result in them re-establishing contact with their former extremist friends) it will also hinder their opportunities for finding employment and thereby finding a path back to society. In the Netherlands, people convicted of terrorism who have been released have been prevented from opening their own bank account, which has also hindered their financial integration into society. Since the Norwegian authorities have introduced very extensive criminalisation of links to terrorist groups and participation in non-governmental military activities, and heavily prosecutes all those who return to Norway, it is an unforeseen consequence that this means of escape is then closed. Even many of those who are disillusioned about IS and the caliphate will choose to continue their involvement with IS rather than disengage and travel home. A strong method of deterring recruitment and participation in violent extremism may therefore also contribute to blocking the path *out* of extremism.
- Cooperation and the exchange of information between the police, PST, Norwegian Correctional Service and different municipal agencies (NAV, education services, health services, SLT coordinator) are decisive for succeeding in preventing violent extremism in general and particularly when concerning rehabilitating people who have been involved in (and possibly convicted of) violent extremism, terrorism or foreign fighter activities. A duty of confidentiality and traditions regarding secrecy have inhibited many of the initiatives in this field. However, a great deal has also improved in recent years, among other things, through new and clear guidelines for the exchange of information in the Government's action plan against radicalisation. However, more clearly authorising such exchange of information through legislation should be considered, preferably based on Section 115 of the Danish Administration of Justice Act (Retsplejeloven)⁵². However, one should also be critical about how far one should go in exchanging sensitive information about returned or released Syria travellers and whether the negative consequences in the form of possible loss of trust will potentially outweigh the benefits.

⁵² <https://danskelove.dk/retsplejeloven/115>, opened on 27 September 2018.

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How to manage returned foreign fighters and other Syria travellers?
Measures for safeguarding and follow-up

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