Prevention of Extremism through International Cultural Relations

From Art Therapy to Cultural Hubs

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Foreword

Prevention plays a central role in countering extremism, both nationally and internationally. The author of this study writes that cultural and educational policy measures are often the only way to counter violent extremism. These measures not only help to build the different forms of social, cultural, symbolic and economic capital that contribute to creating resilience, cross-group network-building and education. They can be especially effective in regions with fragile security situations and strongly divergent world views, where classic instruments of democracy and civil society promotion are difficult if not impossible to implement. A particular merit of the study is that it develops a set of six criteria with which measures and their impact can be assessed. In doing so, the author deliberately refers to a concept of extremism that is defined by the violent implementation of societal, political, and ideological goals (including religious goals), not merely the rejection of a specific political order.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the author, Asiem El Difraoui, for his commitment to this research project. I would also like to thank my colleagues from ifa's Research Programme "Culture and Foreign Policy", Sarah Widmaier, Anja Schön and Ivana Putri, who provided conceptual and editorial support for the project.

Within the framework of ifa's Research Programme, experts examine current issues and challenges in foreign cultural relations and educational policy, formulating recommendations for all relevant actors active in the field. International cultural relations must be studied systematically and close to practice in order to develop sustainable strategies for peace-oriented exchange.

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Abstract

Radicalisation, violent extremism and transnational networks of extremist organisations, together with the ever-growing reach of social media, are increasingly gaining traction with more people. Preventive measures can increase the resilience of vulnerable people to radicalisation and attraction to violent extremist groups and their ideologies. They often even help radicalised individuals to reintegrate into society.

This study examines selected cultural foreign relations and education policy projects for the Prevention of Violent Extremism (PVE), considering the regional political, social, and cultural contexts as well as the distinctive challenges in terms of specific target groups that are hard to reach. Projects in the following regions and countries are discussed: the Sahel; Afghanistan; the Al-Hol refugee camp in Syria; Egypt, and Tunisia. They include inter-regional projects for the MENA region and the Sahel. Recommendations for future foreign cultural relations and education policy projects are formulated.

Executive Summary

"*Culture is the best weapon against backwardness, darkness and terrorism*" – a young woman from Tunisia, theatre-goer and victim of extremism

All 16 projects examined in this study offer valuable suggestions for preventive measures against extremism within the framework of cultural relations and education policy. This includes micro-level projects such as theatre and art therapy in Iraq, to overcome traumatising experiences of violence; meso-level projects such as Women for Women workshops in Afghanistan, where women are empowered; and macro-level projects such as the Digital Library in the Middle East, which provides broad access to Arabic literature.

Due to often limited resources, projects that link the three levels are the most promising. One example is Donko Ni Maaya – which can be translated as 'culture in service of the community' – in Mali. At the micro level, the project offers support to artists to produce work with tolerant and unifying content. At the meso level, artists are connected and jobs in the cultural sector created. At the macro level, the entire population is sensitised through the artistic productions via the lyrics of songs or the content of plays.

The projects selected for this study are analysed using six criteria.

1: Target group identification
2: Access
3: Clear definition of goals
4: Working mechanism and benefits for the target group
5: Results and sustainability
6: Evaluation

It should be determined from the outset whether primary, secondary or tertiary prevention measures are involved, or whether primary and secondary prevention should be combined. Even if secondary prevention measures can also have effects on primary or tertiary prevention, the form of prevention on which to focus must be decided. Pure tertiary prevention is only possible in rare cases within the framework of foreign cultural relations and education policy, as it is rarely

possible to provide individual support to extremists from target groups that are difficult to reach.

Among the projects reviewed here, all six criteria were sufficiently addressed in the following three: Donko Ni Maaya in Mali; the Safe Spaces for Women on the Internet project in north-eastern Syria; and the Women for Women workshops in Afghanistan. These projects can serve as best practice for prevention activities in foreign cultural relations and education policy for hard-to-reach target groups.

For newly conceived or planned projects, all the above criteria should be defined as precisely and comprehensively as possible from the outset to ensure the greatest possible chance of success. In addition, projects operating at the three levels of micro, meso, and macro potentially have the greatest reach and efficiency.

It is regrettable that hardly any projects communicate regarding potential negative effects.

Recommendations

All the projects discussed here reduce the space that extremists and their narratives try to fill. They create tolerant and often creative alternatives for vulnerable people and mostly have a direct benefit that positively impacts their lives.

–   **Development of hybrid projects**
    There is a lack of hybrid projects that address people directly in their environments and at the same time disseminate sustainable content like videos, podcasts, or written educational and teaching materials in social media – projects that intercept young people in their own world.

–   **New approaches such as competitions in schools and universities**
    In places where those in power or the locally ruling extremist groups reject political activities but welcome non-political action that improve the lives of the population, especially in rural settings, indirect approaches to strengthening civil society and promoting independent

thinking should be developed. The inventory for this study did not identify a single local contest.

– **Measures against disinformation**
There is also a lack of concrete initiatives against disinformation and propaganda, such as the Fulbe radio station. This is all the more urgent because – in addition to the extremist propaganda that already exists – in the context of the war against Ukraine, Russian propaganda is growing strongly in the Sahel and MENA regions. Local conflicts are exacerbated by targeted disinformation, destroying mutual trust as a basis for cooperation with civil society.

– **Strengthening civil society**
The numerous intermediary organisations can implement projects that promote self-expression and critical thinking, political education, equal rights, the integration of marginalised groups, the creation of a pluralistic media system, forms of local co-determination and, where possible, local democracy.

– **Supporting the cultural sector and promoting cultural and creative industries**
Consistently increasing or even producing a cultural offering while supporting the cultural sector and its civil society actors is crucial to the success of prevention policies. In addition, the promotion of cultural and creative industries creates much-needed jobs. Strengthening inter-regional cultural relations can also contribute significantly to the prevention of radicalisation.

1.   Introduction

Ongoing conflict, poverty, inequality, injustice, corruption, weak economic and social development and lack of opportunity – especially for young people – are sources of instability in many countries and regions, creating a sense of vulnerability that can lead to radicalisation and violent extremism. Radicalisation and violent extremism pose a major challenge to governments and the international community. Transnational networks of extremist organisations, supported by the reach of social media, are captivating more and more people. Preventive measures increase the resilience of vulnerable individuals to radicalisation and the appeal of violent extremist groups and their ideas. They often even enable radicalised individuals to reintegrate into society.

Cultural relations and education policy cannot replace the so-called three Ds – diplomacy, defence and development – but can – and must – complement them, especially in failed states like most of the states we are dealing with here. Diplomacy must be flanked by cultural diplomacy. Even in the field of defence, or rather in the context of this paper, security assistance for stabilisation, education and culture can play an important role.

Social scientists and terrorism researchers see a close link between promoting a vibrant education and cultural sector and reducing violent extremism[1]. Art, culture, cultural exchange and education contribute greatly to the creation of individual or collective cultural, social and symbolic capital. These three can be transformed into economic capital. Cultural capital consists mainly of education and the opportunities it provides[2]. Social capital allows people to build and strengthen networks, and is thus one of the most important resources for building individual and collective resilience.[3] Symbolic capital describes status and recognition in a society or peer group. Finally, art and culture also simply fulfil basic human needs such as entertainment, fun, and self-expression.

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[1] El Difraoui, A. (2018). The role of culture in preventing and reducing violent extremism. In A. Armborst, E. Marks, C. Trautmann, & S. Ullricht, Building an evidence-base for the prevention of radicalization and violent extremism. Pro BUSINESS GmbH. Retrieved from www.praeventionstag.de/daten/module/buecher/en/ISBN-978-3-96409-063-8/4-El-Difraoui.pdf.

[2] Bourdieu, P. (1983). Economic capital, cultural capital, social capital. In R. Kreckel, Social inequalities (pp. 183-198). Göttingen: Soziale Welt Sonderband 2.

[3] El Difraoui, A. (2018). The role of culture in preventing and reducing violent extremism. In A. Armborst, E. Marks, C. Trautmann, & S. Ullricht, Building an evidence-base for the prevention of radicalization and violent extremism. Pro BUSINESS GmbH. Retrieved from www.praeventionstag.de/daten/module/buecher/en/ISBN-978-3-96409-063-8/4-El-Difraoui.pdf

Cultural and educational policies are often the only way to prevent extremism, especially when it comes to hard-to-reach groups in countries and regions where, due to the security situation, political realities and very different world views, classic measures to promote civil society and democracy are ineffective. One of the biggest challenges is to include groups of people who, as anthropologist Scott Atran writes, have 'sacred values': "values that can be religious or secular, like God or the fatherland, but which are always non-negotiable. That is, these cannot be given up or traded for material gain."[4] Often, however, a minimal consensus – on non-violence, for example – can be reached even with people who hold these 'sacred values'.

The definition of extremism on which this paper is based is therefore also different from the one commonly used in Europe, which postulates that all people who reject liberal democracy and its values are extremists. The concept of extremism used here refers to people who want to use violence to achieve their political, economic and ideological goals; the latter also including religious goals.[5]

Especially in times of increasing ideological sources of extremist ideologies, which are becoming more and more diverse in form, there is a growing need for culturally sensitive, innovative projects in foreign cultural relations and educational policy. The creation of educational opportunities, the consistent expansion or in some cases the creation of a hitherto non-existing cultural offering, and the support of the cultural sector and its civil society actors, as well as the strengthening of inter-regional cultural relations, can contribute significantly to the prevention of extremism, the renunciation of violence and the acceptance of the Other as minimum goals. These projects contribute to defusing conflicts and processes for overcoming violence and coming to terms with past violence. They create open, tolerant narratives that counteract the polarising narratives of extremists. In addition, the promotion of the cultural and creative industries creates urgently needed jobs.

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[4] Spinney, L. (2021, 24. September). Mismatch of mindsets: Why the Taliban won in Afghanistan. Guardian. Retrieved from www.theguardian.com/world/2021/sep/24/mismatch-of-mindsets-why-the-taliban-won-in-afghanistan.
[5] ibid.

This paper discusses selected extremism prevention projects, taking into account the regional political-cultural situation as well as ideology-specific aspects for hard-to-reach target groups in the following regions and countries: the Sahel; Afghanistan; the Al-Hol refugee camp in Syria; Egypt; and Tunisia. Examples of inter-regional projects in the MENA region will also be discussed. All these regions and countries have local specificities that create different conditions for cultural relations and education policy, but also have commonalities. However, the political and social contexts will be only briefly discussed here.

One of the major challenges in researching this study is the lack of systematic mapping of projects, and another is the shortage of scientific work on prevention and its evaluation in the countries and regions in question. The few articles that exist are mainly general policy papers with very vague recommendations; therefore, this paper will focus on concrete initiatives. The projects presented are not an exhaustive listing of initiatives but rather are selected for their potential effectiveness, as examples of the range of the spectrum, and for their scalability (macro, meso, micro levels).

Real and potential efficiency are discussed on the basis of six key criteria:

- Target group identification
- Access
- Clear definition of goals
- Working mechanism and direct benefit
- Sustainability
- Evaluation

1.1   Clarification of terms

1.1.1 Prevention

Radicalisation prevention follows the guiding principle that radicalisation processes should be prevented in advance or interrupted as early as possible. Already radicalised individuals and groups – namely people who have broken with society and turned to extremism – should be supported in turning away from this path.

Precautionary measures against extremism are often divided into primary, secondary and tertiary prevention, depending on whether they are put into practice before, during or after radicalisation. Primary prevention aims to strengthen society as a whole against the dangers of radicalisation. Secondary prevention is aimed at people or population groups who, for a variety of reasons, appear to be particularly vulnerable to radicalisation or are already showing the first signs of it. Tertiary prevention is when radicalisation is clearly recognisable or at least there are strong indications of it. It is mostly directed at individuals who need to be cared for holistically. The boundaries between the individual areas of prevention are fluid.[6]

Projects in all three areas should increase resilience to extremist ideologies. This paper almost exclusively discusses approaches to primary and secondary prevention. Tertiary prevention, which seeks individual access to radicalised persons, is mostly outside the scope possible for foreign cultural relations and educational policy.

1.1.2 Resilience

'Resilience' derives from the Latin term *resilire*, 'to bounce off' or 'to bounce back', and refers to the ability of a person, group, society or system to cope with and overcome crises.[7] People in difficult life situations who experience conflict, traumatic experiences, the death of loved ones, a lack of educational and professional prospects, social, cultural and political marginalisation or total exclusion, a search for identity, illnesses, breaks in life, etc, seek very different forms of support: in their peer or ethnic group, in a philosophy of life that can often be religious, but unfortunately also too often in an extremist ideology that seems to explain everything.

Resilient people can overcome very difficult life situations. They do not get stuck in the low points of life or in simple black-and-white explanatory models, and

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[6] El Difraoui, A., Trautmann, C., & Wiedl, N. (2021). Deradicalisation and distancing work. Begleitbuch zum Qualifizierungslehrgang (Umfeld-)Beratung im Phänomenbereich islamistisch begründeter Extremismus. Contributions to Migration and Integration (Vol. 9). From www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/DE/Forschung/Beitragsreihe/beitrag-band-9-deradikalisierungsdistanzierungsarbeit.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=8, S. 66.

[7] ibid. p. 78.

often find constructive ways of coming to terms with difficulties and finding solutions if they are shown them and helped. A person's resilience is not a static quantity, but rather changes in the course of life in a dynamic process of adaptation and development. Resilience can be learned and developed in a process of interaction between individual and environment.

The EU's Strategic Approach to Resilience[8] aims, among other things, to strengthen the capacity of societies, communities and individuals to "manage opportunities and risks in a peaceful and stable manner, and to build, maintain or restore livelihoods in the face of major pressures".[9] Here, it is crucial to go beyond crisis containment and develop sustainable strategies and approaches for managing vulnerabilities, with a focus on anticipation and prevention. In this context, education and culture play a central role for social cohesion and civil peace in the long term. Through the active participation of civil society, local actors are strengthened and actively take responsibility for the development of their societies.

Contrasting with resilience is vulnerability. This refers to vulnerability to external influences, such as conflicts with experience of violence and lack of prospects.

1.1.3 Narrative

All extremist groups have developed a grand narrative, a cohesive closed worldview with a founding myth. Jihadists, for example, have hijacked Islamic history, key symbols and concepts such as jihad itself to present themselves as the only true community of believers and promote a salvation myth. Especially among socially and culturally excluded people, extremists use young people's doubts about their own identity to spread their radical belief systems.

By affirming a regional or national identity and promoting counter-narratives, culture and education can counter radicalisation. Promoting a cultural identity

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[8] European Commission & European External Action Service, Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council "A Strategic Approach to Resilience in the EU's External Action", JOIN(2017) 21 final, 7 June 2017,
http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legalcontent/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CElEX:52017JC0021&from=EN, p. 3.
[9] ibid.

– defined here as a dynamic and open identity – and a rich and diverse cultural heritage builds resilience to extremist ideologies and their narratives.

Promoting one's culture and imparting knowledge about its diverse building blocks can be a powerful source of pride that counters extremist representations and narratives. In addition, knowledge about the common Arab-Islamic cultural heritage contributes to a positive sense of identity. The visual arts and literature, for example, can counter the jihadist narrative by demonstrating the many achievements of Arab-Islamic science, architecture, poetry, literature and music to show that Arab-Islamic culture in its heyday was very open and tolerant, and greatly enriched by Christian, Jewish and Zoroastrian-Persian influences. These facts are unknown to the majority of young people in the Islamic world.[10]

All this helps to builds resilience to extremist ideologies and their narratives that promote false and manipulative constructs of Islamic identity or nationalist identities. Free and critical thinking are promoted and resilience to extremist ideologies strengthened, especially by preventing the identity vacuum that extremists try to fill.

1.1.4 Civil society and foreign cultural and educational policy

The predominant concept of civil society in Europe encompasses all forms of non-governmental organisations – NGOs, associations, foundations, religious groups – that participate in public life to promote democratic ideals. However, the term seems far too narrow to be applied to other regions of the world. First, such organisations are very weak or non-existent in many of the countries discussed here. Secondly, for many organisations and individuals, the ideals of Western democracy are not desirable. A broader understanding of civil society is therefore needed, one that includes all primarily non-state and non-market actors working for what they perceive as the common good. The definition of the common good is complex. Apart from the universal needs for shelter, food and security – which are the subject of classic humanitarian aid and are not the focus of this paper – there are some areas in which civil society around the world seems to share fundamental goals: legal security, some measure of social justice,

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[10] ibid.

state accountability, forms of public participation, education, and various forms of self-realisation and self-expression.

Foreign cultural relations and educational policy focusses mainly on the last two areas – education and various forms of self-realisation and self-expression. The underlying theory is that activities in these two areas have an indirect or direct impact on social justice, equality and popular participation and thus contribute to reducing conflict within a country or tension at the international level. This also includes dialogue formats and forums that include inter-faith dialogues.[11] The possible scope of civil society support is a crucial issue that is always closely linked to the security situation and political circumstances.

The objectives of foreign cultural relations and education policy should be guided by clear political priorities, which in turn are determined by the geostrategic and overall political importance of the individual countries. State actors should therefore be involved where possible, but in general, measures and initiatives should primarily aim at promoting functioning civil societies. As necessary as assistance in building state structures in failed states is, without a functioning civil society in the sense of a self-organised community of mature citizens who participate in shaping society and politics and resolve conflicts peacefully, the rule of law, co-determination and social justice – crucial to combating extremism – cannot emerge.[12]

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[11] El Difraoui, A., & Berges, C. (2022). *Afghanistan: August 2021 – A tentative reassessment of cultural foreign policy and civil society support.* Stuttgart: ifa (Institute for Foreign Cultural Relations). Retrieved from www.ssoar.info/ssoar/handle/document/76875

[12] European Commission. Prevention of radicalisation. Retrieved from: https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/internal-security/counter-terrorism-and-radicalisation/prevention-radicalisation_en

1.1.5 Hard-to-reach target groups: Groups with sacred values

One of the biggest challenges of cultural foreign relations and education policy is dealing with and reaching out to people who hold the 'sacred values' already mentioned. This is a very difficult task, but quite often a minimal consensus – for example on non-violence – can be established. There are important examples of interactions with jihadists that have led them to renounce violence and become productive members of society.[13] This is often somehow possible with groups like the Taliban that pursue mainly local or national political goals, but almost impossible with groups that have no political agenda and adhere rather to messianic global salvation myths, such as hardcore followers and leaders of ISIS.

Yet, examples in the grey areas of jihadism of meaningful and successful talks with jihadists exist – not just negotiations to free hostages, or tactical negotiations with jihadists in Iraq, Syria and numerous other countries about temporary ceasefires or humanitarian aid for the suffering population, but negotiations that offer first the prospect of a renunciation of violence and afterwards lasting solutions to social and political problems.

Chances of success exist if groups or leaders are not deluded fanatics but rather nationalist or ethnic groups that have joined jihadist organisations yet primarily pursue political and social goals such as better resource distribution or real representation in national government.

Negotiations can start small, at the local level, and help people directly. In central Mali, an agreement was reached with a jihadist group in 2019 to reopen government schools, health centres and markets. In return, the regional administration proposed funding development projects and teaching positions in the madrasas managed by the jihadists.[14]

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[13] El Difraoui, A., & Berges, C. (2022). Afghanistan: August 2021 – A tentative reassessment of cultural foreign policy and civil society support. Stuttgart: ifa (Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen). Retrieved from www.ssoar.info/ssoar/handle/document/76875.

[14] El Difraoui, A. (2021). The hydra of jihadism. Emergence. Spread and defence of a global danger. Berlin: Suhrkamp Verlag. 1st edition.

1.2 Objective of prevention measures and working model

The goal of all levels of prevention in foreign cultural policy is, in short, to prevent or turn people away from violence through measures that counter, as the OSCE puts it, the drivers of violent extremism.[15] The European Commission lists themes for its projects in preventing and countering violent extremism among different population and religious groups, including i) capacity building of governments and ii) transitional justice. However, these two rarely fall within the scope of foreign cultural and educational policy. The other five more clearly do: iii) education, iv) media capacity building, v) youth empowerment, vi) socio-economic inclusion and vii) inter-community activities. Examples of projects in all these areas are discussed below.[16] For this, a working model of six key criteria for planning, implementation and analysis prevention projects is applied.

The six key criteria are:
1: Target group identification
2: Access to the target group
3: Clear definition of goals
4: Working mechanism and benefits for the target group
5: Results and sustainability
6: Evaluation

Additionally, a comprehensive, culturally sensitive and creative media strategy should accompany all prevention projects from the very beginning. It is important to decide whether to communicate on a large scale or to address the target group directly for safety reasons.

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[15] OSCE. Combating terrorism. Retrieved from www.osce.org/de/countering-terrorism.

[16] OSCE. A Whole-of-Society Approach to Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization that Lead to Terrorism. A Guidebook for Central Asia. 2020. www.osce.org/files/f/documents/a/7/444340_0.pdf.

1.2.1 Target group identification

The starting point for all measures is to identify the target group as precisely as possible: size, age, gender, ethnicity and religious affiliation, level of education. The socio-economic and socio-cultural position of the target group, through which the degree of marginalisation and experience of discrimination results, should be examined. Multipliers from educational elites, some of whom are oppressed by extremist groups but still have some room for manoeuvre, need to be identified – for example, urban elites in Afghanistan under the Taliban regime.

It is equally important to identify belief systems. Here, the norms and ideals described by Scott Atran as 'sacred values' must be known, in order to be able to act in a culturally sensitive way and avoid taboo topics as far as possible.

The identification must be followed by a needs analysis: Where are the group's priorities where we can engage with it? What forms of education, self-empowerment, self-realisation are desired? Is the processing of experiences of violence a priority? Already in the preparation phase, clarity must be created about the planned scope of the project and it must be decided whether to act on the micro, meso or macro level, or on several levels.

1.2.2 Objective

It should be determined from the outset whether primary, secondary or tertiary prevention measures are involved, or whether primary and secondary prevention are to be combined. Even if secondary prevention measures can also have effects on primary or tertiary prevention, the form of prevention on which to focus must be decided.

The overarching goal of all measures is, as already described, the renunciation of violence. This is accompanied by tolerance and acceptance of diversity. This goal is promoted through concrete project objectives, such as creating educational opportunities, encouraging independent thinking, supporting coping and working through processes of experiencing violence, or creating new unifying, cosmopolitan narratives that counter and take the place of those of extremism.

The objectives should also take potential negative effects into account, such as the favouring of certain population groups or the exclusion of others, or the stigmatisation of vulnerable groups. Projects can be perceived as pro-Western in their external impact, which carries the risk of participants being perceived as pro-Western agents or traitors to their own population group.

1.2.3 Access to the target group

Here, the first step is to clarify the framework conditions in terms of security and political restrictions. A risk analysis for intermediaries and participants must be carried out very carefully and systematically. Does the security situation allow direct engagement with concerned groups and intermediaries? What are the restrictions and political censorship? Is there a ban on the activities of governmental and non-governmental organisations? Or are measures only possible from a distance, but still with a degree of effectiveness that should not be underestimated?

Successful projects need a culturally sensitive, low-entry threshold at eye level: people, especially young people, should be picked up where they are anyway, in their pursuit of education but of course also in playing football or making music. Credible and authentic mediators must be identified. This should not be done by constantly falling back on 'the usual suspects'. In some countries and regions, de facto NGO industries have formed civil society institutions or associations that live exclusively on funding from abroad.

1.2.4 Working mechanisms and benefits for the target group

Particularly in the case of innovative concepts for measures that have never previously been implemented, the underlying working mechanism, how the project can be implemented in practice, and the underlying theory of change must be at least theoretically proven. This is also called proof of concept. The more the target group derives a direct benefit from the project, the better it can be reached and persuaded to participate. This consists, as already described, of the acquisition of individual, collective, cultural, social or symbolic capital, which can be converted into economic capital. Cultural capital consists mainly of education and the opportunities it brings, while social capital allows networks to be built and strengthened. Social capital is thus one of the most important

variables for individual and collective resilience.[17] Symbolic capital describes status and recognition in a society or peer group.

The design and methods of creation of the different forms of capital should be presented as precisely as possible, as proof of concept for the measures. There are also benefits that do not fall directly into the different capital categories, such as overcoming and coming to terms with violence or self-expression, or simply having fun. Education with the simultaneous acquisition of concrete skills that can be translated into economic capital and lead to self-empowerment is especially helpful for marginalised groups. Diplomas or certificates that are valuable on the labour market are highly sought after.

For smaller projects, the process can be tried and tested. For larger projects, the mechanism of action must be worked out very precisely and constantly adjusted. In general, existing projects should be analysed according to best practice criteria and functioning elements should be adopted.

1.2.5 Results and sustainability

The sustainability of projects must be considered from the very beginning. Projects are sustainable if they increase social, cultural, symbolic and economic capital in the long term. To achieve this, they must involve multipliers who remain agents of change even after the project has ended and who can continue projects and increase their reach according to the 'train the trainers' principle. The role of the multipliers as role models is of great importance.

The reproducibility of the projects and the longevity of the results or products are also crucial in this context, for example songs that continue to be heard for years or films that are box-office successes. Economically sustainable projects, such as culture hubs, where a cultural sector and cultural industries are created, are particularly desirable.

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[17] El Difraoui, A. (2018). The role of culture in preventing and reducing violent extremism. In A. Armborst, E. Marks, C. Trautmann, & S. Ullricht, *Building an evidence-base for the prevention of radicalization and violent extremism.* Pro BUSINESS GmbH. Retrieved from www.praeventionstag.de/daten/module/buecher/en/ISBN-978-3-96409-063-8/4-El-Difraoui.pdf.

A sustainable concept and long-term support are also crucial for the recruitment of authentic and credible local mediators. Numerous mediators, for example in Iraq or Afghanistan, rightly complain that after being supported by Western states, they were eventually abandoned, often in danger of losing their lives. Such experiences also deter potential mediators in other countries.

1.2.6 Evaluation

Evaluating projects in the field of prevention is one of the most difficult challenges, even in Germany. In tertiary prevention, where work is done directly with people at the individual level, it is possible to determine – for example through personal interviews – how far they have moved away from extremist world views, or to observe how they participate in social life and share the basic democratic values of our society. This is much more difficult in secondary or primary prevention. Here, discussions with larger groups, long-term observations and opinion polls have to be conducted.

In primary prevention, large-scale opinion polls, for example on tolerance or attitudes towards certain social groups, must be used as quantitative instruments. Statistics on membership in extremist associations and on acts of violence must be analysed. In all three prevention categories, media behaviour, especially online, can also be examined both qualitatively and quantitatively: the content of posts, the number of posts by participants in certain groups. The analysis can use search algorithms for extremist, as well as for tolerant and peaceful, keywords.

The evaluation of foreign cultural relations and education policy projects aiming to prevent violent extremism, and of the resulting societal change in countries that are often failed states with difficult-to-reach target groups, is a great but necessary challenge.

2. Context and measures

In the following section, after a brief description of the context, measures on the three intervention levels, micro, meso and macro, are discussed in the Sahel, Syria, Iraq – especially in the Al-Hol refugee camp – Afghanistan, Egypt and Tunisia. The projects are examined based on the above-mentioned six criteria. This analysis is not an assessment in the sense of giving grades or establishing a ranking. All the projects discussed here are sensible and worth considering. However, the criteria do allow best-practice suggestions and examples of future measures.

In contrast to tertiary prevention, which targets individuals or very small groups of people and thus basically operates only on the micro level, primary and secondary prevention operate on three levels: micro, meso and macro. At the micro level, smaller groups, such as multipliers, can be addressed individually; at the meso level, larger regional groups can be selected. At the macro level, measures can then be taken that target both vulnerable groups and the population as a whole. Of course, the levels often overlap[18] and there are initiatives that include all of them.

Based on the Global Terrorism Index (GTI) 2022, the eight countries most affected by terrorism are in descending order Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, Burkina Faso, Syria, Nigeria, Mali and Niger. A major concern is the worsening of the situation in all Sahel countries, where the death toll has risen by over 1,000% since 2007.[19] Tens of thousands of people in the Sahel have fallen victim to terrorism.[20]

Although the number of attacks and victims has decreased worldwide, jihadism remains the greatest extremist threat and has never been more widespread on the globe. The universe of jihadism encompasses far more than ISIS, Al-Qaeda and

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[18] El Difraoui, A. (2018). The role of culture in preventing and reducing violent extremism. In A. Armborst, E. Marks, C. Trautmann, & S. Ullricht, *Building an evidence-base for the prevention of radicalization and violent extremism.* Pro BUSINESS GmbH. Retrieved from www.praeventionstag.de/daten/module/buecher/en/ISBN-978-3-96409-063-8/4-El-Difraoui.pdf.

[19] Institute for Economics & Peace. (2022). *Global Terror Index 2022: Measuring the impact of terrorism.* Sydney. Retrieved from www.visionofhumanity.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/GTI-2022-web-09062022.pdf. The GTI score is calculated from the evaluation of terrorist events, fatalities, injuries and property damage in almost all countries.

[20] Vision of Humanity. Global terrorism index. Sahel has become the new epicentre of terrorism. Retrieved from www.visionofhumanity.org/sahel-emerges-as-the-new-epicentre-of-terrorism/

the Taliban; these are only the best-known organisations. The specialist group SITE Intelligence has identified 53 "official" groups[21], and this does not include small cells and informal networks of supporters. No continent is spared from the spread of the ideology.

Jihadism is a global phenomenon but knows how to instrumentalise local grievances and thus acts 'glocal'. Jihadist groups know very well how to exploit perceived or real discrimination against and exclusion of, for example, the Fulbe in the Sahel, young Pashtuns in Afghanistan, Arab Bedouins in the Egyptian Sinai, Sunnis in Iraq or Syria. At the same time, the dangers of extremism are not limited to jihadists alone. In the regions and countries discussed here, numerous other forms of extremism exist along ethnic, ideological and religious lines, including Christian groups.

2.1   Sahel

The Sahel, the 600 km-wide strip stretching over 6,500 km from the Atlantic to the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean, means 'coast' or 'shore' in Arabic. The term for the semi-arid zone comes from Arab traders who crossed the Sahara on their way south from the Mediterranean and finally saw green on the horizon after hundreds of kilometres of extreme aridity. Eleven to thirteen countries, depending on the calculation, lie partly in the Sahel, which is about the same size as the EU – starting on the Atlantic with Mauritania and Senegal; then Mali, northern Burkina Faso and deep southern Algeria, Niger, northern Nigeria; Chad in the centre; and finally, Sudan, Eritrea and Ethiopia on the Red Sea. Some geographers also include Djibouti and parts of Somalia. More than half a billion people live in these states, with 150–200 million in the Sahel itself. The physically huge countries of the region – Chad alone is as big as Germany, France and Italy combined – are almost all among the poorest states on Earth. Half of Mali's population lives below the poverty line; the country ranked 186th out of

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[21] Site Intelligence Group. (2021). Jihadist Groups. Retrieved from https://ent.siteintelgroup.com/jihadist-groups-2.html and Institute before Economics & Peace. (2022). *Global Terror Index 2022: Measuring the impact of terrorism.* Sydney. Retrieved from www.visionofhumanity.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/GTI-2022-web-09062022.pdf.

191 countries on the UN Human Development Index 2021/2022. The country is thus even behind Afghanistan.[22]

Many states in the region, such as Mali, Chad and Somalia, are so-called failed states which can hardly offer the people outside the capitals even rudimentary social and health services and often do not even provide security, let alone the rule of law. Governments find it impossible to control their vast territories. The borders of these states were arbitrarily drawn, as in the Middle East, by the colonial powers – Britain and France or, in the case of Somalia, Italy – with no regard for the peoples living there, the Tuareg, Fulbe, Hausa, Kanuri, Arabs and Somalis. For more than a decade, an ever-growing deadly threat has fed on and aggravated already existing conflicts: jihadism has gained a foothold in all countries of the Sahel. Between January 2017 and September 2019, ISIS and Al-Qaeda offshoots alone carried out over 1,100 attacks, more than ever before.[23] Rivalries between groups close to either of them also repeatedly lead to bloody clashes.

Certain marginalised ethnic groups, such as the Tuareg or the Fulbe, are particularly vulnerable to extremist ideologies. Too often, however, the focus in terms of the Sahel is solely on the jihadist threat. In reality, we witness a militarisation of the region along ethnic and religious lines. Christian militias also exist.

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[22] United Nations Development Programme. (2019). Human Development Report 2019. Beyond income, beyond average, beyond today: Inequalities in human development in the 21st century. New York: UNDP. Retrieved from https://hdr.undp.org/system/files/documents/hdr2019pdf.pdf

[23] St-Pierre, Y. (2019). Africa is IS's new foothold. Zenith. Retrieved from https://magazin.zenith.me/de/politik/organisationen-des-islamischen-staates-afrika

2.1.1 Micro level

The United States Institute of Peace (USIP) and Women Preventing Violent Extremism (WPVE)

The United States Institute of Peace's (USIP) ambitious education and meditation programme began in the Horn of Africa with the aim of empowering women-led organisations. It has been expanded to Burkina Faso, Chad, Ethiopia, Kenya, Mali, Niger, Senegal, Tanzania and Uganda. The programme aims to empower people and institutions:

> *[...] to build peace by deepening understanding and increasing the capacity and skills of women working to prevent and counter violent extremism. These women then inform and improve policy and practice to transform fragile contexts into more resilient ones. Supporting women's local leadership can lead to the inclusion of women and girls as change agents in decision-making processes and position them to advocate for their rights, safety, and inclusion more broadly.[24]*

Particular importance is attached to local forms of dialogue. The programme also aims to strengthen women's capacities locally, create protected spaces for women and connect women with political decision-makers.[25]

1: Target group identification
Women have been neglected for too long in the prevention of extremism, and their role in radicalisation processes has been underestimated. Yet they play a major role, for example through raising children. The USIP programme considers the diverse roles of women in extremism and in prevention, as supporters and mediators but also victims and peacemakers.

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[24] United States Institute of Peace. Women Preventing Violent Extremism (WPVE) in the Horn and Sahel. Retrieved from www.usip.org/programs/women-preventing-violent-extremism-wpve-horn-and-sahel.
[25] ibid.

2: Access to the target group

The information on access is vague. A personalised and gender-sensitive approach is used to build trust between the women who are potential participants and those organising the programme. The care for the well-being of the women is intended to create a low-threshold access to participation. The programme creates support networks with regional and supra-regional actors, giving it greater reach and visibility.

3: Clear definition of goals

Secondary and tertiary prevention: empowerment and networking of women as societal actors: "*A series of facilitated dialogues between women, community members, and security actors allows for new avenues of coordination that help identify shared threats and strengthen resilience.*"[26]

4: Working mechanism and benefits for the target group

The working mechanism and the benefits are the creation of social, cultural and symbolic capital, as well as working with scientifically based concepts such as Gender Analysis Framework theory. Based on information about gender roles and relations, gender-specific differences are examined and taken into account. The methodology of the educational work thus creates awareness of gender-specific roles and differences, and is adapted to the identified target group. The women are empowered, and their motivation to participate and sense of responsibility are increased.

Network building also serves as a therapeutic approach that can additionally help with processes to overcome possible traumatic experiences. Social trust and community coordination are strengthened and thus form the basis for creating resilience. By building a regional platform, women across Africa can participate in preventing and countering the threat of violent extremism in their communities and gain standing in society.

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[26] ibid.

5: Results and sustainability

Educational structures and networks are created to transmit education and social skills in the peer group and inter-generationally. Women thus become multipliers and agents of change with a high motivation for political participation to push back extremism, participate in decision-making processes and advocate for peaceful conflict resolution.

6: Evaluation

No information about an evaluation has been found. The constant expansion of the programme to additional countries suggests success.

2.1.2 Meso level

Football for Hope Initiative in Mali by Common Goal and the Association Malienne pour la Promotion de la Jeune Fille et de la Femme (AMPJF)

Because of their very low threshold to access, football initiatives are particularly suitable for prevention work. As in the rest of the world, football is played everywhere in the Sahel – a small area of sand or earth, a ball, even one made of rags, and two sticks for a goal are enough. However, sports projects are only effective if accompanied by a holistic educational concept. Through accompanying youth work and pedagogical methods, young people can develop attitudes and life skills that make them resistant to ideological manipulation and extremist-motivated violence.

Sport initiatives promote communication and social skills; fair play and teamwork expand the threshold of tolerance and train people to deal with frustration and their own emotions.[27] Ethnic and religious barriers can be overcome through team building. Sporting activities are very important in conveying values, and they strengthen the cohesion of the local community.

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[27] Kickfair. The Kickfair concept. From: https://kickfair.org/homepage/veraendern/das-kickfair-konzept/ Retrieved.

Regular sporting activity can provide structure and support as well as new social relationships – social capital.[28]

In Mali, Common Goal is run in cooperation with the Association Malienne pour la Promotion de la Jeune Fille et de la Femme (AMPJF) and the Football for Hope initiative. It is to be extended to include young men.[29]

1: Target group identification
The programme works with disadvantaged and discriminated-against girls and women of all ages at risk of violence and have limited or no access to education. In particular, female school dropouts are welcome to participate in the programme in order to receive out-of-school education.

2: Access to the target group
It is not clear from the programme description how access is designed. Even after a personal enquiry, no meaningful information was provided.

3: Clear definition of goals
The social awareness, self-confidence and self-determination of girls and women are promoted through the creation of self-help groups, coaching and training. Above all, the programme aims to create structures for the participants that encourage independent thinking, discourse, and the development of their own ideas. These safe spaces are intended to provide access to education and the fostering of self-confidence. The aim is for children and women to get to know each other as active agents of positive change in Mali and "form new ideas on how to achieve the change they want to see in the world".[30]

4: Working mechanism and benefits for the target group
Creating social and cultural capital: By learning through play and the creation of safe spaces for girls and women, participants gain confidence in themselves and

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[28] El Difraoui, A. (2021). The hydra of jihadism. Emergence. Spread and defence of a global danger. Berlin: Suhrkamp Verlag. 1st ed. S. 153.

[29] Common Goal. Empowering girls and women in Mali towards independence. Retrieved from *www.common-goal.org/Organisation/Details/associationmaliennepourlapromotiondelajeunefilleetdelafemmeampf*

[30] Common Goal. (2021). Common Goal – Impact Report. Retrieved from: www.common-goal.org/Content/downloads/Common-Goal-Impact-Report-2021.pdf.

their social environment. They can come to terms with and overcome their personal history. The programme includes football training, regular play and competitions. It also offers workshops and training on women's rights and political participation, to empower the young girls and women in society. The playful environment encourages the participants to discuss amongst and entertain themselves, contributes to the desire for education, and promotes independent thinking and self-determination.

5: Results and sustainability
Due to significant positive feedback, AMPJF would like to organise a similar programme for boys, in cooperation with another organisation.

6: Evaluation
Even upon personal request, the organisers did not share any information about an eventual evaluation.

Donko Ni Maaya ('Culture at the Service of the Community'): Promoting the Young Music and Arts Scene in Mali

The Donko Ni Maaya project implemented by the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ) promotes artistic activities against radicalisation and anti-democratic ideas. The already very active music scene in the country helps provide access to political education, with a low barrier to entry. Many young people in Mali lack access to politics, which can be created through thematically designed song lyrics, theatre projects and performances. Through competitions, projects and workshops, Donko Ni Maaya integrates art and politics, addresses radicalisation and current ethnic conflicts, and offers tangible perspectives on tolerant and peaceful participation in civil society. The participants with their creative work are so-called 'change clients'[31], making their voices and concerns heard. The hope is for them to be "opinion-forming role models for the Malian youth and thus to pursue a societal mission". The

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[31] Brand, M; Lettau, M. (2021). The Role of Youth as Agents of Change for Crisis Prevention and Strengthening Social Cohesion through the Promotion of Arts and Culture in Mali. In: Journal of Cultural Management and Cultural Policy.

resulting productions are intended to have a preventive effect throughout the country.

1: Target group identification
Mali has a lively music and rap scene. The first directly addressed target group is urban, partly marginalised youth who are in this scene or enthusiastic about it. The second target group is young civil society throughout the country, where many people are vulnerable to extremist ideologies. A risk analysis determines in which parts of the country it is safe to work directly with young people.

2: Access to the target group
Low-threshold access: young people are met in their living environment. Existing mediators and initiatives that are considered authentic are integrated into the project. A competition of ideas is used to identify these mediators and initiatives. They help to create networks and draw young people's attention to the programmes. These mediators and initiatives include cultural centres, a dance and hip-hop festival, and well-known rappers – for example, a dance teacher helped runaway girls and girls living in shelters perform their life stories for her dance theatre. Wider civil society could be reached through the productions of the first target group on topics like tolerance and social cohesion.

3: Clear definition of goals
Secondary and primary prevention: Young people are trained to become respected agents of change that take a positive and active role in countering extremism. Their productions create and communicate open, tolerant narratives that counter the polarising narratives of extremists. There is no information about possible adverse effects.

4: Working mechanism and benefits for the target group
Creation of social, cultural and symbolic capital that can potentially be converted into economic capital for the direct participants. Young people are shown different perspectives, and creative self-expression is encouraged. The programme "promotes urban (sub-)culture by supporting selected cultural and district centres to improve the quality and quantity of their cultural offer".[32] By strengthening social cohesion, commonalities and shared potential for action are

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[32] ibid. p. 32.

discovered. As one participant reports, beliefs are challenged. Taboo subjects find attention in educational activities. Participants' own stories are addressed, to also "reveal what is not meant to be revealed".[33]

The programme helps create new access to career and training opportunities. The activities of Donko Ni Maaya demand different skills and thus different jobs to be filled, which in turn strengthens the infrastructure of the cultural sector. The financial support provider for the project creates fertile ground that revives the cultural sector in Mali, furnishes it with perspective and strengthens its relevance. The artistic and cultural production is distributed via social media or radio and makes the wider civil society aware of tolerant alternative narratives to counter extremism, and dialogue processes are stimulated.

5: Results and sustainability
By promoting young artists, multipliers who can transmit their competences are created. Cultural actors with a special awareness of social issues can also contribute to socio-political decision-making processes in the long term. The programme helps to create a cultural sector with the necessary infrastructure and thus also long-term jobs. The cultural productions, with their tolerant and unifying content, have the potential to make a sustainable and lasting impact on civil society. Due to its success so far, the project is to be extended to Gao and northern Mali.

6: Evaluation
This project is one of the few that has been scientifically evaluated. The impact of its objectives was assessed within the framework of a qualitative research design. For this purpose, semi-standardised guideline-based expert interviews were used to obtain authentic information. Contextual realities were included in the interviews. The 27 interview partners were selected according to function and expertise.

The guideline-based interviews dealt with three sets of questions: "Objectives, strategies, challenges", "Work and experiences with the target group of young people" and "Assessments of the impact and changes brought about by GIZ funding". All interviews were transcribed, and statements were "analysed by

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[33] ibid. p. 32.

means of qualitative content analysis using the data management software MAXQDA".[34] When conducting the interviews and the evaluation, the fact that the response tendency could be more positive because the interviewees were financially supported by GIZ was considered.

Fulbe Radio Station – Vulnerable Ethnic Groups

The 40 million Fulbe (also called Fulani or Fula) live in more than half a dozen countries of the Sahel. They are mostly cattle farmers, see themselves as a discriminated-against population group, and have increasingly joined various jihadist groups, partly due to resource conflicts with settled farmers of other ethnicities and religions. There are no reliable figures, but some groups, such as the Al-Qaida-affiliated Katiba Macina and Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS), are now said to consist mainly of Fulbe. Among other ethnic and religious groups, the 'Fulbe equals jihadist' prejudice has spread.

In 2019, a Fulani radio station was to be launched in Dakar, Senegal[35] (we were not able to check the state of development here). In April of the same year, the French foreign broadcaster Radio France International launched two magazines in Fulani.[36] Until then, no international radio station had broadcast in the Fulbe language. This created a vacuum for dangerous disinformation and extremist narratives.

The interactive programmes give young people their say on social and current issues that affect them – especially *Daily Debate,* which deals with topics such as the employment situation and illegal migration, but also local recycling initiatives; projects are presented and practical tips are given. In addition, there is a cultural and music programme. The content is also intended to help decipher information and combat misinformation and extremist narratives. Gender equality is promoted both through the topics covered and the presence of women as guests, interview partners and presenters.

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[34] ibid, p. 34.

[35] Presse francophone. France Médias Monde va lancer une radio en mandingue et peul en octobre à Dakar. From: www.presse- francophone.org/fr/generalites/article/france-medias-monde-va-lancer-une-radio-en-mandingue-et-peul-en-octobre-a-dakar

[36] CFI. "RFI lance deux magazines en peul et en mandingue". Retrieved from: https://cfi.fr/fr/actualites/rfi-lance-deux-magazines-en-peul-et-en-mandingue

1: Target group identification

All members of the Fulbe ethnic group, regardless of educational level, as listeners but also as callers and thus participants.

2: Access to the target group

Very low-threshold: All people with technical access and knowledge of radio stations can use the medium. Another advantage is that access is also possible for illiterate people. Political censorship and political restrictions do not have to be taken into consideration, due to the distance and digital access.

3: Clear definition of goals

Primary prevention: Access to knowledge and information for Fulani-speaking people, combating disinformation. Open narratives and tolerance are created by addressing issues such as gender equality and knowledge transfer, as well as by clarifying disinformation. The radio programme promotes inter-regional cultural relations and social cohesion through, for example, cultural tips and musical discoveries. Independent thinking and participation are also promoted through interviews, talks and discussions in which listeners can take part.

4: Working mechanism and benefits for the target group

Creation of social and cultural capital: Access to reliable information in one's own language makes it possible to engage neglected and marginalised communities and to open up new perspectives on their regions and the world, thus empowering them. Participants acquire social capital by presenting their projects and successful initiatives. Participants can become role models and encourage the audience. Listeners gain access to education and can themselves participate via telephone or Internet to create their own networks. The tolerance threshold is raised through diversity of opinion.

5: Sustainability and results

There is no information available.

6: Evaluation

To the best of our knowledge, only one indicator exists: during the first broadcast in 2019, the programme received 1,100 listener calls.

2.1.3 Projects linking micro, meso and macro levels

Cultural Hub of the Fondation Youssou N'dour pour les industries culturelles et créatives (FYNICC) Senegal

Musician and former Minister of Culture of Senegal Youssou N'Dour announced in Brussels on 9 November, 2022 the creation of a Foundation for Cultural and Creative Industries to create a Cultural Hub in Senegal on the edge of the Sahel, which is also threatened by terrorism. The project was selected for this study, even though it has not yet been implemented, because it is based on an extensive needs and implementation analysis and a clear strategy. Cooperation with the EU is already in place.

As already discussed in terms of the relatively small Donko Ni Maaya project, the promotion of cultural industries and so-called cultural hubs has considerable potential. The hub could have a large-scale social and economic impact by creating a regional value chain. Furthermore, one driver of extremism is the sense of injustice that can arise from the fact that cultural works from Africa are produced and distributed primarily by the former colonial powers in Europe or the US, which thus benefit more than the countries of origin of the cultural creators.

The project takes the positive economic record of cultural hubs in other regions of the world as its starting point and is scheduled to run for ten years. It aims to develop initiatives, actions and projects that help build a more just, open and sustainable society. The concept is based on four pillars: 1) dialogue and advocacy, 2) co-creation, 3) mentoring of young actors and entrepreneurship, 4) production and diffusion. In total, jobs are to be made available for 100,000 young people and several hundred small and medium-sized enterprises created. Residencies, productions and workshops will be organised through strategic partnerships with museums, producers, festivals, record companies, etc. Training, mentoring and incubation programmes will support cultural initiatives that provide concrete skills and knowledge as well as strengthen economic capacities.[37]

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37 Fondation Youssou N'dour pour les industries culturelles créatives. www.fynicc.org/la-fondation/.

1: Target group identification

The target group is young people in Senegal and neighbouring countries, who are supported as artistic participants or given access to training opportunities in the production sector. It is hoped that 100,000 young people will benefit directly from the project through jobs and support, and that 100 small and medium-sized enterprises will be created.

2: Access to the target group

Through a large-scale media strategy and strategic partnerships, for example with museums, festivals, record companies and youth associations, participants are recruited from the arts and cultural sector. The aim is to train and mentor young talents and to disseminate their productions. The project aims to reach young unemployed people in particular and motivate them to participate. Through an African-European Internet platform, project promoters, artists, and national and international partners will be connected.

3: Clear definition of goals

Secondary and primary prevention: Participants are to be taught tolerance, dialogue skills and perspectives through cosmopolitan narratives and creative spaces. Their achievements are to receive recognition, and the resulting cultural industry is intended to sustainably strengthen an open civil society. In addition, inter-regional cultural relations are to be strengthened through the development of a network of various cultural actors and interested parties.

4: Working mechanism and benefits for the target group

Social, cultural, symbolic and economic capital is created. Participants are supported and placed. This creates jobs and opportunities, as well as financial capital. Through networking in the cultural and arts sector, the target group expands its social network and thus promotes dialogue between actors and participants.

5: Results and sustainability

If a tolerant, economically viable cultural hub and a cultural industry around it are indeed created, the project will be very sustainable.

6: Evaluation

The criteria for future evaluation are relatively clear: the number of participants supported and the number of jobs created; the number of artistic productions created and distributed; and key economic development figures.

2.2 Syria, Iraq – camps

The security situation in Syria and Iraq is still unstable. ISIS is said to still have more than 10,000 armed fighters in Iraq and Syria. The Hayat Tahrir al-Sham ('Front for the Liberation of the Levant') group, which emerged from the Al-Nusra Front, the Syrian Al-Qaeda offshoot, is also until now present, especially in the north-eastern province of Idlib. Four million people, including many refugees, live here in one of the few regions of the country not once more controlled by Assad's regime.

Hayat Tahrir al-Sham has an estimated 8,000–10,000 fighters. Rhetorically, it is much more moderate than ISIS and its leader, Abu Muhammad al-Julani, has renounced Al-Qaeda. He claims to pursue purely nationalist goals, not to strike civilians and the West, and tries to bring smaller radical jihadist groups under his control. All this might be merely a tactical manoeuvre to deter Russia, Western states and especially Turkey, which is very present in the region, from attacking his organisation.[38]

However, the greatest danger in Iraq, as in Syria, still comes from ISIS, which can look back on long experience in underground fighting. The marginalisation of the Sunni minority, which lost power and privilege with the fall of Saddam Hussein in 2003, was one of the main factors in the resurgence of the jihadist groups. If genuine political and economic integration of the Sunnis that formerly lived under ISIS rule does not succeed, the same pattern as in 2003 and 2012 could repeat itself, leading to guerrilla warfare and civil war in Iraq as well as Syria.

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[38] El Difraoui, A. (2021). The hydra of jihadism: Emergence, spread and defence of a global danger. Berlin: Suhrkamp Verlag. 1st ed. S. 262.

In Iraq and Syria, non-jihadist – namely non-Sunni – extremist organisations are also a danger, such as the Shiite Hezbollah in Syria, various Shiite militias in Iraq, and also Yazidi, Alevi, and Christian extremist groups. They should be included in preventive measures.

2.2.1 Micro level

Art and Theatre Therapy in Iraq

Erbil, the capital of the Autonomous Region of Kurdistan in northern Iraq, narrowly escaped a direct attack by ISIS and became a refuge for many people fleeing Mosul, among them many children. The Jiyan Foundation for Human Rights created creative therapeutic activities for these children – both for large groups, such as on World Children's Day in 2013, when hundreds of refugee children illustrated their dreams, and for smaller groups, such as in cooperation with the Goethe-Institut. 15 refugee children attended an art therapy seminar twice a week.[39] In Iraq, the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ) supports theatre projects for coping with and overcoming experiences of violence, especially for women. There is no public communication about the project.

1: Target group identification
The target group definition for all projects in this area is quite clear: people who have been exposed to traumatising experiences of violence in conflicts in Iraq, some of whom themselves have been radicalised.

2: Access to the target group
Most of the time, participants will be addressed directly by the project organisers – for example, NGOs that work with them in the field of trauma care or provide general humanitarian aid.

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[39] Jiyan Foundation for Human Rights. Psychotherapy. Retrieved from: https://jiyan.org/psychotherapy/.

3: Clear definition of goals

Secondary and partly tertiary prevention: The clear goal is to process and overcome experiences of violence and to start reconciliation processes, to avoid the seeking of revenge and thereby continued spirals of violence. The acceptance of others is to be promoted.

4: Working mechanism and benefits for the target group

Creating social capital: Art and drama therapy are proven best-practice approaches. Art therapy works because it offers forms of expression to overcome speechlessness in traumatised people. In this way, feelings are also expressed non-verbally and can be better processed. Art therapy creates trust in a playful way to express feelings such as hope, frustration, fear and dreams, and can initiate further relevant conversations.[40] Processing violence is a psychological process that helps people to reintegrate into their respective societies.

5: Results and sustainability

The measures in this area are sustainable if people have processed their experiences of violence and propagate non-violence in society. The projects themselves can only be sustainable if they are based on the 'train the trainer' principle and instruct qualified personnel on-site to continue.

6: Evaluation

Theoretically, art and theatre projects can be evaluated through surveys. However, long-term contact with the participants is necessary to verify whether they have actually processed their traumas and experiences of violence and turned away from violence.

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[40] ibid. and El Difraoui, A., Trautmann, C., & Wiedl, N. (2021). Deradicalisation and distancing work. Begleitbuch zum Qualifizierungslehrgang (Umfeld-)Beratung im Phänomenbereich islamistisch begründeter Extremismus. Contributions to Migration and Integration (Vol. 9). From www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/DE/Forschung/Beitragsreihe/beitrag-band-9-deradikalisierungs-distanzierungsarbeit.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=8.

2.2.2 Meso level

The Stabilisation Network – Online Spaces for Women

There are initiatives aimed at women and mothers that have great potential. One of these initiatives comes from The Stabilisation Network. Here, the online behaviour of women in the target group was studied as exhaustively as possible. The "analysis of the research conducted in north-eastern Syria confirmed that women prefer to communicate in a networked way, their primary preference being with individuals they already know, and their secondary preference being with those [women] who bear social, environmental or ideological similarities".[41] Following the analysis, safe spaces were created online in the project, which is deliberately not named. These were "curated by a team of administrators who not only provided content, but also encouraged the audience to create content themselves, and who had one-to-one conversations with particularly vulnerable members of the target group".[42] The programme also aims to help better understand the socio-economic, political, ideological, collective and personal causes, triggers and drivers of extremism.

For certain critical aspects of how best to approach women from vulnerable groups, recommendations have been formulated based on the findings from the project planning and evaluation.

1: Target group identification
Vulnerable women in north-eastern Syria. An extensive analysis of women's online behaviour and needs was undertaken.

2: Access to the target group
The programme was aligned with research conducted in north-eastern Syria which confirmed that women prefer to communicate in a network, primarily with people they already know and secondarily with women who share social, environmental or ideological similarities. In addition, vulnerable women in the target group "prefer to discuss topics in plenary that are more personal, whereas males in the target audience prefer to discuss 'harder' topics such as geo-politics,

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[41] Atamuradova, F., & Zeiger, S. (2021). Researching the Evolution of Countering Violent Extremism. Heyadah. S. 260. In https://hedayah.com/app/uploads/2021/09/Full-Edited-Volume-RC2019.pdf.
[42] ibid. p. 261.

war, religion and insecurity".[43] Women feel safer talking about topics they consider taboo in a closed, structured group, because they fear that talking about them in public could lead to online harassment and manifest as offline violence. The organisers targeted women exclusively, because transmission of gendered content in public platforms with mixed or predominantly male audiences is most often associated with risks "such as further perpetuation of stereotypes about women, limited engagement, backlash from established male online audiences, and the possibility of reinforcing gendered roles or causing harm".[44]

3: Clear definition of goals

Secondary prevention and partly tertiary prevention: self-empowerment; education and networking in safe spaces.

4: Working mechanism and benefits for the target group

Creation of social and cultural capital: self-expression, social networking and education. The private online spaces created primarily disseminated extremism prevention and counter-extremism content in an authentic, locally adapted way. However, they also fulfilled information needs by providing texts, online learning modules, films and links to learning opportunities, as well as to important local information or other types of information, such as on health.[45] In addition, culturally sensitive discussions were held on the role of women in Islam and Islamic history, indirectly countering the narratives of the 'appropriate' role of women idealised by violent extremist organisations.

5: Results and sustainability

Perhaps the most important indicator is that "the platform still functions one year after project closure and is completely user-led with no external material support"[46]. The project has a high degree of replicability. It is precisely tailored to the target group, and can thus also be used with similar target groups in the region. The project leaders and the authors of the summary on the project suggest, for example, that the lessons learned from the project for the

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[43] ibid. p. 261.
[44] ibid. following: Birchall, J. (2018). Gender sensitive strategic communications interventions. From https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5c6bd7bae5274a72bc452400/498_Gender_Sensitive_ Strategic_Communications.pdf.
[45] ibid.
[46] ibid. p. 261

development of communication programmes could be transferred to the Al-Hol camp in Syria.

6: Evaluation
The initiative's self-evaluation revealed "the creation of a highly active digital community, with up to 1000+ user-generated pieces of content per month. Dialogue was successfully generated and curated amongst vulnerable women."[47] Qualitative evaluation was carried out through case studies and observation of group members' interactions over time. The fact that the platform was still functioning one year after the end of the project and continued to be run solely by the users is also an important evaluation criterion.

2.3 Camps

In the long term, mass camps for ISIS sympathisers and former fighters constitute one of the greatest dangers in terms of jihadi extremism. The largest refugee and internment camp, Al-Hol in northern Syria, has a population of 50,000–70,000[48] and is controlled by the Syrian Kurdish militia People's Defense Units (YPG). The approximately 400 guards are severely overstrained in managing the camp. According to estimates, 12,000 people that are close to ISIS live here, mainly women and children. Many of the women disseminate propaganda and indoctrinate their children. Male ISIS fighters use Al-Hol as a safe haven between terrorist attacks, but tolerate the presence of international aid organisations, as these are essential to the survival of their families.

The risk of Iraqi and Kurdish camps and prisons once again becoming 'jihad academies' is real – not least for the many children born or partly raised in Iraq and Syria. Hundreds more are born in the camps every year. Dealing with traumatised young people and their mothers is one of the greatest challenges of prevention work. Especially here, educational initiatives in the framework of foreign cultural relations and education policy are urgently needed.

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[47] ibid. p. 261

[48] Khani, S. Al-Hawl Camp and the Potential Resurgence of ISIS. Washington Institute Fikra Forum. 29.06.2020. From: www.washingtoninstitute.org/pdf/view/1109/en.

In this case, rather than an implemented project, presented below is the interview-based *When am I Going to Start to Live?* study on the situation and needs in Al-Hol. It illustrates best practice for needs assessments and the planning of projects in the field of prevention.

2.3.1 Micro and meso level

Save the Children Study: *When am I Going to Start to Live?* Situation and Needs in the Al-Hol and Roj Refugee Camps

> *"I wake up early in the morning and keep asking my mother what time it is and what day it is. I wash my face and drink tea in a hurry. I wait for the teacher of the child-friendly place to come and open the door … When I grow up, I want to be a teacher."*[49] *(Nabeel, 6 years old)*

The children in the camps are also, as Save the Children describes in an impressive report, "enthusiastic learners and desperate to go to school. Every single caregiver who participated in a Save the Children education and well-being study in Al-Hol who arrived to the camps from ISIS-controlled areas stated that there was no school or education system for their children prior to coming to the camps."[50] However, there are a number of barriers that limit children's access to education in the camps, such as "the prohibition on children receiving formal education, which means that education providers can only teach children in a non-formal way and in a limited number of subjects".[51]

1: Target group identification
Children and youth living in camps, of all ethnic and religious affiliations and educational levels. Especially children who have not been given any education so far except for religious 'education' on 'sacred values'.

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[49] Save the Children International (2021). When am I Going to Start to Live? The urgent need to repatriate foreign children trapped in Al-Haul and Roj Camps. Retrieved from: https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/document/when-am-i-going-start-live-urgent-need-repatriate-foreign- children-trapped-al-haul-and-roj. S. 14.

[50] ibid. p. 14

[51] ibid.

2: Access to the target group

Low-threshold access to children and young people. According to the study, they seem very eager to communicate and learn. The camps also rely on the provision of informal education projects that counteract the 'educational ban' on formal education.

3: Clear definition of goals

Secondary and primary prevention: The paper clearly identifies the need to create educational opportunities and safe places to do so, to broaden the children's horizons to the world beyond the confines of the camp.

4: Working mechanism and benefits for the target group

Creation of social and cultural capital that can be converted into economic capital. No direct benefit for the target group so far, but the study shows the potential for future projects with high benefits. Informal education needs to be expanded and formal education offered. Different languages are needed to facilitate access for children. The study also underlines the need for certificates and formal school diplomas so that the children obtain professional opportunities.

5: Results and sustainability

Not applicable.

6: Evaluation

Not applicable.

2.4 Afghanistan

Afghanistan has been one of the poorest countries in the world for decades, and the situation has gotten even worse since the Taliban took power in August 2021. It is also one of the most corrupt countries: in the international corruption index, it was ranked 174 out of 198 in 2021.[52] Despite many years of massive US presence, it has never become safe. Whether this will change under Taliban rule

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[52] Transparency International. (2021). Corruption Perceptions Index. Retrieved from www.transparency.org/en/countries/afghanistan.

is doubtful. The government presented in September 2021 consists almost exclusively of Pashtuns. Religious and ethnic minorities such as the Uzbeks, Tajiks and Hazara are still excluded and could take up arms. It can by no means be ruled out that over 20 years after 9/11, Afghanistan will once again pose a global terror threat. Al-Qaida is still present in Afghanistan. The Taliban's attitude towards the organisation is very ambivalent. Bin Laden's successor Ayman al-Zawahiri lived for months in a posh neighbourhood of downtown Kabul until his elimination by a US drone at the end of July 2022.

An even greater threat at present is the Islamic State – Khorasan Province (ISKP), which was formed in 2015 by members of various jihadist groups, including Pakistanis, former Taliban and experienced fighters from Syria and Iraq. ISIS and the Taliban are arch-enemies; the Afghan ISIS offshoot accuses the Taliban of having allied themselves with the Americans and betrayed global jihad for a local Afghan agenda. More than 180 people were killed in the ISIS attack on Kabul airport in mid-August 2022. Since then, the chain of attacks has not broken. ISIS did not even stop at the murder of 46 girls and young women in an educational institution of the Shiite Hazara minority in September 2022.

2.4.1 Micro level

Women for Women Workshop

After a suspension of activities following the Taliban takeover, the international organisation NPO Women for Women in Afghanistan resumed its work in spring 2022 and now offers its programmes in three provinces, where women in workshops are informed about their rights and receive training on health, economic self-reliance and leadership. Over 3,100 women are reported to have participated in the programme since then.[53] A randomised study and evaluation of WfW in Afghanistan concluded that the empowerment programme

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[53] Women for Women International. Afghanistan. Retrieved from www.womenforwomen.org/where-we-work/afghanistan.

improved livelihoods, created more gender-equal relationships and increased women's mobility[54].

1: Target group identification

Conflict-affected, often discriminated-against and marginalised women. They are identified through field research by local staff.

2: Access to the target group

In poor and vulnerable areas, first contact is sought locally through authentic and trustworthy intermediaries. At the time of the Taliban takeover, the work had to be stopped for a short time. During this time, the programme tried to continue workshops and training for participants digitally. The on-site programme resumed in spring 2022.

3: Clear definition of goals

A gender-sensitive approach is used to invest in women's skills and resources, to empower them in order to strengthen their role in their families and in society. Educational opportunities are created through workshops and training on economic and legal issues. Most importantly, opportunities and practical skills for economic survival are also promoted. A safe space for women to connect and form common support systems is created. In addition, women are to be taught social norms that motivate them to become civil society actors and which promote change.

4: Working mechanism and benefits for the target group

Social and cultural capital to be transformed into economic capital. Women for Women's work is evidence-based and grounded in data and analysis. Together with local actors and experts, the project is constantly adapted through feedback discussions and continuous learning.

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[54] Women for Women International. No One Hears Our Voices. A One Year Update: Situational assessment and recommended actions based on the perspectives and experiences of Afghan women. 2022. In www.womenforwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-08/FINAL_One%20Year%20Update_No%20One%20Hears%20Our%20Voices%20Report.pdf.

Access to education that creates secure livelihoods and promotes resilience. Imparting knowledge about health, but also about financial management and rights in the difficult context of Taliban rule is intended to create a certain degree of self-empowerment. In addition, participants join small groups, network, and learn together and with each other. For example, in the Stronger Women, Stronger Nations programme, economic, social and cultural knowledge is imparted to break down barriers that prevent women from realising their potential. In addition, women are also supported economically through concrete support for self-help, such as by providing vegetable gardens or means to raise chickens.

5: Results and sustainability
Since the programme resumed in 2022, it has been active in three provinces. 3,116 women have participated and received support in 12 training camps. The programme describes itself as "learning". Through constant discussions and surveys with the participants and the team, which feed into studies, it is continuously developed and improved.

6: Evaluation
Personal digital surveys are used to analyse the women's progress, to ensure that the work has a lasting impact on their lives. The programme also invests in research methods and studies to measure the impact.

DAAD Education Programmes – Funding for Research Cooperation

Since August 2021, the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) has been focussing on funding research cooperation (aimed at both students and researchers). In this context, the DAAD also intends to expand its support for individuals in Afghanistan's neighbouring countries and develop leadership programmes for young Afghans, to prepare them for a possible post-Taliban era. There is a special focus on refugee students and doctoral candidates in Germany. Scholarships and special research programmes have been developed for them, for example the Bridge Scholarships Afghanistan with 60 places. In addition, the

DAAD is working hard to support DAAD scholarship holders, former scholarship holders and local staff in leaving Afghanistan.[55]

1: Target group identification
Afghan elite members as multipliers, Afghan students and academics are supported, including particularly vulnerable people from marginalised ethnic and religious groups.

2: Access to the target group
University cooperation that continues to exist. Announcements on DAAD internet platforms.

3: Clear definition of goals
Primary and secondary prevention: The aim is to promote elites and train important civil society actors as multipliers.

4: Working mechanism and benefits for the target group
Strengthening cultural, social and symbolic capital, which can be relatively easily transformed into economic capital; classical educational work as well as the training of highly qualified potential multipliers who, as a side effect, can also learn and pass on principles of the rule of law, social justice and of popular participation, by imparting knowledge acquired through democratic methods and their stays in Germany.

6: Sustainability and results
Educational work at higher education institutions is potentially sustainable, provided that the sponsored persons return to their home countries and become active there as multipliers, for example in teaching. Alternatively, they maintain contacts within their home country while in the diaspora and thus also become multipliers.

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[55] German Academic Exchange Service (2021). Support for Afghanistan's students and researchers. Retrieved from www.daad.de/en/the-daad/communication-publications/press/press_releases/afghanistan/.

6: Evaluation

The number of participants, the quality of the training programmes and the diplomas and degrees obtained. Since 2002, almost 1,100 scholarships (for doctoral and master's students) have been awarded to Afghan academics in Germany through the DAAD, and 240 teaching and research projects by German universities and Afghan partner institutions have been funded. The impact for Afghanistan is more difficult to measure: Do people return to the country, and in what functions and positions?

2.4.2 Meso level

Deutsche Welle Radio: DW Pashtun Programme Expansion

Deutsche Welle (DW) announced on 13 September, 2021 that it would immediately expand shortwave radio programmes in both Dari and Pashto, to offer Afghans an alternative source of information. The programmes include daily broadcasts of 30 minutes with topics on dialogue and peace, gender equality and human rights, among others. Since March 2022 wide distribution of the programmes has been increasingly difficult, as they can only be broadcast on a limited basis by the Afghan partner broadcasters. Since then, DW has been trying to ensure programme distribution via the Internet and social media.[56]

1: Target group identification

The target group is the entire population of majority Dari- and Pashto-speaking Afghans.

2: Access to the target group

Radio, TV and Internet are currently the only ways to directly reach a large number of Afghans. Reach and access, however, depend on political and technical restrictions. If the Taliban totally prohibit rebroadcasts by local radio stations, the programmes can only be distributed online and on shortwave.

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[56] Deutsche Welle (2022). Taliban block DW and BBC content. Retrieved from: www.dw.com/de/taliban-blockieren-inhalte-von-dw-und-bbc/a-61278652.

3. Clear definition of objectives

Mainly primary prevention, but also secondary prevention through reliable information and alternative narratives.

4: Working mechanism and benefits for the target group

Creation of cultural capital and, if possible, social capital. Access to independent information, alternative narratives and education. Limited network creation via opportunities for participation via the Internet.

5: Sustainability and results

Not measurable: This would require large-scale opinion polls over a longer period of time. These are currently not feasible.

6: Evaluation

Radio and television projects are theoretically relatively easy to evaluate through audience measurement and content surveys. Since this is not possible in countries like Afghanistan, gauging audience reaction is limited to social media clicks and posts, and possibly phone calls.

2.5 Egypt

In Egypt, the security situation in the north of the Sinai Peninsula remains precarious. Attacks also occur occasionally in neighbouring parts of the country, as in January 2023 against a police checkpoint near the city of Ismailia. The Province of the Islamic State of Sinai and its predecessor organisation have carried out dozens of attacks over the last twelve years, especially against Coptic women and men. Despite, or even because of, the fierce repression campaigns by Field-Marshal Sisi's regime, the Sinai Peninsula is far from being pacified. Peaceful supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood, banned by Sisi and declared a terrorist organisation, could also become radicalised and join or found jihadist groups. Worsening poverty could become another driver of extremism.

In Egypt, prevention work is difficult due to political repression, mistrust of and even a ban on foreign NGOs, including a number of European foundations. However, there are still possibilities for initiatives, as the security situation is

generally stable and a large majority of Egyptians have a positive attitude towards Europe and especially Germany.

2.5.1 Meso level

Teacher Training by the Goethe-Institut Cairo: Promoting Critical and Independent Thinking

The author himself took part in a training course for young Egyptian teachers in 2016. It was acceptably titled for the regime as follows: "On the Way to Tolerance – Against Extremism. A workshop by the Goethe-Institut Cairo on identity formation of young people in school." In fact, the training covered topics such as the factors that can promote radicalisation in the almost always authoritarian Egyptian schools, whether public or private. Examples included stubborn rote learning, uncritical adoption of ideas and strict obedience to extremely authoritarian teaching staff. The training aimed to teach methods of critical and independent thinking. Participants were mainly young teachers or future teachers who, as multipliers, were themselves appalled by the Egyptian school system. They criticised the prevailing black-and-white thinking and were desperate for methods and suggestions on how the system could be reformed from within.

1: Target group identification
Very clear identification: Young and prospective teachers as important multipliers.

2: Access to the target group
Efficient access through public announcements on social media, which is heavily used in Egypt.

3: Clear definition of goals
Primary and secondary prevention, and training of important civil society actors as multipliers.

4: Working mechanism and benefits for the target group
Cultural capital in the sense of learning methods to teach students critical and independent thinking. Classical, creative educational programmes and further education programmes.

5: Results and sustainability
In principle sustainable, as work was done with relevant multipliers.

6: Evaluation
There is no official information on the evaluation. Background discussions the author had with participants showed a high awareness of the need to teach Egyptian students independent thinking and a great willingness to do so.

Egypt as a Media Hub with Multipliers and Productions: The Example of the Amr Salama Film *Excuse my French*.

Despite competition from Dubai and other Gulf states, Egypt is still probably the most important media hub and producer in the Arab world. This applies to the production of both feature films and TV series, such as series for Ramadan, the period with the highest viewer ratings. The productions are exported to almost all other MENA countries and are partly supported by the Egyptian state to combat extremism; not without reason, some criticise them as propaganda. But it is also a fact that they are very powerful instruments for reaching almost all target groups in the MENA region.

Independent producers and filmmakers in particular can play an important role in preventing violent extremism. The films of Egyptian filmmaker Amr Salama, made under difficult censorship conditions, are a good example. In the comedy *Excuse my French*, he confronts religious stereotypes and extremism with the story of a Christian boy in an exclusively Muslim school. The films of the Oscar-nominated director are also supported by European film funds, some of them public.[57]

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[57] El Difraoui, A. (2018). The role of culture in preventing and reducing violent extremism. In A. Armborst, E. Marks, C. Trautmann, & S. Ullricht, *Building an evidence-base for the prevention of radicalization and violent extremism.* Pro BUSINESS GmbH. Retrieved from www.praeventionstag.de/daten/module/buecher/en/ISBN-978-3-96409-063-8/4-El-Difraoui.pdf

1: Target group identification
Society as a whole in the MENA region.

2: Access to the target group
Low-threshold, as TV is by far the most important medium in the Arab world. Feature films and TV series are extremely popular.

3: Clear definition of goals
Primary prevention with possible effects in secondary prevention. Wide dissemination of alternative narratives.

4: Working mechanism and benefits for the target group
Creation of cultural capital: pleasure and entertainment while simultaneously triggering thought processes and humorously refuting extremist narratives.

5: Results and sustainability
Large reach and ongoing discussion about the film.

6: Evaluation
Number of cinema visits, audience ratings, social media comments.

2.6 Tunisia

Tunisia, the country where the self-immolation of young street vendor Mohamed Bouazizi in 2010 triggered the so-called Arab Spring, provided the most ISIS fighters in proportion to its population – over 2,000.[58] Among them were former secular activists and famous rappers who had given up the hope that 'their' revolution in Tunisia would lead to improvements in living conditions. The country was also the victim of spectacular jihadist attacks against targets with high symbolic value in 2015, such as an attack that caused 38 deaths in the tourist city of Sousse and another in the capital Tunis against the National Museum of Bardo, in which 22 people were killed. Most of the jihadists came from marginalised regions in the south and east of the country. Anis Amri, the

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[58] Bajec, A. (2019). Jihadists look to Tunisia. *Zenith*. Retrieved from
https://magazin.zenith.me/de/politik/tunesische-dschihadisten-libyen

Berlin Breitscheidplatz assassin, for example, grew up in the deprived town of Tataouine in the south-east.

In recent years, the security situation in Tunisia has improved decisively. However, a non-negligible latent danger still exists. In 2022, jihadist cells were still being unmasked and ISIS members arrested. The jihadist threat can grow again, due to the frustration of the population with a regime that is becoming increasingly authoritarian. However, the still relatively stable security situation, in contrast to the camps in Syria and Iraq, the Sahel and Afghanistan, means vulnerable groups can be reached relatively easily, including in marginalised regions such as the south of the country. In contrast to Egypt, cultural relations and education policy organisations can continue to work almost unhindered.[59]

2.6.1 Micro level

Jabal Theatre in Kasserine

In 2017, the Jabal Theatre was established in the highly marginalised region of Kasserine, which has a high proportion of jihadi sympathisers. Theatre director Adnen Felali, a 42-year-old teacher, uses elements of traditional culture in conjunction with theatre to counter the jihadist narrative of violence, trying to reach children in particular – "the future of our country".[60] A young Tunisian woman who attended performances and had herself been severely wounded by landmines planted by jihadists or the security forces fighting them expressed her conviction that "culture is the best weapon against backwardness, darkness and terrorism".[61]

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[59] El Difraoui, A. (2018). The role of culture in preventing and reducing violent extremism. In A. Armborst, E. Marks, C. Trautmann, & S. Ullricht, *Building an evidence-base for the prevention of radicalization and violent extremism*. Pro BUSINESS GmbH. Retrieved from www.praeventionstag.de/daten/module/buecher/en/ISBN-978-3-96409-063-8/4-El-Difraoui.pdf

[60] AFP (2017). Upstaging jihad in Tunisia's impoverished mountains. *DailyMail Online*. From www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/afp/article-4277516/Upstaging-jihad-Tunisias-impoverished-mountains.html retrieved

[61] rfi (2017). Upstaging jihad in Tunisia's impoverished mountains. Retrieved from: www.rfi.fr/en/contenu/20170303-upstaging-jihad-tunisias-impoverished-mountains.

1: Target group identification

School children and young people with direct and indirect experiences of violence and who are vulnerable to extremist ideas.

2: Access to the target group

Directly addresses school children and the wider target group.

3: Clear definition of goals

Primarily secondary prevention among local vulnerable target groups, but also primary prevention through education and sharing of experiences of violence, dissemination of an alternative narrative, and forms of expression through music and drama.

4: Working mechanism and benefits for the target group

Social capital through networking and sharing experiences. Creating alternative narratives to extremism. Sharing experiences of violence and how to deal with them.

5: Results and sustainability

There is no information available.

6: Evaluation

The only interviews that exist are with viewers who express pride in Tunisian culture and the belief that with its help, extremist narratives will be pushed back.

2.6.2 Meso level

Radio Hola Kasserine

Also in the Kasserine region, online radio station Hola Kasserine was created with EU funding as part of a pilot programme to counter radicalisation and violent extremism in the Sahel-Maghreb region, in cooperation with the ONG Coopera and UNICRI[62]. 60 young people between the ages of 16 and 25 are involved here. The radio station gives youth a moderate voice and thus also helps to establish alternative narratives to extremism. From the self-description:

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[62] United Nations Interregional Research Institute on Crime and the Administration of Justice

Amplify alternative voices:

> It's early January 2020. 6pm on the dot, the 'On Air' sign lights up and it's time for the evening news. Yet for the residents of Kasserine in western Tunisia, this is a new kind of radio experience: the headlines are read by a young woman, and the current affairs shot that follows is full of young voices discussing issues that might normally be off-limits – from gender equality to child labour to countering violent extremism. This is Hola Kasserine, an online radio station run by around 60 local young people aged between 16 and 25. You wouldn't know it by listening, but until a year ago none of them had set foot in a studio. 'Before joining the station, I had no idea how radio works,' remarks Dhouha Dhibi, the newscaster who can be heard reading the headlines at the top of the hour. 'So I was excited to get involved – it was the first step towards achieving my childhood dream of becoming a journalist.'[63]

1: Target group identification
Vulnerable young people from the region who lack entertainment, cultural opportunities and opportunities for self-expression.

2: Access to the target group
Access is low-threshold, as it is a radio station by young people for young people from the region. It broadcasts in the local dialect. The Internet is accessible almost everywhere in Tunisia.

3: Clear definition of goals
Primary and secondary prevention: The aim of Hola Kasserine is to address young people in an entertaining way, to arouse their interest in political issues and to disseminate independent information. The radio station provides information about projects, training and jobs in the region. It relies mainly on Internet presence and tries to spread tolerant narratives and push back extremist narratives.

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[63] GCERF (2015). Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism: Stories from the EU's work around the globe. Retrieved from www.gcerf.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/PCVE-stories-fromthe-EUs-work-around-the-globe.pdf

4: Working mechanism and benefits for the target group
Creation of social, cultural and economic capital. Listeners have easy opportunities to participate and can network and exchange ideas online via social media. Podcast production and journalism skills are taught. Projects, job advertisements and further training are publicised.

Listeners can also participate in online discussions and co-create podcasts. Through participation, they learn to "defend their ideas and points of view [and] raise their voices louder".[64] The idea is to stimulate thought processes and engagement.

5: Results and sustainability
The project started in 2016 and has been continued independently by young people from the region even after the end of the initial funding by UNICRI[65], among others.

6: Evaluation
An evaluation is not available. The social media presence can serve as an indicator. The Facebook page has over 20,000 followers.

2.7 Inter-regional initiatives at the macro level

MENA – Digital Libraries

Various initiatives such as the Digital Library of the Middle East (DLME) of the Council on Library and Information Resources and Stanford Libraries,[66] as well as the Arabic Collections Online of New York University Abu Dhabi[67] and the Memory of the Arab World collection of the Bibliotheca Alexandrina,[68] are open digital libraries that make materials in Arabic freely available. Works from their own collections, but also from partner libraries worldwide, are digitised and published. These are works of literature and science, historical documents, maps,

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[64] ibid. p. 30

[65] United Nations Interregional Research Institute on Crime and the Administration of Justice

[66] http://amirmideast.blogspot.com/2020/07/digital-library-of-middle-east.html

[67] http://amirmideast.blogspot.com/2014/10/arabic-collections-online.html

[68] Bibliotheca Alexandrina. Retrieved from www.bibalex.org/en/Default

artefacts, audio-visual recordings, translations and more from the MENA region. A greater presence of Arabic-language sources of knowledge and information contributes to a more globally comprehensive body of scholarship.

The projects most importantly provide low-threshold access to art, culture, science and education, especially for people from marginalised areas of the MENA region. Over a period of five years, up to 15,000 works are to be published in cooperation with partner institutions. The DLME project aims to become the largest online archive for artefacts from the Middle East and North Africa.[69]

1: Target group identification
The target group is all people with an interest in Arabic-language literature, knowledge and information sources.

2: Access to the target group
Theoretically, there is a low-entry threshold, as access is made very easy via partner university websites. Unfortunately, however, the digital platforms are little-known and initially appear very elitist.

3: Clear definition of goals
Primary and secondary prevention: Access to education and knowledge transfer is created. The aim is also to teach diversity and tolerance through access to the very diverse Arab cultural heritage.

4: Working mechanism and benefits for the target group
Building cultural and social capital: In the long term, this capital should be able to be transformed into economic capital through applicable knowledge. Especially in marginalised regions, low-threshold access to knowledge and education, and to alternative narratives as well as the diversity of Arab and Islamic culture and history has long been necessary.

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[69] American University of Beirut. Retrieved from
https://aub.edu.lb.libguides.com/c.php?g=276487&p=1842971

5: Results and sustainability
Theoretically extremely sustainable: Long-term, open access to knowledge if the reach and awareness of the projects are large enough.

6: Evaluation
The number of retrievals. Qualitatively not yet measurable.

2.8   Intra- and Inter-religious dialogue

Intra- and inter-religious dialogue is a significant issue for foreign cultural relations and education policy, but it poses very specific challenges. No specific project is covered here, but the concept itself will be briefly discussed.

Impartial promotion of dialogue formats is recommended and can be very helpful. However, individual groups or representatives of different faiths or initiatives must not be supported, in order to avoid losing neutrality and being instrumentalised.

Extremists can often be countered within their own belief system. In this respect, intra-religious and especially inter-religious dialogue has great potential. Religion is an important communication space. Most of the time, even extremists are willing to exchange ideas with respected scholars of Islam and other religions. Conferences on Islamic issues with foreign actors should promote awareness of religious pluralism. To some extent, even the Taliban allow some pluralism, as they have already professed to protect the Shia Hazara minority under Iranian pressure, for example. According to Afghan activists, the Taliban today should be persuaded in an Islamic framework to respect women's rights and to allow more freedoms, by confronting them with the historical perspective that the Prophet Muhammad guaranteed women more rights than in pre-Islamic times, or with the example of conservative Arab Gulf states like Saudi Arabia, where women enjoy more rights than in Afghanistan and have always had access to education.[70]

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70 El Difraoui, A., & Berges, C. (2022). Afghanistan: August 2021 – A tentative reassessment of cultural foreign policy and civil society support. Stuttgart: ifa (Institute for Foreign Cultural Relations). Retrieved from www.ssoar.info/ssoar/handle/document/76875

3. Conclusion and Recommendations

The projects discussed here offer valuable suggestions for prevention projects and initiatives within the scope of foreign cultural relations and education policy. This applies to micro-level projects such as theatre projects and art therapy in Iraq to overcome experiences of violence, as well as to meso-level projects such as Women for Women workshops in Afghanistan that empower women, and macro-level projects like the Digital Library in the Middle East, which provides wide access to Arabic literature.

Due to often limited resources, projects that link the three levels are the most promising. One example is Donko Ni Maaya in Mali. At the micro level, artists are supported to produce works with tolerant and unifying content. At the meso level, artists build networks and jobs are created in the cultural sector. At the macro level, the population as a whole is sensitised through the content of artistic productions such as the lyrics of songs or the content of plays. The planned Cultural Hub of the Fondation Youssou N'dour pour les industries culturelles et créatives (FYNICC) also wants to become active on all three levels on an even larger scale.

The six criteria used to analyse the projects in this study are to be considered when designing and implementing prevention projects. Most of the projects fulfil individual criteria very well and can be considered best-practice approaches, but very few fulfil all criteria. Not all projects will be discussed again below, but selected projects will be used as examples.

1: Target group identification
A very precise identification is provided by The Stabilisation Network's Safe Spaces for Women on the Internet project in north-eastern Syria. Here, the online behaviour of the target group was carefully analysed and documented in advance, and a precise needs analysis was carried out.

2: Access
Almost all of the very diverse projects, whether the Jiyan Foundation's art and theatre therapy in Iraq or the Women for Women workshops, have a low-threshold approach and are designed to involve hard-to-reach target groups. Here, authentic and reliable intermediaries and/or a direct approach are important. In places with well-developed Internet infrastructure, web-based projects such as Radio Hola Kasserine in Tunisia are suitable. But even in these

projects, precise and far-reaching communication and a media strategy are very important. With the Digital Library of the Middle East, Arabic Collections Online and the Memory of the Arab World Collection, a large corpus of texts is made freely available, but so far only on very academic university websites. Wider access – like via apps – and greater public awareness of the projects through a well-thought-out inter-regional media campaign is desirable. Access to Deutsche Welle programmes in Afghanistan is more difficult due to the loss of partner stations.

3: Clear definition of goals

Here it must be made clear from the outset whether a project is a primary, secondary or tertiary prevention project, or if it operates on several of these levels. Does it aim to strengthen society as a whole against the dangers of extremism, reach people or population groups who are particularly vulnerable to extremism, or focus on individuals who are already radicalised? This question should be answered as precisely as possible.

Clearly located in primary prevention is the Fulbe radio station, the first international station to broadcast in the Fulbe language. Access to reliable information in their own language makes it possible to include neglected and marginalised communities, provide them with a new perspective on their home and the world, and thus to empower them as well.

An example that focusses primarily on secondary prevention is the Football for Hope initiative in Mali. For vulnerable girls and women, access to education is strengthened through play and self-confidence is gained. Their tolerance is promoted as they get to know themselves as active players. Unfortunately, however, the organiser has not provided any information on the evaluation here.

Pure tertiary prevention is only possible in rare cases within the framework of foreign cultural relations and education policy, as individual support for extremists is hardly possible with target groups that are difficult to reach and in regions where the security and political situation is more than challenging. However, there are projects that can have a strong impact in tertiary prevention. The Jiyan Foundation's art and theatre therapy project in Iraq, which promotes artistic expression as a therapeutic approach to coping with experiences of

violence among vulnerable people, and The Stabilisation Network's Safe Spaces for Women on the Internet project stand out.

Theoretically, projects can operate at all three levels of prevention. The art project in Mali can reach individual artists at risk of radicalisation while at the same time addressing vulnerable urban populations and having an impact on society as a whole. But here too, the focus from the outset has been on secondary prevention, and only in a second stage on primary prevention. Donko Ni Maaya in Mali promotes agents of change and helps to disseminate artistic content with alternative tolerant narratives nationwide. Tertiary prevention is mainly a side effect.

4: Working mechanism and benefits for the target group

All programmes aim to create individual or collective cultural, social or symbolic capital, and to partly transform it into economic capital as a benefit for the participants. The more direct and tangible the benefit within these categories and the more it corresponds to the needs of the target group, the greater the motivation to participate and thus presumably the greater the success of the project.

Social capital is provided in the form of networking through The Stabilisation Network's Safe Spaces for Women on the Internet, where self-expression and social networking among women are strengthened. Symbolic capital in the form of standing in society through the acquisition of concrete skills for participation is created, for example, in the Women Preventing Violent Extremism programme in the Sahel.

The most beneficial projects are those in which cultural, social or symbolic capital can be transformed – for example, when Afghan women through the education provided in the Women for Women programme acquire not only cultural capital, but also economic capital to improve their material living conditions. Cultural capital also has strong economic value in the promotion of elites, for example through study abroad, as in the DAAD programmes for Afghanistan. When artists like young rappers are supported, become known and can thus earn money, symbolic capital is transformed into economic capital.

More difficult to classify are projects that allow people to simply satisfy their desire for fun and entertainment, for example by watching films and listening to music. Yet by providing stimulation, new ideas, food for thought and alternative narratives, a form of cultural capital is created for a large number of people and space is taken away from extremists and their narratives.

Learning to cope with experiences of violence and trauma, such as through theatre and art therapy in Iraq, also yields high-value benefits for participants.

5: Results and sustainability
Projects that are continued by participants themselves after the end of the measure and its financing are very clearly sustainable. Two examples exist here: The Stabilisation Network's 'Safe Spaces for Women on the Internet' project, and Radio Hola Kasserine.

Other projects achieve a sustainable impact even when they come to an end, by creating multipliers through the 'train the trainer' principle who can start their own new projects or inspire and coach other multipliers for civil society change. Examples are the Goethe-Institut in Cairo teacher training programmes on how to transmit methods of independent and critical thinking; DAAD programmes that support academics who become long-term multipliers at home or in the diaspora; and the Women Preventing Violent Extremism programme, which creates educational structures for intergenerational training of change agents.

Clearly, the creation of cultural industries such as Donko Ni Maaya and the Cultural Hub of the Fondation Youssou N'dour pour les industries culturelles et créatives (FYNICC) are very sustainable, because they create multipliers and agents of change, potential long-lasting artistic productions such as songs, and also jobs. They also potentially have a considerably sustainable economic effect.

6: Evaluation
Evaluation, which is so important, is one of the biggest challenges. A number of projects may not have done a serious assessment or failed to communicate it. One exception is The Stabilisation Network's Safe Spaces for Women on the Internet project; a participant survey was conducted in the form of a qualitative evaluation, and the project was continued independently by the participants. Its reach was also analysed.

For the Donko Ni Maaya programme, semi-standardised, guideline-based expert interviews with selected partners were conducted as part of a qualitative research design. The interviews dealt with three sets of questions ("Objectives, strategies, challenges", "Work and experiences with the target group of young people" and "Assessments of the impact and changes brought about by the funding"), which made possible a detailed evaluation of the impact of the project.

In other projects, there are at least indications for the evaluation. In the case of the Fulbe radio station, success could be measured at least indicatively by the 1,100 calls after the first broadcast.

The evaluation of projects in hard-to-reach areas and with hard-to-reach target groups is certainly difficult, but of great importance. Therefore, instruments for quantitative and qualitative evaluation and for measuring reach must be considered from the very beginning.

Of the projects discussed here, only three took all six criteria into consideration: Donko Ni Maaya in Mali, The Stabilisation Network's Safe Spaces for Women on the Internet project in north-eastern Syria, and the Women for Women workshops in Afghanistan. It is clear that they are meaningful and thoughtful preventive measures.

However, this does not mean that other projects where fewer criteria have been clearly laid out or communicated do not also make valuable contributions to prevention of radicalisation among hard-to-reach target groups. Nevertheless, on future projects all criteria should be included as precisely and comprehensively as possible from the beginning, to ensure the greatest possible chance of success.

In addition, projects that operate at the three levels of micro, meso and macro potentially have the greatest reach and efficiency. But again, the fact that some projects only operate on one of these levels does not make them any less relevant. In the case of DW's programmes for Afghanistan, for example, there are hardly any other ways to reach the Afghan population. Teacher training at the Goethe-Institut in Cairo, at the meso level, is also meaningful because crucial multipliers are involved.

It is regrettable that hardly any projects communicate potential adverse effects. Only in the context of prevention measures in the art and theatre therapy of the Jiyan Foundation in Iraq were problems relevant to foreign cultural relations and education policy initiatives addressed – such as a controversy among humanitarian organisations in Iraq as to whether directly addressing vulnerable or already radicalised groups violates the principle of equal treatment. On the one hand, there are fears that participants will be stigmatised – automatically classified as extremists; on the other, if they are indeed radicalized persons, the impression may arise among other population groups that extremists are receiving preferential treatment.

Recommendations

All these projects reduce the space for extremists and their narratives. They create tolerant and often creative alternatives for vulnerable people and mostly have a direct benefit that affects their lives.

However, there is a lack of hybrid projects that address and engage the target groups on the ground and simultaneously disseminate sustainable content such as videos, podcasts and written educational and teaching materials on social media – projects that pick up young people in their living environment. Internet and smartphone use are also spreading rapidly among hard-to-reach population groups. One suggestion would be to develop playful learning apps that can be linked to on-site lessons and/or edutainment radio.

In places where those in government or the locally ruling extremist groups reject political activities but welcome non-political activities that improve the lives of the population, especially in a rural setting, indirect approaches to strengthening civil society should be developed. Here the major aim is to promote independent thinking, which in turn is the basis for critical thinking. Again, new creative approaches are needed. For example, the inventory for this study did not identify a single local contest. Yet competitions in schools to solve practical everyday problems such as waste or water management can make people aware that there are multiple solutions to a particular challenge. They can also show that initiative and skills pay off. The same kinds of competition can be promoted at university level with more complex topics. Obviously, a careful risk assessment for facilitators and participants needs to be made.

Concrete initiatives against disinformation and propaganda, such as the Fulbe radio station, are lacking. Innovative creative approaches should be promoted in this field. This is all the more urgent in view of the fact that, in addition to existing extremist propaganda, Russian propaganda has increased in the Sahel and in the MENA region in the context of the war against Ukraine. Local conflicts are exacerbated by targeted disinformation. Mutual trust as a basis for cooperation with civil society is eroded.

In general, the use of foreign cultural relations and education policy to strengthen civil society is a core competence of Germany and Europe. Germany in particular has numerous instruments that can help: the political foundations of the parties, which are represented in many countries around the globe; educational exchange institutions such as the DAAD; institutions for the promotion of culture abroad such as the Goethe-Institut and the ifa – Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen; and countless NGOs active in various fields, from educational programmes to environmental protection, the strengthening of women's rights and democratic media.

And that is precisely where we need to start: the promotion of self-expression, critical thinking, political education, equal rights, the integration of marginalised groups, the creation of a pluralistic media system, the promotion of forms of local co-determination and – where possible – local democracy.

Consistently increasing or even creating a cultural offering and supporting the cultural sector and its civil society actors is crucial in this regard. Strengthening inter-regional cultural relations can also contribute significantly to the prevention of radicalisation. In addition, the promotion of cultural and creative industries also creates much-needed jobs.

Concerning the prevention and countering of extremism, we can share many of our experiences and transfer knowledge on an eye level. In all areas that require a functioning civil society, we can help in a holistic manner and benefit from knowledge from other cultural areas. Building civil society is a long process, rarely linear and almost always associated with setbacks – but absolutely necessary.

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