

RESEARCH REPORT

Austria



Introduction

The below listed information's are based on various evaluations from one of our Erasmus + projects called "Xeno-Tolerance ". In the course of this project we interviewed different radicalization experts, social workers and educational trainers.

The different forms of radicalism that can be detected in Austria are right-wing extremism, left-wing extremism, religiously motivated extremism, hooliganism and different sects. These are the political and religious forms of radicalisation that can be found throughout Europe. Türk states that in several countries the number of Islamophobic reports and instances of incitement, scaremongering and inciting speeches has increased at the political level as well as within civil society. The current developments can be seen as a breeding ground for new radical groups (Türk, 2015, p. 7).



Political and Social

One very significant aspect is that the political situation in Austria is going to be very difficult and maybe there will be a changing process in some of the political and social fields. Policy affects to a great extent the social areas. So we think, radicalization seems to be an absolute important topic for the future.

The detailed situation concerning right-wing extremism in Austria in 2015 was the following:

In 2015 1691 extreme right-wing criminal offences were reported, which represents an increase of 40.8% compared to the previous year. These criminal offences were mainly (approximately 1000 offences) violations of the Verbotsgesetz 1947 (Prohibition Act 1947). The victims of these crimes were primarily asylum seekers and Muslims. The actions of the right-wing extremists directed against potential and existing accommodations for refugees, but also against people responsible for caring, assisting and supervising refugees. Several times the offenders organized these actions via social networks, in which explicit threats of violence are gradually increasing. The motives of these offences are probably due the offenders' dissatisfaction with politics and political proposed solutions concerning the terror threat and the refugee crisis. The following is an extract of the extreme right-wing criminal offences committed in 2015: property damage 262 cases, incitement 282 cases, 953 cases violating the Verbotsgesetz 1947. As this is just an extract, not all recorded criminal offences are listed here. The complete list, however, can be found in the Annual Report on the Protection of the Constitution for the year 2015 (Bundesministerium für Inneres, 2016, pp. 10f, 75, 79).



Religious

Another form of radicalism that can be detected in Austria is Islamism. The number of supporters of Salafist jihadism is on the increase. With this development Austria is not the exception; in all western democracies this potential risk due to Islamic groups exists and the numbers of supporters of those groups are rising.

The Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution and Counterterrorism (Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz und Terrorismusbekämpfung) is talking about the phenomenon of transnational jihadism. This includes terrorist organizations such as the Islamic State (IS), al-Qaeda (AQ) and other Islamic groups inspired by one of these two organizations. The procedures for radicalisation and recruitment of new members for these groups are usually quite similar. Radicalisation takes place at public places such as sports clubs or public parks. Charismatic personalities and ideological leaders play a crucial role in the recruitment process. It can be assumed that primarily young male Muslims will be affected by this potential radicalisation. In this context the term "Pop-Jihadism" was coined as reasons for a radicalisation are especially the young people's quest for identity, attention, acceptance and recognition and their desire for self-realization. Further aspects that might play an essential role in connection with the radicalisation of young people are personal problems and crises, and experiences of discrimination or estrangement (Bundesministerium für Inneres, 2016, p. 23f).

People at Risk of Radicalisation

In particular dangers are groups on the edges of society (social, financial or education-based marginalisation). It can be seen that those affected have the tendency to direct their feelings of frustration and envy at people who are in an even worse position than they themselves. A psychologist who we interviewed, and works in a home for UMF (unaccompanied refugee minors) thinks: "They are deliberately targeted by right-wing political groups, playing on their emotions, and whipping up their reactions". (Report Xenotolerance 2016, p. 9)



Thomas Schmidinger (2015) explains the concrete causes for phases of estrangement or alienation as a result of which young people can be made receptive towards jihadist radicalisation.

- Discriminatory experiences
- Questions on the meaning of life and identity
- Family problems (shattered authoritarian family structures, which do not allow loving and respectful treatment of each other to be learned)
- Diagnosable psychological problems
- Problems at school or in apprenticeships
- Lovesickness or problems with their own sexuality

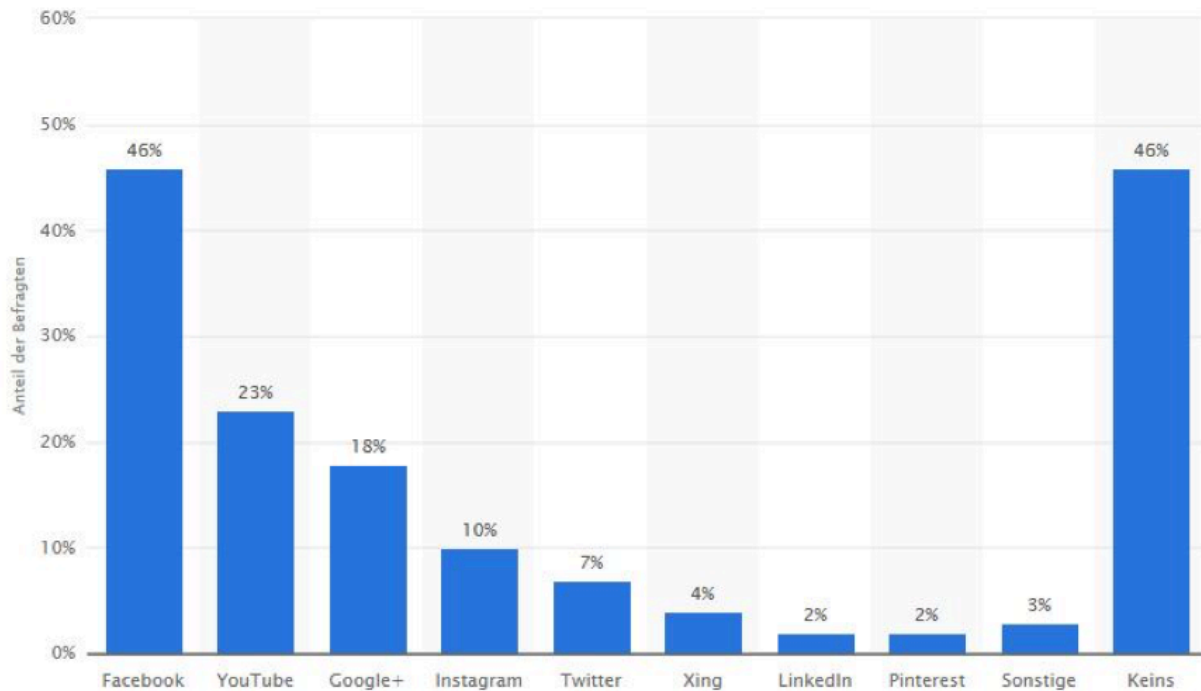
(Schmidinger, 2015, p. 80)

Of course it is not possible to name the exact number of radical Islamists that are currently staying in Austria. However, it is known that 259 so called "Foreign Fighters" from Austria tried to or succeeded in fighting for ISIS. 79 of them fought in the name of ISIS and returned to Austria and were under surveillance, 41 of them were prevented from leaving the country and 43 of them were killed. (Bundesministerium für Inneres, 2016, p. 24f).

The internet, or more exactly Social Media, plays an important part with regard to the radicalisation of young people. According to Schmidinger, there have been no cases of self-radicalisation that can be explained solely by propaganda on the internet, however, accessing material enables a personal contact to the jihadist environment, for example the political Salafist Lies (Read)!!-Campaign. Subsequently, specific websites, videos and social media can become a sort of Jihadist "further education programme". These media offer ideologically filtered information, which confirm a worldview and offer an enemy that needs to be conquered. Thus it appears to be possible to feel oneself part of a whole, of a world-encompassing community, and at least "virtually" to participate in the "jihad". This stage is still a long way off from a potential joining of fighting and of departing for Syria. However, it is necessary to keep an eye on this tendency towards radicalisation, because, according to Schmidinger's expert report, there are currently approximately 1000 people in Austria who are under the influence of jihadist ideologies. (Schmidinger, 2015, p. 80ff.)

- In order to determine the use of ICT and in particular, the use of the Internet in individual households in Austria, a statistical survey was carried out by Statistics Austria in 2016. The people were between 16 and 74 years old. A recent survey by Statistik Austria showed an exciting development. The households with Internet connections have increased rapidly since 2002. Currently 86% of households in Austria have access to the Internet. In 2002 there were only 34%. (Statistik Austria, 2016)
- At the age group of 16 to 24 year olds the Internet is used by the female users 97% daily. Also 92% of the male users use the Internet every day. (Statistik Austria, 2016)
- According to Statistics Austria, 91% of young people between the ages of 16 and 24 use most different types of social networks. (Statistik Austria, 2016)
- In Austria about 3.700.000 people between the ages of 14 and 49 use Facebook. According to a survey conducted by "Socialmediaradar", the gender distribution with regard to the use of Facebook is relatively balanced. By comparison 48.65% of female Austrians and 51.35% of male Austrians use this social network. (Social Media Radar Austria, 2016a)
- The social network "Instagram" is used by around 860,000 people in Austria. The gender ratio is relatively balanced, the proportion of female users is only minimal higher, 52.94%. (Social Media Radar Austria, 2016b)
- The market research company SPECTRA conducted a survey in March 2016 on the use of social networks in Austria. 1058 people aged 15 and over participated in this research. This statistics is therefore only a cross-section and does not represent the total population. According to SPECTRA, the most used network is Facebook. 46% of respondents use this. 23% of the participants use YouTube. In third place we find with 18% Google+. 10% of people use Instagram, closely followed by Twitter with 7%. (Statista, 2016)

Welche dieser sozialen Netzwerke nutzen Sie regelmäßig?



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Weitere Informationen:

Österreich; Stand: März 2016; 1.058 (repräsentativ); ab 15 Jahre

Quelle:

SPECTRA Marktforschungsgesellschaft

Supporting front line staff

In Austria the various pedagogical course of study are relatively heterogeneous. For a long time, teacher training was conducted for the different types of schools (primary school, secondary school, grammar school/vocational school) at a variety of universities and colleges. Since 2013 a process of stepwise unification has been in place, which however is not completed. A similar situation exists with regard to the training of trainers, social pedagogues or social workers – here too a range of different educational courses are offered at different institutions (universities, Universities of Applied Science, private providers). This makes it difficult to generally describe the value of deradicalisation for or in such courses. (Report Xenotolerance 2016, p. 11)

It must be mention the professorships and specialisations in the field of “Intercultural Education” / “Integrative Pedagogy” at two Austrian universities (Klagenfurt and Innsbruck). At both universities intensive research is being conducted into the topic of Racism and Discrimination, which in due course become part of the degree courses. In many other degree courses the curricula require the students to attend and pass courses in the field of “Gender and Diversity”. (Report Xenotolerance 2016, p. 12)

The implementation of deradicalisation topics in the training of pedagogues should currently be a primary goal. One of the difficulties which arise is certainly the heterogeneity of the training and education on offer in Austria, as has previously been outlined. This means too that a large number of different institutions are involved and that it would be necessary to establish a consensus between the different educational institutions (universities, Universities of Applied Science, Academies, private providers). A good example of this is the research centre for Migration and Globalisation in Innsbruck, which is considering developing a university course and/or a PhD program for the future. At the Pedagogical Academy of the Diocese of Linz a sustainable specialism for all teacher trainees is under development, which, in cooperation with Z.I.M.T. (Centre for Interreligious learning, Migratory Pedagogy and Multilingualism) will focus on the areas of Migratory Pedagogy, Diversity and Learning between Religions (Rachbauer, 2015).

Die Kärntner Volkshochschulen (Association of the Adult Education Centres in Carinthia) also offered a course in 2016 on the topic of “Salafism and de-radicalisation”, which was aimed at the staff and trainers of the Kärntner Volkshochschulen. Using such formats courses can be offered on the topic of deradicalisation which are suitable for further education courses in pedagogical institutions like the VHS (Report Xenotolerance 2016, p. 14).

Summary

In summary we can state that growing radical tendencies are present in Austria. Further examination showed that some form of discrimination often precedes these radical tendencies. deradicalisation is being used in Austrian first and further education, but must, for sustainable success, be expanded significantly.

It is clearly evident that there are no quick fixes for the reduction of prejudices, fears and racism, and that the only solution is to build up people's knowledge about racism, and use it adequately in different situations, thereby transferring it to different target groups (Report Xenotolerance 2016, p. 26 El Hill).

For educational trainers this means that they should take action, if they suspect that a participant could be radicalised. A private, personal conversation must be held in order to find out more about the situation. If the participant can no longer be reached, then the trainer concerned should consult the Extremism Information Centre. It must be made clear to everybody involved that the process of de-radicalisation is long and arduous, and that it is consequently even more important to focus on preventative activities (Report Xenotolerance 2016, p. 26 El Schmidinger).

The political reaction in Austria to the rise of radical tendencies has primarily been to resort to criminal proceedings. At the moment Austria is neglecting to increase its use of preventative measures, intervention work, de-ideologising and de-radicalisation. This development cannot be assigned to any one party or group (Moussa Al-Hassan Diaw, 2015).

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