



Erasmus+ Programme

SPEY – Sport for Prevention of Extremism in Youth

The role of sport in the context of violence, crime, radicalisation and (violent) extremism

An analysis of the current state of research by Marilen Neeten, ICSSPE

Abstract

This literature review is part of the project “SPEY – Sport for Prevention of Extremism in Youth”. The project aims to prevent young people between 16 and 25 years at risk of exclusion and/or radicalisation from crime and extremism actions by providing direction and social inclusion in vulnerable situations.

The literature review, specifically, aims at understanding theories about radicalism among youth and the role of sport in this context. Included literature has been selected from the databases Google, GoogleScholar, Scopus and NCBI Pubmedsearches. Additionally, references of the identified literature were scanned for appropriate sources. Relevant keyword combinations were used for the search and the time frame of publication was limited to the last 10 years. The results revealed that sport-based initiatives are a valuable tool to engage at-risk or delinquent youth in alternative settings that provide them with structure, positive identities, life skills and a brighter outlook on their future. A consistent and repeated issue was that the quality and the impact of any intervention highly depends on the funding, on well-designed and theory-based strategies as well as on qualified staff.

The results of this literature review serve as a base for the development of a Handbook of Good Practices that should facilitate the integration of young participants with criminal backgrounds.

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1. Introduction

The role of sport in preventing and counteracting crime, radicalisation and (violent) extremism has gained increased attention in the past decades. On a higher level, several institutions continue to acknowledge that sport and physical activity can serve as an effective tool in the prevention of violence, crime and radicalisation as well as in the behavioural change of (young) individuals that were engaged in criminal or extremist activities.

The United Nations Office on Sport for Development and Peace argue that “sport can cut across barriers that divide societies, making it a powerful tool to support conflict resolution and peace-building efforts...” (UN Inter-Agency Task Force on Sport and Development for Peace, 2005). According to the Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN) (2014), on the European level, the role of sports to increase resilience against extremism was endorsed in recommendations from the European Commission. Following the 2015 Doha Declaration, which included references stressing the importance of youth participation in crime prevention efforts, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has launched a global youth crime prevention initiative. The initiative uses the power of sport to build resilience in young people by enhancing their life skills and by increasing their knowledge of the consequences of substance use and crime (UNODC, 2020). As one main outcome of this initiative, an “evidence-informed and sports-based life skills training curriculum has been designed as a unique tool that transfers the accumulated expertise of the United Nations and other partners in implementing life skills training for crime and drug use prevention to sport settings” (UNODC, 2020, para:6). The so-called *Line Up Live Up* trainer manual programme was designed for people working with children, young people and adolescents (e.g. sport coaches or teachers) in sport settings (UNODC, 2017) and entails a comprehensive set of “interactive and fun exercises” (UNODC, 2020, para:7) targeting the mediation and transfer of valuable life skills (UNODC, 2017). In addition to the training curriculum, UNODC is planning to release a guide on the Prevention of Violent Extremism and Sport in spring 2020 (UNODC, 2019).

In 2018, the UNODC and UNESCO jointly organised an Expert Group Meeting in Vienna to discuss how sport and sport-based learning could be used to prevent violent extremism (UNODC, 2018; 2019). Among the outcomes of the meeting was a consensus on the power of sport programmes helping young people to refrain from crime, radical or extremist ideologies and behaviour. It was also reiterated that sport programmes can likewise reinforce stigmas, violence or can even be used by extremist groups to recruit members. The Expert Group particularly outlined the role of well-trained coaches and the support of communities in which they are engaged (UNODC, 2018). Moreover, Christian Bunk Fassov, Political Affairs Officer from the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT), explained, “terrorist radicalization occurs at the local level, and ultimately PVE [Prevention of violent Extremism] efforts need to reach the grassroots and to be implemented on the ground to be effective. Front-line actors need to be empowered through training, recognition and other support.” (UNOCD, 2018, para:9) It was also outlined that geographical differences make it impossible to design one-size fits all approaches of sport-based initiatives (UNOCD, 2018).

The most recent initiative, the *Global Program on the Security of Major Sporting Events, and Promotion of Sport and its Values as a Tool to Prevent Violent Extremism*, was launched in February 2020. Over the next three years, the programme, which will be implemented by the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism, in partnership with UN Interregional Criminal Justice Research Institute, UN Allianz of Civilizations and the International Centre for Sport Security, aims to:

1. Increasing Member States awareness of terrorism-related threats against vulnerable targets in the context of major sporting events,
2. Increasing their ability to prevent and counter possible threats and
3. Using sport and its values as a tool to build resilience and prevent violent extremism, especially among youth (UNOCT, 2020).

Despite the acknowledgement of higher-level institutions, governments, NGOs and civil society groups all over the world are continuously trying to challenge mind and body of young people in a creative manner. By using educational, vocational, cultural and increasingly sport-based means, the aim is to empower them with life skills and values that can prevent their descent into a life of violent extremism and crime, and give them a positive outlook on their future (Richardson, Cameron & Berlouis, 2017).

The following literature review aims to present the current research on the role of sport and physical activity in the prevention and counteraction of violence/crime, radicalisation and (violent) extremism as well as on the power to use sport in the process of rehabilitation, reintegration and secondary prevention of delinquent youth in settings such as prisons, young offender institutions and secure children's homes. Doing so, a twofold approach using secondary literature was applied. Firstly, scientific papers were investigated to find a body of evidence if and how sport can contribute to the above-mentioned issues. Secondly, projects, programmes and other initiatives were analysed based on available project descriptions, toolkits, manuals and guidelines. Before presenting the results, it should be emphasised that the terms are interconnected and influence each other (c.p. Richardson et al., 2017), the different concepts of violence and crime, radicalism and radicalisation as well as (violent) extremism are defined and distinguished.

2. Definition of terms

Violence/Crime

Crime in the legal sense is behaviour (doing or not doing) that violates the criminal law of a respective country (Hellmer, 1966). Within the broad field of juvenile delinquency, two areas of crime exist: property or enrichment crime as well as personal crime. Property crime is composed of thefts, robberies, fraud and burglaries, while personal crime refers to *violence* against the person, assaults, sexual offences, homicides and manslaughter (Brosnan, 2017). It is not uncommon for the two types of crime to be linked within a single crime. According to Hellmer (1966), causes of violence and crime are manifold but mainly relate to poor social situations (hunger, poverty) or greed. Violence furthermore is often seen as a means to showcase positions of power and superiority among young individuals.

Ferrington (1998) examined predictors, causes and correlates of youth violence, especially concerning male offenders, and found that youth who commit one type of violent offence tend to also commit others. They also tend to execute nonviolent felonies and have associated problems with substance and drug abuse. In terms of predictors, the major long-term forecasters are “biological factors (low heart rate), individual factors (high impulsiveness and low intelligence), family factors (poor supervision, harsh discipline, a violent parent, large family size, a young mother, and a broken family), peer delinquency, low socio-economic status, urban residence, and a high-crime neighbourhood. Immediate situational influences include potential offenders' motives (e. g., anger, a desire to hurt) and actions leading to violent events (e. g., the escalation of a trivial altercation)” (ibid, p.439).

Radicalism/Radicalisation

Radicalism is defined as “the belief that there should be great or extreme social or political change” (Cambridge Dictionary, 2020). *Radicalisation* is then understood “as a growing readiness to pursue and support far-reaching changes in society that conflict with, or pose a direct threat to, the existing order” (Dalgaard-Nielsen, 2010, p.799). According to Hearne & Laiq (2010), radicalisation processes nowadays happen mostly via the internet making it unnecessary to travel to those countries or areas where the group is active or to become directly involved with terrorism. They further specify that people who are to various degrees prone to radicalisation, are having a combination of the following characteristics: “trusting a person already involved with a radical group; being spiritually hungry and dedicated to their faith, but having limited knowledge of their religion; and being desperate, naïve, or simply in need of money” (Hearne & Laiq, 2010, p.2).

According to Oppetit et al., (2019), radicalised minors and radicalised adults have different profiles and follow different paths in the radicalisation process. With regards to youth, more girls and women are subject to radicalisation than elder populations, but significantly less young people attempt to radicalise their surroundings as well as radicalize through physical encounters. What the researchers conclude is that “overall, radicalised minors appear to be more psychologically vulnerable individuals than radicalised adults. These differences highlight the importance of tailored interventions in order to prevent radicalisation among vulnerable adolescents” (Oppetit et al., 2019, p.666). Reasons and factors why young people and adolescents radicalise themselves towards extremist beliefs and behaviours include a sense of no belonging, behavioural problems, issues at home, lack of self-esteem, criminal activity, and being involved with gangs (HM Government, 2020).

Projects using sport-based tools usually aim at preventing young people from being susceptible to radicalisation (referred to as *counter-radicalisation*), but also utilize it for the process of *disengagement* and *deradicalisation*. The latter relates to the process of divorcing a person, voluntarily or otherwise, from their extreme views aiming in attitudinal and ideological change associated with a reduced commitment to extremism. Disengagement is more interested in

changing a person's behaviour by dissolving him or her from extreme group activities without necessarily deradicalising that person or changing their views (Hearne & Laiq, 2010).

Deradicalisation programmes, generally using soft forms (arranging jobs, marriages, and new lives for participants, education, life skills development), seek to undo the radicalisation process by peacefully supporting the individual to return to moderate society, “usually by providing them with a stable support network, probing their original reasons for radicalising, and divorcing them from their extreme beliefs and social contacts”. (Hearne & Laiq, 2010, p.2)

(Violent) Extremism

Whilst radicalisation can be understood as the process people undergo to hold extremist ideologies (which may lead to violent extremism or terrorism), the term *violent extremism* refers to the “end-product” or the actual presentation or execution of an individuals' ideology. According to United Nations, the term lacks of a clear definition since it is a “diverse phenomenon, which is neither new nor exclusive to any region, nationality or system of belief” (UN, 2017, p.1). UNESCO (2017) stated that violent extremism refers to the beliefs and actions of people who support or use violence to achieve ideological, religious or political goals. This is in line with a definition of the German Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community (BMI) for the German context: It refers to extremist activities which “oppose to our [the German] democratic constitutional state and its fundamental values, norms and rules. They aim to overthrow the liberal democratic order and replace it with one in line with the ideas of the respective group. Extremists often accept, promote and actually use violent means to achieve their goals” (BMI, 2020, para:2).

Often the term is used interchangeably with the word terrorism¹, but according to Hearne & Laiq (2010), violent extremism is more far-reaching since it can include extreme right or left-wing groups that are not automatically deemed terrorists. Basic conditions emerging in violent extremism are often rooted in poverty, dispossession, or ideological and political goals (Hearne & Laiq, 2010). However, when it comes to drivers of violent extremism particularly for individuals of younger ages additional factors, generally split into push factors (such as alienation, discrimination, a search for identity, etc.) and pull factors (such as belonging, recognition, power, etc.) are known (UNOCD, 2020).

Sport and physical activity

Lastly, for the current literature review we define sport as “all forms of physical activity which, through casual and organised participation, aim at expressing or improving physical fitness and mental wellbeing, forming social relationships or obtaining results in competitions at all levels” (Council of Europe's European Sports Charter, 1992, Art.2). While football seems to be the most popular sport, there is a huge variety of commonly practiced sports (from individual to team, from competition to friendly, etc.), making it an adaptable vehicle through which prevention and empowerment can take place (UNOCD, 2020). Marc Theeboom led a study with regard to sport

¹ Terrosim, similar to the concept of (violent) extremism, does not hold a clear definition. Every country uses the term differently (see OECD, n.d.), a common explanation, however, is presented by the OHCHR (2008) who says that terrorism refers “to acts of violence that target civilians in the pursuit of political or ideological aims” (p.5).

in prison. It was part of a pan-European study led by the Council of Europe and the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport (EPAS) on the organisation and development of sport in prison. The study revealed that the most popular sport in European prisons is football, followed by fitness training, bodybuilding and weightlifting. In third place was table tennis followed by basketball and table football (Sempé, 2018). Other activities included yoga, aerobic or special programmes targeting vulnerable groups.

3. Methodology

Drawn from different disciplinary perspectives (especially criminology, social and political science, psychology, politics and governmental, civil society, human rights and peace-keeping studies), the selected literature examined issues relevant to the prevention and countering of violence, crime, radicalisation and violent extremism, youth empowerment and education, where possible in the context of sports-based activities. The literature has been chosen using two methods of selection – database searches and a systematic review of references in the literature selected. Regarding the former, we used Google, GoogleScholar, Scopus and NCBI Pubmed to search for articles, scientific papers, dissertations as well as for project and programme documents. Keywords were used in several combinations, among others: “sport in prisons”, “sport in correctional settings”, “sport in youth detention institutions and centres”, “sport prevention of crime and violence”, “sport and rehabilitation”, “sport reoffending”, “sport and radicalisation” and “sport and (violent) extremism”. We combined the keywords with other terms, such as “physical activity”, “play”, “movement” as well as “youth”, “young people”, “children” and “adolescents”. We conducted the analysis using English and German terminology. In terms of time-span, the key body of literature used, was published in the last decade (from 2010-2020), in some rare cases the literature included other articles and project descriptions from earlier years.

4. Results

In the following, we present the results of the literature review. We differ between sport with regards to violence and crime, sport in correctional settings (e.g. prisons or youth detention institutions) and sport in the context of radicalisation and violent extremism. However, it is important to note that some of the findings overlap and do apply to more than one of the fields. Likewise, many projects, programmes or publications tackle more than one of these dimensions due to their thematic proximity.

4.1. Sport, violence and crime

For years, sport is a widely acknowledged tool in the prevention of violence and crime among young people and adolescents. With a particular focus on community-led programmes (Hartmann & Depro, 2006), there is much literature verifying the effectiveness of sport included within broader (social) interventions worldwide. Hawkins (1998) claimed that evening and midnight basketball programmes reduced the crime rate among African American youth in Kansas City Missouri. According to Vitar-Bawzon (1997), there was a reduction in crime among young women who participated in a running programmes sponsored by the Road Runners Club of America in Virginia (Arizona). Veliz & Shakib (2012) found that schools with higher proportions of sport participants, report significantly fewer serious crimes (i.e., violent crimes) and suspensions occurring on school grounds. In their research, Heller, Pollack, Ander & Ludwig (2013) noted that members of youth gangs in Chicago had a better school attendance and were less engaged in criminal behaviour after participating in Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy and afterschool programmes in non-traditional sports (archery, boxing, wrestling, weightlifting, handball, and martial arts). Likewise, boxing sessions in controlled and safe environments allowed young Brazilian people to vent their frustrations and lower their level of aggression (Sampson & Vilella, 2017).

Carmichael (2008) conducted a literature review under the premise that youth engaged in organised sport are not likely to participate in criminal activities. He argued that other than punitive sanctions such as incarceration (e.g. time in a youth correction centre), shock incarceration (e.g. putting a child in jail overnight), community service hours, or boot camps, social development programmes that focus on keeping young people away from negative social activities and provide youth with positive peer interactions, are more likely to be effective in preventing and reducing crime rates. Referring to Nichols (2009), Carmichael outlined several rationales as to why youth sport, specifically in an organised way, can help to reduce youth crime:

- Keeps young people busy and out of trouble
- Meets a need that youth have for excitement
- Makes young people feel empowered
- Meets a need that youth have for risk-taking
- Increases feeling of connectedness & belonging
- Develops problem-solving skills
- Provides positive role-models and mentors
- Develops athletic abilities
- Increases self-esteem
- Develops cognitive competencies
- Fosters teamwork
- Develops decision-making skills
- Makes youth feel special
- Provides employment opportunities

This is in-line with other scholars who argue that sport can act as a diversionary activity from illicit activities for those who were involved in violent crimes (McMahon & Belur, 2013), because sport programs offer structure and support for young people, who otherwise may have a rather chaotic life. Rather than serving as a remedy, sport can be the hook bringing young people into contact with opportunities for achieving wider goals such as furthering their education or finding employment (ibid). Treagus, Cover, & Beasley (2011, p.20) add that the rules and values inherent

to and are transferable through sport (e.g. fairness, tolerance, respect, sportsmanship) serve as an ideal setting for “personal achievement, consolidating knowledge and skills, with potential recognition for hard work”.

Likewise, Carmichael (2008) and Ekholm (2013) conducted a literature review analysing 55 research publications on sport as a means of crime prevention using database searches and a systematic review of related references. As a primary finding, he states that “sport as a means to achieve social objectives is primarily a Western phenomenon since sport programs are often developed by Western NGOs and exported elsewhere” (p.1). He further found that in general two major streams of prevention models exist: the *averting-mode*, and the more dominant *social change mode* (Ekholm, 2013).

The former stresses the goal of preventing antisocial involvement or crime and is defined by the absence of aberration. With regards to sport, the literature reviewed by Ekholm (2013) lines out that the involvement in sport can, on the one hand, “physically divert young people from criminal or deviant activities [since] one cannot simultaneously be engaged in criminal activities outside the sport setting and perform sport activities” (para: 21). Furthermore, sport, being fun, exciting and entertaining, can divert attention from criminal environments and activities. On the other hand, it is argued that youth would be deterred from criminal or deviant behaviour when they recognise a higher risk of detection by supervising adults, coaches, police or staff in the sporting setting.

Referring to the second strand, the *social change-mode*, which is defined as the “change in various circumstances that could cause criminality and is accordingly defined by the presence of progression (i.e. more than just averting a specific behaviour or activity)” (Ekholm, 2013, para:20), four aspects focused on changing circumstances with regard to crime prevention emerged in the literature review: (1) sport creates good conditions for contributing to the development of personal and social relations, (2) sport is a hook to reach out to individuals or enter environments that would otherwise be inaccessible (3) sport can lead to empowerment by strengthening the functions and abilities of individuals to become socially mobile in an established society and being their own social change agent, (4) sport can lead to improved life skills and pro-social behaviour (e.g. increased self-esteem, self-control, conflict resolution skills, communication skills) which in turn could lead to reduced impulsiveness and risk-taking and also enhance educational skills and promote employability.

Despite the positive findings, what has to be borne in mind, given the complex nature of social and behavioural change, is that a direct causal relationship between (youth) sport and crime reduction is hard to prove. Further, Carmichael (2008, p.2) states that “it is unrealistic to claim that organized youth sport alone can reduce the levels of youth crime in society. The causes of youth crime are complex and multidimensional”. Moreover, as underlined by Ekholm (2013), participation in power sports, such as boxing, wrestling, weightlifting and martial arts could also lead to increased antisocial activity, since those sports emphasize elements of fighting and strength. Organized sport programs can, however, contribute to reducing youth crime by giving young people a confident identity, spirit of empowerment and by supporting the young individuals to attain “leadership, teamwork and self-governance skills under adult supervision” (Jamieson and

Ross, 2007, p.24). This is acknowledged and incorporated in the approaches of many institutions, organisations and clubs working around the globe:

The Laureus Sport for Good Foundation, for instance, published several *youth, sports and crime prevention* reports in the past years. With the main focus on gangs, youth, crime and sport, the earliest report *Breaking the Cycle of Violence* (2009) presented data from an online survey investigating the positive influence of sport on gang culture. As a major finding, the report revealed that “young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, who are most likely to be both the perpetrators and victims of violent crime, are less likely to be active participants in sport and physical activity” (p. 18), therefore sport programs have to make an even greater effort to involve those hard-to-reach groups. In its second report, *Teenage Kicks: The Value of Sport in Tackling Youth Crime* (2011), the foundation addressed the “lack of robust research-based evidence on the outcomes of sports participation” (p.19) and in order to close the evidential gap, an innovative approach measuring the impact of such programs was undertaken. The Foundation applied an economic analysis of the cost of certain social problems compared with the cost of measures to them illustrated by three case studies and found that “sports activities on their own generally are insufficient to prevent crime, therefore, they rather need to be combined with wider developmental educational and support initiatives” (p.19). The most recent report *Sport Scores* was published in 2012 and acknowledges sport to present a powerful means for engaging disadvantaged youth, either as a diversionary or rehabilitative approach to tackling crime. In the report, it is outlined, however, that several important success factors influence the achievement of such programs. For success to happen sport activities need to keep in mind the “location and engagement of hard-to-reach groups”; that they are long term in order to develop trust and change attitudes; and that they form an integral part of a broader developmental program of support and education (such as mentoring, training, volunteering, work experience programs) (p. 12).

As another initiative *Fight for Peace* (Luta pela Paz), originally founded in Brazil but now disseminated to a total of 15 countries, combines boxing and martial arts with education and personal development to realise the potential of young people in communities affected by crime and violence (Fight for Peace, 2020). According to their website, Fight for Peace’s work is centred on the five pillars methodology- boxing & martial arts, education, employability, social support as well as youth leadership, enabling young people by becoming “champions of their lives” (ibid., para:2). Fight for Peace has academies in Rio and London and is present in over 25 countries via their alliance of partner organisations. Past evaluations on Fight for Peace projects (e.g. Sampson & Vilella, 2012; Foley, 2014) found a significant positive impact on young people’s behaviour, self-esteem and way of thinking (Foley for the Project Maré United², 2014) and that that young people going through the program were more likely to resist becoming involved in crime and desist from criminality and drug trafficking (Sampson & Vilella, 2012).

Last, but not least, the organisation *Generations for Peace*, based in Jordan, established a sport for peace program that operates with engagement in promoting active tolerance and responsible

² The project delivers Fight for Peace’s Five Pillars model and promotes cross-community sporting events, joint training sessions as well as other exchanges between young people from different areas of the community (Foley, 2014).

citizenship. It is active in communities that experience different forms of conflict and violence (Generation for Peace, 2020).

According to the organisation, it applies specifically designed sports-based games and activities that integrate peer-group and peacebuilding education” in order to provide a safe space for opposing groups that can meet each other in a neutral venue (Generation for Peace in UNODC, 2018b).

4.2. Sport in correctional settings³

“In prisons, just as in our communities, the impact of sport can be far-reaching. Participation can not only improve health and behaviour but can directly contribute to efforts to tackle reoffending, reduce violence and conflict, develop communication skills, and in particular provide a meaningful route into education and employment” (Meek, 2018b, cited in the Guardian, para: 3)

In addition to sport being a tool to prevent criminal and extremist behaviour, sport is used in prisons for several reasons. Those reasons relate to primary benefits such as improved fitness and well-being (cp. Gool et al. 2006; Buckaloo, Krug and Nelson 2009, Meek 2013; 2018) and the provision of means to counteract most of the evolving effects of imprisonment, which are according to Sempé (2008, p.53) “isolation, solitude, promiscuity, dehumanisation, sleep disorders, boredom, routine, surveillance, omnipresent discipline, stress and depression”. A more frequent phenomenon is the introduction of sports activities with a view to address addictive tendencies, drug consumption and dependency in prison (tobacco, alcohol and psychotropic drugs). Regular and structured sports activities in these programs are geared to influence prisoner behaviour by reducing addictive consumption patterns and the need for substitution treatment (Sempé, 2018). Sportive activities are also utilized as a means of rehabilitation of people in detention. In this regard, it is argued that sport provides access to a pro-social network and positive role models, which are specifically important to juvenile prisoners. Sport can improve the daily life of prisoners, e.g. in terms of reduction of tension, aggression, anger or depressions, but can also result in a positive self-identity peer-support, sense of belonging and feelings of positive achievements (Meek, 2018). It is argued that these benefits will help prisoners to rebuild themselves, and will allow them to integrate better into moderate society upon release and reduces levels of relapse long-term (cp. Meek, 2012; 2013, Meek, 2018).

From a legal perspective, the basic provision and access of and to sport and physical activity is part of the basic principles of prison laws and policies of many countries (van Zyl & Snacken, 2009). The European law on prison states in this regard that “recreational opportunities, which include sport, games, cultural activities, hobbies and other leisure pursuits, shall be provided and, as far as possible, prisoners shall be allowed to organise them” (European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment, 2006). Furthermore, in term of children and young people, the Havana rule number 47 (United Nations Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of their Liberty, 1990, p.6) specifies that “every juvenile should have the right

³ Prisons, young offender institutions/centres and secure children's homes.

to a suitable amount of time for daily free exercise, in the open air whenever weather permits, during which time appropriate recreational and physical training should normally be provided. Adequate space, installations and equipment should be provided for these activities. The detention facility should ensure that each juvenile is physically able to participate in the available programs of physical education. Remedial physical education and therapy should be offered, under medical supervision, to juveniles needing it”.

On the European level the field of action gained significantly increased attention following the endeavour of the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport (EPAS)⁴, who announced 2014 as the year of sport in prisons. With the goal to promote sport as a way of addressing the well-being and social skills of prisoners in detention, in the same year a conference was organized at which results of a survey on the management of various prisons in Council of Europe member States as well as good practice examples on sport in prisons were presented. In their final report on the conference, EPAS concludes that “[s]port and physical activity can undoubtedly be used as a “hook” with which to engage and motivate prisoners, particularly those who typically respond better as a result of active participation methods of delivery.” It was found that many of the participating countries had innovative approaches to sport in prisons, ranging from a variety of sports to a variety of target groups. Most sportive activities were initially designed and implemented by the staff working in prisons. Gyms were identified as meaningful settings, but there was a call for more innovative and individual approaches, especially for juveniles, people with at risk diseases and women. Beyond the primary benefit of sport, experts at the conference agreed that sport has the potential to be utilised as a platform for facilitating other innovative prison-based practices, such as victim-offender mediation, restorative justice, and varied forms of civic engagement. Many programs from the member states already included collaborations with external organisations (community NGOs, sport clubs) with sport-specific capacity and profound knowledge in order to give prisoners the chance of engaging in the long-term, e.g. after being released. As a conclusion, the conference considers sport and physical activity as “invaluable in meeting rehabilitative objectives” (EPAS, 2014, p.4), but attention was raised that it “would be naïve and unrealistic to assume that sport and physical activity can be used as a panacea for the complex, deep-rooted, and challenging issues associated with people in detention” (ibid., p.4) . Following the conference, a handbook containing a set of criteria for evaluating, assessing and planning specific (existing or future) sport in prison projects was to be published. Additionally, Gaelle Sempés´ issued the report *Sport and Prisons in Europe* (2018), in which she presented the results of a study conducted under the scientific leadership of Marc Theeboom. The data was collected through an online-questionnaire, containing forty questions about sport and prisons and sent to prison officials at different levels who represented their member state on questions relating to sport in prison. In addition, good practice examples from all over Europe were presented followed by a discussion from a sociological perspective. According to Sempé (2018,

⁴ EPAS, consisting of 38 member countries and 29 sport organisations (e.g. ENGSO, UEFA and the EOC), was established in 2007. Their work focus is on awareness-rising, designing policies and standards and recommendations, best-practise examples and capacity building for the member states, sports federations and NGOs. In general EPAS provides a platform for intergovernmental discussion on how to make the sport safer, inclusive and more ethnical. They furthermore propose recommendation to the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers on issues of sports ethics, the autonomy of the sports movement, and the protection of young athletes from dangers associated with migration (EPAS, 2020).

p.6), the publication aimed “to support the development of evidence-based policies relating to sport in prisons. It is also a compilation of good practices, a toolkit for communication and a collection of practical advice for setting up or strengthening a coherent system”. The report, although it revealed comprehensive and interesting findings on the role of sport in European prisons, did not specifically focus on the value sport can have for young people in detention.⁵ Differently, Rosie Meek and colleagues, conducted several studies and reviews on that topic (primarily in the context of England and Wales)⁶. To mention some in more detail, Meek (2012a) evaluated the *2nd Chance Project Rugby and Football Academies at Portland Young Offenders Institution*. The *2nd Chance*, a two-year long initiative, drew on sport as one of several means to engage, educate and train young people in custody as well as after returning to the community. In addition to the sportive component, mentoring, vocational training and work experience placements were offered to the young men. In her evaluation, Meek (2012a) reported an improved relationship between prisoners and staff as well as a more positive life outlook after being released. Moreover, “statistically significant improvements were observed in established measures of conflict resolution, aggression, impulsivity, and attitudes towards offending following participation” (Meek, 2012a, p.2).

Likewise, Parker, Meek, and Lewis (2014) investigated young male offenders’ experiences of participating in a sports intervention. The authors interviewed 12 young men aged between 15 and 17 years’ old that were imprisoned in a Young Offender Institution in the South of England. The beneficiaries took part in a 12-week football and rugby initiative which combined physical activity with vocational qualifications in custody. In general, the interviewees reported enhanced levels of self-esteem and social skills, which according to the authors (2014) enable the participants to develop a more positive outlook on their respective futures.

In 2018, on request of the Ministry of Justice of the UK, Meek steered a comprehensive analysis into the use of sport and physical activity in youth and adult prisons. For that she visited and audited the provision of 21 institutions, among those prisons, young offender institutions and secure children’s homes throughout England and Wales, speaking with individuals from across the staffing structure as well as with the children, young adults and adults in their care. Although Meek found that much great work has been done up to today (see below), she identified a lack of comprehensive and uniformed (national) strategy. She also said that physical activity-based activities are often not used by women and girls as much as by men and therefore such a strategy should also target the inclusion of all gender and ages. Among other important recommendations, she called for partnerships between prisons, communities, sporting groups and bodies as well as creative and individual approaches of delivering physical activity (Meek, 2018). Meek (2013; 2018), among other scholars (cp. Andrew & Andrew, 2003; Meek & Lewis, 2013; Sempé, 2018) also argues that most of the sport-based initiatives under scrutiny have shown a lack of solid and well-designed impact measurement strategies and therefore more long-term follow-up studies that embrace before and after imprisonment times are needed to

⁵ If you want to read more see Sempé (2018). *Sport and Prisons in Europe*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

⁶ Meek (2020); Morgan, Parker, Meek & Cryer (2019); Baumer & Meek (2019); Meek (2018); Meek & Lewis (2014); Park, Meek & Lewis (2014); Meek (2013); Meek & Parker (2013); Meek, Champion & Klier (2012); Lewis & Meek (2012).

understand the complex environment of correctional settings and the impact custody has on their inmates.

For the German context, several documents were published that give recommendations on how sport in youth detention centres and other correctional settings is best implemented and conducted. The German Sports Youth published a document in 2009, tackling the potential and constraints of sport in the context of YDCs. Under the authorship of Klaus-Jürgen Tolksdorf and other experts, the comprehensive publication argues that the juvenile justice system offers the greatest and perhaps last opportunity for intervention and influence on delinquent young people and therefore the medium of sport, which best corresponds to the physical development and interests of young people, is to be developed into a fixed programmatic component of youth enforcement. Within the publication, different experts elaborate on their specific field of expertise (youth development, pedagogical knowledge, different types of sport interventions) and why sport should be used in prisons. Furthermore, areas and possibilities of several different sports activities are discussed as well as necessary conditions and personnel requirement for quality development of the medium sport in prisons and other correctional settings (Tolksdorf, 2009). Klaus-Jürgen Tolksdorf (2020) also published his assessment of sport as a means of prevention in the penal system. He outlines several propositions, guidelines and recommendations on the preventive effects that are achieved through sports in prisons.

With regards to projects, external providers (mostly sport clubs or commercial sport provider) cooperate with prisons and other correctional settings at large, mostly in the local community. Indicated by EPAS (2014) and Sempé (2018), many programs and projects exist across Europe; however, due to language and accessibility barriers, only for the below-mentioned countries literature on initiatives could be found. Therefore, instead of providing a finite picture of documents and initiatives, the following projects and publications should serve as an example of what has been done in recent years.

In the UK, comprehensive literature is available presenting and evaluating the work that has been done in these settings with young inmates, ex-prisoners or youth that is prone to violence and crime. Many clubs and organisations representing football (including Chelsea, Everton and Fulham), rugby (including Saracens, Northampton and Leeds Rhinos) and beyond (including parkrun, the English Chess Federation and Brighton Table Tennis club) are collaborating with prisons in developing programs that promote activity and tackle re-offending (Meek, 2018): As an umbrella initiative, the *Twinning Project* established partnerships between 114 Prisons and Probation Services and professional football clubs in England and Wales. Today, the project is supported by 28 (professional) football clubs in the UK, among them Liverpool, Arsenal, Tottenham, and Manchester City. The overall aim of the project was to engage a certain number of prisoners per year in football-based programs in order to improve their mental and physical health, well-being and obtain a qualification. This will help improve their life chances and gain employment on release and help to prevent re-offending. The activities – accredited football training and employability based qualifications- are delivered by professional coaches and football club staff which are supported by prison PE officers (The Twinning Project, 2020).

On the Alliances of Sport for Criminal Justice⁷ webpage, several organisations were listed that use sport in their work with young criminals and detained persons. The organisation *Parkrun* has organised more than 25 park runs in prisons, young offender institutions and other correctional settings since 2017 (ASCD, 2020a). The project *Boats not Bars*, implemented by Fulham Reach Boatclub, uses rowing projects in prisons to reduce re-offending rates by changing the inmates' perceptions about their future and life in general as well as providing a supportive social network upon release (ASCD, 2020b). The commercial box club *Queensberry Boxing* engages with young people prone to crime and violence and works with youth in detention as well as ex-prisoners. One of their activities includes ex-prisoners from Thorn Cross prison in England, which work as mediators and coaches with young people at risk of school exclusions in a boxing program in Cheshire (ASCD, 2020c).

Last, but not least, as part of the *Urban stars program*, at Ashfield prison and YOI in South Gloucestershire, *Urban Stars* has facilitated the engagement of young male offenders in sporting activities to improve their behaviours and attitudes and to raise their achievement and skill levels. *Urban Stars* is a flagship program of the Laureus Sport for Good Foundation and is delivered by Active Communities Network – a strategic partner of Laureus Sport for Good Foundation. In addition to these activities, the *Ashfield College Sports Academy* presents offenders with opportunities to participate in activities such as sports coaching awards, community placements and mentoring roles (Active Community Networks (ACN), 2013).

In Sweden, Roe et al. (2019) examined a football program for detained male youth (aged 16-20). The youth detention home under investigation is located on an island and houses a total of 31 males with “severe psychosocial problems with ongoing criminality and drug abuse” (ibid., p.4). The institution collaborates with the island's local sport club which, among other recreational activities, stages competitive football training and games. With all activities being essentially voluntarily, the football program contains three main fields which are (1) physical education with the main focus on football as part of the school curriculum; (2) recreational football activities during evenings as well as (3) competitive football at the islands' local sport club. All activities are conducted rather informally and without specific guidelines. Those who are responsible for the implementation are treatment assistants (unit staff), the psychologist and nurse, administrators, groundskeepers, representatives of the Swedish Football Association (including a former national team coach who volunteers with the program) and the regional sport federation, who regularly visits the youth home to engage in the program.

In Germany, in youth detention centres (YDC) in Plötzensee (Tagesspiegel, 2014) and Berlin (Neues Deutschland, 2011) physical activity (mostly football and fitness) is an integral part of the inmates' daily life. In a prison in Brandenburg, sport is part of the educational program. Five sports coaches, who were additionally trained as law enforcement officers work in the YDC. Besides, a sports pedagogue organizes physical education for everyone who attends school there.

⁷ The Alliance of Sport in Criminal Justice is a charity organisation, mainly working in England and Wales, aiming at the establishment of a “better and safer society through the use of sport in the Criminal Justice System by actively helping the Sport for Development sector in their mission to reduce violence, crime and reoffending” (ADCJ, 2020d, para:4).

Furthermore, in the Federal State of Schleswig-Holstein, several prisons and YDCs incorporate sport and physical activity in their broader educational strategy. The federal working group Sport in Prisons (LAG), established in the year of 2009, published a comprehensive activity report on the state-of-the-art regarding sport in prisons in Schleswig-Holstein. The LAG analysed five different prisons and YDCs and found that the development of sport in the prison system in Germany is in most cases carried out by the prisons together with the local sports organisations. Furthermore, LAG argues that in order to exploit the full potential of physical activity in correctional settings, the establishment of "prison sports clubs" should be examined. Having said this, strategies for recruiting volunteers in sport should be developed (LAG, 2011).

With regards to the offender's institutions under investigation, the YDC in Neumünster has one full-time sports officer and 14 sports trainers at its disposal. The report revealed that a small playing field, a basketball court and a gym exist to provide the prisoners with sporting activities. In Schleswig, the focus of the sports program was on leisure sports, weight training and internal matches and competitions. Additionally, adventure-based learning opportunities, such as canoeing tours are offered at regular intervals. For the 73 prisoners at that time (2010), two small playing fields, three fitness rooms, one sports hall were available. Soccer, volleyball and basketball took place regularly on the small fields; the remaining area was used by running groups. In addition, school sport was guaranteed by a teacher from the Schleswig Vocational Training Centre (since the beginning of the 2007/2008 school year). Physical education is part of the vocational school lessons, the performance is graded and participation is obligatory (LAG, 2011).

In North-Rhine Westphalia, the prison in Herford claims to have the first American football team behind bars nationwide. The team *BLACK DEVILS*, founded in 2008, consistently has 25 young men in the squad. The weekly training units are supplemented by selective training camps and scrimmages and theoretical training. In the past, the team was able to transition four of their former team members to external clubs upon release (JVA Herford, 2020).

In Belgium, De Rode Antraciet (The Red Anthracite) is a non-profit organisation for sport and socio-cultural work within the prison sector in Flanders and Brussels, and is a partner organisation of the Flemish Strategic Plan for prisoners of the Flemish government. Its work is respectively based on the Sports for All ('sport' pillar) and socio-cultural methodologies ('culture' pillar and 'learning courses' pillar), aiming at prisoners and their direct environment, at any person confronted with penal proceedings and at people working and living in penitentiary surroundings. Starting from every person's dignity, possibilities and sense of responsibility, De Rode Antraciet has developed an educational package, varied and specialised while it also tries to enhance the sport and cultural sectors' presence in the penitentiary world through 18 local prisons. In this way, the organisation argues being able to activate "processes of personal growth that multiply the chances of social reintegration, and through our methodologies, we have our share in humanising the penitentiary context" (Prisoners on the Move, p.7).

To sum up, providing sport and physical activity is not only a legal requirement but also indispensable in improving young people's fitness, physical and mental wellbeing, preparing the inmates for life upon release, reducing re-offending rates and creating a brighter and self-confident outlook for their future. In addition to these benefits, it is especially important since young adults in prisons are subject to the danger of undergoing radicalisation (Mulcahy,

Merrington, & Bell, 2013). How sport is related to radicalisation and (violent) extremism will be depicted in more detailed below.

4.3. Sport, radicalisation and (violent) extremism

Engaging young people in activities such as sport has been embraced by some CVE practitioners and government agencies as a central means of developing locally-based programs that contribute to community resilience, enhance civic participation of socially marginalised youth, and weaken the likelihood of young people becoming involved in groups engaged in violent extremism. Sport, radicalisation and (violent) extremism are associated in various ways. Firstly, sport organisations, clubs and events present settings which can be misused for the propaganda and recruitment of extremists. Secondly, sport and physical (leisure) activities have the potential of being used to prevent and counteract violent extremism, and are often a valuable tool utilized by youth- and social workers (Lenos & Jansen, 2019).

The European Parliament published a statement in 2018, urging Member States and national sport federations, particularly football clubs, “to counteract the scourge of racism, fascism and xenophobia in stadiums and in the sports culture by condemning and punishing those responsible and by promoting positive educational activities targeting young fans, in cooperation with schools and the relevant civil society organisations” (European Parliament, Joint Motion for a Resolution, 2018, p. 6).

Voices from extremist supporters in stadiums are not a rarity and in many cases, their actions are not restricted to the football stadiums anymore. Examples from Germany (e.g. HoGeSa or hooligans from the Chemnitz Football Club) and England (e.g. Democratic Football Lads Association) have shown that hooligan groups portray themselves as defenders of their national heritage and identity, and use the sport environment to display their ideals and beliefs (Lenos & Jansen, 2019).

Those supporters use pull-factors of sport to recruit new members in sport stadiums or organisations. These factors inherent to sport relate to a sense of belonging and identity to a certain group and feelings of superiority. Furthermore, sport can provide structure and social support when it is absent and missing. According to Lenos & Jansen (2019, p.3), “in some places the ultra and hooligan groups are the only place for joining a group and experiencing brotherhood or a substitution for family bonds”.

Beyond football, scholars argue that (mixed) martial arts settings, such as gyms or clubs, offer qualities that are appealing for extremists to recruit and mobilise new members. Since extremists are very much concerned in defending the interests and identity of their own group, the obvious element of acquiring and practising defensive violence and also the masculine environment of muscles, strength and machismo showcased in such settings, are factors making such setting attractive to extremists. Other sports clubs and facilities can also function as a meeting and recruitment place for persons who are already extremist or radicalised. A swimming pool in Amsterdam, for example, was a meeting place for a jihadist radical network for a long time (Lenos & Jansen, 2019).

When countering radicalisation and (violent) extremism, Mardsen, Knott & Lewis (2017) suggest that programs and other initiatives can be anchored at three different levels. *Prevention*, particularly in community settings, should be targeted on the primary level, followed by *actions that focus on those at risk of becoming radicalised*, e.g. in prisons (secondary level). Tertiary level interventions provide *services for those who have already engaged in violent extremism*, principally in the form of de-radicalisation, disengagement and re-integration/rehabilitation (DDR) programs. In the organisation, design and implementation of programs, governments, organisations and other implementation partners need to consider local needs and the right balance between different forms of interventions at the respective levels. Kruglanski et al. (2014) found that the most effective de-radicalisation programs applied a multidimensional approach, empowering individuals and reconnecting them with conventional society.

With regards to preventing radicalisation and VE, *John Declercks' prevention pyramid* (European Commission, 2018) provides different levels of analysing how radicalisation, extremism and sport are intertwined. Consisting of five equally important levels, the model points out that “without a profound analysis of a problem on all underlying levels, you take the risk of only doing symptom management” and therefore proper prevention requires cohesion on all five levels. The Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN)⁸ (Lenos & Jansen, 2019) adopted the pyramid to the sport field (see Figure 1). The basis of the pyramid refers to the broader societal context (political, social, cultural, ecological), followed by level one targeting the improvement of the living conditions through stimulating factors such as welfare, sports and health policies, education or recreation facilities. The third level refers to general prevention measures which in the sport-context can include sport projects that aim for inclusivity, prohibition of weapons in stadiums and further education. Specific prevention measures like cameras in stadiums or monitoring of certain groups can be found in the fourth level. At the top of the pyramid lies Curative measures that tackle the problem when abuse has already taken place. This can include cancelling football games, imposing bans or fines on certain groups or de-radicalisation programs.

⁸ RAN was set-up by the European Commission in 2011 and presents an EU-wide umbrella network connecting first-line practitioners and local actors around Europe working daily with those vulnerable to radicalisation, as well as those who have already been radicalised.

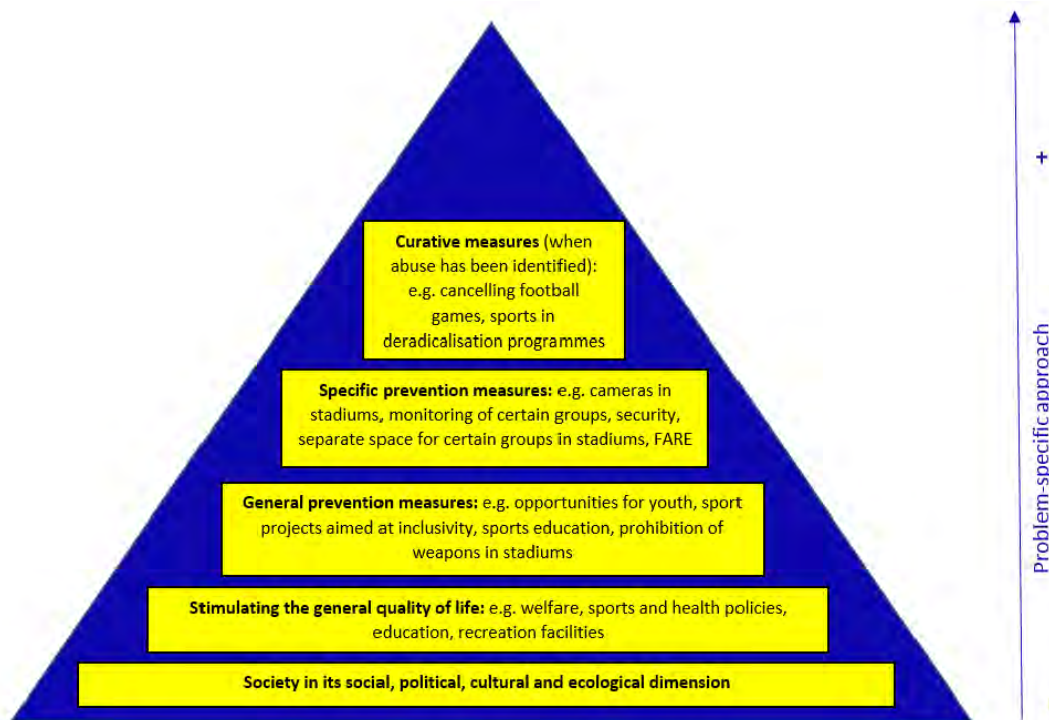


Figure 1: Sports prevention pyramid, based on Declerck (2018)

Many programs, targeting and including sport as a component in their CVE strategy exist worldwide. In the following some will be presented in more detailed, however it has to be noted, that not all of these programs exclusively targeted youth, but involved and were applicable to different age groups.

El-Said (2012) and El-Said & Harrigan (2013) investigated deradicalisation programs in eight Muslim majority states⁹ and found the so-called “soft” measures (mind-set change of participants) were more effective than kinetic approaches. They outline that especially Saudi-Arabia’s strategy to counteract violent extremism can be seen as a success story. According to El-Said (2012, p.58) “it is Saudi-Arabia that has developed the most professional, comprehensive and successful of such official programs”. The so-called *Care program* involves counselling programs in prisons, includes the beneficiaries’ families’ and adds extra-curricular activities, such as sport to the daily lives of the individuals in detention. Upon release, beneficiaries receive help to prevent recidivism and ensure their smooth reintegration into society. This includes the payment of a monthly stipend and support in finding jobs. The state also intervenes to facilitate marriage for single beneficiaries.

In Western Africa, Barkindo & Bryans (2016) examined an 18-month long prison-based de-radicalisation program in Nigeria, which followed a multidimensional approach including sport and games among other activities such as motivational interviewing, vocational and cultural training, art therapy and religious interventions. The sport-based activities were considered more than just the provision of outdoor exercise: “As part of the de-radicalisation program, sports was used to

⁹ Algeria, Bangladesh, Egypt, Jordan, Malaysia, Morocco, Saudi Arabia and Yemen.

promote personal development and growth, and proved to encourage pro-social thinking and behaviour. It also served as a platform for engagement and rehabilitation. When the program started, none of the prisoners took part in sports. More recently, football leagues have been organised with teams from the prisoners, prison staff and general prison population, which has helped to improve the atmosphere of mutual trust and communication. A range of sport interventions were used including volleyball and football” (Barkindo & Bryans, 2016, p.16). Through interaction with staff and other prisoners, inconsistencies in the extremist’s beliefs were highlighted, and the beneficiaries were able to acquire important physical and social skills, increasing their capacity to re-integrate into mainstream society and find vocations.

In Sri Lanka, a rehabilitation program for former members of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam¹⁰ was analysed by Webber et al. (2017). The program comprised seven different rehabilitation strategies which were related to education, vocation, psychology, spirituality, sport and recreation, culture/family, and community. With regards to sport and recreation activities; volleyball, cricket, other sports, as well as board games, were organized and played daily. Special programs and events include; *Cricket for Change*, regional athletic and sport meetings, intercentre cricket and *netball matches*, and a *New Year’s Sports festival*. The program’s analysis indicated that after completing the full program (mostly done after a one—year period), participants testified lower extremism and a reduced feeling of insignificance.

Although the aforementioned attempts of de-radicalisation include sport, physical activity and play in their overall approaches, sport hasn’t been identified as a key or leading activity in de-radicalisation programs. Nevertheless, projects, programs and other activities that particularly embrace the role of sport into the design do exist.

SARI, for instance, a non-for-profit charity organisation working in Ireland uses sport to tackle racism, sectarianism, xenophobia, homophobia and all other forms of discrimination. With their project *Living Together Through Football*, the organisation aims at addressing the sectarian and alienation issues in Belfast, Northern Ireland (SARI, 2009).

In 2011, the German government together with the German Football Association launched the initiative *Sport and Politics – united against right-wing extremism* with the main focus on combating right-wing extremism and discrimination in the German sport, particularly in the spheres of football stadiums and sport clubs. Representatives of sports and politics worked together in a network to achieve this aim (Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, 2016). In the course of this initiative the campaign *Foul from the Right-Wing – sports and politics united for tolerance, respect and human dignity* was started at the national, regional and local level in the same year. One of the main aims of the campaign was to raise awareness around the problem of VE in sport settings, as well as to offer guidance and back-up to sport clubs and association chairmen and chairwomen, trainers and practice supervisors (vereint-gegen-rechtsextremismus, 2020).

A cooperation between streetfootballworld, RheinFlanke and the LiberaIslamic Association formed the project *‘Spiel dich frei!*, with the aim to tackle radicalisation of youngsters using sports (among other forms like art, music and theatre) at a very early stage. One of the outcomes was, a

¹⁰ A terrorist organization that operated in Sri Lanka until their defeat in 2009 (Webber et al., 2017).

manual for teachers, social workers and multipliers which was developed using sport and other cultural means to support young people. This was done by making distinction between religious and radical content and by encouraging them to find their own religious and cultural identity. Together with pedagogical educators, young people have designed their own creative means to work towards expressing their identity and counteracting extremist threats. With regards to sport, RheinFlanke added the sport-pedagogical component, showing how the particular methods of football enables interactive learning and coping mechanisms for radicalisation, discrimination and gender equality (streetfootballworld, 2017).

With a particular focus on right-wing extremism, the project *BIKnetz* established a prevention network against right-wing extremism with the goal to support and strengthen preventive educational work against right-wing extremism in Germany. Funded by the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ), the project ran from 2012 to 2014. The focus was primarily on so-called secondary right-wing extremism prevention, i.e. direct educational and social work with young people at risk, oriented towards the extreme-right. Experiences were exchanged and processed through deliverables such as a knowledge database, topic dossiers, and a service hotline. In addition, a framework curriculum was developed to further the education and training of educational experts (Freund & Smettan, n.d.). The Sport Youth Hesse implemented another project between 2011 and 2014. The project *Erlebniswelt Sport – Wir bieten Respekt und ANerkennung! (R.AN!)* (eng: World of experience of Sport - We offer respect and recognition! (R.AN!)) was set up to bring together young people in sport clubs to counter the "world of right-wing extremism" with a "world of sport" based on respect and recognition. Within the project, the goal was to raise-awareness about right-wing extremism in sport clubs and to create attractive sport-related offers for young people that are at risk of developing a sense of right-wing extremism. In each of the clubs, in which the project was conducted, r.an! teams were formed by young and older club members. The clubs were accompanied and advised by a couple of experts from the Sport Youth Hesse. The concrete activities ranged from qualification modules and leisure activities (such as a youth club with table football in the clubhouse) to larger club events at which the topics of (anti)discrimination, (anti)racism, etc. were tackled with creative ideas, e.g. in the form of a quiz (Freund & Smettan, n.d.).

Developed by sport federations from the eastern part of Germany, another project called *Sport with courage* established a website which serves as a portal for sportsmen and women, youth leaders, trainers and sports officials who want to deal with the issue of right-wing extremism in sport and provides practice-oriented information and materials. The web portal also lists relevant contacts in the eastern German states (Freund & Smettan, n.d.).

In addition to the projects carried out, several documents have been published in the past. The German Sports Youth created the brochure *Vereine und Verbände stark machen* ("Strengthening Clubs and Associations") in order to convince people of the necessity of actively addressing the issue of right-wing extremism in sports clubs and associations. The brochure offers extensive background information on right-wing extremism in sport settings, concrete assistance in the form of exercises and role-plays, as well as legal assistance. At the same time, concrete strategies and techniques are presented on how to work with right-wing extremist statements in

clubs (dsj, 2014). In 2013, the organisation Camino distributed the handbook *We actually only want to do sport. What clubs can do against right-wing extremism without giving up sport* with the objective to offer club and board members practical assistance in how to deal with right-wing extremist attitudes and behaviour in the club. The main focus is on measures that can be implemented in addition to regular sport activities, particularly in the youth and amateur sections (Camino, 2013). The German Youth Institute elaborated on right-wing extremism, xenophobia and racism in football. Within their published anthology different counter-strategies from amateur and professional sport clubs are presented. Additionally, reports on practical experience as well as empirical findings evaluating the work of the clubs are discussed (dji, 2008).

In Australia, Johns, Grossman & McDonald (2014) reviewed a youth-orientated sports scheme named *More than a Game*. The 12-month long program was developed by the Australian Football League as a counter-terrorism program, using sport to develop a community-based resilience model, more specifically, resilience to ideological narratives promoting terrorism or violence among young Muslim men in Western Australia. By means of organized team sport activities the aim was to “develop personal well-being and pro-social skills, and facilitate a greater sense of social inclusion and community belonging for Muslim youth” as well as “fostering greater intercultural contact and understanding between participants and other cultural groups” (Johns et al., 2014, p.58). The authors argue that sport-based interventions have the power to break down cultural stereotypes (and thus facilitate social inclusion among diverse groups of people), boost and develop self-confidence and a sense of belonging, as well establish conflict resolution skills that are necessary to resolve disputes in a non-violent way.

In Austria, the initiative *Not in God's Name* (NIGN), implemented in 2015 by a professional Thai boxer and a political scientist, aimed at providing youngsters with role models in order to refrain from sympathising with radical or extremist views. The program was located in martial arts centres, particularly targeting young Muslim people (Richardson et al., 2017). According to Götsch (2017), who provided a review about Austria's approach in tackling *Threats from Islamist Radicalisation and Terrorist Involvement*, after a period of one year, more than 20 trainers and sportsmen/women were active in this initiative. In addition to boxing-training, bars and youth clubs were visited to start conversations with marginalised youths in order to ascertain potential radical and extremist views and beliefs.

Very recently, the Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN) published an over 700-page-document containing a collection of approaches and practices in the field of prevention of radicalisation among EU member states. Although most approaches do not target sport as a means for prevention or combat of radicalisation to terrorism and violent extremism, some organisations based their approaches on alone-standing sport activities whereas others “only” included sport as one component.

The *Open Fun Football School* (OFFS), organised and implemented by the Cross Cultures Project Association (CCPA) provides, among football-specific activities, a platform where children and adults from different ethnic and social backgrounds can communicate and develop long-lasting, meaningful, and integrated relationships. Focusing mainly on children between the ages of 6 and 12, CCPA seeks to include children from disadvantaged backgrounds, children with disabilities, and children from marginalized populations. The Open Fun Football Schools program is based on

the Danish “fun football” methodology and pedagogy, using sport and fun games as a tool for education and prevention, and are implemented all over the globe. The OFFS program seeks to provide communities with the necessary means and training to ensure the program and serves the overarching values of peaceful coexistence, gender equality, tolerance, and social cohesion and takes away the breeding ground for radicalisation (RAN, 2019, pp. 347).

The Polish project *Hooligans*, from the area of Rzeszow, aims at educating young people about their responsibility and consequences related to any criminal offences and membership in hooligan groups and furthermore want to promote positive attitudes during sporting events, especially at football matches, including behaviours that are not racist, xenophobic or threatening (“hate speech”). In order to do so, the methods used relate to sporting activities, to meetings with young people, parents and representatives of fan clubs, and to the production of dissemination materials (leaflets, presentations or movies). The project is implemented by the police headquarter in Rzeszow together with governmental organisations (Ran, 2019, pp.436).

Another activity, on behalf of the department of the city in Antwerp in collaboration with the government organisation Atlas, is the *Training Identity development of youngsters*. Training for first-line practitioners (e.g. youth workers, teachers) concentrated on youth identity development with a focus on young people from a migrant background. The project did not specifically focus on the area of sports, similar training sessions with sports workers were, however, carried out by the sports department of the city of Antwerp to cover this part as well (RAN, 2019, pp.41).

5. Conclusion

Participating in sport and physical activity represents a structured, positive form of social engagement, thereby promoting an investment in communities and in the wider society. The literature review has shown that sport-based initiatives are a valuable tool to engage at-risk or delinquent youth in alternative settings that provide them with structure, positive identities, life skills and a brighter outlook on their future. Acknowledging this, many governments, NGOs or other stakeholders include sport and physical activity in their strategies to prevent and counteract violence and crime, radicalisation and (violent) extremism, and as a powerful way to rehabilitate the beneficiaries in moderate society. Most initiatives are attached at the community level and in this regard, it is important to recognise that strategies which are developed should be consistent with the laws of a country, and the socio-cultural values and beliefs of the respective setting. Additionally, program designers must identify appropriate partners to deliver interventions and monitoring & evaluation should be included in program design to ensure that resources are spent effectively and knowledge about best practice is developed and shared.

A consistent and repeated issue of all reviewed initiatives was that the quality and the impact of any intervention highly depends on the funding, on well-designed and theory-based strategies as well as on qualified staff. Furthermore, many authors stated an overall consensus regarding the pressing need for more research and analysis, such as to better understand the push and pull factors paving the way to youth crime, violence and radicalisation. Also, as in almost any sport-for-development or social/behavioural change initiatives the critic of such projects referred to the

fact that it remains unclear whether sport participation by itself would result in a positive outcome and behaviour change, independently of a program's other components or other circumstances.

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