



Counseling for Victims of Right-Wing, Racist and Anti-Semitic Violence in Germany

Quality Standards
for Professional Support



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Sevan Street 43
10319 Berlin
Phone: 030 3385 9777
E-mail: info@verband-brg.de
Web: www.verband-brg.de

Editorial office: Christoph Schulze, André Löscher, Zissi Saueremann,
Franz Zobel

Editing: Haidy Dam

Design: Robert Schiedewitz

V.i.S.d.P.: Robert Kusche

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INTRODUCTION

In the Federal Republic of Germany, right-wing violence¹ is a problem throughout society as a whole. Tens of thousands of such acts of violence since reunification in October 1990, including at least 169 murders, show that it is an ongoing phenomenon that cannot be effectively countered with short-term measures. Finding an appropriate way to deal with that violence – fighting it and consistently supporting those who are affected by it – can only happen through cross-sectional service to society as a whole. Successful countermeasures are based on professional expertise and the provision of appropriate resources. Measures that focus on perpetrators – whether through social work, education, politics or repression – is misguided. The consequences of their actions for the victims, their living situation, and their needs must be at the center of our perspective on the problem area.

Our counseling centers have taken up the task of, on one hand, supporting both victims of right-wing violence and their communities as they cope with the material and immaterial consequences of attacks and, on the other hand, strengthening their capacity to act. Additionally, they support the people who are directly affected and their communities as they develop and implement strategies for intervening in society and changing the overall conditions where they are. In terms of an intervention strategy², the counseling centers' task extends beyond the individual case: they help bring about positive changes in the general social conditions that tend to turn marginalized groups into targets of violence and exclusion.

Professional counseling and support for victims of right-wing violence is a relatively new field in Germany. It started to be established and professionalized in the wake of a media debate on right-wing violence in the summer of 2000, which led to a paradigm shift from the perspective of the perpetrator to that of the victim. As a result, the federal government adopted the *Civitas* program, which supported the establishment of specific counseling centers in the former East German states and Berlin. Additional support programs – starting in 2007, including in the western states.

Against this background, the objective of the present quality standards is to outline and establish the distinct profile of the field of action, thereby

¹ The term "right-wing violence" refers not only to acts motivated by neo-Nazi ideology, but is to be understood as a collective term that also refers to acts motivated by other misanthropic and anti-egalitarian attitudes. The spectrum of these attitudes and the groups affected is outlined in greater detail below.

² Mielenz, Ingrid. "Querschnittspolitik und Einmischungsstrategie," in, *Blätter der Wohlfahrtspflege*, 10/1997, Nomos, 208ff.

contributing to quality development and quality assurance. They are intended to promote self-understanding and reflection on one's own work and to encourage improvements. Last but not least, this paper should also justify the necessity of offering specific support services nationwide and backing that offer up with the necessary resources.

Accordingly, the text is aimed at the experts, cooperation partners, policy-makers, managers, and their staffs. At the same time, the quality standards will serve as internal guidelines for all counseling center employees and decision-makers.

The standards described should be understood as guiding principles: all advisory bodies are obligated to make a sustained effort to implement them. However, not all counseling centers are currently equipped with the necessary resources. For the time being, these standards remain a target and should be seen as a supplement to the general victims-assistance standards issued by the nationwide *Arbeitskreis der Opferhilfen* (ADO, Victims-Assistance Working Group).³ Unlike general victim counseling, the services that counseling centers offer victims of right-wing violence require an approach that is specific to the target group. In order to explain this starting point, the present paper focuses, first of all, on the specifics of right-wing violence, the social and political framework in which such acts take place, and the needs and realities of life faced by the various groups affected. Subsequently, the goals, working principles and guiding concepts as well as necessary quality development measures are presented as a basis for qualified and specialized counseling practices in Germany.

The present paper was prepared by a working group within the national network of counseling centers and discussed in detail by representatives of projects from East and West Germany with scientific support from the German Youth Institute, revised and adopted in early May 2014. It is based on previous work by the East Germany-wide coalition of counseling centers.⁴

We would like to thank the German Youth Institute for its scientific support and the Amadeu Antonio Foundation for its financial support.

⁴ Arbeitskreis der Opferhilfen (ado): Opferhilfestandards. Qualitätsstandards für eine professionelle Unterstützung von Kriminalitätsoptionen , online unter <http://www.opferhilfen.de/Standards.pdf>.

CONTEXT OF THE FIELD OF ACTION

Right-wing violence reflects social, historically developed power relations. For example, right-wing violence in Germany refers to its National Socialist and colonial past, the presence of racist ways of thinking within the population, or related public discourse. In the text below, we will explain what the counseling centers mean by right-wing violence, what are the specifics of it, what effects it has, and what specific barriers the affected groups face when trying to access support services.⁵

Specificity of right-wing violence

Right-wing violence expresses certain historically developed and socially widespread ideologies of exclusion. These include racism, anti-Semitism, social Darwinism, homophobia, and transphobia. Relevant here are the perceived attributes that perpetrators ascribe to these groups, not necessarily their actual characteristics.

Persons belonging to these groups are affected by right-wing violence:

- People affected by racism
for example refugees, migrants, Germans with a migration background, Black Germans, Sinti and Roma, Muslims, non-white foreign students, and non-white tourists
- Followers of non-right wing or alternative youth cultures
- Political opponents of the right
Antifascist activists, such as Antifa supporters, leftists, and all others who position themselves against the right, including people engaged in politics, citizens' alliances, churches, and media
- Persons affected by Social Darwinism
for example homeless people or people with disabilities
- People who deviate from the heterosexual norm
for example homo-, inter- and transsexuals
- Jews

⁵ For an in-depth discussion of the approach, see: Porath, Judith. (2013): Beratung für Betroffene rechter Gewalt. Spezifik des Arbeitsansatzes und des Beratungskonzepts. In: Opferperspektive (Hg.): Rassistische Diskriminierung und rechte Gewalt. An der Seite der Betroffenen beraten, informieren, intervenieren. Münster, S. 227-242.

Indications that a violent crime was motivated by right-wing ideology include:

- The attitude of the perpetrators
Clues might be: statements before, during, or after the crime; clothing or symbols; membership in right-wing groups; relevant biography
- The circumstances of the crime
Selection of victims; context of the crime, such as time and place or repeated attacks, including those that do not reach the threshold of violence; method of committing the crime
- The perception of those affected, i.e. the victim's perspective
This is decisive for counseling centers' evaluations

The starting point for counseling work is physical violence, including attempted violence. This includes assault, homicide, arson, and robbery. Coercion, threats, and targeted damage to property with significant impact on the persons concerned are also considered acts of violence.

Many right-wing attacks can be attributed to intent on occasion. The trigger for violence is usually not an interpersonal conflict between perpetrator and victim. They often do not know each other and instead meet by chance in a public space. Victims are attacked not only as individuals, but also as representatives of a devalued group. It is not a matter of arbitrary, aimless violence or violence typical for young people, which can be directed at anyone. The attackers internalize a decidedly right-wing orientation, or at least fragments of a right-wing ideology, which is decisive for committing the crime and selecting its targets.⁶ This makes it possible to depersonalize the victims and results in enormous brutality.⁷ Because of the ideologically based self-legitimation, perpetrators' awareness of injustice and guilt is low and they often even perceive their actions as implementing a "popular feeling."

⁶ See Gamper, Markus and Helmut Willems.: Rechtsextreme Gewalt – Hintergründe, Täter und Opfer. Fachwissenschaftliche Analyse. In: Heitmeyer, W. et. al. (Hrsg.): Gewalt. Beschreibungen, Analysen, Prävention. Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, Schriftenreihe Bd. 563, Bonn, S. 450 "Right-wing extremist violence - backgrounds, perpetrators and victims. Scientific analysis," in: Heitmeyer, W., et. al. (Eds.): *Violence. Descriptions, Analyses, Prevention*. Federal Agency for Civic Education publication series, Vol. 563, Bonn, 2006, 450.

⁷ See Kopp, Andrea and Meike Betz. Analyse der Entwicklungsverläufe von jugendlichen Gewalttätern mit rechtsextremem, fremdenfeindlicher oder antisemitischer Tatmotivation und Schlussfolgerungen für die Optimierung von Präventions- und Interventionsmaßnahmen. Projektabschlussbericht *Analysis of the developmental trajectories of violent juvenile offenders with right-wing extremist, xenophobic or anti-Semitic motivations and conclusions for the optimization of prevention and intervention measures Final project report*, pdf, 2007, 21; <http://www.sicherheitsoffensive.brandenburg.de/cms/detail.php> (accessed 1 May 2014); Schneider, Hans-Joachim: Hass- und Vorurteils kriminalität. In: Schneider, H.-J. (Hrsg.): Internationales Handbuch der Kriminologie. Besondere Probleme der Kriminologie "Crimes of hate and prejudice," in Schneider, H.-J. (Ed.): *International Handbook of Criminology. Special Problems of Criminology*. Vol. 2, De Gruyter, Berlin, 2009, 308.

Impact of right-wing violence

Right-wing violence works on several levels, which differentiate it from other forms of violence.

At the micro level, right-wing violence is a concrete experience of individuals, which can leave them hurt, marginalized, and shaken in their identity and on their path through life. Many affected persons are not only confronted with massive experiences of powerlessness during the attack itself, but often experience the social processes that follow as hurtful. If the experience of violence is not recognized as such by the community, the authorities in criminal proceedings, or the media or if blame is assigned to the victims, this often produces a secondary victimization.⁸

On the middle level, an act of right-wing violence often has an effect beyond the individuals who are directly impacted and, by functioning as a message act, affects far more people: all those who belong to the particular group affected. As intended by the perpetrators, *anxiety spaces*⁹ can arise in the local and social environment and collective victimization can take place.¹⁰

At the macro level, right-wing violence is directed against central democratic values and negates the existence of universally valid human rights. In particular, it expresses the rejection of an open and heterogeneous society and reinforces corresponding social sentiments.

Specific access barriers for targeted groups

For a large proportion of those affected, there are specific barriers to access to assistance. On the one hand, they generally have limited access to social resources because they are exposed to structural social exclusion. Their mobility is often limited, they are often financially precarious, there is a lack of knowledge about the appropriate support that is available, or there are language barriers. Refugees, for example, are particularly vulnerable due to their mostly marginalized and structurally disadvantaged position in society: they are often subject to work bans, cramped housing conditions, and social isolation in addition to being confronted with institutional discrimination and racist everyday experiences.

⁸ See Schneider, Hans-Joachim. *Viktimologie, Wissenschaft vom Verbrechenopfer*, Tübingen *Victimology, Science of the Victim of Crime*, Tübingen, 1975, 34.

⁹ The term *Angstraum* (anxiety space) generally refers to a place where people can feel fear. See Schulze, Christoph and Ella Weber (Eds.). *Kämpfe um Raumhoheit. Rechte Gewalt, „No Go Areas“ und „National befreite Zonen“ Fights for Spatial overignty. Right-wing violence, 'No Go Areas' and 'National Liberated Zones'*, Münster, 2011.

¹⁰ Cf. Strobl, Rainer, Olaf Lobermeier, and Andreas Böttger. *Verunsicherung und Vertrauensverlust bei Minderheiten durch stellvertretende und kollektive Viktimisierungen*. In: Institut für interdisziplinäre Konflikt- und Gewaltforschung (Hg.): *Journal für Konflikt- und Gewaltforschung*, "Uncertainty and loss of trust among minorities through vicarious and collective victimization.," in: *Journal für Konflikt- und Gewaltforschung*, Vol. 5, No. 1, 2003, Bielefeld, 29-48. In addition, right-wing violence at the middle level also affects the perpetrators: Right-wing violence is often executed by organized and propagandized right-wing actors. For them, violence signifies a moment of internal group stabilization, a shared experience of power, and self-assurance – provided that there are no noticeable countermeasures.

On the other hand, many of those affected lack confidence in state institutions, especially in criminal justice authorities. Coercion, insults, and threats often go unreported by the people affected because they believe that these are not actionable assaults. Assault and battery offenses are not reported due to, among other things, distrust of the police, negative personal or community experiences in the past, or the impression that reporting would only cause subsequent danger and not an effective investigation.¹¹

¹¹ For example, when police interrogations are designed to be incriminating, victims' accounts are not believed, or they are even assumed to be guilty for what happened to them.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND GOALS

The work of the counseling centers is effective on three levels, analogous to the levels of right-wing violence:

Micro level

The persons concerned are supported in coping with the direct and indirect consequences of the attack and in exercising their rights. Within a protected framework, they experience appreciation, recognition, and empathy and receive guidance. The counselors support those affected in increasing their experience of security and self-efficacy, regaining control over their own lives, and being able to classify their traumatic experience as part of their long-term biographical experience. To this end, the centers support them in reviewing, expanding, and utilizing existing resources, options for action, and decision-making possibilities and accompany them as they develop and realize their goals for future life planning.

Middle level

Those affected and their communities are supported locally in their self-articulation and organization and in the enforcement of their demands. When the people affected request it, counseling centers inform civil society and state actors as well as political decision-makers in the community about the perspectives of those affected in the wake of an act of right-wing violence. The centers also promote processes of solidarity, so that regional actors actively participate in improving the situation of (potentially) affected persons. One of the goals is to avoid collective victimization of affected groups.

Macro level

The work of the counseling centers is a necessary contribution to a vision of a democratic society that provides equal access to social resources – free from discrimination. This is to be achieved by supporting populations that are discriminated against within existing social power structures. In this way, the counseling centers bring the perspectives of those affected into the social discourse and advocate for realizing their demands and strengthening their rights and opportunities.¹²

¹² See Stark, Wolfgang. Beratung und Empowerment – empowermentorienteerte Beratung? "Consulting and empowerment - empowerment oriented consulting?" in Nestmann, F., F. Engel, and U. Sickendiek (Eds.), *Das Handbuch der Beratung, Vol. 1: Disciplines and approaches*, 2nd ed., dgvt-Verlag, Tübingen, 2007, 535-546; Staub-Bernasconi, Silvia. "Social work and social problems. A disciplinary and professional provision," in Thole, W.(Ed.), *Grundriss soziale Arbeit. Introductory manual*. Leske+Budrich, Opladen, 2002, 253f.

BASES FOR ACTION

This chapter outlines the specific bases for action for counseling work. They include quality standards that also apply to general victim support and those that take into account the special requirements of specialized counseling work.

Working Principles

- Low Threshold

In order to reach the specific target groups, low-threshold work is an essential prerequisite. To achieve this, an approaching, i.e., proactive, outreach-based approach is central.¹³ This means that the counseling centers actively search for right-wing attacks in order to offer support to those affected. At the same time, they offer on-site counseling to reduce financial, legal, and psychosocial barriers that stand in the way of taking advantage of offers of assistance (e.g., travel costs, residency requirements for refugees, or fear).

Initial contact is made as soon as possible. Acceptance of a consulting offer is voluntary. The location of the consultation is determined together with the client and, where appropriate, suitable facilities of the cooperation partner are used. If necessary, a language service is involved. In addition, access to drop-in centers themselves – as well as the counseling centers' internet presence

– is made as barrier-free as possible. Counseling is no-cost and does not require that charges be filed.

- Anonymity and confidentiality

Furthermore, consultation is anonymous and absolutely confidential, if desired. All employees are subject to a non-disclosure obligation, i.e., the content of a consultation are only passed on to third parties with the express consent of the person concerned.

- Partiality

Another important principle in working with people affected by right-wing violence is partiality. This includes a professional attitude on the part of the counselors, characterized by solidarity and acceptance toward those affected. Their perspectives, needs, and interests are the focus of counseling and inform the development of intervention strategies.

Clients' experiences are understood as both a personal expression of their life story and an outcome of social power relations.

The counseling centers also support those affected in representing and asserting their own interests and, if desired, represent them publicly, because partiality also requires a socio-political commitment to the rights and demands of those affected. This also includes contextualizing actions and addressing grievances while clarifying violent right-wing crimes or working with victims of right-wing violence.

Counseling victims on a partisan, pro-victim basis institutionally precludes working with perpetrators in the same organization that is providing victim counseling.

- Independence

A partisan, pro-victim commitment to the interests of affected people requires that counseling centers be independent of state institutions and political parties in terms of content and structure. The interests of those affected by right-wing violence are often in conflict with those of other actors and can only be accommodated through the institutional independence of the counseling centers. The counseling centers also require physical separation from authorities and other state agencies. Independence is an essential criterion for credibility among those affected and forms the basis for confidence-building.

- Orientation toward solutions, resources, and mandates

An attack on physical integrity can, at first, limit the affected persons' ability to see what the possibilities are for dealing with the consequences of the crime. After victimization, one's view of one's own potential or the resources available in the community are often distorted. Counseling centers assume that every person is capable of recognizing solutions for particular situations and questions in everyday life. Counseling can highlight and expand these possibilities and ultimately help affected persons regain their self-determination. Accordingly, it is systemically oriented. The focus is on constructing solutions, not on examining problems.¹⁴

Resource orientation means focusing on each individual's strengths and abilities, the availability of which is also central to the coping process. In consulting, the aim is to uncover and promote them and to tap into additional resources.

Mandate orientation within a consulting relationship means that counselors

¹⁴ See von Schlippe, Arist and Jochen Switzerland. *Lehrbuch der syst. Therapy and Counseling*. Göttingen, 2007, 124.

only become active after the client – and only the client – has given a mandate. Accordingly, mandate clarification and development are important components of the counseling process.

- Difference sensitivity and intersectionality

In order to provide professional counseling for victims of right-wing violence, it is essential that counselors critically reflect on their own social position and how they deal with victims and their backgrounds. This is especially true for counseling relationships in which the counselor and the victim have different social and cultural backgrounds, for example in counseling refugees, youth belonging to subcultures, or homeless persons. In light of this, it makes sense for counseling teams to be composed of employees with different (socio)cultural backgrounds.

If the counselors are white Germans, they must be aware of their location and role in the white majority society when counseling people with racist experiences. The counselors' understanding of their professional role also includes a perception of and reflection on differences and inequalities, power relations due to age, social status, education, origin, sexual orientation and/or identity, religion, physical or psychological impairments, and other social categories. When intersectionality is a consideration, inequalities are not only reduced to the sum of corresponding categories, but the interaction of mutually reinforcing factors of disadvantage are also taken into account.

Guiding concepts

- Everyday life and life-world orientation

Based on respect for and acknowledgment of the everyday lives of the people concerned, their experiences and coping achievements, the counselors support the affected by enabling or facilitating a successful, self-determined day-to-day life. In addition to an approach to the everyday perspectives of the affected,¹⁵ proximity to everyday life in the sense of accessibility and low threshold (i.e. easily accessible), the holistic nature of the centers' services, and the establishment of participation and co-determination are of central importance for this. Preventive measures to build and expand sustainably supporting infrastructures and to establish social justice also contribute.¹⁶

¹⁵ See Mecheril, Paul. "Competence without competence'. Educational action under immigration conditions," in Auernheimer, Georg (Ed.), *Intercultural competence and pedagogical professionalism*. Wiesbaden, 2010, 30.

¹⁶ See Thiersch, Hans, et al. „Lebensweltorientierte Soziale Arbeit," in Thole, Werner (Ed.), *Grundriss Sozialer Arbeit. An introductory manual*. Wiesbaden, 2005, 173f.

- Empowerment

The term *empowerment*, in the sense of self-empowerment, aims to (re)create and strengthen the power, autonomy, and self-direction of those affected by the circumstances of their everyday lives and at the same time refers to necessary changes in social power relations and improved access to resources. Supporting empowerment processes is thus an essential conceptual foundation and at the same time a description of the objectives of the centers' work. It requires a professional attitude that is characterized by respect for the life plans of those affected, respect for their autonomy, and recognition of their self-will.¹⁷

¹⁷ See Mecheril, Paul. *Einführung in die Migrationspädagogik*, Weinheim, Beltz, 2004, 38.

KEY PROCESSES

The following section presents central processes of practical counseling work, which can be directly derived from how counseling centers position themselves and are decisive for the quality and success of counseling work. This set of instruments is suitable for meaningfully addressing the effects of right-wing violence at its various levels.

Case research

Case research means a targeted, active search for people affected by right-wing violence in order to make an offer of help. In order to be able to offer support, continuous and systematic evaluation of information about (violent) crimes with possible right-wing motives is fundamental. For this purpose, the counseling centers do research daily on local and national newspapers, press releases from the police, public prosecutor's offices and courts, Internet sources, and information from cooperation partners. In addition, they regularly evaluate answers to parliamentary questions on right-wing motivated violent crimes and, in some federal states, compare anonymous cases of reported crimes with the state criminal investigation offices in order to learn of further attacks.

If there are indications of violent acts motivated by right-wing ideology, the counselors try to find out details about the affected persons and options for contacting them. For this purpose, they contact, for example, self-organized groups of (potentially) affected persons and cooperation partners and ask about support, or they conduct research directly on site. If necessary, they forward written offers of help to the police or the judiciary.

Counseling and support

The counseling and support services are aimed at both those directly affected by right-wing violence and those indirectly affected: relatives, friends, and witnesses.

To ensure quality, the counseling centers work in small teams. Selected counseling processes are prepared and processed in collegial consultations. The teams regularly engage in external case and team supervision.

For quality assurance purposes, initial interviews are usually not conducted alone, but rather by a team of two counselors. The counselors remain responsible for the case throughout the entire counseling process, whereby tasks are assigned according to resource requirements.

and specific needs can be distributed. Placing responsibility in a team of two increases the counselors' availability for the persons concerned and guarantees personal continuity in the consultation, which is essential for building up and expanding a relationship of trust. In addition, it serves to relieve the consultants by enabling them to prepare and follow up on consultations together and to ensure substitution, if necessary.

The counseling centers document their research on a case, agreed upon assignments, and the course of counseling and interventions in a standardized case file. They are obligated to keep case files in compliance with legal data protection regulations. The counseling centers also maintain a joint database in which core services are documented and evaluated.

What the centers offer covers a broad spectrum of information, advice, and support and should be understood as a flexible, interlocking portfolio of services. The starting point is a joint clarification of mission and objectives. The type of support depends on the respective case constellation: the psycho-social situation of the people directly or indirectly affected, their individual problems, resources and needs, the time of the initial consultation, the current risk situation, the affected persons' integration in social networks, previous experience, the possibilities of further mediation, and the social and political circumstances.

Support may include:

- Crisis intervention
- (Psycho-social) counseling
- Advice on filing a complaint
- Accompaniment to police and public prosecutors' offices
- Advice on the course of criminal proceedings and the rights and obligations of victim witnesses and civil law claims
- Preparation for, accompaniment to, and follow-up on court proceedings
- Accompaniment on visits to other authorities, doctors, psychologists, or psychotherapists
- Further referral to specialized psychiatric, psychological, or psychotherapeutic institutions and other counseling centers
- Research on, information about, and analysis of the level of additional threat

- Assistance in applying for compensation and other financial aid
- Mediation, accompaniment to, and financing for specialist lawyers
- Advice on how to deal with the media and support with respect to inquiries from journalists and in case-related public relations

The duration of the consulting and support process varies from one-time contact to a consulting relationship lasting several years. One reason for longer consulting relationships, for example, is the often long time lag between the crime and the completion of the legal action. Sometimes the focus is on supporting the victim in solving acute problems or trauma, which must be dealt with before addressing a lasting impact of the crime from a position, when the person feel stable again. It can take several years before the psychological consequences of the crime have been processed and the victim's ability to act has been restored.¹⁸

Local intervention

The starting point for local intervention by the counseling centers is always a right-wing act of violence. Local intervention is carried out upon request and in close coordination with the affected or potentially affected persons and results from their need for public rejection of the act, the desire for solidarity and improvement of their living situation locally. Accordingly, a local intervention aims to improve the social environment for the prospect of the people who are affected or potentially affected. groups, to bring about solidarity processes on the ground and strengthen the position of (potentially) affected persons.¹⁹ It is also intended to signal to the attackers and their sympathizers that their actions have not gained public approval and thus they have achieved the opposite of what they intended.

Local interventions can include the following fields of action:

- Discussions with cooperation partners on-site or with local and state authorities
- Support for and accompaniment of affected persons or representation of those who do not want to or cannot articulate or represent their own interests and concerns
- Support for the affected people and their community in organizing events and solidarity actions

¹⁸ See: Mondon-Kuhn, Harald.: „Grundzüge einer personenzentrierten Opferberatung,“ in: Hanauer Hilfe e.V. (Ed.), *The development of professional victim support. 25 years Hanauer Hilfe*. Wiesbaden, 2009, 53.

¹⁹ See: Köbberling, Gesa. "Local intervention as a space-related field of action," in Victim Perspective (Ed.): *Racist discrimination and right-wing violence. Counseling, information, intervention at the side of the victims*. Münster, 2013, 243-260.

- Case-related public relations, for example initiating appeals for donations; research on right-wing structures to provide background information and analysis

Any local intervention requires strategic planning based on a feasibility study. The prerequisite is an analysis of the local conditions that is as detailed as possible. The counseling centers work together with other actors according to their needs and existing possibilities and, if necessary, implement joint or complementary activities. Local interventions require good knowledge of the local conditions, especially regarding the existence and strength of right-wing structures.

Networking

Networking is relationship work that takes place on different levels, pursues different goals, and requires sufficient resources and continuity. Network partners are selected according to the requirements of the content –for example with regard to the monitoring tasks of the counseling centers.

At the micro level, the focus is on networking with communities of (potentially) affected people and their environment. This provides the necessary knowledge about attacks and problems and ensures access to the affected groups. On the middle level, continuous contact with networks that are pursuing anti-fascist and racism-critical initiatives and with local politics and institutions is of great importance. There, the needs of the communities of (potentially) affected persons should be communicated and appropriate measures against right-wing violence should be initiated or promoted in their interest. At the macro level, networking takes place in the state and federal government. As lobby organizations for victims of right-wing violence, the counseling centers participate in supra-regional alliances (such as the *Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft Demokratieentwicklung* (In Eng: *Federal Working Group for Democracy Development*), exchange information with civil society organizations (such as refugee councils or self-organized migrant groups), and with politics and local administration (such as parties, state ministries, and regional centers for political education).

An exchange of information with state institutions such as the police and the public prosecutor's office should be sought in the interests of those affected.

Monitoring and public relations

As independent monitoring centers, the advisory centers research and document right-wing motivated attacks in their respective areas of responsibility. Case research is an essential basis for this. Building on that research, they publish – in conjunction with those affected only with their consent – anonymous reports

in their publications. Essential information about attacks is also published annually in the form of statistics for all the East German states compiled jointly by the specialist counseling centers. There is an explicit desire for and there are plans to compile common statistics for all of Germany in the future.

The counseling centers have broad criteria for inclusion in monitoring programs, but those standard do not completely align with the Federal Criminal Police Office's criteria for what constitutes *politisch motivierte Kriminalität* (PMK, politically motivated criminality), which are applicable nationwide.²⁰ The perception and interpretation of the act by the affected persons are the main criteria for classifying an attack as right-wing violence. In addition, other objective clues about the circumstances of the act may also be available (for example, unambiguous insults, the appearance of the aggressors, or prior threats).

The aim of monitoring is to show the actual extent of right-wing violence, to make it socially debatable, and to promote countermeasures.

Through public relations work that goes beyond monitoring, the counseling centers expand the social discourse on the causes and effects of right-wing violence to include the perspective of those who are affected by it. They sensitize the public to their concerns and their living situation and work to improve the position of groups affected by right-wing violence in society.²¹

Public relations work includes publishing press releases and other documents, including on the member organization pages or in newsletters, organizing press conferences, holding interviews, organizing or participation in podium discussions, information evenings or other public events, and publishing brochures or books. Upon request, background discussions are held with journalists or suitable contact persons are arranged.

Last but not least, public relations work serves to systematically make the specialist counseling centers known to (potentially) affected persons and multipliers. The projects have produced and published various brochures – some of them in several languages – on their work, the rights and opportunities of those affected, and civil society options for action.

²⁰ Differences between figures compiled by the police and those of the counseling centers for violent crimes motivated right-wing ideologies are due to the fact that the counseling centers also record attacks that have not been officially reported. In addition, they also document threats, necessities, and damage to property, if these have serious consequences for the victims. On the other hand, some offenses counted by the police (e.g., resisting law enforcement officers, breach of the peace, or interfering with shipping, air, rail, or road traffic) are not recorded by the counseling centers. Finally, the counseling centers – in contrast to police registration – update their statistics from previous years as soon as additional attacks become known. For more on this topic, see, among others, Wendel, Kay. *Rechte Gewalt, Definition und Erfassungskriterien*, <http://www.opferperspektive.de/Chronologie/624.html>, 2007 (access 1 May 2014).

²¹ See: Staub-Bernasconi, Silvia. "Social work and social problems. A disciplinary and profession-related determination," in Thole, W.(Ed.), *Grundriss soziale Arbeit. Introductory manual*. Leske+Budrich, Opladen, 2002, 253f.

FINANCIAL, STAFFING, AND STRUCTURAL FRAMEWORK

The counseling centers provide a long-term service for society as a whole. Professional victim support requires adequate financial, personnel, and structural resources. Only the long-term and plannable support that counseling centers for victims of right-wing violence can provide at the federal and state level guarantees personnel continuity in its teams and ensures the quality of the work.

In order to be able to function nationwide, the counseling centers in each federal state must have sufficient staff. When putting an entire team together, they also pay attention to ensuring that teams represent the diversity of the society. Accessibility, the affected person's choice with regard to the counselor's social position (e.g., according to gender), the possibility of short-term intervention, and sufficient flexibility must all be guaranteed. All employees must receive appropriate remuneration. If necessary, the use of short-term staff should be economically feasible.

Where geographically necessary, several adequately equipped offices distributed throughout the country must be maintained in order to ensure a minimum response time in acute problem situations and the greatest possible involvement of the consultants in the specific local and regional contexts. All other operating expenses, such as rent and public relations costs, must be covered by a reliable budget. The budget must additionally include funds for regular and qualified supervision, additional training, language mediation, and any necessary aids. A company car and a sufficient budget for travel expenses must also be provided.

For the work that the counseling centers do, acceptance by the groups concerned is an important prerequisite. All employees must have a sound knowledge of the social situation, living situation, everyday and structural disadvantages and exclusions of the respective affected groups and, in addition, they must have knowledge on topics such as right-wing extremism, racism, anti-Semitism, homophobia, and refugee and migration policy or Social Darwinism.

Access to the affected groups requires empathy and authenticity on the part of the counselors.

In order to be able to guarantee successful counseling and support, counselors need to process specific knowledge and skills, especially with regard to: psycho-social counseling; trans-cultural communication; multilingualism and non-verbal communication skills; crisis intervention; interdisciplinary knowledge of traumatology and victimology; neo-Nazism and racism; criminal, civil, alien, and asylum law; social law (e.g., how criminal proceedings work, accessory prosecution, compensation claims, residency, and alien-specific social benefits). The counseling centers are working to ensure that the right to refuse to testify will be enshrined in law for counselors in the future – analogous to, for example, employees at addiction counseling centers.

The entire team should also have access to the following skills: conflict management, press and public relations, de-escalation skills, communication skills, research and analysis skills, as well as knowledge of country- and region-specific characteristics.

JOINT QUALITY ASSURANCE

The counseling centers have established an overarching quality assurance panel that meets at least four times a year. All counseling centers should name a staff member who participates in the quality panel. The quality panel discusses overriding issues of quality development with respect to the counseling approach, develops proposals for joint solutions, and makes decisions about joint public relations and lobbying.

An important element of quality assurance is continuous, joint continuing education for employees in the consulting network, dealing with, for example, specialist discourse, developments in the field, or legal innovations. These continuing educational measures are initiated, planned, and implemented by the quality circle. In addition, the individual projects organize continuing educational courses, which are usually open to other participants from the network.

OUTLOOK

The work of the counseling centers is a necessary contribution to realizing the vision of a democratic and discrimination-free society. Right-wing actors and racist and anti-Semitic attitudes must be recognized and taken seriously as phenomena in society as a whole. The specific counseling centers' many years of experience and society's handling of the terror of the *National Socialist Underground (NSU)* show that the perspective and needs of those affected must be at the forefront. The European Union also demands special consideration and counseling for victims of right-wing violence.²²

Based on these considerations, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- One consequence of NSU terror must be the development, establishment and long-term safeguarding for independent, specific advisory structures throughout Germany.
- For the practice of counseling work, it is important to grant counselors the right to refuse to testify in court.
- In order to ensure and further develop network continuity, information exchange, and the counseling centers' joint public relations and lobbying work nationwide, financing for a coordination office located at the counseling centers is urgently needed.
- In order to ensure common quality standards and reflection on one's own work, continuous scientific monitoring of the work at the project level is necessary.

²² See: *Directive 2012/29/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council on minimum standards for the rights, assistance and protection of victims of crime*. 25 October 2012. Available online at: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2012:315:0057:0073:DE:PDF..>

FIRST SIGNATORIES

- B.U.D. - Victim counselling on behalf of the Bavarian State Coordination Office against Right-Wing Extremism
- ReachOut, Berlin
- Victim Perspective, Brandenburg
- LOBBI - Counseling, support and information for victims of right-wing violence in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern
- Opferberatung Rheinland (OBR) - Counseling and support for victims of right-wing extremist and racist violence, North Rhine-Westphalia
- Counseling center for victims of discrimination and right-wing violence, Saarland
- Victim counseling RAA Saxony
- Mobile counseling for victims of right-wing violence, Saxony-Anhalt
- Counseling center for victims of right-wing violence in the Anhalt/Bitterfeld/Wittenberg region, Saxony-Anhalt
- ezra - Mobile counseling for victims of right-wing, racist, and anti-Semitic violence, Thuringia
- Initiative for a counseling center for victims of right-wing, racist, and anti-Semitic violence in Lower Saxony
- Beau. Counseling center for victims of right-wing, racist, anti-Semitic, and antiziganistic violence, Baden-Württemberg
- Initiative for counseling for victims of right-wing violence in Schleswig-Holstein

