

**There must not be any “gut-feeling reporting” to police from exit workers about their clients**

**Position statement with regard to interaction between exit work practitioners and intelligence/ security agencies (by Harald Weilnböck)**

In the wake of a terror attack in Germany by a person who had currently participated in an exit program, the Berlin daily newspaper [Der Tagesspiegel published an interview](#) with a leading exit work practitioner in November 2020. The exit practitioner said that he advised his national team of exit workers to report to security “already at the slightest gut feeling about a potential risk of committing an attack” and the nation-wide nine clients have been reported on this basis.

Exit helpers do important and indispensable work. They need the support of all of us, as well as infrastructure and stability of working conditions – e.g. also through a law for the promotion of democracy. With all our support, the political pressure would also be taken off the exit companions, which sometimes tempts them to become entangled in misleading considerations as the one uttered by the above mentioned exit practitioner. For he has been seriously mistaken when suggesting that exit workers should "pass on the name of a client to security services even on the slightest gut feeling". This, however, is entirely the wrong signal! Which young person in extremist entanglement would enroll in an exit program if it was known that the practitioners would report to the police on a gut feeling? Moreover, this would destroy the exit program itself. Such reporting is also completely unnecessary! Because it is the duty of all citizens anyway to report when there is a recognizable imminent danger; and professions in the social field are trained to recognize situations of (self-) endangerment of the client or others.

Also, what in the world should the police do when getting the report of a gut feeling by an exit practitioner? No, if a hotline needs to be considered, then this hotline should go to psychological and psychiatric services, other help systems, and if necessary the inclusion of forensic expertise for a more precise clarification. But all this requires infrastructure, stability – and unambiguous support from all of us for effective and humane crime prevention and exit work as well as for youth and educational work that creates resilience both inside and outside schools. Because it is always about us, the modern, democratic society. Any hasty interconnection of social work and security agencies is detrimental. Modern democracy thrives on the division of powers, intelligent task sharing and joint commitment.