

## English Summary

### Exit: A follow-up and evaluation of the organisation for people wishing to leave racist and nazi groups

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The Exit project was initiated in 1998 by a person who had himself broken his ties to the White Power movement a few years earlier. The project's objectives are to help young people wishing to break out of racist and nazi groups, to provide support to the parents of these young people and to disseminate information and expertise on the White Power movement to those whose work brings them into contact with these youngsters. Today (in 2001) the project has seven employees in two districts, Stockholm and Motala.

From the very beginning, the Exit project received financial support from the Government.

The National Council for Crime Prevention has been tasked by the Government to follow up and evaluate the work conducted by the Exit project, and to identify shortcomings and factors which may serve to obstruct the work of providing support to persons wishing to leave racist and nazi groups.

This summary is based on the issues which the Council was specifically asked to address in the follow-up work commissioned by the Government.

*To what extent is there a demand for the services offered by Exit, and to what extent are these services provided?*

Between the time the project started in the summer of 1998 and April 2001

- 133 people wishing to leave the White Power movement have turned to Exit. According to Exit, all these individuals have been given help.
- Exit has received between 300 and 400 telephone calls from parents in need of advice and support. All those requiring assistance have been given help.

- approximately 180 lectures and training sessions have been conducted. At the present time (spring 2001), Exit is having to decline to participate in connection with approximately 25 per cent of inquiries due to a lack of resources.

*Who contacts Exit?*

- Young people looking for help to break their ties with the White Power movement. Those seeking help may be described in the following way:
  - Just over 90 per cent are men, with the majority living outside Stockholm, principally in central and southern Sweden. The number of girls contacting Exit has been small.
  - At the time they made contact with Exit, the majority were between 18 and 25 years of age, and had been involved with the White Power movement for between two and five years.
  - During their time in the White Power movement, half had engaged in alcohol abuse and had to some extent abused other drugs too.<sup>1</sup>
  - Half have been convicted of criminal offences.<sup>2</sup> A further quarter report having committed such offences without then being convicted.
- Parents of children involved in the White Power movement.
- People who come into contact with these young people in the course of their work – from schools, local authorities, council associations, voluntary and cultural organisations and religious bodies.

*What kind of help do they receive?*

- Exit follows a five point program for people wishing to leave the White Power movement. The program is based on the needs of such young people during different phases of this process. They receive practical, social and emotional support and help over a relatively long period. The contacts with Exit are usually maintained for between seven and twelve months.
- Parents are referred to the parent group in the Klippan area or are given assistance in understanding the kind of group their children have joined and advice on how they should act towards their children.
- Those people who come into contact with such young people in the course of their work are provided with information about the White Power movement and the steps that can be taken by schools, for example, to help young people who have joined groups of this kind and to prevent further recruitment into such groups.

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<sup>1</sup> According to information given to Exit by the young people themselves, and which Exit has compiled anonymously for the use of the National Council.

<sup>2</sup> According to information given to Exit by the young people themselves, and which Exit has compiled anonymously for the use of the National Council.

*What has been the effect of making contact with Exit?*

- Of the 133 people who have been given assistance by Exit, 125 have left the White Power movement, which has also meant, according to their own reports, that they have ceased to commit criminal offences or to abuse drugs or alcohol. The 17 who were interviewed felt that the help they had been given by Exit played a decisive role in their chances of successfully leaving the movement.
- The parents who were interviewed were very satisfied with the help they had received from Exit and felt that it had been very important both for themselves and their children.
- Half of the persons interviewed from schools, local authorities etc. had made contact with Exit as a result of problems they were having with pupils who belonged to or sympathised with the White Power movement. They report that Exit's involvement has made an important contribution to easing the problems, or resolving them completely.

*To what extent do local authorities and others making use of the services provided by Exit contribute to the funding of the project?*

Exit charges a fee for lectures and training sessions, which are held in schools and other locations. They also charge for their contributions to the more long term strategic collaborations that have been initiated in a number of central and southern Sweden's local authorities. On the other hand, they are not usually offered a fee for lectures given to local police or social service units, merely reimbursement to cover travel and other expenses. As a rule, Exit pays the travelling expenses of persons attempting to leave the White Power movement, to enable them to meet Exit personnel and to participate in various joint activities. Exit also makes exceptions and charges no fee when a small school, for example, lacks the financial resources to pay for external assistance.

*Does the work conducted by Exit comply with the goals and intentions of the government funding?*

The goals established by Exit, which also constitute the basis for government funding, focus on developing a model to

- assist young people who are involved with various racist and nationalist groups to leave these groups, and
- to prevent and obstruct recruitment into these groups, by
- addressing the youths in question, their parents and others who work among and with young people.

Work within the project has been conducted in accordance with these goals. Exit has helped a large number of youths to leave these groups and has also supported those parents who have sought assistance. Exit works preventively by giving lectures and training people who come into contact with these youths in the course of their work. In the context of school presentations, the

project has also reached and been able to influence other young people on their way into, or already involved with, the White Power movement.

## The Council's assessment

During the three years since its initiation, the work of the Exit project has been relatively extensive as well as successful. According to the interviews conducted with young persons leaving the White Power movement and with parents, both these groups feel that the assistance they have been provided by Exit has had a decisive impact on their chances of successfully making the break. Interviews with representatives from schools and other places where Exit has been involved with lectures or training sessions also show these bodies to be very satisfied with Exit's work.

There are nonetheless problems associated with the work of the Exit project. In many ways, Exit can be seen as typical of organisations started by committed enthusiasts, displaying both the strengths and weaknesses of many such organisations. Their strength lies in the way that those involved are familiar with the problems at issue, are able to work flexibly in accordance with the demands of a given situation and are willing to provide support to those in need of assistance at all hours of the day and night. The weakness of operations of this kind is that their organisational structures, decision-making procedures and professional leadership are often inadequate.

In Exit's case, these organisational and managerial weaknesses have become apparent as the operation has begun to expand. This probably explains the difficulties experienced in association with the regional expansion, and the remarkably high staff turnover. If the operation is to survive in the longer term, it is essential that ways are found to improve the organisation's administrative capabilities and its competence in the management of personnel

Inadequate levels of collaboration with other agencies at the local level constitute an additional problem, albeit one whose resolution lies beyond the reach of Exit. The youngsters turning to Exit come from many different areas, primarily in southern and central Sweden, and in all they represent fourteen different counties. It is not possible for an organisation of the type represented by Exit to establish a contact network suitable for collaborations with a large number of local agencies. It would therefore be very useful if there were qualified individuals at the regional level who kept themselves informed about work with young people attempting to leave the White Power movement, and who could function as a link between Exit and actors at the local level.

These issues would benefit by being discussed in the working group appointed by the government, whose task is to make proposals on how continued work to support persons wishing to leave racist and nazi groups might be conducted and financed.