HANDBOOK

ON PREVENTING AND COMBATING RADICALISATION AMONG YOUNGSTERS IN EUROPE

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ABOUT THE PROJECT

Project title: "Prevention of youth radicalisation through education and empowerment of youth workers"

Summary of the project:

The online radicalisation and violent extremism are issues that communities are exposed to for more years now, especially after the terrorist attacks in different cities in Europe and wars in the world have occurred. For years, the fear that young people can be a targeted group by violent extremist has been in the attention of governmental institutions, families, working places as well as community. This fear comes even more today where this kind of content is presented, almost without control or moderation, in the digital world. Young people are the most present community in the online world, through accessing of different social media, platforms, and so on. This makes them as one of the most vulnerable community to this phenomenon.
During Covid-19 the online content was even more embraced by young people and therefore the potential to being exposed to online radicalisation has increased.

There is a need for youth workers and educators to address this issue and at the same time to find an innovative response to support youth workers with new approaches, materials, digital tools that contribute to better impact on solving this issue.

The project is directly developing their knowledge and capacity, by providing youth workers, youth professionals and youth organisations with the relevant data, tools and training their digital competences, thus increases the level of quality of youth work, and its capacity to address urgent and emerging matters. These digital competences are, for most of the youth workers, not acquired during their formal education and so are largely overlooked.

In the field of youth work an ideal society could be described as a fully inclusive community of active citizens. This concept of inclusive community of active citizens has changed in recent years, and especially in the recent Covid-19 pandemic times, due to the reality of today society in which technology is taking more and more importance and thus having impact in each field of our life.
Not only that the young people are nowadays increasingly engaging with new technologies and digital media instead of joining face-to-face activities of youth centres/clubs, but also this period of 2 years of Covid-19 pandemic measures and limitations to travelling and organising face-to-face residential mobility activities for youngsters - have resulted in the lack/decrease of interaction of youngsters with their peers from other countries and communities, which further increased the potential impact of negative influence of (online) radicalisation among/towards youngsters.
For the last 2 years, youth workers and youth organisations have decreased the number of their face-to-face European youth work activities, which resulted in the decrease of number of youngsters benefitting from such activities that inspire intercultural learning/dialogue, acceptance of others and European citizenship.
In addition to that, current war in Ukraine further influences youngsters in a negative way.

We believe that youngsters who have been through more youth work activities that promote European citizenship and values, are more resilient towards the potential negative impacts of both pandemic isolation measures and war related hatred and radicalisation spread online and offline.
As we have noticed a decline in the number of beneficiaries, youngsters having opportunities for quality interaction with peers from other countries/communities, and an increase in the negative influence of online radicalisation on them in our communities and among our youth (work)

organisations, we have gathered and are motivated to do this project that will assist us in addressing this situation.

Aim of the project:
- Developing and strengthening capacities of youth workers and youngsters in preventing and combating radicalisation through development of educational methodologies and tools that support online and offline anti-radicalisation youth work.

Project Specific objectives:
- Raising awareness on negative impacts of radicalisation and educating young people (mainstream and marginalised) on anti-radicalisation through the development of inspiring handbook, toolkit, as well as the e-learning platform.
- Empowering youth workers and improving knowledge management of our organisations in theory and practice for building competences of youth workers in prevention and combating radicalisation through the development of innovative curriculum and the e-learning course.
- Exchange good practices and further develop effective partnership among partners from 6 European countries (and beyond) with different realities regarding education, awareness and practices on anti-radicalisation and its prevention among the community.

Project activities are:
- A1 – Project Management
- M1 – Partnership meeting 1
- O1 – Handbook on Preventing and combating Radicalisation among youngsters in Europe
- O2 – Toolkit for empowering youngsters on advocacy for anti-radicalisation in Europe
- O3 – Curriculum "Empowering youth workers for NFE for prevention and combating the radicalisation among youth"
- M2 – Partnership meeting 2
- O4 – E-Learning Course "Empowering youth workers and youth peer leaders for prevention and combating radicalisation among youngsters"
- O5 – e-Learning platform on youth work and youth initiatives against radicalisation
- C1 – LTTA training for trainers
- National multiplying training courses
- E1, E2, E3, E4 – National conferences in Italy, Croatia, Serbia and Greece
- E5, E6 – International conferences in Belgium and Germany
- M3 – Partnership meeting 3

INTRODUCTION

Some ideas are radical or extreme, but they lead to improvement of societies and humanity. However, there are also radical ideas about how societies should look like, which are against the human rights and the dignity of others. These ideas are aiming to promote acts of violence as a manifestation of hate, intolerance, discrimination or crime in general. In this handbook, we look at violent radicalisation and online extremism (leading to violence, hate crimes, terrorism, etc.). Many international organisations and intergovernmental bodies define radicalisation and extremism as a negative process only when it becomes violent, leads to harm, hate crimes or terrorism.

Countering violent extremism means applying strategies and measures that serve to deconstruct extremist narratives and promote non-violent alternatives. Social media platforms provide violent extremist and radical groups free access to vast audiences, and these are the same social media platforms used by everyone else. The extremist groups or their hate preachers or recruiters are creating often local level chat groups where they share misinformation from their own blog and fake news outlets. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has pushed young people (and everyone else) to the online spaces, and has initiated a new wave of extremism, fuelled by the ideas of radicalisation against the authorities, the governments, vaccines and creating conspiracy theories that undermine living together in diverse societies under the same rules.

In this complex situation, what can actually youth workers do?
Youth worker is not a superhero, even if we sometimes think they are. In this line, the work on preventing extremism and radicalisation, both online and offline among young people is a complex and multi-faceted issue. This handbook looks at some approaches where youth workers can play an important role as they are the first in line to create positive relationships with young people. Youth work is also about active participation and engagement, sometimes this being through participation structures, but sometimes it can be activities such as sports, arts, volunteering, etc. The important part is to support young people to build social connections and create their groups of friends which can reduce the risk of them feeling isolated and vulnerable to extremist and radical recruitment.
In a more structured way, youth workers can also promote media literacy and critical thinking by supporting young people to look at the sources and validity of information, to understand the context and intent of the messages from the media and online platforms. In the world of information hyper production, when everyone is a content creator, the competences to understand and manage media are important.

This handbook is designed as detailed guide to support and strengthen capacities of young people in education for preventing and combating radicalisation and promote this cause among youngsters. It consists of theoretical and conceptual sections for further knowledge development of young people in this topic. The content of this handbook and topics covered are structured in different chapters, each one presenting a specific aspect of education in prevention of radicalisation among young people. Specifically, the handbook is organised in the following way:
- It starts with key theoretical concepts on radicalisation and online extremism and looks also at the key challenges posed by misinformation and propaganda.
- It explores the online platforms and their impact on radicalisation and violent extremism as well as an overview of causes for radicalisation.
- The impact of Covid-19 pandemic on radicalisation among youngsters is also taken into consideration and explored.
- Finally, it looks more into the future and the role of youth workers in preventing radicalisation as well as some competence areas for development of youth worker. It also offers a mapping of the key stakeholders in combating radicalisation .

- In order to inspire future action, it has some useful methodologies for education on anti-radicalisation such as critical thinking, media literacy, Human Rights Education against terrorism and youth work on religion and beliefs.

We hope that this handbook is a first step towards re-designing youth work to serve as a prevention mechanism to violent radicalisation and extremism. In its application, it is encouraged to apply the rights-based approach, with and for young people directly. Listening to young people, their parents and the community members is of outmost importance in shaping effective programmes against violent radicalisation and extremism.

Key theoretical concepts on radicalisation and online extremism

Radicalisation and extremism are not a new threat to society as these phenomena has been present in different formats and manifestations throughout history. Online extremism however is a new phenomenon, as the online spaces have emerged and evolved so rapidly that the current legislative and institutional framework set up to ensure protection of our fundamental rights cannot respond effectively on this new challenge.

Many international organisations and intergovernmental bodies define radicalisation and extremism as a negative process only when it becomes violent, leads to harm, hate crimes or terrorism. For example, the OSCE defines "radicalisation that leads to terrorism as a dynamic process whereby an individual comes to accept terrorist violence as a possible, perhaps even legitimate, course of action. This may eventually, but not necessarily, lead this person to advocate, act in support of, or to engage in terrorism."[1]

In addition, many countries also have their own definitions of violent extremism. Such example from Canada is that violent extremism is "beliefs and actions of people who support or use violence to achieve extreme ideological, religious or political goals." In Albania for example it is defined as "the use of violence to pursue political goals". The USAID – American development agency defines it as "advocating, engaging in, preparing, or otherwise supporting ideologically motivated or justified violence to further social, economic and political objectives."[2]

Defining online extremism is an ongoing effort, especially as it can be linked to expressions of online hate speech, usage of online platforms to promotion of violent radicalisation and terrorism, invitation to hate crimes or organising a violent mob. However, it is possible for an individual or an ideology to be extremist and yet non-violent. Historically, many ideas that brought progress to society were considered extreme ideas, but through time, respectful debate, promotion of the idea, academic reviews, practitioners' involvement and transparent decision-making these ideas became accepted in the society. It is important for democratic societies to support freedom of speech, freedom of association, freedom of belief among others as well.

The key word in this definition is the act of violence as a manifestation of hate, intolerance, discrimination or crime in general. Therefore, in this handbook, when we refer to radicalisation and online extremism we understand and refer to violent radicalisation (leading to terrorism) and online extremism (leading to violence, hate crimes, terrorism, etc.). Countering violent extremism means applying strategies and measures that serve to deconstruct terrorist narratives and promote healthy alternatives. This can also include the rehabilitation and reintegration of former violent extremist offenders. These countering measures can only be done in line with human rights standards, making sure that they are not directed at unjustified pressure or attacks to those who have a different opinion, who engage in political debates and criticise policies and politics or those who come from minority and vulnerable groups.

Some of the clearest definitions about these terms are provided in the National Strategy of the Government of Canada on Countering Radicalisation to Violence:

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[1] Preventing Terrorism and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization that Lead to Terrorism: A Community-Policing Approach (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, 2014), p. 15. Available at: https://www.osce.org/secretariat/111438?download=true

[2] Idem.

"**Radicalisation** is a process by which an individual or a group gradually adopts extreme positions or ideologies that are opposed to the status quo and challenge mainstream ideas.
Radicalisation to violence is the process by which individuals and groups adopt an ideology and/or belief system that justifies the use of violence in order to advance their cause.
Violent extremism is a term describing the beliefs and actions of people who support or use violence to achieve extreme ideological, religious or political goals."[3]

The UN Secretary General's 2015 Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism sees this work as a set of broad and systematic measures geared at addressing the drivers of violent extremism. It emphasises "tackling conditions conducive to terrorism" while "ensuring respect for human rights for all and the rule of law while countering terrorism." The Plan of Action argues that "the creation of open, equitable, inclusive and pluralist societies, based on the full respect of human rights and with economic opportunities for all, represents the most tangible and meaningful alternative to violent extremism (…)."[4]

In a more Europe-focused approach, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) has issued quite a number of policy recommendations linked with the topic of extremism and radicalisation. As indicated on ECRI's website, it is a unique human rights expert body that monitors action against racism, discrimination (on grounds of "race", ethnic or national background, skin colour, citizenship, religion, language, sexual orientation, gender identity and sex characteristics), and intolerance in Europe. ECRI is an independent monitoring mechanism with members who are experts from 46 member countries of the Council of Europe. They are appointed on the basis of their independence, impartiality, moral authority and recognised expertise in dealing with issues of racism and intolerance.[5]

Some of the key policy recommendations of ECRI which are touching upon the topic are the following:

- ECRI General Policy Recommendation N°6 on Combating the dissemination of racist, xenophobic and anti-Semitic materiel via the internet. This recommendation concerns the dissemination of racist material via the Internet, often done by online extremist groups. The Recommendation requests governments to take the necessary measures, at national and international levels, to act effectively against the use of Internet for racist, xenophobic and anti-Semitic aims.
- ECRI General Policy Recommendation N°8 on combating racism while fighting terrorism focuses on how to ensure that the fight against terrorism does not infringe upon the rights of persons to be free from racism and racial discrimination. In brief, it aims to ensure that human rights are respected when combatting terrorism (as a manifestation of radicalisation).

The European countries remain vulnerable to threats caused by violent extremism. Young people in particular fall victims of the recruitment activities of violent extremist organizations or other forms of violent groups. The recent war in Ukraine as well as the COVID-19 crisis has shown a new type of online hybrid war, which affects young people's rational decisions and critical thinking. This becomes more harmful in situations of continued instability, long-lasting tensions against minorities and migration and very strong engagement of political extremists with young people which remain an ongoing threat their safety. These extremist groups continue to emerge across Europe fuelling the

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[3] Government of Canada, National Strategy on Countering Radicalisation to Violence of Canada, 2018, page 7, ISBN: 978-0-660-28894-9
[4] UN Secretary General's 2015 Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism is available at:
http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/70/674
[5] European Commission's against racism and intolerance, info leaflet, Council of Europe, https://rm.coe.int/leaflet-ecri-2022/1680a969e9

increased intolerance and ideologically motivated violence. In the European continent, there have been a large number of casualties as a result of terrorism. In the last 50 years, the Global Terrorism Database found that in Eastern Europe there were 5326 terrorist incidents with over 25% of them having casualties. In Western Europe, the number of incidents is more than 3 times higher, amounting to 17.328.[6]

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[6] Searched on the Global terrorism database https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/Results.aspx?region=8

Misinformation

Propaganda, misinformation and fake news have the potential to polarise public opinion, to promote violent extremism and hate speech and, ultimately, to undermine the trust in the democratic society.[7] Misinformation and creation of information bubbles or echo-chambers has a strong potential to lead to radicalisation and have direct effects on the young people who are vulnerable potential targets to violent radicalisation and extremism. Below are presented some facts & figures about misinformation in the EU:[8]

1. Two thirds of EU citizens report coming across fake news at least once a week.
2. Over 80% of EU citizens say they see fake news both as an issue for their country and for democracy in general.
3. Half of EU citizens aged 15-30 say they need critical thinking and information skills to help them combat fake news and extremism in society.

The terms 'propaganda', 'misinformation' and 'fake news' often overlap in meaning. They are used to refer to a range of ways in which sharing information causes harm, intentionally or unintentionally – usually in relation to the promotion of a particular moral or political cause or point of view. It is possible to separate out three clearly different uses of information which fall into this category:[9]

- Mis-information - false information shared with no intention of causing harm;
- Dis-information - false information shared intentionally to cause harm;
- Mal-information - true information shared intentionally to cause harm.

Although none of these phenomena are new, they have taken on new significance recently with the widespread availability of sophisticated forms of information and communication technology. The sharing of text, images, videos, or links online, for example, allows information to go viral within hours.

The Council of Europe report indicates that "in order to effectively address information pollution, we need to understand the emotional and ritualistic elements of communication. The most 'successful' of problematic content is that which plays on people's emotions and encourages feelings of superiority, anger or fear. This is also the type of content that is most liked and shared, often without actually having been read or understood. The report emphasises that the core purpose of communication between people, going far beyond the function of transmission of information, lies in representing shared beliefs."[10]
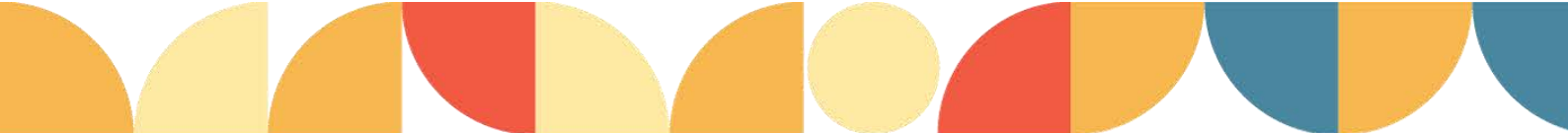
When most social platforms are engineered for people to publicly 'perform' through likes, comments or shares, it's easy to understand why emotional content travels so quickly and widely, even as we see an explosion in fact-checking and debunking organisations.

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[7] Dealing with propaganda, misinformation and fake news, Council of Europe's Free to speak, safe to learn campaign https://www.coe.int/web/campaign-free-to-speak-safe-to-learn/dealing-with-propaganda-misinformation-and-fake-news
[8] Flash Eurobarometer 464, 2018, https://data.europa.eu/data/datasets/s2183_464_eng?locale=en
[9] Wardle & Derakhshan, H., 2017. Information Disorder: Toward an interdisciplinary framework for research and policy making. Strasbourg, France: Council of Europe.
[10] Idem.

Why is propaganda, misinformation and fake news an important topic for the education of youngsters?

According to the "Free to Speak, Safe to Learn" campaign of the Council of Europe, information and communication technology is so central to young people's lives nowadays, there are particularly vulnerable to propaganda, misinformation and fake news. Young people spend a significant amount of their time watching television, playing online games, chatting, blogging, listening to music, posting photos of themselves and searching for other people with whom to communicate online. They rely heavily on information circulated online for their knowledge of the world and how they perceive reality.[11]

This is a new competence, the ability to deal with news, including misinformation or fake news which many parents do not have. Therefore, the young people should get some sufficient technical competence to keep up with their exposure online or even take the role to educate their parents about the risks of misinformation. Many schools do not provide young people with the critical and information skills which they cannot access at home, therefore the role of youth work in this case is vital.

The Council of Europe Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture also lists the ability to respond critically to online propaganda, misinformation and fake news. For the new digitalised world these are important democratic competence in addition to analytical and critical thinking, and knowledge and critical understanding of the world. The paradigm of "lack of information" is no longer true, as there is a lot of information available (some true, and some fake). Therefore, a new competence is the ability to seek for correct information through review of sources and critical thinking.

What are the key challenges when dealing with misinformation in youth work?

There are a number of challenges that youth workers can encounter when introducing some activities against propaganda, misinformation and fake news. Still it is very important that the education and youth work sector takes this action seriously as a social issue:

- Youth worker's own online activity and area of experience is very limited and often they are the key resistance against online technology. This makes traditional youth work a system that lags behind the needs and experiences of young people. Youth workers should show a significant commitment to professional development.
- The fast-changing technology and young peoples' online activity changes makes it difficult to use traditional ways to train youth workers to keep up to date with recent developments. The only way to know what is new, is to be an active user and follower of the current trends of online activity.
- Finding space in the youth workers timetable to discuss about misinformation and radicalisation or embedding these issues to all the work across the programme is another dilemma. While aspects may be raised while discussing almost any other issue, it is important to look into this phenomenon of fake news and misinformation as a head-on as an issue in its own right.
- As the article on News, Fake News and Disinformation from the University of Washington frames is – "the description 'fake news' does not mean there is such a category as 'true' news. All news is a selection and written to suit a particular audience for a particular purpose. Providing the depth of analysis and sophisticated skills to critically analyse

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[11] Dealing with propaganda, misinformation and fake news, Council of Europe's Free to speak, safe to learn campaign
https://www.coe.int/web/campaign-free-to-speak-safe-to-learn/dealing-with-propaganda-misinformation-and-fake-news

information and news in general can be a challenge for some organisations, as it might mean also a deeper reflection on their own experiences and values."[12]

Deepfakes

Deepfakes are a new and particularly challenging type of audio, video, or image disinformation, generally used in malicious ways. They have the potential to rapidly spread false words and actions to a global audience and can be extremely difficult to distinguish from real content.[13]
"The term deepfake is typically used to refer to a video that has been edited using an algorithm to replace the person in the original video with someone else (especially a public figure) in a way that makes the video look authentic."[14] The more insidious impact of deepfakes, along with other synthetic media and fake news, is to create a zero-trust society, where people cannot, or no longer bother to, distinguish truth from falsehood. And when trust is eroded, it is easier to raise doubts about specific events.[15]

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[12] News: Fake News, Misinformation & Disinformation - University of Washington.
https://guides.lib.uw.edu/c.php?g=345925&p=7772376
[13] Idem.
[14] What is a Deepfake? | Deepfake Meaning and Examples | Merriam-Webster. https://www.merriam-webster.com/words-at-play/deepfake-slang-definition-examples
[15] What are Deepfakes and how can you spot them, The Guardian, 2020,
https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2020/jan/13/what-are-deepfakes-and-how-can-you-spot-them
The Guardian is quoting a Merriam-Webster dictionary definition https://www.merriam-webster.com/words-at-play/deepfake-slang-definition-examples

Online platforms used by extremist groups

Social media platforms provide violent extremist and radical groups free access to vast audiences, and these are the same social media platforms used by everyone else. The extremist groups or their hate preachers or recruiters are creating often local level chat groups where they share misinformation from their own blog and fake news outlets. These are then distributed through the Facebook groups and news feeds. Often tweets and Facebook live are also used for recruitment especially when they broadcast attacks, have live coverage of events, recruitment process for new members, and provide training. The fact that social media is based on algorithms, it helps to strengthen the echo chamber around a potential target of radicalisation. This young person then gets content that fuel division and foster extremism before they are invited to be recruits.

There is no separate online platform used by extremist groups; these activities are happening on the same user-friendly, reliable, and free platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok and Twitter. All these pages provide direct access to content managed by banned extremist groups including Daesh and neo-fascist or extreme nationalist groups in Europe. The fact we don't see the content, does not mean it is not there, and this is a worrying thing. It means that those who see such extremist content, are likely not to see any other content that creates an alternative narrative to extremist or radical content.

Social media provides violent groups with a powerful mechanism to broadcast terrorist attacks, beheadings, instructional videos, and recruitment material targeting potential new members. For example, there are some evidences that the 2013 Boston Marathon bombers learned how to build explosives from online ISIS material.[16]

Terror-related content such as instruction from virtual coaches for possible recruits to extremist groups can be found easily through a simple search on the social media. It is shocking that it is not even necessary to join a private or secret group to access this content. Social media platforms often use the auto-recommending groups and matching members with similar interests so that they the recruiters of extremist groups can reach out to potential new people who might be interested in such content. According to research of the International Centre for the Study of Violent Extremism (ICSVE), based on 236 in-depth interviews, which queried about recruitment history and experiences with and inside the terrorist group, among many other aspects of the interviewees' paths into and out of terrorism, the data clearly show that Internet recruitment alone is enough to seduce a vulnerable person into the group.[17]
In addition, "64% of all extremist group joins are due to the recommendation tools" and that most of the activity came from the platform's "Groups You Should Join" and "Discover" algorithms.

Facebook claims its AI systems identify most of the terrorist content that is taken down before appearing on its platform, however, many NGOs disagree with this statement. The NGOs accuse tech and social media firms of not doing enough to adjust algorithms that accelerate violent radicalisation and extremism. Due to this pressure, in some countries there is a shift of the responsibility for monitoring Internet platforms for illegal and terrorist activity from the government and NGOs towards the tech firms. More control and regulation of the social media spaces means getting a proactive stance against the illegal activity and active involvement of the police and prosecutions offices. It is very clear that changes cannot happen just by awareness raising and prevention, but we need also joint work and efforts from the legislative system and the law enforcement.

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[16] Harvard Kennedy School, the journalist's resource, https://journalistsresource.org/health/boston-marathon-bombings-lessons/
[17] Anne Speckhard & Molly Ellenberg, Is Internet Recruitment Enough to Seduce a Vulnerable Individual Into Terrorism? 2020, https://www.icsve.org/is-internet-recruitment-enough-to-seduce-a-vulnerable-individual-into-terrorism/

Causes of radicalisation

The youth sector's action to address radicalisation and online extremism is through its prevention work and education, activism, advocacy and so on. The prevention work will be effective only once the core reasons, causes and types of radicalisations are understood. It is important therefore to know well what triggers young people to join extremist groups, to spread online hate speech, to take an action to harm someone or worse, to commit terrorist attacks. The following pages look at specific issues, causes or vulnerabilities which expose some young people to be more easily victims of radicalisation.

"It has been argued that there is not a single path to radicalization leading to violent extremism and terrorism."[18] Youth workers and youth leaders therefore must understand that radicalisation is a result of a unique combination of the personal factors (identities, social and psychological issues) and the factors linked to the surrounding community or environment in which that young person lives.

Economic, cultural and social causes

"It is widely recognised that social exclusion produces deep and long-term damage to the living conditions, social and economic participation, emotional life, and health status of young people. It also contributes to the intergenerational transmission of poverty. In turn, insecurity in living standards, political and social isolation, feelings of estrangement and unhealthy lifestyles aggravate pre-existing conditions of social exclusion. This results in a vicious circle where socially excluded young people are in even more danger of suffering from additional material deprivation, social and emotional marginalisation, and health issues, which in turn expose them to more serious risks of exclusion. Almost one out of three young persons between the ages of 18 and 24 is at risk of poverty or social exclusion in the European Union."[19]

Economic issues can have a weak link towards motivating extremism, but not violent radicalisation. This is because extremism, mostly populist politics would use economic issues to fuel up their support. But, strangely enough, the economic causes do not grow further from there.

"There is controversy among researchers regarding the link between poverty and political violence. Researchers representing the different perceptions of such a link can be separated into three groups that can be labelled "no link", "weak link" and "link". The common understanding within sociology, social psychology and political science is that there is no link or a weak link between absolute poverty and political violence. A European Commission (2008) paper on the causal factors of RVE argues that if poverty is a cause of radicalisation, it will be an indirect one that depends on social and individual factors."[20]

The social factors, however, are a strong motivation for extremist behaviour. These factors include manifestations related to social exclusion. These can be:

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[18] Discussion Paper | Root Causes of Radicalization in Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (UN Development Programme, 2016).

[19] Youth Social exclusion and lessons from youth work, Eurydice and Policy Support Unit (P9) of the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA), p.4

[20] Poverty and radicalisation into violent extremism: a causal link? Atle Mesøy, 2013, Norwegian peacebuilding resource centre.

- Stigmatisation is labelling and having negative views towards people from a certain group. This can result in a discriminating process which inflicts shame and humiliation to the people from this group on the basis of the diversity they present.
- Marginalisation and discrimination (real or perceived) are the unfair or prejudicial treatment of people and groups based on characteristics such as race, gender, age, or sexual orientation. In the article 14 of the European Convention of Human Rights and the case law of the court, there are also other grounds which are protected from discrimination.
- Limited social mobility means when people from certain social groups (ethnic or religious minorities, etc.) are not to switch their social groups and social circles easily as other people in society. This can also be manifested with limited education or employment opportunities.
- Social factors can also be seen though an element of displacement, or not being able to find one's own place in society. Displacement can also be due to external factors, receiving the status of refugee.
- Criminality is a cause linked stigmatisation and exclusion which can also motivate approaching different extremist groups.

A specific type of cultural marginalisation is the one based on someone's personal or ethnic culture and belonging. Due to these identity issues, many young people would feel more alienation in societies. For instance, second generation immigrants in Western Europe sometimes lack a sense of belonging, feeling neither part of the new" home" nor of the country their parents left behind.

Political, historical and ideological extremism

The main types of political extremisms and radicalisation can be grouped into far-right and far-left groups. Very often, the political extremism is limited to far-right groups, as they are more numerous and much more organised to spread hate and even commit violent crimes. The changing political climate in many European countries has increased the membership, visibility and often the hate crimes committed by politically extremist groups. There are ongoing concerns about security threats from violent extremist movements during elections, and especially often linked with anti-rights and anti-gender movements in Europe. In some countries in Europe, far-right parties participate in the governments which gives another safety net for their extremist groups to recruit young people and have no fear of investigation or prosecution of their potential crimes.

The European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (EUROPOL) finds that the refugee crisis from the war in Syria and Afghanistan has provided fuel to the "violent right-wing extremist spectrum."[21] Due to increased migration flows from conflict zones, the appeal of xenophobia and anti-migrant hate speech and rhetoric, especially when presented in a populist political package, has been increasing the popularity of the far right. The same report outlines also that political parties claiming that immigrants exploit the European welfare state, undermine the "European way of life", or pose a direct security threat to local populations have prevailed at the polling booths in several countries.

Also, nationalist movements, including violent ones, are garnering popular support, something that has been unseen in Europe since World War II. In recent years, there have been some increasing reports involving hate speech and extremist violence directed at immigrants or at ethnic, national or religious minorities. Recently, the anti-rights movements also mobilise young people in spreading sexist narratives or attacking LGBTI+ community. Polarising discourse and identity politics have in some cases been provoked by or silently endorsed by mainstream political parties. This new trend

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[21] European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2018 (EUROPOL, 2018), p. 6

has given impetus to violent extremist groups re-emerging after decades of being perceived as irrelevant and outsider movements.

Political and ideological radicalisation and extremism targets young people directly and their methods of recruitment are not only traditional through talking, but also for example through events such as music
concerts and rallies organised by this type of groups. For example, a nationalist rally co-organized in Warsaw by Obóz Narodowo-Radykalny (Nationalist Radicalist Camp) on Poland's Independence Day in 2017 reportedly attracted 60,000 participants from across Europe. The rally was banned in 2018.[22]

A study on the participation of women in neo-Nazi and other forms of right-wing extremist groups in Germany has found that there is an increase in "the number of active extreme right-wing women as well as a growth in the number of women's groups in the extreme right-wing scene. The possible roles and positions which can be assumed by women have also expanded: from activists, street fighters and gang leaders to local government politicians, and from demonstration coordinators to internet activists."[23]
EUROPOL found that in 2017, 12% of failed, foiled and completed attacks in the European Union were left wing in nature. The target of this kind of terrorism is more often government buildings, and it leads more to civil unrest than violence against individuals and groups.[24]

Further factors in addition to political ones can be also those linked with historical ideologies. Due to nation-focused history teaching. This includes building hate and grief framed around victimisation as a
result of historic and present actions or inaction, including human rights violations. These factors are associated with a strong sense of alienation and injustice, for example, the sense of not being represented by political leadership and police, often reinforced by xenophobia, discrimination and marginalisation. Often extremism can be nurtured by narratives of being the autochthonous people in a certain land, seeking for social justice of past events, looking for revenge based on historic semi-truths and narratives. Such tensions can be difficult, as they are often projected to young people without giving them mechanism for critical thinking or rejection of these ideas, but rather, tolerating expressions of intolerance which can move into hate speech and crime including terrorism. Another result from such narratives is that some young people are pushed in joining a violent extremist group due to a belief in a sacred duty, a historical mission, an apocalyptic prophecy as a means for achieving justice or equality. In this way, young people are pushed for example to join far-right groups "protecting their cultures and countries" or even participate in foreign wars.

According to the European observatory of history teaching, history education does not only consist of teaching students about key dates and high-profile figures from the past. History, can show students how to think independently by examining events using critical thinking and understanding how these events have impacted upon the world and contributed to the formation of our societies. These analytical and critical thinking skills should then allow students to become informed, active citizens.[25]

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[22] "Polish Independence Day march by nationalists banned in Warsaw" (BBC News, Nov. 2018) - https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-46123001
[23] Claire Provost and Lara Whyte, "Why are women joining far-right movements, and why are we so surprised?" (OpenDemocracy.net, Jan. 2018).
[24] European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2018 (EUROPOL, 2018), p. 9.
[25] Mission statement of the European Observatory of History teaching, https://www.coe.int/en/web/observatory-history-teaching/regular-report

Psychological issues

Sometimes the radicalisation and extremism can also be amplified by socio-psychological factors. Challenges such as peer-pressure, but also lack of access to mental health services can lead to grave psychological issues, and radicalisation would be a manifestation of these.

Some psychological issues would include feelings of grief or criticism and emotions such as alienation, isolation or exclusion. These issues would manifest themselves mainly through a very reserved, introvert and solitary behaviour, and young people affected by these issues are often not noticed among their peers or in the classrooms.

Another set of psychological issues go even go further in showing anger and frustration because of a strong sense of injustice. These young people would often show condemnation towards the society, their peers and the system in general. Often for them, the institutions of a democratic society are the source of oppression, and their interaction with the public institution or the majority provokes to them some feelings of humiliation. Due to their understanding of the world, a strong sense of victimhood is guiding their interactions which are often very sensitive to personal vulnerabilities.

A third group of psychological issues are linked to so-called rigid worldview. These young people have the tendency to misinterpret situations, often believe in conspiracy theories and have a strong stance of being in opposition to mainstream cultural or societal norms.

Another experience which triggers radicalisation is the lack of support for persons dealing with trauma and other trigger mechanisms. Often the psychological trauma experienced directly from parents remains unresolved which can lead to various violent behaviours, including radicalisation.

Obviously, socialising is the key aspect in enhancing or reducing the psychological triggers to radicalisation. Social groups impact on self-esteem, identity and belonging, and are strong in shaping opinions and values. The groups also stimulate friendships, strengthen pre-existing friendship and relatives' ties. Social groups can also share a joint fascination with a charismatic leader in addition to the elements of socialisation. For many of the radicalised young people, the belonging to their violent radical groups gives them a sense of belonging that cannot be found in mainstream society. They are associating themselves with others who share similar needs or demands.

It is also important to mention that the radicalisation and the psychological issues do not develop only on their own. Often there are external persons, so-called hate preachers and those who prey on people's vulnerabilities and feelings of injustice, who fuel up those feelings until these become serious. These persons are often used for channelling recruits into extremist groups through methods such as persuasion, pressure and manipulation.

The social media has changed the way how we live, work, connect and communicate, but also has made it possible to radicalise much faster. Social media provides connectivity, virtual participation and very dangerously, an echo-chamber for like-minded extremist views. Due to the changing logic of the internet, it is no longer a space of exploration, but a space which serves only the same ideological and political views. This information bubbles or echo-chambers can accelerate the process of radicalisation and increases opportunities for "self-radicalisation."[26]

There is no clear-cut path to terrorism and no consistent set of factors driving extremism and radicalisation. A study undertaken by the Council of Europe's Committee on experts on counterterrorism[27] also identifies some of these reasons for radicalisation and extremism:

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[26] RAN Issue Paper: The Root Causes of Violent Extremism (Ranstorp, Radicalisation Awareness Network, European Commission, 2016).

[27] Committee of Experts on Counter-Terrorism, The Roles of Women in Daesh: Discussion Paper (Council of Europe, 2016).

Feeling lonely and isolated, including confusion over one's identity and uncertainty of belonging within the mainstream or community structures, a situation sometimes experienced by second-generation migrants in host countries.

Tensions of those coming from conservative societies in certain countries that restrict financial independence, mobility and the agency of women, and liberal societies with higher gender equality in

which men feel intimidated by women's independence.

Believing that one's community is at risk of violence or persecution, this including xenophobia and profiling against the Muslim population in Europe, or the perceived threat to the security and local "way of life" experienced when immigrants of different cultural and religious backgrounds settle in European cities.

Grief and anger related to discrimination and persecution by state services or unequal access to them. This includes the racial profiling of a terrorist suspects by based on ethnicity and religion in the aftermath of terrorist attacks. In addition, there can be also anger over the lack of international action in response to the persecution of Muslims or the involvement of some countries in different wars, such as the middle East[28], and recently Ukraine.

Religious causes and beliefs

Daesh religious influenced terrorism starts in 2014 when the group Daesh or also known as ISIS "claimed territory in Syria and Iraq but aspired to a global reach by recruiting members from far beyond that region and having its followers and supporters perpetrate violence around the world. At the peak of its operation in 2014–2015, ISIL/Daesh attracted to its ranks approximately 40,000 so-called foreign terrorist fighters from around the world, around 6000 from Europe."[29]

The UN Security Council Resolution 2178, defines foreign terrorist fighters as individuals who travel to a State other than their State of residence or nationality for the purpose of the perpetration, planning or preparation of, or participation in, terrorist acts or the providing or receiving of terrorist training, including in connection with armed conflict.[30]

In recent years, there is a new trend due to the territorial loses of Daesh in Iraq and Syria, many of the foreign terrorist fighters return to their home or other countries Of European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2016 (EUROPOL, 2016), p. 29. 17% of the returnees are minors, who present a number of challenges to states upon their return, especially for criminal justice systems. The fate of returnees associated with Daesh has varied widely. Some have been taken into the respective criminal justice systems of the countries they have returned to and face accountability for their assistance or association with an extremist or terrorist groups. Some returnees appear to have abandoned their violent extremist ideology for various reasons, including disillusionment and are supported into rehabilitation, while others have not been de-radicalised, and they continue to present a real security threat.

"Though returning foreign terrorist networks continue to pose a threat in terms of potential violence and inspiration to others, the majority of Daesh-inspired attacks in 2017 were carried out by so-called "home-grown" terrorists who have been radicalised in their countries of residence and have never travelled abroad to join a terrorist group. This is often contrary to popular beliefs, particularly

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[28] El-Said and Barrett, Enhancing the Understanding of the Foreign Terrorist Fighters Phenomenon in Syria (United Nations Office of Counterterrorism, 2017).

[29] The Challenge of Returning and Relocating Foreign Terrorist Fighters: Research Perspectives (United Nations Counter Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, 2018), p. 4.

[30] See S/RES/2178 (United Nations Security Council, 2014).

as presented by certain polarising political forces. It is such lone actors, people who do not have direct links to Daesh or any other terrorist organization, who may present one of the most difficult threats for law enforcement to detect."[31]

Christian extremist groups also are on the rise, usually linked with conspiracy theories, these groups are strongly impacting on societies with an anti-rights and anti-gender narrative, as well as, with terrorist attacks. Possibly the most known recent terrorist attack was the Now, after the QAnon conspiracy theory which helped to motivate the insurrection at the USA Capitol, motivated by open expression of the Christian faith by many participants. In USA, but also in Eastern Europe, the Christian churches might have a different denomination, but their clergy and pastors openly spread the conspiracy theory among the believers. For example, in Serbia, the church pronounced LGBT people as "offshoots from Sodom and Gomorrah", and Amfilohije Radovic, a high priest and the leading prelate of the Serbian Orthodox Church, indirectly, but unambiguously, justified the planned violence against the Pride Parade and, in a way, even invited his followers to take part in committing violence. Also, priest Dragan Terzic commented the Law on Prohibition of Discrimination: "this Law is deleting the line between good and evil. It has derogating effects not only in the moral aspects but as well towards society making it closer to animal which is a catastrophe for the whole nation and the state."[32]

It is a very sensitive line how to make sure that the freedom of religion is not jeopardised when dealing with extremism in the name of religion. In this line, working on religious motivated extremism and radicalisation needs very good balancing skills. On one hand societies should hold religious institutions and their representatives accountable for their acts but also, they should not limit the freedom of thought, conscience and religion. According to Article 9 of the European Convention of Human Rights, any limitations to manifestations of the freedom of thought, conscience and religion may only be motivated by the interests of public safety, by the protection of public order, health or morals, and by the rights and freedoms of others. Article 18 of the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights is very similar: the freedom of thought, conscience and religion may be restricted if this is necessary to protect "public safety, order, health, morals or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others". It is clear that the international human rights standards "the freedom to manifest one's religion or beliefs" and not the substance or contents of such religion or beliefs. According to Article 18.2 ICCPR, "no one shall be subject to coercion which would impair his freedom to adopt a religion or belief of his choice."[33]

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[31] European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2018 (EUROPOL, 2018), p. 6.
[32] Study on Homophobia, Transphobia and Discrimination on Grounds of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Sociological Report: Serbia, Danish Institute of Human Rights, https://www.coe.int/t/Commissioner/Source/LGBT/SerbiaSociological_E.pdf
[33] Strasbourg, 20 June 2012 CDL-AD(2012)016 Or. Engl. - Venice Commission. https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL-AD(2012)016-e

The impact of Covid-19 pandemic on radicalisation among youngsters

According to a recent study by OBESSU[34], "the impact of the pandemic on education systems is both heavy and disproportionate, and generally dependent on past neglect. Cuts to the public sector in the last decades contributed to stagnating methodologies, underdeveloped facilities and more precarious working conditions for teachers. This made it so that school systems in most of the EU were not prepared to guarantee digital learning for all students. Contributing to the distress, impotence and uncertainty experienced across the board by young people is the fact that their needs and circumstances were seldom taken into account while devising strategies to offset the crisis - a political

continuum of marginalisation that we argue, bypasses the Covid-19 contingency. Unless action is taken, school students will suffer long-term consequences of the pandemic in the social, economic and emotional spheres of their lives."

This quote from the study of OBESSU outlines perfectly the change of reality when it comes to the impact of COVID-19 on young people. The pandemic crisis made everything online, and the online systems emerged with much disinformation, hate speech, disillusion. At times when social and community relations were cut, and education became harder to access than before, young people (but not only) were left without much support to be easily manipulated into conspiracy theories, hate speech, extreme and radical opinion and feelings of powerlessness. The youth work and school systems in most EU countries were not ready to guarantee digital learning for all, which meant than many of the students and learners were left behind.

The fact that their needs and circumstances are rarely taken into account when developing crisis coping strategies contributes to the suffering, helplessness and uncertainty experienced by all young people. In some cases, long-term consequences of the pandemic in the social, economic and emotional areas of life will yet to be seen. However already some of the spaces left unattended by education and youth work, as well as, lack of social work and inclusion or integration activities have resulted with an increase alienation of young people from the society in which they live in.

The European Commission's Radicalisation Awareness Network in their Spotlight of October 2022 focused mainly on the COVID-19, violent extremism and the anti-government movements.[35] The network concludes that: "Fuelled by the COVID-19 pandemic and the corresponding measures taken by governments and authorities, there has been a surge in anti-government action throughout Europe. Several extremist groups, both from the violent left and right, have been feeding on and propagating misinformation, disinformation, conspiracy narratives and fake news. This reaches a broad audience of people who in turn become violent towards authorities. As a result of recent events, we see a growing mix of anti vaxxers (the anti-COVID vaccination movement), conspiracies – including those spreading mis- and disinformation about Russia's invasion of Ukraine, who are often the same groups spreading mis- and disinformation about the COVID-19 pandemic – climate extremists, and many more. The accumulative result is an increase in public distrust, particularly among vulnerable individuals, towards authorities and governments."

It is very difficult to navigate in such a complex system of narratives which are triggering confusion, sense of isolation and mistrust to the institutions. Traditionally, youth work would have served as a

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[34] Through school student's eyes: impact and challenges of COVID-19 on education systems in Europe, Gilda C. Isernia with the support of Rute Nunes, OBESSU, 2022, www.obessu.org

[35] Spotlight on COVID-19, Violent Extremism and Anti-Government Movements | October 2022, European Commissions' RAN Network, https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/networks/radicalisation-awareness-network-ran/ran-media/ran-spotlight/spotlight-covid-19-violent-extremism-and-anti-government-movements_en

bridge between the young people and the public sector, but with COVID-19 restrictions, it could not fulfil this role. In such environment, the young people were left to choose between different options, fake and misleading information, and association with groups which have violent and extremist ways of operating.

The radicalisation process in such context, is not only online, but also can come from their family members and groups of friends. It is very obvious that young people are not the only victims of the new, anti-government radicalisation narratives. Everyone was struggling with radicalisation and especially with conspiracy theories about vaccines, the narratives about the virus and its creation and other misinformation aiming to radicalise the views of the people. The youth workers therefore are now facing a context which is more complex and multi-faceted, where every narrative could trigger violent extremist reactions online and unfortunately, these narratives also are visible in elections, addressing and working with public sector, participation, access to rights, discrimination, media and many other areas.

The role of youth workers in preventing radicalisation

Prevention and awareness-raising

The work on preventing extremism and radicalisation, both online and offline among young people is a complex and multi-faced issue. On this issue, there are various law enforcement services (police, prosecution, inspection) which are working on, in addition to political and policy making services, media, education and social work and religious institutions themselves.

This said, youth workers can play an important role as they are the first in line to create positive relationships with young people. Spaces for youth work should be a safe and welcoming environment where any young person can express their views, experiences, and concerns. By creating these social connections, youth work can reduce the risk of some young people getting overly influenced by extremism online. Youth work is also about active participation and engagement, sometimes this being through participation structures, but sometimes it can be activities such as sports, arts, volunteering, etc. The important part is to support young people to build social connections and create their groups of fiends which can reduce the risk of them feeling isolated and vulnerable to extremist and radical recruitment.

In a more structured way, youth workers can also promote media literacy and critical thinking by supporting young people to look at the sources and validity of information, to understand the context and intent of the messages from the media and online platforms. In addition, youth workers can support young people struggling with anxiety, depression, or isolation due to various issues, social issues, family problems, economic issues, etc. At time also talking about violent extremism can help young people to understand the phenomena and warn when they notice someone becoming isolated and under more influence from extremist narratives. The role of non-violence is also very important to be promoted as a culture of communication, dialogue and empathy. However, preventing extremism among young people requires a holistic approach that addresses the underlying causes of extremism, and youth workers are just one part of the system involving also the young people's parents, educators, but also, law enforcement services, political and religious leaders, media and others.

Competence areas for development of youth workers

What should youth workers know, be able to do and have as attitude in order to engage in working against violent extremism and radicalisation?
Below is presented a table with a proposed list of competences which can help to further develop youth workers and education and training. The competence framework presented does not aim to create an all-powerful youth worker, but on the contrary, it intends to give ideas on areas that youth workers and non-formal education trainers can develop, so they can work on preventing violent extremism and radicalisation.

Competence area: Understanding the concept of violent extremism and radicalisation		
COMPETENCES	CRITERIA	INDICATORS
Understanding of the causes and definitions of violent extremism and radicalisation	Knowledge about the current frameworks for defining extremism and radicalisation as well as their causes and manifestations	Understanding of the socio-cultural context and the aspect of violence which provokes extremism and radicalisation
		Demonstrates an understanding of root causes and manifestations of signs of extremism and radicalisation among young people
	Ability to understand the societal and cultural challenges, narratives and pitfalls leading to radicalisation	Can present various examples of issues that fuel extremism and violence, based on strong prejudges, narratives that incite hate speech and other social and cultural issues leading to extremism and radicalisation
	Self-awareness and urge to learn more about the developments and trends in violence, extremism and radicalisation among young people	Shows ability to identify reading materials, sources of information, academic materials and get new knowledge about the topic
		Has interest to engage and further understand the topic
Understanding of the theories (Intercultural, Global Citizenship, Human Rights, etc.)	Knowledge of the current theories about culture and identity and intercultural communication	Understands culture as a dynamic and multifaceted process (heterogeneity of culture); and the complexity of intercultural communication process
		Understands the links between culture and identity and the different models of culture as well as, how some of these can lead to isolation and exclusion
	Knowledge of the Human Rights frameworks, Responsibility and Global Citizenship Education	Knows which key human rights are affected by extremism and radicalisation Knowledge of Human Rights Education frameworks and approach
	Skill to explain clearly the methodological approaches applied to prevention work against extremism and radicalisation	Can explain to learners in a clear way which methodologies applied in youth work are effective to prevent radicalisation and extremism.
	Awareness about discrimination and inequality, issues of social justice, historic, cultural and religious narratives	Understands the interconnections between prejudices, inequality and discrimination Follows closely the trends in narratives about social justice, historic, cultural and religious narratives and how these impact young people
Technical competences regarding the local community and other stakeholders working on preventing violent extremism and radicalisation	Knowledge of the practical steps to establish partnership with schools, law enforcement, media, parents and others	Knowledge of the legal circumstances, formal steps and mechanisms to build partnerships with other stakeholders
		Knowledge of the potentials for interlinks between youth work and other work on preventing violent extremism and radicalisation (such as the formal education curricula, police prevention work, media training, etc.)
	Skills to communicate and establish cooperation with other service providers such as teachers and school staff, police officers, investigators, journalists and parents' associations	Ability to clearly explain proposed activities and share tasks with other partners from other services when necessary

	Skill to set common objectives with local stakeholders, parents and others, and work in partnership	Ability to communicate openly with the local stakeholders about issues related to extremism and radicalisation and propose actions
Being able to act as organise activities of youth work against extremism and radicalisation	Knowledge about the elements that needs to be set in place to implement a youth work programme against extremism and radicalisation	Knowledge of the technical conditions needed such as room, materials, timing, etc. as well as the profile of participants, working conditions and other context related conditions
	Skill to organise and manage the youth work programme	Ability to plan and manage the technical conditions needed to implement the youth work programme, basic management skills, communication skills and other relevant skills

Competence area: Developing and delivering educational programmes[36]

COMPETENCES	CRITERIA	INDICATORS
Developing an educational approach based on the principles and values of non-formal learning	Knowledge of the concept and values of non-formal learning as an educational practice	Demonstrates an understanding of the values and key principles of non-formal learning
		Demonstrates an understanding of different educational methods and concepts for needs assessment
	Openness and readiness for unexpected elements when defining the educational approach	Assesses current contextual issues related to extremism and radicalisation before or at the very beginning of the youth work activity
		Addresses learners' questions and interests through an adequate and tailored educational approach
		Is comfortable with having an adjustable programme based on the experiences and issues of the young people – learners
	Acceptance of the key concepts, values and consolidated practice of non-formal learning	Is comfortable with addressing and applying the principles of non-formal learning when designing a programme with a particular focus on active participation of the young people
		Demonstrates a genuine interest in the topic of addressing extremism and radicalisation
Selecting, adapting or creating appropriate methods	Knowledge of existing methods and their sources	Identifies appropriate methods from the resources available in Human rights education
	Knowledge of methodologies used in youth training	Explains the methodologies used in a workshop when choosing, adapting and creating methods Can apply methodologies linked to media literacy and critical thinking, human rights education against terrorism and inter-religious dialogue
	Skill to choose, adapt or create an appropriate method	Creates and adjusts methods accordingly having in mind the most pertinent issues linked with addressing extremism and radicalisation
	Skill to adjust to a changing training situation	Improvises and adjusts to changing situation
	Courage to improvise, adjust and deal with	Dares to improvise and adjust in unknown and unpredicted situations always led with the idea of

[36] Inspired by the competence framework of TALE – Trainers for Active Learning in Europe, 2011 https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/tale?desktop=false

	unknown and unpredicted situations	promoting human rights and non-violence
Understanding and facilitating group learning processes	Knowledge of the theories and concepts of power relations	Understands the power and responsibility of the trainer/facilitator in a workshop
		Understands the power of group dynamics
	Skills of active listening and non-verbal communication	Listens carefully to others without interrupting and in an unbiased manner
		Pays attention to body language
	Skill to ask meaningful questions and conclude the learning reflection	Asks open questions which are linked with the topic and lead the discussion
	Readiness to confront and be confronted	Dares to push learners in the stretching zone and then to safely conclude their learning process
Competence to lead the learning process through debriefing	Understanding of the experiential learning cycle and the role of debriefing within it	Knows the experiential learning cycle
		Refers to experience to make adequate questions and lead the learners to conclusions
	Skills to guide a group learning process through debriefing	Ability to engage participants with different learning styles within the group in the debriefing process
	Ability to manage the debriefing process when there are tensions and disagreements	Manages a discussion when there are contrast statements and beliefs, still leading it towards non-violence
		Skill to recognise disagreements and apply specific ways and methods for dealing with disagreements
		Encourages observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, and communication among learners
Competences linked with evaluation and reporting	Knowledge of various approaches for learning evaluation	Understands various approaches to raise awareness of the participants of their learning; and how to use the outcomes of the learning for their own benefit
	Skill to design a reflection process so the participants are aware of their own learning	Raises awareness of learning outcomes through meaningful questions and space for self-reflection
		Encourages the expression of various point of view in a safe(er) space in order to address extremism and radicalisation
	Willingness to support and empower participants to use their learning outcomes	Promotes confidence and motivates participants to apply their learning outcomes and become active against extremism and radicalisation among their peers
Needs-based session design (NAOMIE)	Skill to assess/analyse learners' needs	Assesses learners' needs before or at the very beginning of the training activity in light to adjust the themes to relevant local issues which lead to addressing extremism and radicalisation
	Skills to choose appropriate methods	Applies methods and approaches for the transfer of knowledge and values in learning processes as well as promotion of critical thinking
	Skill to set learning objectives based on learners needs	Addresses learners' needs through an adequate and tailored educational approach
		Shows a genuine interest in learners' needs

Competence area: Communication and teamwork

COMPETENCES	CRITERIA	INDICATOR
Meaningful communication	Ability to clearly express thoughts and emotions	Shows a clear understanding of feelings and emotions and their impact on others

		Allows participants – youth to share their emotions on issues that are triggering to them
	Competences linked with Active listening	Demonstrates an understanding of concepts of active listening and non-verbal communication
		Listens carefully to others without interrupting and in an unbiased manner
		Pays attention to body language
	Being diversity-aware	Works effectively with young people from diverse backgrounds, especially taking into account those who are introvert, isolated and the specificities of their social, cultural, economic and religious context
		Is sensitive to the needs of and challenges of the young people, their access to narratives and viewpoints of the world
		Clearly can distinguish between signs of being radicalised and isolated, and just being introvert or facing exclusion
Public Speaking	Knowledge and skills for public speaking	Knowledge of public speaking techniques
		Skills to express oneself clearly and with confidence
	Skill to support and encourage/confront the group and/or learner in useful way	Supports and encourages/confronts the group and/or learner in a way that is useful way for the group/learner
Creating inclusive and focused learning environment	Knowledge of ways and methods to encourage creativity, problem solving and 'out-of-the-box' thinking	Refers to a variety of methods that encourage creativity, problem solving and 'out-of-the-box' thinking, in line with promoting critical thinking
	Curiosity and openness to improvise and experiment for inclusion	Dares to improvise and experiment in order to engage more isolated and un-reached young people in the programmes
	Knowledge of ethical boundaries	Adopts appropriate behaviour that respects ethical boundaries within a given group of young people
Being aware of the team processes and being able to work in teams	Knowledge of team processes and their influence on team effectiveness	Remind themselves to team processes and their potential influence on team effectiveness especially if working with external partners
	Openness to team processes and recognition of their importance	Shows an interest in the team process and does not ignore any teamwork issues

Competence area: Learning to Learn and Intercultural Learning		
COMPETENCES	CRITERIA	INDICATORS
Experience and practice in working on combating violent radicalisation and extremism	Knowledge on practical preparation steps and identification of the key issues on combating violent radicalisation and extremism	Can make a list of most important actions that need to be taken in order to open topics important for combating violent radicalisation and extremism
		Can connect and engage in dialogue the community, parents and other stakeholders, leading to mutual learning and support
	Skills to reflect on the preparation process and apply the learning points in the next steps of the youth work activity	Identifies easily if the preparation activities are done with the needed attention and quality
		Proposes additional activities and strategies to ensure the youth work activities are properly prepared
		Takes time to reflect on the preparation and implementation of the activity and draws conclusions from that process

Experience and practice in intercultural learning, including inter-religious learning	Knowledge and interest in intercultural and inter-religious learning and theoretical frameworks	Links the youth work activity with relevant intercultural learning and inter-religious dialogue theories and concepts
	Skills to successfully facilitate intercultural learning	Proposes effective measures to overcome unplanned situations and facilitate an intercultural learning process
Competence to give and receive feedback on how to improve the work done in this area	Ability to critically reflect on the outcomes the youth work activities	Can use the evaluation and feedback to estimate how much were the learning objectives of the youth work activity were reached
		Can identify the strongest and weakest points in terms of content of the implemented activity
	Ability to receive feedback	Actively listens and understands the feedback received from all the stakeholders
Self-reflective as a youth worker	Assessing one's own learning achievements and competences	Applies appropriate methods for assessment and self-assessment of their own learning achievements
		Takes responsibility to run self-assessment and build personal development plan based on it
	Undergoing personal/ professional development through feedback	Understands the values and mechanisms of feedback
		Gives, receives and integrates feedback in a constructive way
		Asks for feedback

Key stakeholders in combating radicalisation

The following section provides an overview of the key stakeholders in combating radicalisation and extremism but from a non-juridical perspective, mainly through prevention work. There are other stakeholders such as law enforcement, justice system, intelligence services, anti-terrorism services which are focused in working on the security of general population and the respect to the rule of law.

This overview will focus on:
- Stakeholders in the field of education
- Stakeholders in the field of youth civil society
- Media, internet intermediaries including tech companies

The selection of these stakeholders is because of their direct impact on young people.

Stakeholders in the field of education

The work on prevention rather than focusing on repressive measures is the key in combating radicalisation. In this line, the stakeholders involved in the provision of formal and non-formal education at the first level of prevention and countering violent extremism and radicalisation among youth. Unfortunately, the stakeholders in the field of education are often unprepared and not really equipped to work on these issues. Teachers can sometimes be anxious to address such emerging and unfamiliar challenges as radicalisation and violent extremism.

Some of the formal education institutions to prevent and counter radicalisation and extremism would require a holistic rethinking including reimagining the schools as a human rights-based environment, both in terms of methods and curricula. Human Rights Education for youth contributes to a process of building positively their identity and counteracting negative influence which can rise from various ideologies and extremist platforms.

Educational systems, both formal and non-formal should focus on building competences – such as critical thinking, dialogue and peaceful conflict resolution. These areas are essential to empower youth to reflect, interact with others, peacefully channel and express their opinions, reject calls for violence and intolerance and unlearn violent behaviour. The capacity of educational institutions, teachers and youth workers to teach these competencies needs to be strengthened.

Both formal and informal education should promote the respect and appreciation of diversity, especially in the use of language, and emphasize that crime, in particular terrorism, cannot be identified with specific ethnic, racial, religious or other groups. Education is central in developing and promoting shared narratives of tolerance and mutual understanding which are instrumental in tackling discrimination and hate speech.

The education sector should reach out and integrate the faith-based educational institutions as well as individuals committed to peace and representing a wide range of beliefs. In this way, the systems of learning will promote their interoperability and acceptance of diversity, while at the same time, the education will have strong inter-faith approaches.

Stakeholders in the field of youth civil society

The danger of radicalisation and extremism among youth is often fuelled by issues of discrimination, exclusion and marginalisation. These are the issues that are closest to the work of youth civil society. The youth organisations should play a role in fostering feelings of belonging to society and encouraging the development of active, civic and democratic engagement of all young people. Extra efforts are needed to reach out those young people who are isolated, feel disengaged and experience exclusion already on other grounds. These efforts are instrumental in countering radicalisation and extremism.

Youth organisations also can play a role in providing support for young people and their 'hybrid' identities, often relying on social media and belonging to different groups.

Civil society should also take action to promote and protect the democracies, meaning a society in which individuals, beyond their diversity, are brought together around shared, universal values of human rights and pluralistic democracies. Youth civil society is central into producing initiatives to counter radicalisation and extremism through non-formal education. These can also introduce partnerships with modern media (the Internet and social media) but also public sector and businesses.

Youth work can promote cohesion through arts and sport initiatives which result with strengthening of inter-cultural dialogue, reconciliation and integration. These youth work activities can help build bridges between divided groups or bring communities of young people together through a neutral activity to engage in collectively. Very often in specific neighbourhoods in Europe it is possible to find disengaged young people who have never met other young people from different ethnic, social, religious, cultural groups. Youth work has the role to create such bridges and bring back the value of diversity among young people.
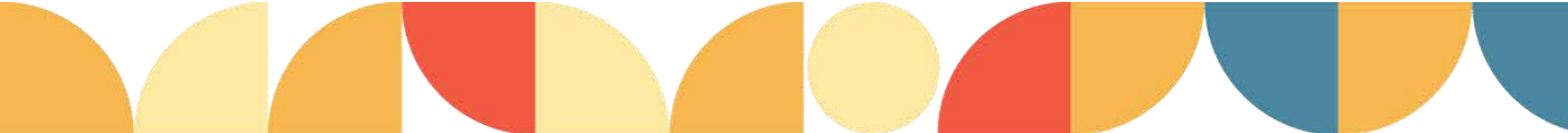
Youth work also can support young people co-operating with local businesses and engage in local economic development. For a period of years, even the EU's youth programme was focused on supporting young people's employability and entrepreneurship. The involvement of community members and recognition by community leaders can be strong incentives for youth to engage in such type of activity.

Media, internet intermediaries including tech companies

The responsibility to respond to hate speech, radicalisation and extremism online is not only through the work of education and youth work. Media and the tech companies should be at the forefront also in responding to the high volume of violent extremist, xenophobic and intolerant content and behaviour online targeting religious groups, ethnic minorities, women and members of the LGBT community. Human rights and fundamental freedoms apply equally online and offline, even if it takes more time to get the public law-enforcement to act in the digital spaces. A positive example that shows the power of youth civil society and the need to represent those who might be victims of extremism is the case against Twitter in Germany. Twitter is being sued in Germany by two groups claiming the social network failed to remove six posts attacking Jewish people and denying the Holocaust, after they were reported. This will be a unique case that will take the tech companies as liable to implement their own terms and conditions of use of the service.[37] With stricter control and supervision, the tech companies can also map and take out the spaces used by radical groups to spread misinformation and recruit new young people.

With this said, it is important to keep and protect the freedom of expression and these limitations should not come at the expense of respect and effective protection of the rights of others. Reporting

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[37] From BBC News: Twitter sued over anti-Semitic posts left online, 2023 https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-64404590

and flagging illegal and extremist content on the Internet, will improve the usage of the social media safely, including reduction of risks and removal of hateful and violent extremist content.

Media also should be engaging with young online activists and youth organisations who are committed to promoting human rights online. Possible initiatives include the creation of online networks of young human rights activists and the provision of training in online campaigning against intolerance and discrimination. Some examples exist also through various European projects aiming to support the development of counter-narratives by young people, training them in non-violent response to violence and hate online, as well as linking online and offline efforts.[38]

Traditional and modern media are increasingly used by extremists' groups to spread their narratives and recruit new followers. It is not only the social media channels but often the traditional media is also spreading messages of discrimination, prejudice and adding up layers of disengagement. Young people are particularly at risk of radicalisation and extremism through their use of social media and the Internet, combined with various personal and contextual factors. Social media but also traditional media is in some countries the main source of information for the majority of the population. Media outlets can contribute to counter radicalisation and extremism among youth by providing them with a platform to express their identities, concerns and frustrations and to be heard within the society. They can also help reaching out to vulnerable young people who are disconnected from their communities and the society at large.

Counter-narratives to extremism are those which are promoting tolerance, inter-cultural and inter-faith dialogue. All communities should be empowered to be active with messages which take into consideration the local context and culture, as well as the challenges and possible feelings of isolation, deprivation and lack of prospects faced by their members and young people. Young people also might engage in journalism or implement specific projects on the Internet to promote tolerance, intercultural and inter-faith understanding or produce counter-narratives to hate speech. Their voices would be particularly powerful to challenge extremism and radicalisation and push back violence among their peers.

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[38] Example: We CAN for Human Rights Speech is a joint EU-Council of Europe project https://www.coe.int/en/web/inclusion-and-antidiscrimination/wecan4hrs

Defining methods and methodologies for education on anti-radicalisation

Youth work and non-formal education are a key approach in preventing young people from radicalisation and violent extremism, both online and offline. The different methodologies that can be applied are mainly in the area of human rights education and global citizenship education. Several existing frameworks define human rights education, mainly as education **about, through** and **for** human rights. This means that human rights education the learners find out more **about** human rights, **though** experiencing and living human rights, so that they become active **for** promoting and living in human rights.

The following part contains 4 areas of youth work and non-formal education, which are crucial for applying methodologies for education on anti-radicalisation:
- Critical thinking
- Media literacy
- Human Rights Education against terrorism
- Youth work on religion and beliefs

Critical thinking

Non-formal education should promote critical thinking, as some of its core characteristics are that it should be holistic and open ended. However, we can also argue that many non-formal education trainers and youth workers do not understand the concept well enough, and they miss opportunities in the process to promote more critical-thinking skills into debriefing and analysing of a certain activity. To make this more applicable in methodologies of non-formal education, it is important to define what skills are the core of critical thinking, as well as, how to learn these skills through educational and youth work activities.

A very good overview is provided by Jonathan Haber from MIT[39] and the following is a summary from his work: "Critical thinking involves thinking in a structured way, it is productive and "logic," but logic describes a number of systems for reasoning systematically…Skilled critical thinkers must also be adept at translating spoken and written language into precise statements that can be built into a logical structure. This translation process is as much art as science, but with practice, students can perform this kind of translation on anything from historic or literary documents to scientific ideas and mathematical proofs."[40]

Having this in mind, there are some specific skills which help to develop critical thinking further, which are highly important for young people to develop and are suggested to be addressed in future youth work activities. These skills are:
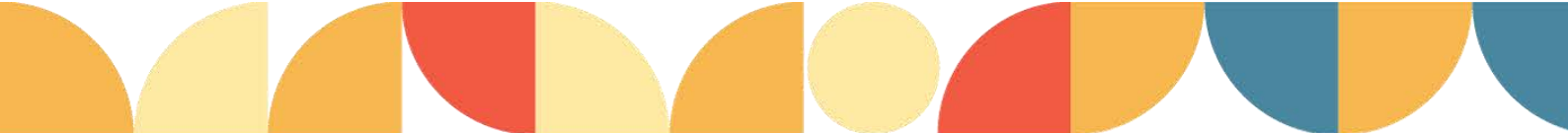- Structured arguments usually used for debates and understanding better the reasoning of someone's thinking. With structured arguments, the young people are though to question and analyse issues from different perspective so that they do not accept radicalisation and extremism as a fact.
- Perceptions and perspectives are a second area of intervention which youth workers are very well familiar with. The basic on promoting intercultural dialogue is in challenging and

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[39] Jonathan Haber, Critical Thinking Essentials, MIT Press. LogicCheck.net:
https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2020/03/02/teaching-students-think-critically-opinion
[40] Teaching students to think critically (opinion) - Inside Higher Ed.
https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2020/03/02/teaching-students-think-critically-opinion

developing understanding of different perspectives, in a framework of mutual recognition and acceptance of human dignity of all the sides. In this way, young people should build an attitude that everyone can experience and interpret interactions and information in different ways, and these can change over time. However, in order to allow everyone to change, grow and develop, there should be respect to each person's dignity in a non-violent way.

- The concept of truth in a world of information is another area which is very important for the media literacy work and intersects with critical thinking. The notion of lack of information is not true any longer, but there is nowadays a new issue which is information pollution and echo-chambers. There is a need through critical thinking to challenge one's own echo-chamber and understand a bit more from the full picture of the society and the world we live in. It is important also to challenge the concept of universality of truth and have an approach of multifaceted and interconnected truth.

- Remembrance, dealing with emotions and seeking social justice are also some areas where critical thinking is very important. These are areas are not critical thinking per se, but applying critical review and analysis can help to overcome anger, rage, powerlessness and disillusion because of the fact that the world and its history have been unfair. It is important to remember, grief, commemorate and seek social justice by not repeating the same atrocities. Hate and suffering cannot be resolved through hate and suffering. Such messages must become part of the key educational approaches against radicalisation and extremism.

- Empowerment to be the agent for change through non-violence is also linked with all of the above, by ensuring that young people are empowered, networked, informed and supported to seek and work for a fairer world through non-violence, dialogue, sharing of ideas and collaboration. This is the only way that progress is possible.

Media literacy

As indicated in the Compass, Manual for human rights education[41] "media, information and communication technology play a central role in the lives of youth today and are among the main factors that have shaped the current generation of young people. Many young people can be considered digital natives: they grow up in an environment where IT technologies are a part of everyday life and children learn to use digital devices before they can walk or speak. It has been assumed that even their brain structures are different from those of previous generations as a result! However, the existence of such a digital gap between youth and their parents' generation has been questioned."[42] The key arguments are that the so-called digital divide is due to exposure and access to technology, and this might be rooted in economic, social, political and other constraints (such as discrimination for example).

We absorb information through different sources in the digital society. The traditional media such as television is becoming rarely used as a source of news and follows the path of the radio and printed newspapers. Today, information is mainly placed through social media which can be leading to various sources on official and unofficial web-spaces, such as blogs, vlogs, reels, TikTok's, etc. The new way of "consuming" news is fun and interesting, and in the digital society everyone is a creator of news. This brings in a lot of pitfalls as not everyone is trained to create news, to verify their content, to conform to the ethical issues around news and to take responsibility about the content they put online. On the other hand, in this world of information overflow, young people are not trained to deal with news, to select the relevant news, to check the content and critically review its

[41] Media, Compass Manual for Human Rights Education, online thematic pages,
https://www.coe.int/en/web/compass/media#19
[42] Read more: VanSlyke Timothy, Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants: Some Thoughts from the Generation Gap;
http://technologysource.org/?view=article&id=77

sources and intentions. Because of this, the social media became a perfect space for radicalisation and promotion of extremism which leads to violence. Recent reports looking at behaviour of young people online, assume some correlation between the violence present online and how it becomes manifested in "real life" as aggressive and violent behaviour towards others.

Due to these factors, media literacy becomes an ever-important part of the education (including non-formal education), social work, cultural and information policies of every country in the world. The European Commission has several flagship initiatives to support media literacy in different spheres of life such as:[43]

- The European Media Literacy Week which is set up by the European Commission with an aim "to promote media literacy skills and projects across the EU.";
- European Media Literacy Awards are also a side initiative to award inspiring and impactful projects in the field of media literacy;
- An expert group of the European Commission also brings media literacy stakeholders together "to identify, document and extend good practices in the field of media literacy and improve the coordination between different stakeholders across the EU".

The work on media literacy is not only happening in Europe. An example of it is an advocacy initiative titled "Media Literacy Now" from USA which aims to create a public education system based on media literacy which they call a "21st century literacy skills they need for health, well-being, economic participation, and citizenship."[44] For this initiative, media literacy means "to apply critical thinking to media messages and to use media to create their own messages – is a key 21st century skill. Media Literacy is critical to the health and well-being, as well as to young people's future participation in the civic and economic life of our democracy."

The new aspect of social media which makes it relevant, but also dangerous is linked with the collection of preferences for the users. Young people carelessly are sharing their personal data making them easily trackable for unwanted influence, including, recruiters promoting violent extremism and radicalisation as well as other online predators. The fact is that most of the social media spaces are unsupervised online environments where there can be all sort of extreme messages, cruel and degrading photographs, videos, stories aimed to trigger emotions and abuse those emotions.

To address these challenges, many countries are working on developing laws to restrict internet abuse going beyond the typical code of conduct for various social media but managing the media on the Internet and limiting the harmful consequences of various online recruiters and hate spreaders. But, until this moment comes, the key aspect to work on is the one linked with media literacy and real digestion of media available.

The purpose of youth work methods linked with media education is to make young people more critical and conscious media users and creators. Media education methods should allow young people to be more aware of the current circumstances of media creation and sharing of content, so that they can distinguish the quality of information, its reliability, verifiability, and other characteristics (intent of the news, context, etc.). Media education creates selective consumers of social media ready for the digital society of today, it prevents young people to be vulnerable to advertising, as well as helps them to keep their online safety and privacy.

Another useful tool in this area is from the Council of Europe, namely the Recommendation on empowering children in the new information and communications environment (2006) which "states that member states should have a coherent information literacy and training strategy which is conducive to empowering children and their educators in order for them to make the best

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[43] Shaping Europe's Digital Future, Media literacy, European Commission, https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/media-literacy
[44] Media Literacy Now, USA advocacy group, https://medialiteracynow.org/

possible use of information and communication services and technologies. The importance of promoting internet skills and literacy is reaffirmed in another Recommendation (2009)22, which calls on member states to develop and promote – in co-operation with private sector actors and civil society – strategies to protect children against content and behaviour carrying a risk of harm while advocating their active participation in the new information and communications environment."[45]

Human Rights Education against terrorism

The Compass Manual for human rights education identifies "two key areas where the concepts of human rights and terrorism may come into conflict: the first, most obviously, concerns an act of terrorism itself; the second concerns the measures that may be taken by official organs in the process of trying to counter terrorism."[46]

Through various activities based on human rights the young participants get to understand how to define terrorism, especially from the lenses of extremism and radicalisation. It also looks at this topic from a human rights perspective or as defined in Compass the "act of terrorising members of the population constitutes a violation of their dignity and right to personal security, in the best case, and a violation of the right to life, in the worst… A number of human rights issues arise in connection with the fight against terrorism – and there is almost bound to be a continuing tension between the measures a government regards as necessary to take in order to protect the populace and the rights it may need to limit in order to do so."[47]

Youth work activities against terrorism and extremism can have several layers of methodological approaches and guidelines:

- Prevention aspect, making sure that young people are aware of extremist recruitments, reflect on early warning signs and know how to seek help;
- Prevention through socialisation, supporting young people not to feel isolation, thus become vulnerable to various threats from terrorism;
- Support to young people who experience traumas and victims who might fall on extremism online or those who were affected by radicalisation and extremism.

The activities with youth workers can also involve other parts of society such as working with law enforcement (police, prosecutors, etc.) or the human rights institutions in the country such as the ombudsman-office, equality bodies and commissions. In this way, youth work and human rights education activities make a connection directly with real life and support the dialogue between young people, including those affected by radicalisation, and the public services. These activities should be:

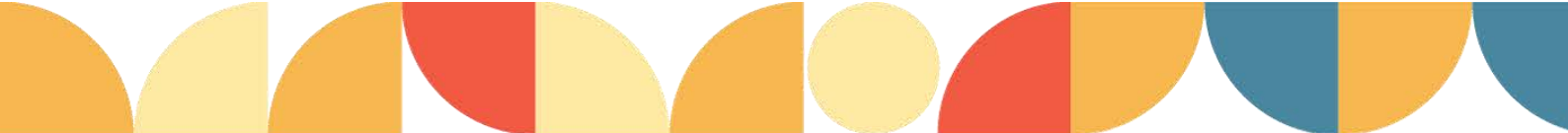1. Jointly planned with the other partners!

The planning stage can involve the police officers responsible for relations with the community, or community police if such exists in the country. They can work together with youth workers and prepare activities linked with human rights education as well as inform the young people about the existing support the police can provide in case they notice some signs of violent radicalisation or extremism.

2. Implemented in a safe(er) space for the participants to build relation of trust and confidence

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[45] Implementing European and International Standards on Media and Information Literacy in various domestic institutions, Council of Europe office in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2021, https://rm.coe.int/mil-eng-study-1-implementing-mil-standards-rozgonyikostic/1680a666ca

[46] Compass manual for human rights education, section on Terrorism https://www.coe.int/en/web/compass/war-and-terrorism

[47] Compass manual for human rights education, section on Terrorism https://www.coe.int/en/web/compass/war-and-terrorism

A safe space as defined by a dictionary is "a place intended to be free of bias, conflict, criticism, or potentially threatening actions, ideas, or conversations."[48] A safe(r) space acknowledges that bias, criticism and conflicts are part of a dialogue and learning, therefore it does not focus on eradicating them, but rather on ensuring everyone can reflect on them and learn from them as they occur. In a safe(er) space, the youth workers can open questions which are personal: identity, belonging, acceptance, clash of values from different identities, etc., and also questions that are more societal: social justice, concept of equality and equity, dealing with oppression from the past, fairness and equality of opportunities, etc.

3. Based on human rights and human rights education

Finally, it is important to have in mind that youth workers are not investigators working against extremism, but they work on prevention. The main task therefore would be to implement activities truly based on human rights education. Therefore, it is important to reflect and check that the activities offer spaces for education about, through and for human rights. This means that these difficult topics of radicalisation and extremism should be looked at through a human rights frame, though experiencing and living human rights by understanding how extremism impacts on human rights and to promote living in human rights as a way to prevent radicalisation.

Youth work on religion and beliefs

Youth work should address each part of young people's lives, including religion and belief. As defined in Compass, Manual for human rights education – "religion is an issue that many young people deal with in their daily lives at home, in public, at work or at school. Youth work can help to make religious differences a factor of cultural enrichment for young people instead of being a source of confrontation, especially through the lenses of mutual understanding, tolerance and acceptance of difference."[49]

In the past decades, youth workers and trainers became much more aware and open to the potential role of religion. In Europe, youth work developed also in parts through the work of the Churches (such as Don Bosco youth clubs or the YMCAs), but nowadays it is adjusting and adapting to other religions as well. Working on religion and beliefs can take different shape in youth work:

1. As the main theme of the activity: religion and beliefs are the core of the learning process of the activity as well as the planned objectives. This means that the activity opens questions about the role of religion in young people's lives, their aspirations and desires, their wishes, and understandings of religion. It also aims to foster inter-religious dialogue, meaning that the young people should have a culture of acceptance of different religions, as well as, the freedom to choose a religion or not to be religious at all.

2. An activity on diversity with side aspect on inter-religious dialogue is also a way to work on these topics. An activity can promote a dialogue to improve understanding of religions, but also explore the notions of religion and human rights, citizenship, participation, etc. These youth work activities also contribute to religious acceptance and empower young people to speak up about their choices, exchange about the similarities, differences and consequences of these choices and seek for their best solutions.

3. An activity which is sensitive to religion, is such an activity that takes into consideration the differences of religions and beliefs within the group of youngsters and proposes a set of practical solutions to make the activity accessible. Some of these solutions can be for example: the different dietary rules in different religions, places and times for praying, main holidays in different religious calendars and daily practices of different religious groups

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[48] Merriam Webster dictionary https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/safe%20space
[49] Compass, Manual for human rights education, theme on religion and belief
https://www.coe.int/en/web/compass/religion-and-belief

during those holidays. For example, during an activity which happens over Friday, it would be good to have time for the Friday prayers in case participants are willing to do so. During Ramadan, there might be a need to provide the meals after sunset (iftar). Similarly, for Christians there might be a need to leave time for prayers during Sundays.

Youth work should avoid ignoring the religious identities of some of the young people attending its activities. The sensitivity for the religious diversity which might exist in different youth groups, is also a way to acknowledge the uniqueness of each of the young people present at the activity and avoid separation and isolation. In such way, youth work can promote mutual respect and understanding, which is a core competence in fighting against prejudices and discrimination.

CONCLUSION

The COVID-19 pandemic resulted with cutting social and community relations, and education became harder to access than before, resulting with less support for young people and more online manipulation into conspiracy theories, hate speech, extreme and radical opinion and feelings of powerlessness. The danger of radicalisation and extremism among youth is often fuelled by issues of discrimination, exclusion and marginalisation. These are the issues that are closest to the work of youth workers and youth organisations.

Through working with young people and encouraging the development of active, civic and democratic engagement, the youth work systems also prevent violent radicalisation and extremism. Extra efforts are needed to reach out those young people who are isolated, feel disengaged and experience exclusion already on other grounds. Youth organisations are central into producing initiatives to counter radicalisation and extremism through non-formal education. These can also introduce partnerships with modern media (the Internet and social media) but also public sector and businesses.

Youth work and non-formal education are a key approach in preventing young people from radicalisation and violent extremism, both online and offline. Youth work can promote cohesion through arts and sport initiatives which result with strengthening of inter-cultural dialogue, reconciliation and integration. These youth work activities can help build bridges between divided groups or bring communities of young people together through a neutral activity to engage in collectively. The different methodologies that can be applied are mainly in the area of human rights education and global citizenship education. Serval existing frameworks define human rights education, mainly as education about, through and for human rights. This means that human rights education the learners find out more about human rights, though experiencing and living human rights, so that they become active for promoting and living in human rights.

The proposed areas of work, such as critical thinking, media literacy, Human Rights Education against terrorism and youth work on religion and beliefs are ways forward to promote social cohesion and combat violent radicalisation and extremism.

As a general and commonly shared impression, youth work organisations have the enthusiasm to play a role in countering violent radicalisation and extremism. As much as they reach out to take this role, it is also important for other stakeholders in society to acknowledge them, provide resources, partnership and guidance so that there can be a true impact of this work, and a real cross-sectorial approach.

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