



RAN YOUNG Issue Paper

Policy Recommendations

Introduction

Young people constitute by far the highest percentage of individuals joining violent extremist groups ⁽¹⁾. Young people were previously considered merely as the source of the radicalisation problem, but now we realise they are also an underexplored resource in the fight against extremism. According to the United Nations' Action Plan to Prevent Violent Extremism of 2015, young people are invaluable partners in the struggle against violent extremism ⁽²⁾. 'It is time to stop thinking of youth as a problem to be solved, and start thinking of youth as the problem solvers', underlined US Under Secretary for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights, Sarah Sewall, in her closing remarks at the Global Youth CVE Summit in 2015 ⁽³⁾.

This issue paper was based written by the RAN Centre of Excellence and Edwin van de Scheur of Dare to be Grey. The views expressed are not necessarily those of the RAN Centre of Excellence.

⁽¹⁾ Euer, K., van Vossolle, A., Groenen, A., & Van Bouchaute, K. More Hogeschool, T. & APART. (2014). *Strengthening Resilience against Violent Radicalisation (STRESAVIORA). Part I: Literature analysis* (HOME/2011/ISEC/AG/4000002547). Retrieved from https://www.bounce-resilience-tools.eu/sites/default/files/content/download/files/stresaviora_research_report_part_3_0.pdf

⁽²⁾ United Nations. (2015): *Action Plan to Prevent Violent Extremism*. Report of the Secretary General, pp. 17-18. Retrieved from http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/70/674

⁽³⁾ Sewall, S. (2015). *Closing Remarks at the Global Youth CVE Summit*, US State Department. Retrieved from <https://2009-2017.state.gov/j/remarks/247817.htm>



Introduction continued

RAN embraces this approach, recognising that Europe's young people are able to make a vital contribution to the agenda for countering violent extremism (CVE), and must be engaged as an important stakeholder in this policy area. Over a number of years, RAN has grown to its current status of a network exceeding 3 000 practitioners from all 28 Member States, with many specialisms and sectors represented — and since March 2017, young people have also been represented in a dedicated subgroup under the umbrella of the RAN Youth, Families and Communities working group.

RAN Young's first meeting was held in Madrid, Spain on 28 and 29 March 2017, and was attended by 35 participants from a wide range of EU Member States. As highlighted in the ex post paper from this meeting, the RAN Young ambassadors have selected four RAN working groups where they believe young people's contribution can provide the highest added value, and provided recommendations for these different groups of practitioners⁽⁴⁾. Participants in this first meeting also reviewed their national CVE strategies and proposed recommendations for reducing the radicalisation of young people and for including the youth perspective in their own countries' CVE policy.

This paper covers academic evidence and good practices from around the world. It also includes recommendations provided at the RAN Young meeting by the RAN Young ambassadors on the national CVE policies of EU Member States and the role of youth in CVE overall.

At their meeting in March, RAN Young participants made two key conclusions about youth participation, and have provided recommendations on how to achieve them. The first is that involving young people in politics would reduce their personal vulnerability to radicalisation by providing alternative, democratic outlets and enfranchisement through which they can address their grievances and engage with the system. The second conclusion is that CVE would be improved by youth perspectives and contributions, due to their (usual) superior understanding of audiences, technology, communications and other aspects of this field. These aspects will be covered in Chapter 1 of this paper.

The RAN Young ambassadors identified four key aspects of CVE policy in particular that could benefit from the contribution of young people: prevention, social inclusion, the internet and education. The RAN Young ambassadors' recommendations for these focal areas will be covered in Chapter 2 of this paper.

⁽⁴⁾ Radicalisation Awareness Network, YOUNG. (2017). *RAN YOUNG kick-off meeting: Young people's views on the work of first-line practitioners and policies*. Ex post paper, 28-29 March 2017. Retrieved from [https://ec.europa.eu/home-](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/about-ran/ran-yf-and-c/docs/ran_young_kick_off_meeting_madrid_28-29_03_2017_en.pdf)

[affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/about-ran/ran-yf-and-c/docs/ran_young_kick_off_meeting_madrid_28-29_03_2017_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/about-ran/ran-yf-and-c/docs/ran_young_kick_off_meeting_madrid_28-29_03_2017_en.pdf)



Chapter 1 Youth participation

Definition of the challenge

The rise of the militant Islamic fundamentalist group Daesh, and the subsequent emergence of the foreign fighter phenomenon since 2013 has brought youth radicalisation into the spotlight. This has resulted in a range of new studies on youth within the context of extremism and counter-extremism⁽⁵⁾. Traditionally, most research in the area of youth radicalisation has explored why and how individuals turn to extremist networks⁽⁶⁾. However, recently the debate has shifted away from 'youth vulnerability profiles', 'identity crises' and 'broken families' towards a more holistic, multilevel approach, a key part of which involves viewing young people as stakeholders within CVE⁽⁷⁾. This chapter explores this debate, examines good practices around the world and provides recommendations from RAN Young ambassadors.

Extremism could be viewed as an anti-establishment form of politics, and violent extremism as an illegal strategy to implement a different world view or to disrupt the status quo. This reasoning implies that those tempted by extremist groups and ideologies are reacting to their lack of representation in the mainstream or their frustration with the system. Anneli Botha argues that young people in their mid-to-late

teens are most prone to radicalisation and more at risk of falling prey to extremist recruiters, because they have stronger reactions to external political events and perceived injustice⁽⁸⁾.

She cites two reasons for the higher susceptibility of youth to violent extremism: young people are both more impatient and more willing to respond to human rights violations and injustice with violent action, if they perceive this to be necessary to change the political system. In contrast to older generations, they therefore often opt for confrontation rather than accommodation, compromise or manipulation.

Academics and policymakers no longer view radicalisation as a one-dimensional, linear process, but as a complex and varying course impacted by a combination of various factors at different levels⁽⁹⁾. This includes grievances and identity crises as well as exposure to charismatic recruiters and their extremist narratives and ideologies. The multidimensionality of extremism implies that an equally multifaceted approach is needed to assess the role that youth can play in the field of counter-extremism: this includes implementing upstream primary prevention alongside downstream deradicalisation programmes.

This full-spectrum approach to CVE must also take into consideration the value of youth participation in politics and policymaking as a

(5) Bigo, D. Bonelli, L. Guitet, E. P. & Ragazzi, F. (2014). *Preventing and countering youth radicalisation in the EU*. Study. Directorate General for Internal Policies, Policy Department C: Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs — Civil Liberties, Justice And Home Affairs (PE 509.977 EN). Brussels: European Parliament. Retrieved from [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/etudes/JOIN/2014/509977/IPOL-LIBE_ET\(2014\)509977_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/etudes/JOIN/2014/509977/IPOL-LIBE_ET(2014)509977_EN.pdf)

(6) See, for example, the following: Hafez, M., & Mullins, C. (2015). The radicalization puzzle: A theoretical synthesis of empirical approaches to homegrown extremism. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*.

(7) See, for example, the following: Extremely Together. (2018). *Countering violent extremism: a peer-to-peer guide* by Extremely Together. Retrieved from <http://www.extremelytogether-theguide.org/>

(8) Botha, A. (2014). Political socialization and terrorist radicalization among individuals who joined al-Shabaab in Kenya. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 37(11), p. 910.

(9) Vidino, L., Marone, F., & Entenmann, E. (2017). *Fear thy neighbor: Radicalization and Jihadist attacks in the West*. Ledizioni.



preventative factor, both at individual and societal levels.

Youth participation in CVE

Bottom-up approaches to CVE are widely supported by academic literature and are considered by practitioners to be more effective than top-down approaches⁽¹⁰⁾. As such, they are steadily being built into CVE strategies across EU Member States⁽¹¹⁾. This shift has predominantly meant engaging with schools and teachers in the bid to employ education as a tool to prevent radicalisation, as well as engaging with religious and diaspora communities if a certain type of radicalisation over-indexes in a given community.

As the evidence base for bottom-up approaches points to engaging those close to and most similar to vulnerable target audiences, RAN Young participants argue that CVE should include young people as key stakeholders, in a comparable way to existing collaborations with education practitioners and community figures. Young people should therefore be considered as natural preventers, peer-to-peer intervention providers, credible messengers in counter-speech and potential innovators who can deliver new approaches.

Peer-to-peer approaches are relatively new in CVE and have not received much attention in research. Due to the novelty of youth-led

counter-extremism programmes, it is important to consider the transferability of approaches across other areas and their capacity to be led by other stakeholders. Youth-led approaches that are used in other fields of prevention, such as drugs and crime, can be applied to the counter-extremism field; likewise, lessons learnt from CVE approaches that are not focused on youth can be translated into youth-led initiatives. Successful youth-led CVE approaches in developing countries (referenced in this section) could also be applied to developed European countries.

According to Margaret Williams⁽¹²⁾, the United Nations Security Council Resolution on Youth, Peace, and Security (SCR 2250) demonstrates a 'shift from the dichotomy of youth as either perpetrators or victims of violence to a perspective in which youth are viewed as agents of positive change and peace'. The SCR 2250 highlights that young people can be crucial actors in maintaining and promoting peace as well as preventing and resolving conflict through economic, social and development projects⁽¹³⁾.

Supporting and amplifying the voices of young people involved in peace-building can create a strong leverage effect. For example, peace-building activities can benefit from the digital literacy of younger generations. UNESCO⁽¹⁴⁾ notes that 'our task is to nurture a new

⁽¹⁰⁾ Bhatt, A., & Silber, M. (2007). Radicalization in the West: The homegrown threat. *The New York Police Department website*. Retrieved from

<https://info.publicintelligence.net/NYPDradicalization.pdf>

⁽¹¹⁾ See, for example, the UK Prevent strategy as explained in the following: Government, H. M. (2008). *The Prevent strategy: a guide for local partners in England*. UK: The Stationery Office. Retrieved from

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97976/prevent-strategy-review.pdf

⁽¹²⁾ Williams, M. (2016). Youth, peace, and security: A new agenda for the Middle East and North Africa. *Journal of International Affairs*, 69(2), 103. Retrieved from

<https://jia.sipa.columbia.edu/youth-peace-security-new-agenda-middle-east-north-africa>

⁽¹³⁾ Ibid.

⁽¹⁴⁾ UNESCO. (2015). *International Conference on Youth and the Internet: Fighting Radicalization and Extremism*. Retrieved from http://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/concept_note_-_youth_and_internet.pdf



generation of "digital citizens" at the global level and recommends that the internet be used as a tool to empower youth activism and to build inclusive knowledge societies. The rapidly increasing international connectedness through social media has not only revolutionised human interaction, but also provided for novel opportunities in peace-building. It can be used to both stir and resolve conflict and has served as a tool in the spread of hatred and solidarity alike ⁽¹⁵⁾. New information and communication technologies provide platforms for young people, effectively enabling them to mobilise their peer groups and influence their attitudes and behaviour. This can empower them to bring about political reforms and societal change, and to enhance conflict management and resolution strategies ⁽¹⁶⁾.

Williams ⁽¹⁷⁾ cautioned that over-securitisation in any youth agenda should be avoided. According to her, young people's opportunities and equality should be viewed from a peace-building perspective rather than from a security perspective: otherwise, governments risk further alienation from these groups. She also highlighted the need to involve young people in regional political decision-making processes ⁽¹⁸⁾.

Mirahmadi et al. point to successful examples of

peace-building efforts involving youth in similar ways. One of the examples they provide is the 'Let's live in peace project' initiated by the women's organisation PAIMAN Alumni Trust ⁽¹⁹⁾ and aimed at forming strong civil society coalition against extremism. Through this initiative, PAIMAN provides courses on mediation and conflict transformation skills to women and young people in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province in Pakistan. PAIMAN's conflict resolution and peace-building projects have reached over 35 000 young people over the past 2 decades ⁽²⁰⁾.

The US Agency for International Development (USAID) launched a range of initiatives in Somalia aimed at facilitating youth-to-youth dialogue and youth-led outreach campaigns against violent extremism. Some of their projects used the positive influence of sports to mobilise and connect young people as well as women. For example, USAID organised a two-week long outdoor basketball tournament in Mogadishu Abdulaziz district, with teams representing eight Mogadishu districts ⁽²¹⁾.

Sarah Zeiger argues that providing peer-to-peer communication training and facilitating capacity-building can help youth leaders and youth influencers who engage in counter-extremism activities to substantially widen their reach in

⁽¹⁵⁾ See the following: One Young World. (2017, January 17). Re-taking the Internet, ISIS's recruitment haven. Retrieved from <https://www.oneyoungworld.com/blog/re-taking-internet-isis-recruitment-haven>

⁽¹⁶⁾ United Nations. (2015). *The Challenge of Sustaining Peace: Report of the Advisory Group of Experts for the 2015 Review of the United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture*. p. 22. Retrieved from <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/150630%20Report%20of%20the%20AGE%20on%20the%202015%20Peacebuilding%20Review%20FINAL.pdf>

⁽¹⁷⁾ Williams, M. (2016). Youth, peace, and security: A new agenda for the Middle East and North Africa. *Journal of International Affairs*, 69(2), 103.

⁽¹⁸⁾ Ibid., p. 103

¹⁹ <https://www.peaceinsight.org/conflicts/pakistan/peacebuilding-organisations/paiman-alumni-trust-paiman/>

⁽²⁰⁾ Mirahmadi, H., Ziad, W., Farooq, M., & Lamb, R. (2016). Empowering Pakistan's civil society to counter violent extremism. *Contemporary Readings in Law and Social Justice*, 8(1), 194.

⁽²¹⁾ USAID. (2016). *Kenya and East Africa: Countering Violent Extremism*. Retrieved from http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PBAAH614.pdf



vulnerable communities. They should therefore be equipped with the skills and tools required to create and disseminate the counter-narratives and alternative narratives targeted at their friends and peers ⁽²²⁾.

With this in mind, the EU-funded programme 'Extremely together', managed by the Kofi Annan Foundation, follows this approach. They promote youth leadership in order to encourage further youth participation across the spectrum of CVE activities, ensure that young leaders have a seat at CVE decision-making tables, and build the capacity of young people in communications and intervention approaches in CVE ⁽²³⁾.

Likewise, the Danish government has stressed that peer-to-peer dialogues can help to address persisting grievances, challenge stereotypes and uproot 'us against them' narratives. It has committed to training young people in leading discussions and workshops to help their peers resolve identity crises and foster positive interactions within their communities ⁽²⁴⁾.

Youth participation in politics and policymaking as a preventative measure

⁽²²⁾ Zeiger, S. (2016). *Counter-Narratives for Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) in South East Asia*. Retrieved from <http://www.hedayahcenter.org/Admin/Content/File-2792016102253.pdf>

⁽²³⁾ Extremely Together. (2018). *Countering violent extremism: a peer-to-peer guide* by Extremely Together. Retrieved from <http://www.extremelytogether-theguide.org/>

⁽²⁴⁾ Danish Government. (2014). *Prevention of Radicalisation and Extremism: Action Plan*. p. 11, Retrieved from <http://www.justitsministeriet.dk/sites/default/files/media/Pressem eddelelser/pdf/2015/SJ20150422125507430%20%5BDOR1545530%5D.PDF>

⁽²⁵⁾ Saltman, E. and Kirt, J. (2016). *Guidance for International Youth Engagement in PVE and CVE: Youth Responses to Resolution 2250*

Research conducted by the Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD) ⁽²⁵⁾ concluded that factors driving young people to join extremist networks include perceived social isolation and political exclusion. Global Risk Insights ⁽²⁶⁾ reasoned that jihadists in Belgian neighbourhoods such as Molenbeek have benefitted from the country's integration problems and high unemployment rates among Muslim youth: these circumstances have made it easy for them to offer young, disenfranchised individuals a new perspective. Similarly in the UK, a study on youth and community cohesion commissioned by the UK Government's Department for Education found that individual-level factors determine young individuals' perception of both local and societal cohesion ⁽²⁷⁾. For these reasons, the CVE sector in general and RAN Young ambassadors in particular support young people in understanding and exercising their citizenship rights, and recommend promotion of post-16 participation in full-time education and training.

The UN's Guiding Principles on Young People's Participation in Peacebuilding underline that young people can and should take leadership roles in conflict resolution and extremism

and the UN Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism. Institute for Strategic Dialogue. p. 6. Retrieved from

<http://docplayer.net/39238321-Guidance-for-international-youth-engagement-in-pve-and-cve-youth-responses-to-resolution-2250-and-the-un-plan-of-action-to-prevent-violent-extremism.html>

⁽²⁶⁾ Dozier, J. (2016). Why does Belgium breed terrorists?. *Global Risk Insights*. Retrieved from <http://globalriskinsights.com/2016/04/brussels-attack/>

⁽²⁷⁾ Demack, S., Platts-Fowler, D., Robinson, D., & Stevens, A. (2010). *Young people and community cohesion: analysis from the Longitudinal Study of Young People in England (LSYPE)* (Research Report DFE-RR033). UK Department for Education. Retrieved from https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/181542/DFE-RR033.pdf



prevention⁽²⁸⁾. As powerful innovation drivers, young people's participation is an 'essential condition' for successful peace-building. They can make a substantial contribution to the creation of socially, politically and culturally inclusive communities and accelerate transition processes towards democratic and socially just governance structures in conflict-affected regions. In order to make better use of this underexplored resource, governments should actively promote civic engagement and active citizenship of young people and reach out to marginalised and hard-to-reach audiences⁽²⁹⁾.

Promoting dialogue with young people and addressing their grievances is also ranked highly on the agenda of the European Commission⁽³⁰⁾, which has highlighted the importance of creating an inclusive and friendly environment for young people, in order to prevent radicalisation. A 2015 report published by the Commission outlines the Member States' intention to encourage active citizenship, employability and social inclusion among youth as part of their fight against extremism⁽³¹⁾.

Several RAN Young ambassadors urged their national governments to engage young people more formally in policymaking. They underlined that such forums were often inaccessible to young people, who felt disenfranchised; in

debates, they often felt they were treated condescendingly. They also felt that policies particularly relevant to young people were developed without consulting representatives who could speak for their generation. This has resulted in ineffective and erroneous resolutions and problem-solving, while also contributing to a wider sense of social exclusion among young people.

However, some RAN Young ambassadors, such as those from Finland, commended their national government for involving young people in policymaking in general, and CVE in particular, and advised fellow EU Member States to adopt this good practice. They highlighted the inclusion of young Muslims in the National Action Plan for the Prevention of Violent Radicalisation and Extremism, who sit on equal terms at the policymaking table alongside officials and non-governmental organisations⁽³²⁾. Finland's commitment to collaborative CVE and the value they ascribe to involving young people and faith communities in this work is evident in practice: e.g. the establishment of a youth council which runs question and answer sessions for young people in Finland; and the Ministry of Education's provision of funds for youth-led programmes.

⁽²⁸⁾ See the following: UN Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development's (IANYD) Subgroup on Youth Participation in Peacebuilding. (n.d.). *Guiding Principles on Young People's Participation in Peacebuilding*. Retrieved from https://www.sfcg.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Guiding-Principles_EN.pdf

⁽²⁹⁾ Ibid.

⁽³⁰⁾ European Commission. (2015). *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: Draft 2015 Joint Report of the Council and the Commission on the*

implementation of the renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018) (Brussels, 15.9.2015, COM(2015) 429 final). Retrieved from <http://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regdoc/rep/1/2015/EN/1-2015-429-EN-F1-1.PDF>

⁽³¹⁾ Ibid.

⁽³²⁾ See the following: Mankinen, T., & Ewwaraye, A. (2016). *National Action Plan for the Prevention of Violent Radicalisation and Extremism*. Ministry of the Interior (Finland). Retrieved from http://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/75040/Kansallinen_vakivalt_radikalisoituminen_eng_NETTI.pdf



Chapter 2 Policy areas

Prevention

Definition of the challenge

The process of preventing violent extremism can be divided into two categories: primary prevention and targeted prevention. The former, primary prevention, is the practice of proactively reducing a population's vulnerabilities to radicalisation, without assessing individuals' vulnerabilities. The latter, targeted prevention, or intervention, calls for assessment of an individual's particular vulnerabilities and of their stage in the radicalisation process, before a tailored prevention approach can be administered. Both occur before the act of violent extremism or crime, and rest, to a certain extent, on the evidence-based assumption that extremist ideas, words and non-violent behaviours precede violent extremist actions. As they occur in the so-called pre-criminal space, both types of preventative approach are not linked to law enforcement in most EU countries, even though they are occasionally administered by officials in this sphere.

Recommendations

RAN Young ambassadors unanimously believe that strengthening the structural and institutional capabilities to carry out primary prevention is more beneficial to CVE than broadening security legislation or focusing on law enforcement approaches. Having had recent, first-hand experience of the education system, they are uniquely placed to identify these challenges and solutions.

They recommend promoting pluralism through integration and education policies as a necessary preventative approach. Boosting the resilience of

young people in this way will help prevent the identity crises that can pave the way for radicalisation. They also suggest sharpening the critical thinking skills of school children as a means of preventing their exploitation by extremists, in vulnerability cases where the children have already been exposed to extremist individuals, propaganda, or groups. In addition, they noted that another way to build resilience is to invest in interfaith activities, in order to increase understanding among the general population and undercut extremist 'them vs us' narratives that exploit ignorance.

As regards targeted prevention, RAN Young ambassadors recognise that it is vitally important to intervene in cases of individuals exhibiting signs of radicalisation, and encourage collaborative efforts with a wide range of stakeholders including those in faith communities, the educational sector, mental health fields and young people. This will aid efforts to 'spot the signs' and administer interventions, while reducing negative unintended consequences including erroneous referrals, securitisation of pre-criminal space and damaged relationships.

Good Practice

RAN Young participants from the UK supported their government's Prevent strategy and recommended it as a good practice, an assessment supported by the EU-funded network-based prevention and learning programme Terrorism and Radicalisation (TerRA), which termed it the most comprehensive



preventative approach in the world ⁽³³⁾. In particular, they supported the Prevent duty, which empowered stakeholders from diverse institutions such as schools, healthcare, and the prison and probation services to refer individuals to the Channel programme for targeted intervention.

Social inclusion

Definition of the challenge

Social inclusion is the policy approach of making all groups of people within a society feel valued, important and equal ⁽³⁴⁾. Achieving this is of vital importance to CVE, because identity crises, personal crises, grievances and system failures may be vulnerability factors for radicalisation. All these factors can be reduced through the presence of social inclusion, which should therefore be considered the most structural form of prevention.

At a psychological level, if an individual does not feel a sense of belonging, of meaning and of status (all of which originate in social inclusion), then that individual will search for alternative means of expression and representation, which can result in involvement in extremist organisations. Extremists exploit a real or perceived lack of social inclusion by exacerbating divides between in-groups and out-groups: they use black and white, divisive language and symbols to highlight the exclusion of the individual from society and his/her inclusion in the extremist organisation.

Recommendations

RAN Young ambassadors note that policies to improve social inclusion are not usually established through CVE approaches or security departments, but have more of a cross-cutting scope. Examples of such policies are seen in efforts to reduce reoffending of ex-prisoners, to provide new opportunities for unemployed young people and to offer education/training and better job opportunities to adults with mental health problems. While these policies are traditionally considered to lie outside the CVE agenda, they nevertheless tackle social exclusion among sectors of society that become involved with radicalisation: since these policies reduce the vulnerability factors which can be exploited by extremist organisations, they should be more widely incorporated.

The RAN Young participants all recognised the social exclusion effects of divisive rhetoric used by politicians and media when discussing terrorism and CVE, and strongly recommended that this be addressed.

RAN Young participants identified the key social inclusion approaches that must be adopted in CVE to improve its effectiveness: the consultation and involvement of civil society (including communities and young people) in prevention to ensure that CVE is not employing a top-down approach; tackling extremism of all kinds, so as not to alienate any single faith group; the promotion of interfaith work to unite societies with shared values against the common threats

⁽³³⁾ See the following: Young, H., Rooze, M., Russell, J., Ebner, J., & Schulten, N. (2017). Evidence-Based Policy Advice: Final Report. *TerRa: Terrorism and Radicalisation*. Retrieved from http://www.terra-net.eu/files/resources/evidence-based-policy-advice/evidence-based-policy-advice-terra_english.pdf

⁽³⁴⁾ See the following: The World Bank. (2018). Social Inclusion. Retrieved from <http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/social-inclusion>



posed by extremism; and the insistence on equality in the rule of law, its application by officials and effective communication of this.

Good practice

RAN Young participants from Austria recognised the good interfaith work led by the European Muslim Jewish Dialogue in their country: they said this created a solid foundation for intercommunity cooperation, and countered ideological narratives intended to drive a wedge between the communities.

The internet

Definition of the challenge

Radicalisation relies on effective communication between extremists and vulnerable individuals. Due to their insurgent nature, extremists are initially better than governments at innovating in the use of emerging technology, and prefer operating in ungoverned spaces. The internet's development over the last two decades has enabled instant communication and networking — it is therefore not surprising that extremists have developed capabilities to use the tools it provides, and governments have not. This is compounded by the fact that the internet is not designed to navigate across national legislation and borders; CVE strategies are often nationally or locally based at their outset, and are only now expanding to collaborate internationally.

Recommendations

RAN Young participants were vocal in identifying the internet as the primary area in which young people can contribute to CVE: they believe themselves to be more in tune with emerging technologies and more able to innovate than policymakers and other CVE stakeholders. When it comes to online communications approaches in

CVE, they noted that since young people are frequently the target audience, young people should likewise be consulted more often in focus groups, content testing and campaign development, as well as regularly be considered appropriate for credible voices.

In particular, the RAN Young participants focused on the ongoing debate related to taking down extremist content: they highlighted the need for young people to contribute to the debate on free speech and online governance. While they recognised that extremist propaganda often remains accessible to young people online, they noted that pressuring service providers to remove it ever faster was only part of the solution.

In addition, they advocated the following: teaching critical thinking for internet users, to reduce the likelihood of extremist material resonating with young people online; engaging a wider cohort of young people in counter-speech production to ensure that counter-narratives and alternative narratives occupy the same space as extremist propaganda; and promoting innovation among young people to help them develop technological solutions to this problem, particularly through collaboration with social media companies.

This last recommendation was considered key for extremist communications that contribute to radicalisation but are not considered to breach laws or terms of service of internet service providers: here, the debate on safeguarding vs free speech is particularly pertinent. Many participants argued for greater cooperation with social media companies like Facebook and Twitter, and more seamless integration between online and offline projects. This includes broadening the online dimension of successful



offline CVE approaches to reach either wider audiences or more specific audiences (both of which are possible, thanks to technology), depending on their remit.

At the same time, participants frequently emphasised that if these new and other forms of narratives are to be supported, youngsters need to be consulted and involved more often.

Ultimately, they usually know better how to navigate contemporary social media domains, and are often considered a more credible voice when they connect with their peers.

Good practice

RAN Young participants promoted 'Dare to be Grey', the counter-polarisation alternative narrative campaign in debates, in order to undercut extremists' binary narratives. In particular, they supported the collaboration between students, the Dutch government and Facebook, to which they attribute the campaign's success.



EDUCATION

Definition

In 2015, the EU intensified its efforts to counter radicalisation through education, and educators across Europe drafted the *Manifesto for Education*: this served as a call to action and a guide for schools on how to engage those who could be 'most influential in the lives of our young people' by preventing them from becoming radicalised ⁽³⁵⁾.

A RAN Young ambassador, studying to be a teacher, remarked, 'Schools can be a vehicle for social change'. Many other RAN Young participants argued that if schools want to retain a positive influence on society and in the fight against radicalisation and extremism, they must remain informed and updated on current trends in society and on developments in related research.

Recommendations

RAN Young participants raised three particular recommendations during the kick-off event.

Firstly, schools can play a direct role in preventing radicalisation. RAN Young recommends training teachers to handle various aspects of radicalisation, e.g. to identify signs of a student who is potentially being radicalised, or to manage polarised debates and tensions amongst students during class.

The second recommendation concerns diversity. Young people spend a great deal of their time in school, which is where a considerable part of their identities is shaped. It follows therefore, that schools should prioritise identity crisis

management for youngsters. With this in mind, RAN Young participants appealed for more material and projects aimed at promoting alternative narratives of history, cultural identity, diversity and active citizenship.

The third recommendation — and the one emphasised most — relates to the influence of contemporary media. As social media features increasingly in modern daily life, RAN Young firmly believes that all young people must be educated in coping with the associated risks and threats: recognising fake news and propaganda, dealing with stereotypes and becoming aware of extremist grooming. Many participants urged that in this area in particular, younger people should be consulted in designing and implementing these projects, in order to keep up with trends, to innovate where appropriate and to understand the needs of their generation.

Good practices

In terms of good practices, RAN Young participants from the UK pointed to their country's Department for Education, which has facilitated various kinds of funding for community-based education programmes such as Educate Against Hate. This has allowed many local NGOs to offer peer-to-peer education on topics ranging from tolerance and online safety to grooming and radicalisation, and has empowered teachers to safeguard young people through primary prevention.

⁽³⁵⁾ Radicalisation Awareness Network, Prevent. (2015). *Manifesto for Education – Empowering Educators and Schools*. Retrieved from

<https://euroclio.eu/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Manifesto-for-Education-Empowering-educators-and-schools.pdf>



Conclusion

RAN Young ambassadors value the opportunity to be represented in the debate on CVE efforts and commend the European Commission for establishing this platform. They all clearly appreciate the urgent need for increased involvement of their generation in all aspects of CVE, and recognise the role of RAN in promoting this.

The EU's Youth Strategy is an excellent means of encouraging participation in and collaboration with young people in a range of policy areas⁽³⁶⁾. Extending this approach and focusing one element of its delivery on CVE would constitute a positive move towards implementing many of the recommendations in this paper.

It is striking how different countries engage young people in CVE: some focus on

communications efforts, others on education, and several on active participation in policymaking. However, no EU Member State has involved young people in every aspect of its CVE policy; all will therefore benefit by learning from the valuable experience of their fellow governments in this joint endeavour.

The four areas identified by the RAN Young ambassadors for promoting youth involvement should serve as a starting point for RAN practitioners to engage with RAN Young participants as well as with a broader range of young people. National governments considering where to engage young people should also focus on these areas. The recommendations in each section offer clear suggestions that are applicable to every EU Member State.

⁽³⁶⁾ See the following: European Commission. (2018, February 19). EU Youth Strategy. Retrieved from https://ec.europa.eu/youth/policy/youth-strategy_en