

Prevention of radicalization



Project 2021-1-BG01-KA122-ADU-000035679 Safety and success, Erasmus +

Partners:

Association of European Development - Applicant

EOS DEVELOPMENTAL SA – Hosting organization

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Harmful Impacts of Radicalization- Why do we need prevention?

- Physical, emotional and psychological impact: The most obvious harm is the direct victimization of those who experience and witness attacks. Violent extremism can also create fear and increase people's sense of insecurity of society as a whole.
- Normalization of violent action and rhetoric: There is evidence that exposure to some forms of extremist and terrorist violence can lead to its perpetuation.
- Polarization: A significant concern is that the destructive actions of some individuals or groups will prompt stereotypes and potentially worsen larger-scale divisions and grievances.
- Reduction of trust: Some studies on the impact of terrorism find that terrorist attacks are associated with lower levels of trust in fellow citizens, national institutions and the legal system.



What can we do to protect society

There is evidence about what can protect individuals and society against harmful impacts of extremist and terrorist violence:

- Effective, appropriate support for victims of attacks in the short, medium and long term.
- Meaningful, non-violent avenues to address grievances and conflicts and to advocate for social change.
- Positive social values, including mutual respect and sense of belonging for all.
- Ways to de-escalate, counter and marginalize destructive discourses in the media and public sphere.
- Well-functioning state, social institutions and media platforms and outlets that are viewed as procedurally fair.



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Early prevention

Early prevention efforts are aimed at the general population and have the objective of preventing the onset of harmful behaviour. Examples include:

- Raising awareness about radicalization to violence so individuals can distinguish it from holding extreme views and identify when someone is at risk of engaging in violence;
- Increasing critical thinking skills and digital literacy so people are less vulnerable to manipulation and influence of terrorist and violent extremist messaging online;
- Supporting narratives that challenge violent extremism and promote positive social engagement;
- Supporting outlets for respectful and meaningful dialogue and social action that allow grievances to be addressed in non-violent ways;
- Supporting in the development of curricula and training for teachers that encourage open dialogue on complex issues in classrooms and provide students with prosocial avenues to discuss their grievances.

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At-risk prevention

At-risk prevention efforts are directed at individuals or groups in the initial stages of radicalization to violence. Examples include:

- ▶ Interventions with individuals showing signs of vulnerability or risk in order to build protective factors and divert them from the path towards violent extremism.
- ▶ Appropriate tools for family members, peers, and front-line workers and practitioners, such as police officers and mental health professionals, to intervene with those at risk.
- ▶ Tools and strategies to engage individuals who are interacting with harmful content online that may be radicalizing them towards violence.





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Disengagement efforts

Disengagement efforts are aimed at individuals who have become directly involved in ideologically-motivated violence. These include:

- ▶ individuals on peace bonds, incarcerated for terrorism offences, or returning from conflict zones.
- ▶ Disengagement programs serve as a complement to the comprehensive work of the country's security and policing agencies in monitoring, investigating, and building a case for criminal prosecution.
- ▶ These programs, such as initiatives to help individuals exit from violent extremist groups, are another way of mitigating the potential threat posed by these individuals.



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UNESCO's position

- ▶ It is not enough to counter violent extremism --- we need to prevent it, and this calls for forms of 'soft power', to prevent a threat driven by distorted interpretations of culture, hatred, and ignorance. No one is born a violent extremist – they are made and fueled. Disarming the process of radicalization must begin with human rights and the rule of law, with dialogue across all boundary lines, by empowering all young women and men, and by starting as early as possible, on the benches of schools.
- ▶ UNESCO Member States adopted the landmark decision (Decision 197EX/46) to enhance UNESCO's capacity to provide assistance to States as they craft sharper strategies to prevent violent extremism. UNESCO has also committed to the UN Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, with a focus on priorities of direct relevance to UNESCO's work: (i) education, skills development and employment facilitation; (ii) empowerment of youth; (iii) strategic communications, the Internet and social media; and (iv) gender equality and empowering women.

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Preventing online child radicalization



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- From an early age, people need to be equipped with the skills and confidence to engage with the digital world safely, and to know where to go for help when things go wrong.
- This involves being willing to tackle and embrace difficult conversations appropriate to different age groups. We need to talk about diversity, sexuality, religion and politics in schools. We need to empower young people, so when someone challenges their way of thinking, they can fall back on their own knowledge, rather than being led down a dangerous path.
- We need to keep up to date with technology and understand how it changes. We also need to educate ourselves about the online world and the issues that children, young people and vulnerable adults may be faced with online.
- That can be as simple as spending time with a young person and playing and using some of the games and social media platforms they love. By engaging with a child, we will not only begin to understand what they are doing online and the potential dangers, but we can start to build their trust.

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