RADICAL ONLINE EDUCATION

KA2 STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP IN THE FIELD OF YOUTH

MODULE 2: Identifying Radicalization Behaviour	
Project Title	"Radical Online Education"
Project Acronym	ROE
Project Reference №:	№: 2017-2-DK01-KA205-034323

Table of contents: Module 2

1. Myths and realities

Alex Begley (2013) presents in his article different point of views on radicalization. While speaking in Washington DC at a May 28 New America Foundation (NAF) panel on "Online Radicalization: Myths and Realities", Dr. Peter Neumann who is the director of the International Centre for the Study of Radicalization at King's College London, said that "What makes [terrorists] different from the public, is not how they use [the Internet]," Neumann continued. "It is the purpose for which they use it."

Moderator Haris Tarin, director of MPAC's Washington, DC office, after the events of the Boston Marathon bombings, has said that discussing online radicalization had become a "very public conversation that needs to be had". Dr Neumann focuses on the fact that now it is easier for radicals to be tied together creating "an enormous, vibrant, virtual community" online, and there is no longer a need for a physical community and that the actions to fight it {online radicalization} should not be in the form of blocking controversial content or shutting it down.

Rabia Chaudry, NAF Fellow and Safe Nation Collaborative founder, puts emphasis on the idea that it is the biases of "anti-Muslim bigots" and radicals that have the biggest impact on influencing politicians, media and policy makers and also alienating the Muslim youth by propagating ideas such as "you can't be a good American and a good Muslim ". By offering parents the means to monitor children's online activity, Chaudry proposes to help the Muslim community to understand and combat online radicalization.

U.S. special envoy to the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, Rashad Hussain has declared that the community is trying to combat radicals at their own game by making sure that "in the online space, Muslims are doing more to make sure their voices are being heard." and make the "disaffected youth" aware that Muslim's themselves are also victims of terrorist attacks.

While engaging with the audience, Imam Webb recalled that during a Twitter campaign, young Muslims had started tweeting how they chose to define the word jihad using the hashtag "my jihad" and a lot of the tweets had been humorous. Rashad Hussain had also told the audience that the Muslim community can help by being more involved in dispelling the untruths of the radical narratives online and collaborate with law enforcement when handling real threats of violence.

Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

RADICAL ONLINE
EDUCATION

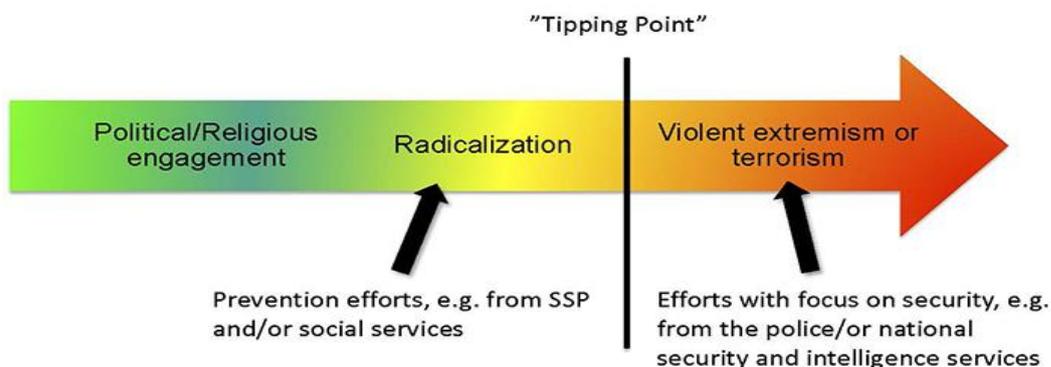## 2. Defining radicalization – a continuous challenge

The term 'radicalization' doesn't have a universal definition, being a topic of recent debate. Back in the 19th century, the term was used to signal a change within the political department or to refer to a non-violent activist. The contemporary use of the word sees activism as anti-liberal and fundamentalist. The term in itself is constantly changing and adapting to the times and spaces it is used (Verhaar, 2016). Therefore, Coolsaet (2011) mentions that radicalization is a process, without giving a clear definition. In relation to this, Hoskins (2011) claims the word is used mostly when referring to Jihadism or Islamic radicalization, but nonetheless radicalization also includes notions of Fascism or white supremacy (Bowman-Grieve, 2009). Sedgwick (2010) defines it as the act or political activities against a mainstream democratic society, and Midlarsky (2011) adds that radicals "strive to create a homogenous society based on rigid, dogmatic ideological tenets; they seek to make society conformist by suppressing all opposition and subjugating minorities".

Radicalization is defined by McCAuley and Moskalenfo (in Fishman, 2008) as an attitudinal and behavioural change towards increased support for intergroup conflict. Netherland's intelligence service underline that radicalization supports the changes in society that harm the functioning of the democratic legal order.

One question that arises is whether radicalization is about beliefs, subscribing to radical thoughts, or about actions, engaging in radical behaviour because those having radical beliefs might be at risk of engaging in radical actions but still, people should be identified as suspicious based only on their beliefs and not their actions (Fishman, 2010).

How does radicalization happen?

Radicalization is a process that can lead to violent extremism or terrorism.

"Tipping Point"

Political/Religious engagement — Radicalization — Violent extremism or terrorism

Prevention efforts, e.g. from SSP and/or social services

Efforts with focus on security, e.g. from the police/or national security and intelligence services

Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

RADICAL ONLINE
EDUCATION

Another definition is given by Belala in Michael C. Wigley's article (2015):

> "Radicalization is both an individual and collective process of identity construction that involves a social rupture in the relationship of the individual with his/her fellow citizens. The radicalized young people reject others on a cultural and political basis. They oppose their values and even develop antagonism towards their own families and local communities. They equally reject other cultural groups both locally and in the rest of society: Jews, Hindu, or moderate Muslims."

The International Association of Chiefs of Police, US (Morris, 2016) defines online radicalization as being "the process by which an individual is introduced to an ideological message and belief system that encourages movement from mainstream beliefs toward extreme views, primarily through the use of online media."

Defining terrorism brings also challenges, as the meaning is changing over time and terrorists refer to themselves as anything but terrorists. The FBI defines terrorism as "the unlawful use of force or violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives", while the Department of Homeland Security (USA) defines terrorism as "any activity that involves an act that: is dangerous to human life or potentially destructive of critical infrastructure or key resources and must also appear to be intended (i) to intimidate or coerce a civilian population; (ii) to influence the policy of a government by intimidation or coercion; (iii) to affect the conduct of a government by mass destruction, assassination or kidnapping". There is little agreement in either the policy or scholarly communities on how to define terrorism and radicalization (Fishman, 2010).

3. Causes

There are not specific causes that are directly related with engagement in terrorism and radical behaviour, but researches see radicalization as a dynamic process that shares some common grounds, but it varies for each individual. Some examples are:

- need for identity – individuals that are struggling to find an identity, to feel meaningful or significant

- identifying as a member of a religion, rather than a member of a nation or as individuals

- discrimination and violence towards ethnic groups

- loss of political, economic or social power might support the rise of far-right social movements

Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

RADICAL ONLINE
EDUCATION

Individuals that experience changes within their community over time, for example the influx of immigrants or a decrease of the job market, may be increasingly vulnerable to radicalization.

Other communities with a potentially increasing role in the studies of radicalization are identity communities, those connected ideologically or ethnically. Several youths from the Diaspora communities (people that have been displaced or relocated, by choice or otherwise) in the US have been pulled toward radicalization.

Marginalized communities and individuals that are excluded from a host community are vulnerable to radicalization. There is a fundamental need of individuals to maintain stable and positive interactions with others. The perceived schism between the West and traditional culture bring feelings of alienation. Different events in the people's home countries may increase the nationalistic sentiments.

The relative deprivation (of resources or opportunities), either compared to another community or within a community, may bring feelings of frustration, desperation and helplessness which can push individuals onto radical paths (Fishman, 2010).

4. Virtual communities

The web works as a tool for radicalized groups to communicate, organize and plan activities, using power and the freedom of social media to exercise pressure and influence across the globe, thus "online radicalization can be seen as a process wherein individuals through their online interactions and exposure to various types of social media content, come to view violence as a legitimate method of solving social and/or political conflicts" (Verhaar, 2016). Also, social media provides radicalized groups with communicative efficiency, by connecting not only the members of the group with each other, but also connecting different groups that might have been unaware of each other before.

The processes and effects of radicalization have greater impact at the community level, be it a geographic community (counties, municipalities, towns, neighbourhoods) or online communities.

The context for online communication and membership provided by the Internet can be used to explore "political action and affiliation online". There are many innovative and sophisticated ways in which radical and terrorist movements try to reach multiple audiences, including perceived enemies, active members, supporters and potential supporters. Besides the websites alone, an important part is played by the increasing number of discussion forums and virtual communities of support. These communities encourage the political and ideological radical discourses and provide validation – the feeling of inherent value and legitimacy, "individuals see themselves as utilizing the same 'cutting edge technology' used by other intelligent and creative people in society". Furthermore, virtual communities provide real social spaces for support, identity negotiation and promote the specific propaganda disseminated by different movements.

A community does not involve in the today's globalized world only the notion of geographic proximity but can be defined as "a group of people who regularly associate with one another on the basis of a shared interest". Many communities may imply a sense of "openness" but in the same time communities both on- and offline are elitist to some degree, especially support and radicalization support communities, which also may require registration. Since human action and interaction is fundamental in the sustenance of virtual communities, they are fluid and dynamic, changing in response to those involved. These communities can be seen as social arenas for the formation of interpersonal bonds, contributing to individual involvement in a terrorist or underground movement (Bowman-Grieve, 2009).

Lorraine Bowman-Grieve (2009) provides an analysis of various radical right movements. The radical right can be described using various labels, including racism, White nationalism, neo-Nazism, right-wing extremism, and White supremacy. Even if different right-wing movements differ from each other in various ways, there are similarities of ideology that bring them together, in the way that "individuals express a variety of extremist right-wing views and use this (virtual) community to discuss and debate their ideologies and goals despite their differences in beliefs and opinions". Moreover, extremist groups are centred on their perceived right to use violence to achieve their goals as they consider they react to the perceived threats of changes in society. The radical right movements have proponents in much of the Western world and their distinction reflect the cultural, political and social influences of their birthplaces. While the European radical right is mostly secular[1] in nature, mainly influenced by the Nazism discourse, the American radical right is determined by religious beliefs and assumptions.

Examples of radical right movements:

The Christian Identity Movement

- one of the three primary radical right movements in America, alongside the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) and neo-Nazism.

- consider that the Bible is the history of only one people, the White race and the Jews are a separate creation, the result of the seduction of Eve by Satan with Cain and the non-Whites are "beasts of the field", the result of illicit mating with Jews.

- these beliefs are commonly shared between the different organizations of the radical right in the US and they are promoted through Christian Identity's own body of literature, such as "Jubilee" and the "American Bulletin", besides the active websites and discussion forums.

Ku Klux Klan (KKK/Klan)

- Christian organization in the US promoting and disseminating the propaganda of the radical right and notions of White supremacism

---

[1] Not connected with religious or spiritual matters.

Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

RADICAL ONLINE
EDUCATION

- statement from the opening page on their website:

"If you are not of the White race, this web site is not for the likes of YOU!
We reserve the right of free speech to state our views whether our enemies
like it or not. The IKA[2] hates: Muds, spics, kikes and niggers. This is our God
given right! In no way do we advocate violence. We believe in educating our
people to the monopolistic Jewish control of the world's banks, governments,
and media. White education is what ZOG hates and why it tries to imprison
White Racialists."

The Creativity Movement (a.k.a World Church of the Creator [WCOTC])

- promoting ideals of White supremacism based on five fundamental beliefs for
Creators (as they refer to themselves):

I WE BELIEVE that our Race is our Religion.

II WE BELIEVE that the White Race is Nature's Finest.

III WE BELIEVE that racial loyalty is the greatest of all honors, and racial treason is
the worst of all crimes.

---

[2] Imperial Klans of America – support base for the Klan movement and promotion of a Klan network.

IV WE BELIEVE that what is good for the White Race is the highest virtue, and what is bad for the White Race is the ultimate sin.

V WE BELIEVE that the one and only, true and revolutionary White Racial Religion— Creativity—is the only salvation for the White Race.

To the fulfillment of these religious beliefs, we Creators forever pledge our Lives, our Sacred Honor, and our Religious Zeal. (Excerpt from www.creativitymovement.net/)

The twenty-first century has brought an increase in right-wing ideologies throughout Europe. In Scandinavia, for example, there are two forms of the radical right, neo-Nazism, which promotes a clearly racist ideology and Anti-Immigrationists, who frame their ideology in political and historical rhetoric, both using violence to achieve their goals. In Norway and Denmark, the supporters justify their opposition to immigration by comparing with opposition against Nazi invaders during World War II, claiming that it is their right to use violence against those who attempt to invade their country. Another example is the skinhead movement, particularly popular in Britain, which started not as a racist movement but as a form of protest against the system and a sub-culture of urban, working-class youth in Britain. That period (1960's-1980's) was characterized by an increased immigration and economic downturn, conditions that facilitated the radicalization of the movement, thus a large number of skinheads were affiliated with British right-wing organizations such as the National Front.

As mentioned before, even if these examples of radical movements have different origins, they all have a prevailing "worldview", with central features that include, but are not limited to:

- A belief in White "pride" and the importance of protecting the White race from extinction.
- A belief in a "Zionist Occupation Government" (ZOG) – the notion that there is a Jewish conspiracy to make the White race extinct, pursued by Jews who are in positions of power in government and media. From these positions, they control the immigration policies and promote "the multicultural ideal" in order to achieve the extinction of White race and only themselves remaining "pure".
- A condemnation of other races and of miscegenation[3].
- A belief in (at least some form of) the inevitability of a Racial Holy War (RAHOWA).
- A belief in some variation of Revisionism[4].

---

[3] The interbreeding of people considered to be of different racial types.
[4] A policy of revision or modification, especially of Marxism on evolutionary socialist (rather than revolutionary) or pluralist principles.

Besides the ideological beliefs, similarities between radical right organizations can be identified also in the way of how and why they and their supporters are using the Internet. Internet is serving as a facilitator and it is not a direct cause for radicalization (Emma Morris, 2016). Still, it has an important role in providing a link with the movement the people support, by offering access to information on ideology and goals and facilitates involvement either online or offline (in potentially more active capacities). The main point is that it is central to the creation and maintenance of the radical discourses and provides the necessary justifications, validations and encouragement that in time may contribute to further involvement and even action in support of the movement.

The virtual community "Stormfront" is an international and multi-organizational community that supports the radical right movement. They describe their vision on their website www.stormfront.org as it follows: "We are a community of racial realists and idealists. We are White Nationalists who support true diversity and a homeland for all peoples. Thousands of organizations promote the interests, values and heritage of non-White minorities. We promote ours. We are the voice of the new, embattled White minority!". Besides providing information on current events and press coverage, the site's most popular section is the one devoted to community discussion where supporters share their ideas on a wide range of cultural, theological and ideological contexts relating to the radical right. On top of that, there are specific international subsections that include membership from America (North and South), Europe, Australia and Russia. These forums offer people a sense of community empowered by members who encourage each other to express their opinions. They find validation and justification by continuously reading the other's viewpoints and they even may request supporting evidence from another in relation to a comment made.

Currently Stormfront is caught up by Reddit, which boasts the 9th highest Alexa Internet traffic ranking in the US and the 36th worldwide. Reddit is an online forum wherein the active participation of the members is facilitated by the sub-reddits (discussion and posts about different topics), playing an important role for community building. The use of sub-reddits is an example of how involvement within a certain topic creates a feeling of community (Verhaar, 2016).

6. Processes – recruitment, homophily, echo chambers

Michael C. Wigley mentions in his article (2015) reasons for recruitment or volunteering. Extremist groups seek mostly young people receptive to the extremist cause. They also target people based on the individual skills and talents that benefit the organization. Recruits can be placed into leadership, operational or support roles, serving in positions from intelligence gathering to financing and translating. Another

Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

RADICAL ONLINE
EDUCATION

factor that contribute to one's radicalization online is the time that one spends immersed in extremist content. On the Internet, individuals can also portray their own ideal characteristics and identity. This can lead over time to a discrepancy between their real and online selves, causing personal pain and depression. They may find reconciliation in the form of violent acts or other actions loyal to the extremist cause. As Michael C. Wigley says, "some individuals volunteer their services, and some are targeted because of their skills and experiences. Others are emotionally withdrawn and socially isolated, looking for a sense of belonging and purpose. More complicated yet, some individuals may exhibit a combination of all these characteristics."

Since the identification with an ideological cause "does not exist in a vacuum; it is reinforced by a social network of like-minded politicos" (Campbell qtd. in Boutyline & Willer, 2016), the type of interactions presented above within the radical right organizations are representative for the concept of homophily. It describes how people with common traits and interests will tend to interact more with one another than with the ones having dissimilar traits. This behavior represents one of the biggest barriers in interpersonal and intercultural contact (Dunne, 2013) but in the same time is one of the most powerful force in cultural dynamics and community construction (Centola, 2007).
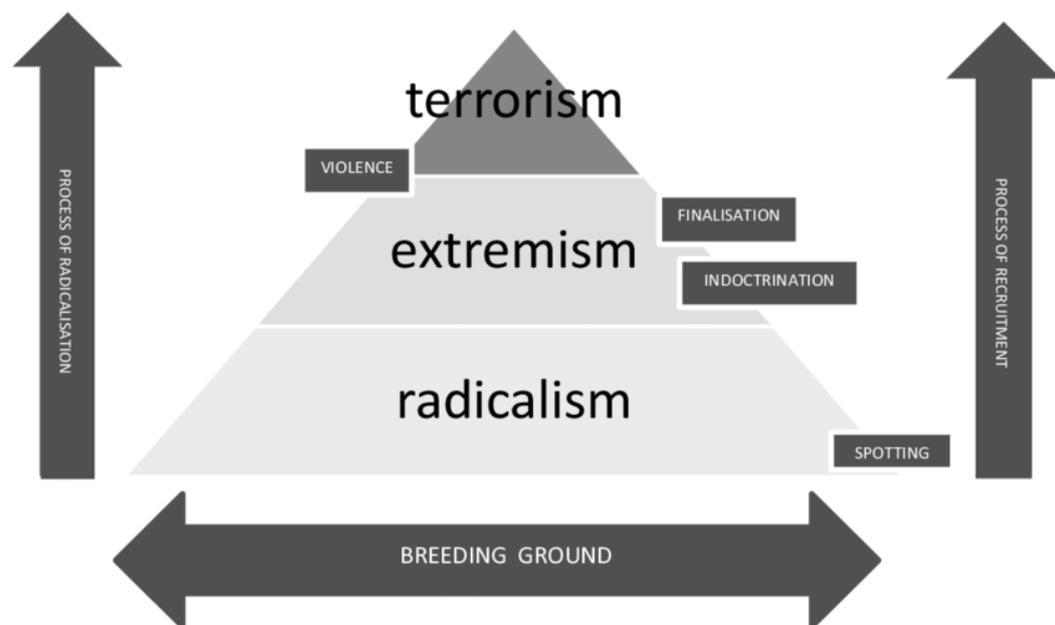
Research on personality differences across the political spectrum shows that both more extreme and more conservative individuals tend to choose to associate with others similar to themselves in political ideology than more liberal and more moderate ones. Thus, "greater political homophily is associated with decreased chances of politically diverse interactions and increased rates of interactions with ideologically similar others that tend to reinforce individuals' views and enhance their commitment

to their ideological group". Similarly, individuals without exposure to diversity in discourse are less able to provide rationales for their own political decisions and they are more likely to hold extreme attitudes. Political homophily creates in-group bonds that reinforce behavioral norms and increase social pressure to get involved in risky activities (Centola, 2007/2013).

Political psychology tells us that one of the personality traits that drives this attitude is the preference for certainty. Findings suggest that the ones on either ideological extreme have greater preferences for certainty than more moderate ones, as they appreciate encountering similar opinions and avoiding contradictory ones. As these individuals will seek certainty through social contact, their networks may become "echo chambers", providing them with validation and protecting them from disagreement (Boutyline & Willer, 2016). This concept is used to refer to a community wherein similar messages or beliefs are spread. Echo chambers may lead to social fragmentation, wherein diversity is a marker for polarization[5]. Since a lot of information on the Internet is adapted to the users' specific needs, members are usually exposed to content in favor of the community or group (Verhaar, 2016). Thus, echo chambers play an important part in radical networking with multiple factors that act like a glue, but all of them are part of the homophily of a group. In this way, "groups gradually become more homogenous over time which also involves becoming more radical as the consensus within the group grows" (O'Hara & Stevens, 2015).

7. Online "de-radicalization"

Identifying and preventing the radicalization of children

Emma Morris (2016) claims that the radicalization of children is a nuanced and complex process that is not happening in isolation only online – Internet is serving as a facilitator, not a direct mans of recruitment.

She is giving an example of good practice in identifying and preventing online radicalization – Family Online Safety Institute (FOSI) – promoting responsible online use: looking at the risk that is posed, checking if there are actual harms and balancing the actual harms with the benefits of online exploration, discovery and friendship, because the experience of growing up online should not be forgotten in the attempt to protect from the worst-case scenario.

People should be aware of the differentiation between extremist content that is prevalent on the Internet and may distress the youth and online behaviours with

---

[5] Division between groups with different beliefs.

radicalization as an objective and its corresponding risk of offline violence, that has more serious implications for a child's safety and well-being.

The culture of responsibility

- governments can gather experts to research on the subject, inform the public and advice law enforcement efforts

- cooperation and dialog between trans-national agencies, states, and relevant domestic government departments

- combination of local policing, with strong community ties, and strategic high-level policing in cooperation with security services

- teachers should be aware if there are changes in a child's behaviour, that may indicate a struggle with an online experience

- parents should explore the internet with their children from a young age and have open conversations about technology and beliefs

- social media platforms have been collaborating with governments, law enforcement and NGO's to develop tools to remove dangerous content, even if many of them have strong free speech commitment

- ensuring (by all of those who interact with children) that children have positive, educational, and fun experiences online

- counter speech – vital component to combatting radical thoughts: "message that offers a positive alternative to extremist propaganda, or alternatively aims to deconstruct or delegitimize extremist narratives" (Silverman et. al., 2016); it is often more effective than changing the removing the offending content.

Other counter strategies

Omar Ashour (2010) mentions in his article one of the famous strategists and ideologues of Jihadism, Abu Mus'ab al-Suri that has said that: "the best way to organize is without an organization...an ideological front survives any security arrangements."

While debating whether the Internet plays a role in facilitating radicalisation, recruiting of new audiences and promoting extremist narratives and focusing on the intensity of the problem the discussion can be forwarded into the direction that it becomes a global imperative for media outlets and the Internet to try to revert the role and counter violent extremist narratives. The Internet is perceived as a playing a vital role in facilitating de-radicalization efforts and counter-radicalization and also plays a big role in promoting counter-narrative.

There is an urgency for international cooperation between the United Nations governmental bodies and experts on the subject matter for conveying and building a comprehensive counter-narrative to violent extremism. Empirical data has shown that limited success is gained when sophisticated counterarguments to the ideologies of violent extremists are being brought up front by less credible sources. That is why the need for credible messengers is considered to be crucial for conveying a comprehensive counter-narrative that should be able to cover several dimensions of violent extremism such as theological, socio-psychological, political and instrumental.

Ashour also claims that this is a crucial and unique moment in the history of Jihadism where the messages against the current ideology and jihadist behaviour that reach the younger generations are being brought up front by academic scholars, former officials, civil society organizations and respectable religious clerics. This is considered to be a challenge for the United Nations on how to capitalize this moment and use the proper media outlets to create and promote a credible and comprehensive counter-narrative to violent extremism.

Online De-Radicalization and the Strategy for a Counter-Narrative

Omar Ashour's article focuses on sketching a framework for counter-narrative strategy as part of an UN-sponsored, comprehensive research project. The strategy can be built on three pillars: comprehensiveness (the multi-layers of the message), credibility (background of the messengers) and promotion (propagation). Also considered important is the international cooperation for implementation.

1. **The Message (comprehensiveness)** - after observing multiple narratives of violent extremists, can be grouped into four categories:

a. Political. This narrative focuses on various types of ways in which a particular group is suffering at the hand of an already identified culprit(s) which is being held responsible.

b. Historical. For the political narrative to be legitimized more, violent extremists select various historical episodes to enforce this belief.

c. Socio- political. The emphasis is being put on the glorification of terrorism and violent acts empowering the non- mainstream against the mainstream.

d. Instrumental. Which promotes the achievement of social- political goals by addressing alleged effectiveness of violent methods.

A fifth category is being brought up when discussing about groups who employ religion to legitimate their actions:

e. Theological. The actions / reactions of a religious group to social oppression and political grievances are considered to be legitimate.

By matching some of the dimensions we are given an attractive and encompassing narrative full of historical and cultural symbolism. To counter that narrative, addressing each dimension and focusing on creating messages for different audiences, a comprehensive message should be outlined. The emphasis should be on understanding specifics of the affected group, the ideology and ontology and the context in which it operates. The content should rely on highlighting the legitimacy and effectiveness of non-violent strategies while (depending on the case) admitting the validity of some/ all of the grievances and offering alternative ways to deal with them.

2. The Messengers (credibility - background of the messengers)

It is important to be aware that the identity of the messengers matters. Such as a former commander of the Egyptian Islamic Group armed wing declares: "Hearing the [theological/moral/instrumental] arguments directly from the Sheikhs [IG leaders] was different….do you think I did not hear this before?!...we heard those arguments from the Salafis and from al-Azhar…we did not accept them…we accepted them from the Sheikhs because we knew them, and we knew their history."

The interactions between radicals, independent religious figures and credible academic experts can be seen as a crucial process for updating the extremists' worldview, thus cracking the duality of "good" versus "evil".

3. The Media (promotion)

This dimension of the counter-narrative strategy requires multiple tasks:

Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

RADICAL ONLINE
EDUCATION

a. Analysing the counter-narratives available, evaluate potential impact, highlight sources of strength and appropriateness for the audience in question.

b. Summarizing, simplifying and sometimes translating (if required) of existing and forthcoming counter-narratives. As propagating tools, online videos and audio should also be used.

c. The final task consists of introducing the messengers, their credibility and their background.

On the other hand, Tobias Gemmerli (2015) focuses on the fact that critical thinking and education are the best forms of prevention when talking about radicalisation and extremism and that while counter-narratives are intended to dismantle propaganda or offer positive alternatives they may lead to opposite results.

The strategies adopted by researchers, government ministers and interest groups for preventing radicalisation and counteracting extremist narratives can be divided into three categories:

1. **Direct counter-narratives** - confronting the ideology and lifestyle of extremists by deconstructing and undermining their propaganda. The argument for this is that by direct counter-narratives (making fun of, demonstrating the contradictory) and focusing on challenging the misunderstandings and conspiracy theories of violent extremists they can point sympathisers in the right direction and cause doubts in the extremist line of thought.

2. **Positive alternatives** - supporting moderate voices. The approach emphasizes on the importance of influencing young people who are generally vulnerable to messages, to combat the attraction of extremism by using alternative offers to identity, moderating interpretations of religion and ideology etc.

3. **Improving digital competences** - the ability of vulnerable young people to reflect critically. This approach focuses on the long- term perspective of helping young people to employ theories that improve their understanding on how to use analytic and media - critical proficiency.

Receiver paradox – understanding the individual. Before using counter - narratives, we need to understand the individual and to identify what should be presented to him / her. Direct counter- narratives work better for rational individuals who prefer the truth and positive alternatives work for youth who can be inoculated with the right values, but we need to keep in mind that extremism is appealing to some young people and for them, direct counter- narratives are simply considered politically correct propaganda.

The focus is being put on attracting young people to voluntarily observe well-constructed counter-narratives (which are generally perceived as being irreconcilable with their values) while navigating through a chaotic sea of information. This has been proved to be ineffective and that is because individuals while receiving new information, they interpret it through a personal narrative which has been rooted into them in a complex network of individual relationships.

Rebellion against authorities

Online radicalization and extremism is, in one way or another, based on the rebellion of young people against authorities and moderate outlooks on life and that is why the idea of positive alternatives being provided by moderate voices of authority may not have a good outcome. An alternative can be offered, that of implanting seeds of doubt into the minds young people who are flirting with extremism and allow that seed to grow and break down defence mechanisms. It is also important to keep in mind that the objective of this and the sender must not be obvious for this alternative to work and for the voice of doubt to be perceived as if it comes from within the extremist groups.

One of the dangers on the sender- paradox is for it to be linked with ideological and financial support of the state which will only enforce mistrust and arouse suspicions, lose credibility of independent initiatives and thus speaking against the idea of strategic alliances.

Alternative truth or critical approach

Gemmerli's opinion is that the direct counter-narratives approach does not focus on the reality that media is politically constructed and dependent on certain point of views not taking into account of who is sending that information.

Positive alternatives while focusing on a more unproblematic place in the community tries to bring back into the fold the normality- sceptical youth.

The critical formation approach is seen to be more fundamental and educates young people to be more sceptical towards the truth and who proclaims them.

While there is no simple solution to preventing extremism, because we cannot perceive it as selling the "better" product or focusing on communicating the truth to an already reality-disoriented counterculture, the best strategy to counteract it seems to rely on critical thinking and this means taking the long route and focusing on education.

8. Final remarks

A community depends on the active participation of its members and now it becomes more and more accessible for people to be active on the Internet. It offers the space and even more, the virtual anonymity, to discus, debate, and dissent, especially topics and issues that are emotive in nature, such as terrorism and extremism. A community has the power to create very real values, as members set their own standards, sense of identity, and meaning of group belonging. Furthermore, the ideology promoted within a community may control the individual's decision making and behaviour, with the potential to facilitate the involvement and to instigate to action (Bowman-Grieve 2009).

In conclusion, sketching a global action plan for promoting online de-radicalization and producing counter- narratives becomes crucial with the current rise of violent incidents linked to online radicalization. Interaction models should be used to inform and guide the process of constructing persuasive counter-narratives. For there to be success of any action plan there needs to be an exchange of experiences and an enhancing international cooperation (Ashour 2010).

Bibliography

Ashour, O. (2010). Online De-Radicalization? Countering Violent Extremist Narratives: Message, Messenger and Media Strategy. *Perspectives on Terrorism,4*(6), 15-19.

Begley, A. (2013). Online Radicalization: Myths and Realities. *The Washington Report on Middle East Affairs; Washington,32*(6).

Boutyline, A., & Willer, R. (2016). The Social Structure of Political Echo Chambers: Variation in Ideological Homophily in Online Networks. *Political Psychology,38*(3), 551-569.

Bowman-Grieve, L. (2009). Exploring "Stormfront": A Virtual Community of the Radical Right. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism,32*(11), 989-1007.

Centola, D, et al. (2007). Homophily, Cultural Drift, and the Co-Evolution of Cultural Groups. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 51(6), 905–929.

Coolsaet, R. (2011). Jihadi Terrorism and the Radicalisation Challenge. *European and American Experiences*, 2nd edition, pp. 269-287.

Dunne, C. (2013). Exploring motivations for intercultural contact among host country university students: An Irish case study. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 37, 567-578.

Fishman, S., Community-Level Indicators of Radicalization: A Data and Methods Task Force. College Park. MD. START, 2009.

Gemmerli, T. (2015). The Fight Against Online Radicalisation Starts Offline. *Extremism on the Internet*. Danish Institute for International Studies.

Hara, K. O., & Stevens, D. (2015). Echo Chambers and Online Radicalism: Assessing the Internet's Complicity in Violent Extremism. *Policy & Internet*, *7*(4), 401–422.

Hoskins, A., Awan, A., O'Loughlin, B. (2011). Radicalisation and Media: Connectivity and terrorism in the new media ecology. Routledge.

Midlarsky, M. I. (2011). Origins of Political Extremism: Mass Violence in the Twentieth Century and Beyond. *The American Historical Review,119*(1), 150-152.

Morris, E. (2016) Children: extremism and online radicalization. *Journal of Children and Media*, 10(4), 508-514.

Sedgwick, M. (2010). The Concept of Radicalisation as a Source of Confusion. *Terrorism andPolitical Violence,22*(4).

Silverman, T., Stewart, C., Amanullah, Z., Birdwell, J. (2016). The impact of counter-narratives: Insights from a year-long cross-platform pilot study of counter-narrative curation, targeting, evaluation and impact. *London: Institute for Strategic Dialogue.*

Verhaar, P. (2016). Radical Reddits: Into the Minds of Online Radicalised Communities. *Master Thesis New Media & Digital Culture*.

Wigley, M., C. (2015). Online Radicalization. *Military intelligence,* 60-63.