



# RAN ISSUE PAPER

## The role of education in preventing radicalisation

### Summary

Schools are key institutions to strengthen resilience and prevent youngsters from being attracted to radical ideologies and organisations. What is more, teachers are often among the first to note possible signs of radicalisation, and are important interlocutors for those affected (i.e. the individuals themselves, and their relatives and friends).

In taking on this responsibility, teachers should engage with the crucial issues that can contribute to radicalisation processes, and address the concerns and grievances that are exploited by radical religious and right-wing propaganda. They should feel empowered to act and to empower students, with the following in mind.

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- No student is invulnerable to radicalisation.
- Teaching should foster students' identification with society, and reflect the diversity of the student body across different biographical, cultural and religious backgrounds.
- Encourage students' participation in schools by reflecting their interests, supporting them, and helping them to make choices: this is a means of preventing frustration and alienation, and of fostering student bonds with the institution.
- Schools should empower students against discrimination and marginalisation, and encourage critical thinking about controversial and sensitive issues (i.e. identity, religiosity, gender roles and international conflicts).
- To prevent radicalisation, clear procedures, effective support structures and strong local networks are imperative: these should be established prior to any cases of violent extremism. Teachers should train other teachers to employ these procedures, structures and networks.

## Introduction <sup>(1)</sup>

Institutions of formal education are key actors in preventing radicalisation. They foster shared values and critical thinking, and help students develop basic life skills and social competencies that are essential for active citizenship in

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<sup>(1)</sup> This paper builds on the [RAN Manifesto for Education](#).

democratic societies (**generic prevention**). Educating by teaching democratic values and empowering youngsters to understand and handle life in pluralist social environments is crucial for boosting resilience against social polarisation and radicalisation.

Yet schools do not just cultivate the communicative, cognitive and behavioural skills required for democratic life; they are also places where early signs of radicalisation can be noticed, and where early responses can be initiated (**secondary prevention**). In many cases, teachers are the first to become aware of changes in appearance, thinking and behaviour, and to offer counsel and support for youngsters in their quest for orientation.

The empowerment of teachers as individuals and of schools as institutions is a precondition for the empowerment of students against the offerings of (violent) radical ideologies and milieus.

## Context: empowering students, teachers and schools

Schools play a prominent role in preventing radicalisation and violent extremism for several reasons.

- Violent extremism is not limited to the margins of society. Studies have documented the considerable range of social backgrounds represented among foreign fighters from Europe who joined jihadist organisations in Syria and Iraq <sup>(2)</sup>.

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<sup>(2)</sup> For an assessment of the numbers and profiles of 'foreign fighters' in different European countries, see Van Ginkel, B. & Entenmann, E. (2016). The Foreign Fighters Phenomenon in the European Union. Profiles,

What is more, the age of those joining such organisations has dropped sharply, with 13-, 14- or 15-year-old pupils already involved. Recent reports on violent attacks against refugees in Germany and other countries also point to a growing number of perpetrators with no previous history in right-wing extremist circles <sup>(3)</sup>. **Extremist views are thus not limited to certain social milieus and educational backgrounds, but are expressed across various segments of society.** Extremism is also echoed in classrooms and affects communal life in schoolyards and on campuses.

- This does not relate to explicit support for extremist ideologies alone. More importantly, **teachers and schools are regularly contending with 'ordinary' concerns and grievances among youngsters that are increasingly exploited in religious or right-wing extremist propaganda:** concerns around identity, immigration, gender, social and economic conflicts, discrimination and social marginalisation, but also international conflicts, figure prominently in extremist propaganda across

ideologies. Extremist propaganda addresses these concerns that are often controversially discussed in society, and hence among students.

- **Social media adds to the impact of these views in classrooms and schoolyards.** Social networks have become important channels for hate speech, radicalisation and calls for violence, elements that in the past remained confined to limited audiences of peers and in-groups. Here again, schools ought to provide spaces to address related challenges and to provide alternative and more convincing narratives than those promoted by extremist organisations <sup>(4)</sup>.
- While most experts agree on the need to challenge radicalisation in schools, definitions of 'radicalisation' and **what exactly** has to be prevented often diverge. **In fact, schools are expected to provide safe spaces for students** to develop and voice their views and convictions, **even if these views challenge generally accepted norms.** Providing students with safe spaces to explore ideas and their own boundaries is crucial to reaching 'those who feel left out' <sup>(5)</sup>. However, **no consensus exists on how to define the limits** within which these views are acceptable. While hate speech is against the law in EU Member

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Threats & Policies. *The International Centre for Counter-Terrorism–The Hague*, 7(2). In a brief overview of research about push and pull factors, Magnus Ranstorp evokes a 'kaleidoscope of factors, creating infinite individual combinations' that might encourage violent extremism (Ranstorp, M. (2016), The root causes of violent extremism, *RAN issue paper*, 04/01/16, p. 1).

<sup>(3)</sup> 'Jäger warnt vor ,Turbo-Radikalisierung'', *Der Westen*, <http://www.derwesten.de/politik/jaeger-warnt-vor-turbo-radikalisierung-id11978219.html>, 5 July 2016.

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<sup>(4)</sup> See Gagliardone, I., Gal, D., Alves, T., & Martinez, G. (2015). *Countering online hate speech*. UNESCO Publishing, Paris, pp. 46-52.

<sup>(5)</sup> RAN/EDU (2016), 'Ex post paper: Schools leaders and prevention of radicalisation. Setting the conditions for a safe and democratic environment. RAN EDU Meeting 19-20 April 2016', Amsterdam, p. 4.

States, prevention strategies in countries like France, the United Kingdom or Denmark have long focused on **violent** extremism; in these countries, even explicit statements in support of neo-Nazi or jihadist ideology remained protected by freedom of speech. In other EU Member States, extremism is defined more broadly, and includes statements or activities that do not necessarily imply the use of illegal means. Extremism, from this perspective, includes the act of challenging the established constitutional order or contradicting socially accepted norms. For critics, this understanding of extremism poses a considerable threat to basic rights, as it supports taking state-initiated action against supposedly extremist appearances, behaviour and views that are otherwise covered by civil liberties<sup>(6)</sup>. It is argued that schools risk losing their status as safe places where students feel free to explore their views and express concerns and grievances.

- In several EU countries, recent legislation holds schools — as well as other childcare providers — responsible for reporting cases of radicalisation. In the United Kingdom, they are expected to have an explicit safeguarding role or 'due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism'<sup>(7)</sup>.

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<sup>(6)</sup> Williams. R. (2015), 'School heads raise alarm over new duty to protect students from extremism', *Guardian*, 9 June.

<sup>(7)</sup> Section 26 of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015, cited HM Government (2015), Revised Prevent Duty Guidance: for England and Wales, London, p. 2.

Similar regulations have been implemented in France<sup>(8)</sup>. The **obligation to report possible cases of radicalisation again touches upon the very role of schools as safe spaces**. This is also relevant for universities: academic freedom would be restricted by attempts to impose supposedly consensual values and norms as limits to academic research and debate. Prevention strategies thus pose a dilemma: while schools and educational institutions are expected to take necessary steps to prevent radicalisation and violent extremism, such statutory obligations to detect and report suspected individuals may conflict with basic educational standards and principles of civic education.

## Addressing current challenges of building resilience and prevention

Teachers and schools are well placed to prevent radicalisation and violent extremist ideologies, but several significant challenges need to be addressed.

### a) *Teacher training*

In principle, teachers are well positioned to foster democratic values and to handle difficult conversations in classrooms. Yet in the light of growing polarisation and 'new' phenomena such

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<sup>(8)</sup> Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale, de l'Enseignement Supérieur et la Recherche (2014), *Prévenir la radicalisation des jeunes*, Paris.



as religiously motivated extremism, many teachers voice concerns about a lack of knowledge and skills that allow qualified responses. Providing substantial resources (i.e. funding, time and qualified trainers) for training is crucial for raising awareness and fostering teacher competence to build resilience against radicalisation, detect potential signs of (violent) extremism and engage youngsters. Training should respond to the following expectations.

- *Do not reinvent the wheel*

The term radicalisation has only recently become part of academic and educational debates; the phenomenon, however, is not completely new. Teachers have been trained to foster resilience, provide multiple perspectives and encourage self-reflection among students, while reinforcing acceptance of social, cultural and religious differences. Similarly, they have acquired the skills to challenge claims to absolute truth, and respond to expressions of hatred and calls to violence (i.e. in the context of diversity education, citizenship education and anti-bias approaches)<sup>(9)</sup>. Training for teachers should build on these existing skills, and identify similarities to other forms of antidemocratic expression (i.e. homophobic or anti-Semitic) or challenging behaviour (i.e. hate speech or bullying) that teachers might already be aware of, and with which they have dealt in the past. **Instead of simply adding**

**another training session on 'radicalisation' — in addition to the many training sessions teachers are required to attend — prevention of radicalisation should become a regular part of professional training.**

- *Teachers and schools might be 'part of the problem'*

Teachers play a major role in shaping students' views and behaviour; this also implies that they can negatively impact on students' development. For instance, schools are not neutral zones free from racist stereotypes and discrimination. In fact, studies have documented the communal discrimination and resentment experienced by students of immigrant and/or Muslim backgrounds in institutions of formal education<sup>(10)</sup>. Such experiences might undermine these students' identification with society, thereby possibly contributing to the development of radical attitudes and patterns of behaviour<sup>(11)</sup>. **Training for teachers should raise awareness of cultural and religious diversity, and encourage teachers to accept differences. This also includes acceptance of different religious beliefs and lifestyles that might challenge teachers' own values and convictions.**

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<sup>(9)</sup> RAN EDU (2016), 'Ex post paper: Empowering and supporting teachers. Pedagogical role requires time and training. RAN EDU Meeting 24-25 February 2016', Amsterdam, p. 2.

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<sup>(10)</sup> See, for instance, Amnesty International (2012), *Choice and Prejudice. Discrimination against Muslims in Europe*, London.

<sup>(11)</sup> Lyons-Padilla, S., Gelfand, M. J., Mirahmadi, H., Farooq, M., & van Egmond, M. (2015). Belonging nowhere: Marginalization & radicalization risk among Muslim immigrants. *Behavioral Science & Policy*, 1(2), pp. 1-12.

- *Engaging in dialogue, not spying on students*

Teachers often request concrete guidelines on signs and indicators to help detect the youngsters being drawn to radical ideologies or groupings. But such checklists with clear-cut answers do not exist. While there are certain traits (expressed in thought, appearance and behaviour) that are characteristic of radicalised individuals, none of these alone — or even a combination of several of them — should be considered definitive proof. Instead of providing checklists, training should encourage teachers to engage in dialogue with students to discover the motives behind changing looks and attitudes: Is it a protest against (real or perceived) injustices, a provocation intended for parents, teachers and society? Or is it, in effect, about an ideology that implies a break with society, a claim to ultimate truth, and devaluation and dehumanisation of others? **Such dialogue with students differs from 'spying'; it reflects an interest in the students' personal life — and should be part of any student-teacher relationship** <sup>(12)</sup>.

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<sup>(12)</sup> For a summary of indicators included in an official training tool developed for state employees in France, see Secrétariat General du Comité Interministériel de Prévention de la Délinquance (2015), *Prévention de la radicalisation. Kit de formation*, Paris, pp. 60-66. For a multifaceted assessment see ufuq.de (2016), *Protest, provocation or propaganda? Guide to preventing Salafist ideologization in schools and youth centers*, Berlin, pp. 25-32.

- b) ***Building resilience, representing diversity, learning democracy in classrooms***

Radicalisation processes imply cognitive, behavioural, communicative and emotional changes; therefore, prevention through education ought likewise to respond on various levels. It is important to be aware of the wide range of ideas and approaches that can be used to raise awareness and build resilience against radicalisation in formal education, as discussed below.

- *Engaging in conflict and compromise*

'Democracy needs to be learned, explored to be obtained' <sup>(13)</sup>. In the light of growing social polarisation, this observation is crucial. Yet, learning democracy cannot be limited to an acquisition of knowledge, i.e. facts regarding the constitution ('We have to teach them our values!'). Instead, it requires an awareness of — and an appreciation for — pluralism, differences and controversies as basic tenets of modern society. Democracy is about how to handle differences and manage controversy. One of the fundamental messages that students should learn is that 'in our society, conflict and compromise mark the rule, not the exception'.

- *Enhancing life skills to engage with society*

Prevention includes enhancing the **life skills and building the resilience** of students, bolstering their self-confidence, and allowing them to take a stance, interact and constructively engage with others. This also involves

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<sup>(13)</sup> RAN/EDU (2016), 'Ex post paper: Schools leaders and prevention of radicalisation. Setting the conditions for a safe and democratic environment. RAN EDU Meeting 19-20 April 2016', Amsterdam, p. 3.

psychophysical dimensions that can be addressed through sports, music or theatre. Recognising one's potential as well as one's limits, being aware of one's emotions and knowing how to articulate them, makes it easier to engage others and to handle difficult social relations. It becomes less likely that one will adopt confrontational attitudes and resort to violence.

**Good practice: *Bounce resilience tools***

'An early prevention psycho-physical training for (vulnerable) youngsters to strengthen their resilience against radical influences and to raise the awareness of the youngster's social environment' <sup>(14)</sup>.

- *Putting democracy into practice*

The ideal 'democratic school' considers students to be active participants within the institution. Democracy in this sense is not limited to politics, but implies active participation in daily affairs, including schooling and education. Engaging students in institutional structures allows them to **experience democracy**, to formulate their interests and argue to support them, and to take responsibility for their choices. Active participation serves to strengthen identification with one's social environment and prevents alienation. Having a voice and being involved in one's learning environment makes it less likely that one will break away from these surroundings and

question their legitimacy. However, what is often overlooked is that institutions that are democratic entrust students with more power. To encourage students to experience democracy thus requires an institutional recognition of their views and interests — even in cases where this might necessitate institutional change.

**Good practice: *The peaceable school and neighbourhood***

'A whole-school approach for elementary schools. It aims at the school becoming a democratic community, in which children and teacher learn to solve conflicts in a constructive way, and in which children get a voice. Students are involved in and learn to carry responsibility for the social climate in the community' <sup>(15)</sup>.

**Good practice: *Schule ohne Rassismus — Schule mit Courage / Schools without racism — Schools with courage***

'A project run for and by students. It allows children and youngsters to become an active part of their school, and to object to any kind of discrimination, bullying and violence. We are the largest network of schools in Germany, with over 2.000 schools and some 1 mio. students' <sup>(16)</sup>.

- *Representing minorities*

Curricula and textbooks have improved considerably over recent decades; yet they often **do not accurately represent**

<sup>(14)</sup> See <http://www.bounce-resilience-tools.eu> online.

<sup>(15)</sup> See <http://www.stichtingvreedzaam.nl> online.

<sup>(16)</sup> See <http://www.schule-ohne-rassismus.org> online.

**the diverse identities and biographies making up most classes** in Lisbon, Copenhagen, or Milan. All too often, histories of migration are addressed only in the context of conflicts, be they social, cultural or religious. Consequently, migration is not portrayed as a normal feature of most European societies, but rather as a problem and a cause for concern. This also applies to the representation of Islam and Muslims in European societies. Even in recent textbooks, Islam is often mentioned primarily in the context of medieval history, with no links to social life in Paris, Berlin or Madrid today <sup>(17)</sup>. Muslim students will hardly feel represented through these references to early Islamic history or Islamic scripture. Representing the diversity of biographies in 'globalised classrooms' is crucial for students to identify with their school — and by extension — with society. This does not mean that **all** stories and perspectives represented in a classroom can be told; representation often calls for choices to be made. In this regard, the history of the massacre of Bosnian Muslims in Srebrenica in 1995 is an example that is rarely used, but would add important perspectives to the narratives developed in most curricula and textbooks. Although memories of Srebrenica continue to mark

Muslim European's identities, the history of Srebrenica is rarely addressed in history classes. Giving lessons on Srebrenica in German, Austrian or French schools would convey **an important lesson: 'Your history matters'**.

- *Changing perspectives on European history*

Representation also implies narrating European colonial histories as global history, including from the **perspective of colonised societies**. Apologetic narratives of European colonial rule are still found in many national curricula. Not only are these historically wrong, but they also add legitimacy to extreme religious propaganda that instrumentalises the European history of colonial violence to generate calls for revenge.

**Good practice: *Zwischentöne / Nuances* — *Teaching Materials for Classroom Diversity***

'The internet platform provides teaching modules that represent and reflect this diversity. In view of the public controversies surrounding Islam and immigration, these topics lend themselves to learning processes closely related to living environments and to stimulating the pupils' decision-making and negotiating skills' <sup>(18)</sup>.

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<sup>(17)</sup> Georg Eckert Institut – Leibniz Institut – für internationale Schulbuchforschung (2011), Keine Chance auf Zugehörigkeit? Schulbücher europäischer Länder halten Islam und modernes Europa getrennt, Brunswick, p. 3.

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<sup>(18)</sup> See <http://www.zwischentoene.info/english.html> online.



- *Providing inclusive narratives of 'us'*  
**Lack of representation can stir up conflicts in classrooms and alienate youngsters**, as is perhaps best illustrated by the controversy prompted by the Paris attack on the magazine *Charlie Hebdo* in January 2015. In the aftermath of the attack, classroom debates (not only in France) were often marked by confrontation: one group (often including the teacher) insisted 'Je suis Charlie!', while another — often including students of immigrant and/or Muslim background — responded 'Je ne suis pas Charlie!', or 'Je suis Muslim!'. Reports from different European countries point to the growing prominence of such 'us'-versus-'them' discourses, reflecting a mounting societal polarisation. Classrooms provide ideal settings in which to challenge these discourses, and to encourage the self-identification of students as French **and** Muslim, German **and** Turkish or Dutch **and** Moroccan. **Introducing role models that represent diverse biographies** helps challenge claims to homogeneous collective identities, and can provide inclusive alternatives. Students ought to be aware that they are not obliged to choose between 'Charlie' and 'Muslim'; 'being a citizen **and** Muslim' is indeed a viable option.

**Good practice: IC Thinking**

'Social, emotional, political pressures can lead to "tunnel vision" — an over-simplification in values, thinking, and identity that makes young people vulnerable to the black and white thinking of extremists. IC interventions leverage a change in mind-set through broadening values, thinking, and social identity complexity through action-learning, group exercises, and multi-media materials' <sup>(19)</sup>.

**Good practice: Dialog macht Schule / Dialogue in School**

'We start from their personal stories and issues taken from their experiences in their specific environments ... They can discuss subjects and issues such as basic and human rights, identity, home, religion, bullying, mobbing and racism and come to understand them in a new way. The aim is to show them chances and ways to participate in a democracy and to try them out in joint activities' <sup>(20)</sup>.

- *Addressing conflict and encouraging engagement*  
Political factors, which include grievances framed around conflicts, may also be factors of radicalisation. Despite this, many teachers are reluctant to teach their students about Israel and Palestine, or to address the current wars in Syria and Iraq. Granted, these are controversial issues that can be approached from various angles, with conflicting claims and lacking easy answers. Nevertheless, youngsters are aware of these conflicts, and are continually exposed to news and

<sup>(19)</sup> See <http://www.ictcambridge.org> online.

<sup>(20)</sup> See <http://www.dialogmachtschule.de/> online.

(dis)information from the frontlines, with social media only adding a further dimension to events in Aleppo, Beirut or the Gaza Strip. Addressing these conflicts in schools is not primarily about knowledge and information, but rather is about **providing the space to express emotions, anger and frustration**. For many students, the classroom is the only place they can share these feelings, learn about other perspectives, and develop strategies to overcome feelings of powerlessness and notions of 'eternal victimhood' (emotions exploited by the propaganda of religion-inspired extreme movements). Obviously, schools cannot stop wars, nor students challenge global injustices; yet schools can motivate students to raise their concerns, contribute their perspectives to public debates, or run charitable actions to support civilians in war-torn countries. They won't change the world in the short term, but they will **learn how to engage, make their voices heard and handle grievances over (global) politics**.

- *Empowering students against discrimination*

Racist attacks and experiences of discrimination can be instrumentalised in religious-inspired propaganda. For instance, jihadist propaganda may argue that the 'infidels' are leading a war against all Muslims. From this perspective, students' experiences of discrimination and enmity are expressions of a broader conflict that does not involve individuals but rather the group ('infidels' vs the *umma*).

According to religious extremists, the only viable option in this case is solidarity among the global community of Muslims. By **addressing experiences of discrimination and racism in the classroom and by exploring response options**, extremist instrumentalisations of victimhood can be challenged: while racism is a serious problem in European societies, victims of racism are not helpless. Empowering them to respond and defend their rights is an important aspect of prevention.

- *Promoting diverse gender roles*

Both right-wing and religious extremism promote rigid gender roles that are based on an assumed natural or divine order<sup>(21)</sup>. These gender roles are appealing because their unambiguity absolves women — and men — from making choices from the various options available in modern societies (choosing to be a mother with or without a professional career, or single parenthood, or being a stay-at-home parent, or postponing such decisions, and so on). **Empowering women and men to make choices over gender roles** implies that they may have to defend these choices when they dissent from peers, family or the social environment, but it also implies an acceptance of such choices, even when contradicting one's own expectations (i.e. a religiously conservative lifestyle).

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<sup>(21)</sup> See [RAN issue paper 'The Role of Gender in Violent Extremism'](#) online.

c) ***New approaches to challenging radicalisation***

Prevention of radicalisation builds on various approaches and experiences that have proven successful in past attempts to strengthen resilience and challenge extremism. However, new approaches can also prove valuable in adopting current strategies to today's contexts and issues.

- ***Peers as role models***

Peer education is an effective strategy to engage youngsters in dialogue and to encourage critical thinking. Peer education approaches are increasingly used in civic education to create non-hierarchical learning environments in which questions of identity, justice or religion can be addressed. Led by peers trained as informed moderators, such discussions are marked by a more open and less confrontational atmosphere. In many cases, peers are chosen not only due to their age, but also due to their ethnic, cultural or religious background so as to resemble those of the students. **As 'authentic' role models, they facilitate identification and encourage participation** in discussions of controversial issues.

**Good practice: AKRAN — Peer to peer against prejudices**

Peer-to-peer programme to qualify Muslim youngsters as peer educators <sup>(22)</sup>.

- ***Using online media to engage students***

Online media plays a key role in spreading extremist ideologies. At the same time, the use of social media as a teaching tool is legally restricted in some EU countries. Nevertheless, experts agree on the need to challenge (violent) extremism by fostering media literacy and raising awareness of the online content and online strategies of extremist propaganda. Recent studies on the role of online media in prevention have pointed to the importance of 'alternative messages' that provide alternative readings of potentially contentious social, political and religious issues. The aim of such messages when used in an educational setting is not primarily to challenge extremist claims or to deconstruct their premises; instead, **they aim at providing 'new' narratives to inspire critical thinking without imposing certain views and convictions** (in contrast to 'counter-narratives').

**Good practice: Was postest Du? Civic education with young Muslims online**

Developing civic education approaches online to engage young Muslims in social media and to encourage debate and reflection on questions of identity, religion and belonging <sup>(23)</sup>.

<sup>(22)</sup> See <http://www.kiga-berlin.org/> online.

<sup>(23)</sup> See [http://www.ufuq.de/was-postest-du-ansaetze-der-politischen-bildung-mit-jungen-muslim\\_innen-online](http://www.ufuq.de/was-postest-du-ansaetze-der-politischen-bildung-mit-jungen-muslim_innen-online) online.

- *Using first-hand narratives*

Prevention of violent right-wing extremism is often based on testimonies of formers and survivors. Being first-hand accounts of persons previously involved in right-wing activities, or previously victims of right-wing violence, such testimonies provide important insights that could help delegitimise these organisations' ideologies and practices. In the recent past, similar testimonies of formers and survivors of religious extremist organisations have become available for use in the classroom setting. Here again, **the authenticity of these voices spurs debates about the legitimacy of the involved claims and challenges the heroic self-depiction of extremist organisations.**

**Good practice: *Extreme dialogue***

'A series of short documentary films tell the personal stories of Canadians and Europeans profoundly affected by violent extremism; a former member of the extreme far-right in Canada, a mother from Calgary whose son was killed fighting for ISIS in Syria, a youth worker and former refugee from Somalia, a former member of the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) whose father was killed by the IRA, and a former member of the now banned British Islamist group al-Muhajiroun' <sup>(24)</sup>.

- *Addressing religious concerns and questions*

The status of religious education — both in public and in private schools — differs considerably from one EU Member State to another. Most experts agree that religious education can be an important means of fostering interreligious and intercultural awareness and encouraging critical reflection on religious teachings and traditions. However, this teaching should not be restricted to faith-led religious education in a narrow sense. Instead, religious interests and concerns should be addressed in various school subjects that draw on students' life-worlds (*Lebensweltbezug*). Talking over religious concerns (i.e. 'Is there life after death?', 'What is the sense of life?', 'Who is to balance religious and non-religious values and norms?') in non-faith-led conversations boosts identification with the institution and supports religious literacy of all students, irrespective of religious orientation. These conversations do not aim at strengthening religious beliefs, but to translate related concerns into **ethical questions relevant to all** — religious and non-religious students.

**Good practice: *'How do we want to live? Shorts films & workshops on Islam, anti-Muslim racism, Islamism & democracy'***

'They encourage debates about religious concerns of youngsters in heterogeneous teaching environments and provide space to reflect about questions of norms, values, identity and participation. As interventions prior to and in early stages of radicalisation, they

<sup>(24)</sup> See <http://extremedialogue.org/> online.

aim at fostering identification as German Muslims' <sup>(25)</sup>.

*d) Defining procedures, building networks <sup>(26)</sup>*

While there is no single way to identify radicalisation processes, transparent structures and clear procedures are crucial for competent and sustainable responses. Such structures and procedures are imperative for every institution of formal education, and teachers should be trained to follow them. These procedures will vary across countries, educational levels, age groups and stages of radicalisation. But they all have to provide clear answers to the following questions: How to assess possible cases of radicalisation? Who is responsible for what, and when? To whom to report? Who to involve? How to follow up? In addition to such procedures, it is crucial to establish effective support structures for teachers, so they can provide competent counsel and psychological support. No less important is vocal public and political support for the institution addressing cases of extremism within its walls. All too often, schools are reluctant to take action against cases of radicalisation, fearing bad publicity and a decline in student numbers. It is thus even more important to encourage schools to define clearing procedures **prior** to the emergence of possible cases of radicalisation. This also relates to the building of networks with other institutions, to allow for holistic and multifaceted responses when needed. In fact, while schools are key players in such networks,

youth work programmes, social services, local communities and the police are other players crucial to interventions with radicalised youngsters. Here again, prevention work against radicalisation does not need to start from scratch. In most countries, networks and partnerships between schools, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), youth centres, local institutions and police already exist; in such cases, **prevention schemes against (violent) extremism should draw on existing contacts and build on established trust and cooperation.**

## Recommendations

- Teachers and schools **do not have to reinvent the wheel** to develop effective strategies of prevention. They have ample experience in handling difficult situations and conflicts, and this can serve as a useful starting point for the prevention of radicalisation.
- Schools and teachers **might reproduce discrimination and stereotypes**. Teachers should be encouraged to **critically reflect on** their own attitudes, and reconsider the messages they convey to their students.
- No student is invulnerable to radicalisation. Teachers hence bear a particular responsibility to **notice early signs of alienation and retreat**, and to respond appropriately. They should be **trained in the relevant procedures and response structures** to cases of (violent) extremism.
- Teaching is a powerful means to **foster students' identification with society**; it should reflect the **diversity** of students

<sup>(25)</sup> See [http://www.ufuq.de/teamer\\_innen-workshops-wie-wollen-wir-leben/](http://www.ufuq.de/teamer_innen-workshops-wie-wollen-wir-leben/) online.

<sup>(26)</sup> See [RAN policy paper 'Developing a local prevent framework and guiding principles'](#) online.



and their different biographical, cultural and religious backgrounds and provide inclusive alternatives to 'us-versus-them'-narratives. This includes **representing histories of migration as 'standard' facets of modern European history.**

- Democracy is not primarily about knowing the constitution. Rather, it is built on **the experience that one's interests matter and that they are represented in public debate.** Encouraging student participation in schools is a means to foster bonds to the institution and to prevent frustration and alienation.
- Schools provide ideal settings to empower students against discrimination and marginalisation, and to encourage critical thinking about controversial and sensitive issues (i.e. identity, religiosity, gender roles and international conflicts). While these topics might provoke strong emotions and heated debates, schools allow students to be introduced to various perspectives and experiences that would otherwise go unheard. **Providing students with alternative messages** is a means of challenging easy answers and ideological claims promoted by violent extremist actors.
- The use of **social media, first-hand accounts and peers** have proven important strategies to reach students, to change perspectives and to provide alternative narratives to extremist propaganda.
- **Clear procedures, effective support structures and strong local networks** are key to handling cases of radicalisation. However, it takes time to build and

sustain such networks. It is important to establish these structures prior to any cases of violent extremism, and to inform and train teachers on how to use them.



## Annex

### Selected teaching resources and teachers' guides on radicalisation

Arktos npo (2014), Bounce up. Train the trainer, Leuven. (available in English, French, Dutch, German; URL: [http://www.bounce-resilience-tools.eu/sites/default/files/content/download/files/bounce\\_up\\_-\\_tool\\_train\\_the\\_trainer.pdf](http://www.bounce-resilience-tools.eu/sites/default/files/content/download/files/bounce_up_-_tool_train_the_trainer.pdf))

Jamieson, A. & Flint, J. (2015), Radicalisation and Terrorism. A Teacher's Handbook for Addressing Extremism. Ages: 11-14 years, Bedfordshire.

Keen, E. & Georgescu, M. (2014), Bookmarks. A Manual for Combating Hate Speech Online Through Human Rights Education, Council of Europe: Budapest. (available in English and French; URL: <http://www.coe.int/de/web/no-hate-campaign>)

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