

INVOLVING YOUNG PEOPLE

MAIN LESSONS LEARNED

This document is an addition to the RAN video on "Involving young people" available via: <https://youtube.io5in32-WNA>

This paper summarizes the main lessons from the RAN Joint event: Involving young people. The meeting had three main themes (online, community and education) and three key questions:

Why are some young people attracted to extremist groups?

There is consensus between young people and professionals that the reasons for young people to be attracted to extremism, or, in the words of one of the example campaigns, to flirt with extremism, are very diverse. To generalize or to profile vulnerable young people is both dangerous and counterproductive. However, common denominators mentioned were; a complex reality in which it is difficult to find the 'truth', struggling with insecurity, identity and belonging, easy access to alternative worlds via the Internet, challenging family situations and a (perceived) lack of perspective. A negative image of young people sometimes seems to prevail, only portraying a small group of vulnerable youngsters who have taken the extremist path. The majority of young people however has the potential to challenge this small group, and to prevent peers from being drawn to a radical mindset and violent groups.

What are the do's and don'ts of engaging young people on this topic?

Do



Use platforms that are popular and relevant to young people like Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Whatsapp and Snapchat.



Create more content in different languages besides English.



Create safes spaces online so that young people can interact on CVE.



Challenge aggressive narratives on the spot.



Invest in increasing digital (media) literacy and understanding of a critical approach to news and media, as soon as children get access to the Internet (through phones, etc.) The target group of propaganda seems to get younger and younger; content should reflect this.



Provide places where young people can get reliable information.



Co-create with students in school settings. Teachers should give space and support to their students.



Use personal stories and experiences (formers, victims) to reach young people.



Build connections between online activities and offline activities. This will resonate more with young people.



Establish inter-generational platforms (online and offline) in which adults (parents, teachers, community/religious leaders) and young people come together.



Keep it fun. Use humor and modern/popular forms of expression to connect to youth.

Don't



Get hung-up making only perfectly produced content. It is important the message hits the heart.



Lecture students, but start from their worldview and opinion. No need to be scared of a debate.



Make extremism a taboo.



Neglect other forms of extremism because of the political focus on Islamic extremism.



Think that online can replace face-to-face contact. Personal relationships are still key. Online can be a way of beginning contact.



Shy away from young people's frustrations and fears related to e.g. the lack of future prospects, stigma, isolation and unemployment.

What would empower young people to take more action against extremism?

- 💡 Use young local / celebrity ambassadors and young role models.
- 💡 Connect small local networks to form bigger youth networks.
- 💡 Develop an advisory team through which young people's voices can feed into politics, policy and media.
- 💡 Set up a helpline by young people for young people who have concerns about radicalisation and extremism in their social environment.
- 💡 Develop an online platform through which young people's initiatives, ideas and stories can be shared and supported.
- 💡 Organise a summer camp for young people from different backgrounds, in order to get to know each other and produce practical deliverables such as prevention campaigns.
- 💡 Reach out to different schools and countries, mobilise schools and young people.
- 💡 Involve young people in field visits to other countries, communities and schools to initiate cross border and cross cultural dialogue about difficult topics such as radicalisation and extremism.
- 💡 Create an open community of content creators who generate content for free on Vine, YouTube, Snapchat.



Young people's stories

A powerful story was shared by one of the young participants, on his own initiative. He shared the story of how he lost his older brother to Daesh and how his brother had made attempts to also recruit him. He did not want to go. He didn't want to hurt his family, who were already torn by his brother's departure. Eventually his brother died.

This 17 year old wanted to let the group know that it was social contacts and friends, not the Internet, that brainwashed his brother which eventually led him into the hands of Daesh.

