

SPOTLIGHT

10 YEAR ANNIVERSARY

AUGUST 2021



10 YEARS OF RAN

Contents

FOREWORD	04
CONTRIBUTORS	06
EDITORIAL	07
THE PURPOSE	10
ARTICLE – The early years	12
FILM – 10-year anniversary: Victims	18
INTERVIEW – Victim of terrorism	20
THE PEOPLE	24
FILM – 10-year anniversary: Practitioners	26
PROFILES – RAN practitioners	28
BRAND – 10-year anniversary	30
THE PROJECTS	32
RAN COLLECTION	34
FEATURE – Athena Syntax	36
FEATURE – Project Cicero	42
THE PROGRAMMES	46
FEATURE – The Civil Society Empowerment Programme (CSEP)	48
FEATURE – RAN in the Western Balkans	52
THE PROSPECT	56
INTERVIEW – RAN YOUNG	58
INFOGRAPHIC – The achievements	70
RAN – IN THE PRESS	72

10 YEARS OF RAN



Dear Practitioners,

As the Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN) marks its 10-year anniversary this year, I wanted to take this opportunity to write to you, RAN practitioners, to thank you personally for the work that you do, for your tireless efforts, commitment, dedication and energy, working every day on the frontline, in communities and online, to tackle some of the most complex and challenging issues of our time.

The RAN was established ten years ago in 2011 to address the emerging threat posed by terrorist and violent extremist organisations whose influence extended within the borders of the EU. RAN was set-up with the sole purpose of giving first-line practitioners working in communities across Europe the knowledge, skills and support they need to do their work.

I am immensely proud of what RAN has been able to achieve. Since it was established, RAN has been able to build an incredible, and ever-growing, network of over 6,000 practitioners from all corners of the EU. Bringing people together to exchange insights, experiences, ideas and good practices, RAN has created thousands of connections and fostered hundreds of partnerships, which has resulted in countless new initiatives, projects and interventions. This year alone has seen the launch of RAN in the Western Balkans, the expansion of the RAN YOUNG platform, the delivery of Study Visits to countries all around the world and the extension of RAN support to policy makers and researchers (RAN Policy Support). As RAN continues to extend its reach and influence, the RAN network can now be considered to be the leading network in the field of P/CVE in the world.

However, it has not been without its challenges. The rise of ISIS, the arrival of migrants to the EU, the spate of terrorist attacks, the re-emergence of violent right wing extremist groups, the spread of disinformation and fake news, and the COVID-19 pandemic has meant that RAN and its practitioners have had to quickly adapt and respond to changing events. But as it adapts it continues to learn.

As we emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic, we are likely to see a new set of emerging P/CVE threats, with ever more violent narratives seeking to exploit community tensions and create division. As long as the P/CVE challenges remain, the European Commission is committed to supporting RAN and its practitioners to continue to do its important work, and is invested in its future success. RAN is here for the long-term.

In the coming months and years, the Commission will increasingly find new opportunities to facilitate greater exchange and enhance cooperation between practitioners, policy makers and researchers. Meanwhile, RAN will continue to adapt to changing events, and will continue to innovate and adopt the latest digital technologies to find new ways to reach and engage its audiences.

Ylva Johansson

**Magnus RANSTORP****Astrid PASSIN****Lisbeth RØYNELAND****Karin HEREMANS****Jakub KLEPEK****Vivian LADA**

EDITORIAL

This year marks the tenth anniversary of the Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN). To commemorate and celebrate this momentous occasion, we have produced a special edition Spotlight magazine, which takes a look back at the past ten years of RAN, and looks ahead to the future.

In this Spotlight, RAN members, both past and present, Working Group leaders, and the European Commission reflect on why it was established in the first place, the evolution of the network and the people at the heart of it. It also showcases its successes and achievements, including some of the successful projects and programmes that have been delivered over the years.

Published in advance of the High Level Conference and Plenary, which will be held in October this year, this Spotlight magazine is one of a number of products, including a series of films, which are designed to tell the story of RAN and promote it to audiences within and outside of the network. We therefore hope that you will be able to share this publication with colleagues and peers alike.

As always, we want to hear from you! The purpose of the Spotlight publication is to give an opportunity to practitioners to share their insights and tell their stories. If you would like to contribute to future editions of Spotlight, or if you have ideas for an article, interview or feature, please get in touch with the RAN Practitioners communications team at ran@radaradvies.nl

The RAN Staff



THE PURPOSE

“The Radicalisation Awareness Network is more than just a network for me, it is the opportunity to qualify myself professionally, to exchange ideas and to connect with practitioners all over Europe. If it didn’t already exist, it would have to be invented.”

10 YEARS OF
RAN

Fabian Wichmann
Exit-Germany
Co-Chair WG C&N

ARTICLE: **THE EARLY YEARS**



**Magnus
RANSTORP**

On 9 September 2011, only weeks after the violent right-wing terrorist attack by Anders Breivik in Norway, the EU Commissioner for Home Affairs, Cecilia Malmström, announced the creation of the Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN), an umbrella network of first-line practitioners working with violent extremists. The launch date was symbolic as it was close to the ten-year anniversary of the 9/11 terror attacks that shook the world. It also took on an increased urgency with the shocking terrorist atrocity in Norway, which was a worrying harbinger of violent right-wing extremism (VRWE) for the future...

The idea and concept behind the creation of RAN emerged right after Commissioner Malmström's entry into office and came as a direct response to the adoption of the EU Internal Security Strategy in Action: "Five steps towards a more secure Europe". Working through some ideas with Commissioner Malmström and her cabinet chief Erik Windmar, I proposed together with colleagues and the EU Counterterrorism Coordinator's staff, the creation of a practitioner-led "network" that would exchange best practice and insights in different sectors, working on preventing violent extremism.

I had been involved in the EU Expert Group on Violent Radicalisation that issued a concise report on radicalisation processes in early 2008. This report identified priority focus areas and pressing policy issues but whose insights fell on deaf ears in Brussels and EU Member States. Endless academic meetings and policymakers' forums often didn't result in any concrete, tangible action to prevent violent extremism. These meetings of academic experts and practitioners on violent extremism could best be likened to the U.S. movie "Groundhog Day", where every new day (meeting) started with reinventing the wheel stuck in the same old tracks. To break free from this trap required innovative thinking, radical action, and a strategic vision.

The idea behind creating the Radicalisation Awareness Network was to provide a reservoir of practitioner experience across countries and across portfolios. In this way, RAN's institutional knowledge would exponentially grow and expand, together with specialised focus areas and expertise applied to emerging areas and challenges. In the words of Commissioner Malmström, RAN would become a "network-of-networks". In order to defeat this archipelago of terrorist networks, the creation of a practitioners forum for exchanges and collaboration was required, notably to seek to beat the extremists' own networks. The idea was that it would serve as a countervailing exponential force. Above all, this RAN umbrella network would "draw together a constellation of previously unconnected efforts and programmes, give them visibility and form a cohesive response to violent extremism."

Violent extremists reside locally and within communities. Consequently, it requires the involvement of local actors – "community leaders, teachers, police, victims and youth associations" according to Commissioner Malmström who "are often in the best position to act." Those in direct contact with vulnerable individuals or groups are simply best placed to detect radicalisation and to intervene.

One of the main reasons why the creation of RAN was necessary was the fact that traditional law enforcement methods were not enough to prevent violent extremism. It required coordinated efforts among multiple agencies and local actors. It was also due to the changing nature of terrorism. Europol in its annual TE-SAT reports pointed to the increased danger of lone actor terrorism. Another related priority issue was the quest to better understand radicalisation processes and what triggers individuals to become violent and others not. Similarly, it focused on identifying who could positively influence someone who became radicalised. The overarching priority was to understand radicalisation processes, how to detect early signs of radicalisation behavior and finding tools to counter violent extremism. Finding answers to these vexing questions was at the core of RAN's early missions. Specifically, finding effective countermeasures to these challenges became a priority issue. The mission was for RAN to present findings and help EU Member States to sharpen their policies.

Commissioner Malmström also recognised that the interplay between violent extremism, ideologies and social media was creating new complexities and challenges. Extremists used the internet through increasingly sophisticated means and these violence-promoting ideologies spread widely, and needed to be tackled through positive-alternative narratives and counter-narratives.

RAN was initially organised into eight thematic working groups driven by a Steering Committee. These eight working groups covered local and community policing (RAN-POL); prison and probation (RAN-P&P); the role of the Internet (RAN@); local

prevention strategies (RAN-PREVENT); deradicalisation (RAN-DERAD); the health sector (RAN-HEALTH); using the voices of victims of terrorism in fighting radicalisation (RAN-VVT) and the internal and external dimensions of radicalisation facing the EU, including issues such as foreign fighters and the role of diasporas (RAN-INT/EXT).

I became the Working Group leader of RAN-INT/EXT and we identified already in 2012 that foreign terrorist fighters would emerge as a major challenge. In April 2013, RAN INT/EXT organised a meeting on “European Foreign Fighters in Syria” in Amsterdam and in January 2014 RAN INT/EXT organised a “Cities Conference on Foreign Fighters to Syria” in the Hague, which brought together over 200 practitioners and experts from 23 European cities to discuss foreign terrorist fighter travel to Syria. In 2017, RAN produced a “Returnee Manual” in response to the anticipated need for coordinated action within and across EU Member States in handling returning foreign terrorist fighters.

This is one of several examples of how successful RAN has been in forecasting future security challenges relating to violent extremism and how to effectively respond in a coordinated approach. Already ten years ago, Commissioner Malmström and the practitioners as well as experts identified the need to develop exit programs and to closely work with public-private partnerships relating to social media and violent extremism issues.


Remarkably, the RAN has effectively grown exponentially in just ten years. It has effectively created synergies where there were none between practitioners in different sectors and cities. It has also closely fused together the practitioner experience with policymakers’ and the latest evidence-based academic research. What emerged as an idea and a concept to pressing security concerns has resulted in major achievements that Commissioner Malmström would be proud of when she launched RAN in September 2011.

Despite the success story, she would be the first to urge us all to press forward and to do even better. will protect us from harmful and violent future actions. Here the saying “prevention is better than cure” acquires its maximum meaning.

Dr. Magnus Ranstorp is a Special Adviser to RAN Practitioners and former RAN CoE Quality Manager.

“The idea behind creating the Radicalisation Awareness Network was to provide a reservoir of practitioner experience across countries and across portfolios. In this way, RAN’s institutional knowledge would exponentially grow and expand, together with specialised focus areas and expertise applied to emerging areas and challenges.”

RAN Practitioners is producing a series of films which mark and celebrate the 10-year anniversary. The first in the series takes a look back at why RAN was set-up, focusing on the people most affected by terrorist attacks, victims of terrorism. The film hears the powerful personal stories of a number of victims from across Europe, how they were affected and how RAN has been able to help them. You can watch the film in full [here](#).



**RAN's Victims of Terrorism
Working Group
puts victims at the centre
of the P/CVE debate**

Interview: Victims of Terrorism

**Astrid
PASSIN
and
Lisbeth
RØYNELAND**

We spoke with Astrid PASSIN and Lisbeth RØYNELAND, both victims of terrorism (VoT) about their experiences, their involvement in RAN Practitioners and how it has helped them and other victims.

Can you briefly tell me about your experience?

Astrid PASSIN (AP): Since the terrorist attack in Berlin on December 19, 2016, with which I lost my father, I have been involved as a spokeswoman for the bereaved. My experiences as a victim of a terrorist attack are very complex. Since the attack I find myself in a completely new, different and difficult circumstance. When I see myself as the spokesperson for many of those affected, I think that it was the correct way to deal with it and the right thing to do. I think I've been able to set a lot in motion.

Lisbeth RØYNELAND (LR): I have become president of the Norwegian support group following the terror attacks on 22nd July, 2011 in Norway, after my youngest daughter, Synne (18 years old), was killed at Utøya island.

What kind of support did you find initially?

AP: I got my support primarily from my family and friends. Later came the support and comfort of many of those affected by similar acts of terrorism.

LR: Initially, I received good support from the health service, but I felt something was missing. After a couple of months I got engaged in the support group and realised that the peer-to-peer support I experienced there was very positive for me.

When and how did you first hear about RAN?

AP: I heard about RAN for the first time in 2017 through a contact from the WEISSER RING - an organisation for victims of violence in Germany. It still took another year before I could go to Brussels. However, when I did, I was very impressed by the first meeting. I felt accepted, respected and valued! It was a blessing for me to get to know so many dedicated people.

LR: Later, around 2015, I heard about the Radicalisation Awareness Network. I was very positive to hear that the network existed, and I have enjoyed participating in the network for many years.

Can you explain the role of the Victims of Terrorism

Working Group?

AP: In the working group there are very competent and passionate people who stand-up for the concerns and values of the VoTs. We discuss how we can find a platform for victims and give them a voice. The nature of the exchange means that we can discuss important topics constructively. The insights and recommendations generated are summarised and shared with the European Commission and EU Member States.

Since I joined three years ago, many topics have been expanded, new projects and initiatives have been created and the European Remembrance Day for the Victims of Terrorism is an absolute highlight, the content of which is adjusted every year.

LR: My role and involvement with the working group has changed over time. At first there was primarily a focus on supporting the victims themselves, which was good at that time. However, I was very pleased when RAN also started focusing on how we as victims can contribute to the network in other ways, by fronting new ideas in the battle against radicalisation.

How important is it to have a network like RAN and how has it helped you?

AP: This network is extraordinary, both the quality of the work and the people involved. Personally, it provides a very good opportunity for me to expand my own network and to learn from one other. Professionally, I would very much like to work more closely with RAN because I consider it very important to be able to stand up for such a thing.

How important is it to provide a framework for those dealing with the testimonies of victims of terrorism?

Having a framework is the only way to understand the different effects on everyone affected in their own environment and country. The feeling of being a victim is the same for everyone!

LR: It is important that we have an international network like RAN that reaches across Europe and beyond, and connects with other support groups and other victims, which I have really benefitted from. It is important to show that we stand together as victims across borders.

What's next for RAN? What are your hopes for it?

LR: I hope that RAN will exist for many years to come, because it is so important to have this kind of organisation that brings organisations and victims together with one main goal: To prevent radicalisation. In that way, my hope is that we can prevent cruel and terrible attacks in the future.

“This network is extraordinary, both the quality of the work and the people involved. Personally, it provides a very good opportunity for me to expand my own network and to learn from one other.”

THE PEOPLE

“RAN never ceases to pleasantly surprise me and bring me professional and personal joys. RAN has given me the opportunity to reach out to other perspectives and listen to many other voices. And realize, that together, we are doing something great.”

10 YEARS OF
RAN

Dr. Eva María Jiménez González
Co-Leader HEALTH RAN WG

The second in the series of films which marks and celebrates the 10-year anniversary of RAN focuses on the people at the heart of RAN, the practitioners. The film meets a number of different practitioners from all parts of the EU, working in different fields, who describe their experiences of RAN and how it has been able to help them. You can watch the film in full [here](#).



**The Radicalisation Awareness Network [RAN]
has over 6,000 P/CVE practitioners**

PROFILES: OUR PRACTITIONERS



Jesper Holme Hansen

Jesper Holme has been working in education in the city of Aarhus, Denmark for the last 30 years, as a teacher, leader, consultant and practitioner. For the last 15 years, based in The Department of Children and Young People, he has focused on specifically on prevention, working in P/CVE as part of the so-called Aarhus Model.

He is the educational representative in the local Infohouse, working on P/CVE cases in schools and other areas of education, working closely together with teachers, leaders, mentors, streetworkers and role models. From 2016 to 2020 he part-time worked for the Danish Ministry of Education on a national P/CVE-project.

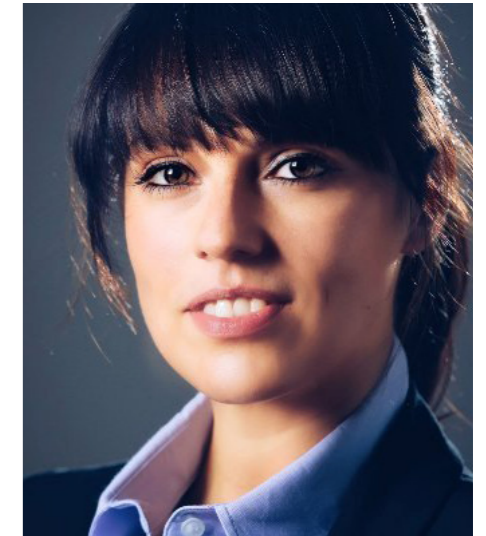
Jesper has been involved in RAN for many years and part of the RAN Education Working Group since the very first meeting in Manchester. He has attended many meetings with presentations and been involved in supporting peers and organisations on a local as well as national level.



Dr. Marzena Kordaczuk-Was

Dr. Marzena Kordaczuk-Was is the co-Chair of RAN POL Working group addressing representatives of police forces and other law enforcement agencies. She is involved in the preparation of activities charged with improving intervention work in the field of P/CVE.

Marzena has a PhD in social sciences, specialising in the sociology of security. For 18 she has served for the Polish police, coordinating police actions aimed in crime prevention, with particular attention put to P/CVE. Marzena is currently working at the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Training (CEPOL) in Budapest, and is involved in the coordination of CEPOL Knowledge Centre on Counter Terrorism.



Rositsa Dzhekova

Rositsa Dzhekova is the Director of the Security Program at the Centre for the Study of Democracy in Sofia, Bulgaria. Her work is focused on strengthening civil society and practitioners' capabilities to better understand and address radicalisation with a focus on risk assessment, resilience and early prevention. Rositsa is part of the Civil Society Empowerment Programme (CSEP) and works on designing and delivering alternative narrative campaigns for young people to reduce their vulnerabilities to radicalisation.

To promote the 10-year anniversary, RAN Practitioners has produced a new brand image, containing the faces of a number of RAN practitioners, which celebrates the scale and diversity of the network. The branding will be used across a range of RAN products and channels over the coming months. If you would like your face to be included in the brand, please contact the RAN Practitioners communications team at: ran@radaradvies.nl.



THE PROJECTS

“RAN helped give me a framework to what I intuitively knew was the right thing to do. The RAN Network is like a hothouse facilitating cross pollination of ideas and generating lots of original thoughts.”

10 YEARS OF
RAN

Alan Fraser
Director of Community Partnerships
Cranford Community College

More than 200 inspiring practices are included in the RAN Collection, which is a convincing testimony to the progress that is being made in the field preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE). It is continually expanding to include more practices with the aim of providing a valuable source of information and inspiration for practitioners, policymakers and researchers.

As a practical, evolving and growing tool, the RAN Collection offers practitioners, policymakers and researchers the opportunity to draw inspiration from existing practices and to find examples adaptable to their local/specific context. It also makes it easier for practitioners to find counterparts to exchange on prevention experiences. As a work in progress, the RAN Collection is continuously updated and enhanced with new practices from EU/EEA Member States.

Learn more about the selection of practices and the selection of experts [here](#).



FEATURE

Athena-Syntax:

WHERE ART AND EDUCATION MEET

The influence of art on individual and social behaviour is undeniably great. Many studies indicate that art plays a crucial role in providing positive and alternative narratives against polarising and radicalising ideas.



The 'Athena-Syntax Where Art and Education Meet' project offers a model for teachers to explore difficult and sensitive topics – such as religion, philosophy, science and identity – with students in schools. To do this, a group of teachers of science, language or philosophical subjects introduce projects which involve art. Through these projects teachers are able to open a dialogue with pupils around these topics.

But WHY ART? Art is universal and is often seen as a culturally acceptable activity. All of the projects start out by looking at similarities and are conceived with the ambition of conveying a positive message. This doesn't mean difficult or sensitive subjects cannot be addressed: confrontations and the airing of challenging feelings are positive and essential in the process.

The Athena-Syntax project emerged from a dialogue between teachers of science, religions and worldviews, after they observed that students were confused by discrepancies between evolution and origin narratives. These teachers collaborated together and devised a form of horizontal dialogue, in which both narratives can co-exist.

Designed with our multicultural students and teachers in mind, Athena-Syntax draws on, and celebrates, the diversity within our school. The dialogues that take place through the art projects are designed to take students on a learning pathway linked towards active citizenship. This process is rolled out in various planned steps throughout the school year, and built up slowly in the form of lessons, lectures, workshops and other extra-curricular activities.

The dialogue around the difficult and sensitive topics is based on core and common values and universal human rights. At the school, we translate these core values into four universal themes (time, choice, space and human being) which are explored across the different school subjects through focused projects during lessons.

The themes are introduced in a phased approach: Discover, Encounter and Evolve. In the first two years of secondary school, students are encouraged to explore their own (religious or other) world view (DISCOVER). In years 3 and 4, other worldviews are introduced (ENCOUNTER). In the last two years, students explore broader societal themes, using various worldviews to offer diverse perspectives on these themes (EVOLVE).

Athena-Syntax is conceived as an enriching experience for students and teachers alike. Thanks to the creation of an effective relationship between student and teacher, we hope to help students as they shape their own philosophical and/or religious and scientific thinking. By drawing on what is shared between them rather than what is different, students are empowered to be involved in a pluralist society where science and art can co-exist with religion and philosophy.

The Athena-Syntax project has been reviewed by the RAN YOUNG review panel. The perspectives of young people on this and other practices have been captured in a paper which can be found in the Library section of this publication. Find more examples of school-based projects in the RAN Collection of Inspiring Practices [here](#).

FEATURE

PROJECT CICERO

The overall goal of Project CICERO, which has been delivered in Italy, Belgium and Spain, is to develop and implement a counter-narrative communication campaign through civil society and community engagement, and to enhance their ability to detect and cope with radicalisation leading to violent extremism.



The project focuses on de-constructing and challenging extremist narratives; illustrating the consequences of extremist choices; and producing alternative solutions to everyday and socio-political problems, as well as propose alternative roles for youth.

The centrepiece of the project is a video game. Recognising that radicalisation is often a gradual process, the game's four protagonists — Marco, Jasmin, Jens and Franziska — are ordinary teenagers. In the course of the game, they find themselves in situations in which they have to make decisions.

The video game, structured along a set of binary decisions leading to radicalisation or maintaining resilience, is a unique and innovative approach to tackle radicalisation and enhance (digital) resilience. The stories in the game are based on real experiences of former members of extremist groups and unfold based on the players' individual decisions.

The goal is that, after playing the game, individuals move away from extremist attitudes and build on their critical thinking skills. Furthermore, they should understand radicalisation as a process, which is gradual and not tied to certain predispositions; be aware of the narratives and ideas of extremist groups; be able to deconstruct them and resort to positive ways to address concerns.

Since the video game was launched, a total of 9,000 people have played it. The majority of these are male (75%). The campaign was especially attractive to young people below the age of 24.

In order to measure whether or not the project achieved its intended impact, different scientific methods were applied, in the form of focus groups and a quasi-experiment. The overall analysis of the pre-/post questionnaires from the quasi-experiment revealed that the video game had a significant impact on participants' attitudes towards "extremist narratives" – they agreed less to extremist statements after playing the game.

The results also showed that the video game improved participants' understanding of radicalisation processes and recruitment strategies, increased awareness of extremist narratives, promoted the democratic value of diversity and fostered critical thinking.

The project illustrates the value of entertainment and other innovative means, combined with a pedagogical approach, to engage young people and lower the bar for participation in prevention activities.

Read more about the project [here](#), or watch the trailer for the video game [here](#).

THE PROGRAMMES

“I have been a participant in the RAN for several years. For me, RAN stands for inspiration. Shared working methods enable me to perform my own work better. In addition, I really enjoy the feeling that you are part of a larger network.”

10 YEARS OF
RAN

Dennis de Vries
WG leader Y&EDU

FEATURE

CSEP

Civil Society Empowerment Programme

Supported by RAN

CIVIL SOCIETY EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMME

Since its foundation, RAN has constantly attempted to bring policy into practice through various programmes. The Civil Society Empowerment Programme (CSEP) supports civil society, grass roots organisations and credible voices to deliver counter and alternative narrative campaigns online.

Using the positive power and tremendous reach of the internet, it empowers these different groups to provide effective alternatives to the messages coming from violent extremists and terrorists, as well as ideas that counter extremist and terrorist propaganda.

The Civil Society Empowerment Programme is an initiative under the umbrella of the EU Internet Forum, which was launched in 2015 by Dimitris Avramopoulos, Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship, to tackle terrorist content online.

Terrorist and extremist groups are very successful in capitalising on technology and social media to spread their propaganda, and to recruit and radicalise supporters. Meanwhile, many civil society organisations (CSOs) are already active in providing alternative narratives and sharing moderate voices. But they often lack the capacity and/or resources to produce and disseminate these messages effectively online.

Through the CSEP, the EU is committed to capacity building and training, partnering civil society organisations with internet and social media companies, and supporting campaigns designed to reach vulnerable individuals and those at risk of radicalisation and recruitment by extremists.

An example of a project funded by CSEP is ‘Game Changer’.

The overall goal of “Game Changer” is to empower NGOs from all over Europe to engage young people in issues affecting their local communities and build resilience to violent extremism through online and offline campaigns and smart use of technology.

The target audience(s) of the project included NGOs working with youth (between the ages of 12 and 25) in countries where the project partners are active, including Poland, France, Greece and the Netherlands.

The project helped to find a connection between campaigning and gamification mechanisms. The project worked with Role

Playing Games (RPG) to develop a game which could be played both offline and online.

The project found that fun and play are important aspects to consider in the creation of games that promote behaviour change, and games can help first-line practitioners, such as teachers, in facilitating deeper discussions with their students on a broad range of topics.

Read more about CSEP [here](#) and more about CSEP training [here](#).

FEATURE

WESTERN BALKANS

RAN has also constantly looked to expand geographically. Earlier this year, the European Commission was proud to launch the Project 'RAN in the Western Balkans'...

Prevention of radicalisation leading to violent extremism and terrorism is a key priority for EU Member States and Western Balkan partners. As common challenges require a common approach, the European Commission has committed to support not just EU Member States but also the Western Balkan region in preventing and countering all forms of radicalisation.

The 'RAN in the Western Balkans' project, is an extension of the RAN, the EU-wide network of first-line practitioners, and aims to enhance synergies between EU and Western Balkans professionals on P-CVE, in line with EU Policy. The expertise within the RAN will be mobilised to support prevention work in the Western Balkans, and facilitate exchanges among professionals within the region as well as with their colleagues from the EU Member States.

Through this new Project, funded by DG NEAR, front-line practitioners working both in the region and in EU Member States will be able to exchange expertise and knowledge, share lessons learnt and identify good practices and recommendations to support the work of different stakeholders in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia.

The project will map and engage with practitioners working in the region in the field of P/CVE, and will establish an expert pool. Training sessions, workshops, webinars and study visits around themes such as the management of returning Foreign Terrorist Fighters (FTFs) and their family members, and Violent Right-wing Extremism (VRWE) will be organised for the next 2 years.

The project implements a number of priorities set out in the Joint Action Plan on Counter-Terrorism for the Western Balkans, which was signed between the European Commission and representatives of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia in October 2018. The foreseen activities will be funded under the Instrument for Pre-Accession (IPA II) with the signature of a €1.55 million project that will be implemented over 30 months.

Read more about 'RAN in the Western Balkans' [here](#).

“Through this new Project, funded by DG NEAR, front-line practitioners working both in the region and in EU Member States will be able to exchange expertise and knowledge.”

THE PROSPECT

“RAN is a unique and invaluable space for knowledge production and sharing but also for networking with practitioners and experts (as I’m part of the expert group). My experiences at RAN meetings have been a key element in my work both as a consultant and at the University with my students. I’m certainly a better professional because I had this positive experiences working in/with RAN.”

Paulo Teixeira
Consultant and
University Teacher

10 YEARS OF
RAN

Interview: RAN YOUNG

Jakub KLEPEK and Vivian LADA

Jakub KLEPEK

1. Can you tell us who you are and what you do?

I am an International Politics & Intelligence Studies graduate from Aberystwyth University in the UK. I have been an intern at NATO, Rise to Peace, The Institute of New Europe and the Counterterrorism Group and I am currently applying for my MA Degree at IDC Herzliya.

2. Can you tell us about your involvement in RAN YOUNG?

I have been a part of RAN YOUNG for about a year now. Together with my amazing colleagues we took part in several online seminars, where we could listen and share our experiences across many different fields of work. During this time, we planned an intervention, which would prevent young people from being radicalised.

3. What has been the stand-out moment in your involvement for RAN YOUNG?

The stand-out moment was when I presented our intervention to members of the RAN. This presentation was a big confidence boost for each and every one of us and convinced us that we are part of something that could make a real impact on youth security and the prevention of radicalisation.

The fact that RAN YOUNG gives an opportunity to meet like-minded, creative and hard-working people is the biggest reason why RAN YOUNG worked so well even in the time of a global pandemic.

4. What are the fears and concerns of the next generation?

If the COVID-19 pandemic had to teach us just one thing, it is the use of the internet by terrorist and radical organisations to recruit, train and communicate with their supporters.

We need to make sure the next generation are not susceptible to the propaganda of radical groups, which may seem pretty convincing to young people who are not aware of it or are not

The future prospects of RAN are as much, if not more, about younger generations than they are the existing membership. To that end, we spoke to Jakub KLEPEK and Vivian LADA, both participants of RAN YOUNG, about their experiences of the platform, why it is important to involve young people in P/CVE efforts and their expectations and hopes for the future.

educated in this area. Similarly, fake news and disinformation poses another significant threat to the next generation, who use the internet every day and come across millions of news items and other information, which are often not verified and simply false.

5. What role can young people play in P/CVE?

Young people should spread awareness about the influencing efforts of violent extremists. Since their propaganda is often aimed at young people, we should check on our colleagues and friends and make sure they do not fall for any type of propaganda or ideology, which seems suspicious or dangerous to them or to a society.

International cooperation and exchange of updated information and experiences between young people is key when it comes to prevention and countering violent extremism. It is because something that had already happened in one state, could soon happen in another. By talking to each other and helping our more experienced colleagues by sharing the information with them, we, as young people, can make a positive impact in the field of security and prevention.

6. Why is it important that we involve young people in P/CVE efforts?

It is important to involve young people in P/CVE efforts because they could provide a fresh, up-to-date perspective on many issues. Young people of different backgrounds have the power to increase awareness of, and spark debate around issues, which otherwise may not have been discussed or ignored. It is mostly young people who will be responsible for the security of the generations to come. Therefore, young people should learn how to work together in an international and multicultural environment, which is one of the key factors of preventing radicalisation and countering the propaganda of radical groups.

7. What do you think will be the challenges that we will face in 2022?

Last year showed us that it is very difficult to predict future threats and challenges. As of today, it seems that 2022 will be another year of waves of fake news and disinformation, especially concerning the COVID-19 virus and vaccination campaigns. Radical groups might try and convince more and more people to certain beliefs, which are not backed up by any type of science.

Additionally, as we may see an outbreak of another variation of viruses, terrorist organisations could capitalise on the government's focus on the virus rather than them, and use this time to develop and increase the number of their supporters.

“Young people should spread awareness about the influencing efforts of violent extremists. Since their propaganda is often aimed at young people.”

RAN 2021
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8. What role should RAN YOUNG play in addressing these challenges?

RAN YOUNG should continue its mission to educate and connect individuals who value cooperation and try to find practical and real solutions to the challenges that we face today and in the future.

In order to address these challenges, we should first focus on our families and closest environments. By showing our family and friends how and where to verify information they see in the media we make a big step forward towards prevention. At the same time, we should not forget about threats such as terrorism, and always be vigilant and keep our eyes open within our school, university or circles of friends.

Finally, we must remember about fostering dialogue and cooperation despite our differences and backgrounds, because that is the best way to keep our world safe and be confident in addressing the future challenges.

Vivian LADA

1. Can you tell us who you are and what you do?

I am from Siatista in Greece and I have studied Law at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. I am currently studying for a masters degree in “European and international Law” and I am involved in civil society as a young practitioner trying to raise awareness on radicalisation and discrimination issues through social media campaigning and film-making.

2. Can you tell us about your involvement in RAN YOUNG?

My first experience with issues related to radicalisation, started with my participation in the RAN YOUNG Empowerment Academy (RYEA) 2019 and in the RAN Communication and Counter Narratives working group. Since then, I have been involved in a project which is called “Humans First” which originated from the RYEA.

“Last year showed us that it is very difficult to predict future threats and challenges. As of today, it seems that 2022 will be another year of waves of fake news and disinformation.”

RAN 

RAN YOUNG online meeting:

Guidelines for local authorities:
how to organise a youth
review panel



#RANconclusions 

As a coordinator of a “new born” P/CVE project I felt the need to expand my network and my knowledge on issues related to radicalisation and violent extremism so today I am one of the 23 RAN YOUNG practitioners who have been meeting online since July 2020 and participating in workshops on youth involvement and engagement in P/CVE.

3. What has been the stand-out moment in your involvement for RAN YOUNG?

If it's only possible to name one! Well I would say that the most precious moment for me in RAN YOUNG was this March when myself and three other members were given the opportunity to present the importance of youth participation in front of the RAN Local Authorities working group. The interaction with experienced practitioners and the fact that we managed to make useful recommendations for them in order to improve their projects and give them a more youth-inclusive perception of their work was a “winner” experience for me.

4. What are the fears and concerns of the next generation?

Coming from a country that suffered a lot from an economic and a rule of law crisis – and I know that many other young people in Europe can emphasise – we experienced the devastating results of the previous generation's thoughtlessness and that made us more conscious and mindful of the fact that our actions have a serious impact for the future.

We live in a society that constantly demands us to adopt to new circumstances, to be “immune” to change and to be overqualified. We are constantly asked to learn new stuff, to absorb new information, to familiarise with new technologies when at the same time be loyal to the ethics and traditions of the past. Not to mention the serious damage to the environment, that we as a generation will experience the most devastating results of.

The COVID-19 pandemic also ruined many of our career and education plans, but most importantly made us drift away from our friends and relatives, to become even more dependent on social media and the online world. So, to conclude, we are the most highly qualified generation with the most innovative and sustainable ideas, but still we can see the uncertainty for our future shadowing most of our efforts.

5. What role can young people play in P/CVE?

I believe that young people are the key factor for the success of P/CVE. Young people can act as valuable partners when given the chance, as they are active thinkers and, as COVID-19

pandemic shows us, they are the ones who can adopt easily to new circumstances and shift to online work.

Young people have the ability to “think outside of the box” and provide innovative ideas both by designing a project and also by implementing it. Also, I see youth participation as a valuable opportunity for practitioners to get direct feedback on their work by the target groups, meaning that they can help in short and long-term evaluation.

We are living in times of a technological revolution. Social media is not only useful platforms for campaigning but also for influencing. Young people can act as “influencers” to other young people, as they have the platform to intervene with their peers and set a good example for them.

Lastly, I feel that authorities need to activate youth in order to be part of the process instead of addressing them as a passive audience. They can finally become part of the change and the solution.

6. What do you think will be the challenges that we will face in 2022?

2022 will be a turning point for us personally and for society in general. It will be the year when the world will emerge from the COVID crisis and return to normal. And here is the problem: what do we call normal still? Plenty of us have become used to working remotely and leading a remote lifestyle! Many stereotypes and standards have been lifted and many more have arisen. This is the year that the streets will be packed with people, but these people will have a different mindset than before.

Additionally, Covid-19 has been the reason for the violent extreme right and extreme left to rise. Democracy and rule of law have been in question. It is a serious challenge for civil society, who are required to take action and build bridges between the state and its civilians.

Moreover, due to the COVID-19 pandemic people are more susceptible to misinformation and disinformation through their dependence on social media, meaning that vulnerable groups of our society are prone to online discrimination and polarisation.



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2021 RAN YOUNG platform

7. What role should RAN YOUNG play in addressing these challenges?

RAN YOUNG is also at a turning point because we now need to shift our online approach to a physical one and to a being at “the heart of the events”. The RAN YOUNG platform will this summer expand its network with plenty more active individuals who have not only the knowledge and experience but also the will and power to make a change in the field of P/CVE.

As stated above young people are the core of the new online era and RAN YOUNG can play a major role in addressing online radicalisation, using its dynamic social media network enriched with synergies and collaborations of projects and groups all around Europe. We can create strong bonds of understanding and empathy between practitioners, share innovative tools and means of tackling problems but most importantly, we can unite people and motivate them to keep making a change in Europe.

“2022 will be a turning point for us personally and for society in general. It will be the year when the world will emerge from the COVID crisis and return to normal. And here is the problem: what do we call normal still? Plenty of us have become used to working remotely and leading a remote lifestyle! Many stereotypes and standards have been lifted and many more have arisen.”



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David Crouch in Gothenburg and Jon Henley
Mon 23 Feb 2015 09:30 GMT

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Political parties drive hate in EU, commission says

By NIKOLAJ NIELSEN
BRUSSELS, 29 JAN 2013, 09:28

Far-right political discourse is feeding hatred throughout the EU and could harm the European project in the upcoming 2014 European Parliament elections, says the European Commission.

Disparaging words geared towards minority groups like Roma, Muslims, Jews and immigrants are becoming more common as elected officials attempt to woo a growing number of the voting electorate rooted in populist movements.

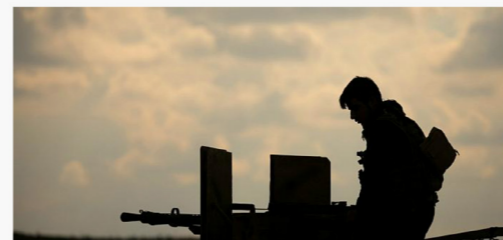
"Not since World War II have extreme and populist forces had so much influence on the national parliaments as they have today. In some countries even neo-nazis have been



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By Rachael Kennedy Updated: 07/03/2019



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How the European Union is making major strides fighting terrorism

August 28, 2017 12:27am BST

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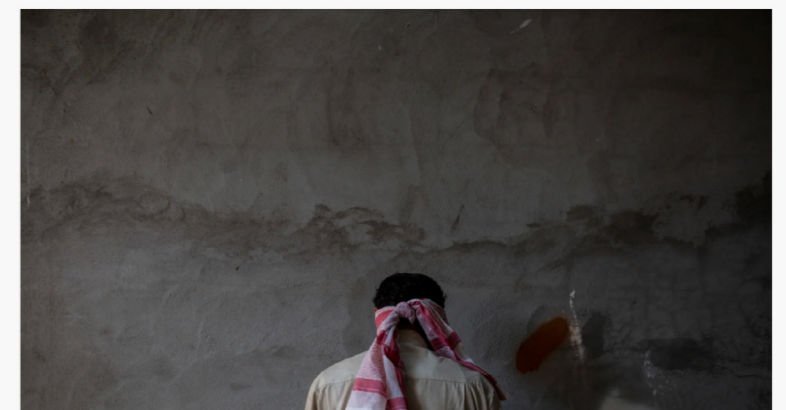
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By Robin Wright
October 23, 2017



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Radicalization in the EU: What is it? How can it be prevented?

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