

# EX POST PAPER

## RAN EDU KICK-OFF MEETING

*“All countries in Europe face the same issues, and it makes me feel a lot less alone talking to other teachers and see their commitment.”*

*“Students are experts, and should be involved more to find solutions and therefore we should provide an infrastructure to use these ideas, peer to peer.”*

*“Schools should promote belonging, and should not shy away from difficult topics”*

### Introduction

The RAN Education (EDU) Working Group<sup>1</sup> was set up in 2015 and kicked-off on 25 and 26 November in Prague (CZ). This Working Group focuses on better equipping teachers and the school system so they can play a crucial role in preventing radicalisation. The aim is to raise awareness of the topic, but also to empower and build capacity to prevent and deal with radicalisation in educational settings. RAN EDU takes stock of the legacy of the RAN Prevent Working Group and the Manifesto for Education<sup>2</sup> - Educators and Schools, that was published after a big meeting on education<sup>3</sup>. In the Manifesto it is decided on the prevent strategy and choices, based on the voices of 90 educators.

On top of the Minutes that were already published, this Ex post paper reflects on and highlights the lessons learned and interesting projects presented at the RAN EDU kick-off meeting.

The following topics will be addressed:

- Conversations in the classroom
- Promising strategy to support schools
- Students as providers for alternative messages
- Intercultural education in divided communities

Based on the relevant presentations, discussions and committed participants, it can be concluded that the prevention of radicalisation is indeed a topic for schools. The educational field wants to deal with this topic.

We would like to share two remarks, on the used terminology. Formal education includes all the schools, from primary to colleges and university. If we use the word schools, the others forms are also meant. The terms learners, pupils and students are used interchangeable.

<sup>1</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation\\_awareness\\_network/about-ran/ran-edu/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/about-ran/ran-edu/index_en.htm)

<sup>2</sup> Available at: [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation\\_awareness\\_network/docs/manifesto-for-education-empowering-educators-and-schools\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/docs/manifesto-for-education-empowering-educators-and-schools_en.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> RAN Prevent meeting, Holding Difficult Conversations - Empowering Educators and Schools, 3-4 March, Manchester (UK)

## Conversations in the classroom

*“Extreme ideas exist, and if schools and teachers are not able to handle conversations on these ideas with their students and ask the right questions, where will they be handled? We will have a problem in society then”.*

A safe and sound school context, is of importance for students. Teachers are able to create this, by not only teaching their students to be critical thinkers and resilient, but also by teaching them how to fight in a good way for their ideas and how to deal with conflict.

The Dutch peaceable school (see text

box) is a good example of this approach. Another example, showing that creating tolerance can and should be part of the curriculum, is the Swedish Tolerance project (see text box below). The German project Prevention through dialogue shows that both students and teachers should be involved in creating a democratic school climate (see text box below). Citizenship and democratic values should however not be forced upon students.

*The peaceable school, Dennis de Vries, Head of primary school OBS Overvecht (NL)*  
*In a so called peaceable school, like primary school OBS Overvecht, students are taught to resolve conflicts in a peaceful way and they learn to be responsible for their own environment. Dutch website available via: <http://www.devreedzameschool.net>*

*Tolerance project, Robin Andersson, Gothenborgs universitet, Segerstedtinstitutet (SE)*

*The Tolerance project encourages tolerance amongst students, during a one year programme with mixed groups from different schools in the municipality. By the use of narratives and reflection, students discover themselves and wonder why they think the way they think. The project estimated the savings by doing prevention. This project will be visited by the RAN EDU Working Group on 24 and 25 February 2016 in Gothenborg.*

**Prevention through dialogue - a workshop for students and teachers, Robert Strauch, Social worker for the Rütli School in Berlin-Neukölln (DE)**

Campus Rütli is a school for children aged 12-18, 85% of them have a migrant background and 90% of them live on welfare. This two-day radicalisation prevention workshop, focused on students and teachers has the goal to improve the school climate through dialogue. Students learn about discrimination, empowerment to speak up facing extremist ideology, Muslim identity and Anti-Muslim racism. Teachers learn about racism and discrimination, stereotypes and privileges, difficult situations in class and improving the curriculum. Instead of being taught on democracy, in creative workshops they explore democracy on their own. They work towards an exhibition by the use of photography, slam, rap, comic and poetry. The workshop is organised in cooperation with partners like Ufuq and Cultures interactive. For a workshop like this, funding, space/room and time are needed.

Teachers should be and remain in dialogue with their students, both in general as well as when it comes to delicate issues. A useful method to take care of these conversations is the ‘Socratic dialogue’, focused on facilitating conversations and supporting dialogue by posing questions without sharing your own opinion as teacher. In some countries however, teachers are not allowed to or it is feared that teachers are not able to manage these conversations. Consequently, there is a need for teachers training. They should be supported and empowered, so that there are confident enough to remain in dialogue.

### *Stories of formers*

Stories of formers could be used in the classroom. You should however be thoughtful in doing this, being a former does not immediately qualify you for being a didacticus. A good example of the use of formers in the classroom, by the use of a video with four formers, is the project My former life (see text box).

***My former life, Kelly Simcock, Tim parry Johnathan Ball Foundation for Peace (UK)***  
*Stories of formers are being used in the classroom, to discuss motivations, ideas but also to demystify and deglamourize violent extremism. These stories should be used in a safe environment in a workshop facilitated by trained facilitators. Website: <http://www.foundation4peace.org/mv->*

## Promising strategy for government to support schools

To be able to make a difference, schools need support from their local or national government. Supporting schools is not about telling them what to do and that they should do more. It’s about empowering, challenging, capacity building and investing in schools. The Dutch Support centre School and Safety, is an example of a promising strategy to take care of this (see text box below). Approaching schools on the topic of counter and violent extremism, is more effective via partners that are already involved in schools other safety related topics like drugs abuse, crime prevention, bullying and sexual exploitation. The Support centre School and Safety, was well received by the participants present.

***Support centre School and Safety, Fleur Nollet, School and Safety (NL)***  
*The Support centre is an independent foundation, funded by the Ministry for Education. It supports schools to establish a good and safe social climate. The support centre actively support schools in the 18 municipalities of the Netherlands, where the problem of radicalisation is most present. They develop and deliver trainings. Schools feel helped and listened to, and as an effect of the support the connection with the local government is improved. Dutch website available via: <http://www.schoolenveiligheid.nl/>*

## Students as providers for alternative messages

Who knows better how to use social media, how to write and alternative story for people their own age? It's students who should be part of the solution, when it comes to providing alternatives for the messages extremists spread via social media. With their knowledge of social media and their creativity, they are the ones who should be in the driving seat like in the Peer 2 peer project (see text box). Students are empowered, by making them responsible for their own environment and by working towards the same goal/outcome with other students. Parts of this programme can be used in the curricula of different European schools, and the programme could also be adapted to secondary education level.

**Peer 2 peer, Tony Sgro, edVenture partners (US, Global)**

*Teams of students provide for alternative narratives and develop social media strategies against violent extremism, in an international competition. They are enthusiastic, creative and provide for peer to peer narratives. Website available via: <http://edventurepartners.com/peer2peer/>*

## Intercultural education in divided communities

Radicalisation is about "Us and them", polarisation, hostilities. In divided communities, children go to schools where they only meet peers from their own community. While parents in their daily life meet people from other backgrounds, children don't. Therefore intercultural education is of importance. Schools and universities should teach future generations to deal with trauma and (perceived) injustice, offer other narratives and perspectives on history. Preventing future violence cannot be achieved without dealing with the past, as time does not heal all wounds. A good example of this is the Croatian project Intercultural education (see text box).

**Intercultural education, Tomislav Vukovic, Dalj Elementary School (HR)**

*In Eastern Croatia the extra-curricular activity Cultural and Spiritual Heritage of the region is organised, in order to improve relationships of post-conflict societies and to allow children to learn more of the cultures and customs of the others. The children are educated in their mother tongue, and ethnic groups therefore are educated separately, this shows the importance of organising activities that bring children from different ethnic groups together. The activity focuses on topics like: Relations among people, active listening, communication, tradition and customs, religious customs, history of the region, stereotypes, prejudices, interculturality, identity, by the use of: workshops, projects, interviews, portfolio.*

## Conclusion

- Conflicts are part of society, they should not be ignored but be addressed, especially in the classroom
- Teacher should be empowered and supported
- Democratic values should not be forced upon students
- Students should be in the drivers seat, when it comes to providing for alternative messages