

# SPOTLIGHT

DEC 2022

## Civil Society





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**EDITORIAL**

**Violent extremist recruitment efforts are increasingly localised. They draw on local grievances and exploit local events to radicalise vulnerable individuals. It therefore often falls to social workers, youth workers, teachers and others on the frontline in communities, to tackle this challenge. However, the importance of civil society groups and their representatives, cannot be understated. They often have the credibility and reach among the communities they represent to engage vulnerable individuals within them and intervene.**

In this Spotlight, RAN practitioners and experts from outside of the network, share their insights on the important role of civil society in preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE). This Spotlight provides an overview of the challenges in communities in Europe today, the different communities which civil society groups represent and the challenges that they face. It includes content on working with faith-based groups, working with community figures inside and outside of schools, and creating safe spaces for young people.

Some of these topics have been addressed by RAN Practitioners through various Working Group meetings, papers and other activities in 2022. This Spotlight publication therefore captures the highlights from some of these activities and points practitioners to where they can go to find out more. It also provides an overview of the EU-funded Civil Society Empowerment Programme (CSEP).

As always, we want to hear from you. 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](mailto:ran@radaradvies.nl)

**RAN Practitioners Staff**

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**ARTICLE**  
**THE ROLE OF  
CIVIL SOCIETY  
ORGANISATIONS  
(CSOs)**

**Eric POINSOT**

Historically, P/CVE policies were conceived and implemented by states and other public institutions. Over time it became more and more obvious that such policies could no longer be the sole responsibility of public institutions, and that all components of society had a role to play, including churches, associations, trade unions, and others. P/CVE strategies should be based on what is commonly known as a “whole of society” approach. However, this seemingly simple idea raises a number of questions and challenges, particularly from the point of view of practitioners.





**ARTICLE**  
**CIVIL SOCIETY  
AND P/CVE**

**Luca  
GUGLIELMINETTI**

**Since the very beginning of RAN, 11 years ago, one of the most innovative aspects has been the significant role assumed by civil society organisations (CSOs) in the activities of preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE) at all three levels of intervention. Among the thousands of practitioners who have participated in the various RAN working groups, a large number represent of the portion of civil society who engage with young people, inmates in prison and the most vulnerable social groups.**



**Over this time, CSOs have created safe spaces in schools and prisons for the exploration and sharing of ideas, including unpopular and politically sensitive ones, “to discuss exactly the issues used to mobilise sympathy and support for extremists, but before the extremists do”. CSOs have created and amplified grassroots-based alternative narratives, and thanks to their credibility they have been able to connect at-risk audiences with authentic messaging. CSOs have also led exit programmes for the rehabilitation and resocialisation of former terrorist and violent extremist offenders, including foreign fighters and their families.**

Civilian actors play an important safeguarding role within communities, especially when it comes to maintaining social cohesion and building resilience to all forms of violent extremism. This role is nothing new. In fact, CSOs play a similar role to charities who work in the educational and welfare fields. In criminology history, prevention programmes go back as far as the Robert Park School of Chicago and the “Chicago Area” project in 1932 – run by workers and the local Russell community Square – and its “curbside counselling”, which targeted youth gangs<sup>1</sup>.

CSOs are able to take the lead in preventative activities – such as creating more opportunities for youth empowerment, and building civically engaged and resilient communities – because they have, or are able to build trust with the communities they work with. From primary prevention to exit and rehabilitation work, building a relationship of trust between practitioners and target groups or clients is the indispensable precondition for the success of any P/CVE programme. Young people view CSO practitioners, even more than social workers and teachers, as independent from state institutions. This trust building is therefore the key factor of their accountability and that makes them fundamental in any preventative and rehabilitation activities. It’s probably this accountability that is the common denominator of most of the programmes in the RAN collection of inspiring practices, beyond the area of intervention, the setting and the method used.

Conversely, the “trust gap” between governmental bodies and CSOs is a factor for improvement in many Member States. “Previous law enforcement and surveillance practices have had a chilling effect upon CSOs who fear government outreach

1. Raffaella Sette (2008). *Controllo sociale e prevenzione: un approccio criminologico*. CLUEB: Bologna

2. Abbas Barzegar et al. (2016). *Civic Approaches to Confronting Violent Extremism*. Georgia State University, British Council, Institute for Strategic Dialogue

3. One of the most famous cases of multi-agency collaboration is the model of the city of Aarhus (Denmark). See Dennis Walkenhorst et al. (2020). *Rehabilitation Manual. Rehabilitation of radicalised and terrorist offenders for first-line practitioners*. RAN Practitioners

4. See the recent RAN CSEP thematic event in Dublin that reported a relevant analysis on the “Evaluation of impact and effectiveness of counter- and alternative campaigns stemming from the CSEP programme”

initiatives are duplicitous”. CSOs<sup>2</sup> express concern over some counter-terrorism measures that can affect civil liberties, as well as over the lack of inclusion in government programme design. So, to mitigate such a concern, we need highly visible public dialogues that involves CVE stakeholders, practitioners, and critics, and that should accompany the public policies programming pathway.

The problem is the sensitivity of the relationship between the needs of Counter Terrorism (CT) programmes and those of the Prevention of Violent Extremism (PVE) programmes, between security policy and safeguarding, between punitive measures and rehabilitation. It concerns different roles and responsibilities that finds a possible conciliation in multi-agency collaboration, which we find as a recommended approach in RAN Practitioners papers<sup>3</sup>. This approach aimed at fostering dialogue and effective cooperation between civil society, private sector and state bodies still remains a formidable challenge today. A necessary challenge that must combine and find a balance between the security needs of the community with the safeguarding of groups and members of the same community.

Last but not least, counter terrorism (CT) and P/CVE policies are sometimes disproportionately funded. The stress of limited funding for CSOs generates a lack of continuity in P/CVE activities and as a result it becomes rather difficult to measure their impact on the medium-long term. Of course, among the EU programmes and funds focused on P/CVE in the last 10 years, some have been targeted precisely at CSOs, such as Erasmus+ and RAN CSEP, allowing them to obtain funding for well-structured projects and, in many cases, relevant outputs.<sup>4</sup> However we must always consider that the effectiveness of P/CVE policies is often disputed by the media and in the court of public opinion when they fail, as occurred in the aftermath of both the attacks carried out by Kujtim Fejzullai in the 2020 Vienna shooting and by Usman Khan in the 2019 London Bridge stabbing. We should always keep in mind that the quality and the impact of such practices are not separated from the financial resources available to them.

**Luca Guglielminetti works for the Associazione Leon Battista Alberti in Turin and is a member of the RAN Experts Pool and RAN Ambassador for Italy.**



In the fourth episode of the 'Special Report' series, a programme which explores topical issues of relevance to RAN practitioners, we take a look at the P/CVE environment in Europe today. The programme, which was published in summer 2022, heard from three practitioners who talked about the capacity – both practitioner and civil society – that exists to tackle today's challenges and the skills, tools and support these groups and practitioners still need. You can watch the programme in full on the RAN YouTube channel [here](#).





ARTICLE  
**UNDERSTANDING  
THE POWER OF  
AN INCLUSIVE  
CIVIL SOCIETY  
ENGAGEMENT  
STRATEGY**

Cecilia  
GARDING

**“It is when we share the pain of extremism and terrorist attacks, respect our differences, blur the lines of geographic and mental borders within a community, that we truly lay the foundation for a solidarity that propels and fosters true prevention of radicalisation.”**





**I represent Muzicadelic Entertainment which is a non-profit organisation from Sweden that works through culture to facilitate integration, promote community building and to combat discrimination and extremism. We are award-winning filmmakers, authors, academics that have joined together to create this organisation. We believe that culture matters to create social cohesion and to heal social problems. We also have won awards by successfully engaging civil society to participate in our cultural projects especially within the field of filmmaking. My aim in this article is to present our work and experiences to inspire and present my own analysis on how we can more properly engage with vulnerable communities in a respectful way.**

I took the initiative to create the Eurotopia project 2018-2021 which was funded by the Internal Security Fund and the police action grant. For me, as the coordinator, it was important to hire staff who represented different communities and that had different religious beliefs from the start, as I understood that this would widen my reach, in finding voices for the films. Not only that, I knew that this would give the project more legitimacy with a diverse group of people coming from vulnerable communities, where we wished to have an impact. This is also what enriched our project, as we could find, through the staff, other voices and people, coming from different parts of Stockholm. Because, when we speak of civil engagement, we have a role to play to level the playing field, and ensure we enable a diverse range of voices to be heard.

This is usually not, how you work in Sweden. As the former diversity consultant for a large Swedish cultural study organisation, I found another reality two years earlier. Within the spectrum of civil society engagement, that I worked with, it was 90% run by solely the white Swedish majority population, despite our state funded status. My job was to change this pattern and I came up with the 25% rule – to represent the 25% with non-white majority status in Sweden. The idea was simple, to foster the introduction of new collaborations by creating more

diverse cultural plays/events to attract new consumers and foster cultural talent. In the end, the idea was to ensure that this would impact the boardrooms as well as staff and recruitment. I managed to get the 25% rule to be a part of the statutes for this organisation. This was the basis of my frame of mind when I received the funds for the Eurotopia project.

We also understood very early on that there was a need within the dramaturgy of the narrative surrounding extremism, to give a diverse population true representation. We made professional short films in Sweden, Belgium and Italy and these films were made with formers, victims of terrorism, young people from high school and role models in tackling violent extremism that were inspired by this guidance. We created, as far as we know, some of the first short films depicting Muslims as victims of terrorist attacks, but also as active agents working against radicalisation within their own religious group where they could be seen as role models. And it was, thanks to our Muslim staff and other staff on the ground in vulnerable areas, that we did find both the right people to interview but also actors to play in the short films. Their input was invaluable.

My aim for diverse staff recruitment also impacted our film production in Belgium and Italy. For instance, when producing the film “Game of life: Italy”, which contained 20 actual soccer players, we had one player from a Muslim background. Together, they highlighted how young soccer players are at risk of being radicalised. This film would not have been made without the local expertise of our staff with both non-Italian background and Italian background, where they had great networks within the city of Rome and the filmmaking industry. We managed to engage over 100 actors that volunteered for the project, something that I am very proud of. I hope that future projects can learn from our experiences and the 25% rule.

**Cecilia Garding has initiated over ten projects, funded by the Swedish State or the EU, delivered by civil society organisations to further social inclusion and prevent radicalisation. In 2014, she won the title “Women Inspiring Europe” by the European Institute for Gender Equality for her work in helping young people with migrant backgrounds to get included in the Swedish cultural sector.**



## RAN ACTIVITY

# CIVIL SOCIETY EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMME



### What?

The Civil Society Empowerment Programme (CSEP) supports civil society organisations (CSOs), grass roots organisations and credible voices.

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 violent extremist and terrorist content online.

### Why?

Terrorist and violent extremist groups are very successful in capitalising on technology and social media to spread their propaganda, and to radicalise and recruit supporters.

Many civil society organisations 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.

### How?

Through the Civil Society Empowerment Programme, the EU is committed to capacity building, 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.

A training programme was rolled out across Europe for civil society organisations in 2017, providing participants with the skills needed to design and implement an effective, convincing and credible online campaign, and to ensure it reaches the target audience. The training material is available online [here](#).



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MI CASA ES SU CASA

FEATURE

Andrea  
VOLTERANNI

FEATURE  
**CSEP project –  
OLTRE**

**Meaningful participation as a  
critical factor in preventing  
radicalisation. The experience of  
the OLTRE project.**





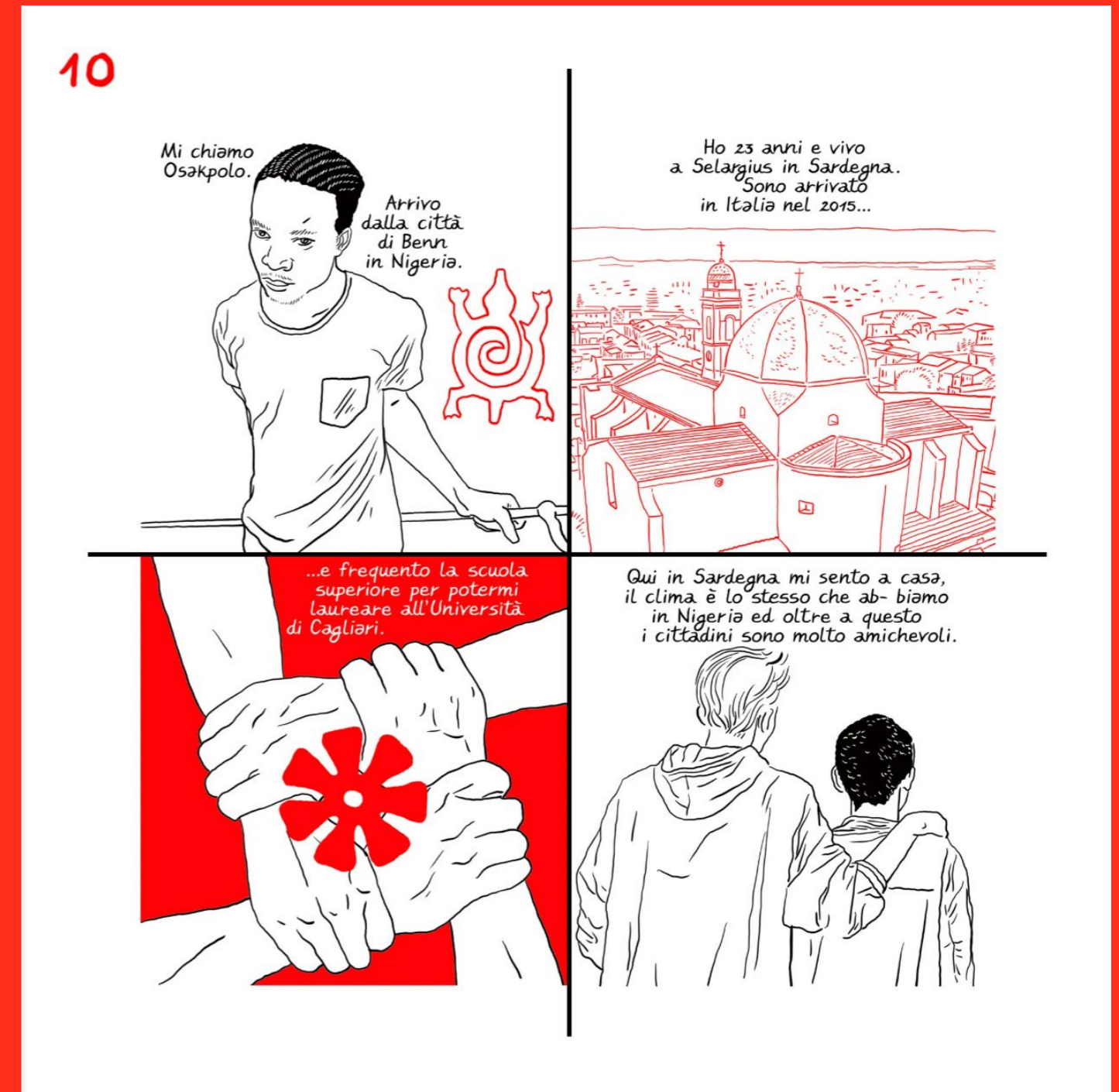
**The OLTRE project, ‘Beyond the Horizon - Counter-narratives from the margins to the centre’, sought to contribute to the prevention of Islamic radicalisation, especially among young people of Muslim faith, through a nationwide online communication campaign.**

Is it possible to prevent the radicalisation of this second generation of young Muslims in Italy through an online communication campaign? The answer is certainly yes if we consider ways to ensure greater visibility and meaningful participation of young people.

The Oltre project was delivered by a consortium of organisations, including universities, civil society organisations (CSOs) who work with young people, and community groups which represent second-generation young people. The activities of the project included research, two workshops (on ‘social communication’ and the ‘theatre of the oppressed’), an online prevention campaign, and a webseries.

From the outset of the project we aimed to increase the visibility of project activities among our primary target audience, second-generation young people actors. The inclusion of Coordinamento Nazionale delle Nuove Generazioni Italiane (CONGII) – an organisation which brings together various associations of second-generation young people – in the project, made it possible to have a direct channel of communication with our target audience, enabling us to build strong contacts and involve them in project activity.

Through research activity, researchers and second-generation young people worked together to better understand the relevant dimensions of potential radicalisation, but also of discrimination. After the research phase, preparatory workshops were held on both digital communication and identity, through the ‘Theatre of the Oppressed’ methodology. In both cases, it was the second-generation young people who first proposed and then discussed the relevant topics to be addressed and co-developed together.



The project also produced: the webseries *Rajel*, the video interviews with Mahmood *Oltre la serie*, the theatrical monologue *Oltre il velo*, by Preziosa Salatino, the song *Tutto il mondo paese*, by Maruego, the graphic novel by Gianluca Costantini, the book *Seconde generazioni, identità e partecipazione politica* (M. Macaluso, M. Siino, Tumminelli G., FrancoAngeli, 2020).



Subsequently, a group selected on the basis of their availability, of about 20 young people, worked together with the project team to develop an editorial plan for the social media campaign, the specific content for each product, and who and how would respond to any comments, requests, potential hate attacks and discrimination. The communication campaign provided young people with the opportunity to be “social media moderators”, to actively intervene by posting texts, videos and images of their daily experiences of discrimination, the ideas they have, and the problems they encounter in being accepted.

In all the places and processes just described, second-generation young people were able to experience meaningful participation, i.e. the possibility to participate but also, and above all, to contribute to the design of the activities to be carried out. It was not easy to ensure second-generation young people’s visibility and meaningful participation. To do so, the project team had to listen carefully to what young people wanted to do and how they wanted to do it.

This idea we implemented had a threefold result. The first was to be able to explore issues and problems of second-generation young people that we would not have thought of as a consortium, because they emerged from the perceptions of the young people themselves within their everyday lives. Anyone who is called upon to speak in the first person is better able to tell their point of view.

Secondly, the opportunity to be able to witness discussions, even of a confrontational nature, on some topics rather than others, made it clear what aspects could be worked on for prevention. Together with the second-generation young people, we discussed these aspects both in the management of the online campaign and in the writing of the webseries script.

Finally, it should be emphasised how the significant participatory processes – although tiring to manage in terms of time and attention to each individual – were able to ensure that the project’s social media pages continued to live on after their

conclusion, because they were considered co-created spaces and not someone’s property. In conclusion, the Oltre project experience can also be replicated in different cultural contexts because the methodology and participatory approach can take cultural and social differences into account.

More information about the OLTRE project can be found [here](#).





A paper, published by RAN Practitioners in February 2022, entitled 'P/CVE Work with Religious Communities and Faith-based Organisations', takes a look at the multiple ways in which faith-based actors and religious communities can support the prevention and countering of violent extremism (P/CVE) efforts on the local level. The paper presents the highlights and key takeaways from a meeting of RAN in the Western Balkans held in Skopje earlier this year. You can read the paper in full [here](#).



18/11/2021

## CONCLUSION PAPER

*RAN in the Western Balkans - Regional small-scale expert workshop  
21-22 October 2021, Skopje, North Macedonia*

# P/CVE Work with Religious Communities and Faith-based Organisations

## Key outcomes

There has been growing recognition of the multiple ways in which faith-based actors and religious communities can support prevention and countering of violent extremism (P/CVE) efforts on the local level. While such efforts are most often led and coordinated by local authorities, officials responsible for public security, and social support services for vulnerable individuals and families, collaboration is needed with a wider range of community actors who can reach people and provide support. Promoting resilient and effective cooperation between religious communities, state agencies and civil society actors is crucial for all stages of P/CVE work, from primary prevention to intervention with at-risk individuals/communities and rehabilitation and reintegration.

This is particularly relevant in the Western Balkans (WB) where a vast majority of people identify as religious and where the role of religion has an impact on social cohesion and community resilience against polarisation. Religious identities and communities are an important reference point when we seek to identify and explain divisions between different groups in WB societies and the dynamics between them. Similarly, faith-based organisations and faith leaders can play a reconciliatory role and be a significant source of resilience and healing for both individuals and communities in times of crisis. Over the past years, practitioners in the region have voiced need for strengthening safe partnerships and collaboration with religious communities across faith traditions. "RAN in the Western Balkans" made a first step towards addressing this gap by providing a format for practitioners to exchange knowledge and share good practices and existing models of cooperation. A small-scale expert workshop with representatives of religious communities, inter-religious collaboration centres, local NGOs, and support services for reintegration and rehabilitation of women and children was held in North Macedonia to kick-start this process. Main takeaways include the following:

- **The WBs is a region that is still affected by the consequences of a recent conflict:** Political instabilities and ongoing polarisation are partly a legacy of previous conflicts and insufficient ways of dealing with the past and seeking reconciliation. These structural factors are contributing to further polarisation of societies in the region.
- **There is growing ethno-national extremism and cumulative extremism as a result of polarisation and dynamics between different groups.** Practitioners and policymakers have for many years worked to address the threat of religiously motivated extremism (for example, foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) and the rehabilitation and reintegration of returnees from Daesh). The landscape of extremism is changing and more focus needs to be placed on monitoring different types of extremist narratives promoting interethnic tensions, hate and violence.

## The importance of education for the creation of resilience

One of the most devastating outcomes of the recent conflicts in the WB is the institutionalisation of ethnic divisions in the education system. Most countries in the WB have some form of segregated education, with Bosnia's 'Two Schools Under One Roof' <sup>(1)</sup> practice being the most extreme example. The ethnically based formal education system where one's own group is valorised at the expense of the "other" has significantly reinforced divisions. The post-conflict generation in the WB has been identified as young, ethnically isolated and potentially radicalised. In order to bring resilience to the region, this challenge needs to be tackled <sup>(2)</sup>.

## Recommendations

Below are recommendations related to the different strands of the discussion highlights above.

### 1) The creation of a joint network for P/CVE projects and activities in the WBs

- to share experiences and knowledge about different models and approaches used in different countries and explore which models are most useful/effective in which context (currently, the exchange of information is needed in relation to the rehabilitation and reintegration of FTFs);
- to promote and encourage regional cooperation in relation to bottom-up P/CVE activities;
- to learn about challenges different countries have in relation to interfaith dialogue;
- to gather information on different national strategies and local government set-ups in relation to P/CVE activities, strategies and policy;
- to build a shared understanding of P/CVE in the WBs in order to identify and map risks and create solutions;
- to create a space of interaction between practitioners and academic research;
- to establish a trust-building zone for transnational and regional cooperation between different religious communities;
- to continue cooperation with RAN in the WBs.

### 2) Transfer and expansion of interfaith dialogue and cooperation into the online sphere to

- explore the ways in which current interfaith dialogue in the region can be present also into the online space;
- further explore online interfaith dialogue;
- there are already existing courses on interfaith dialogue aimed at combating extremism amongst young people <sup>(3)</sup>: gather information about these courses for the joint network above.

### 3) Promote and encourage female faith actors' involvement in P/CVE in the region by

- gathering information about female-led P/CVE activities in the region;
- providing a space for dialogue and peer exchange for faith-based female actors.

### 4) Critical engagement with education systems in WBs

- reviewing education systems in the WBs and studying the ways in which segregated education contributes towards polarisation of WB societies;
- assessing the relationship between school curricula and political instabilities in the WBs.

<sup>(1)</sup> See: <https://www.osce.org/mission-to-bosnia-and-herzegovina/404990>

<sup>(2)</sup> Halilovic Pastuovic, M. (Forthcoming). Ethnopolitics and Textbook Politics: Education in Post-Conflict Bosnia and Herzegovina. In C. Vanner, S. Akseer, & T. Kovinhan Levi (Eds.), *Textbooks for Peace*. Springer.

<sup>(3)</sup> See: <https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/interfaith-dialogue>



**Anna  
VALSAMIDIS**

**FLAMMAN HUS**  
**Creating safe  
spaces for  
young people in  
communities**

**In many ways, civil society has always been seen as an actor that works with the “heart” and understands the lived reality of people they work with. They are seen as credible and trusted actors by the communities they represent, and therefore are able to secure the support and co-operation of them. Although they are trusted by communities for their competence, knowledge and expertise, unfortunately it has always been a more difficult fact to legitimise among, for example, government institutions and security agencies.**

**FEATURE**



**There has also been a failure among such institutions and agencies to understand why we, as civil society, are actually needed and what role we can play. For example, in the last 20 years we have seen many waves of radicalisation to various violent extremist groups across the world. When this occurs, civil society is expected to play a key role in de-radicalisation and dis-engagement. Civil society has shown itself, not at least in Sweden, to be a strong player in preventative work against radicalisation, but also when it comes to getting children and young people to leave behind radical thoughts or environments, generating strong counter-narratives which impact individuals, and presenting alternative solutions.**

In various reports and research it is shown that young people in our society today feel socially excluded and alienated, suffer from mental illness and trauma, and do not feel like an important or represented part of society – especially when it comes to democratic processes. Young people today, therefore, try to find alternative ways to fit in, to find their identity, and to feel accepted. For example, young people in socially vulnerable areas and rural areas experience poorer social inclusion and have a higher distrust of authorities, as described in a report from MUCF (The Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society Affairs).

We – the Flamman Social Prevention Center in Malmö (Sweden) – run a project called 'Safe Space'. Safe Space works to protect democracy against all types of anti-democratic behaviour that can lead to violent extremism. We meet a huge number of young people who all express the same thing as one another: mistrust of society, lack of motivation to go to school and a feeling of being left out and not fitting in.

Why do we think this is so? The reasons for this are many, but as a civil society actor we know that it is too simple to point at individuals as the problem when it comes to extremism; instead we need to understand the root causes holistically. Working at the grassroots, in communities, we have our ear to the ground.

We listen to the concerns and grievances of communities and individuals. The insights that we gather we share upwards, with authorities at both local and national level. We fully understand that when you work in politically controlled organisations, such as government institutions, it is not always possible to act only in the best interest of the individual, but you have different policies and protocols you must follow. Therefore, we believe that society in general, but especially government institutions, should see civil society as a credible actor in the work against radicalisation and extremism. We work at grassroots level and have more opportunities to work from a holistic perspective with young people who have ended up in, or expressed, radical opinions and thoughts. However, we see the importance of working together with authorities to prevent radicalisation and extremism in our society.

We in Safe Space do this by, among other things, having a collaboration group where other civil society actors sit with representatives from social services and the police. It has been a long journey to get there, to gain that legitimacy and to create the collaboration that we have done over the years. We must jointly realise that radicalisation and extremism, just like crime, is a sign of not only a system error in society, but also how parallel societies can be created – when people do not feel represented; are exposed to racism or other forms of discrimination; and experience exclusion.

Therefore, civil society and authorities must work together to better understand the problem, work to eradicate any system errors, and create conditions so that individuals do not end up in radical and extreme groups, or thoughts. We must work together for a more inclusive society, for everyone. Among other things, we must ask ourselves, who are the least represented in our society and how do we ensure that young people are seen and heard, and instead do not join radical and extreme environments. How do we highlight the problem and how do we deal with it?

Young people who have participated in social and democratic activities often experience a greater opportunity to influence



decision-makers and democratic processes (The Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society Affairs). So how do we ensure that more young people have the opportunity to participate and build a more inclusive society? Well, by listening with our ear to the ground and realising that this is a bigger problem than any individual or community. Young people are calling for arenas where they can raise their concerns and talk about difficult issues (Children's Ombudsman Sweden). Children must also be heard and involved in matters that concern them (Children's Convention).

At Safe Space we work to ensure that young people are seen and heard every day. We raise their voices and give them the tools they need to participate and influence. We make sure we are 'young people' centred and 'co-produce' our work with them. In this way, we also work to reduce the risk of young people ending up in anti-democratic environments.

But we also see the importance of education on the subject. We do this by connecting professionals working in the field with children and young people to hear what they have to say. Through education and consultation, we increase knowledge. Together we can become stronger. We have a responsibility to create the conditions today that will enable children and young people to prosper in the future.

**If you don't listen when the child cries, the wrong person can hear them.**

**If you don't catch the child when it falls, a dangerous road can hurt them.**

**If you don't hear when the child is talking to you, another can pretend to listen with their own agenda.**

Let's remember that for the way forward, for the good of every single child and young person, we must create a society where democracy is something positive and important for all people in our world.

**“At Safe Space we work to ensure that young people are seen and heard every day. We raise their voices and give them the tools they need to participate and influence. We make sure we are 'young people' centred and 'co-produce' our work with them. In this way, we also work to reduce the risk of young people ending up in anti-democratic environments.”**



**RAN FILM**  
RAN Reporters – Sports Against  
Racism Ireland

A recent episode of RAN Reporters, a programme which uncovers some of the most interesting and innovative projects and stories from among the RAN Practitioners network, visited Sports Against Racism Ireland (SARI) and one of its programmes leads, Azeez Yusuff, in Dublin. The programme tells the story of SARI's work to transform the lives of minority communities – particularly those that face issues of discrimination – through sport. You can watch the film in full on the RAN YouTube channel [here](#).

SPOTLIGHT  
RAN FILM

DEC 2022  
CIVIL SOCIETY

038-039



It's mind boggling.



ARTICLE

# CREATING A SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY DIALOGUE: LESSONS LEARNT FROM LECCO RESTORATIVE CITY

Cristina  
VASILIESCU  
and  
Bruna DIGHERA

‘Restorative cities’ aim to mainstream conflict management practices – otherwise known as ‘restorative practices’ – in people’s daily lives. This includes in formal social settings – such as schools and the workplace – and informal social settings – such as at home, in the neighbourhood, with families, and friendships.









A paper, published by RAN Practitioners in October 2021, entitled 'Working with Community Figures both Inside and Outside Schools', provides insights for practitioners on the value of collaboration between educators and community figures and the challenges they encounter in the prevention of violent extremism. The paper also provides a set of recommendations for solutions to these challenges. You can read the paper in full [here](#).



20/10/2021

## CONCLUSION PAPER

RAN Youth & Education (Y&E)

5-6 October, Digital event

# Education and Youth Work: Working with Community Figures both Inside and Outside Schools

## Introduction

The involvement and the support of communities are fundamental in the prevention of radicalisation. In addition to schools and youth work organisations, young people are also exposed to various other influential environments like their family or religious community. These environments can serve as both protective factors (in their search for identity) or as risk factors (in proclaiming problematic narratives). What's more, key figures in these environments might be able to reach young people more effectively than teachers or social workers because of their function as role models.

At RAN Youth & Education, we try to emphasise the importance of [collaboration within the pedagogical environment](#) in order to create a positive and inclusive community around young people. Therefore, we also want to explore the role and value of these community figures within such collaborative structures. During this RAN Y&E Working Group meeting, we invited practitioners from youth work, schools, and community representatives to share their experiences and expertise regarding this topic.

The meeting included three break-out sessions in which participants discussed specific questions related to the topic. On the first day, participants explored the relevance of working together with community figures in the prevention of violent extremism (PVE) and formulated various challenges they encounter. Solutions to these challenges were formulated on the second day. This paper will present these topics in the same order: first, the value of collaboration, followed by the challenges and solutions.

### Solutions:

- Start small and address **easy topics** first, such as the playground or school canteen, and define common goals around these topics. Address more delicate issues gradually. Throughout the process, make sure you communicate well and engage in an honest and **empathic dialogue**.
- Make clear that the **common goal** of all parties is a happy and successful child. Focus on that goal instead of 'preventing radicalisation', which might make some parties rather defensive.
- Set up a **clear plan** together, concentrate on what works and get rid of what doesn't. This requires frequent monitoring and evaluation.

**Challenge 3:** How to deal with conflicts between value and ethos? How to formulate shared values and common goals?

*Some actors might be rather distant in their (pedagogical) beliefs and practices, or have certain misconceptions about others. While they might have similar goals, they have different ideas about how to get there. Is it possible that these diverging views don't hinder the collaboration process?*

### Solutions:

- Initially, partners might have a different agenda. Keep focusing on building trust and formulating the common goal of a **happy successful child**. Build the network around the pedagogical principles you can agree on.
- Be **patient** and clarify misunderstandings, do not ignore them when it becomes sensitive or uncomfortable.
- Ask someone from the community itself to explain your point of view, or use mediation if needed. Also, be open to the other partners' point of view and try to reach a consensus. Without **listening** to the other, you will never be able to eventually bring across your message.

**Challenge 4:** Which communities are important when working on the prevention of right-wing extremism, hybrid conspiracies, or Covid-19 induced radicalisation?

*When working with communities on the primary prevention level, it is hard to point out where to find certain communities. However, if you wish to collaborate with a religious community, places of worship are clear gathering points you could reach out to, such as Mosques or Churches. However, if you wish to collaborate with communities formed around a specific ideology, where do you find them? And how do you keep track of developments within evolving ideologies and communities?*

### Solutions:

- As a school or youth work organisation you need to know your local area, you need to know your communities to address the issues. Be a **community (both off and online) sensitive**, who are the youngsters in the schools, what communities are they part of? What are the social issues in the community? Knowing your neighbourhood will make it easier to identify the right community figures and the places where to find them to prevent possible radicalisation inspired by any type of extremist ideology.
- If communities do not gather in any specific place, connect to places in your neighbourhood where people get together, such as **sports clubs, youth clubs, bars, and online spaces**. Next RAN meeting will focus on how to engage with sport clubs in order to foster inclusion.

## General recommendations

**Throughout the meeting, various general recommendations came up about how to foster collaboration between schools and/or youth work with community figures.**



# PROFILES: RAN PRACTITIONER Azeez YUSUFF



**Azeez Yusuff discovered he was a good soccer player quite soon after he arrived in Ireland. It was not his technical ability that made him stand out but the speed at which he weaved the ball up and down the pitch. Unfortunately, his new-found talent did not help the primary school student make friends.**

His classmates were already hesitant about opening up to the new arrival from Nigeria. The fact that he could race down the pitch faster than the star soccer player did him no favours.

“I arrived at the school in the winter and they used to throw tissues in my tea. I told the teacher but she just said they were only messing. I was just this little boy trying to make friends but I did get bullied. I was really fast at football and I guess one guy got pissed off because I was getting the ball but he was the best in the school.”

Azeez was just 10 years old when he stepped on board an aircraft for the first time in his life and flew to Ireland to join his parents. He still remembers the fear of sitting in that large mechanical object, praying it would not fall out of the sky.

At Dublin Airport he was greeted by his mother whom he had not seen in six years and his father, who had been gone even longer. “I remember it was freezing when I arrived in Ireland, it was February and so cold. But it was one of the best days of my life; I hadn’t seen my parents in a long time.”

He had moved in with his grandmother in the city of Ibadan, north of Lagos, after his parents moved to Ireland in search of work. “It was really difficult leaving her behind but we still talk. The way I think about it is for you to move on in life you have to make some sacrifices. I haven’t gone back home to see her since I came here but I would love to see her again.”

After he arrived in Dublin, his parents enrolled him in sixth class at the local primary school in Tallaght. However, when his older brother arrived soon after and joined the same class, their



mother, who was worried the brothers would stick together and not open up to new friendships, requested that Azeez be moved into fifth class. By the time he started secondary school, he was still struggling to make friends.

“I really stood out in class, that was scary. Obviously the language barrier was really difficult in terms of not understanding people. In Nigeria, English is the first language but it’s not what you speak at home. I spoke Yoruba, that’s my language. I was going to school and just coming straight back home and it got really boring. My dad suggested I join a club to make friends and improve how I spoke.”

He was 13 when he started playing with the local soccer club. “They were really welcoming and even though my language still wasn’t the best, they helped.”

He continued playing soccer through his teen years and joined Shamrock Rovers FC. However, he was forced to take a break after he sustained an injury and underwent surgery on his knee in his late teens. It was his friend Abdul, whom he had met through the local club, who suggested that he consider coaching the newly formed Muslim women’s soccer team in Dublin.

Diverse City FC had been established by a group of young Dubliners after Fifa decided to lift the ban on headscarves during matches. Abdul also introduced him to the Sports Against Racism Ireland (Sari) organisation which uses sport as a medium to promote social inclusion and cultural integration.

Despite the demands of college work, he is still an active member and volunteer with Sari and continues to train the young women who play with Diverse City. “I absolutely love coaching Diverse City. What I’ve found is a lot of women don’t really get involved in sport but with Diverse City it’s totally different. It doesn’t matter if you’re really good at football. Anyone can come along and we help them develop. Soccer is a physical activity that is key for everybody, it doesn’t matter if you’re a boy or a girl.”

Azeez (21) is now studying computer science at the National College of Ireland, volunteers with Sari and acts as a coach and mentor for young teenage players. Asked why soccer continues to play such an important role in his life, he says it’s all down to a feeling of happiness.

**“I’ve discovered that sport releases all the stress from my body. When I play I literally drop everything. I don’t think of college work, family problems, nothing. I just focus on playing and after I finish I feel so happy on the pitch.”**

Azeez has passed this love of sport on to his younger siblings who were born in Ireland after he moved from Nigeria. His younger brother plays soccer for Knocklyon Football Club in Dublin and his two younger sisters play Gaelic football and camogie. He also enjoys playing Gaelic football.

“I like the fitness aspect of it,” he says. “It’s much more physical than soccer and I think the training is more challenging.”

The struggles in his early years in Ireland have taught the soccer enthusiast the importance of getting involved as a means of making new friends.


“For new people who are coming into this country, my advice is definitely to join societies or clubs,” Azeez suggests. “It doesn’t have to be sport, but clubs really boost you. For me it has opened up a lot of doors and networks. If I didn’t join a club I don’t think the direction I’m going in would have happened.”

“I’m Nigerian and I’m proud to be Nigerian, but I’m Irish in my blood,” he adds. “I’ve been here longer than the time I spent in my own country. Ireland is most definitely my home.”

This article was first published in The Irish Times, which can be found [here](#).



A paper, published by RAN Practitioners in May 2022, entitled 'The role of civil society organisations in exit work', discusses the importance of multi-agency work and collaboration between governments and civil society in exit work. The paper provides a comprehensive overview of the different functions and characteristics of CSO-led exit interventions in the EU and summarises challenges, lessons learned and inspiring practices. You can read the paper in full [here](#).



**The role of civil society organisations in exit work**

European Commission

Radicalisation Awareness Network  
**RAN**

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## THE ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS IN EXIT WORK

The terms CSO and non-governmental organisation are used interchangeably. In this paper, the term CSO will be used.

**Exit work** refers to practices and approaches that 'provide support to individuals wishing to leave a violent extremist group and/or to abstain from radical thoughts.'<sup>28</sup> The goals of exit interventions may include facilitating disengagement, deradicalisation, rehabilitation and reintegration of violent extremists.

**Participants in exit interventions** can be individuals currently involved in violent extremist environments and/or in terrorism-related activities; individuals who have attempted to travel to war zones to join militant extremist groups and returning FTFs; and individuals who have been radicalised in prison as well as those who have made the decision to leave the extremist environment and seek help with disengagement and/or reintegration. The terms participant, client and beneficiary are commonly used to refer to individuals participating in an exit intervention. The term client is commonly used by CSOs to emphasise the voluntary nature of the relationship between the two parties defined as client and service provider.<sup>29</sup> Beneficiary is a term used to refer to exit participants mandated by the court or prison to participate.

**Tertiary radicalisation prevention** entails targeted interventions to those already involved in radicalised environments and violent extremism, to motivate change and to support their exit from violent extremism. The focus of such interventions may be on disengagement, deradicalisation, rehabilitation or reintegration, or a combination of these. Tertiary radicalisation prevention also includes interventions offered to concerned individuals (e.g. relatives and professionals) who are in contact with radicalised individuals and seek advice.

**Violent extremists** are individuals who support ideas and/or are involved with groups or movements promoting violent means to enforce an extremist ideology. Violent extremism refers to 'the beliefs and actions of people who support or use violence to achieve ideological, religious or political goals'.<sup>30</sup> This can include terrorism and other forms of politically motivated violence.<sup>31</sup>

## II. CSOs in exit work in the EU: Different paths in different contexts

CSO-led exit interventions in the EU have become established in a variety of ways. This section presents selected examples to showcase the various trajectories of CSOs implementing exit work in different contexts.

While in-depth analysis of the historical country contexts exceeds the scope of this paper, examples of the establishment and operation of various CSO-led exit interventions are discussed from Scandinavia, Germany, the Netherlands and France. The first CSO-led exit programmes were established in **Scandinavia** as a response to the rise of violent right-wing extremism. The 1990s saw a surge in xenophobic violence and

<sup>23</sup> Radicalisation Awareness Network, 2020a.

<sup>24</sup> European Commission, 2021 p. 5.

<sup>25</sup> United Nations. *Civil Society. Who we are*. See <https://www.un.org/en/civil-society/page/about-us> online.

<sup>26</sup> UN Guiding Principles Reporting Framework. *Civil society organisations (CSOs)*. See <https://www.ungpreporting.org/glossary/civil-society-organizations-csos/> online.

<sup>27</sup> OSCE, 2020 p. 6.

<sup>28</sup> van de Donk et al., 2020 p. 28.

<sup>29</sup> See, for example, the *RAN Rehabilitation Manual (2020)*.

<sup>30</sup> UNODC. *The Doha Declaration: Promoting a culture of lawfulness (2018)*. See <https://www.unodc.org/e41/en/terrorism/module-2/key-issues/radicalization-violent-extremism.html> online.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

## Highlights: **RAN Practitioners activity**

The role of civil society in P/CVE has been addressed within a number of RAN Practitioners activities in 2022. Stay tuned for updates on future events in the RAN Practitioners Update and on RAN Practitioners social media channels.

For more information about RAN Practitioners activities please visit the Calendar on the RAN website [here](#).



**CSEP**  
07-08 November 2022

### **CSEP event**

The objective of this event was to reflect on the lessons learned and challenges encountered by CSEP projects over the past five years, and to discuss the future of online campaigning, and next steps.



# LIBRARY: DISCOVER MORE

If you would like to discover more about the role of civil society in P/CVE you can get in touch with the RAN Staff, take a look at the [RAN Collection of Inspiring Practices](#) or read through some of the latest [RAN papers](#). We have included some of these papers in a carefully selected collection of interesting and relevant articles below.

**RAN Practitioners (2022)**

[CSOs engaging in the prevention and countering of ethno-nationalism and violent right-wing extremism](#)

**RAN Practitioners (2022)**

[How to deal with the local impact of online \(extremist\) activities](#)

**RAN Practitioners (2021)**

[Community police and the online dimension](#)

**RAN Practitioners (2021)**

[Inclusion through sports](#)



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