

EX POST PAPER

RAN YOUNG kick-off meeting

Young people's views on the work of first-line practitioners and policies

Introduction

Across RAN, a simple message is often repeated: young people should be involved in the prevention of radicalisation and (violent) extremism, and empowered to take an active role. Professionals and practitioners should not only talk *about* young people but also *with* them. Young people should also have the opportunity to interact with each other on the topic. Their views are valuable input for the different practitioners within RAN, and RAN will therefore ensure these young people have more opportunities to contribute to the common goal through the creation of a platform for young people within the RAN community. On 28 and 29 March, 34 young people (all between 18 and 25 years old) gathered in Madrid. In different ways, they all want to play a role and make a difference in preventing radicalisation and extremism.

This paper describes the outcomes of this first RAN YOUNG meeting in three parts. The first deals with young people's views of various practitioners, including clear dos and don'ts. The second reviews national or local P/CVE policies and strategies, summarising clear recommendations for 12 European countries. And finally, as RAN YOUNG aims to be a movement, the paper presents the follow-up to the meeting.

Reviewing practitioners' work

To connect RAN YOUNG to the Radicalisation Awareness Network of practitioners, we have established the RAN YOUNG Ambassadorship that links four RAN Youngsters to the following RAN working groups:

- RAN Police & Law Enforcement
- RAN Education
- RAN Communication & Narratives
- RAN Youth, Families & Communities

The RAN YOUNG

Ambassadors have started connecting with these working groups and their practitioners to build meaningful relationships with them. During the Madrid meeting, the RAN youngsters split themselves between four break-out groups, each led by one of the RAN YOUNG Ambassadors, and discussed their views on the work of the practitioners brought together in the four working groups listed above: 1) community police officers 2) teachers 3) online content creators and 4) youth- or community workers. Their clear recommendations are listed below.

Don't impose your own views

Don't use boring policy terms

Community police officers (RAN POL)

In essence, local networking and community engagement are all about communication and personal, effective communication styles and skills. That is exactly what the RAN youngsters focused on when formulating their recommendations for the community police officer. Tips for communicating with young people:

How would youngsters (from all backgrounds) like to be approached by a community police officer?

- ❖ Without prejudice
- ❖ The same way as anyone else
- ❖ Not aggressively
- ❖ In friendly terms
- ❖ With genuine interest
- ❖ With openness to explaining and the will to be understood
- ❖ As accepted normal, accepted person, instead of as a societal problem

When the community police officer (CPO) approaches a young person for the first time, he or she needs to be aware of the influence of the environment has on this first interaction. Related to this, the RAN youngsters stressed the importance of a CPO always de-escalating. For example, the first contact between a young person and a CPO is best carried out at school (de-escalating), instead of in a home setting (escalating). In addition, the CPO's attitude should favour creating comfort with a view to an open conversation based on equality.

Do listen

What would young people like to talk about with the CPO?

The CPO needs to be able to talk about tough issues, which means attending police training with a focus on communication skills and having a genuine will to communicate and an open attitude. A trust-based relationship is the basis for open and honest communication.

Talk about:

- ❖what motivates the young person in life
- ❖what catches his or her attention

- ❖what the person is interested in
- ❖his or her concerns
- ❖what makes the young person happy
- ❖what makes the person angry

What should the community police officer NOT do?

- ❖ Don't be negative, judgmental or biased in communication
- ❖ Make sure you do not give certain youngsters the feeling they are second-class citizens, and be aware of the influence of your communication in instigating this feeling
- ❖ Don't confirm prejudices
- ❖ Don't immediately treat young people as a suspect
- ❖ Don't escalate
- ❖ Don't treat any person differently based on background, religion, culture or gender
- ❖ Don't pretend – young people can easily pick up on play-acting

Do speak the language of young people

Do

1. Educate community police officers in communication and especially in engaging with other cultures and people from other backgrounds.
2. Promote the police in a positive way online. Use social media to explain the work of the police and to be more approachable.

Don't

1. Don't only be a law enforcer; engage with members of the community that have greater credibility. Create and keep up good ties with other first-line practitioners that can help you in your work.
2. Don't escalate the issue.

The recommendations by the RAN youngsters are in line with one of the practices presented at a RAN POL meeting on successfully and effectively engaging with communities in Oslo. This practice is included in the RAN Collection: A guide to police empowerment conversations.

The use of dialogue is of importance within the Norwegian police, and is used as an approach to preventive policing. The Oslo police district has dialogue officers that are specialised in the use of dialogue in their work. The form of dialogue that is being used depends on the concerns. The clarification and the empowerment conversation are two different forms. The clarification conversation focuses on the person's intentions and is more confrontational. The empowerment conversation focuses on the life the person would like to have, and what steps the person should take to get there. After a conversation like this, the route will be mapped out and a follow-up takes place. It is of importance for the police to work with dialogue, to listen, to have conversations and build up relations.

More on the Norwegian approach for dialogue as a tool for the police can be found online in the [RAN Collection of Practices and Approaches](#).

Teachers (RAN EDU)

The RAN youngsters stressed the importance of changing the traditional school curriculum. The curriculum should focus more on building up students as people, instead of only focusing on teaching them academic skills. Teaching pupils about democratic

Don't judge

values, human rights, and cultural and religious diversity is key to creating understanding and respect for all people in society. A more holistic approach to educating youngsters in schools is needed. This entails some prerequisites:

- ❖ Teachers should be trained in having an open mind and in having respect and understanding for people with different backgrounds and values.
- ❖ Schools should hire teachers with different cultural backgrounds.

In addition, pupils should be exposed to diversity, different cultures and religions. Not all schools bring together teachers and students with different backgrounds. In these schools in particular, attention is needed to make sure the students interact with other cultures. Exchange programmes between different neighbourhoods,

Do invest in the relationship and create links with other professionals

cities and countries are a good method/practice to enhance contact between students with

different backgrounds with the purpose of creating intercultural understanding.

Our school is definitely committed to teaching the academic skills they need to access higher education. However, what we do have is time within the curriculum where pupils develop themselves as people. This is why we have subjects such as 'religious education' and 'PSHE (Personal, social, health education)' and 'citizenship'. Subjects like citizenship and religious education are not present in all schools in the UK because some schools have the freedom not to have this as part of their curriculum time. In my school, we currently provide PSHE and religious education at a total of 100 minutes a week. The holistic curriculum in our school is set up to better prepare our students for the world they live in today. (Practice from London)

Do

1. Be neutral. Create a safe space for students for their thoughts, feelings and stories.
2. Be well informed. A teacher needs to know what topics need discussing. If you do not have the knowledge, seek the expertise elsewhere!

Don't

1. Do not interrogate the student. Be patient.
2. Do not impose your views on the pupils. Don't lead the discussion. Don't force the pupil to have the same views as you!

The Content Creator (RAN C&N)

As young people are closer to the target audience of many counter or alternative narrative campaigns, they can exploit peer-to-peer communication to design innovative, creative and dynamic campaigns. Young people know how to use social media, and are therefore well-placed to counter radicalisation online.

The RAN youngsters noted a need for sympathy within dialogue, and to go where young people are. And that's online. But it is also in schools and on streets. Campaigns should therefore have an offline aspect as well, e.g. advertisement in the streets.

Do

1. Give young people the feeling of being a part of society. Give them the space to share their ideas and contribute to online content.
2. Use language that is simple, depending on the target, and use easy and creative forms of communication.

Don't

1. Don't stereotype
2. Don't pretend you know what is right or wrong; don't lecture, but stimulate the audience to come up with their own ideas and opinions, e.g. just give the facts so people can develop opinions or ask questions.

The youth- or community worker (RAN YF&C)

Amongst the participants in this break-out session were many youth workers themselves. They discussed the fundamentals for their profession and for community workers. Peer-to-peer outreach is very effective, as older people don't resonate with young people as youngsters themselves do. Young people also feel less or not targeted if they are approached by peers. However, as older colleagues do have a lot of knowledge and stories to tell, they proposed that they work in pairs.

They stressed that youth- and community workers should speak the language of young people. Young people can speak more easily with young professionals (e.g. from the same religion). Policy terms such as 'diversity' and 'tolerance' are boring. The group also stressed that young people must be respected, and seen as human beings, and not as stereotypes. Youth or community workers should use new tools to visualise information (e.g. videos and social media), and should make vulnerable youngsters feel special and appreciated. It takes time to invest and build a relationship between young people and youth workers. It is important to building this relationship to also spend informal time together (smoke, joke around). It was agreed that both youth and community workers can benefit greatly from cooperation with religious leaders.

The group also had an interesting discussion on how easy/difficult it is to reach youth- and community workers. Is it a 9 to 5 job? While some felt you need to be reachable at all times, others did not see this work as a 24/7 job.

Do

1. Build a relationship. Be in an actual relationship with him or her. There should be respect in both directions. The youngster also needs to have respect for the youth worker if he or she is to open up.
2. Build partnerships and links with other relevant experts and professionals, e.g. parents, formal educators and religious leaders. You need each other. The youth worker has expertise on how to talk to young people, and the religious leader has knowledge about the content. These two areas of expertise are complementary.

Don't

1. Don't stereotype and judge. Those who have been working in the field for a long time are at risk of falling into thinking in stereotypes. Always try to be – and stay – open.
2. Don't go too fast. Building a relationship and trust takes time, so it's a game of patience.

Review of P/CVE policies and strategies

As a homework assignment, all RAN YOUNG participants were asked to read their national or local policies on the prevention of violent extremism and/or countering radicalisation and terrorism. They formulated their thoughts, evaluations and recommendations for their governments and presented them in Madrid. The principal remarks for all countries represented were:

Belgium

In the Belgium policy document, there is a lot of attention on support for families affected by radicalisation. Some recommendations to the Belgian government are:

- Promote awareness on the influence of how communication from politicians and the media about Muslims can feed the breeding ground of Islamic radicalisation.
- Invest more in projects that help young people find their identity.
- There should be more focus on taking down terrorist propaganda and extremist content, especially on YouTube.

Don't only focus on Islamic radicalisation or terrorism in your policies

The Netherlands

The Dutch policy has a very good focus on the local approach and community-building. The Dutch delegation regrets however the stigmatising language used in this document and have a few recommendations:

- Most of the actions undertaken by the Dutch authorities are traditional offline measures. To effectively counter radicalisation, policy-makers should include other actors in

developing the approach. This could result in more innovative, online initiatives that respond to new trends.

- Unfortunately, there is a stigmatising focus on Islamic radicalisation. A national strategy to counter radicalisation and violent extremism should include an approach or plan that targets all types of extremism. Although the accompanying letter briefly mentions right-wing extremism, the policy document is even called: *The Netherlands' comprehensive action programme to combating jihadism*. It fails to pay attention to the growing right-wing extremist movement in the Netherlands, and will feed the breeding ground of Islamic radicalisation.

Austria

All though Austria does not have a national prevent strategy, it has several measures and programmes in place to give guidance and support to families affected by radicalisation. The Austrian delegation stressed the importance of awareness amongst politicians and the media when it comes to communicating about this issue. In addition, they suggested the following:

- More social work in prisons with the aim of resocialising convicted extremists.
- Provide training not only for practitioners and young people, but also for people in other positions, such as management, politicians, academics etc. to make sure everyone understands the underlying processes and breeding grounds of radicalisation, and their own influence on these processes.
- More funding is needed for social projects that directly or indirectly target removing the breeding ground for radicalisation.

Norway

The Norwegian strategy is quite detailed about preventative efforts, but the Norwegian delegation did formulate a few recommendations:

- There should be more guidelines for politicians on how they speak publicly about minorities.
- Politicians should be aware of the influence of their rhetoric on society.
- To forge more cultural understanding, one delegate argued that the free choice of schools in some areas should be abolished as this leads to segregation instead of integration.

Italy

There is not a national policy document on the prevention of radicalisation, but there are some laws in place that target radicalisation. The Italian delegation formulated these recommendations:

- Do not only focus on Islamic extremism. Include all types of radicalisation and violent extremism in policy documents or laws related to this topic.
- Oblige academia to conduct research on how to instigate intercultural dialogue within Italian society.

Invest in digital & media literacy

United Kingdom

The British delegation was of the opinion that the Prevent strategy of the UK was very promising, but has a damaged image due to bad press. They therefore recommended the following:

- More positive stories about successful interventions or cases of hope should be shared by politicians and media to make

sure the image of preventative policies improves, and they become more effective.

- More knowledge is needed on which interventions are successful and why in order to develop effective practices and anticipate coming trends.
- The UK delegation believes the use of formers could be very effective for interventions targeting radicalised people from the same ideology.

Promote intercultural dialogue & friendship

Spain

The Spanish government developed a National Security Strategy and a National plan to fight violent extremism. According to the Spanish delegation, the plans are in place, but further action is needed:

- When shaping a policy document, include how and when the actions and measurements will be implemented in order to monitor policies.
- Be transparent and keep communication about the progress of plans.
- Include measures for social media and new technologies in the strategy.

Slovakia

The national action plan on combatting terrorism is a complex and strategic document covering all the main areas involved in fighting radicalisation and extremism. The Slovakian delegation recommended the following:

- Greater emphasis on young people, and the setting up of effective practices in the educational sector, focused on the expression of thoughts.
- As Slovakian guns have often been used in terrorist areas, improvements in the gun control.
- Action instead of the drafting of further strategies!

Portugal

Because radicalisation is relatively rare in Portugal, the national legislation is general, abstract and short. The Portuguese delegation has some suggestions to translate the good intentions into more concrete practices:

- Develop training on the prevention of radicalisation for teachers, as well as resilience-building programmes for schools.
- Develop strategies to follow up on the recommendations on social and religious inclusion, or interfaith and multicultural dialogues. They are not included in the policy document.
- Introduce a prevention programme to counter online hate speech and online extremist engagement. Social media isn't key, but should be included.

The RAN youngsters are worried about online content and about the attitudes of their politicians & journalists

Greece

There is no strategy to prevent violent extremism in Greece. Right-wing extremism does however exist in Greece. The Greek delegation therefore made the following suggestions education:

- Educate the teachers about social inclusion and acceptance of all children.
- Make sure teachers get enough resources and time to handle diverse classes.
- Change curricula to stimulate open discussions, and to introduce pupils to understanding situations from different perspectives.

France

The plan on tackling radicalisation and extremism is voluminous, and was updated in 2016. The document outlines proposals touching upon areas as diverse as intelligence services and

education, with the aim of countering radicalisation. The French delegation recommended the following:

- There is no mention of the role of civil society in countering radicalisation. Only public services and specialised associations have role to play in the plan. We believe civil society is key to stopping the social exclusion affecting sections of the population (which is an underlying factor behind breeding grounds for radicalisation).
 - Since, in many cases, it is young people excluded from society who are touched by radicalisation, young people must have a key role in the de-radicalisation processes.
- Create multicultural centres in which young people from all social categories can meet (offline and online) to debate and enhance inter-cultural understanding.

Finland

The Finnish strategy was last updated in 2016. Some suggestions from the Finnish delegation to improve it include:

- More emphasis on online hate speech and countering propaganda on social media.
- More focus on educating the general public on radicalisation and its different forms. At the moment, the strategy is good in terms of the people at risk or already radicalised, but lacking when it comes to telling ordinary people about what violent extremism actually is.
- The last recommendation is to develop a clear roadmap indicating what to do for people who think somebody in their near circle might be on a path to radicalisation.

RAN YOUNG as a European movement

Follow-up recommendations for practitioners

At the kick-off meeting in Madrid, the RAN youngsters started filming the video that the group will produce on recommendations to practitioners. The dos and don'ts were translated into visuals, and during the course of the year more footage will be collected. We plan to finalise the video by the end of this year.

Four actions for practitioners in four working groups

To connect RAN Young to the Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN), the RAN youngsters discussed their views of the work carried out by practitioners represented in four RAN working groups: 1) community police officers (RAN POL), 2) teachers (RAN EDU), 3) online content creators (RAN C&N), and 4) community workers (RAN YF&C).

A general discussion led to the drafting of four specific actions or action plans outlining initiatives to be undertaken in relevant communities (offline/online). The actions will be implemented before the November meeting by the members of RAN YOUNG, and the RAN CoE will ensure regular updates in the meantime on the progress made by the RAN Young European Movement.

RAN Police and Law Enforcement:

- Send out a basic questionnaire or carry out an interview with local police on how they cooperate with young people and schools. Together, these interviews and questionnaire can be input for a study on community policing in different countries.
- Organise a workshop in your community where you bring (community) police officers into a school/classroom. To encourage greater

mutual understanding, the police officers should explain their work, while the students/pupils should help the police officers to understand their views/perspectives (for example on community groups, religion or minorities).

RAN Education: interview a teacher on their role and experiences in their school (and take notes or voice record this interview).

- What are the procedures you have to follow?
- What do you think you could do to improve the prevention of radicalisation?

RAN Communication & Narratives: contribute to the Surprising Facts video, naming or explaining something that is considered part of your national heritage, but has its origins elsewhere. For example, "did you know Dutch tulips are actually Turkish?"

RAN Youth, Families & Communities: create an Ask Me Anything (AMA) with a (popular) expert.

Follow-up review of national CVE policies

The next step in reviewing national CVE policies is to start writing down all recommendations and sending them in a letter to the national or local government. Delegations that were present at the kick-off meeting can work together in drafting letters. Other young people who did not attend the first meeting had also shown interest in reviewing national CVE policies, and so the exercise is not limited to those who were present. The letters will be collated in the RAN Young issue paper that is planned for publication in September.

The RAN youngsters:

I expect

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- ... to learn from my peers about the situation in their country
- ... that our engagement leads to results in our communities
- ... a positive feeling from doing this together. We are not on our own!
- ... to be empowered and inspired
- ... new ideas for youth projects!
- ... new contacts and narratives
- ... ideas from the other young people and to learn how they work and influence politics with their ideas
- ... inspiration from listening to intelligent and driven young people
- ... to make new friends!
- ... to build up more knowledge about the social processes that lead to radicalisation and how to prevent and counter it.

”

I will bring

“

- ...some opinions and a lot of questions! And some personal experiences on similar topics
- ...a different perspective
- ...the S.T.O.L.T. programme
- ...knowledge of ideologies
- ...my expertise on how to talk about and discuss this topic with government officials
- ...motivation!
- ...my own experience as an ethnic minority and close friend of radicalised people.
- ...happiness and positive vibes
- ...my views on the terrorist attack in my country and how young men can feel during and after these events
- ...a very personal experience with the power skinhead subculture/neo-Nazi scene (in Slovakia)
- ...contributions to a nuanced view about young people in Europe, especially those who feel misrepresented and do not feel “at home” in our country.

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