RAN Collection practice template

Name of the practice

Please note that by practice we mean an activity/method/tool that has been used or is in use by professionals and/or community members.

Athena-syntax Where Art and Education Meet

Description
(max. 300 words)

Short description of the aim and working method of the practice. Please note that in this description, it must be clear that there is an explicit connection to preventing and/or countering radicalisation and/or violent extremism. This means that in the aims and/or the activities/methods/tools of the practice, there is a link to preventing and countering radicalisation and/or violent extremism. Practices without this link cannot be included in the RAN Collection.

Our school is a multicultural flagship school in the city of Antwerp. Our students represent more than 60 nationalities. Our teaching staff also boasts great diversity.

Among our students, there are many second- and third-generation migrant youngsters, as well as refugees. Due to the school's multicultural population, it is also faced with children being raised in radical environments, some of whom even left for Syria. Between 2011 and 2015, our school addressed an infiltration of Sharia4Belgium.

Our educational project is built upon common values and all interactions in the school presuppose the acknowledgement of universal human rights and dogma-free scientific research.

At our school, we actively translate these values into a cycle of four universal themes (time, choice, space and human being), which are developed throughout the school year and across the different subjects.

These themes are considered from an ever-widening perspectives. Over the years, the approach has been extended. During the first two years of secondary school, it opens with the student's own (religious or other) worldview (DISCOVER). In years 3 and 4, other worldviews are introduced (ENCOUNTER). During the last two years, extensive dialogue is undertaken on societal themes, using the various religions and worldviews in order to offer diverse perspectives on these themes (EVOLVE).

We have placed the interreligious and philosophical dialogues on a learning pathway linked to educational outcomes, social skills and active citizenship. This process is rolled out in various planned steps throughout the school year, and slowly built up in the form of lessons, lectures, workshops and other extracurricular activities.

To tackle the problems caused by proselytism and Sharia4Belgium, teachers decided to involve art in their dialogue platforms.

The Athena-syntax 'Where Art and Education Meet' project emerged from a horizontal dialogue between teachers of science and religions and worldviews. It was initiated after teachers observed that students were being groomed and confused by discrepancies between evolution and origin narratives lessons. The teachers of the various religions, ethics, science and art classes, participated in this dialogue, in which both narratives could co-exist, together in various projects of Athena-syntax. Among other things, we make the link with the projects 'Identity & Communication' and the 'Prevention Pyramid' (RAN Collection). Considering the positive effects on students, teachers decided to organise a project week focussed on the topic of art and culture. During this week the students explore the perception of art, study and appreciation of art, as well as the creation of art.

The Athena-syntax 'Where Art and Education Meet' project offers a structure for involving art.

Why art? Art offers space and freedom which makes it easier to explore difficult and sensitive topics. Art has a sublimating function. These projects start out similarly and have the ambition of conveying a positive message. This doesn't mean that difficult or painful subjects cannot be broached: confrontations with and the airing of challenging feelings are positive and essential in the process.

Athena-syntax is conceived as an enriching experience for students and teachers alike. The project gives students the space to experience their own and each other's identities through the medium of art and creativity. Thanks to the creation of an affective bond, we hope to accompany students and colleagues as they shape their own philosophical and/or religious and scientific thinking. Through positive impulses, drawing on what is shared rather than what is different, students are empowered to be involved in a pluralist society where science and art coexist with religious and philosophical affairs.

This good practice was developed during the period of problematic Islamic radicalisation and in follow-up to the war in Syria and departing youth. Today, however, we live in a hyper-polarised society and polarisation and radicalisation have become a many-headed monster: in addition to proselytising Islamist Salafism, we notice extreme right-wing extremism, the woke debate that is fierce in our schools, LGBTQ thinking, anti-women thinking, climate activists, etc. Precisely because of this recent evolution, the training offer has been updated and this good practice is integrated into a general basic training 'prevention of radicalisation and polarisation'. Here, we examine how radical thinking comes about, when it is problematic and when we speak of extremism. We reflect on the different forms that exist and what the associated characteristics are. We also look at the challenges this poses in practice and provide information on how front-line workers, local authorities, teachers, youth

workers, welfare workers, etc. can deal with these challenges. This model is integrated into this training.

In the previous school year 2022-2023, tailor-made formations were provided.

A new training offer will be rolled out within all GO! schools. During this school year 2023-2024, the key persons who were activated in 2015 will be reactivated.

In september 2023 we reactivated these key figures in Given the fact that we notice a lot of tensions, polarisatin & proselytism in different schools, we give these key people a packet of digital trainings (5X2 hours) to refresh their knowledge and follow up on the new trends and possible actions at school level. In the training we envolved our different good practices : the prevention piramid, Identity and communication, Athena-syntax & the CCA method. We linked them to the polarisationmodel of Bart Brandsma. We rolled out this training in different schools over Flanders. We reached out also jewish schools.

| **Key themes** | Social cohesion and polarisation |
| Please <u>choose</u> 2 key themes most corresponding with the practice. | Alternative and counter narratives |

Target audience	Youth / Pupils / Students
Please <u>choose</u> a minimum of one target audience most corresponding with the practice.	Educators / Academics
	Add additional target audience.

| **Geographical scope** | Antwerp, Flanders and Europe |
| Please indicate where the practice has been/is implemented (countries, regions, cities). | |

| **Start of the practice** | Starting year: 2011 |
| Please indicate when (year) the practice was developed and implemented to indicate the maturity of the practice. In case the practice is no longer active, please indicate when it ended. | Ending year: Select ending year of practice in case practice has ended. |

| **Deliverables** | – Brochure 'Athena-syntax, where ART and EDUCATION meet' |
| Please indicate if the practice has led to concrete deliverables, such as | – Student artwork |

(links to) handbooks, training modules, videos.	– Training module – Miscellaneous videos, presentations and online projects: ● 'Athena-syntax website https://www.athenasyntax.org ● https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O7VOIiqEAQY ● https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ovrPA6UDPWQ ● https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wzZjkrurAzU ● https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AH1xaNsQZGk ● https://www.klasse.be/radicalisering
Evidence and evaluation Short description on <u>performance measures</u> of the practice, including 1. <u>qualitative views and quantitative (statistical) data</u> e.g. measure of the success of your project or intervention. 2. <u>evaluation and feedback</u>, including surveys and/or anecdotal evidence e.g. have you done either an internal or external evaluation, have you encouraged any feedback from your target group? 3. <u>peer review</u> which feedback did the practice receive in the RAN working group and/or study visit where the practice was discussed. Please elaborate on the outcomes of your monitoring and evaluation efforts.	• Stijn Sieckelinck, researcher at the interdisciplinary Institute for Societal Resilience in Amsterdam, monitors the project during a six-year cycle. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jWvwYD92UPI&t=5s • Internal evaluation through three annual surveys. • Peer review feedback during RAN Education meetings. RAN YOUNG Peer Review meeting 1-2 October 2020 • RAN expert review by Jesper Holme Hansen, November 2020 • SWOT analysis RAN YOUNG, October 2020 • 2023 – 2024 Training for all the teachers of religions, & ethics (more than 2000) in Flanders • 2023 -2024 Training for 2 key figures PVE/CVE GO! Schools
Sustainability and transferability (maximum of 200 words) Short description on the sustainability and transferability of the practice, including e.g. information on the costs of the practice. <u>Please elaborate on which elements are transferrable and how.</u>	The project is a policy pillar of the school. A group of 10 teachers from various disciplines ensure the daily operations within the school. Karin and Rudi propagate the project outside the school. A non-profit organisation, closely intertwined with the school, guards the philosophy and objectives of the project, provides the financial contribution and ensures the sustainability of the project. The philosophy and techniques, such as the use of art to discuss difficult themes, as well as the horizontal dialogue, the dialogue techniques and working methods are easily transferable and sustainable. Although the project is tailormade and is developed and matured wihtin a specific problematic and challenging situation, the methodology can be adapted to other local circumstances and school contexts.

	A sufficiently large supply of funds is necessary to achieve the full potential of the project. In its current form the project costs between EUR 5 000 and 10 000. Included in this budget are the lectures and the workshops given by the artists.
Presented and discussed in RAN meeting Please note that to be included in the Collection, the practice is preferably nominated through one of the RAN meetings. Add name of the RAN Working Group/event, date, place and subject of meeting.	Name: RAN EDUCATION Date: 14/11/2019 Place: Antwerp Subject: 'Dealing with religious inspired extremist ideologies in school'
Linked to other EU initiatives or EU funding (maximum of 100 words) Please indicate how your project was funded, if your practice is linked to other EU initiatives or projects, AND explicitly note if it is (co-) funded by the EU, and if so, by which funds? Such as Erasmus +, Internal Security Funds (ISF), European Social Fund (ESF), Horizon 2020, etc.	• Nomination for the peace education prize of the Events Foundation (2017) • Erasmus+ project 'Teaching Art Through Education' • Development of the website financed by the Network HUB
Organisation (enter maximum of 100 words and select organisation type) Please briefly describe the organisation behind the practice including the legal status e.g. NGO, governmental, limited company, charity etc.	Athena-syntax Athena-syntax is a non-profit organisation founded by, associated with and housed in the GO! Royal Athenaeum of Antwerp. The project is a policy driver within the school. It is run by a core group of teachers and people from the socio-cultural life of the city. Type of Organisation: Other
Country of origin Country in which the practice is based.	EU or EEA country: Belgium or: Non-EU country: Enter name if non EU country
Contact details Please provide contact details of who can be contacted within the organisation, with name and email address.	Address: Franklin Rooseveltplaats 11, 2060 Antwerp, Belgium Contact person: Karin Heremans (school principal – policy coördinator GO! & Ran expertpool Rudi Audiens (chairman)

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