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CONCLUSION PAPER

RAN YOUNG Platform

3 & 4 May 2023, Budapest, Hungary

Assessing P/CVE Projects: Peer Learning and Exchange

Key outcomes

On 3 and 4 May, the RAN Young Platform (RAN YOUNG) organised a kick-off meeting in Budapest, Hungary, for its newest cohort of young participants. The meeting brought together 26 young people from 14 EU Member States, all specialising in different topics and approaches focused on preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE) or related societal issues in Europe. Recognising the value of so many perspectives and experiences in one room, RAN devoted this first meeting to creating a conducive environment for these young people to learn from one another and forge relationships with their peers. The focus of this exchange was peer-to-peer learning, during which participants worked in six groups to perform a SWOT analysis on three projects that were presented by their fellow participants who are working with organisations to deliver P/CVE projects in Europe.

- The 2-day meeting began with an introduction to RAN Practitioners, its nine Working Groups, and how RAN aims to promote peer-to-peer exchange in RAN YOUNG meetings and the involvement of young people in regular RAN Working Group activities. The introduction was followed by a learning session, where participants heard from an expert trainer about the make-up, design and management of projects for P/CVE. In addition to enhancing their understanding of projects and how they can achieve impact, it provided them with critical background for assessing their assigned project and structuring their analysis and feedback.
- After this learning session the practice owners presented a project they are working on to their peers.
- Following presentations from the practice owners, the six review groups worked independently to complete their SWOT analysis and prepare a presentation, which was delivered to the project presenter and the rest of the groups at the close of the meeting.

This conclusion paper documents key outcomes from this meeting, focusing on a peer-to-peer learning session while organising a youth review panel and the youth reflections on P/CVE programmes.

Recommendations for organising peer-to-peer exchange in P/CVE

Peer learning activities are particularly beneficial for young practitioners. They provide critical networking opportunities where they can **build connections** and share experiences with others who are in a similar phase of their career. When done well, these activities are also **empowering**. They can challenge young people to take an active role in their training, pushing them to explore topics critically, and hone their own understanding and articulate it to others. It can also provide a safe space to **practice critical skills** like public speaking, networking, moderation and debate, leaving them better prepared to engage in mixed forums. In the following paragraph we describe some recommendations for building a peer-to-peer youth exchange programme in P/CVE.

Start the programme by ensuring that participants have a **shared understanding** of (project management in) P/CVE and are roughly beginning at the same level. You can do this through the following:

- Record a **webinar** on the topic, or use an existing webinar to watch as preparation for the meeting. For this meeting, [this](#) webinar was used.
- Share a **list of terms or concepts** in the lead up to an event. For this session, RAN YOUNG sent participants a discussion paper that outlined the terms and concepts that would be used for this event.
- Incorporate **capacity building** at the start of the meeting to ensure everyone has the knowledge and confidence to participate fully. At this meeting, participants received an introduction to project management in P/CVE. This included the definition of a project and the components of a project that must be strategically defined and aligned during planning and delivery (goal, objectives, target audience, outputs, outcomes and inputs).

To effectively accommodate networking opportunities for the young actors with their peers, keep in mind the following when organising a meeting:

- Start the meeting with enough time for participants to **informally get to know each other**.
- **Combine formal and informal networking sessions.** A combination of structured and unstructured networking gives a variety of opportunities to become acquainted and make connections with other young peers.
 - Examples of opportunities to get to know each other are games, discussions, collaborative working sessions and social opportunities in informal settings.
- To **ensure continuation** of the networking between young participants, use the platforms they are comfortable with to keep in touch:
 - for example, a closed LinkedIn group or a more informal WhatsApp chat.

Include the following ingredients in events focused on peer-to-peer learning for young people:

- For peer-to-peer learning, it is crucial to give participants an **active role** in the meeting and make sure they understand what is expected of them. In this meeting, participants were selected to present the projects that would be reviewed. For the reviewers, they were each given the same basic set of instructions, but allowed some flexibility in how they approached the task.
- If participants are working in groups, try to keep the **groups small enough** that everyone can play an active role and participate fully. However, be mindful that participants also have the opportunity to interact with people outside of their own working groups. During this event, participants worked in groups of five to

six when creating their SWOT presentations, but they had numerous opportunities to interact with other groups during presentations and discussions at the start and end of the event, as well as during games and social engagements.

- **Keep it practical, keep it simple.** For example, this meeting was designed around a single practical exercise. This keeps participants engaged and pushes them to work together towards a shared goal, promoting collaboration. It allowed RAN YOUNG to combine learning and networking objectives into a single task that evolved from one session to the next without overloading or overcomplicating a short meeting.
- **There is no 'right' answer.** Prioritise exercises that necessitate critical thinking and discussion. For this session, RAN YOUNG organised a SWOT analysis to promote exchange, rather than finding a single correct answer. As an exercise, it challenges participants to draw on their own knowledge and experience to articulate their impressions and form conclusions. This kind of exercise promotes critical thinking and exploration, while producing varied results that can provide inspiration between groups. Also ensure that activities are collaborative and require participants to work together towards a shared goal.

Recommendation from RAN YOUNG

The SWOT analysis

A SWOT analysis is a simple analytical framework that aids reviewers in assessing a project's or organisation's viability in a given context. For the RAN YOUNG members, it was a chance to think critically about what makes a P/CVE project successful and how those lessons may be distilled to support the field more broadly. To perform the analysis, the review groups considered internal and external factors: the Strengths and Weaknesses (internal) and Opportunities and Threats (external). They also compiled a list of recommendations for the project owners that could help them maximise strengths and opportunities, address weaknesses and minimise threats, and identified good practice that could help inform or inspire other P/CVE practitioners in Europe.

Three RAN YOUNG members presented inspiring projects related to (P/C)VE that they are working on within organisations in the EU:

1. **Smart Hubs:** As part of the European Commission's INDEED programme, PATRIR is creating Smart Hubs – spaces for P/CVE practitioners to come together and share knowledge, discuss gaps and learn about emerging challenges. Smart Hubs are systematic, long-term responses to community-level prevention, supporting a whole-of-society approach that comes from within the community it serves.
2. **CONNEXT:** 'Contexts of Extremism in MENA and Balkan Societies' is a Horizon 2020 project that is exploring the drivers of radicalisation and violent extremism among people to improve prevention. CONNEXT is closing the gap between research, policy and programming at the state, community and individual levels to address the threat of extremism in a combined way.
3. **M11 Association for the Victims of Terrorism:** This is a survivor-led initiative to support victims of the 2004 train bombing in Madrid. The programme organises debates and talks and runs a series of social media campaigns to raise awareness about terrorism and the high toll it takes on survivors and their families. It pays special attention to young people, using storytelling to teach them about terrorism and extremism through personal experiences.

Outcomes from the SWOT analysis: Good practice for P/CVE projects

The young people provided a wealth of feedback and recommendations for each of the practices, some of which have been outlined here:

Strengths

- Large-scale international projects with a **consortium of local delivery partners** have incredible potential to capture the benefits of localised delivery at scale. The international platform presents opportunities for

exchange and learning between partners and participants, while partnering with local organisations makes it possible to tailor delivery and leverage the trust and credibility needed to engage meaningfully with local beneficiaries.

- **Multi-sectoral approach:** P/CVE projects are strengthened by a whole-of-society approach that draws from multiple stakeholders, such as policymakers, academics, civil society organisations, community-based organisations and the private sector.
- **The personal touch:** Storytelling, especially when it draws on first-hand experience, has incredible value for engaging a broad audience, particularly young people. M11 Association for the Victims of Terrorism, for example, had the greatest reach with their content when it featured stories of survivors. Personal stories can come from a range of people, including practitioners and former extremists (example: [Extreme Dialogue](#)).

Possible weaknesses and threats

- Large-scale international projects can be challenging with regard to **coordination, consistency** and the hurdles of **international travel** that might exclude participants from countries with travel restrictions.
- **Keep it inclusive:** No matter the approach or the scale, practitioners should be mindful about inclusion. To enable greater participation from all beneficiaries, consider:
 - Compensation for participants, especially for whom travel is financially burdensome. Consider paying for travel costs up front, rather than reimbursing after the fact and be mindful of work and school schedules.
 - Using more inclusive language. Practitioners should adopt local terminology wherever possible and be mindful of words that may be problematic or disempowering.
 - Minimising hurdles to travel. In addition to the cost associated with travel, logistical hurdles such as visas can impact participation. When organising international events and meetings, practitioners should be mindful of visa restrictions and select locations that do not exclude or burden certain participants. This may require organising events in neutral, third-party countries.
 - Making materials more accessible. Ensure materials are easily accessible and available in local languages. Practitioners should have a dedicated place online where participants and interested parties can find materials related to the project.
 - Enhancing the diversity of advisory bodies. When a programme includes an advisory body, practitioners should take care to ensure it is diverse, representing the range of stakeholders and beneficiaries who are being engaged.

Opportunities

- Practitioners should explore opportunities to promote **bottom-up approaches** that leverage the experience and credibility of hyper-local actors who have an existing relationship with beneficiary groups. This can also include those who do not traditionally work within the P/CVE sphere, such as social workers, mental health professionals, community and religious leaders, educators and youth workers.
- **Data is critical:** Monitoring, evaluation and research are critical to the successful planning, implementation and scaling of P/CVE projects.
 - During the planning phase, practitioners should conduct research and mapping to ensure the project is based on evidence and properly tailored to the local context. They should also create a theory of change and a strategy for collecting and analysing data that includes evaluation tools.
 - Throughout delivery, practitioners should collect qualitative and quantitative data on an ongoing basis and assess as needed to inform mid-project adjustments.
 - At the close of the project, practitioners should evaluate and report on the project's impact and extract learnings.

For more information on this topic, please read the following RAN papers:

- This [RAN YOUNG webinar](#) highlights the basics of P/CVE and youth participation. It can be used in peer-to-peer sessions in P/CVE in order to build a shared understanding (see p. 3 of this paper).
- These papers outline the main outcomes of the [RAN YOUNG Review Panel 2022](#) and the [RAN YOUNG Review Panel 2020](#) and serve as a guideline on organising youth review panels for local authorities.