



European
Commission

LISTENING TO ITALY'S DISAFFECTED YOUTH



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Project name:

Beyond the horizon: Counter-narratives placing marginalised young people at the centre – OLTRE

Purpose:

Understanding radicalisation in Italy by giving voice to young Muslims and crafting positive stories

AT A GLANCE

Geographical coverage:

Italy

Project coordinator:

University of Rome Tor Vergata

Estimated budget:

€ 1 068 011

EU contribution:

90 % co-funded by the European Union

Type of funding:

Internal Security Fund – Police (ISFP)

Start date:

November 2018

End date:

November 2020

Overview

Although Italy has so far escaped serious violence from Islamist terrorists, the country has its share of people at risk of becoming radicalised, and it remains a gateway to Europe from the Middle East and North Africa. This project is working with young people from disadvantaged backgrounds with the aim of better understanding some of the routes to extremism in Italy. It will canvass their views, investigate their social networks and give them the chance to exchange opinions in a supportive environment.

The project will thus provide opportunities for young people to create positive messages through video, social media and music. The end result will combine rigorous academic research with practical anti-radicalisation techniques based on openness and the avoidance of confrontation.

Listening, learning and encouraging discussion

Getting young people to share their views is the best way, the project partners believe, to understand how they might become radicalised and how to prevent this. The researchers will start by collecting the life stories of 42 young people through in-depth interviews and focus groups, and analysing their social networks. Talking to both Muslims and non-Muslims may explain, for instance, how radicalisation can arise from everyday social conflict as well as 'top-down' indoctrination by religious or political leaders.

Next will come workshops allowing around 200 young people to get to know each other, share and craft their stories, develop protective strategies and enhance their sense of self-worth. The well-known cultural organisation Arci, for instance, plans sessions based on the 'theatre of the oppressed' to turn spectators into actors. The intention is to create opportunities for regular meetings and discussions that will outlive the project itself.



Migration and
Home Affairs

Journalists and photographers from the organisation Witness Journal will help the youngsters build narratives through video and social media that reject radicalisation and build self-confidence.

Finally, the partners will create an online communication campaign to spread the messages developed by the young people themselves.

Escaping the cycle of rejection

Many young Muslims from deprived backgrounds will be tempted to reject the societies that surround them as long as they feel rejected in their turn. This project will increase our understanding of how economic hardship and social tensions contribute to radicalisation. It will also develop practical measures to increase integration by promoting dialogue and self-confidence, while avoiding stereotyping and stigmatisation. The knowledge gained will be transferable to other countries and other groups.

HARDENING PUBLIC OPINION IN ITALY

Italy's relative freedom from Islamist terrorism has not stopped debate about radicalisation among academics, politicians and the general public. Until 2017, the official attitude to migration and inclusion was fairly tolerant. Since many Muslims in Italy are first-generation immigrants, deporting extremists – including several imams – was the main defence against radicalisation.

In the last year, however, attitudes have hardened in both public opinion and government policy. The partners have had to allow for this in planning their project, and fear it will be harder to learn about radicalisation if Muslims are less willing to speak out.

MUSIC AS A UNIFYING FORCE

The creative activities planned for the project will provide input for a professional online communication campaign by Milan-based agency AB Crea. The partners plan to recruit a well-known musician to promote the message of respect and self-respect.

MORE INFORMATION

Project reference: ISFP-2017-AG-CSEP 812584

Title: Oltre l'orizzonte. Contro narrazioni dai margini al centro (Beyond the horizon: Counter-narratives placing marginalised young people at the centre) – OLTRE

Website: www.progetto-oltre.eu



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