

Civil Society Empowerment Programme

January 2017

This is a special newsletter on the activities of the Civil Society Empowerment Programme (CSEP), a new EU programme supported by the RAN Centre of Excellence (RAN CoE) to support online campaigns countering extremist propaganda. You are receiving this special edition as you are part of the RAN network, and because you may therefore be interested in the various activities supporting the Civil Society Empowerment Programme. If you would like to stay up to date on the programme, please [register your interest in CSEP](#). A CSEP-focused version of the RAN Update will be sent out six times this year, in addition to the regular RAN Update. Feel free to distribute this CSEP special within your network.

Launch of the Civil Society Empowerment Programme

Terrorist propaganda has an enormous reach online. Recruiters and extremist sympathisers are known to abuse social media to further influence individuals at risk of radicalising to violent extremism. At the same time, the internet has provided citizens with enormous opportunities, which should be harnessed, along with the internet's tremendous reach, to counter online threats. Countering violent extremism online is best done by civil society at local level by allowing moderate voices to be heard and providing alternative or counter narratives.

To support civil society in this important task, the European Commission, supported by partners from the internet industry (Facebook, Twitter, Google/YouTube, Microsoft), launched the Civil Society Empowerment Programme (CSEP) during the 2nd [EU Internet Forum](#) on 8 December 2016. The Commission will be rolling out this programme in several stages. The RAN CoE is tasked with providing support for the first phase, which will involve developing a network of civil society actors, credible voices and internet and creative companies, and providing training for Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in all EU countries. The RAN CoE will partner up with various social media companies and the European Strategic Communication Network (ESCN).

Plan for 2017

Training

Starting in April 2017, RAN will provide training to CSOs in all EU countries. The training will provide guidance on how to design and implement a convincing and credible campaign and how to ensure it reaches the target audience across different online platforms, and it will provide support on evaluation.

15-16 March: Kick-off meeting

A kick-off meeting of the CSEP network will take place on 15-16 March. This meeting will bring together social media companies, CSOs and marketing experts to form partnerships, launch campaign ideas and become inspired by the most promising practices.

Future campaign support

The Commission intends to support the development and implementation of effective campaigns across the EU by civil society partners in 2017. More information will be provided in due course.

Get involved in the Civil Society Empowerment Programme

Many civil society actors are already active in providing alternative and counter narratives online, while others are well positioned to become a credible voice for the target audience. Some might have a track record in delivering counter speech in school classes, neighbourhoods or via a local Facebook community. CSOs can be first line practitioners (teachers, youth workers etc.), community workers (local capacity building, interfaith programmes) NGOs, or other credible voices (bloggers, peer-to-peer programmes). We invite CSOs, credible voices, but also creative companies, marketing experts and online platforms, operating in this field to be part of the CSEP network.

Are you interested in joining? Please let us know [by subscribing to the network](#). The RAN CoE encourages the RAN network to invite CSOs and others who might be interested in participating in CSEP to subscribe.

Contact details

The Civil Society Empowerment Programme is supported by the RAN CoE.

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