Extremely EUnited

Prevent Radicalization Among Youth

D2.2 Good Practices Database

Online alternative and counter-narrative campaigns

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Acknowledgment

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Online alternative and counter-narrative campaigns: Good practices

Criteria	Description	Campaign Examples	General lessons from the field
Define clear goals	Objectives and goals should be specific (they should not be abstract ambitions but rather quantifiable milestones); measurable (campaigners should be able to discern, from available metrics and evaluation activities, whether they were achieved); and realistic (considering a campaign's time-spam, budget, intended audience size and available resources).	**Example:** One campaign decided to use humorous videos to undermine extremist propaganda (TA: 18-25 year-olds vulnerable to radicalisation). However, no clear method/ goals were defined from the onset. Hence, monitoring and evaluating the impact of the campaign was rendered very difficult. Only short term outcomes such as likes, shares, comments were measured, but the content of the responses were not analysed through sentiment analysis. **Lessons:** It is imperative to plan out the phases of the project as to use the most appropriate measuring tools and develop better content.	**Do:** have specific, measurable and realistic objective. Ex: 'have 1000 online conversations with young people through comments or direct messages. **Don't:** simply state 'engage young people'.
Know your audience	It is important to truly understand your target audience (TA) as to conduct a more effective campaign. Knowing not only demographics, but also the target group's priorities, needs, motivations, beliefs, influences etc. will allow you to frame your campaign in a more specific manner. It is also important to partner with Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) or Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) that have working experience with your TA, as to ensure your campaign takes into account specificities and sensibilities.		**Do:** Carry out research and ensure your thoroughly comprehend your audience's needs. **Don't:** Overestimate your capacity to capture its complexity.

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Disseminate relevant messages	A counter-narrative campaign can have several messages, but they need to be consistent, clear and relevant to the goals you are trying to achieve. The message should be relevant to your TA's needs and stimulate their emotions and thoughts. It should also carry "social currency" (meaning it would "boost" members of your TA's social standing, and make their peers want to share the message). It is important to avoid too many monologues in the campaign, and invite interaction and discussion.	**Example:** A campaign that aimed at debunking conspiracy theories produced a video that showed different conspiracy theories, to attract the interest of the TA. In the second part of the 2-minute video, humour was introduced to make people rethink their beliefs. The videos reached their target audience, but most did not watch the video to the end and missed the twist. Hence, the campaign was counterproductive. **Lessons:** By using the analytics of social media platforms, learn how long tend to watch campaign videos for, and hence adapt the timing of your message.	**Do:** Test your message with a focus group as to learn where it works and where it doesn't, and how it resonates. **Don't:** use confrontational approaches that could be perceived as an attack on the TA's core beliefs and values. This might be counter productive and dangerous, as it might only reinforce extremist ideology.
Use of relevant keywords	Using targeted words in the campaign could help attract the target audience.		
Age-appropriate content	The target age group for the EXtremely EUnited project is 13-25. As minors are involved, it would be best not to publish any content that would be too graphic for such age group and to avoid glorifying acts of terrorism.		
Easy to use and attractive interface and platform	The website of the project should be attractive and informative, and the contents of the campaign should be accessible. Social media pages should be eye-catching, and the content should be concise and straightforward.		
Tone and coherence of campaigns	Counter-narrative-centric strategies are inherently defensive and reactive, whereby they depend on the adversary's messaging in order to create its own messaging. Consequently, the adversary tends to not only initiate but shape the pace and nature of the information contest. Studies have shown that success in the information theatre tends to follow the actors who proportionally disseminate more offensive than defensive messages compared to their adversaries. Furthermore, it is vital that the counter-narrative messages are thematically consistent and coherent at a broader narrative level.		**Do:** Synchronise campaign and message design to ensure coherent messaging over the short, medium and long term, in order to compete against the adversaries in the 'information theatre'. There needs to be a clear and simple-to-understand overall narrative. **Don't:** Over use theme-based messaging, as it risks the strategic communications campaign falling into cyclical messaging that is less adaptive to change, especially over the medium to long term.

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Work with "familiar" messengers	Engaging people who are directly involved with the TA and who are familiar with its language and (sub-) cultures will maximise the engagement with the TA, as the message is coming from credible actors and could be better received than if it were coming from those perceived as outsiders.	**Example:** *What's up?* Peer education in Social Networks. Following a peer-approach, young Muslim adults that have been trained to engage in online-discussions, encourage Muslim youngsters to participate in public debate and to develop individual responses to relevant topics in society and politics.	
	As the campaign can have multiple messages, it is logical to work with multiple messengers. Potential messengers could be family members, former extremists, influencers, peers and/or community leaders. It is important to note that only the TA itself can truly decide the credibility of the messenger.	Addressing issues ranging from local politics, discrimination, and religious issues to global conflicts, the project renders visible the diversity of Muslim approaches and intervenes in early stages of radicalisation.	
Medium	For online counter-narrative campaigns, it is important to use the same platform as the TA. This requires adequate research into the social media habits of the TA, and distinguishing which platform (ex: YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp, Telegram, Snapchat etc.) is used more frequently.	**Example**: The *Witness to History* campaign was a series of films based on victim's testimonials of terror attacks. The videos were published on the organiser's website (women without borders), but was subsequently shared on the social media pages of the organisers (I.e.: Women without Borders).	**Do:** Thoroughly research the most common media platforms used by the TA as maximise the chances of the campaign reach. One should also consider using the right medium for the right purpose.
	This will aid in maximising the outreach of your campaign and the engagement with your TA. The medium should be decided as early on in the process as possible.	**Lessons:** The campaign was effective and well disseminated over the years. However, as the campaign itself does not have its own social media page or website, this may limit its visibility.	For example, the TA could use Facebook as a source of news, but be more interactive and responsive on Instagram. Hence, if the aim of the campaign is to create short informative videos, then it would be best to disseminate it on Facebook.
			But if the aim of the campaign is to collect qualitative data, then using Instagram stories for polls, questions etc. could be the better option.

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Call to Action	In order to measure the impact of your campaign, the engagement with the TA has to be taken into account. This means providing a space where your TA can respond and participate. Thus, calling members of your TA to action and encouraging them to participate, by asking them to donate money for a shared cause, volunteer, participate in events and demonstrations, and even simply talking to campaign organisers through a dedicated phone line or website, will further involve your TA in the project and help you measure your reach and impact.	**Example:** *Nazis against Nazis* -Germany's most involuntary charity walk. EXIT-Germany managed to use neo-Nazi demonstrations against them by engaging with residents in Wunsiedel, a town in which neo-Nazis annually demonstrate and disturb its residents. For every meter the Neo-Nazis marched, 10 euros would be donated to Exit-Germany, as such raise much needed funds to safely help individuals disengage from far-right extremism. A total of 10,000 euros was raised. **Lessons:** This campaign was highly effective, not only in terms of financial terms, but also in terms of its engagement with citizens and in terms of media-buzz.	**Do:** Create a call to action that will resonate with the TA. If the call to action carries "social currency" (ie: it makes the participant sound smart or funny), it will encourage participants to share the initiative with their peers.
Link between online and offline	Successful counter-narrative campaigns are often linked to offline actions. With Extremely EUnited's online campaign, a number of offline events will be organised to foster the impact of the online campaigns.	**Example:** The Radical Online Education Project implemented both online and offline activities, such as E-learning courses but also training events. The training event enabled the interaction between youth and other stakeholder entities, allowing for the exchange of ideas.	**Do:** Keep both online and offline campaign messages coherent.
Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)	M&E is vital to measure the effectiveness of a counter-narrative campaign. Consistently monitoring and evaluating the project throughout its time frames would allow for the collection of qualitative and quantitative that would not only help achieve the goals of the project, but also contribute to the trustworthiness of the campaign.	**Example:** The CICERO project is one of the few to have published an evaluation report on their website. The report was based on their evaluation of content from other campaigns, as the CICERO team used this data to test the tools and metrics they had planned to use on their own project.	

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Outreach	The total number of people that received an impression of your post or ad on their screens or newsfeeds. When evaluation activities begin, the first thing to establish is the scale that the campaign achieved, in terms of the awareness achieved and the number of engagements on the online platform. Two aspects that need to be identified are awareness and engagement: while the content of the project may reach a wide audience (for instance, videos on a YouTube channel can be viewed 500,000 times), levels of engagement may be considerably lower (the same videos may only be shared 55 times). This outcome may be tied to whether the content is paid or organic content; while paid content may have a wider reach, engagement levels are usually low. The demographics of the audience also need to be taken into account.		**Do:** Remember that successful YouTube engagement for young people relies mostly on organic content, as advertising cannot target those under 18.
Awareness	There are two possible metrics to measure under awareness: 1) The number of people who saw or interacted with the campaign 2) The nature/ characteristics of the audience (gender, location, age, device type etc.). These metrics ensure that the campaign is reaching its target audience. Reach, impressions and views can help measure awareness, however different social media measure these differently so it is important to familiarise the campaigners with the methods of different platforms (ex: Facebook measures views if the video runs on auto play for more than three seconds. YouTube measures views if the video is watched for more than 30 seconds).		**Do:** Use social media algorithms to measure impressions, reach, impression frequency, views etc.
Engagement	This is defined as the volume and types of interaction between the TA, the campaigners and the campaign material. Clicks are a good indicator as to how many people proactively engage with the campaign material. Other forms of engagement include likes and share, comments, instant messages and email responses.		**Do:** Use tools such as sentiment analysis software to analyse the emotions in the audience's written responses (both positive and negative).

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	The number and nature of these responses can be used to evaluate the progress of the project.		
Impact	The metrics of awareness and engagement will ultimately help measure impact, and whether or not the campaign has achieved its goals. However, this does have its limits, as it is a way of measuring in the short term. Attitudinal and behavioural impacts of individuals remain hard to measure without in person, long-term assessments.		
Sustainability	Counter or alternative narrative campaigns should be sustained rather than sporadic. Extremist narratives tell a continuing - albeit highly manipulated - story. Counter-narrative campaigns implemented over a sustained period of time will more likely have a bigger impact in the long run than one-off efforts.	**Example:** The *Peer 2 Peer (P2P)* project created a public private sector consortium to provide funding and support for the best of a P2P's initiatives, products or tools that are worthy of investment and continuance.	
Ethical risks	Ethical risks can comprise research ethics or put campaigners or audience members at risk if they are not properly considered. It is particularly important to consider the legal and cultural context in which the participants interact with the counter-narrative campaign.	**Example:** The Pericles project created five tools, platforms that favour a multi-agency approach and that can be used when one person suspects another of being vulnerable to online radicalisation. Depending on their relationship to the person (either being a parent, teacher, social worker etc.) they can use the platform to find guidance and create a custom approach to halt the radicalisation process. Pericles noted the importance of involving stakeholders in the design of the tools and the process that would follow them, as to minimise the ethical risks related to discrimination, stigmatisation etc.	*Safety of personnel:* **Do:** Measure to what sort of risks personnel working on the counter-narrative campaign may be exposed to, especially in situations of negative reactions from extremist groups or individuals. **Don't:** Publish personal information about personnel who are tied with the counter-narrative campaign. *Data protection:* Secure and ethical data protection and storage practises are important considering the sensitive nature of the project. **Do:** Follow guidance on how to securely and ethically handle data. Secure the anonymity of the targeted audience - for instance, the reported version can rename the person as User 1. **Don't:** Disregard the anonymity of those engaging in project, for instance, using the real name or social media account name of the person who has engaged in any way with the project e.g. John Smith @smith3477

Further Reading

1	The Counter-narrative Monitoring and Evaluation Handbook, Louis Reynolds and Henry Tuck, Institute for Strategic Dialogue, 2016
2	RAN Collection Preventing Radicalisation to Terrorism and Violent Extremism (2016 edition)
3	Effective Narratives: Updating the Gamma+ model, RAN, 2019

	Useful Links	Description
1	https://www.youthandpolicing.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Radicalisation-Lesson-Plan.pdf	This link contains lesson plans and educational information collected by Youth and Policing Education Hub (UK-Based platform that gathers educational plans in collaboration with the police and other State agencies to help teachers tackle subjects such as radicalisation, violence, drug abuse etc.
2	https://extremedialogue.org/sites/isd.hocext.co.uk/files/2018-04/Extreme-Dialogue-Facilitator-Guide_0.pdf	Link to the Extreme Dialogue's counter-narrative delivery guide.
3	https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/about-ran/ran-c-and-n/docs/ran_cn_academy_creating_implementing_effective_campaigns_brussels_14-15112019_en.pdf	Relevant RAN Publication
4	https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/about-ran/ran-c-and-n/docs/ran_cn_academy_creating_implementing_effective_campaigns_brussels_14-15112019_en.pdf	Relevant RAN Publication
5	https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/ran-best-practices/docs/delivering_alternative_narratives.pdf	Relevant RAN Publication

Additional Projects and Resources

	Campaign Examples	Website	Description	Notes	Contact Information
1	Eurotopia	https://eurotopia-project.com/productions.html	Aims to produce 21 short films and videos to prevent far-right and Islamist radicalisation, potentially impacted by Coronavirus as no videos have been published yet	Their webpage does not contain links to social media; there are no reports as to how they gathered information to create their videos.	info@eurotopia.com
2	Echoes of ISIS	https://echoesofis.submarinechannel.com/	An interactive webpage documentary created by Submarine Channel, recounting the stories of those who have been directly affected by IS (Refugees, foreign fighters etc.)	They provide **"Guidelines for teachers" upon request**. The project also involved social media influencers.	info@submarinechannel.com
3	Twin Track	http://integrateuk.org/iuk-projects/twin-track/	Twin Track is a short drama produced by Integrate UK, which observes the parallels between radicalisation and gang violence. It was produced to teach youngsters to recognise signs of radicalisation.	Apparently, **a lesson plan was part of their deliverables.** However, it is not available on their webpage. We might have to enquire as to obtain it.	info@integrateuk.org
4	Jamal al Khatib- My way!	https://www.facebook.com/jamalalkhatibmeinweg/	Jamal al Khatib-My Path! produced counter narrative videos and materials using biographical experiences to conduct "Online-Street work".	They do not have a website, they use Facebook, Instagram and YouTube, and their content is in German.	jamal.al-khatib@gmx.at

Campaign Examples	Website	Description	Notes	Contact Information
5 #NotAnotherBrother	https://www.quilliaminternational.com/quilliam-launches-notanotherbrother/	#NotAnotherBrother is a counter-narrative campaign launched by Quilliam, a UK-based Think Tank. It targets at risk Muslims living in the West, and the video depicts a young foreign fighter injured in a warzone, regretting his decision. The call to action when promoting the video was to simply share it, which was apparently effective. The video is often used as a case study.	The use of the hashtag increased sharing and engagement. It also got a lot of media attention (The Guardian and Huffington post published articles about the campaign)	info@quilliaminternational.com
6 Extreme Dialogue	https://extremedialogue.org/	Extreme Dialogue provides training and resources to teachers to tackle radicalisation. (Canada and UK Based). Their videos are unscripted as to maintain as much authenticity as possible, and **to avoid extensive and recognisable editing, which could be perceived as propaganda.**	Their educational ressources files contain specific guideline on how to deliver trainings and workshops. (Link posted below)	https://extremedialogue.org/training-delivery#contact
7 La voix des victimes contre la radicalisation	https://www.afvt.org/la-voix-des-victimes-contre-la-radicalisation/	AFVT ran a 10-day campaign that published testimonies from victims of terrorism (in French), organised by the French Association for Victims of Terrorism.	The testimonies could perhaps be used for case studies.	contact@afvt.org
8 Pericles	https://project-pericles.eu/	This project ran from 2017 to 2020 under the Horizon 2020 Project, and aimed to "develop a comprehensive approach to prevent and counter violent radicalisation and extremism."	*This project not only developed five tools to carry out their objective (accessible on this platform https://platform-pericles.eu/), but they have published almost all their deliverables (reports, evaluations etc.)*	info@project-pericles.eu