

Young people and extremism: a resource pack for youth workers





Erasmus+

Erasmus+ is the European Union programme for education, training, youth and sport. It runs from 2014 to 2020 and has a budget of €14.7 billion.

Erasmus+ aims to modernise education, training and youth work across Europe, by developing knowledge and skills, and increasing the quality and relevance of qualifications.

It is open to organisations across the spectrum of lifelong learning: adult education, higher education, schools education, vocational education and training, youth and sport.

Erasmus+ will enable more than four million people to study, train, volunteer or work in another country. Access to international experience not only benefits the individuals involved, but also their organisations – enabling them to develop policy and practice, and so offer improved opportunities for learners.

Erasmus+ has responded to changing circumstances in Europe, and the growing concern for social inclusion, by encouraging new project applications which emphasise the following:

- Reaching out to marginalised young people, promoting diversity, intercultural and inter-religious dialogue, common values of freedom, tolerance and respect of human rights;
- Enhancing media literacy, critical thinking and sense of initiative of young people;
- Equipping youth workers with competences and methods needed for transferring the common fundamental values of our society particularly to the hard to reach young people
- Preventing violent radicalisation of young people;

together with youth mobility projects involving or focussing on the refugees, asylum seekers and migrants.

Erasmus+ Programme Guide 2017, page 78)

Cultural Diversity

SALTO Cultural Diversity (SALTO CD) is one of eight resource centres in the SALTO-Youth network (Support Advanced Learning and Training Opportunities for Youth). These support the Erasmus+ Youth Chapter by providing non-formal training and networking opportunities for youth workers across Europe.

SALTO CD is particularly concerned with topics such as, culture, ethnicity, faith and identity, in order to promote cultural diversity. It has a keen interest in contributing to new approaches in relation to young people and extremism, and in promoting international partnerships which support further learning and exchange in this area.

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More tools and case studies can be found on the SALTO CD website <https://www.salto-youth.net/rc/cultural-diversity/publications/>





Introduction

To effectively address the drivers of violent extremism and promote peace, youth must be engaged as partners in the design and implementation of relevant programs and policies. With commitments to learning, to partnership, to innovation, and to impact, we are ready to address violent extremism, a defining challenge for our generation.

Global Youth Summit Against Violent Extremism, 28 September 2015, New York

Devastating terrorist attacks in Europe in 2015–16 have increased concern at levels of extremism, including violent extremism. The EU's Terrorism Situation and Trend Report of 2015 referred to 'unprecedented' numbers of people going from Europe to Syria and Iraq to become involved in armed conflict. Meanwhile, right-wing extremist violence remains a significant threat to security across European states.

Governments, policymakers and young people themselves are all concerned to deter young people from becoming involved in extremism, especially violent extremism. The Paris Declaration issued by the Council of the European Union in 2015 noted the rise of extremism in European society and expressed commitment to upholding fundamental values – including respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and human rights. It emphasised the role of education, along with the need for co-operation across the EU's member states, to ensure that, 'Children and young people acquire social, civic and intercultural competences, by promoting democratic values and fundamental rights, social inclusion and non-discrimination, as well as active citizenship.'

In April 2016, 24 youth workers, community workers, activists and policymakers from 14 European states gathered in Paris to explore these issues further. The seminar enabled participants to increase their understanding in this area, and explore the role of youth work in response. The seminar's objectives were to:

- identify and understand the causes of extremism and radicalisation;
- recognise the importance of dialogue on the concept of citizenship and to explore questions of identity, including religious and political beliefs;
- equip participants with the ability to identify those most at risk and with tools to respond to different levels of extremism and radicalisation;
- design and implement activities using the Erasmus+ framework to help young people at risk from extremism and radicalisation.

This resource pack builds on the content of the seminar and aims to provide theoretical and practical support to youth workers, as well as providing information and insight to policymakers, youth and education practitioners and other organisations involved in responding to the risks from extremism and radicalisation.

The benefits of partnership in youth work

In May 2016 the Council of the European Union reiterated both the value of youth work and the 'role of the youth sector in an integrated and cross-sectoral approach to preventing and combating violent radicalisation of young people.' Since risks to young people from extremism are not confined by borders, but are also shaped by local contexts, there is potential for youth organisations to work with partners from different European countries. In this way, youth organisations can expand and enhance the opportunities offered to young people and youth workers – enabling them to gain new insights, as a result of exposure to different experiences and settings.

About this resource pack

This pack aims to help youth workers to increase their understanding of the issues and their awareness of the complexities. It must be emphasised that this pack – just like any resource – does not have all the answers. Extremism and radicalisation, and how they impact on young people, are complex issues and there is no 'one size fits all' remedy that will stop young people from being involved in extremism, including violent extremism. However, this resource focuses on youth work as a practice that can enable us to respond to the risk of young people becoming involved. It highlights civic youth work, in particular, as a specific approach to youth work based on active citizenship that can help in reducing this risk.

Having a better understanding of young people can help us to better understand radicalisation. If we want to understand young people as best as possible, we need to try to do so, not just as adults or as professionals,

Definitions

Civic youth work is work with young people in order to bring about change in the issues that matter to them in their daily lives.

Action research provides a cyclical process of learning and action to find solutions to problems.

Non-formal learning – this is learning that takes place in a broad range of settings, such as community centres or sports clubs, and is not dependent on formal education structures, such as a curriculum, but is centred on the voluntary participation of the learner, who is actively involved in their own learning.

but also from the point of view of young people themselves. We need to connect with young people in ways that help us to learn how they make sense of extremism, including violent extremism. The resource pack therefore begins with an analysis of the different ways in which young people are perceived in society and how this can influence our engagement with them. It also proposes action research in partnership with young people as a way of developing responses to problems through both action and reflection.

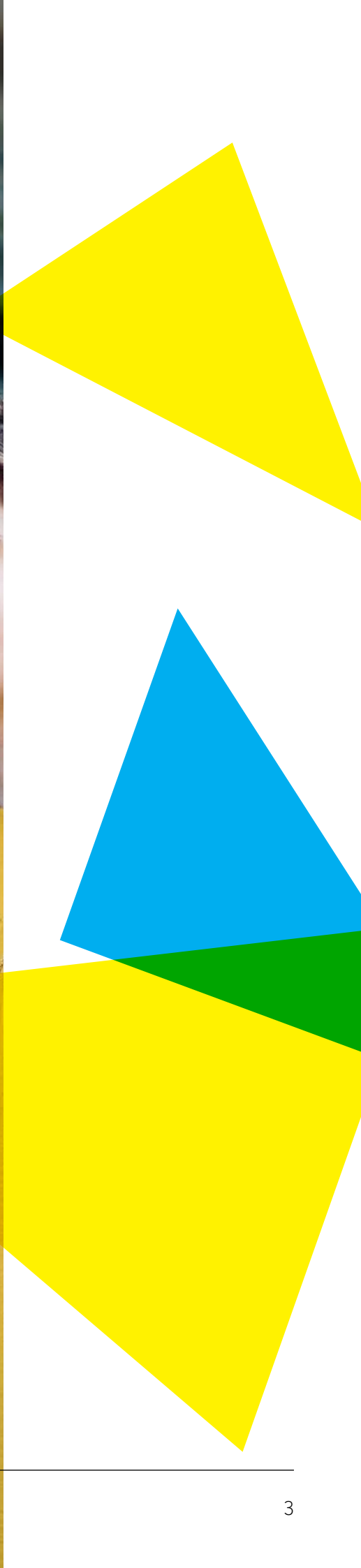
This resource pack offers ideas, examples and practical techniques through which youth workers, community workers, policymakers and those who work with young people can engage with challenging questions and better understand the context young people are living in. It explores the role of youth work with an international dimension, and of non-formal learning more generally, in responding to the risks to young people from different forms of extremism.

Alongside each section, there are questions to aid critical reflection and help you think about the best way to apply these ideas in your context and with the young people you work with.

The pack also includes a number of case studies (showing how some of these techniques have been put into practice) and tools and practical ideas you can implement in your own work. Further resources including more case studies and tools are available on the SALTO CD website: <https://www.salto-youth.net/rc/cultural-diversity/publications/>

We recognise that not all readers who work with young people will necessarily identify themselves as youth workers. Many different kinds of professionals and volunteers have opportunities to work with, or on behalf of young people, in different settings, including teachers, social workers and civil servants. Whenever the term youth worker is used, it does not refer exclusively to those who are in a professional youth work role or who have a particular set of qualifications in that regard, but includes anyone in direct contact with young people. In the Erasmus+ Programme, 'young people' usually refers to those aged 15–30. This may differ from your local context – and some of the examples mentioned may refer to young people on either side of that age band – but this material is generally intended for those who work with young people in this age category.

Part 1: Perspectives of young people



Further reading

'Hoodies, louts, scum': how media demonises teenagers' Richard Garner. The Independent 13 March 2009. Available online at www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/hoodies-louts-scum-how-media-demonises-teenagers-1643964.html

Folk Devils and Moral Panics: The creation of the Mods and Rockers, Stanley Cohen, 2002.

Young people through the centuries have been the target of commentators keen to pin all of society's ills on to them. Young people can, and do, commit serious crimes... However, what is not at all clear is whether young offenders have any connection with tales of national decline, or that young people are worse thought of these days than they used to be. Moral panic has always been with us.

Geoff Pearson, Antisocial Behaviour: Modern Folk Devils

There are a number of different ways in which we can view young people, summarised in the table opposite. It is important to understand that the first three perspectives are characteristics of a deficit model, where young people are viewed as in some way deficient. They are considered not yet fully formed and can potentially even represent a risk to themselves. These perspectives are grounded in a conception of youth where chronological age dictates development, and in contrast to adults, it is considered that young people are in a phase of preparation for 'real life'.

These various viewpoints are noticeable in media representations of young people, where they are described in negative terms more often than positively. For example, research has found that descriptions of teenage boys in the media connected them to issues of crime more than half the time. Such demonisation can create a sense of moral panic about 'the youth of today'. This phenomenon shows how public anxiety can be generated in relation to certain societal standards or social problems and sensationalised in the media – in turn adding to the anxiety.

The last perspective listed in the table opposite – which views young people as co-creators – forms the foundation for this resource pack. It supports approaches that are based on working in partnership with young people. Such approaches can be used to address risks from extremism and radicalisation, by recognising that young people can and must be part of the solution.

*young people can
and must be part
of the solution.*

When youth workers, educators and others who have professional relationships view young people in this way, it releases the potential for young people to develop their understanding of the world around them and to use their skills (including critical thinking skills) to work in partnership with adults to bring about social change.

Young people as...	Description	Programme response	Model
Vulnerable	Young people are susceptible to various dangers and risks such as alcohol abuse, violence, sexual exploitation, dangerous ideologies; they need to be kept safe.	Protection, diversion – can lead to an over-protection that fails to enable young people to learn how to navigate the world around them.	Deficit-based
Problem	Young people are troublemakers and are deviant, they can cause harm to others and are a threat to society.	Management, control, containment, diversion	
Consumer	Young people are not ready to contribute in society, they are 'empty vessels' awaiting the deposit of information into their brains; they are the future.	Marketing, entertainment, depositing information – can switch the focus from learning as a process to an emphasis on outputs, such as the numbers participating in a programme.	
Co-creator	Young people have the capacity to create, contribute, and make a difference; young people are the present and not just the future; they are to be celebrated; they are part of the solution; young people have agency – the means or power to take action.	Partnership, dialogue and discussion of sensitive issues, youth-led approaches, learning by doing	Asset-based

Table 1: Summary of how young people can be viewed

Definitions

A Deficit-based approach to working with young people views them as lacking the necessary skills, qualities and information to contribute fully to society, or defines them in terms of their problems or needs and how they represent a threat to society.

Agency refers to a person's capacity to act and make choices about their own lives, and to make use of their skills and capabilities.

An Asset-based approach to working with young people views them in terms of what they offer, their abilities and strengths. This approach also recognises that young people have distinctive ideas and opinions; it values their perspectives as young people.

Questions for reflection

- How do you see young people?
- When you explain your work to friends or family, how do you present young people? What representations of young people are shared with you?
- Which perspective(s) of young people from those suggested above inform(s) the work and projects of your organisation?
- How can you – or the young people you work with – change the narratives that are used to talk about young people?

Part 2: Understanding the causes of extremism



In this section we explore what factors are involved in influencing young people to participate in extremism, particularly violent extremism. It focuses on understanding some of the realities that young people face.

If we acknowledge that different perspectives may inform our views of – and actions towards – young people, we can see that young people are often understood to be ‘vulnerable’ to involvement in extremist groupings. This is reflected in the portrayal of young people in the media. For example, the UK-based commentator, Alan Grattan, wrote in *Youth and Policy*, that, ‘Britain has a ‘youth problem’ of a new dimension, that of young disillusioned and alienated Muslims who are vulnerable to ‘radicalisation’ processes from those who want to wage a ‘war’ on Britain.’

This kind of rhetoric can create anxiety and suspicion towards young people, while ignoring the dynamics in wider society. This resource pack acknowledges the very real challenges facing young people, but also aims to promote the view that it is much more constructive to treat young people as potential agents of positive change.

Before we can support young people to act on the basis of their abilities, strengths and capacity in the face of extremism, we need to understand how it manifests itself and to consider some of the terminology – both for our own understanding but also to help young people critique the messages they receive.

What are the main types of violent extremism?

According to the Centre for the Prevention of Radicalisation Leading to Violence (CPRLV) in Canada, violent extremism can be categorised in four ways:

- 1) Left-wing violence, such as violent acts committed by anti-capitalist groups in order to transform political systems. This category can also include violence by animal rights extremists or environmentalist groups.
- 2) Right-wing violent acts, such as those committed by far-right groups, often referred to as ‘neo-Nazi’ groups. Such groups are motivated by racism and a desire to defend supposed racial supremacy.
- 3) Religiously motivated violence, such as violent acts committed by extremist Islamic movements, which often have specific grievances against Western governments in relation to foreign policy.
- 4) Issue-based violence, such as violence carried out by groups concerned with a single issue – such as, abortion or homosexuality.

Incidents of violence have been perpetrated on a similar scale by both extreme right-wing and Islamist groupings in Europe in recent years. However, this is not reflected in public perceptions, since media attention tends to focus on certain incidents. We should all aim to become more informed – recognising that facts can suffer from distortion in the media, and terminology can be used that stems from discriminatory assumptions or encourages stereotyping.

What do we mean by extremism and radicalism?

Dictionary definitions can help us understand the meanings of certain terms at a base level and we can then begin to explore how these terms are used more broadly in relation to violent extremism. Some terms have particular connotations for different people, or are perceived differently in different contexts, and distortions might appear as a result of different agendas. This examination of terminology is crucial in preparing for successful engagement with young people.

The Chambers Dictionary defines an extremist as, ‘someone who has extreme opinions, especially in politics’, and states that when the word is used as an adjective it means ‘relating to, or favouring, extreme measures’. A ‘radical’ is someone who favours far-reaching social and political reform. It is when violence is involved that these definitions begin to shift in their emphasis – and it is worth recognising that on their own, radical opinions or ideas are not considered problematic.

No definition for radicalisation has been universally adopted and it has been described in numerous ways by various organisations – some denote it with reference purely to Islamic terrorism, while others look at it more broadly. The CPRLV in Canada frames radicalisation in terms of the use of violence to achieve change, defining it as ‘A process whereby people adopt an extremist belief system – including the intent to use, encourage or facilitate violence – in order to promote an ideology, a political project or a cause as a means of social transformation.’

Honour and Responsibility

A community worker in Belfast, Northern Ireland works with young men in a neighbourhood where there is a legacy of statutory military service as well as paramilitarism. He described how there is a strong sense of respect for the sacrifices made by previous generations in serving in military actions and it is something that is honoured in those communities. He observes that 'there's a sense of what's responsible in terms of responding to that through the service of your own life and wanting to be committed and true to that.'

Preventing Youth Extremism (interview), R Higginson

The CPRLV summarises violent radicalisation as:

- The adoption of an ideology whose rationale becomes a way of life and a framework for meaningful action for the individual.
- The belief in the use of violent means to promote a cause.
- The merging of ideology and violent action.'

<https://info-radical.org/en/>

The term 'extremism' can also be relative – dependent on what is interpreted as moderate. This means that views considered threatening to the status quo may be thought of as extremist views. A challenge that emerges here is that these various terms can be used in ways that end up labelling certain belief systems, or associating them with violence where there have in fact been no violent actions. Efforts to counteract violent manifestations of extremist views become less effective when they narrow their focus to predicting who will become tomorrow's terrorist.

For the purposes of this pack, when the text refers to violent extremism, it is with the understanding that it embraces a belief that violence is a legitimate method to achieve certain aims. Similarly, when the text refers to radicalisation, it is based on an interpretation that includes violence as part of the means to an end.

Causes of violent extremism

The following factors have been identified from research into violent groupings around the world. They indicate an increased likelihood of individuals deciding to involve themselves in a specific campaign of violence:

- The existence of a grievance or perceived injustice by a sub-group of the population.
- Age and gender (terrorist acts are generally committed by young males aged 15 to 25).
- Past family involvement with, or support for, the movement.
- Community support for the insurgent group, or high status associated with membership of the group.
- Coercion or conscription into the movement.
- Eventual membership as a result of an incremental process of increasing acts of insurgency.
- Vengeance as the individual feels a need to hit back and right wrongs.
- To become a member of an armed group there must be an organisation that the individual has the opportunity to join, and that wants his or her membership.

(Based on Ferguson, Burgess and Hollywood (2008))

What is noticeable from this list is that religion is not included as having a direct causal relationship with violence. It has been suggested that religious ideology may have more to do with binding a group of people together. Ultimately, focusing on a small range of factors such as religious ideology or mental health does not enable us to explain why some people get involved in violent extremism. Many experts agree that there is no single pathway to violent extremism.

It may be more productive to focus on asking how violence becomes legitimate in the mind of the perpetrator and, more importantly, to explore the political circumstances and the kinds of political narratives which are required for violence to be seen as legitimate.

What do young people get out of involvement in violent extremism?

The following list is by no means exhaustive, but offers a way of understanding young people's decisions to get involved in organised armed violence

- **A sense of identity, belonging and acceptance** – the young person may feel that they are being included, and the group may provide a source of support. This may be particularly relevant for young people who feel alienated by a prevailing culture, or who may be feared or suspected because of their beliefs, religion, or where they live.
- **Security or safety** – on the one hand, the young person may feel safer as a member of a particular grouping, particularly if there is a perceived threat from outside the neighbourhood or from a different grouping. On the other hand, there may be very real consequences for the young person if they choose not to get involved. For example, in Germany, young people who are not part of right-wing groups in some rural areas may experience fear and intimidation because of the level of domination by a right-wing youth culture; some may feel they have to blend in to stay safe.
- **Status** – involvement in a violent gang or extremist group may give the young person a sense that they are protecting their family or neighbourhood.
- **Honour and responsibility** – Affiliation with an organised armed group can often tap into a sense of duty about what it means to be a responsible citizen. The activities of paramilitary groupings may become dominant and accepted as normal in some neighbourhoods, especially if they are seen as resolving local problems more effectively than the police. They may also provide another avenue for young people – young men in particular – to act out of a sense of service to the local community. Another motivation for involvement may be the fear of shame, particularly for falling short of shared norms and expectations, such as gender-based notions around expectations of what it means to be a man.
- **Legitimisation** – extremist acts of violence can emerge in societies where there is increased division and between ethno-religious communities or political identities. Such division creates a heightened sense of tradition and cultural identity and anything perceived to threaten that culture or 'way of life' reinforces the divide between 'them' and 'us' as well as fear of 'the other'. Participation in organised armed groups can serve as justification for discriminatory and violent actions towards 'the enemy'.
- **A way out of poverty** – particularly for those young people living in communities suffering deprivation, involvement in gangs or paramilitary groups may offer a source of income. For some, becoming active in a violent gang or extremist group may be considered as an alternative career.
- **A sense of empowerment and purpose** – the young person may feel that their contribution matters and that their worth is validated because of the role they are given within a violent extremist group.
- **An opportunity to resolve injustices** – regardless of whether these are local or global, some violent groupings are perceived positively because they are doing something. This can be an important factor in communities where the police force is perceived to be unrepresentative and engaged in unfair practices (such as ethnic profiling) and is therefore not accepted, nor seen as effectual. Some young people may feel that being part of a paramilitary organisation or extremist group is their only way to challenge the inequities or discrimination they experience (See side panel on page 11 for examples).
- **An opportunity to 'fight back'** – the decision to join an extremist organisation may be in response to a sense of being part of a broader social conflict, such as a



perception that Muslims and the religion of Islam are under siege on a global scale, or that refugees and asylum seekers are to blame for unemployment and increasing pressure on public services.

- **Revenge** – sometimes there will be a very specific incident, which is perceived to be an attack on a specific group or community that leads a young person to choose to 'join up'.
- **Utopian vision** – there is some evidence that young women, particularly young mothers, have been influenced by a vision of a utopian society – such as, 'Daeshland' – that is free from crime and poverty, a place of safety, equality and solidarity. This has motivated some young women to attempt to travel to conflict zones such as Syria, in order to join Islamic State's state-building efforts.
- **A 'buzz'** – the sense of excitement that some young people experience as a result of their involvement in violence, such as street violence, should not be underestimated – particularly in communities where there is a lack of youth provision or where extremist groups seek to incite violence by arranging demonstrations that result in civil unrest.

Why recruit young people?

It is worth considering what the adults involved in organised armed groupings are trying to achieve by recruiting young people into their ranks. Going back to the different perspectives of young people, it is often the 'troublemaker' perspective of young people that dominates discussion of the rationale for youth recruitment. Militias can sometimes exploit the way in which a community might perceive a particular young person or group of young people as being 'out of control' by using intimidation tactics to bring them under their control.

Research has shown that young people can be viewed as 'cheap, effective, and obedient fighters' (Kemper in Magnuson & Baizerman, 2007). Child Soldiers International has recorded the involvement of tens of thousands of child soldiers in most armed conflicts and in almost every region of the world since 2000, with young people often controlled and exploited as conflict 'fodder'.

Contextual analysis

Contextual analysis is about examining the environment in which we work with reference to young people, taking into consideration the structures that shape young people's lives such as political, educational and social structures, and the historical and cultural context, as well as identifying their key characteristics. It is important to remember that young people are the only true experts when it comes to their own experiences – they are our teachers about what it is like to be a young person in the here and now. Youth workers need to take time to analyse the context and explore how young people make sense of and experience their locality and society more broadly.

The tool 'Mapping Your Community' on page 12 can be used to create a visual representation of how you – or, if you work with young people to create the map, young people themselves – see the community. It can be particularly helpful in highlighting the areas where young people feel safe and showing differences in perspectives between different groups.

It is important to remember that young people are the only true experts when it comes to their own experiences – they are our teachers about what it is like to be a young person in the here and now.

TERRA is a European project that focuses on preventing radicalisation and supporting de-radicalisation. Its website (<http://terra-net.eu>) offers materials for professionals to understand and respond to radicalisation. In addition, the project has produced a number of short films with victims of terrorism and former radicals, as well as a variety of professionals currently working in this area: <https://vimeo.com/terratoolkit>.



A culture of violence?

It is also essential, as part of understanding local contexts, to explore the extent to which a culture of violence exists and the extent to which violence manifests itself in different ways – for example, in domestic violence, hate crime or alcohol-related violence, experiences of intimidation or bullying, public disorder and rioting, political violence emanating from violent demonstrations, as well as in military actions overseas. Violence may have an on-going impact on a number of aspects of the lives of young people; it may become normalised as part of everyday life and accepted as ‘the way things are’.

Moreover, those in power may sometimes consider that their interests are best served by allowing a culture of violence – with conflicting factions becoming further entrenched in their opposing positions – to continue.

Societies across Europe have many sources of difference – socio-economic, political, ethnic and religious lines. It is important that these are considered carefully as part of contextual analysis.

Young people may see violence as a legitimate way of handling conflict, they may be ready to use it as a means of advancing a particular cause, or they may find it difficult to see solutions or alternatives to violence. The sense of powerlessness experienced by many young people should not be disregarded in terms of how it motivates some young people to take extreme actions. This reinforces the need to talk openly and directly with young people about violence – and to explicitly name issues such as racism and sectarianism as issues of violence, in order to challenge the prevailing culture and to find alternatives.

It is also worth noting the complexity of young people’s lives – not just in terms of pressure to succeed, or pressure to fit in, but also in terms of community expectations. For example, young people from inner-city neighbourhoods can spend a significant amount of time managing competing demands and pressures from different sources – which may

include representatives of armed groups, as well as parents, teachers, leaders of extra-curricular activities, local community leaders and police officers. At the age of 15 or 16, this requires a complex set of skills in order to stay safe, let alone succeed. This highlights the importance of

enabling young people to teach us what it is like to be a young person in their neighbourhood and to support them to have a sense of ownership of what they want to do in their lives.

Youth workers need to reflect on their own context and on the young people they work with as they seek to address the topic of extremism, and to actively engage in this process with young people. A useful tool in reflecting on our local context is action research. This can also help to identify the divisions present in our communities.

Action research

Action research is a process that practitioners can use to examine the interventions they carry out with young people, and to find ways to enhance them – particularly by improving the fit with the local context. Exploring answers to key questions, particularly with young people, is often the starting point for this approach. In the context of extremism and radicalisation, action research can enable youth workers to identify the most relevant practices and to build practical projects on the basis of responses to the questions.

A further extension of this approach is youth participatory action research, where young people are directly involved in leading action research activities.

Definitions

An opportunity to resolve injustices

Ethnic profiling: ‘Police and law enforcement officers are using ethnic profiling when they view people as suspicious because of who they are, what they look like, or where they pray, rather than because of what they have done.’ – Open Society Justice Initiative and European Network Against Racism, 2009.

A youth worker from Northern Ireland told the story of one young man whose brother had been involved in paramilitary activity. The police raided the family’s home, were abusive to the mother and damaged the house. While the raid may have been a necessary action, it was the tactics used by the police that had a knock-on effect on the young man and his peer group. As the youth worker described it, ‘they went after one radical and created several others in the process.’

A report by the Institute for Security Studies on radicalisation in Kenya found that: ‘Political factors have pushed Muslim youth to join extremist groups as a counter-reaction to or way of retaliating against what they see as “collective punishment” that is driven by a misguided perception that all Muslims are terrorists or potential terrorists.’ Radicalisation in Kenya: Recruitment to al-Shabaab and the Mombasa Republican Council, Anneli Botha, Institute for Security Studies, 2014.

Online resources

A number of activities that will help you to explore the dynamics of your local community are available online: Understanding contested spaces; Understanding inter-group tensions; Mapping organisations, programmes, projects and services

<https://www.salto-youth.net/rc/cultural-diversity/publications/>

Mapping Your Community

AIM:

To develop a profile of your local community, exploring how it shapes life for young people, and to consider why things are the way they are.

RESOURCES REQUIRED:

Large piece of paper e.g. flipchart or card.

METHOD:

Think through the following questions and note down your responses.

1. On a single sheet of paper (the larger the better) draw a rough outline of what you take to be your local community. Leave enough space inside and outside of the boundary to write.
2. Now, focus on the inside of the boundary.
 - a. Where are the major landmarks? What institutions exist (places of worship, schools, etc.)?
 - b. What types of businesses are in the community and where are they located? What youth organisations, associations or community clubs exist? Place all of these on your map.
 - c. What groups of people are located in the community? Do they frequent or occupy a particular location? How do they move within the community? Where are young people in the community? What space is available to them?
 - d. What youth programmes, initiatives, opportunities exist? Where? What space is safe, dangerous or open and safe only sometimes during the day for young people?
 - e. What space is off-limits to young people?
 - f. Where does violence take place? Where can young people go to be protected, or feel safe?
 - g. How does the space change at night?
 - h. How does the space change at particular times of the year, around specific events or when certain things happen?
3. Now focus on the outside. What are the perceived threats to the local community? Where do these threats come from? Who are the outsiders who come into the community regularly? Where do they come from? Why? Who decided the shape of your community? For what reasons? What changes might affect its future shape and boundaries?
4. Now think about the map from your own perspective: Where are the places that you frequent? Why these places? What places are safe for you to visit? Which are not? Can you go into some of these places with others? Who? What do you have to look out for as you walk in these places? How has this place changed over time for you?
5. Now consider the questions above, how does the information you gathered and listed provide an answer to the questions? What questions does it not answer? Why? What new questions emerge?

(Based on Building Democracy with Young People in Contested Spaces: A Handbook for Critically Reflective Practice that challenges cultures of violence by Ross Velure Roholt, Laura McFall, Michael Baizerman, and Paul Smyth (2008))



Advantages of using questions

The points raised regarding action research highlight the way in which questions can enhance our own professional development and practice as well as enable others to get more out of the process.

- A way of orienting to, looking at, and thinking about something.
- Make planning explicit and conscious.
- Keep you self-reflective about your thoughts and practice.
- Examining whether your programme works and whether your practice is effective.
- Prevent you from getting blinded by your opinions and beliefs.
- Facilitate communication and true dialogue, with oneself and with others.
- Encourage others to learn from themselves.
- Invite participation. To ask someone something is to invite them to be involved in doing something together, to join in and be(come) a member.
- Help keep your work democratic.

(Based on Building Democracy with Young People in Contested Spaces, Ross Velure Roholt, Laura McFall, Michael Baizerman and Paul Smyth (2008))

Questions for reflection

- How does violence manifest itself in the community where you work?
- What fault lines of divisions are present in your local/national context?
- When is violence seen as legitimate – by young people/by those living in your community?
- In what ways can you involve young people in asking questions about the neighbourhoods in which they live, go to school, work and socialise?
- How could you involve young people in action research to understand your local context and to develop action projects that address the key issues?

Part 3: How youth work can make a difference



One of the distinctive features of youth work, and particularly, non-formal education, is its **value base** – that is, the values that inform the way we work with young people (such as, diversity, justice and equity). This sets it apart from other learning approaches.

The ethos of non-formal learning for young people contrasts with curriculum-based or treatment-focused approaches. The emphasis is on supporting personal and social development, where the young person is in the driving seat and their decision whether or not to participate is respected.

Examples of key values for work with young people include:

- **Respect for people** – seeing the good in everyone, treating others with dignity and acknowledging the uniqueness of others.
- **Promotion of well-being** – placing the focus of our work on the welfare of all.
- **Truth** – a commitment to seeking truth and ensuring that we do not teach what is false, that we act with integrity and that we are open to dialogue.
- **Democracy** – not just about having a particular political system, but also a value in terms of working out how we share in a common life and how we can do so in ways that accommodates differences and address inequalities.
- **Fairness and equality** – ensuring that the relationships we have with young people promote fair and equal treatment as well as fair and equal access to opportunities.

(Based on Informal Education – Conversation, Democracy and Learning – Tony Jeffs and Mark K Smith).

It is important that as youth workers we acknowledge we are role models; we must pursue congruence between the way we live our own lives and the lives we are encouraging and supporting young people to live.

It also means recognising that we bring our beliefs and values to everything that we do – and these have the potential to influence young people. It takes an exceptional level of honesty, integrity and moral judgement to help young people explore their own values and beliefs without imposing your own.

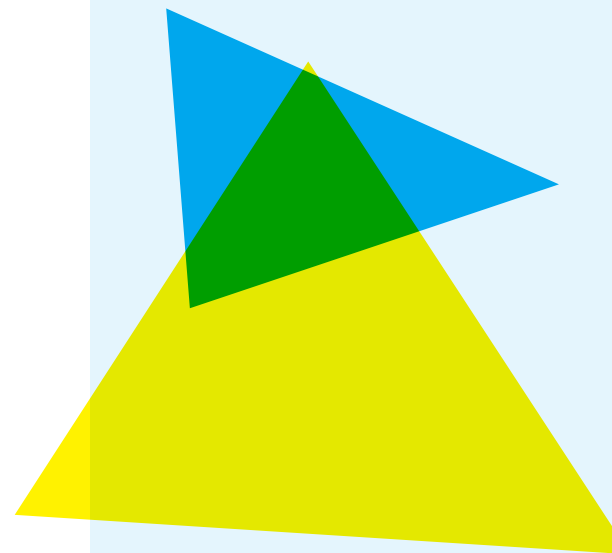
It takes an exceptional level of honesty, integrity and moral judgement to help young people explore their own values and beliefs without imposing your own.

Values

The values that shape youth work practice are not solely focused on change within individual young people. They are also linked to our aspirations for the world and our thoughts on what contributes to the common good. Youth work can therefore be considered an ethical practice with the youth worker supporting young people in their journey of understanding what it means to live a good life. It is also strongly influenced by our orientation towards young people – that is, the stance we take towards young people, how we interpret what it means to be a young person, and how we respond to young people.

Definition

Congruence is about the ability of the youth worker to be genuine and for the way in which they carry out their work to reflect the values of non-formal learning. For example, it would not be congruent for a youth worker carrying out a drugs education or awareness programme with young people to have a drug habit.





Identity exercise

AIM:

To explore potential links between identity and the process of radicalisation.

RESOURCES REQUIRED:

Paper and pens for everyone in the group

Description: This exercise enables participants to reflect on what is most important to them about their identity, to experience how it might feel to lose a core part of who they are.

METHOD

1. Ask each participant individually to reflect upon and write down seven key aspects, which they feel are the most important to them in terms of their identity.
2. Ask the participants to get into pairs, then to swap papers and review each other's aspects of identity without discussion.
3. Ask the pairs to return their papers to each other then ask each participant to delete two aspects of their identity they feel they can live without.
4. Instruct the pairs to swap papers again and each partner removes two further aspects of the other's identity – this is to be done without consultation.
5. Then the information is returned to the original owners and the pairs have a discussion about how they feel having lost a part of their identity.
6. Ask these questions of the whole group:
 - What are the thoughts and feelings that emerge as a result of this exercise?
 - What does this mean for people in terms of a sense of belonging and citizenship?

Thanks to Farkhanda Chaudhry and Ghizala Avan for permission to reproduce this exercise that they facilitated during the Preventing Youth Extremism seminar in Paris, April 2016.

The process of exploring values is an important part of exploring identity. Youth workers must acknowledge their role in supporting young people, not only to think about what is important to them, but also to integrate these values with their sense of self and the people they want to be in the world.

It can be helpful to think of identity as made up of two main elements: self-image and self-esteem. Self-image (or self-concept) refers to how we describe ourselves, and/or knowing that we belong to certain social groups such as ethnic/religious groups. Self-esteem means the value that we attach to our self-image, and/or the emotional significance of being part of social groupings.

In order for young people to benefit fully from this process, youth workers must create a safe environment with the following features:

- Supports young people to be open and honest about themselves;
- Enables them to critically reflect on the ways different identities are interpreted;
- Helps them to wrestle with the tensions that can come with holding multiple identities;
- Supports them to name the values they wish to live by.

Recent years have seen the growth of issue-based youth work (such as initiatives to support employability) as well as increased policy emphasis on raising levels of educational attainment. These certainly have their place, given the challenges facing young people in the labour market across Europe. However, supporting young people's broader social development by providing space to explore identity is at the heart of youth work; it is young-person-centred and supports their active citizenship (Brent, 2014).

Case Study

The THINK Project

Ethnic Youth Support Team, Swansea, Wales

In response to increased activity by far-right groups in Swansea since 2010 – sometimes with public protests that resulted in street violence – the Ethnic Youth Support Team set up the Think Project as a non-confrontational method of addressing extremism and racism. The project works by offering training over three days for young people aged 14–25 (particularly those who are not in education, employment or training) and covers racism, migration, asylum, identity and extremism. It emphasises increasing young people's understanding and critical thinking skills, by using group work methods – including dialogue and discussion. Participants can also gain accreditation for completion of the programme.

It is important to note that the Think Project does not stigmatise or criminalise young people who exhibit racist language or opinions.

www.thinkproject.org.uk

www.counterextremism.org/resources/details/id/504/the-think-project

<http://bit.ly/29a42is>

EYST and i-works research, 2015

Instead, staff members focus on exploring – without judgement – why those young people feel that way and where these ideas have come from, and on opening up space for discussion and dialogue. They then take the opportunity to challenge any misinformation and to provide young people with positive experiences of diversity such as volunteering with a black or minority ethnic/refugee organisation.

The Think Project also offers a range of training services to professionals including trainer-training and programmes to address issues such as, cultural diversity awareness, Islamophobia, forced marriage; honour-based violence, Islamic extremism, racism and far-right extremism.

An external evaluation in 2015 found the project had achieved a range of positive outcomes including providing an effective means for young people to change attitudes and behaviours, embedding good practice regarding diversity, and developing new ways of tackling the issue of extremism.

Online resources

Some further activities to help you to explore identity with young people:

Circles of influence;

the Shape game

<https://www.salto-youth.net/rc/cultural-diversity/publications/>



Civic youth work

Any kind of activity undertaken with others in relation to an issue of public interest or concern can be considered political activity – for example, getting together with others to set up a food bank for families who are struggling financially, or joining with others to respond to changes in a public service, such as, the closure of a hospital. When we do something like this we are not only being political, we are also acting out our citizenship. This reflects an understanding of citizenship that goes far beyond the limited notion of having a passport or voting in elections.

When applied to youth work, these ideas build further on the perspective that sees young people in terms of their capacity. Rather than being seen as people who will attain full citizenship once they are old enough to vote or have acquired certain kinds of knowledge, young people are interpreted as ‘citizens now.’ Civic youth work is a practice that has emerged as a result of this interpretation of citizenship and of seeing young people’s capacity to be initiators and agents of social change.

In contrast to a purely skills-based approach to citizenship, civic youth work draws on the concept of ‘civic literacy.’ This encourages young people’s learning on what it means to be democratic and to live democratically – and to learn by doing through addressing common problems in collaboration with others.

Civic youth work could be described as a political approach to youth work. It challenges accepted social norms and asks questions – such as, ‘What is normal’, and ‘Who decides?’ Civic youth work also supports young people to analyse power relationships and challenge power dynamics, particularly in situations where they feel disempowered. Civic youth work recognises the importance of its underlying values – particularly fairness, diversity and democracy.

Civic youth work action cycle

AIM:

To support a group to develop, design and implement their own action project on an issue that matters to them.

Resources: Flipchart paper and markers, internet access for research purposes.

DESCRIPTION:

This model came out of an action research process in Northern Ireland, whereby Public Achievement staff and volunteers identified key components in how groups worked together to bring about change in their communities. It also draws on the approach to civic youth work described by VeLure Roholt and Baizerman in *Civic Youth Work Primer*.

METHOD

The model is based on four processes that continue throughout the group’s activity: relationship building, evaluation, making the project public and celebrating achievements. As the diagram below illustrates, this is not a linear process. For a group that meets once a week, about 6–12 months are usually needed to work through this process.



In contrast to a purely skills-based approach to citizenship, civic youth work draws on the concept of ‘civic literacy.’ This encourages young people’s learning on what it means to be democratic and to live democratically – and to learn by doing through addressing common problems in collaboration with others.

In essence, civic youth work focuses on supporting a group of young people as they address an issue of importance to them.

For example, in Belfast a group of young women taking part in a civic education project became concerned about so-called 'punishment' attacks on other young people in their community carried out by paramilitary groupings. Such attacks were intended as a kind of vigilante 'justice,' meted out to young adults for anti-social behaviour. Victims might be shot in the knees or ankles; some were beaten by paramilitaries with baseball bats. There were even instances where parents were contacted and told to bring their child for an 'appointment'. The young women worked together to become more informed about the extent of the problem, developed a campaign to highlight the issue and lobbied Northern Ireland's most senior police officer – including calling him to account for the performance of the police in investigating these incidents. While the issue could not be resolved overnight, the young women were instrumental in keeping it on the agenda of decision makers and public servants – and in the public eye.

The section below outlines some 'touchstones' for civic youth work. Regardless of your setting or professional background, these can be useful in identifying where your engagement with young people is consistent with the ethos of civic youth work.

Touchstones of civic youth work practice

1. The youth worker embodies an on-going invitation to participate.
2. The youth worker embodies an on-going invitation to work democratically on issues that the participating young people find meaningful and consequential.
3. The youth worker approaches young people as willing to work together on public issues.
4. The youth worker embodies an on-going invitation to work in partnership with young people – involving them always in analysis, decision-making, action, evaluation, reflection and follow-up.
5. The youth worker creates space for active citizenship.
6. The youth worker attends to the extent of each young person's participation.
7. The youth worker supports praxis (the application of theoretical learning to day-to-day practice).

(Based on VeLure Roholt and Baizerman in Civic Youth Work Primer)

Young people who take part in these kinds of interactions are more sure of who they are, are more aware of each other, the neighbourhoods they live in and the world around them. They have a sense of ownership, developed by taking care of things that matter to them, and greater self-confidence. They are learning to listen to different voices and have understood what it means to collaborate with others. They demonstrate problem-solving skills and have developed stronger critical thinking skills. Since these are all attributes that obstruct extremist behaviours, there is a strong case for investing in initiatives that support civic youth work.

It is clear that the way we work with young people is no less important – and arguably more so – than the content of our work. If we can bring young people in to a process of exploring values – a process that includes discussions on identity and provides space for young people to identify what is important to them – then civic youth work can open up new possibilities for young people in their lives. It can provide the means for young people to formulate and express ideas and opinions, to understand what democracy means in the here and now, and to partner with adults in finding ways of making a positive difference in their own communities and beyond.

Definition

Touchstone – this is a standard or criterion by which something is judged or recognised. In the present context, it refers to the particular qualities of youth work and non-formal learning. It helps us to understand what is distinctive about what we do.

Questions for reflection

- Make a list of the values that you consider to be highly important in your life and work, and think of an example when your values have guided you.
- Complete this sentence: 'As a youth worker you can expect me to...'
- What would a young person gain as a result of experiencing these values?
- What would your co-workers/co-leaders gain as a result of experiencing these values?
- What would your organisation/project be like if it encouraged its staff and/or volunteers to reflect these values?
- Does the vision of your organisation/project reflect your values?



It is clear that the way we work with young people is no less important – and arguably more so – than the content of our work.



Case Study

Aware Girls

Pakistan

Aware Girls is a non-profit organisation in Pakistan founded and led by young women, whose mission is 'to empower young women, advocate for equal rights of young women, and to strengthen their capacity, enabling them to act as agents of women's empowerment and social change.' With a membership open to young women aged 12-29, Aware Girls operates a range of projects including election monitoring, micro-enterprise, HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention, gender equality and peace building.

In 2012, Aware Girls established a Youth Peace Network in response to extremism in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province, a region considered to be a hub of religious extremism. In 2014, they also began project activities in Afghanistan. The organisation identifies potential volunteer peace educators, and then provides them with training in peace building, conflict transformation, non-violence and pluralism. Using a peer education approach, the trained activists carry out peace education and capacity building activities with a group of ten young people in their communities, exploring relevant

topics including non-violence, conflict resolution through dialogue, the teaching of Islam on peace, and what it means to be tolerant of diverse beliefs and ideas. The focus is on countering indoctrination and discourse that is intolerant or militant, as well as deterring young people from becoming involved in violent extremism.

Methods include study circles, book groups and film screenings, followed by discussions, presentations and sermons in mosques. Supported by mentors, the activists also help to mediate local conflicts, thereby providing a model for local communities. In 2014 a team of 223 trained activists reached almost 4,000 'at risk' young people.

The Aware Girls approach is based on the simple idea that the best way to prevent young people from being attracted by violent or extremist movements is by reaching them through other young people. They know the ways their peers can be recruited and have the trust and influence in the community to persuade them that another, more peaceful way is possible. This is a lesson applicable to any society affected by extremism.

Ruairi Nolan, Asia Specialist,
Peace Direct.

www.awaregirls.org/portfolio/gender-mainstreaming-of-peace-buildingpeace

www.peacedirect.org/uk/peacebuilders/pakistan



www.peacedirect.org/uk/youth-can-challenge-extremism

Part 4: Identifying youth at risk



Violent radicalisation is a complex matter that has not been defined uniformly. In this context violent radicalisation refers to a process whereby a person accepts the use of violence to achieve political, ideological or religious goals. Take note that radicalisation does not necessarily lead to violent extremism or terrorism and radical expressions do not have to be problematic per se. (Council of the European Union, 2016)



Recognising radicalisation

CATEGORY	EXAMPLES
 <p>INSIGNIFICANT BEHAVIOURS</p> <p>This category includes a series of behaviours associated with diverse forms of political, religious or community engagement, which are characterised by peaceful actions and democratic means of expression.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Argue fervently to defend their convictions before family members and/or close friends. • Adopt visible signs (traditional clothes, beard, shaved head, religious symbols, specific tattoos, etc.) to express their identity. • Are active on social media. • Take a stand and campaign peacefully for a cause related to a community, a group or an individual. • Take a keen interest in national and international current affairs. • Express the desire to reintegrate or to increase involvement in a religious practice, or an identity or political engagement. • Convert or adopt new religious, ideological or political beliefs. • Insist on following specific dietary requirements due to political or religious convictions. • Express a need for excitement or adventure. • Display a desire to correct social injustices.
 <p>TROUBLING BEHAVIOURS</p> <p>This category includes individual behaviours that show evidence of personal ill health. It also includes behaviours that represent an increasingly sustained self-identification with a cause or an ideology that leads the individual to significantly change their behaviour.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Express polarising views of absolute truth, paranoia or extreme mistrust. • Adopt behaviour which creates a rupture with family practices. • Are drawn to conspiracy theories and discourse. • Begin to isolate themselves from family and/or friends. • Suddenly change their habits. • Insistently preach religious and ideological ideas to other people. • Reject the rules and regulations in institutions and organisations with which they are in contact (school, workplace, athletic organisations, etc.) based on ideological, political or religious grounds. • Refuse to take part in group activities or come into contact with certain individuals due to the latter's religion, race, skin colour, gender or sexual orientation. • Feel a sense of victimisation and rejection. • Express a need to dominate or control others. • Have difficulty reassessing their own ideas and/or recognising the value of other points of view.

CPRLV in Canada has developed a 'behaviour barometer' categorisation system as a guide for the assessment of behaviours that may provide an indication of an individual's radicalisation process. This clearly distinguishes between, on the one hand, non-violent and democratic activism and, on the other, radical behaviour that shows in words or actions a willingness to use violence.

Given the various factors that might influence a young person's decision to take part in extremist violence, youth workers must take note of what is being presented to young people and the needs that are being met by extremist groupings. They should aim to provide activities that can meet these needs in more positive and constructive ways. In this context, the following are essential attributes for youth work and young people's non-formal learning:

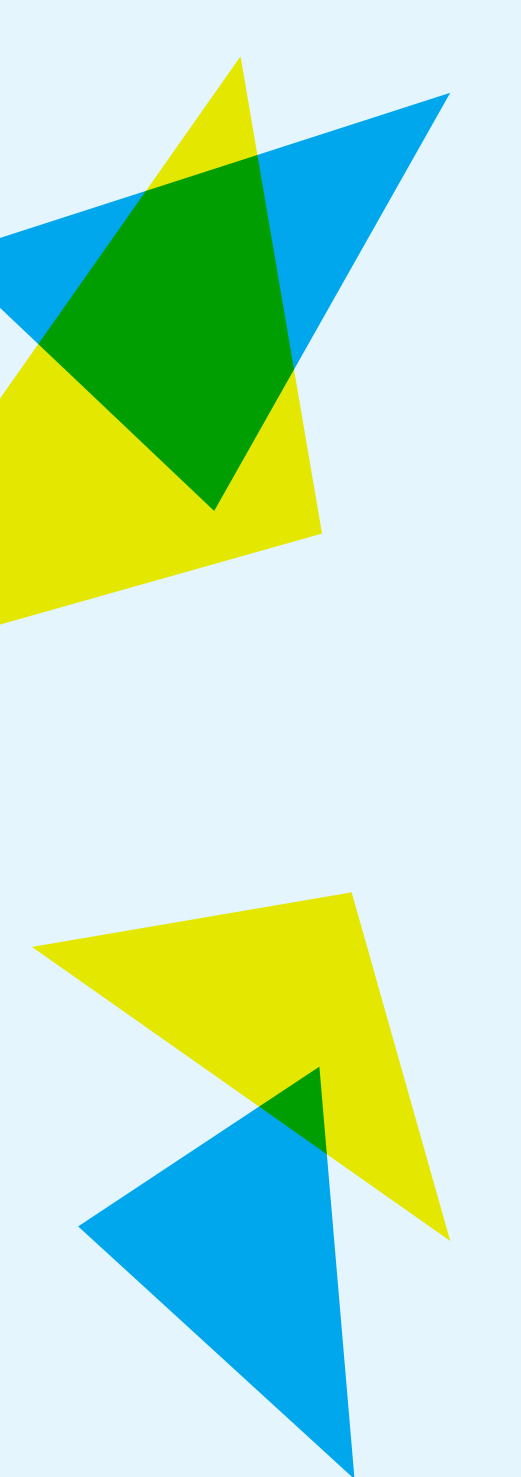
- Supporting young people to explore their identity;
- Providing a sense of belonging;
- Creating safe spaces for young people to meet and to be themselves;
- Providing opportunities for young people to challenge the negative circumstances affecting their lives – such as, poverty, discrimination or unemployment;
- Enabling young people to explore alternatives to violence and imagine new ways of solving problems.

CATEGORY	EXAMPLES
 <p>WORRISOME BEHAVIOURS</p> <p>This category encompasses behaviours that can be associated with the beginning of an individual's engagement in a radical trajectory. It is characterised by an acute mistrust of the outside world, and by a preponderance of views legitimising the use of violence to achieve goals, or to win a cause.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cut off ties with family members and/or close friends in order to keep exclusive company with a new circle of acquaintances or friends. • Legitimise the use of violence to defend a cause or an ideology. • Hide a new lifestyle, allegiance or belief system from family members and/or close friends (either online or in real life). • Become closer to individuals or groups known to be violent extremists. • Become suddenly uninterested in professional or school activities. • Display symbols of affiliation or support associated with recognised violent extremist groups. • Become obsessed with the end of the world or with messianic views. • Express hateful views towards other individuals or groups.
 <p>ALARMING BEHAVIOURS</p> <p>This category includes a variety of behaviours that show evidence of an exclusive and sectarian allegiance to an ideology or a cause, which lead the individual to perceive violence as the only legitimate and valid means of action.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take part in violent extremist group activities by any means whatsoever (material, financial or physical). • Recruit individuals for a violent extremist cause (or encourage their enlistment to that cause). • Are in contact with a group or a network of individuals known to be violent radicals, either online or face-to-face. • Reinforce own beliefs through regular consultation of violent extremist internet forums and websites. • Commit or plan violent or hateful acts inspired by ideological motives or a violent extremist cause. • Learn about, seek to acquire or know how to use weapons (firearms, explosives, etc.) outside the legal bounds. • Plan a trip to a conflict zone or to a region in which violent extremist groups are known to be active.



Part 5 – Youth worker responses to extremism





There are a number of different approaches and techniques that can be used by youth workers in order to engage meaningfully and constructively with young people. There are also strategies that are especially relevant for organisations involved in youth work, as well as by those involved at policy level, in addressing risks to young people from extremism.

Some of these methods of intervention will be part of your everyday practice, while others may be less familiar – or known to you by a different name. The youth-focused interventions below are grouped in four categories:

- The youth work relationship
- Group work
- Civic and/or political education
- Community engagement.

The youth work relationship

Building relationships with young people could be described as the currency of youth work. The success of all of our other activities with young people depends on the rapport and trust created in this way. Our values and our perspectives on young people are central to this process. A concept developed by the psychologist, Carl Rogers, is useful in this context; ‘unconditional positive regard’ refers to the respect we hold for young people, a respect that is not based on their behaviour or attainment.

Relationships are also central to how young people experience community. A way of understanding community is to consider the ‘three S’s of community’ – security, solidarity and significance – often thought of as the key requirements for human beings to experience a positive sense of community with each other. It is also worth reflecting on how far these are present in our own youth and non-formal learning activities with young people.

- **Security** means safety – not just physical, but also emotional and social safety to express fears or concerns, plus the extent to which young people feel they can be themselves when they are part of a group.

- **Solidarity** is that shared understanding of group purpose – and the accompanying feelings of belonging and being supported.

- **Significance** refers to a young person’s sense of being valued and listened to by others in the group – the sense that their existence and their contribution matters.

(based on Clark, 1996)

The GROW model

The GROW model is a coaching model developed in the 1980s for use by youth workers to support individual young people in setting goals, solving problems and identifying appropriate actions to achieve their goals. The model guides a participant through a four-step process where GROW is an acronym for Goals, Reality, Options, and Will.

See opposite link for a case study on how young people can be supported through mentoring.

Online resource

The GROW model
<https://www.salto-youth.net/rc/cultural-diversity/publications/>
for all references to online SALTO resources

Case Study

Mind Your Own Business

Mind Your Own Business is an entrepreneurship-focused development programme that seeks to strengthen participants' professional skills and social relationships through vocational and personal skills development. The aim is that participants have a stronger connection to the education system, labour market and Danish society.

Participants are boys aged 13–17 from deprived neighbourhoods around Denmark. Often they have experienced rejection and negative attention because of their ethnicity or because of negative stereotypes of the local community where they grew up. There is a general lack of role models in their communities, and the boys are exposed to destructive social relationships in street hierarchies on a daily basis. All of this exacerbates difficulties in their school-based learning and access to full-time or part-time employment.

In collaboration with volunteer mentors and mentor companies, the young people are given the responsibility to establish and operate their own micro-enterprise over an eight-month period. They work together as a team working on everything from product development to production, marketing and sales.

Since its inception in 2010, 203 boys have created 21 micro-enterprises. They have been supported by advice and encouragement from volunteer mentors and mentor companies totalling 4,350 and 1,520 hours respectively.

Internal and external evaluation has indicated that participants gain significantly from the programme, as reflected in improved communication and social skills – including co-operating with others, and listening to (and respecting) others' views. Through exposure to a variety of new experiences, participants become more confident in their own abilities and potential.

www.myob.dk



Egg tower

AIM:

To explore the skills involved in working as a team and to explore the contributions that everyone can make.

RESOURCES:

Newspaper, sticky tape, scissors, one egg per team.

DESCRIPTION:

This is a team-building exercise that provides valuable lessons about how we work together on shared goals and how we work with different strengths and weaknesses.

METHOD:

Split the group into teams of five and provide each with the same set of materials (newspaper, sticky tape, scissors). Their goal is to produce a tower that can suspend or hold an egg in the air. In each group one or two people are deliberately placed at a disadvantage e.g. blindfolded or have their hands or feet tied to simulate different people bringing different abilities to the group. The teams are given ten minutes to complete the task. The towers have to hold the egg for at least 20 seconds. The tallest and most stable tower wins.

Debrief questions

- What have we learned about teamwork?
- Which is more important – getting the job done or having a group that works well together?
- What can help people to become effective in groups?

Adapted with permission from YouthLink: NI, 2004

Team building

Team building is an important part of helping groups to form bonds and work together. One of the important factors in making it most effective is time for group reflection and debriefing activities, so that the learning can be fully explored. Most energisers, 'ice-breakers' and games show parallels with life experiences; it is important to make the most of opportunities to explore these young people. Sometimes, a simple question is enough to open up discussion – such as, 'Why do you think we did this activity today?' In this way, young people can be encouraged to identify and take responsibility for their own learning.

Group work

Most of the settings where youth work and non-formal learning take place involve activities in groups. Some of these activities will have a specific purpose and others more focused on the interactions between the group members – how they come together around a common interest or need, and how they give mutual support. Groups offer young people valuable opportunities for experiential learning. It is useful to remember, particularly when we start working with a newly formed group, that groups consist of collections of individuals who may not necessarily have learned how to make the group function. In this sense, the role of the

The advantage here is that you can create space for self-directed learning that starts from the young people's existing knowledge and works with them to understand what they want to achieve and how they can do so.

Programme-led	Youth-led
Curriculum-based.	Starts with the experience in the room – where the young people are at.
Doing youth work 'to' young people; worker decides the topic or programme.	Collaborative – facilitator works with young people to develop and design the programme.
Learning outcomes are set from the start, based on the programme (and sometimes based on targets).	Participants are involved in agreeing learning outcomes and the facilitator creates an environment for learning.
The participants are the learners.	Everyone learns, including the facilitator.
Directs young people to participate in a certain way.	Invitational – invites participation by the young people.

Table 2: Contrasting approaches to group work

youth worker is focused on **'group making'** or **'group becoming'**. As the group goes about its business and as the members navigate various differences, obstacles and conflicts, they will learn how to function effectively as a group.

One of the distinctive features of non-formal learning is that it does not rely on a specific curriculum; you can start with the experience in the room.

While this can make the youth worker nervous about what might come up during a group work session, it can also be incredibly liberating – by creating a dynamic that is more participatory and youth-led than conventional, programme-led approaches.

The biggest barrier to this kind of youth-led approach can be young people's lack of belief in themselves – or their perception that 'nothing will ever change'. It can be very intimidating to be asked, 'What kind of project would you like to create?' especially for young people who have been used to clearly defined youth programmes delivered by a youth worker to a fixed schedule. To enable young people to respond positively to alternative approaches, which may actually bring them greater benefit, the youth worker should focus on developing

relationships, supporting young people to articulate what they care about. This will help build the motivation to make a difference and to be active citizens. Then the next paragraph should start 'It is also vital...

It focuses on working with young people, rather than doing youth work to young people. It also requires that youth workers are open to learning from young people – and focused on creating an environment where learning can happen, rather than following a pre-set agenda.

Table 2 illustrates the contrast between youth-led and programme-led approaches. It is also vital that youth workers do not shy away from **addressing sensitive topics directly, honestly and openly**. For youth work to fulfil its role in supporting young people to understand who they are, their place in the world and what it means to act with integrity as a member of the human race, it must address issues of common concern – including: inequality, war, immigration, racism and violence, division, sexism, discrimination, poverty and unemployment.

If our approach to young people is based on a deficit model, it can be tempting to think that young

people are apathetic and do not care about these issues. The reality is that most young people have an acute sense of fairness – and that they care deeply about their families, friends and neighbourhoods, and anything that affects those people and communities. An asset-based perspective of young people understands the need to include young people in dialogue on a range of topics – not just those that affect them directly. By involving young people in this way, youth workers can help to pre-empt the feelings of powerlessness or apathy which have repeatedly been found among people who go on to perpetrate acts of violence.

While it is natural to be concerned that conflict will arise within the group, it is only when our approach is open and without pre-conceptions that young people will feel confident in identifying and expressing their own ideas and opinions safely, while at the same time learning to value others'.

Key to this process is the ability to **challenge stereotypes, myths, beliefs and perceptions**, to question where these come from and to explore how they come to be accepted. Young people need opportunities to think about what is important to them and to learn to empathise with the interests and concerns expressed by peers, where these seem different to their own.

Dialogue and discussion are vital; particularly to help young people explore 'narratives' that inform how they interpret the world around them.

These narratives can be understood as 'framing stories.' In a destructive form, they can be part of extremist groups' appeal to new members – whether it is a narrative about the need to defend your community or your religion, or a perception that immigrants are taking jobs from locals.

Narratives and counter-narratives exercise

AIM:

To think through the arguments that extremist groupings make in support of their actions and to articulate a response.

RESOURCES REQUIRED:

None

DESCRIPTION:

This activity enables groups to explore the narratives that influence particular extremist groupings and to find ways to challenge destructive content.

METHOD

Split the group into smaller groups of four to five young people. Ask each group to think about a particular ideology or 'framing story' that might influence extremist actions – such as, violence in support of environmentalism, animal rights, or White Pride. Prepare the position taken by this extremist view, together with the accompanying narrative.

Example statements may include:

- 'People who experiment on animals should have the same done to them!'
- 'These foreigners are taking our jobs and our country; they should all be kicked out!'

Then ask each group to prepare an alternative narrative that can be used in response.

Example statements may include:

- 'Any kind of violence towards others makes us lose our compassion and humanity.'
- 'All of us have more in common than we realise, there is only one human race and we need to work together to overcome problems like unemployment and poverty.'

Ask two people from each group to present the ideas that have been prepared as a conversation between two people each taking the opposing position.

Take time for a group reflection and debriefing on the activity:

- What have you learned as a result of working on this activity?

Thanks to Farkhanda Chaudhry and Ghizala Avan for permission to reproduce this exercise.

Within these kinds of discussions, it is important to acknowledge the risk of imposing our own values on young people – whether consciously, by dictating what a young person should think about a certain subject, or unconsciously, by transmitting our own pre-conceptions. It is sometimes tempting to avoid such discussions altogether. However, the best way of preventing any kind of indoctrination is to be prepared to explore and understand our own histories and the values that inform the way we live our lives. By developing our self-awareness in this way, we can better understand how we feel about dealing with controversial

issues. It also requires a willingness to confront our own preconceptions and blind spots.

The processes described above – of continual exploration and challenge – also contribute to **critical thinking skills**.

Critical thinking skills refer to aspects of our capacity to reason, including:

- Identifying and challenging assumptions;
- Recognising the importance of the social, political and historical contexts of events, assumptions, interpretations and behaviour;
- Imagining and exploring alternatives

- Exercising reflective scepticism towards claims to universal truths or ultimate explanations.

(taken from Young, 1999)

Critical thinking skills enable young people to think about – and sometimes challenge – the status quo, and to open up new learning, ideas and possibilities. Young people can be helped to develop the specific skills needed to process information including:

- Grasping the **meaning** of a statement
- Avoiding **ambiguity**
- Spotting **contradictions**
- Judging what **follows**, what is **assumed** and when a conclusion is **unwarranted**
- Deciding when a definition is **adequate**
- Deciding when an **observation, statement or authority** is reliable
- Deciding when a problem has been properly **identified** and adequately resolved.

(taken from Young, 1999)

It is not possible to equip young people with critical thinking skills if we do not seek to develop these skills ourselves. When working with young people in any (non-formal) setting, we must also set aside time to reflect on our practice – with managers or colleagues, or using self-reflection.

Non-violent communication

Non-violent communication is a technique that can be used as part of dialogue and discussion activities with youth groups. Also known as compassionate communication, it seeks to improve recognition of underlying, shared needs by focusing on self-awareness, self-expression and empathy.

Online resource

Non-violent communication four-way process

www.salto-youth.net/rc/cultural-diversity/publications/

http://www.nonviolentcommunication.com/pdf_files/4part_nvc_process.pdf

http://www.nonviolentcommunication.com/pdf_files/4part_nvc_process.pdf

Plus, minus, interesting brainstorming model

AIM:

To engage young people in a critical thinking process.

RESOURCES:

Pens and paper

DESCRIPTION:

This technique encourages young people – individually or in groups – to explore a variety of possibilities, generate ideas and new ways of thinking about a particular issue and to create the beginnings of an action plan. It can be applied equally to formal or non-formal settings, and can also be adapted by youth workers to help develop their own creativity, analytical skills and problem solving.

METHOD

Select a topic that the group of young people you are working with are interested in and wish to understand more deeply. Ask each young person to draw a table with three columns on their page – one for 'plus', one for 'minus', and one for 'interesting'.

Step 1 – For two minutes, ask the young people to write down all of the possible positive things about a subject or action in the plus column.

Step 2 – For two minutes, ask the young people to write down all of the possible negative things about a subject or action in the minus column.

Step 3 – For two minutes, ask the young people to write down all of the interesting things about the subject or action (including implications and possible outcomes – whether positive, negative or uncertain) in the interesting column.

Take time for a group reflection – have the young people gained any fresh insights or different ways of thinking about the subject or action? What questions remain for the group on this issue and what can they do to find out more? Has the activity produced any ideas about actions the group could take to address a particular issue?

Adapted from Three Steps to Critical Thinking, Todd Finley
www.edutopia.org/blog/three-steps-to-critical-thinking-todd-finley

Further reading

Informal Education –
Conversation, Democracy
and Learning – Tony Jeffs
and Mark K Smith

The Art of Youth Work –
Kerry Young

'Good youth work is about how you create safety for young people to explore issues which are fundamentally risky and allow them to make decisions which then can allow them to change, and unless those kind of opportunities are provided for people to look at things which are dangerous but from a place that's relatively safe then I don't think anything changes.'

(Duncan Morrow – Lecturer
and Director of Community
Engagement, University of
Ulster;

[www.youtube.com/
watch?v=7v5SAp
SK8ew&feature=youtu.be&a](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7v5SApSK8ew&feature=youtu.be&a))



Useful resources

Games for Actors and Non-Actors, Augusto Boal

Combatants for Peace:
<http://cfpeace.org/theatre-of-the-oppressed>

www.formaat.org

Resource Document for European Youth In Action Training Course 'Making a scene for Change', Eolas Soiléir – <http://eolassoileir.ie/what-we-do/past-projects/making-a-scene>

Kairos

A Journey In Understanding YouthLink: NI

LEAP

www.leapconfrontingconflict.org.uk

A non-profit organisation that provides conflict management training for young people and professionals. In addition, LEAP is a good example of how an organisation uses action research to support improvements in practice and in the development of policy.

Value the Difference, Tali Padan

Working More Creatively With Groups, Jarlath Benson

YPAR Hub

<http://yparhub.berkeley.edu>

This website is an excellent resource for those wishing to learn more about the use of youth participatory action research.

Extreme Dialogue

<http://extremedialogue.org>

This initiative offers high quality mixed-media educational resources that can be used to help young people in formal or non-formal settings to explore extremism, activate discussion and enhance critical thinking.

Youth participatory action research

Youth participatory action research is an approach where young people are trained in research skills to deliver their own research projects as a means of improving their own lives or the lives of those in their neighbourhoods. In this way, it flips perceptions about young people: rather than regarding young people primarily as subjects of research, it positions them as co-researchers, recognises the value of their ideas and opinions, and strengthens their contribution to bringing about change.

(based on VeLure Roholt and Baizerman, 2013).

This approach has been used by PUKAR, a research-focused non-governmental organisation in Mumbai, India. In response to increasing urbanisation – specifically, through the eyes of young people – youth participatory research has helped to encourage sustainability through innovation.

<http://pukar.org.in>

Role play

Role play is an ideal method for helping young people to engage in experiential learning and to grapple with the implications of real-life issues.

One of the advantages of role play is that it gives young people the opportunity – in a safe environment –

to explore a variety of possible responses to problems and real-life situations. Doing this develops 'muscle memory' – where the strategies that have been tested out by the young people can be recalled much more easily when they find themselves in such a situation in reality.

Role play in youth work and non-formal learning can also make use of theatre techniques, such as those developed by Theatre of the Oppressed. Initiated by the Brazilian director, artist and activist, Augusto Boal, Theatre of the Oppressed has been effective in different contexts, including contested spaces and in response to social inequalities and social integration. It includes techniques to analyse both internal and external oppression, explore alternatives and possibilities for change, and build community participation.



Veil exercise

AIM:

To explore discrimination, exclusion and inclusion.

RESOURCES REQUIRED:

Seven large scarfs that can be draped over a volunteer's head obscuring their vision.

DESCRIPTION:

This experiential exercise enables participants to see and feel what it is like to be a young person when exposed to extremist ideologies – and to explore what may help to counteract emotions and ideas associated with extremism.

METHOD

The facilitator reads out a series of seven statements and participants are asked to place a veil over a volunteer participant after each statement. Once all seven veils have been placed over the volunteer, the second set of statements is read out, and after each statement a veil is removed. At the end, the volunteer is asked to share her/his experience and others are asked to reflect upon this.

Two sets of statements are provided below, reflecting different perspectives on the same scenario.

Scenario 1:

Pascal is 19 years old and studying at college. He lives in a suburb, which has many diverse communities including refugees.

1. I am studying at college and recently I found out from my friends that these foreign students have been given a special prayer room. I feel excluded and left out.
 2. When I walk in my neighbourhood, I notice these foreign students standing in street corners speaking in their own language. I feel unsafe.
 3. I hear on the news that thousands of refugees are on their way to my country. Our country will have to spend all this extra money on them. What about our people? I feel angry.
 4. My brother applied for a job and didn't get it because they gave the job to one of them.
 5. These foreign boys are after our girls and keep their own women covered up and indoors. Makes me feel sick and angry.
 6. I meet a group of people at college who think like me and are really annoyed at these immigrants. It makes me feel stronger.
 7. We have decided to start approaching their women and harass them. They will know what we feel like when they talk to our women. I feel in control.
-
1. The college publicise the opening of an inclusive 'open to all' contemplation room and I find out that I can use this space too. I tell my friends. It makes me feel that my college has thought about me as well.
 2. Local youth workers in my neighbourhood are forming football teams and I notice that some of these people who are hanging about in street corners are great players. They really want to win the football tournaments just like I do and make our neighbourhood feel proud of us. I feel that we are more similar than I thought.
 3. One of the immigrant boys in our football team invites me to his home; I don't want to go because I heard their houses are smelly and unclean. I like him and decide to go and I can't believe how hospitable and kind the whole family is. I taste food that I have never tasted before and get to know the rest of the family, including his sisters. I feel I am trusted and respected.
 4. My brother confronts the immigrant that got the job and finds out he has been living in this country for three generations. My brother also finds out that he had applied for ten other jobs in the last six months, which he didn't get and has a university degree which my brother doesn't have. I feel this is fair.
 5. I go to the house of my football friend and I find out that one of his sisters is very good at maths. She is at the same college as me and is a few years older. She offers to help me with maths once a week. I feel valued and didn't expect to learn from someone from a different culture.
 6. I hear about a group of students at college who don't like immigrants and they want to take action. They invite me to join. I choose not to. I feel my mind is open to new experiences and people.
 7. I talk with a few people from the football group about how we need to do more things together so that we get to know about each other. We decide to speak to the local youth workers about this. I feel I can make a difference and feel good about myself.

A second scenario, featuring a 22 year old woman, can be found online at <https://www.salto-youth.net/rc/cultural-diversity/publications/>

Thanks to Farkhanda Chaudhry and Ghizala Avan for permission to reproduce this exercise that they facilitated during the 'Preventing Youth Extremism' seminar in Paris, April 2016

Useful resources

www.syp.org.uk

<https://cardiffyouthcouncil.com>

www.youthforum.org/vote-16

Eichhorn, J, Kenealy, D, Parry, R, Paterson, L and Remond, A (2015) Voting At 16 – What Next? 16–17 Year Olds' Political Attitudes And Civic Education

An example of a school-based peer mediation programme is available to access online at

www.salto-youth.net/rc/cultural-diversity/publications/

Conflict resolution skills

Given that many young people who have become involved in violent extremism believe that violence is the only option open to them – or the only way of resolving the conflict that concerns them – it is important to give young people opportunities in their formal and non-formal learning to understand the nature of conflict and to develop conflict resolution skills.

Civic and/or political engagement

There are a variety of ways in which we can support young people's engagement civically and politically. These include: introducing civic and political education in the formal school environment, creating opportunities to volunteer and serve the local community, ensuring that young people are consulted as part of policy-making processes and initiatives to encourage young people to register to vote.

Young people must feel they have a recognised role in improving their communities – otherwise they will not consider wider civic and political involvement. Being part of **social change** also helps to address the feeling of powerlessness that young people can experience - and is sometimes prevalent among those who get involved in violent extremism.

Taking this a step further, young people need to have opportunities to get involved in **decision-making processes** – and in holding decision makers and public servants to account. By doing so, young people

gain an understanding not just of the particular political landscape they find themselves in, but also of their own capacity to be part of change. Young people often need support to ensure their contribution to decision-making can be real and meaningful. Consultation aimed at young people can sometimes end up being meaningless; for example, when meetings to elicit young people's opinions are held during school or college hours, thus automatically excluding many young people.

The **rights** of children to express their views and for those views to be given due weight is enshrined in Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. This requires a number of actions on the part of adults:

- The provision of space for children and young people to express their views;
- The support to express them;
- The act of listening to what children and young people think;
- Acting upon their views appropriately.

(based on Lundy, 2007)

The key consideration in this context is not, how to give young people a voice, but how to ensure that voice is heard. If we respect the unique dignity of young people, our responsibility lies in ensuring that young people are supported to understand what they think and to say it.

For some young people, political engagement might mean that they take part in a municipal **youth forum** or a national youth parliament. Other young people may seek to combine social action with political activism, ensuring their voices are heard



through **lobbying and campaigning** on issues they care about (including designing, delivering and evaluating their own campaign projects). Numerous youth organisations and young activists across Europe are involved in campaign work to lower the voting age to 16, and there is evidence to suggest (from the example of Scotland's referendum on independence in 2014) that early voter enfranchisement along with political education can enhance young people's political participation.

These kinds of active citizenship and participation, based on values of non-violence and democracy, can make a positive difference to young people who have experienced exclusion on the basis of their age, and who feel disempowered as a result. They can also help in addressing the conditions that give rise to oppression or marginalisation.

In situations of conflict and post-conflict, there is a pressing need for young people to be included in **peace-building processes and initiatives**. There are many examples of the serious consequences when young people are not included in this way. In Palestine, youth workers noted how young people were prominently involved in political activism during the first and second intifada, but side-lined in the political processes that followed. This pushed some towards civic engagement with political structures, some to apathy and others to extremism.

It is important to discuss with colleagues and with young people how they can play a more inclusive role in building the society they want to live in, particularly in post-conflict scenarios – and to consider the structures that might support this.

Conscientisation

The power of civic youth work draws on a process known as **conscientisation**, developed by the Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire. In practical terms, this means supporting young people to develop a heightened critical awareness of their circumstances – and, on this basis, to identify priority issues and plan specific actions to bring about change.

The biggest barrier to this kind of youth-led approach can be young people's lack of **belief** in themselves – or their perception that 'nothing will ever change'. It can be very intimidating to be asked, 'What kind of project would you like to create?' especially for young people who have been used to clearly defined youth programmes delivered by a youth worker to a fixed schedule. To enable young people to respond positively to alternative approaches, which may actually bring them greater benefit, the youth worker should focus on developing relationships, supporting young people to articulate what they care about. This will help build the motivation to make a difference and to be active citizens.

Resources

Amplify Participation of Young People in Europe, Jochen Butt-Posnik and Raluca Diroescu

Civic Youth Work, Ross VeLure Roholt and Michael Baizerman

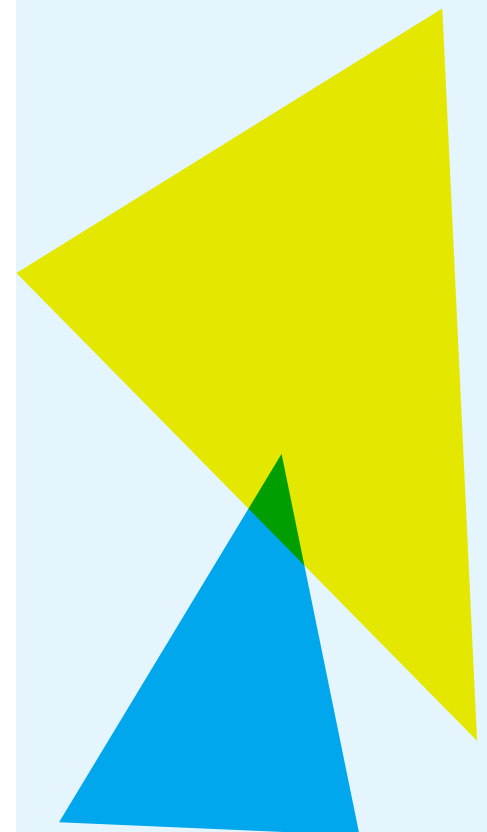
Empowerment of Young People for Political Participation in the Democratic Life in Europe, Luxembourg Presidency of the Council of the European Union, November 2015

Palestinian Youth Programme, American Friends Service Committee – <http://afsc.org/sites/afsc.civactions.net/files/documents/PYP%20Booklet%20English.pdf>

Young People and Democratic Life in Europe – What Next After the 2014 European Elections? Tomaž Deželan

Youth Influence – The Real Deal, Helena Gillinger

Youth Participation Good Practices in Different Forms of Regional and Local Democracy, Ann Gretschel, Tiina-Mana Levamo, Tomi Kiilakoski, Sofia Laine, Niina Mäntylä, Geoffrey Pleyers, Harri Raisio





Community engagement

It is widely agreed that young people need opportunities to develop a sense of connection with their local communities. Young people can sometimes feel disconnected from others in their neighbourhood, particularly if they are treated with suspicion or viewed as potential troublemakers. Many young people can tell stories about being followed by security guards when they enter a shopping centre or how – in the case of teenagers – they are asked to leave their schoolbags at the door of shops while adults are not. This sends out a message that young people are judged before they are given a chance to prove themselves – and that they are not valued for their abilities and potential.

Exposure to 'the other' is a critical part of young people's personal and social development.

It is especially important in neighbourhoods that are more insular or that are divided along ethnic or religious lines. It can help to reveal the real people behind commonly used labels or stereotypes. There are a variety of ways to ensure young people can experience different perspectives

that broaden their horizons and challenge their assumptions –

- **Site visits** to significant places of interest e.g. historical sites, memorials, places of worship and community centres;
- Inviting a **speaker** from a particular ethnic or religious community to talk about their cultural/religious traditions;
- Engaging in a **joint project** in partnership with another youth group in your locality – from a different community or background;
- Participating in an **exchange project** in partnership with another youth organisation to gain insight into a completely different context. In both this and the previous example, the partnering groups can design a joint programme where they will learn from each other's experiences.

The case study opposite offers a good example of how young people can be supported to develop positive connections with their local community as well as build relationships with those from different backgrounds to their own.

Case Study

Love Works Cooperative

The Love Works Cooperative is a worker-owned enterprise in Belfast, Northern Ireland, whose members are both shareholders and workforce, and it offers three key services:

Bike Repair – The Love Works team restores unwanted bikes then sells them at reduced prices as well as offering a repair service.

Bakery – Artisan breads including rye and sourdough loaves are baked by hand then sold at local markets or via subscription.

Gardening – The Love Works members provides landscaping for gardens in need of a general tidy up or a new look.

Love Works is located in North Belfast in an area of the city that experiences deprivation in multiple forms including unemployment, lower educational outcomes, above average crime rates and low income. The area is characterised by deep divisions between Northern Ireland's two main religious/political communities – Protestant/Loyalist and Catholic/Republican. More broadly the number of racially motivated crimes has increased in Northern Ireland as it has become more culturally diverse. While the historic Good Friday Agreement of 1998 brought an end to what was known as the 'Troubles', paramilitary groupings still hold sway in many communities through racketeering and organised crime, intimidation, orchestrating political violence or vigilantism including beatings and shootings.

The members of the cooperative are all young men, most are in their early twenties, some have been in trouble with the law, all have experienced unemployment, all have grown

up in Belfast's divided inner-city communities and all are very familiar with the control held by members of paramilitary groupings in these localities. The members are a mix of the two main religious/political communities.

Being part of Love Works has had a huge impact on the lives of these young men who take great pride as members; some liken it to being part of a family. Many say that it has given them a sense of purpose, that it has helped them to make better choices for their lives, and that if they hadn't become involved they would now be in trouble with the police or with paramilitaries.

In early 2016 following the arrival of refugees from Syria in Belfast as part of a resettlement scheme, Love Works was asked to facilitate a photography project giving the local members and new arrivals a chance to work together and communicate how they experience their surroundings through a camera lens. A number of the refugees have remained involved in Love Works helping with the workload. While there was some initial reticence on the part of the local members, this project demonstrates the way in which the project has made deliberate choices to introduce diversity:

"The other element is to introduce difference, introduce diversity so that it doesn't become another ghetto. At various stages you're introducing something that is bringing challenge where there's a kind of reciprocation of dialogue, something has happened that is provoking in some way, provoking conversation." (Richard Higginson, Love Works founder)

<https://loveworkscoop.com/>

As the Love Works Cooperative case study demonstrates, it is not enough for young people simply to engage in social activities with groups of young people from different backgrounds to themselves. It is much more meaningful to support more deliberate and intentional relationship building and dialogue between the different groups – in a safe and non-judgemental environment – so that each gets to hear the other's stories and experiences. In this way the young people become better informed, myths are challenged, and they can learn to respect differences and focus instead on common ground that brings them together.

Social capital

A useful concept when considering community engagement, 'social capital' refers to the community networks, wellbeing and trust created by relationships between individuals and groups. A core component of positive social capital is 'bridging', where there are opportunities for individuals from different backgrounds or belief systems to go outside their own networks and make connections with others in ways that might otherwise not be possible. It is important that youth workers understand the role they can play in connecting the young people they work with to other worlds or contexts.





Cultural symbols

AIM:

To explore the meanings behind a variety of cultural/religious/political symbols. To encourage a sense that difference is normal, different groups can learn from each other and diversity is healthy

RESOURCES:

A collection of different religious/faith symbols, badges, flags, national dress or clothing, sporting equipment, political/national emblems, and photos that represent a wide spectrum of religious, cultural and political identities relevant to your local context.

DESCRIPTION:

This activity can be done in different ways – for example, with a group that is quite homogenous, so that they can gain an understanding of diversity in their community; or it can be used when bringing together two different groups of young people, perhaps from different backgrounds, as a means of enabling them to share with each other the various symbols that are important to them.

METHOD:

Spread out the collection of symbols around the room and encourage the participants to walk around the room. Encourage them to pick them up and have a good look at the various items. Explain that they may feel comfortable with some of them and not others.

Ask the participants to each choose a symbol – one that means a lot to them or that they can relate to. Ask each person to describe the object they chose and explain why it is important to them.

Repeat the exercise by asking participants to choose an object they don't know about and would like to ask a question about. Encourage the rest of the participants to answer each other's questions. If a question cannot be answered, suggest that it is something to investigate later.

We all share some parts of our identity with others. There are also lots of different identities. The young people may relate to some of these and not others. Use this as an opportunity to teach the young people about their own culture and to get a broad understanding of different viewpoints.

(Adapted with permission from YouthLink: NI, 2004)

Useful reading

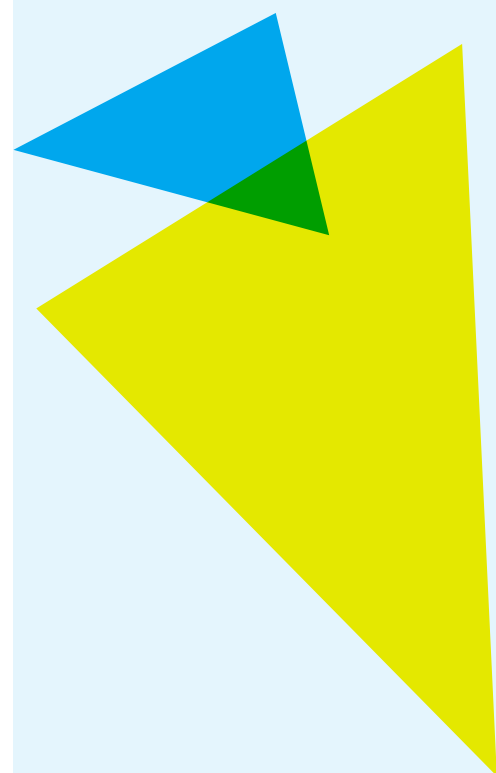
Rough Justice, Ken Harland and Sam McCready

Kairos – A Journey In Understanding, Youth Link: NI

Social capital. The Encyclopaedia of Informal Education, MK Smith <http://infed.org/mobi/social-capital>

Value the Difference Resource Pack

<https://www.salto-youth.net/rc/cultural-diversity/publications/valuedifferencesresourcepack/>



Restorative justice

In situations where there is actual or potential violent conflict between different communities, and a risk that young people will become involved, restorative justice can provide useful learning. Restorative justice encourages offenders to understand the impact of their wrongdoing on their victims – and take responsibility by seeking to make amends. It emphasises the victim's perspective, opens up the possibility for offenders to be restored to more positive (and law-abiding) pathways, and also helps to restore relationships in the wider

community. Where, for example, young people are being influenced by violent groups such as right-wing extremists seeking to stir up violence against minorities, it may be useful to consider ways in which the young people can hear the voices of victims (those who have suffered as a result of hate crime) or the voices of former offenders (those who have made negative choices in hurting others and have decided to live a different way).



Thanks to

Rajaa Belhourania for the material she presented during the 'Preventing Youth Extremism' seminar in Paris, April 2016 that formed the basis of this section.

Responding to individual young people

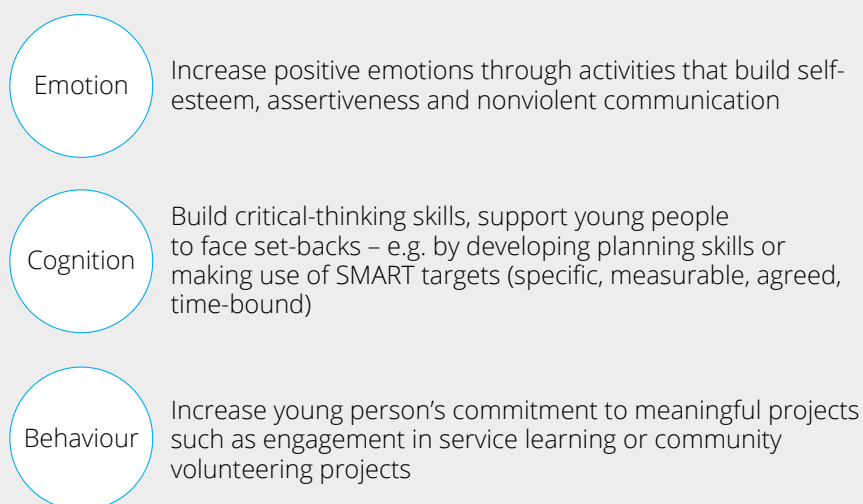
The following analytical model can be used to inform our responses to individual young people. It recognises that the way people think and interpret objective situations directly influences their behaviour and feelings. The model shows how the youth worker can focus on each of the three categories of cognition, emotion and behaviour – in order to reinforce young people's cognitive resources, support emotional skills development and increase commitment to voluntary social action.

Figure 2: Responses to young people

Pre-radicalisation signs

This section describes what youth workers can do in their regular activities with young people, to help pre-empt influence from destructive narratives. The recommended approach is to encourage participation in learning that will ensure young people are not swayed by radical discourse leading to violent actions.

Pre-radicalisation



The CPRLV also suggests that there are a number of 'protective factors' that can equip a young person to resist indoctrination. These include:

- A non-violent social network (face-to-face or online)
- A quality relationship with a positive role model
- Critical thinking and broad-mindedness
- Stable relational environment
- Ability to handle emotions
- Tolerance towards ambiguity (grey area)
- Opportunity for positive social advocacy
- Empathy towards others.

Post-radicalisation signs

This section addresses the approach a youth worker might take if a young person they are working with is showing some signs of radicalisation (e.g. 'troubling' behaviours as defined by the CPRLV above) The objective at this point is to limit or stop the process of radicalisation. At this point the youth worker can apply some of the strategies outlined in the diagram below:

Post-radicalisation

Emotion

Help maintain the young person's connections with their social environment as well as their education

Cognition

Discussion and dialogue in order to understand the young person's motivations, encourage them to express and develop in the other aspects of their identity e.g. career aspirations, cultural expression and sport

Behaviour

Help ensure the young person continues to engage in and is included in youth activities.

The CPRLV also makes a number of practical suggestions:

- Encourage the person to talk to you and do not make them feel guilty
- Listen – without passing judgement on the person's needs, beliefs, ideals... in order to maintain ties
- Adopt a non-punitive attitude (for example, do not forbid the person to have internet access, do not ground them, etc.), so that the person does not withdraw into themselves
- Remain vigilant and keep an eye on how the situation develops.

Organisational strategies

In this section, the focus is on helping workers to think about their approach to working in the area of young people and extremism, from the perspective of their organisation. It does not present specific interventions, but suggests ideas about activities and support structures for face-to-face engagement with young people, under two categories: organisations and local contextual awareness.

Organisations

It is essential that organisations have the appropriate **facilities and space to meet young people** – whether these are physical or virtual space, and whether the activities with young people take place in designated premises or on the street, through detached street-work.

The No-Nazi.net case study overleaf is a good example of a project that uses virtual spaces (online forums and social media) to engage with young people and create space online. In contrast to centre-based youth work, detached youth work takes place where young people meet – for example, in parks, public spaces or residential areas. The advantage of this approach, which focuses on meeting young people on their own terms, is that it can create opportunities to engage with young people who do not usually access youth services. However, detached youth work is a specialist area; it requires detailed policies and procedures in place to ensure the engagement and activities with young people are appropriate and safe.



Case Study

No-Nazi.net

Germany

No-Nazi.net is a social network platform serving as a resource for young people, parents and educators. This project was established in 2011 by the Amadeu Antonio Foundation, which leads a range of initiatives for civic empowerment and democratic culture, particularly in response to the growth in neo-Nazi subculture in Germany

The Foundation seeks to highlight neo-Nazi and extreme right-wing activity while taking concrete and proactive steps to eliminate the real and on-going threat such groups pose to German democracy and pluralism. Online hate speech is one of its key areas of focus and the project represents a very deliberate effort to counter extremism in the virtual world:

'Neo-Nazis are extremely successful with social media. While right-wing activists encounter more and more resistance in the real public space, they increasingly use the internet as a forum, where it doesn't take much to spread their racist worldview. Hiding behind innocuous-seeming identities and campaigns, they can appear less harmful than they really are.' Amadeu Antonio Foundation

With over 11,000 followers on its Facebook platform, No-nazi.net is aimed at young people aged 13–18, and uses a peer education approach (recognising that young people are more likely to be influenced by other young people). In creating a safe, social network, free of neo-Nazi ideas and references, No-Nazi.net works to create a critical mass, believing that where people come together, they can generate more ideas and be much more effective as a community than alone.

The Foundation also carries out monitoring of neo-Nazi campaigns and activities on various social media networks. This data is then used for awareness-raising activities with schools, communities and other agencies in order to motivate others to take action against these movements.

In 2016 No-Nazi.net published a leaflet directly tackling the issue of anti-refugee rhetoric and called, 'Hate Speech against Refugees in Social Media: Recommendations for Action.' This offers practical ways in which to counter racist hate speech online as well as a comprehensive overview of how it can be recognised, reported and dealt with in the justice system.

www.amadeu-antonio-stiftung.de/eng/we-are-active/campaigns/hate-speech-online/

www.facebook.com/nonazinet

www.netz-gegen-nazis.de/

www.counterextremism.org/resources/details/id/662/no-nazi.net

www.amadeu-antonio-stiftung.de/w/files/pdfs/eng_hetze-gegen-fluechtlinge.pdf

Support for staff and volunteers, particularly those in direct contact with young people, is essential to ensure consistency in the services provided. This support can take the form of **supervision** – for example, by a line manager – or in a group setting, where a group of youth workers come together to discuss current issues and challenges, and to identify and share their learning.

There are many benefits from setting aside time for supervision in this way – benefits for youth workers, for their organisations and ultimately the young people they work with. It can provide a kind of 'breathing space' – an opportunity for reflection and distance from the constant cycle of planning, organising, co-ordinating and delivering activities and programmes. Supervision can also help staff to develop their critical and analytical thinking skills, as they reflect on conversations with young people and evaluate projects.

Given the complexity, sensitivity and seriousness of extremism (particularly violent extremism), it is all the more important that youth workers have the support they need to sustain them in this work, particularly if they are working closely with young people who may be at risk of involvement in violent activities.



Organisations that engage with young people directly need to ensure that they have appropriate **internal structures** and detailed policies and procedures to address issues that may arise in the area of young people and extremism. All staff and volunteers connected with the organisation must be familiar with these policies and procedures. While it is impossible to predict every situation that might possibly occur, it is important to ensure clear lines of reporting and communication. It is also important to demonstrate how the response to a particular set of circumstances should be informed by the organisation's overall mission and core values.

The collection of scenarios at the end of this section can be used for discussion with colleagues in your own organisation or with counterparts. They will help you to think about possible approaches in situations relating to young people and extremism – and to consider what further action your organisation needs to take in order to prepare itself.

Finally, organisations should have an awareness of their local, regional and national **policy environment**, particularly in relation to policies that affect young people directly – in education, enterprise, employment, health, justice and

The main goal is to ensure that young people are the beneficiaries of youth policy.

social development. While not every youth worker will have a specific role in advocacy, most will have opportunities to articulate the needs of young people and to highlight ways in which the policies of central and local government could be better aligned with young people's interests and needs. Sometimes this will require youth workers to describe the difference that youth work and non-formal learning can make to individual young people. They can also highlight the consequences (and costs) if the activity or service were removed.

For example, many youth workers in the UK felt that austerity policies resulting in the closure of youth centres were a contributory factor in the riots that took place in London and other major cities in 2011. Such activities may also help to secure funding and long-term sustainability for your organisation's activities with young people. The main goal is to ensure that young people are the beneficiaries of youth policy.

Online resource

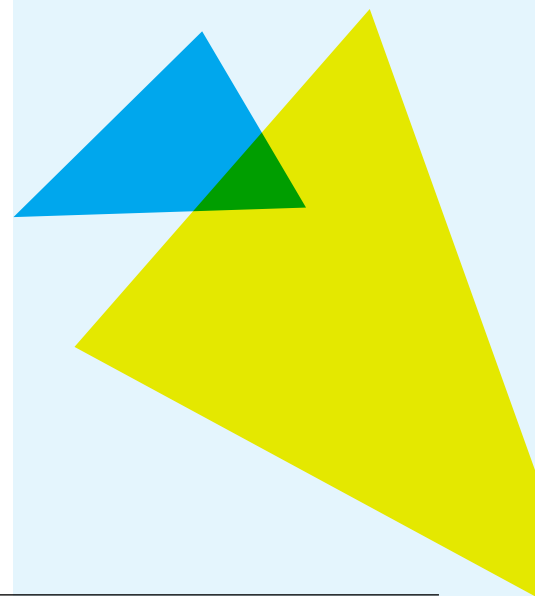
Mapping Organisations, Programmes, Projects and Services
<https://www.salto-youth.net/rc/cultural-diversity/publications/>

Questions for personal reflection

- To what extent do the young people I work with experience security, significance and solidarity when they take part in the youth activities I facilitate? How do I know?
 - How comfortable do I feel about working with the experience in the room rather than delivering a set programme?
 - What are the skills I need to develop to apply the various youth work methodologies and strategies mentioned in this section?
 - What do I need to work on in order to increase my confidence as a group facilitator?
 - What issues do I feel confident to address with young people? What issues do I feel reluctant to address with young people? Why? What do I need to do to increase my confidence?
-

Questions for reflection with young people

- When does violence start?
- What are the spaces where you can be yourself?
- What do you need to be heard in this community or more widely?





Local contextual awareness

The use of contextual analysis and action research can help workers to better understand their context – its specific local problems and challenges – and to develop more effective ways of working with young people at their point of need.

Networking

Networking is a key skill for anyone involved in work with young people. Meeting other youth workers from different organisations not only provides mutual support, but also leads to sharing of learning and ideas for practice. Meeting practitioners in other areas of relevance to young people can bring further benefits including healthcare workers, teachers and educators, religious leaders, social workers, politicians, community leaders and police. Building up relationships and connections in these different professional contexts enables you to call upon support or advice when you need it – and to be more effective in working towards the best possible outcomes for young people. Such connections can also give rise to new partnerships – for example, in support of a joint initiative or project.

When mapping your local context, it is useful to consider who else (individuals or groups) is interested in the specific issue or change you want to pursue and to determine the nature of that interest. This will help you to understand local **power dynamics**. Will those individuals or groups be supportive of what your organisation wants to achieve or change? Or will they be unsupportive, whether passively or actively? This will help you to get a sense of who might be your allies or adversaries. It may even be possible that those who you think are not on your side may be able to help you after all, perhaps by helping you to understand

what the obstacles are. However, there may be others who act as 'gatekeepers' and block access to information or to particular people.

It can be useful to involve young people in mapping the local context – for example, where a group of young people has already identified a specific local issue they want to work on. The knowledge and understanding gained can help the young people in planning how they will address the issue more effectively.

Scenario discussion

Description: The following scenarios will help youth workers, policy-makers and others who work with young people to reflect on how they might respond to potential instances of radicalisation.

Method

Read the scenario then work through each of the questions and come up with an action plan in your group.

1. You have heard that Neo Nazis are operating in your area and there are rumours that they are recruiting in the area. There has been an increase of refugees in this area due to empty housing stock. You have noticed some leaflets in the youth room, which contain messages of hate and promote the idea that foreigners are changing the 'way of life' in your country. You suspect that some of the young people you work with have brought them in.
2. You work in a multicultural area where unemployment is high and there are ethnic tensions. You have been working for two years with Sophia, who is 16 years old; one evening she appears wearing a hijab.

3. Jason is a young person you have worked with for some time. He has always held very strong opinions. Recently he has spoken to you about how angry he feels towards testing on animals. He tells you he has attended a meeting of an organisation that does something about this. He names the organisation, which is known to you, and he has been involved in violent acts in the past.
4. You have been working in a multicultural area and you work with a group of diverse young people. In the group there are a number of young people of Somali heritage whom you consider to be well integrated with their peers. You know that they sometimes go partying and drinking with their peers. Recently two brothers from the same ethnic background have joined the group. Their father is the imam in the local mosque. You pick up tensions between the recent arrivals and the rest of the young people. The young people tell you that the recent arrivals are frowning upon them because they smoke and don't pray. They tell you that the two brothers are insisting that they also attend a youth group in the mosque and that their father will be speaking to their parents so that they send them to the youth group in the mosque.
5. Shortly after a terrorist attack in your country, there are serious tensions amongst the youth that you work with. You know that some of the parents identify with far right ideology. White young people begin to single out the minority ethnic young people telling them that they are the ones that have caused the terrorist attack. You learn that some of them have threatened the minority ethnic young people – telling them to watch out and that their families are going to 'get it'.

6. You have recently started to work in a local authority council. Your job is to work at a strategic level. The number one priority is to prevent radicalisation. How would you develop this new department leading on radicalisation? The general objective is to bring together all services and all the different actors who bring experience and expertise on the subject of radicalisation.

Questions for discussion of each scenario:

- What can you do in this situation? Which of the strategies highlighted in this pack would you employ? What other ideas can you explore to address these scenarios?
- What would be the key features of your approach? What values would be particularly relevant?
- What can someone else do?
- What can your organisation do?
- What difficulties would you face?
- What would you need to help you? What information do you need to address similar scenarios if they arise in the community you work in?
- How will you know if your approach has been successful?

Thanks to Farkhanda Chaudhry and Ghizala Avan for permission to reproduce these scenarios that they used as part of an exercise during the 'Preventing Youth Extremism' seminar in Paris, April 2016

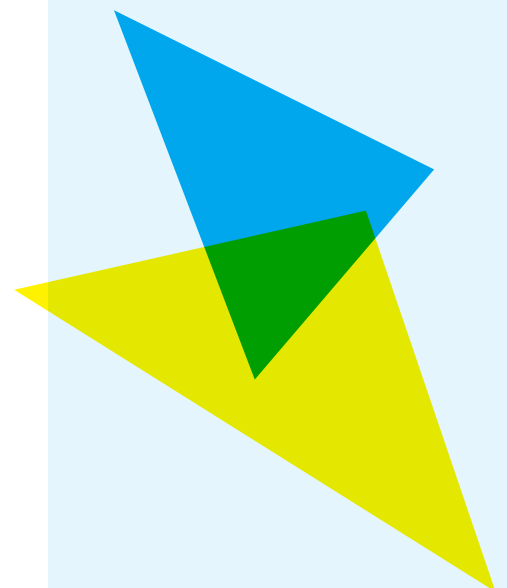
Questions for reflection for you and your organisation

- What are the structures that might support young people to be part of building the society they want to live in?
- Take time to discuss the scenarios at the end of this section with colleagues. Which of the approaches described above might be useful and at what stage might they be applied? What other approaches or actions could be helpful in these situations?
- How can we make a difference in the youth policy environment? How can we ensure that young people's needs are central in any policies that affect their lives?

Questions for peer reflection

It is important to recognise the challenges inherent in working in the area of young people and extremism, including radicalisation. Key questions include:

- What does it take to do this work? How do we sustain ourselves?
- How do we process these issues with each other (safely)?
- How are we to model – as youth workers and human beings – appropriate ways to work in the area of young people and extremism, including radicalisation?



Part 6: Using the Erasmus+ Programme framework



International experiences and exposure to alternative points of view can be effective tools in enabling young people to view their own experiences and contexts from a different angle. Such opportunities open up new possibilities to apply fresh understandings of their home environment and handle different perspectives. (Youth Council for Northern Ireland, 2015)

Erasmus+, the EU programme for education, training, youth and sport, aims to modernise education, training and youth work across Europe, by developing knowledge and skills, and increasing the quality and relevance of qualifications. provides access to international experience – not only to individuals, but also to their organisations enabling them to develop policy and practice, and so offer improved opportunities for learners.

Benefits from involvement in Erasmus+ youth projects include:

- improvement in young people's skills and competences for active citizenship, democratic participation, employment and entrepreneurship, intercultural dialogue and social inclusion;
- improvement in the quality of youth work (though co-operation between youth organisations and other stakeholders);
- improvement in policy development and the recognition of non-formal and informal learning (through co-operation between policy-makers at local, regional and national levels, use of recognition tools and exchange of good practices);
- improvement in the capacity of youth workers and youth organisations for European and international partnership activities.

(Based on Erasmus+ Programme Guide 2017, page 29)

The guidance below highlights elements of a successful international partnership and provides guidance on applying for Erasmus+ funding.

Preparing for a successful partnership

- Ensure you set aside time to discuss and clarify each partner's expectations for the project, their organisation's values and objectives, including the specific benefits they are seeking for young people.
- Ensure that everyone has a clear understanding of the requirements for applicants, bearing in mind that these can change according to the type of project proposed.
- Make use of a planning tool such as a logic model (see link overleaf):
 - Discuss and agree desired outcomes for the project, i.e. what does success look like?
 - Plan for how you are going to evaluate the success of the project, e.g. how do you know if you have achieved your intended outcomes?
 - Identify the resources needed.
 - List the activities that will take place during the preparation, delivery and post-delivery phases and agree specific outputs or targets as necessary (e.g. numbers participating, numbers of workshops or group work sessions).
 - Ensure that the methodologies chosen fit with the desired outcomes and have a clear rationale for all of the activities.
 - Ensure there is a good plan in place for selection and preparation of participants.
- Make use of a written agreement to confirm expectations, desired outcomes, and clarify detail on all practical matters, including:
 - Financial responsibilities: who is paying for what, what kind of

resources are each of the partners putting into the project (remember that this can include staff time as well as physical resources) and who will be responsible for reconciling and reporting on the overall project budget.

- Deadlines for completion of the relevant tasks at each stage of the project.
- Division of roles and responsibilities. It is also worth discussing a code of conduct for all staff and volunteers working on the project with the young people.
- All partners' responsibilities in preparing and implementing fair and transparent decisions on project management.
- All partners' responsibilities in responding to risks and emergencies.
- All partners' commitment to project planning, implementation and evaluation, together with follow-up activities in dissemination of results.
- Ensure there is clear, honest and regular communication in all phases of the project:
 - Keep partners informed regarding any changes or unexpected situations that arise in relation to the project.
 - Keep others informed if there is going to be difficulty adhering to what has been agreed in the written agreement.
- Ensure logistical arrangements are included in detailed planning: have clear agreement on type and location of accommodation and types and means of travel.

Question for reflection

- What information do you need to pursue a partnership with another organisation, whether locally or transnationally?

Logic Models

A logic model is a simple visual way of presenting the relationship between the problem you aim to solve, the resources available, the activities you plan and the changes or results you hope to achieve

More information on using logical models can be found online here:

<https://www.youthimpact.uk/resources-hub/designing-impact/logic-model-builder>

<https://www.erasmusplus.org.uk/erasmus-uk-logic-model>

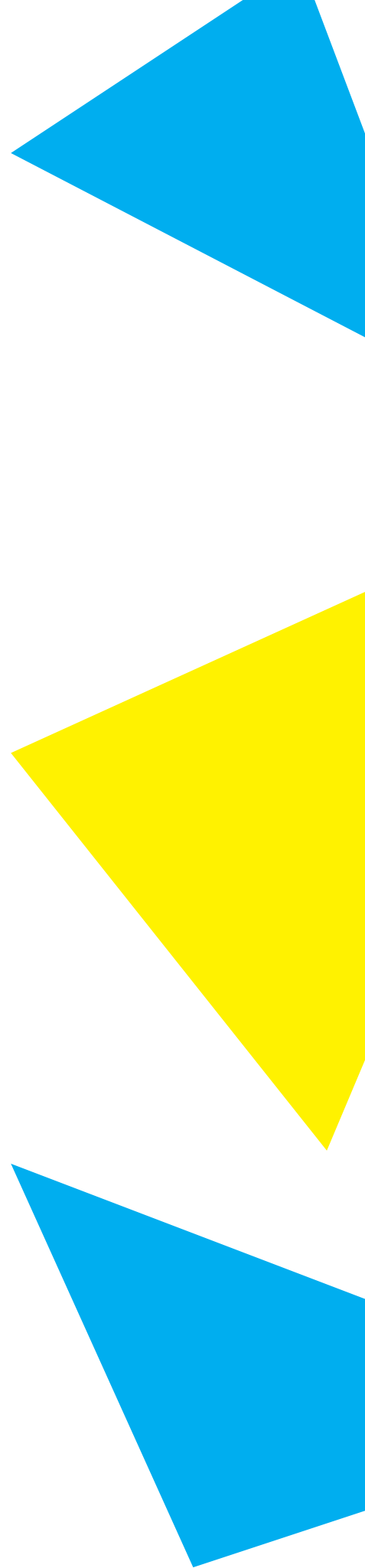
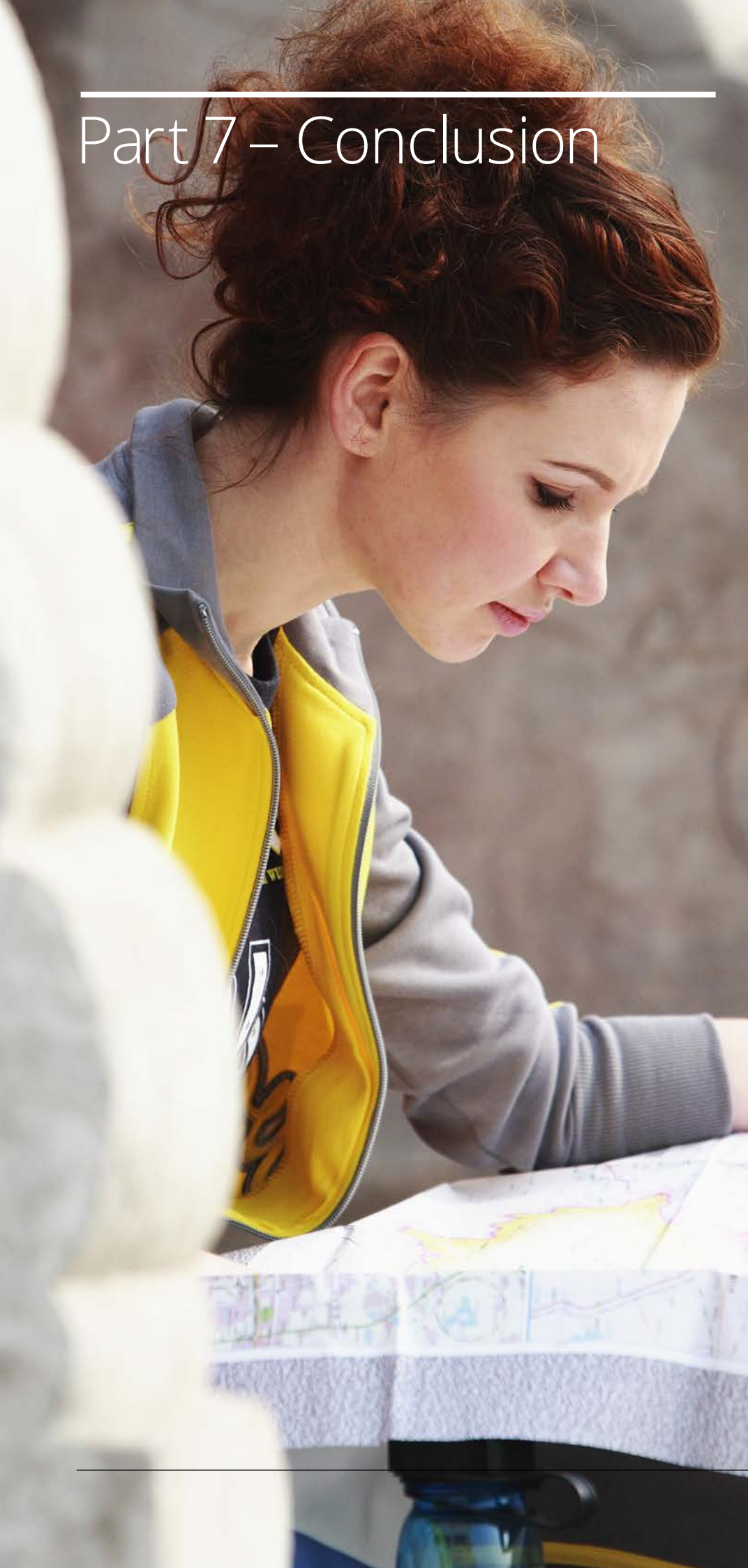
An example logic model



Source: adapted from W.K. Kellogg Foundation



Part 7 – Conclusion



As youth workers, and others with responsibility for young people's non-formal learning, we must address difficult and sensitive issues directly, openly and honestly. We must invite young people into problem-solving discussions and support them in making a difference on the issues that affect their lives.



Another world is not only possible, she is on her way. On a quiet day, I can hear her breathing.
(Arundhati Roy)

“Youth work and youth workers must go further and be in the forefront of offering a real voice and real, non-tokenistic, participative democratic political education and involvement to young people at local and community level. Youth workers should not fear entering into such discussion, dialogue and action as the alternative may be further alienation, segregation and communal violence.” (Alan Grattan)

This resource pack has focused on the relevance of civic youth work to the broad area of young people and extremism. It has emphasised the influence of our perspectives on young people in general. There is a need for youth workers, most of all, to avoid seeing young people in terms of difficulties and deficiencies – and instead to respond fully to young people's abilities and creativity. By using civic youth work as an approach, young people can be supported to take on the role of co-creators of social change, and be equal partners in shaping a world no longer threatened by violent extremism.

As stated at the outset, one publication cannot by itself reduce the risks from extremism – and especially violent extremism. We will not necessarily see immediate results from putting the suggestions outlined here into practice. Youth work in the area of young people and extremism is gradual, painstaking work; it requires our full commitment and perseverance. At the same time, there is huge potential to gain new learning and to continually improve our practice – particularly if we do so together with young people, letting them teach us about how they experience the world and how they would like us to work with them.

As youth workers, and others with responsibility for young people's non-formal learning, we must address difficult and sensitive issues directly, openly and honestly. We must invite young people into problem-solving discussions and support them in making a difference to the situations that affect their lives.

The Erasmus+ programme can support initiatives that explore social integration, intercultural understanding, active citizenship and inclusion as well as extremism

and radicalisation. Youth workers, and others with responsibility for young people's non-formal learning, are urged to explore this potential – not just to access funding support but as the basis for wider co-operation and exchange.

You are invited to use this resource pack to reflect on the ideas that have been presented, on your own practice and your opportunities to address these issues – whether you work in face-to-face settings with young people or are involved at policy level.

- If you engage directly with young people, try out some of the activities, and discuss and evaluate them with young people. Get together with colleagues and ask questions, identify learning from your activities and apply new ideas and approaches project development.
- Use critical reflection to explore your values, expand your critical thinking skills and safeguard your welfare in the midst of difficult work.
- If you are involved in policymaking, seek out ways in which to support action research, and to support ways ensure young people's voices and perspectives are heard.

Finally, always remember to hope. Humans are inherently creative beings. With young people, we can explore alternatives to extremism, partner with them in finding new pathways that lead away from violence actions, and support them in believing that another world is possible.

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Young people and extremism: a resource for youth workers

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