

POLICY PAPER

Harnessing the power of digital media
tools to prevent the radicalisation of
vulnerable youth



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A short overview of the CONCORDIA project

1.1 What is the CONCORDIA project?

The CONCORDIA Project - Harnessing the power of digital media tools to prevent the radicalisation of vulnerable youth was selected for funding by JUGEND für Europa as part of the EU funded ERASMUS+ Programme. The project was selected as a strategic partnership in the youth field as a project focused on cooperation for innovation and exchange of good practices between organisations active in the youth development field.

The CONCORDIA project consortium comprises eight partner organisations drawn from eight different Member States and includes organisations with expertise in front-line youth development work; the design and delivery of education and training materials and programmes; the development and provision of continuous professional development training; digital and social media production training; web development and the design of intuitive e-learning environments. The partner organisations are:

1. Jugendförderverein Parchim/Lübz e.V. (Germany)
2. Asociatia pentru Educatie si Dezvoltare Durabila (Romania)
3. Die Kärntner Volkshochschulen (Austria)
4. Centrum inspirace (Czech Republic)
5. Future In Perspective Limited (Ireland)
6. Etudes Et Chantiers Corsica (France)
7. SYNTHESIS Center for Research and Education Limited (Cyprus)
8. Innoventum Oy (Finland)

The work of the CONCORDIA project consortium has focussed on three inter-related strands of intervention to address the growing radicalization of disenfranchised indigenous, migrant and refugee youth throughout Europe. As each of the individual strands were innovative in their own right project partners believed that the combination of the three different strands would represent a completely new dimension in the field of front-line youth development work.

The first strand incorporated the design and implementation of a bespoke media development training programme to support the continuous professional development of youth professionals. The second strand of the project focussed on the design and development of a suite of sample prototype materials to demonstrate how media content can be produced using available technology platforms like smartphones to counteract the most insidious extremist narratives. The third strand centred around the development of an On-line Observatory of Best Practice that would assemble in one location some of the excellent interventions that have been developed over the last few years to tackle some of the more common types of abuse like bullying, racism, homophobia, xenophobia, etc.

Throughout the 24-month project development and implementation lifecycle, between September 2016 and August 2018, the partner organisations involved in the project consortium worked extensively with front-line youth service providers, educators and

trainers, migrant support workers and representatives of the RAN networks in their home countries.

1.2 Why is the CONCORDIA project important?

Europe faces a real and ongoing threat from violent extremism. A small minority of groups continue to present false arguments and reasoning that seek to justify attacks on innocent civilians. Member States are being urged to take measures to prevent extremist voices and messages reaching those who are most vulnerable to these radical views. Research indicates that the demographics of those at risk of radicalization in relation to religion, age, sex, education and financial backgrounds vary and that those at risk are not necessarily identified as disadvantaged youth. What has been found is that many young people from all social classes become radicalized in response to emotive messages and visuals and through frustration or outrage at perceived injustice or inequality. There is no obvious profile of a person likely to become involved in extremism or a single indicator of when a person might move to adopt violence in support of extremist ideas.

Radical extremists have shown a mastery of global communication networks, using the Internet to disseminate graphic videos and electronic magazines to spread anti-establishment rhetoric and volumes of 'fake news' items to attract potential sympathizers. On social media, extremists echo these messages and reach out to the curious and impressionable. As of the second quarter of 2018, Facebook had 2.23 billion monthly active users and is used by extremists to share information and propaganda and to identify potential recruits. As of the first quarter of 2017, Twitter had 328 million monthly active users and acts a vehicle to disseminate information in real time, providing 'breaking news' which can be real or fake, often to gain sympathy or incite violence or hostility. Extremist groups use engaging visuals and hip-hop soundtracks on YouTube to target young people. Cyber magazines such as Inspire and Dabig share skilfully edited information and images to reach a wide audience. Today's young digital natives are increasingly addicted to competitive online gaming where much of the action takes place in hostile environments. The pro-aggression attitude within the on-line gaming world promotes bullying, harassment, homophobia, racism and misogyny.

There are a range of extremist groups and narratives that promote the use of violence, which affect individuals and communities right across Europe. These include ISIS; Al Qaida; extreme Right and Left Wing quasi-political groups. Global events like the economic crisis and the conflicts in North Africa that spawned the recent influx of migrants throughout Europe are also impacting local communities. These can sometimes lead to community tensions, fuel suspicion, and create divisions between people from different cultures and backgrounds. Tensions in local communities between different ethnic groups; feelings of grievance and injustice; 'them and us' thinking; a need for identity, meaning and belonging are just some of the factors that are common place in Europe today and these factors help create the perfect conditions for radical extremists to operate.

The radicalization of vulnerable youth within Europe is a relatively new issue and the latest one that youth professional and front-line staff are being asked to address. CONCORDIA provides an innovative and comprehensive response to support youth professionals and other front-line workers. The CONCORDIA project provides a platform for front-line youth workers and Europe's young people to mitigate the impact of radicalization.

1.3 What has the CONCORDIA project achieved?

Since September 2016, the following outputs have been developed by the CONCORDIA project consortium:

1. Summary Research Report - Establishing the state-of-the-art & needs analysis. A research framework that set out the nature and scope of the research to be conducted was provided by SYNTHESIS. All partners conducted desk-based and field-based research and in the process engaged with all appropriate stakeholders at local level. All partners compiled country specific research reports from which a Summary Research Report that presented a synopsis of the main findings was produced. The research findings provided a benchmark for all ensuing development actions. The Summary Research Report clearly identified that while the radicalization threat differs from country to country, digital and social media are extensively used by subversive and extremist groups to engage vulnerable youth.
2. Countering Radicalization Continuous Professional Development Training Curriculum - The CONCORDIA project has developed and piloted a completely new continuous professional development training curriculum that empowers front-liners to deal with the threat of radicalization. The training provided focused on the use of readily available digital media tools and platforms like smart-phones, tablets, etc. and built the key skill sets necessary to enable front-liners to produce versatile and robust counter radicalization media-rich materials. The curriculum is made up of two distinct elements;
 - a suite of media production and social media management skills development modules that were piloted during a five-day training workshop in Germany.
 - a suite of on-line self-directed learning modules that focus on developing core skills to assist front-line workers to understand the radicalization process; identify those at risk of being radicalized; respond to the threat of radicalization in group and one-to-one sessions.

The curriculum was designed as a blended learning training course and comprised a total of 100 hours of study.

3. Sample Media Content Tool-kit with Tip-sheets - a suite of sample media outputs

was also produced. These samples were developed as prototypes that the front-line workers could copy or emulate and included a series of short viral videos; 3 short audio files; a sample web-blog, Facebook page, Twitter feed and Instagram account.

4. E-learning Portal – this online environment provides access to all the CONCORDIA resources. The portal is optimized for mobile access and functions equally well on laptop, tablet or smartphone devices.
5. On-line Observatory of Best Practice – a second round of research was conducted by all partners to identify 3 best practice examples that could be made available to support front-line practitioners on the observatory. These best practices include projects, methodologies, tools and resources that were identified by partner organisations. The observatory provides instant access to a library of tools and resources that support the fight against radicalization and extremism.
6. The present policy paper “Countering the Radicalization of Vulnerable Youth - A Front-line Approach”



Why the CONCORDIA model represents an innovative and timely intervention to support front-liners?

Dealing with the threat of radicalization is a new challenge facing front-line youth professionals. Few, if any, of those working in the field have had the necessary training to successfully harness the power of available digital media to counteract the radicalization threat. A policy paper questionnaire was distributed to key stakeholders in each partner country. The main highlights of the responses are as follows:

What is your opinion regarding the CONCORDIA project approach of providing bespoke digital and social media production and management training supports to front-line service providers to enable them to counteract the extremist narratives that are widely promoted through digital and social media platforms?

- The digital and social media production elaborated by the Concordia project partners is useful from two points of view:
 - The good analysis of the issue of radicalization helps us to understand the situation in European countries.
 - It provides us the contents and tools for digital media creation.
- Great pleasure to discover the Concordia project and its approach which is comprehensive, pedagogical and very actual. It is an interesting resource for all: vulnerable youth as well as different front line workers.
- The project follows a holistic approach in addressing key challenges such as counteracting the extremist narratives that promote radicalization.
- I appreciate the active approach of the CONCORDIA project that seeks to raise awareness in this area. Educating people is crucial area because we have to work with the prejudices people have. Digital and social media are currently the closest sources of information to reach relevant target audiences. Therefore, I find this project very beneficial.
- I think it's very important, that front-line service providers learn how to use modern social media and digital platforms, because most of them aren't "Digital natives" and therefore have a tremendous need to catch up. Without knowing the functionality, without having the necessary skills and knowing how to use social and digital media it's almost impossible or very hard for the front-line service providers to handle the problems, which occur on social media platforms or which are intensified through the Internet, and to help affected youngsters.
- In addition to that many front-line service providers feel being left alone with the actual problems, that nobody cares how they should solve the problems or handle the situation and therefore would appreciate it to know that there is help and support, which they only have to accept and to use, that there are possibilities and ways how they can educate themselves to gain the skills for solving the problems easier – and without being alone. In the CONCORDIA discussion forum on the Online Observatory platform people with similar problems can talk to each other, solve them together, find similar case studies and get inspired by new ideas or best practice examples.
- It's a courageous approach, as we have not seen in our region. Service providers for youth even needed this. I participated in the multiplier event organized by AESD and

we really felt our discussion partners. We look forward to seeing the final project conference.

- Providing bespoke digital and social media production and management training is very important for me
 - in Internet there is unlimited access to child-endangering content, which is not always easy to classify and understand for me
 - to enable us to introduce youth competently to digital media
 - to enable us to integrate the conscious use of digital media and social networks in learning processes
- It's a pioneering approach for the Cypriot society. Currently, there is no such training or any other policy for professionals working with the Youths on how to prevent radicalization and extremism.
- I think it is very important to provide useful training material to all teachers and trainers to enable them dealing with extremist ideas. An extremist mind-set is a learned behaviour and therefore it can be unlearned and replaced by other attitudes and opinions. It is very important to talk about it and to share ideas and experiences with colleagues to find ways to cope with difficult teenagers and their attitudes.
- The CONCORDIA project is a very important project amongst others in the battle against radicalisation of vulnerable youth, which nowadays occurs in our digital world more and more on social media platforms. The project makes an important contribution and helps countering antidemocratic and misanthropic attitudes through the help of social media in a sustainable way.
- The approach is very interesting as it tackles the issue through new and innovative ways such as social media production. As the numbers show, most young people interact with each other on social media and therefore by using this approach youth workers are coming closer to the youth.
- The idea is good but finding time to produce the messages and contents in may prove to be problematic. The extremist messaging and videos are often very professionally produced and should be countered with equally high-quality contents.
- A good, novel idea. There's demand for the training delivered locally in Finland. The training was of high quality, and it was interesting to see how small things can make a difference (in different aspects). The training was found to have an excellent value for the time spent
- In Romania, the radicalization of young people from Roma communities begins to increase in intensity from year to year. Unfortunately, decision-makers have not always attached the importance of this issue. The CONCORDIA project highlights the need for the local community to address the issue of radicalization. We are very happy about this.
- An extremely useful approach for institutions that support the inclusion of immigrants in general, or the inclusion of the Roma community in particular. Extremism is manifested especially among young people who are part of these minority groups and it is normal to address them first.

- It is the first time we face such an approach, we are very satisfied and we participate with pleasure when we are asked. At the level of the local community, nothing has been done in this direction within the state institutions.
- The CONCORDIA project is a significant benefit for us, front-line workers, who provide educational activities for children and youth with institutional care. Our clients, who are often confronted with the absence of basic values and opinions that could be normally drawn from a functional biological family, are easily subject to the negative influences of mass media and extremist phenomena. Educating workers who encounter educational activities and thus have the potential to influence the development of young people's opinion is therefore a very important issue and a priority.

Why do you think (or why you do not think) that the development of digital media skills of front-line service providers is important for their daily work with vulnerable youth?

- Today the “most spoken language” among young people including vulnerable youth is digital language. The communication based on social network contributes a lot to spread the information to a great number of youth at the same time. The front-line workers must be connected that is why the development of digital media skills is important.
- The development of digital media skills proposed by the Concordia project is important because it is very accessible to all target groups and provides interesting information about the radicalization among young people. In the connected world all of us including the front-line service providers must be connected. It is the only possibility to attract the attention of young people.
- Working with the media is nowadays crucial, as it is a sort of "link" between different groups. Therefore, service providers need to improve these skills to be able to influence vulnerable youth. It enables them to get closer to this target group of vulnerable young people, reach out to them, and possibly show ways how to manage their problematic situation.
- Today, children and young people grow up with digital media as a matter of course: Smartphone, tablet, notebook and the like are increasingly shaping the daily lives of adolescents.
- Digital media offers opportunities for the individual - for example, expanded possibilities for information, communication and participation.
- Digital media entail risks such as Internet access and computer gambling addiction, cyberbullying, or radicalization.
- Front-liners must have methodical-didactical competences and technical-content-related.
- Front-liners need technical skills. They must be able to communicate with the media themselves. For this reason, front-liners must be given the opportunity to acquire and expand competences through further training.
- Front-liners need resources and time their daily work with vulnerable youth and individual projects with digital media.

- Youth workers need to update their knowledge on the digital tools and social platforms that the young people are using. This will help professionals to better communicate and work with the Youths, and train them in digital skills that would of interest to them.
- Youngsters are used to social media and use these platforms daily, so it's important for front-line service providers to get to know the media and platforms their clients use, knowing what is actually going on there and which problems do occur. Furthermore, we shouldn't let extremists' having a monopoly in the Internet and the social media platforms, but offer positive, useful alternatives instead – especially to vulnerable youngsters.
- By learning how to produce video clips or other formats for social media platforms the front-line service providers are enabled to deconstruct the narratives and strategies of extremists, to produce alternative material and, hopefully, to convince vulnerable youngsters. They are enabled to use social media in an active way – and not only being passive recipients.
- In day-to-day work in a children's home I am very well aware that the development of digital media skills of direct service providers is important because nowadays children spend much time with the media and it is in our interest they spend this time safely and without any risk. But we can help them only if we understand the world of youth and this opportunity brings the training that Concordia organizes.
- Through studying the digital and social media production front-line service providers get another perspective, a new angle of view, with which they can identify dangerous media content easier and quicker than before.
- It's a big advantage that nearly every material of the CONCORDIA project is provided in the national language of all partners, so that it's very easy for front-line service providers of all partner countries to use the material in their daily life – without any language barrier.
- As the use of the digital media is increased, youth workers should continuously update their skills so that they keep up with the current trends. Being able to interact with youth by using digital tools and platforms is very important in the digital age. Also, helping individuals to create their own products (i.e. videos, recordings and other) and deliver positive messages to their communities and around the world is a very important step to combat radicalization.
- Helping youth workers to increase or/and strengthen their digital skills is very important in addressing issues related to the radicalization.
- The development of digital media skills of front-line service providers is crucial because nowadays we live in an interconnected reality, and the pedagogical methodologies cannot lose this train if they want to keep pace with our times. Basic digital skills and some kind of "IT moral codes" are the milestones for a good learning and teaching.
- Media reading skills are extremely important in order to be able to discuss things using their correct names and for critical review of information sources.

- Basic skills for media production are useful, if time is allocated to make use of them at work. The training helps to understand the world where the youth of today live in.
- The world operates more and more online and in digital format, therefore it is important to understand this environment
- The youth can be very black-and-white with issues and lack media reading skills. The youth workers challenge is to make them aware of what exists in between the far ends.
- Vulnerable youngsters use the Internet not only for entertainment, but also for searching and getting information, and they communicate with each other more and more through digital communication channels. Because of that the competent and professional handling of means of communication and the purposeful use of social media is very important – also for teachers, social workers and other front-line service providers. For the work with the target group of vulnerable youngsters that's even a major key skill! Because of that dealing with that issue and the advancement of personal skills in using social media is very important. Only people with the appropriate skills and abilities are able to communicate in a low-threshold way with the target group of vulnerable teenagers and to get in a dialogue with them – hoping that the front-line service providers are able to influence the vulnerable teenagers in a positive way and thus prevent them from radicalization.
- It is important that trainers and teachers are up to date, that they know what is going on around them and what are the latest trends concerning youth communication and digital media. Without these skills and knowledge, they can't really help or support teenagers helpfully.
- Because young people mostly use the digital environment it is normal for providers of such services to respond in the same way. Radicalization is a phenomenon that has evolved with the communication that takes place in the digital environment, this environment has been conducive to the propaganda that those who aim to attract young vulnerable people to this dangerous side are both for the young people concerned and for society.
- Forming digital media skills for front-line workers is a top priority. The reason is that most young people use the online environment as a form of showing and spreading their extremist ideas.
- Because most vulnerable young people use digital media tools to express and spread their ideas, so we have to respond in the same way.
- The development of digital media skills of front-line service providers in their work with vulnerable youth is very important because currently the direct contact of front-line workers with youth is strongly influenced by the media. Digital skills are close to all youth and they are influenced by the media consciously as well as unconsciously. It is therefore important to educate pedagogical staff in this field, subsequently enabling them to approach youth and influence their thinking and opinions. *Why do you consider that it is important for policy makers to consider the CONCORDIA project approach?*

- The Concordia project analysis is not only the relevant information about the radicalisation of youth in Europe but also gives the tools fight this tendency.
- For policy makers is important to consider CONCORDIA project because they're in charge of giving guidelines to the trainers at local and national stage. Knowing this innovative methodology can give the opportunity for developing new training pathways and feeding the debate among institutional actors, trainers and learners.
- The project includes a range of digital tools and products aim to strengthen the digital skills of youth workers to combat issues on radicalization.
- Policy makers should explore the approach followed by CONCORDIA as it brings together youth workers with youth and makes use of the tools that are being used on a daily basis by most people.
- It is very important for policy makers to consider Concordia project approach because Concordia offer the insight and processed information from many countries.
- The number of migrants and especially unaccompanied minors keeps growing in Cyprus. It is of most importance to create a policy strategy which will prevent extremism and radicalization in the Cypriot society and will support migrants' integration.
- The issue of radicalization has traces in many spheres such as the political, social and financial spheres and therefore it is very important for policy makers to consider the project approach as the extremist behaviours are observed in different areas.
- For policy makers is important to consider CONCORDIA project approach for these reasons:
 - It permits to understand the power and danger of the radicalization process among vulnerable youth.
 - It suggests concrete advice based on good practices and methods of working with both target groups: front line workers and vulnerable youth.
 - It provides professional training on digital tools necessary for all categories of social workers, teachers and the decision makers.
- The Concordia approach and training provides a set of tools to work with the youth. It can also be used for coordinating active youth groups if they wish to take action and produce messages for youth themselves. But this requires resources, which the policy makers should realise.
- In order for digital media to be adequately integrated into the work with young people, in Germany still lack the equipment and infrastructure. Therefore, high investments are necessary, e.g. to bring schools up to date.
- It would be important for policymakers to amend the law on the protection of minors in this area and for game manufacturers to be given greater responsibility.
- For funding of the youth work. For example, in the municipality of Joensuu, there are no youth worker resources dedicated to online work
- The Concordia approach should be provided for all youth workers as a basic level training, and a special in-depth training provided for people who work full-time in the digital environment

- If policy makers want to have an educated society with critical thinking, they should consider the CONCORDIA approach.
- Digital information and communication technologies have nowadays high significance – not only for private purposes, but for the society and its development as a whole. Digital, interactive media contributes importantly to the intercultural understanding and influences the dealing with structures of power. Finally, they frame and shape the social change.
- Measures of developing and improving skills in handling and using social media and digital means of communication are therefore an important aspect for countering the radicalization of vulnerable youth – especially for teachers, social workers and other front-line service providers. Policy makers should support and help these people to get the required skills and thus enable them to react in an appropriated way to the problem of growing radicalisation and extremism. In addition to that policy makers should focus on prevention and provide preventive methods, which then can be used by front-line service providers in their daily work.
- By investing in prevention policy makers could help preventing youngsters from radicalisation and thus save the society from radical incidents like terrorist attacks. Furthermore, by supporting projects like Concordia they are also doing favours for themselves, because extremists are often interesting in changing the political system and removing the politicians in power.
- Because the problem of radically vulnerable youngsters, unresolved in time, will create problems in local communities, and decision-makers will have to invest time and money to address these consequences.
- Any approach to the issue of youth radicalization, especially in the European context, should be a model for informing local or national decision-makers, from which to draw inspiration for their models at community level.
- In Romania, the radicalization of young people from Roma communities begins to increase in intensity from year to year. Unfortunately, decision-makers have not always attached the importance of this issue. The CONCORDIA project highlights the need for the local community to address the issue of radicalization. We are very happy about this.
- Continuous Vocational Training Opportunities for youth workers and adult education staff , recommendations for improving the training of these workers , presenting the legal framework for local and national strategies for working with young people, innovative pedagogical interventions.
- European countries developed different approaches to managing migration in the past. The reason was the difference between migratory flows, social conditions, but also political traditions and cultures.

Exploiting the model of best practice developed in EU Member States

In keeping with the open education resource requirements of the ERASMUS+ programme the full suite of tools and resources are freely available to front-line youth professionals and the training organisations who support their continuous professional development. All training resources can be accessed through the project website www.concordia.website where there is a link provided to the new e-learning portal which has been developed. As outlined in the original project proposal this e-learning portal will be maintained for a period of 5 years after the project ends in August 2018.

To support wider uptake all resources developed are available in English, German, French, Czech, Greek, Finnish and Romanian. There is also a link to the project Facebook page where front-line youth workers can connect with like-minded individual throughout Europe.

It is important to remind front-line youth workers that this training is only a starting point to help them to build the digital and social media production skills that are essential to support sustainable interaction with today's young 'digital natives'. The courseware developed provides the perfect starting point for skills development and the prototype tools and observatory of best practice offer an online guidance resource to help front-liners.

In order to create a sustainable online learning environment for front-line youth workers they should be encouraged and supported to;

- Join in the online community of youth workers in the different Member States who are actively engaged in dealing with the radicalization threat
- Experiment with their newly developed skills and produce their own prototype resources
- Share their experiments among their peers to elicit feedback and support
- Encourage other front-line professionals to complete the continuous professional development training provided

The curriculum comprises 100 hours of study, 35 hours of face-to-face workshop-based training and 65 hours of online self-directed learning. The curriculum resources are modular in design to facilitate the easy segmentation of learning into manageable sessions. Training organisations who propose to utilize the courseware should ensure that Participation Certificates are available to all those who complete the training.

Why policy makers should consider the CONCORDIA model

The European Commission's Communication on Preventing Radicalisation to Terrorism and Violent Extremism as well as the European Agenda on Security provides the policy framework for the EU's prevention policies in this area. While the prevention of radicalisation has been one of the main pillars of the EU's counter terrorism policy for over a decade, recent events have highlighted the importance and urgency of stepping up efforts to prevent and counter radicalisation more effectively. The European Agenda on Security and the 2016 Communication supporting the prevention of radicalisation leading to violent extremism, identified priorities and sets out how the EU can support national efforts.

Measures to prevent and counter radicalisation are taken at local, regional and national level, and fall primarily within the competence of the Member States. The EU does, however, have a supporting role: the challenges affecting EU countries are similar, and the scale of the problem means that it affects the EU as a whole. Action at EU level facilitates cooperation, networking, funding and the exchange of good practices. The Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN) is an EU policy tool. that brings together practitioners from Europe working on the prevention of radicalisation. The most effective prevention strategies stop people from getting involved in violent extremism or acts of terrorism in the first place. RAN is a network of frontline or grassroots practitioners from around Europe who work daily with people who have already been radicalised, or who are vulnerable to radicalisation. Practitioners include police and prison authorities, but also those who are not traditionally involved in counter-terrorism activities, such as teachers, youth workers, civil society representatives, local authorities representatives and healthcare professionals.

The RAN Collection of Approaches and Practices presents a set of seven practitioners' approaches in the field of prevention of radicalisation, each of them illustrated by a number of lessons learned and selected practices and projects. The Collection supports the actions proposed in the EU Commission Communication "Preventing Radicalisation to terrorism and Violent Extremism: Strengthening the EU's Response" and it is an excellent tool for you as a youth worker or front-liner to consider when working with vulnerable young people.

Youth workers and other front-line staff work at the coal-face of emerging problems and issues and are expected to respond to new circumstances as and when they arise. These workers are some of the most innovative and resourceful professionals within the entire education landscape often operating in non-traditional settings without the comfort or certainty that many other institution-based educators enjoy. The CONCORDIA project understands the important role the front-line youth professionals play in non-conventional learning environments. The project also recognizes that if these front-liners are to be successful they need appropriate continuous professional development training to build key skill sets for dealing with today's 'digital natives'.

Policy makers are certainly not spoiled for choice where the availability of appropriate training materials for front-liners that tackle the radicalization process is concerned. The CONCORDIA resources are not competing with a wide range of alternative resources. The resources developed are bespoke; free to use; are accompanied by a wide range of very

specific and targeted prototypes that address radicalization in action. The CONCORDIA training materials represent a valuable resource that should be widely implemented with front-line youth professionals. Throughout the implementation of the CONCORDIA project, the following statements were recorded from different stakeholders who participated in the project at local level:

- Nearly every European state is affected by extremism and radicalization – of course in different degrees and ways. But a common mistake of many policy makers in the last years was that they didn't see the problem of growing radicalisation – or didn't want to see it. Now they have the chance – and even the duty – to act proactively to reduce the consequences of the failed policy of the past years.
- A problem of the modern, digital threat is that you can't really see it anymore, it's hidden in the darkness of social media and the Internet, but it's there. As a policy maker you have the responsibility to support projects, which try to detect the threat, to help front-line service providers, to deconstruct extremist narratives and to reduce the danger of radicalization amongst youngsters.
- The Concordia project approach is interesting because for the first time a true strategy is put in place through the same channel as the extremists. Furthermore, the pedagogical approach both for the front-line providers and the young. This bottom approach, within the participation of different stakeholders from different European countries is very innovative and feeds the debate both at local and at national level.
- Policy makers should consider the CONCORDIA approach for the benefits of this project, it's up-to-datedness and the relevance of the issue being addressed by the project. Its international representation is also essential, namely the possibility of passing on experience.
- The Concordia project deals with very important topics which can't be neglected by any policy makers. By investing money in time and in the right projects – as for example in CONCORDIA – policy makers can in the long term save money, give back hope and perspectives to vulnerable youngsters for their futures, reduce the risk of terrorist attacks and improve the social cohesion. Without reacting to the actual problems, they increase the risk to lose many youngsters to extremism and terrorism, which in turn would threaten the stability of the state and the cohesion of society.
- The Concordia project that provides training to support the production and management of individual digital and social media for front-line service providers is very professional. The training is conducted and presented in such a way that all participants attending the training are drawn to the subject. The training is very beneficial for the organizations they work in.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Radicalization is a process not an event. As a process, interventions that deflect individuals from the path to radicalization and the influences of radical extremists are possible. There is ample research and evidence to show that once an individual has been radicalized the process of de-radicalization can take years and is extremely expensive requiring intense support work from a variety of highly trained experts.

CONCORDIA represents a front-line approach that supports front-line youth professionals to counteract the extremist narratives and intervene in the radicalisation process before the individual concerned has been radicalized. It represents a pro-active approach to building a tolerant and integrated society in Europe. The threat of radicalization is not diminishing. Instead the strategies used by radical extremists grow in complexity and professionalism. Front-line youth professionals have little chance of counteracting the threats that pertain in digital environments without essential training and additional resources.

This Policy Paper emphasises the need for policy makers to look again at resource allocation in the front-line youth service arena. Many youth workers who participated in the training said that they would need additional time if they were to successfully develop and manage their own counter-radicalization narratives and resources. While they would welcome the opportunity to act in this way they need additional supports.

There is also a real need for ongoing dialogue between policy makers, youth service managers, crime prevention organisations and front-line youth workers. Models like CONCORDIA have a key role to play in the design and delivery of future service provision.

One of the stark findings of the research process was that many front-line youth workers were unaware of how digital and social media were being used by radical extremists to target vulnerable youth. So, while there is a significant demand for the CONCORDIA tools and resources there is also a need for an additional project that builds awareness among front-line staff, parents and guardians of how digital and social media is being used to radicalize those at risk. Many people engaged in the project seemed almost oblivious to the insidious nature of the threat posed in online environments.



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