



# Jean-Monnet WORKING PAPERS 2017 20 March 2017

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TABLE OF CONTENT

*How EU citizens can become an asset for refugees’ integration?.....5*

**What is the problem?..... 5**

**What do already exist? ..... 6**

**Goals and objectives..... 7**

**Who is our target audience?..... 7**

**What are the societal points of views of our target audience? ..... 8**

**What do we want them to perceive after this campaign?..... 9**

**What is our communication plan? ..... 9**

    How does the buddy program work?.....10

    How to measure it?.....11

    Possible partnerships.....11

    Our key message.....11

**What could be our obstacles? ..... 12**

**Why would EU citizens take part in our project?..... 12**

*Refugees and EU Citizens: a bridge between both parties..... 15*

**Context ..... 15**

**Who? – EU citizens ..... 16**

**AIMS ..... 17**

**Target Audience..... 18**

**Key Messages ..... 19**

**How? – Tools ..... 20**

    Slogan.....20

    Social Video.....20

    Workshops .....20

    AIMS.....20

**Timeline..... 20**

**Resources..... 21**

**Results..... 21**

**Evaluation ..... 21**

*Prevention campaign against all forms of radicalization of young people aged 13-20  
..... 22*

**Background ..... 22**

**What is the target audience?..... 23**

**What are the causes?..... 23**

**What are the objective and main goals of this campaign?..... 25**

**What is the key message?..... 25**

**Which communication channels and tools? ..... 26**

**The Tools..... 26**

    Social media: Facebook .....26

Online platform.....	27
<b><i>Tackling online hate speech: how can we engage with the civil society? .....</i></b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Abstract.....</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Analysis.....</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Strategy.....</b>	<b>30</b>
Goals and objectives .....	30
Audience .....	30
Key message .....	31
Communication mix and timeline.....	31
<b><i>Online radicalization and counter narrative strategies in Europe. An analysis. A strategy.....</i></b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Online radicalization: what are we talking about? Brief analysis.....</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Can we tackle online radicalization through a strategic communication approach? Counter-narrative strategies .....</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>A Communication campaign to counter online radicalization .....</b>	<b>34</b>
Reasons and objectives .....	34
Target audience and (mis)beliefs .....	34
Key message and tools of implementation .....	35
Campaign tools.....	36
Evaluation.....	36
<b>Conclusions .....</b>	<b>37</b>
<b><i>Spotting, addressing and tackling the first signs of extremist views in primary and secondary school children .....</i></b>	<b>40</b>
<b>Background Analysis .....</b>	<b>40</b>
Introduction .....	40
Definition .....	40
History .....	41
Vulnerability.....	41
<b>Goals and Objectives .....</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>Communication Strategy .....</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>Target Audience.....</b>	<b>42</b>
Teachers.....	43
Students.....	43
Parents.....	43
<b>Communication Mix .....</b>	<b>43</b>
<b><i>Gender &amp; counter-radicalization.....</i></b>	<b>45</b>
<b>Our issue: the involvement of women in the Islamic State .....</b>	<b>456</b>
Key Factors in women involvement .....	457
<b>Our goal: defeat terrorism by empowering women .....</b>	<b>458</b>
A gender perspective to address specific conditions.....	458
<b>Our target: young Muslim women in urban areas.....</b>	<b>458</b>
Relevant cases .....	459
The perceptions we need to consider to achieve our goal .....	459
.....	

**Our strategy: intervene at the turning point..... 50**  
**Our key-messages: I want = I can ..... 50**  
**Our communication mix: towards a relationship of trust..... 51**

# How EU citizens can become an asset for refugees' integration?

*by Natacha Lescart and Elisabeth Binard*

## **What is the problem?**

More than one million of “economic” migrants and refugees (asylum seekers) crossed the European borders in 2015, sparking a multi-crisis as European countries have to struggle to cope with the influx, unsettling EU policies and threatening the solidarity of Member States and their citizens<sup>1</sup>. This crisis is first and foremost a humanitarian crisis as most of the refugees are trying to escape a situation of war and famine. In addition, their journey to reach Europe is dangerous, expensive and complicated as they are exposed to the closure of borders, the construction of fences, etc. As a result, many of these people never reach the European borders and die. According to the International Organization for Migration (2015): “between 2000 and 2014, over 22,000 migrants died trying to reach Europe by crossing the Mediterranean Sea (3,072 of those deaths took place in 2014 alone). In 2015, the number of people who drowned in the Mediterranean Sea was even higher<sup>2</sup>”.

In parallel of this humanitarian crisis, a political and social crisis has emerged in Europe. Indeed, a polarisation not only between the EU and its Member States but also between Western and Eastern countries appeared. Furthermore, the refugees' arrival in the European Union has been nurturing a feeling of fear among the EU citizens. An anti-immigrant sentiment is on the rise<sup>3</sup>. People are scared of the unknown and the refugees embody this fear. This feeling leads to refugee's rejection. Extremist politicians use the fear of the stranger and of the unknown as a means to impassion their political discourses and target the refugees as the responsible for many problems of the citizens. The far-right politicians (especially, but not only) connect the refugee crisis with “security issues<sup>4</sup>” and the fear of Islamic terrorism. For instance, Marine Le Pen said during a plenary session in Strasbourg in 2015 that they were a chance of jihadists' infiltration among the illegal immigrants that are crossing the European borders<sup>5</sup>. As summarized by Europe Vision Summit: “Western democracies, in short, have proven fertile ground for the emergence of a new, anti-immigrant narrative that brings together the issues of

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<sup>1</sup> When talking about refugees, we follow the definition given by Vision Europe Summit in his 2015 publication “Exploring the current migration integration crisis” which says: “With the term ‘refugee crisis,’ we refer to the recent massive and unplanned inflow asylum seekers and refugees from countries currently unsafe (such as the Middle East—especially Syria and Iraq—and Afghanistan) into Europe”. p.7.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Foster P., The Telegraph, “Anti-Muslim sentiment on rise in Europe due to migration and Isil as continent rejects multi-cultural society”, online on <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/07/12/europe-rejects-multi-cultural-society-says-survey/>, [consulted on the 10/01/2017].

<sup>4</sup> D'Appollonia, A. C., “Migrant Mobilization and Securitization in the US and Europe. How Does it Feel to Be a Threat?”, 2015.

<sup>5</sup> Fenian., Risque d'infiltration djihadiste parmi les clandestins : Marine Le Pen brise l'OMERTA, 2015. Online: <http://www.fdesouche.com/557191-presidentassemblee-constituante-libyenne-leurope-estime-risque-dinfiltration-djihadiste-parmi-les-immigres-clandestins#>, [consulted on the 08/01/2017].

migration, ‘radical Islam’ and ‘terrorism’—what we call the ‘immigration-terrorism nexus’<sup>6</sup>”. The recent attacks have reinforced this anti-immigration feeling. People and political leaders believe that “Muslims” are not able to integrate into the European society<sup>7</sup>. In brief, the general public is influenced by politicians’ reactions and also by the media, which has a strong tendency to cover sensationalist news and give a biased approach of the issue to their audience. All these factors have worsened the reaction of EU citizens towards asylum seekers and illegal immigrants<sup>8</sup>.

Moreover, the UNHCR - The UN Refugee Agency - recently conducted a series of evaluations in different Member States to identify some obstacles to refugees’ integration. Apart from obstacles such as insufficient knowledge of local languages, cultural differences and the psychological impact of prolonged inactivity during the asylum procedures, there are other obstacles that involve the European citizen<sup>9</sup>. Indeed, according to the survey, integration is also hindered because of locals’ discriminatory attitude, their lack of openness towards foreigners and the misunderstanding of host societies of the refugees’ situation<sup>10</sup>.

Finally, it is important to highlight that immigrant policies are a national competence. Every Member State develops its own tools and channels to communicate and integrate refugees. However, the European Commission created in 2005 a common framework for the integration of third-country nationals. Member States and their Common Basic Principles on Integration support the effort made by the Commission and the European Council conclusions of June 2014 reaffirmed the commitment to implement these basic principles.

### ***What do already exist?***

Intercultural dialogue and activities do also need to be taken into account<sup>11</sup>. There are many projects that have been put into place by the civil society to integrate refugees thanks to EU citizens. For instance, mobile applications like ‘Apps akin’ or ‘AirBnB’ have already taken actions. Through those apps, citizens can offer spare rooms to the one in need. Local governments financially support those projects. The great benefit of these platforms is that they bring refugees and host citizens together<sup>12</sup>. In Belgium for example, the Red Cross does a number of activities in partnership with Fedasil called ‘neighbours initiatives’. Debates, movie nights or dinners are organised in more than 18 different centres where refugees and locals

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<sup>6</sup> Vision Europe Summit, op cit., p.8

<sup>7</sup> The Guardian., “Integrating Muslims into Europe is impossible”, 2016. Online: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jan/18/integrating-muslims-into-europe-is-impossible-says-czech-president>, [consulted on the 19/08/01/17].

<sup>8</sup> Berry., Garcia-Blanco & Moore., “Press Coverage of the Refugee and Migrant Crisis in the EU: A Content Analysis of Five European Countries”, 2015, p.15

<sup>9</sup>Bureau européen de l’UNHCR., “Intégration des réfugiés par l’UE”, online : <http://www.fmreview.org/sites/fmr/files/FMRdownloads/fr/pdf/MFR28/62.pdf>, [consulted on the 19/01/2017].

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup>Europcom 2016., « Reflecting on Europe – Migration crisis: Communicating Refugee Integration locally », online: [http://cor.europa.eu/en/events/europcom/Documents/Session\\_2\\_Migration%20Crisis\\_Communicating\\_Refugee\\_Integration\\_Locally.pdf](http://cor.europa.eu/en/events/europcom/Documents/Session_2_Migration%20Crisis_Communicating_Refugee_Integration_Locally.pdf), [consulted on the 19/01/2017].

<sup>12</sup> UNHCR., « An agenda for the integration of refugees in central Europe », online: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/4bfe72542.html>, [consulted on the 19/01/2017]

spend evenings together and discuss different topics<sup>13</sup>. Finally, Wintegreat, a Parisian association, enables young refugees to go to renowned schools so that they will be able to integrate professionally and socially<sup>14</sup>. These examples show that connecting refugees and locals is possible and that it does help for a better integration.

In other words, progresses have been made and tools have been put into place to facilitate this integration. Nonetheless, we considered that there is a need to do more. Integration is an interactive process involving refugees, EU citizens and institutions of the receiving country<sup>15</sup>. As the 2016 Europcom conference concluded: “Communication is one of the most important drivers for integration, but that tool must be improved by involving more relevant stakeholders<sup>16</sup>”. Refugees’ integration is a dynamic and multifaceted two-way process, which requires efforts from all parties concerned. On the one hand, refugees need to adapt to the countries and public institutions have to welcome refugees and meet the needs of a diverse population<sup>17</sup>.

### **Goals and objectives**

This campaign has very precise goals and objectives. We want refugees to be better integrated in the European society. We are aware that national governments and the European Union are taking some measures to welcome refugees into their society but we want to focus on European citizens so they can contribute to refugees’ integration. We want to transform the EU citizens into a strong asset to help refugees to learn a new language for them to participate into refugees’ daily lives, etc. By developing educational tools and activities directed to European citizens, we aim at helping refugees to have a better ‘stay’ in the European Union. We believe that this educational program will make European citizens understand the precarious situation of the refugees who arrived in Europe with in most cases nothing. In a way, we want people to change their mentality and make them aware of what is happening next to their houses.

### **Who is our target audience?**

The refugee crisis concerns every EU citizen, which is challenging. Indeed, it is complicated if not impossible to target everyone with different actions. A too large audience would diminish the impact of the campaign. Therefore, a subdivision of this target audience is needed. We believe that focusing on European biggest cities is an interesting approach because they have to deal with a greater amount of refugees and the difficulty to integrate them is greater (housing, education, workforce development, etc.) than for smaller town, which have fewer refugees and can put smaller integration structures in place<sup>18</sup>. Additionally, a distinction between younger

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<sup>13</sup> Croix-Rouge de Belgique., « Les activités et initiatives de quartiers », online : <http://www.croix-rouge.be/activites/asile-et-migration/les-activites-etinitiatives-de-quartiers/>, [consulted on the 18/01/2017].

<sup>14</sup> ELLE., « Wintergreat, l’association qui aide les réfugiés à reprendre leurs études », online : <http://www.elle.fr/Societe/News/Wintegreat-l-association-qui-aideles-refugies-a-reprendre-leurs-etudes-3403112>, [consulted on the 18/01/2017].

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Europcom 2016., op cit..

<sup>17</sup> UNCHR., « Note on integration of Refugees on the European Union », online: <http://www.unhcr.org/463b462c4.pdf>, [consulted on the 20/01/2017].

<sup>18</sup> Palmer, Grace., “Cities and refugees: the German experience”, September 2016. Online:

and older citizens needs to be made, as they do not share the same perspectives regarding refugees' integration. The level of education is also a factor to take into account and reactions also diverge from Member States<sup>19</sup>. Finally, a difference between people who are welcoming the refugees and the others who are not is to be made. A particular focus will be given to the perceptions of the ones who consider refugees as a threat. We will do co-working with welcoming citizens. They would become the ambassadors of our campaign.

In other words, we will target people living in European big cities focusing on

- First, young workers between the ages of 25 to 35 who are welcoming refugees. We have chosen this share of the population because young workers have the energy and the willingness to participate to such a program. They are the ones who participate often in cultural activities and they are aware of recent and current trends and activities. They often have an active life, which will help them plan activities with their buddy. Moreover, they are used to live in a multicultural society. Finally, there are strong assets to spread the word of our campaign and talk to other citizens who are hostile. They are key players in our campaign and will become the ambassadors. They will help us to change other people's point of view on this issue.
- Afterward we want to enlarge our target audience to EU citizens that are not between 25 and 35. First, the youngest that could be motivated and influenced by our ambassadors. Then, older people who will be more reluctant to join. But could be convinced by a strong and efficient communication campaign. At that point, we only focus on those who are welcoming refugees and therefore who are more inclined to join our buddy program.
- Once we have ambassadors for every age group, we will try to make people who are unfriendly with refugees change their mind thanks to our ambassadors who could explain them who those refugees are. This will enlarge our target audience.

### ***What are the societal points of views of our target audience?***

Considering that Europe has not entirely recovered from its economic crisis, that European citizens are still struggling to 'get out of the crisis', and that there is a large amount of refugees that wants to settle in Europe for an unknown period of time, some EU citizens consider them as a threat<sup>20</sup>. Moreover, as mentioned above, press coverage and extremist politicians reinforced this feeling, connecting refugees (mostly Muslims) with security issues and terrorist attacks.

Islamophobia is on the rise among EU citizens (as we know, most of refugees are coming from Muslim countries). Two surveys conducted by Transatlantic Trends Immigration (TTI), respectively in 2011 and 2014, show a great change in mentalities. In 2011, 52% of Europeans believe that immigrant (including Muslims) integration has been successful. A certain optimism

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<https://www.brookings.edu/research/cities-and-refugees-the-germanexperience/>, [consulted on the 08/01/17].

<sup>19</sup> These factors will be taken into account while developing the "buddy programme" (see below).

<sup>20</sup> Emmanouilidis J.A., Zuleeg F., European Policy Centre, « EU@60 - Countering a regressive & illiberal Europe » online:

<http://www.emmanouilidis.eu/download/EU@60-COUNTERING-A-REGRESSIVE--ILLIBERAL-EUROPE.pdf>, [consulted on the 17/01/2017].

could be felt across Europe<sup>21</sup>. By contrast, the 2014 survey shows that many Europeans believe Muslims are less integrated than immigrants in general. Moreover, 56% of the population was worried about migrants from outside of the EU<sup>22</sup>. Another survey conducted by Pew Research Centre in 2016 goes in the same direction. It reveals that negative opinions about Muslims reached 43% with a noticeable rise in 12 months in countries such as Great Britain (+9%), Spain and Italy (+8%) and France (+5%). In addition, terrorist attacks throughout Europe that involved followers of Daesh and ISIS - type of government primarily based on the application of sharia (Islamic law) - increased the conflation between Muslims (already seen as poorly integrated) and terrorists<sup>23</sup>. This creates a hostile environment and the prospect of future attacks extends the hate against Muslim.

### ***What do we want them to perceive after this campaign?***

We believe that if we create a number of tools we could contribute to a better integration of refugees in the European society. The aim of those actions is to transform the EU citizen into a fully-fledged tool to integrate refugees into different Member States. Developing educational tools directed to the European citizens could help to have a better ‘stay’ in the European Union. We want to reduce the fear of the unknown by bringing closer EU citizens and refugees. Our target audience needs to understand the precarious situation of these refugees. Most of refugees do not want to remain permanently in Europe but they are looking for a “safe haven” that they think Europe can provide them with. We want EU citizens to put themselves in refugees’ shoes and to try to understand them.

### ***What is our communication plan?***

UNHCR recommends a participatory and community development approach by engaging local communities<sup>24</sup>. Following this advice, we want to create a specific project that facilitate dialogue between refugees and locals and enable them to work together pursuing common goals and priorities<sup>25</sup>. In this case, it is essential to focus on quality rather than quantity of tools. That is why we decided to focus on a specific tool called the “buddy program” that aims to make EU citizens become the ambassadors of their city. To make it as efficient as possible, online tools such as Social Media will be used as a supplement and as a means to communicate about the program. We believe that thanks to online channels (Twitter, Instagram, Facebook) we can reach a greater amount of people. It is also a way to centralize all the details that we want to communicate about our offline actions (when, where, etc.). We would also encourage national governments to provide, through Social Media supports, information on how EU citizens can effectively help. These communication tools must be consistent, clear, friendly and always conscious of the meaning of image and symbols for other cultures. Constant media monitoring

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<sup>21</sup>Transatlantic Trends Immigration, 2011, on line, [http://trends.gmfus.org/files/2011/12/TTImmigration\\_final\\_web1.pdf](http://trends.gmfus.org/files/2011/12/TTImmigration_final_web1.pdf), p.3.

<sup>22</sup> Transatlantic Trends Immigration, Mobility, Migration and integration: Key findings from 2014 and selected highlights, 2014, p.8.

<sup>23</sup> Alnatour O., The Huffingtonpost, “Muslims are not terrorists: A factual look at terrorism and Islam”, online: [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/omaralnatour/muslims-are-not-terrorist\\_b\\_8718000.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/omaralnatour/muslims-are-not-terrorist_b_8718000.html), [consulted on the 20/01/2017].

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*,

<sup>25</sup> Europcom 2016, op cit.

is necessary in order to detect misleading information. For every action that is undertaken, we invite people to share it on Social Media thanks to a specific hashtag (for example #buddyprogram #welcomerefugee).

### **How does the buddy program work?**

EU citizens and refugees are asked to register and create a profile on an online platform. The platform matches one refugee with one local depending on their profiles (age, education, sex, interests, etc.). Every local who wishes to be part of the program has to follow a training before the beginning of the “buddy program”. During these training sessions, he receives not only information on its city’s history, on the functioning of its country but also on refugees’ culture, on how they can access social aids and finally on how to overcome language barrier which will help them to build a relationship with their partner.

The “buddy program” aims at integrating refugees in the European society thanks to locals. It is up to the pair (refugee-local) to establish their own plan of activities depending on their common interests (a list is suggested online but they will be free to join or do something of their own choosing). They are a multitude of possible activities in a city: The European can show to his penfriend his city, include him in his friend groups and give some tips to meet the labor market requirements (giving advice for his CV, where he could apply, etc.). Together, they can participate in cultural events; practice the host country language, etc. Learning the language and having some knowledge of the welcoming country are basic requirements to achieve autonomy and to be self-sufficient as well as to become part of the local community<sup>26</sup>. Moreover, regular events are organized by associations and can contribute to the panel of activities suggested to the duos. The program requires from them to participate at least once every two weeks in an activity. Moreover, the duos will be created and assessed for a period of six months. Afterwards, it is up to them either to stop the program, to continue with the same person or to change partners in order to discover new things and meet a new person.

Other activities are set up within the “buddy program” as a support of our main action. These activities are called “citizenship classes” where locals and refugees meet and get to know each other better. These sessions are also part of an educational program. It is a great opportunity to learn more about who the refugees really are, what they do, why they came here, etc. It is a win-win program. This program could be extended to children and schools. It would be the same concept but for younger people. The objective is that local children and refugee’s children spent time together so they learn to know each other. They could build a cultural project in a year time. The purpose of this school buddy program is to give to refugee children an access to education by learning the language and culture of the host country. Involving children in different education school projects is also an indirect way to involve their parents.

As it is often said, education is critical in facilitating refugees’ participation in the economic, social and cultural life of the host countries<sup>27</sup>. The Syria Regional Refugee Response shows

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<sup>26</sup> UNHCR., « An agenda for the integration of refugees in central Europe », op cit.

<sup>27</sup> Bodewig C., Brookings, « Education is the key to integrating refugees in Europe », online: <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/futuredevelopment/2015/11/23/education-is-the-key-to-integrating-refugees-in->

that more than half of all Syrian refugees are under the age of 18. Such a large share of children and youth is a major opportunity<sup>28</sup>. If host countries ensure a quick access to quality education and training opportunities, they can equip this generation of refugees with tools to succeed. We don't have to forget that education is also a key vehicle to transmit host countries' values and supply orientation on civic life<sup>29</sup>. In other words, education and training are central elements to successful integration efforts.

### How to measure it?

First of all, every trimester, a get-together is organized. This enables both refugees and locals to share their opinions on the program. In addition, professionals of refugees' welcoming (from our partner's groups etc.) are attending these get-togethers. They will evaluate the improvements made by the refugees based on several criteria that cover all aspects of the daily life (language knowledge, market labor integration, understanding of the local bureaucracy, etc.). In addition, an online evaluation based on the one made by UNHCR<sup>30</sup> is suggested to the participants (primarily to refugees) to judge of the success of the "buddy program". With the data collected from the platforms, it will be possible to identify gaps and shortage of the program. The program will therefore be subject to continuous assessments and will be modified in consequence.

### Possible partnerships

This project can be implemented in partnership with the European Solidarity Corp and with Creative Europe program. These programs fund activities where culture can be a means for refugees and migrants to meet and communicate together so they become part of existing communities<sup>31</sup>. It promotes cultural and linguistic diversity, itself a result of centuries of cross-cultural interactions<sup>32</sup>. It is also important for national governments, cities and smaller towns to give their support by giving information on and communicating on about our actions. We could also consider working together with the Red Cross, Fedasil or other NGOs and associations that have a broad knowledge of the issue to implement our buddy program. As we mentioned before, AirnBnB' have already taken actions to help refugees. We could work with them in order to have a stronger visibility and influence?

### Our key message

Our main key message is the following: *“a good integration process would help people to integrate, would reduce radicalization, increase security and result in a better functioning of the society in the long-term. We hope it would also decrease the hate speeches coming from the European citizens on Social Media and slow down the rise of populism, of extremist parties”*.

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europa/, [consulted on the 20/01/2017].

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> UNCHR., « Integration Evaluation Tool », online: <http://www.unhcr-centraleurope.org/en/what-we-do/promoting-integration/integration-evaluation-tool.html>, [consulted on the 21/01/2017].

<sup>31</sup> European Commission., Creative Europe, « Refugees, migration and intercultural dialogue », online on [https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/crosssector/refugees-migration-intercultural-dialogue\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/crosssector/refugees-migration-intercultural-dialogue_en), consulted the 21/01/2017.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

## ***What could be our obstacles?***

Looking at the current context, we are expecting reluctance from EU citizens. Their beliefs and perceptions emphasized by the media coverage on refugees is not at our advantage. The pervasive threat of a terrorist attack reinforced their unwillingness to participate. Moreover, according to a study, made by “vivre ensemble education” with the help of the Brussels and Walloon federation, despite the abundance of information on this topic, European citizens are badly informed or not informed at all on this issue<sup>33</sup>. Plus we have to take to account the language barriers. Not all refugees or even EU citizens share the same language, which complicate the communication between them. Finally, another obstacle could be time. Indeed, European Citizen could consider they don't have time for such activities.

We could tackle those obstacles thanks to an information and communication campaign that explains to the European citizens that not all information that you can find in the media is true and reliable. Communicate locally; be close to people is the key to make them understand the current situation (going to schools and give presentations, write articles published them in magazines, communicate through Social Media such as Twitter, Facebook and Instagram, reportage on TV). We can use the media coverage at our advantage. Concerning the language barriers, it is going to be difficult at the beginning. However, many of the ambassadors speak several languages, in addition the language classes will help both refugees and EU citizens to learn the language of the other, therefore it is going to be easier to communicate. Finally, language is not the only way to communicate, this is why we have chosen to foster our participants to take part in cultural projects, we believe that arts can help them exchange emotions, feelings without too many words.

## ***Why would EU citizens take part in our project?***

It is no longer a question of admitting refugees at this stage. Today, European countries simply have to welcome them. More and more projects are put into place to ease the gathering of different cultures. Citizens are aware of the issue partly because of the excessive media coverage. Thus, it is essential that host countries explain to their citizens the economic and social benefits of welcoming refugees<sup>34</sup>. Member States with an aging population and facing skills shortage look for well-educated young people<sup>35</sup>. In addition, it is better for European countries to design admission and integration processes that will enable the migration to benefit rather than divide European countries. Host populations should be given reasons and incentives to engage directly. Many people want to help<sup>36</sup>.

Taking part in the “buddy program” is a significant achievement for any European citizen. It is a new opportunity for European citizens to engage in a meaningful activity. At the end of the program, the contributors will receive a certificate that documents their participation. They will

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<sup>33</sup> Vivre Ensemble Education., « Médias : la crise des réfugiés sous la loupe », online : [https://vivre-ensemble.be/IMG/pdf/2016-02\\_medias-refugies.pdf](https://vivre-ensemble.be/IMG/pdf/2016-02_medias-refugies.pdf), [consulted on the 19/01/2017].

<sup>34</sup> Van Wassenhove L.N., Harvard Business Review, “What’s Europe’s Long Term Plan for integrating refugees”, online: <https://hbr.org/2015/09/whatsuropes-long-term-plan-for-integrating-refugees>, [consulted on the 19/01/2017].

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> UNHCR, “An agenda for the integration of refugees in central Europe “, op cit.

also receive a package of other benefits, which vary depending on the type of activity that they had undertaken. In addition, they are also entitled to travel, lodging and subsistence as well as insurance coverage for the duration of the activity. Finally, the training that European citizens receive at the beginning of the program is relevant for their personal background.

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# Refugees and EU Citizens: a bridge between both parties

*by Giulia Bertagnoli and Ecaterina Cojuhari*

## **Context**

Every year thousands of men, women and children flee persecution and find in resettlement the possibility to build a new life and to contribute to a new society. Europe is experiencing one of the most significant influxes of migrants and refugees in its history. Pushed by civil war and terror and pulled by the promise of a better life, huge numbers of people have fled the Middle East and Africa, risking their lives along the way.

More than a million migrants and refugees crossed into Europe in 2015, compared with just 280,000 the year before. The scale of the crisis continues, with more than 135,000 people arriving in the first two months of 2016. Among the forces driving people to make the dangerous journey are the conflicts in Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan. The vast majority - more than 80% - of those who reached Europe by boat in 2015 came from those three countries. People who arrived in the Old Continent through the Mediterranean are seeking protection from war and persecution.

Poverty, human rights abuses and deteriorating security are also prompting people to set out from countries such as Eritrea, Pakistan, Morocco, Iran and Somalia in the hope of a new life somewhere like Germany, Sweden or the UK. The perception of the refugees in the EU countries is very different. As it was mentioned by the European Union External Action: “Anger and polarization characterize domestic politics, and harsh measures targeting migrant and refugee communities are put forward in a number of countries. This is partly due to misconceptions and prejudice in a context where communities are confronted with challenges related to the arrival of refugees and migrants with diverse backgrounds, cultures and religions”<sup>37</sup>. Mass exodus of refugees and migrants fleeing conflict and poverty in Syria, Iraq, Libya and other countries into Europe resulted in fuelling fears, prejudices and even hatred against those who are perceived as ‘the other’ by local populations. Such distorted perceptions have also led to violent reactions within host societies on some occasions, creating a parallel society.

In this context, the media plays a major role in shaping perceptions about migrants and refugees. Every day, information from the media is influencing people's thoughts, perceptions and opinions. The media is well placed to inform, communicate and connect citizens across the globe. Instead, in many cases, it acts as a powerful platform for discrimination, exclusion and incitement to hatred and violence.

“Social media provides a wide and open platform for hate speech, facilitating the rapid spread of negative narratives and ideas online,” – consider Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, High Representative for the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC). Unlike anything else, social media has created this environment of a heightened sense of fear and mistrust in host communities towards migrants and refugees in EU countries.

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<sup>37</sup> “#SpreadNoHate: Hate Speech Against Migrants and Refugees in the Media Symposium”, January, 25. 2017, the EEAS.

## Who? – EU citizens

According to the current situation in the EU, the European citizens feel different kinds of fears.

1) *“One fear is that immigrants will compete for work and drag down wages. Another is that they will pinch the public purse”*<sup>38</sup>.

Evidence suggests that immigration has only a small impact on employment or wages. Unskilled workers and existing migrants are most vulnerable, as they are the closest substitutes for the new arrivals. But the effects are still measly. For example, a recent paper by Stephen Nickell of Oxford University and Jumana Saleheen of the Bank of England found that a ten-percentage-point rise in the share of migrants working in menial jobs, such as cleaning, depressed wages for such positions by just 2%.

The experience of past immigrants may not be much use in assessing the impact of the new lot. Immigrants were a fiscal burden, for example, in Germany in part because lots of them are pensioners, who tend to drain the public finances. The new arrivals, in contrast, are young, with a long working life ahead of them. “The influx will not be bank-breaking, however, in the very short run, the IMF estimates that refugees will add around 0.19% of GDP to public expenditure in the European Union in 2016. This will add to public debt, and given higher joblessness among refugees, unemployment will rise. But looking only at their fiscal impact is too narrow a focus. Later on, as the new arrivals integrate into the workforce, they are expected to boost annual output by 0.1% for the EU as a whole. They should also help (a little bit) to reverse the upward creep of the cost of state pensions as a share of GDP, given their relative youth”<sup>39</sup>.

2) *“As a new Pew Research Center survey illustrates, the refugee crisis and the threat of terrorism are very much related to one another in the minds of many Europeans. In eight of the 10 European nations surveyed, half or more believe incoming refugees increase the likelihood of terrorism in their country”*<sup>40</sup>.

But are there terrorists among refugees? International Organization for Migration and the EU Refugee Agency (UNHCR) reported that to date there has been no proven case of terrorist infiltrated flows to Europe. It is unlikely that terrorists would mingle with migrants or refugees and try to reach Europe through the deadly streets of the sea.

3) *“For some Europeans, negative attitudes toward Muslims are tied to a belief that Muslims do not wish to participate in the broader society”*<sup>41</sup>.

In many EU countries, the dominant view is that Muslims want to be distinct from the rest of society rather than adopt the nation’s customs and way of life.

According to a survey by the “Der Spiegel” newspaper, 65.6% of Muslims believe “Islam is the only true religion.”<sup>6</sup> These ideas clash with the relaxed approach that many Europeans take toward lifestyle choices, including the way they view religion. Although the two cultures believe they possess completely different mindsets, they actually have more in common than

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<sup>38</sup> “The economic impact of refugees. For good or ill”, *The Economist*, January 23, 2016.

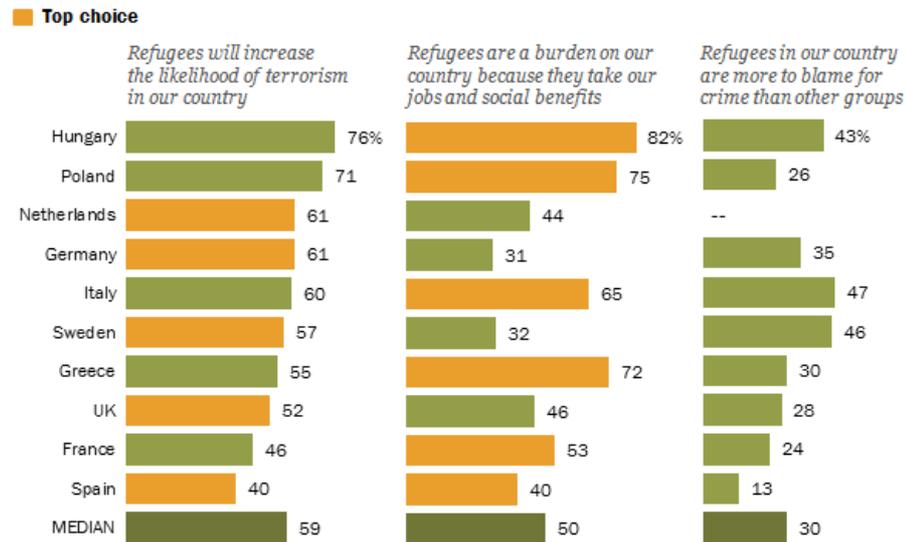
<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> “Europeans Fear Wave of Refugees Will Mean More Terrorism, Fewer Jobs”, *Pew Research Center*, July 11, 2016.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

they realize, according to “Der Spiegel”. Many Muslims in Germany “tend to be lax when it comes to religion”, - says Katajun Amirpur, a Berlin expert on Islamic studies. According to Amirpur, religion “doesn’t play a very dominant role” in their daily life.

### Many Europeans concerned with security, economic repercussions of refugee crisis



Note: Netherlands excluded on question about crime (Q51b) due to administrative error.

Source: Spring 2016 Global Attitudes Survey, Q51a-c.

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Polish sociologist and philosopher Zygmunt Bauman tries to give us an answer: "The people who come (in Europe) are refugees, not people who suffer from hunger, no food and no water. They are people, until yesterday, proud of their homes and their social position. People often very well educated, well off, have become refugees, who come here to find what? The precariousness. The insecurity that lives of anxiety. And fear. And we have nightmares. I have a quiet social position and would like to continue to have it... And now, these people come from Syria and Libya that lead threats from distant lands right into our homes. We suddenly find them next. We can't avoid their presence. They symbolize, embody, all our fears. Yesterday they were powerful men in their country, very happy men, as we are today. But look what happened. Now they are homeless, without livelihoods. And we're just beginning. There is no short cut, an instant solution. We must prepare ourselves to live very difficult times. The wave of immigration last year was not the last. More and more people waiting to leave. We have to accept this situation. Let us join together and find a solution<sup>42</sup>."

## AIMS

The main goal of the communication campaign: “Social and cultural bridge between the EU citizens and refugees” - to change negative perceptions and attitudes of the European citizens towards refugees and migrants, and to strengthen the social contract between these populations and host communities.

In an interview on intercultural dialogue, the UK member of the EU Parliament Julie Ward has evoked the need to address the problem of intolerance: “We have one world and we have to find

<sup>42</sup> “Zygmunt Bauman: Behind the world's 'crisis of humanity'”, *Al Jazeera*, July 23, 2016.

some way of being mutually respectful and tolerant of each other”<sup>43</sup>. Education is crucial. On the opinion of the Julie Ward, people are not born to hate and to fear.

The negative reaction to refugees is more emotional than rational and logical. To change people's minds, either the negative emotions - "refugees are dangerous" need to be turned down or more positive emotions - "refugees are human beings like us and need help" need to be turned up. It is possible to teach people to turn fear into something more positive. One of the ways to deal with the other mentalities is to talk with people, to share different cultures. This sharing of different cultural practices is what makes a rich society. When people meet and speak honestly sharing the culture, religion, word views of each one, they realize that all human beings have the same aspirations and concerns. In terms of exclusion and intolerance, one of the methods is - to use the story as a means of learning how to live better in the future.

That's why the aim of the communication campaign “Social and cultural bridge between the EU citizens and refugees” is – to reduce fears and destroy stereotypes in the EU citizens’ mind, replacing them with facts, arguments, real stories and examples, real actions and solutions, that will create solidarity and tolerance to the refugees.

### **Target Audience**

**Primary Target Audience** - young people between 16 and 35 years old, the EU citizens in Italy and especially in the small cities, problematic areas, like Lampedusa Island and northern Italy.

**Secondary Target Audience** - public and private operators that provide service at information desks, social and legal assistance and guidance to work for migrants and refugees, social workers, cultural mediators.

Young people in Italy are afraid about their future and they're afraid that the refugees will be their competitors. Also, they believe refugees are the source of conflicts and terrorist attacks. They are afraid of the economic and social crises, as well as the cultural and religious gap.

As we can see from the Pew Research Center report, the top three countries who have a negative attitude: Hungary, Italy and Poland. In Hungary, Italy and Poland more than six-in-ten say they have an unfavourable opinion of the Muslims in their country.

Along with worries about refugees and minorities, the survey finds mixed views regarding the overall value of cultural diversity. When asked whether having an increasing number of people of many different races, ethnic groups and nationalities in their country makes their society a better place to live, a worse place or does not make much difference either way, over half of Italians say growing diversity makes things worse. Views on diversity differ based on the educational level of the respondent. Less-educated people are more critical of diversity than more-educated members of the public.

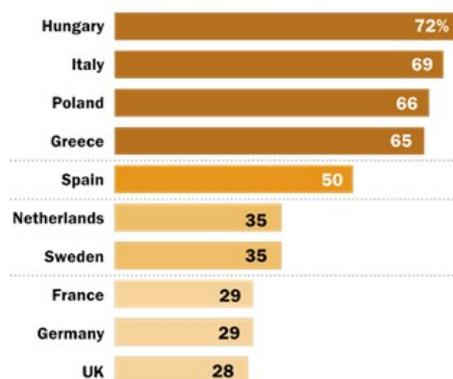
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<sup>43</sup> Julie Ward on cultural diversity: “We’re all human beings with common aspirations and concerns”, *European Parliament News*, December 8, 2015.

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## Views of Muslims more negative in eastern and southern Europe

*Unfavorable view of Muslims in our country*



Note: In Poland, question was asked of a subsample of 686 respondents.

Source: Spring 2016 Global Attitudes Survey, Q36c.

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Moreover, Italy is a country extremely exposed of the refugees and migrants stream. “IOM estimates show that in the first three months of 2016 Italy registered the arrival of over 18,000 people – an increase of more than 8,000 compared to the same period last year”<sup>44</sup>. At least 9,200 migrants were rescued at sea by Italian and international vessels. Lampedusa, a city in the very west of Sicily, is sadly known for welcoming daily thousands and thousands of migrants. That’s why we will launch our communication campaign in Italy. This will be a pilot phase for a project, which would be later developed at EU level.

### **Key Messages**

The gap between EU citizens and refugees can be eliminated by the spread of information and intercultural education. In the social video, in brochures and booklets and through workshops people will be informed about the current situation with refugees, their culture, religion, about social and education programs of the EU and about their actions to resolve these problems.

#### **1) We travel on one heterogeneous binary**

#### **2) Prejudices exaggerate the threat, find proven facts**

#### **3) Being in the refugees’ shoes**

One of the experiments showed with just the right dose of empathy, how could change peoples’ mind for example on transgender rights issues. “Two decades of opinion change took place during a 10-minute conversation, and it persisted for at least three months — that’s a big effect<sup>45</sup>,” - Josh Kalla – political scientist. All it took was a conversation where the people were asked to put themselves in a transgender person’s shoes.

That’s why the methods of the campaign are - workshops and social video, which will influence emotionally and with information flow on the EU citizens’ consciousness, views, and attitudes.

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<sup>44</sup> “Mediterranean Migrant Arrivals in 2016: 169,846; Deaths: 620”, *International Organization for Migration*, January 4, 2016.

<sup>45</sup> “An application of what is known about human psychology to the study of politics”, *Political Psychology*, August 12, 2016.

According to existing fears in the society, in our social video and workshops, through information, creative and emotional way will be shown facts, based on the key-messages. Through this angle young Italian people will be informed, the fears will be dispelled fears and the reasons for then will be reduced.

## **How? – Tools**

**Slogan** - “OUT FROM THE AQUARIUM”

### **Social Video**

Group of people aged 18-34 most influenced by YouTube videos. The social video will show the life of the Muslim refugees in the EU, their culture, religion, worldviews. In sensitive and emotional way, it will call EU citizens for a humane, compassionate attitude towards refugees, in spite of different fears, which have mostly appeared as a result of misunderstanding and lack of information. The social video will be shown on various social media sites: YouTube, Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest and others.

### **Workshops**

In a close connection with Intercultura Italia - an international association that is spread all over Italy and mainly in the small centers, and with other partners, 2-day meetings will be organized with young Italian people.

### **AIMS**

- An information guide to the current situation. What happens in migration policy, what happens to the refugees, how they are living in the EU, their culture and worldview, about the EU governance’s actions in this sphere. The main task is - to dispel fears and stereotypes by providing the arguments and facts, that the fears are unfounded, to reduce fears of European citizens towards refugees.
- Showing useful videos of the current situation in countries such as Libya, Calais, Aleppo, with the aim of teaching young generations about “why refugees are escaping from their native country and are asking for asylum”.
- Preparing activities in a team, sharing different and intercultural points of view.
- Showing our social video product, which will emotionally influence the audience.

Before and during the workshops, the press releases, E-mail newsletters and invitations, posters, Brochures and booklets will be prepared for the guests and participants of the events. The press and TV-journalists will be invited and the publications will appear in the Italian press.

## **Timeline**

The communication campaign “Social and cultural bridge between the EU citizens and refugees” will be realized in two parallel milestones during two months.

The social video will be launched through different Internet resources and across various social networks. At the same time, during two months a program for workshops (social meetings, round tables) will be started with the informational brochures, booklets and also with the social

video. 8 events in different Italian cities are planned, which according to the result of the Italian National Institute of Statistics, have the highest percentage of immigrants to the city's population: Roma, Brescia, Padova, Firenze, Napoli, Milano, Torino, Lampedusa.

### **Resources**

EU funds, NGOs, sponsors, partners like “Intercultura” in Italy.

### **Results**

A more tolerant behaviour on the side of Italian young people, reducing the sense of insecurity and panic that European citizens in Italy have towards refugees.

The result of this communication campaign:

- To build the bridge between EU citizens and refugees, to find a common point, to create the informational and emotional connection. The social video and workshops will influence on behaviour of both parts for the peaceful coexistence.

### **Evaluation**

Nowadays young people mostly use the Internet more than watch television. The effect of the campaign can be evaluated by the quantity of views of the social video on YouTube, in different kinds of social networks, by comments and reactions.

The attention and interest to the workshops can be evaluated by the quantity of visitors, their attitude, their opinions and by public poll after events. Indeed, some publications and TV-news can be in the Italian newspapers, magazines, TV - channels.

# Prevention campaign against all forms of radicalization of young people aged 13-20

by Nune Muradyan

## Background

Young people can struggle in the complex European reality to find their place, identity and belonging. They can turn to radical groups to find alternative narratives, which are facilitated by easy access to the Internet where they can find a sense of recognition and fellowship. Indeed 85 % of European households had access to the Internet from home in 2016<sup>46</sup>, according to Eurostat. The past few years have been filled with confusing messages and successive crises, and in this socio-economic context, young people aged 13 to 20 are the most vulnerable to radicalization and may be the subjects of recruitment by extremist groups<sup>47</sup>.

Too often, radicalization is reduced to religious motives. However, it is important to recognize that different forms of radicalism exist, such as “nationalism”, “racism” and “Nazism”. Moreover, right wing and xenophobic discourse is on the rise and poses a serious threat to European security according to the OSCE (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe).<sup>48</sup>

It is to be stressed that actions countering radicalization take place mainly on the ground, at local but also regional or national levels, and fall within the competences of the Member States<sup>49</sup>. Local actors such as teachers, social workers, community leaders, psychologists, NGOs, think tanks, community police, prison and probation officers as well as representatives of local authorities are usually best placed to prevent and detect radicalization both in the short term and the long term. However, the processes of violent radicalization and the recent terrorist attacks in Europe have underlined the urgent need to tackle radicalization at a transnational level, which require support at the European level.<sup>50</sup>

The majority of the terrorist suspects implicated in those attacks were “*European citizens, born and raised in Member States, who were radicalized and turned against their fellow citizens to commit atrocities.*”<sup>51</sup> The prevention of radicalization is a key part of the fight against terrorism, as was highlighted in the European Agenda on Security.

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<sup>46</sup> Eurostat, *Internet access and use statistics - households and individuals*, December 2016 [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Internet\\_access\\_and\\_use\\_statistics\\_-\\_households\\_and\\_individuals](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Internet_access_and_use_statistics_-_households_and_individuals).

<sup>47</sup> EIP, *Why do people join terrorist organizations?* <http://eip.org/en/news-events/why-do-people-join-terrorist-organisations>.

<sup>48</sup> Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, *Working with youth for youth: Protection against radicalization*, 1 December 2015, <http://www.osce.org/cio/205211?download=true>.

<sup>49</sup> Local actions in 2016:

- <http://www.urbansecurity.be/Prevention-de-la-radicalisation-et-services-des-communes-pour-les-familles>
- <http://www.jeunes.gouv.fr/actualites/chiffres-cles/article/plan-d-action-contre-la>
- <https://www.counterextremism.com/countries/germany>

<sup>50</sup> European commission, *Frequently asked questions: Stronger action at EU level to better tackle violent radicalization*, June 2016, [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_MEMO-16-2179\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-16-2179_en.htm)

<sup>51</sup> European Commission, *Supporting the prevention of radicalisation leading to violent extremism*, 14 June 2016 [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education\\_culture/repository/education/library/publications/2016/communication-preventing-radicalisation\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/repository/education/library/publications/2016/communication-preventing-radicalisation_en.pdf).

The European Commission is stepping up its efforts to ensure that young Europeans have perspectives of their future and a sense of belonging to Europe as a whole, notably through programs such as Erasmus+ and recently the European Solidarity Corps. Nevertheless, beyond these programs a concrete campaign could be useful to counter these radical and extremist narratives and develop inclusive ones for the younger generations. Therefore, it is proposed to the European Commission to launch an online multi-dimensional pilot project campaign in 3 European countries - Belgium, France and Germany. Not only these three countries faced several terrorist attacks during the years of 2015 and 2016, but also all three of them have a history marked by immigration. This past history can see emanate after decades, on the one hand racist behaviours of the local inhabitants and on the other hand, among the descendants of these immigrants, difficulties to find the benchmarks between the culture of origin inculcated and the Western culture to adopt.

### **What is the target audience?**

This pilot project will have a **core target**, young people from ages 13 to 20 in Belgium, France and Germany and as a **secondary target**: teachers, social workers, community leaders, psychologists, NGOs, think tanks, community police, prison and probation officers as well as representatives of local authorities.

Indeed, youngsters especially adolescents which are in a period of their life where they still are looking for their identity and their place in the society are easy targets. These existential questions make them vulnerable to propagandists who arrive with easy answers and give them outlined narratives.

Most young people that leave Europe to fight for a extremist group are angry, alienated and frustrated **young men, mostly under 22 years of age**.<sup>52</sup> They are ideologically committed to the cause and have embarked on a new life while totally rejecting their previous one.

They can be drawn into violence or be exposed to the messages of extremist groups by a number of means. These can include influence of family members, friends, the Internet and social media. Such platforms are increasingly used to share extremist ideologies and views. Exposure to extremist groups increases the risk of young people being drawn into criminal activity and has the potential to cause significant harm to themselves and the environments in which they interact.

The secondary target is essential in the matter of prevention of all forms of radicalization. They need to be informed in order to have the right tools to fight the isolation and reintegrate the youngster in the European society.

### **What are the causes?**

There is no single cause to radicalization and violent extremism of young people. It is a wide array of factors on the macro, meso, and micro levels. Research conducted by the Radicalization Awareness Network (RAN), an EU-wide umbrella network of practitioners and local actors involved in countering violent radicalization, have gathered root causes to radicalization leading to terrorism of adolescents<sup>53</sup>.

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<sup>52</sup> EIP, Why do people join terrorist organisations? *op. cit.*

<sup>53</sup> European Commission, *Fact Sheet, Frequently asked questions: Stronger action at EU level to better tackle violent radicalisation*, 14 June 2016, [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release MEMO-16-2179\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-16-2179_en.htm).

- **Individual socio-psychological factors**, which include grievances and emotions such as: alienation and exclusion; anger and frustration; grievance and a strong sense of injustice; feelings of humiliation; rigid binary thinking; a tendency to misinterpret situations; conspiracy theories; a sense of victimhood; personal vulnerabilities; counter-cultural elements.
- **Social factors**, which include social exclusion; marginalization and discrimination (real or perceived); limited social mobility; limited education or employment; an element of displacement; criminality; lack of social cohesion and self-exclusion.
- **Ideological or religious factors**, which include a sacred historical mission and belief in apocalyptic prophecy. These beliefs also include the view that Western society embodies immoral secularism. Let's take for example, the ban on the Muslim veil; the cartoon crises and other contentious issues are all evidence that the West is at war with Muslim communities.
- **Culture and identity crisis**, which relates to cultural marginalization, which produces alienation and a lack of belonging to either home or the parents' society. This reinforces religious solidarity with Muslims around the world.
- **Group dynamics**, which involve charismatic leadership; pre-existing friendship and kinship ties; socialization; groupthink; self-isolation; polarizing behaviour and counter-cultural elements.
- **Radicalizers and groomers**, which involve hate preachers and those that prey on vulnerabilities and grievances and channel recruits into violent extremism through persuasion, pressure and manipulation.
- **Social media**, which as said before, provides connectivity, virtual participation and an echo chamber for likeminded extremist views. The Internet "reaches otherwise unreachable individuals"; it accelerates the process of radicalization; and increases opportunities for self-radicalization.

Among reasons for youth to get into radicalization, psychological factors seem to play a prominent role. A sense of belonging to society is challenged nowadays. Our campaign should gather all the elements to counter the attractive radical narratives that lead to the isolation of the young one by creating empowering and inclusive ones. It has to have the capacity to cope with such existential uncertainties.

The campaign must, in the first instance, set out models of success and testimonies to show that in Europe, they are free, have rights and have the opportunity to fulfil their dreams.

Secondly, as a preventive measure, it must also provide the necessary tools for the young person's entourage, especially educators, to be able to detect radicalization and be able to intervene in time and in the best possible way. These tools must be widely propagated through Internet but also by European networks already in place.

## What are the objective and main goals of this campaign?

Considering the below numbers<sup>54</sup>:

Country	Potential online audience 12-20 y.o.	Potential online audience working in education sector.
BE	1.100.000 users	230.000 users
FR	5.700.000 users	1.200.000 users
GE	5.000.000 users	850.000 users

- **Raise awareness and prevention:** Inform about the risks and consequences of radicalization on social media.

*60% of the 11 800 000 available and targeted young people to be reached*

- **Promotion of inclusive narratives:** Prevent young people from 13 to 20 from being drawn into radicalization and ensure that they are given role models to look up. Promotion inclusion, citizenship and EU common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through the online

*40% of the 11 800 000 available and targeted young people to be redirected to the online platform*

- **Download of the prevention toolkit by educators:** The toolkit will provide to the educators the knowledge, information and the tools to prevent the radicalization of young people

*20 % of the available and targeted audience to download the prevention toolkit*

## What is the key message?

The key message of the campaign will be the promotion of inclusion as well as providing a sense of belonging and empowering. There will be two different variants of the slogan:

Slogan	Key Message	Description
<b>“You are not alone”</b>	The key message is that the person firstly is not alone in this situation, and secondly is surrounded by loving people who can and want to help him.	The first one will be used for the testimonies showing young de-radicalized people that have succeeded to come back to the society

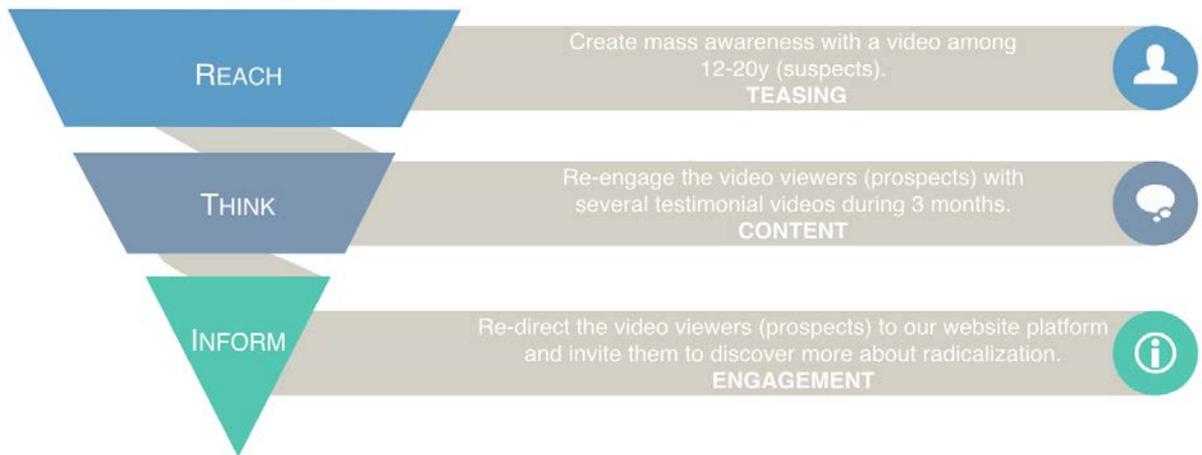
<sup>54</sup> These numbers have been collected through Facebook ads manager the 23/01/2017.

<p><b>“If I did it, you can do it”</b></p>	<p>The key message is that if other people have succeeded, you too can find the strength to get there.</p>	<p>The second one will be used for the videos featuring young role models to look up to and to identify themselves to.</p>
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### Which communication channels and tools?

The campaign will be done in 3 phases for both the core target and the secondary target.

#### CORE TARGET:



#### SECONDARY TARGET:



### The Tools

#### Social media: Facebook

Young digital natives are using social media as part of their everyday life. Research suggests that, terrorist groups strategically target young men and women for their purposes through

essentially Facebook.<sup>55</sup> While aiming young people, social media can't be left apart; therefore the teasing phase will be done on Facebook. During the awareness phase, all the links and videos will also be shared on social media.

With its cost-effective, highly targeting options and engaging formats, Facebook is the ideal platform to both introduce the campaign and redirect and get users and youngster to discover the online platform.

## Online platform

**TESTIMONIES:** It will be launched through an online platform which will be powered with content weekly over a period of 3 months. The first part of the content will be based on the life stories of young girls and boys directly concerned by the issue of radicalization. Every story will be composed of a video and its narrative of life with interviews permitting to raise awareness and inform about the risks of radicalization and its consequences.

**ROLE MODELS:** This platform will also contain success stories of young Belgian, French and Austrian youth from very different backgrounds allowing others to identify themselves and have role models to look up to. Young people can have an active role in developing counter-narratives and hate speech must be conquered with more speech. Therefore, these stories will show all the opportunities available to young Europeans, regardless of their social background, origin or religious beliefs. They will also highlight the values of Europe such as democracy, tolerance and human rights. This second tab will help preventing young people from to 20 from being drawn into radicalization and ensure that they are given role models.

**DOWNLOADABLE TOOLKIT:** Finally, the platform will contain a toolkit containing files that can be downloaded by teachers, facilitators, youth and social workers or others. Indeed, Education (including non-formal education) is a key focus area to make a difference in promoting youth.<sup>56</sup> It will aim to work the phenomenon of violent radicalization with diverse publics and especially young people. It will make it possible to tackle more specifically themes such as recruitment, the role played by social networks, freedom of expression, etc. And will leave the participants the opportunity to listen to their feelings, to express a word that is too often suppressed or killed by fear of judgment, to raise their questions and questions, to express their opinions, and then to elaborate and construct knowledge. This

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<sup>55</sup> European Parliament, The EP and the expectations of European Citizens, Europeans in 2016: Perceptions and expectations, the fight against terrorism and radicalisation, <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/atyourservice/en/20160623PVL00111/Europeans-in-2016-Perceptions-and-expectations-fight-against-terrorism-and-radicalisation>.

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# Tackling online hate speech: how can we engage with the civil society?

by Oriana Henry

## Abstract

With growing hatred since the refugee crisis, this paper explores new key tools to tackle online hate speech. Indeed, in the past decades, the Internet has become a growing communication channel. In the mean time, this method of communication has also been emulated by an increase in far-right and extremist websites, with a hate-based online activity<sup>(57)</sup>. The anonymity and the mobility provided by the Internet has enabled harassment and expressions of hate much easier and opened, in a world that went beyond the traditional landscape of law enforcement. At a national level, States have tried to regulate the Internet and the mean of communication that it represents through the use of conventional national law enforcement. However, Internet does not know borders such as States do. What jurisdiction should State apply?<sup>(58)</sup> Efforts to regulate what is happening online – both at a unilateral and multilateral level –, and online criminality in general is not enough on its own to reduce the effects of online hate-speech. In addition, there is a growing awareness of the issue both amongst the research community and the general public. That is why we believe it is time to mobilise European citizens.

## Analysis

Tackling online hate-speech is one of the Juncker Commission priority under the chapter “Justice and Fundamental Rights”. The Commission wants to target hate-speech and online discriminations, as this phenomena of racism, xenophobia (and other forms) is propagating faster and faster throughout Europe<sup>(59)</sup>.

As stated in the Commission “Justice and Fundamental Rights: two years on” report, some efforts have already been made towards the fights against online and offline hate-speech. Among the measures taken the Commission has established a code of conduct with companies such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Microsoft in May 2016. The Commission has also established a High Level Group to target and combat racism, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance.

However, no tools have been given to the European citizens to tackle and target these forms of hate, especially online where national borders and jurisdiction are especially difficult to apply.

In October and November 2016, VOX-Pol Network of Excellence organised a series of lunchtime briefings, each exploring a different aspect of Violent Online Political Extremism. As Professor Pohjonen demonstrated during the lunch meeting on November 9<sup>th</sup>, and according to his studies; since the beginning of the so-called refugee crisis, it has been found that hate-speech has become more and more antagonistic and violent than what had ever been seen before in any other cases or geographical areas<sup>(60)</sup>. People across Europe have started to reject mainstream media because of a lack of trust. They now tend to turn towards new and alternative

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<sup>57</sup> Banks, J. (2010). Regulating Hate Speech Online.

<sup>58</sup> Banks, J. (2011). European Regulation of Cross-Border Hate Speech in Cyberspace: The Limits of Legislation European Journal of Crime, Criminal Law and Criminal Justice.

<sup>59</sup> European Commission, (2016). *Justice and Fundamental Rights: Two years on*, p.5.

<sup>60</sup> Pohjonen, M. (2016). "Rapefugees" not welcome here, Online Hate Speech, the Refugee Crisis and Far Right Extremism.

media as a source of knowledge. These means are often used by extreme-right propagandists to spread hateful speech.

## Strategy

### Goals and objectives

On the short-term, we want to **educate** European citizens on what online hate-speech is. This goal can be achieved through different objectives such as: giving them the tools to make the distinction between freedom of speech and hate-speech, to spot online hate speech and reduce the tolerance limits towards online hate-speech. Once this is achieved, we will be able to alert our public on the danger it represents for our democracy. But also to better promote the importance of media literacy and help European citizens to promote human rights with counter-narratives.

Then on the mid-term, we want to **alert, train and organise** the formation of citizens-based networks to develop these counter-narratives. In order to do so, we should give our citizens the tools to support and show solidarity towards groups and people targeted by the hatred. But also empower the local civil society and organisations to call out on hatred and to propose an alternative to censorship, as we do not believe the censoring of these hate speeches will be the solution to their eradication.

Eventually, in the long-term we want to **campaign** for peaceful speeches with the aim to show people can exchange and interact with each other beyond hatred – the internet can become a safe space for these people instead of being a safe haven for hate-speech in the name of freedom of speech. This form of campaigning has shown proof of working in the Myanmar experience in Burma<sup>(61)</sup>.

Here our overall objective would be to give a strong and practical knowledge to citizens as to what is online hate-speech. We also want them to have the right platforms and interlocutors to tackle that issue. The aim is for citizens to understand that they are the key tool to campaign.

### Audience

For this campaign our target audience are European citizens. But in this context we can target a specific group of citizens. Young Europeans are the most active online and often the greatest advocates for human rights. By engaging with our youth, we are targeting the bulk of the problem.

As stated by Laura Leets in her study people's perceptions of the motives for hate-speech and hatred towards specific groups in general, as well as their consequences have not been subjected to much empirical investigation so far. However some have tried to study the phenomenon, it focuses very much on the effects rather than the outside perceptions<sup>(62)</sup>.

But to be able to better target this group of people, we should also be able to target organisations and companies engaged in the fight against hate speech and racism, as well as organisations working especially with young people both at national and European level. Some of them would be: **SOS Racisme, IMADR** (International movement against discrimination and racism), **ENAR** (European Network against racism), **NICRAS** (Northern Ireland Community of Asylum Seekers and Refugees), **iMiR** (Institut für Migrations- und Rassismusforschung), **Association Wspolnota Kazachska, Dialogue Platform Association, Amnesty International**. These organisations and companies will be the ones able to, at first, complete

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<sup>61</sup> Gagliardone, I., Gal, D., Alves, T. and Martinez, G. (2015). Countering Online Hate Speech. Unesco series on internet freedom. Paris: UNESCO.

<sup>62</sup> Leets, L. (n.d.). *Experiencing Hate Speech: Perceptions and Responses to Anti-Semitism and Antigay Speech*. [online] Available at: <http://faculty.georgetown.edu/lll27/files/leets5.pdf> [Accessed 7 Mar. 2017].

the objective of educating European citizens about online hate speech. By campaigning with us, both online and offline, in schools, on the streets etc.

## Key message

The aim of our campaign, in term is to be able to have a citizen-based movement that have the tools to counter online hate speech. Our main message is: Empowering European citizens to fight against online hate speech and promote freedom of speech. We want them to understand that tackling online hate speech is about:

- An act of love in an economy of hate; an act of love for democracy – since hate speech is in part a response of a democracy crisis;
- Defending freedom of expression as expressed in Article 10 of the EU Convention on Human Rights<sup>(63)</sup>; and defending media ethics in a volatile media environment;
- Fighting against the spread of online hate speech as a threat to freedom of speech, and as a tactic for directing attention to racist provocation;
- Showing people propagating hate speech and racism, xenophobia and intolerance by using language games and political language just as
- Showing that the propagation of these ideas cannot be a way to shape the spectrum of acceptable ideas.

## Communication mix and timeline

The first phase of the campaign will consist of reaching out to organisations and associations fighting against racism, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance and for human rights (mentioned in our “target audience” chapter). Working along them will allow us to develop the program. In this first semester the focus will be on training organisations as to what are the goals and objectives of the campaign and the key messages we want to convey. At least two seminars will be organised throughout the semester.

Then, following this training, we will be able to unfold the second part of the campaign. The associations and organisations will start working in schools and other educative environments, but also through their own network, events, and workshops will they be able to develop the second part of this campaign. To do so, we should then make available an online tool box for any person which wants to associate to the campaign. It gives the knowledge on the campaign and the media channels used for it. It offers a practical and methodological support for the online spread of the campaign.

At the same time, we will launch the online part of the campaign. Our online presence will mainly be through 4 platforms: Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and a dedicated website. The online campaign will be entitled “Would you say it out loud?” with the aim to denounce how people can be violent through the Internet and the anonymity and freedom it offers. On YouTube it would be a video campaign, the series will be at least of 10 videos long in a first time. The video campaign will also be adapted to traditional media. And for example to be broadcasted on TV and in cinemas. An “easy-made” version of the toolbox provided to organisations will also be available on the website, so that anybody who wants to join the campaign and the fight will know the ins and outs of it. On other social networks, we will be able to share original content and articles published on the website as well as what other organisations share. All content shared online will have to use the identity of the campaign: #OutLoud...

To measure the impact and results of our campaign, we will have to first rely on the feedback of the organisations and associations we will be working with for a first short to mid-term

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<sup>63</sup> European Courts of Human Rights, (1953). *European Convention on Human Rights*. Rome: Council of Europe, Article 10.

assessment. That is why we should meet regularly with them, at least twice a year. Then we will be able to rely on the statistics of our online campaign. But the decline, and in term the eradication of online hate speech will only take place in the long term, and an assessment of that will only take place in 2 to 5 years.

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# Online radicalization and counter narrative strategies in Europe. An analysis. A strategy.

by Vittoria Marchegiani

## Introduction

Since the last decade, and especially after the Twin Towers' attack, the problem of radicalization and Islamic terrorism have emerged quite drastically on the international political scenario and in our daily life as Europeans. Most recently, radicalization has moved from the offline world to the web, using it as a tool to recruit new fighters and organize its actions, with tremendous effects and spreading more quickly in our society.

In this paper we will focus on the Internet as we all know it, with a specific approach on communication and Social Media. Hence, we will focus on Islamist Violent Extremism (VE) contents and online radicalization, rather than approaching the topic in a more general way. The paper will not take into account the deep web and its mechanisms as the monitoring and control of deep-web's phenomena are not directly related to communication.

## Online radicalization: what are we talking about? Brief analysis

Online radicalization can be defined as “a process whereby individuals through their online interactions and exposures to various types of Internet context, come to view violence as a legitimate method of solving social and political conflicts”<sup>64</sup>. Anyway, it has to be clarified that a link between being exposed to VE contents and doing violent or terroristic actions in real life is still unproven, even if there have been cases of “lone wolves” who educated themselves online.

In the case of the so-called Islamic State (IS), it has to be specified that it “has truly transformed the state of play. Its vast propaganda operation is unrivalled, involving devoted media teams (...) who work relentlessly, day and night, in the production and dissemination of the ‘caliphate’ brand”<sup>65</sup>.

## Can we tackle online radicalization through a strategic communication approach? Counter-narrative strategies

If the so-called IS starts its process of radicalization and recruitment online, it seems logic to start a counter campaign on the same ground. But how does the so-called IS strategy works? How they can let Europeans identifying with their terrible and violent narratives and how we can impede this?

First of all, to shape an efficient online strategy, we need to bear in mind that even if the tendency is to depersonalize “users”, we are still talking about human being, people. And in fact, people and their identity are the core of our strategy. Secondly, if we can say that the sum of all the messages and behavior of a community can be defined as a “narrative”, we can also state that the Internet and Social Media allowed recognizing themselves in an infinite number of potential narratives, no matter about distances. These “narratives” influence people's

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<sup>64</sup> Ines von Behr, Anaïs Reding, Charlie Edwards, Luke Gribbon (2015), RAND Report *Radicalisation in the digital era. The use of the internet in 15 cases of terrorism and extremism*.

<sup>65</sup> Charlie Winter, Documenting the Caliphate, The Quilliam Foundation, 6 October 2015, quote from forward written by Haras Rafiq.

behavior also outside the net. As a consequence, counter narratives can be defined as “*a form of intentional and direct strategic communication having a fixed objective, within a political, policy, or military context, to discredit messaging of a violent extremist nature*”<sup>66</sup>. The real efficiency of counter narratives has not yet been proven, but their importance to counter online radicalization is being more and more emphasized by policy makers and experts around the world as demonstrated by the recent remarkable increase of dedicated national and international conferences, studies, publications and projects.

The point is how to really implement such kind of campaign(s) in a European environment, how to evaluate their efficiency, and how to build a counter narrative able to discourage people on being attracted by VE online contents. Like every political communicator and campaigner know, there’s no chance to try to change people’s mind simply messaging them, people interpret incoming information on the basis of their personal narratives located in their networks and communities<sup>67</sup>. In a few words, we can’t impede radicalization by simply massaging people.

We should then underline that the effort of the EU in trying to counter VE narratives is already being put in place in several ways and the institutional effort must be saluted, but more needs to be done on both the communication and the legislative side.

## ***A Communication campaign to counter online radicalization***

### **Reasons and objectives**

According to Europol, the so-called IS has been able to implement a very efficient communication strategy (also in Europe) to spread its beliefs and engage people and that’s why a counter strategy is needed: to stop and prevent the effects of online radicalization. Hence, the objectives of our campaign are:

- Raise awareness on the issue and start engaging the TA on our channels,
- Let our TA feel comfortable with our narratives (start of the identification process), and allow them to understand the truth and the misery of devoting a life to the so-called IS (by giving them an alternative),
- Let VE online contents less (preferably not at all) appealing,
- Complete identification with our narratives and direct engagement against online radicalization and report of VE contents.

All these objectives will be accompanied by systematic SMART goals, which will be evaluated by traditional indicators such as: number of visitors on our platforms, rate of positive feedback and so on<sup>68</sup>.

### **Target audience and (mis)beliefs**

As stated before, the so-called IS is currently adopting new tactics to attract young Europeans, especially via the net and Social Media, but this is only a first clue to start identifying a well-

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<sup>66</sup> Definition of Biggs and Feve, explained on Dr Kate Ferguson’s paper, Countering violent extremism through media and communication strategies. Edited by the Partnership for Conflict, Crime and Security Research, 1st of March 2016.

<sup>67</sup> Cristina Archetti. 2015, Perspective on terrorism. Terrorism, Communication and new media: explaining radicalization in the digital age, ISSN 2334-3745 (Online)

<sup>68</sup> See §3.5 for a more detailed analysis of the evaluation process

focused Target Audience (TA). According to the last Europol report “Changes of modus operandi of Islamic State (IS) revisited” and the profiling of former jihadist, we can define our TA as: “*mainly young men who have a criminal past, are or feel discriminated, humiliated and marginalised in society, with some also having mental health issues who are not strictly practicing their Islamic religion*”, people who have a “*lack of education, unemployment and an inferiority complex can make them vulnerable to radicalisation and recruitment, offering a sense of social belonging and emotional fulfillment. (...) a person isolated and therefore prone to use violence*”. In just a few words, our TA can be identified as those people who are most likely to radicalize.

As regards of this a more in depth analysis should be carried out in order to better define a specific TA, instead of addressing our campaign to the “general public” and mining its efficiency. In doing so, an analysis based on surveys and online big-data could help. Nevertheless, what we already know is that our TA tends to adhere to this kind of narratives because this online communities make them feel less vulnerable and part of a strong community in which they can identify themselves and let their voice heard. The so-called IS “*promises believers a utopian society without distinction based on origin, language colour or race*”. Our TA feels attracted by a dream in which they want to believe, where violence became a tool for a better world, “*terrorist ideologies aim to give simplistic explanations for fundamental grievances, such as individual failure or discrimination, and promise to solve them with violence*”<sup>69</sup>.

We can then identify our TA as young Europeans, mostly men between 15-35 years old, who spend a huge part of their time on the Internet, especially on Social Media, and who are more prone to be manipulated by fake news and ideological propaganda.

### Key message and tools of implementation

The key message of our campaign is pretty simple: violence and extremism are not a tool for a fairer world, no matter what. The alternative of all nowadays societal problems (from youth unemployment to social exclusion and racism) does not reside in violence, which only leads to a miserable life and put people in a vicious circle of hate that only calls for more hate and violence, or death. The real means for a better world are tolerance, knowledge and the acceptance of all forms of diversity. Translated into a motto: *Violence can't help*.

Firstly, our campaign should be the strongest and clearer as possible. People who suffer from a “lack of education, unemployment and an inferiority complex” mostly compose our TA, this means that we should use a language and tools that they will understand. We will influence them by providing *strong positive messages*, giving them a real alternative to radicalization and violence (i.e. acting positively in our society, for example by doing charity, will give them a positive asset to the quality of their life instead of using violence). In doing so our campaign will also aim to educate people and help them developing their critical thinking.

Secondly, it has to be underlined that such a campaign will be really efficient only if our message is perceived as strong, if people feel we are strong – remember that our TA tends to radicalize because the extreme strength of VE online contents let them feel stronger in a society where they feel abandoned. As an example, many studies demonstrate, some of the best online campaigns and contents that receive the most interactions, are the ones that use humor and sarcasm<sup>70</sup>. Having no fear of IS is what IS fear the most. But sarcasm is only an example, what

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<sup>69</sup> EUROPOL (2016), European Union terrorism situation and trend report 2016 (TE-SAT), p. 25.

<sup>70</sup> Henry Tuck Tanya Silverman, Institute for Strategic Dialogue (2016), The Counter-narrative handbook, pp. 9 -

we foresee here is to use emotions as “*emotions are more important than evidence*”<sup>71</sup>. We will show the no-sense behind the brutality of VE acts by giving them an alternative to the so-called IS propaganda.

## Campaign tools

Getting into the details and tools of implementation of our campaign, a few specifications are needed: such a campaign will be multichannel, with contents in several languages (if possible) and adapted to the cultural background of our TA.

We highly recommend the development and online dissemination of audio-visual material such as short films with counter narratives, interviews and testimony of former foreign fighters, survivors (and experts). In addition to that, we will also recommend developing and using innovative visual contents such as using data-driven storytelling, a new trend that is quickly spreading also in Europe from the US and demonstrated to be a very efficient tool to engage Internet users.

Practically speaking, to implement a strategy with such characteristics we foresee the creation of an online hub under the form of an attractive responsive website curated in its image, modern and interactive, user-friendly and with different sections of which one should be dedicated to users, a sort of “forum” where young Europeans can share their positive experiences of acceptance, give positive messages and alternatives, share reasons and visions against violence. Nevertheless, our main ground of action will be Social Media (Facebook, YT and Twitter). They are essential as they are the online platforms where our TA spends most of its time and it is where all our contents will have more visibility. Furthermore, on Social Media we can achieve the maximum rate of interaction with our TA and that’s why a team of expert community managers will be needed.

Our aim is not to go viral, but being efficient. As regards of this, contents that work well on Social Media, especially on Facebook, are: emotional and storytelling content, contents with a strong opinion or elements of surprise, HD Facebook videos (always with subtitles, as we know that people sometimes do not use or like FB sounds), and contents with specific hashtags and call to actions<sup>72</sup>. Always as regards of this, particular attention should be given also to influencers, bloggers and vloggers, who are able to engage a large number of people.

Another aim of our campaign is to be as broaden as possible, but what we recommend is to analyze the results of an ex-ante evaluation and survey (see below), carried out also in order to identify where and when a first pilot campaign should be implemented in order to test its efficiency.

## Evaluation

Evaluating the real efficiency of such kind of strategy would not be easy, as we cannot calculate a “non-radicalized” rate or how exactly know many people changed their mind before/after being exposed to our contents. But despite this, modern technology can help us during the evaluation phase(s).

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10; p. 18.

<sup>71</sup> RAN Centre of Excellence (2015), Counter narratives and alternatives narratives. Retrieved from [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation\\_awareness\\_network/ran-papers/docs/issue\\_paper\\_cn\\_oct2015\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/ran-papers/docs/issue_paper_cn_oct2015_en.pdf)

<sup>72</sup>VOXpol (2016), Tips and trick from Google/YouTube, Facebook and EXIT Germany for effective online CVE. Retrieved from: <http://www.voxpol.eu/tips-tricks-googleyoutube-facebook-exit-germany-effective-online-cve/>

We strongly believe that for such a campaign we should use not only statistics and insights, but also *big-data*. Thanks to this kind of analytics we will be able to evaluate the performance of our campaign but also the online behaviors of our target audience and shape our actions to better tailor the campaign and all its contents.

We would also suggest a continuous evaluation process starting from an ex-ante evaluation from a final one, passing by a systemic evaluation (with a timing to be defined in accordance with our campaign's time schedule – minimum 6months/1 year to start, given the nature of such a campaign).

This systematic evaluation process will help in comparing data and understand the real efficiency the campaign, and will also be an opportunity to collect new relevant data and best practices, useful to better understand also trends and behaviours linked to online radicalization.

## **Conclusions**

Assuming that talking in the name of an EU institution can be seen by our TA as a sort of propaganda, the question is all about how Europe can implement its action without being seen as a Western-propaganda-provider? We believe that EU Institutions should combine different tools, channels and partners. In other words, the EU should be completely independent and free while communicating, implement intensive information and communication mixed campaign together with private communication agencies, the civil society (i.e. associations and organizations actives in the field of human rights, or also those involved in the fight against racism and discrimination) and promoting grassroots initiatives that, working together, will be able to counter radicalization at their best (online and offline).

To implement efficient and independent campaigns at their best, EU should provide funds at a maximum level to boost these initiatives and partnerships, for example via specific calls for proposals in such field, with more “agency-friendly” guidelines, avoiding any frustration for communication specialists. We also believe that on a long-term perspective, EU should also start reflecting on the implementation of-a new funding program dedicated to brand new ways of tackling online radicalization thanks to communication and technology, with grants of a higher budget compared to those already existing. This will also help in building a real European (counter) narrative.

Europe defines itself is the land of diversity, in the most wonderful sense of this words (i.e. the official EU motto “united in diversity”), and despite the fact that all actions against radicalization and terrorism are an exclusive competence of Member States but the added value of the European framework should not be forgotten, and a strong cross border cooperation is needed, even for country-tailored campaigns implemented by private actors (i.e. exchange of best practices). We are convinced that only a real cross border strategy can really influence people's narratives (identities). Furthermore, Europe dispose of all the necessary means - funding and expertise - to really define and implement a strategy to counter online radicalization and change people's life.

To efficiently tackle (online) radicalization an effort should be made at a political and societal level as well.

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# Spotting, addressing and tackling the first signs of extremist views in primary and secondary school children

*by Sebastian Edgington-Cole*

## **Background Analysis**

### **Introduction**

In this paper I will explain lone actor terrorism as well as its origins, its trends and how primary and secondary school children can be vulnerable to its influence. I will then outline my communication strategy aimed at fighting this influence.

### **Definition**

Similarly to the word “terrorism”, lone actor terrorism lacks a concise definition and is very open to interpretation.

The literature around the subject uses various synonyms:

- Lone wolf
- Freelancers
- Lone operator terrorist
- Solo terrorists
- Solo actor terrorists
- Loners
- Stray dogs
- Lone offenders
- Menacing loners

Lone wolf is the most commonly used term, especially in the media. However it has been deemed that this term encourages those considering acts of terrorism, as the wolf is often represented as a dominating symbol of power and fear. One common thread can be pulled from the official term as well as its synonyms: the word lone. This word has two connotations:

1. The first is in the action itself: lone actor terrorists carry out and or plan acts of terrorism by themselves. Although some claim allegiance to a specific group (e.g. ISIS, far right groups, etc.) they don't receive support from the group before the act.
2. The second connotation refers to the actor's state of mind: Lone actor terrorists are very often individuals who find themselves at a particularly stressful and difficult time of their life, and have no one to turn to for help and support, be it family members, a partner, friends or colleagues. Therefore in their time of stressful loneliness they feel the need to unleash in a way that will bring them attention and fame.

As such, a lone actor terrorist can best be defined as an individual who carries out, and / or plans, an act of terrorism, either because they have been influenced by an outside party to do so, or they are in a particular situation in their life where they believe that committing such an act is the best way out of that situation. In other words, lone actor terrorist acts can be carried out by anyone, anywhere, at any time and for any reason. For this paper I will be referring to this as the 4 ANYs.

## History

The notion of lone actor terrorism has been popular since the 1990s. This period also saw the introduction and rise of the worldwide web. In fact, the Internet is the main propagator of lone actor terrorism in recent years. As a global and instantaneous communication platform, it makes the 4 ANYs far more likely and therefore far more dangerous.

Furthermore, since then the next phase of the Internet has become equally as successful and used: social media. It has further increased the Internet's capacity to connect likeminded individuals in a quick and easy way. Therefore the sharing of ideas and motivations is much more widespread.

Popular websites that rely on user-generated content but that are difficult to regulate have become a one-stop shop for lone actor terrorists and those considering going down that path. For example, through Facebook they can meet likeminded people or even join groups of many likeminded people, whilst the video sharing website YouTube has unknowingly hosted bomb building videos. As such, the Internet, and more specifically social media sites, have become a convenient, instantly accessible and unchecked How-to guide for lone actor terrorists.

## Vulnerability

As stated earlier, lone actor terrorists are not usually popular, heart of the family and life of the party people. They are individuals who feel lonely, rejected and ignored. Whilst such a profile may be one undesired by most, it is a situation which most of us could have faced before, during childhood.

A time of our lives already filled with uncertainty, doubts affecting our past and future, it can also be a stressful time due to the added challenges of education, peer pressure and living up to expectations. Furthermore this part of our lives is also synonymous with something that most of us either suffer or suffer upon others: bullying. In the case of those suffering from bullying, it puts them in a further situation of stress, exclusion and personal doubt. This demonstrates that whilst the similarities between the mentality of schoolchildren and lone actor terrorists are not obvious, they are very comparable. Whilst this comparison could have been drawn at any time in history, it is much more potent in this day and age due to the aforementioned rise of social media.

According to Facebook, middle age adults and pensioners dominate their current intake in new members. However young people are still at the forefront of discovering, using and propagating new forms of social media. This means that young people are the instigators and consumers of new social media. As such, they are the most likely to be informed and influenced by what they see on social media. Therefore young people are either unknowingly exposed or knowingly accessing this platform and witnessing or learning the ideas and techniques behind lone actor terrorism. The increasing popularity and possibilities of smartphones now also means that social media can be accessed on the go and anywhere at any time. This makes the dangerous aspects of social media mobile and therefore more accessible, and ties into the 4 ANYs.

As well as social media, mainstream media is increasingly reporting acts of lone terrorism. For example the attack carried out by Anders Breivik in Norway, and his ensuing trial, were heavily reported by media outlets across the globe. This not only panders to the terrorist's desire for fame and recognition, but also propagates the motives and ideas behind lone actor terrorism.

Whilst such media outlets are mainly aimed at adults, an increasing number of young people are tuning in, very often through their smartphones.

## ***Goals and Objectives***

The goals and objectives of this campaign will rest on three pillars: inform, educate, share.

Inform:

- Raise awareness of lone actor terrorism and the dangers therein
- Inform on the sources of influence for lone actor terrorists
- Inform on the usual state of mind of people considering lone terrorist acts

Educate:

- Educate about the best ways to tackle extremist views and their origins amongst pupils and students
- Educate about the consequences of acting upon these views and ideas.
- Educate about taking away the means as much as the motivation, for example through better control and supervision of a child's use of social media.

Share:

- In schools
- Teachers & parents
- Social media

## ***Communication Strategy***

As young people are increasingly exposed to the ideas behind lone actor terrorism, and at an age where they could match the profile of a lone actor terrorist, they are the most vulnerable. Therefore a communication strategy is needed to counter the large and wide radical communication campaigns out there, which are increasingly highly accessible.

As young people are the most vulnerable, my communication strategy is aimed at schoolchildren, at both primary and secondary level. Through these pillars I will focus on addressing schools directly, in person. I aim to educate and create an understanding of the issues, not just inform on the issues.

As the EU has very little say on the curriculums of its member states, I will carry out this campaign nationally, with the hopes of it then gaining international and EU wide attention. Furthermore, this campaign will be carried out in one particular school. The school I have chosen is the Ecole Internationale Le Verseau which is based in Bierges, Belgium. I chose this school firstly because it's where I carried out my primary and secondary education and I still have links there, and secondly because it has a wide range of cultures and nationalities amongst its staff and students. The work in this school will act as a pilot for a wider campaign at national level. Once the national campaign has reached an adequate level of traction and success, I would branch it out and adapt it to an EU wide campaign. However, where possible, I would also aim to adapt the campaign to each member state's curriculum and approach to education.

## ***Target Audience***

I will communicate with teachers, students and their parents, but in different ways and for different reasons. I will also issue a key message to each different target. You will see that each key message features "them". By them I mean those most at risk of becoming lone actor terrorists, so students that feel alone, are bullied and don't participate in class or in the playground.

## Teachers

- At the forefront of education
- Understand educational needs and difficulties
- Have a knowledge of their pupils/students and their behaviour

Key message: Educate them to stop them.

## Students

- Risk of diluted message if transmitted by parents or teachers so students need to be addressed directly
- Help from peers
- Club attitude. The playground, the classroom and the cafeteria are hives of conversation so if I connect with and reach one student, he or she could pass on the messages to half a dozen more students.
- Can help them understand the benefits of inclusion

Key message: Play with them to stop them

## Parents

- Know their children
- Have a degree of control over their consumption of the internet, social media, mobile devices etc.
- Have 24/7 care of their children
- Rational thought process
- Are aware of lone actor terrorism through the news but often have a “my child would never do that” attitude

Key message: Help them to stop them

## **Communication Mix**

My communication mix aimed at these three groups includes direct and indirect communication.

Direct:

- Presentations
- Workshops
- Social media

Indirect:

- Leaflets
- Posters
- Dedicated social media hooks (for example hashtags)

Overall this communication strategy will create an understanding amongst those most vulnerable to becoming lone actor terrorists. This understanding will follow the understanding that lone actor terrorism can be stopped as it isn't difficult to stop at grassroots level and that if it isn't stopped it will only grow in strength as channels grow. This means that more acts of lone actor terrorism would be committed and more people would die. In the long-term, that's what my campaign strategy aims to stop.

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**Roberta Fadda & H  l  ne Ruttiens**

Communication Strategy  
European Communication & Policy  
IHECS-Academy

2016-2017

As extremism and terrorist movements have become an increasing threat in Europe, our goal is to tackle specific aspects of radicalization and propose an adequate communication strategy to face it. The present document focus on the role of women in extremist movements and their power in counter-radicalization.

## Gender & counter- radicalization

Empowering women  
to defeat terrorism



I WANT  
= I CAN



# GENDER & COUNTER-RADICALIZATION

## TABLE OF CONTENT

- Our **issue**: the involvement of women in the Islamic State (IS) – p.1
- Our **goal**: defeat terrorism by empowering women – p.3
- Our **target**: young Muslim women in urban areas – p.3
- Our **strategy**: intervene at the turning point – p.5
- Our **key-messages**:  
I WANT = I CAN – p.5
- Our **communication mix**: towards a relationship of trust – p.6



### Gender:

17% of foreign fighters are female.

*Radicalisation and counter-radicalisation: A gender perspective, EP Briefing 04-16*

## OUR ISSUE: THE INVOLVEMENT OF WOMEN IN THE ISLAMIC STATE

The role of women has become increasingly stronger in the European strategy of *Islamic State* (IS).

According to the *International Centre for Counter Terrorism* (ICCT), as of October 2015, the number of women in the foreign fighters groups represents 17% in the Da'esh occupied territories<sup>1</sup>.

Although many of these women have joined the *Islamic State of Iraq and Syria* (ISIS) in Syria willing to play the traditional role and become wives and mothers of the male terrorists, we are witnessing a shift in the radicalized women in Europe. In fact, many of them are now trying to play an active role in the IS strategy.

In september 2016 there was a plot carried by two women to conduct an attack in France with a gas canister placed in a car. Similarly, in Nice, France, two women were arrested for planning an attack under the supervision of an IS propagandist, Rachid Kassim. These are few of the many cases in which women were conducting or planning attacks.

According to Francois Molins, France prosecutor in charge of terrorism investigation, there is a new, independent and feminist type of Jihadist<sup>2</sup>, who like to act similarly to a man, mainly because they are women who have grown up in Europe and they have a wider control over their lives.

There is also a much broader attention from the ISIS members to the role that the women can play in their strategy. Although ISIS does not encourage women to fight directly, based on a strict interpretation of the *Sharia* laws<sup>3</sup>, it has been noted that “organizations are increasingly exploiting gender stereotypes using women to get past security personnel and avoid detection or shame men into action”<sup>4</sup>.

Another important role of women in the ISIS strategy is the one of the recruiter, spreading the organization's ideology and reaching easily other women. They engage and mobilize women and boys into action, especially in their pair groups<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Radicalisation and counter-radicalisation: A gender perspective, Briefing, European Parliament, [URL] [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2016/581955/EPRS\\_BRI\(2016\)581955\\_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2016/581955/EPRS_BRI(2016)581955_EN.pdf), consulted 23.01.2017

<sup>2</sup> Women's Emergence as Terrorists in France Points to Shift in ISIS Gender Roles, NY Times, [URL] [http://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/02/world/europe/womens-emergence-as-terrorists-in-france-points-to-shift-in-isis-gender-roles.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/02/world/europe/womens-emergence-as-terrorists-in-france-points-to-shift-in-isis-gender-roles.html?_r=0), consulted 23.01.2017

<sup>3</sup> The rules that conduct every aspect of Muslim lives, those are from several sources including the Koran. La loi islamique : la Sharia, Projet Aladin, [URL] <http://projetaladin.org/holocaust/fr/un-guide-de-lislam-pour-les-non-musulmans/les-fondements-de-la-foi-musulmane/la-loi-islamique-la-sharia.html>, consulted 23.01.2017

<sup>4</sup> Radicalisation and counter-radicalisation: A gender perspective, Briefing, *idem*

<sup>5</sup> Good Practices on Women and Countering Violent Extremism, the Global Counter Terrorism Forum, [URL] <https://www.thegctf.org/Portals/1/Documents/Framework%20Documents/GCTF%20Good%20Practices%20on%20Women%20and%20CVE.pdf?ver=2016-03-29-134644-853>, consulted 23.01.2017



## Key Factors in women involvement

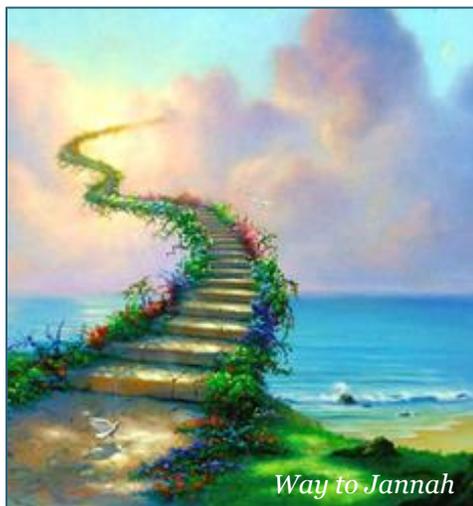
Experts suggest that women join terrorist movements for many of the same psychological, personal, social and political reasons as men<sup>6</sup>. These reasons may include a desire for action; a drive for power or a commitment to an ideology or religious cause. The centre on Global Counterterrorism adds a number of push factors for men and women such as socio-political conditions, grief following a death of a loved one or the desire to create a societal change.

However, according to the OSCE (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe) there is a significant number of gender-based factors that lead women toward radicalization. Violence and discrimination against women, lack of educational and economic opportunities and limited chances for women to exercise their political ideas<sup>7</sup> may make women more susceptible to the appeal of terrorism. The experience of living in a society that denies them full civil rights may lead women to perceive participating in terrorism as a way of acquiring liberty, emancipation, respect and equality<sup>8</sup>.

Violations of women's human rights like the rights for life and physical integrity, the rights of liberty and security, the freedom of expression and the freedom to express their thoughts or their religious beliefs can deepen the feelings of alienation, isolation and exclusion that may make individuals more susceptible to radicalization<sup>9</sup>.

Especially regarding the Western Women and girls the *Radicalisation Awareness Network* (RAN) found other push factors like: feeling socially and culturally isolated in the Western culture, a perception that the Muslim community is persecuted and the anger because they feel this persecution is not addressed internationally.

In addition to all these factors we are also witnessing an increase of the targeted messages towards women by the ISIS propaganda. Their narrative is that women are useful in the building of the new "state", a place where they belong and do not feel marginalized. They have built a romanticised image of Jihad where they include a sensation of belief and adventure, decorating the propaganda with images of sunset and beautiful landscapes and including in the messages promises to find a husband which is also a good fighter<sup>10</sup>.



Way to Jannah

<sup>6</sup> Radicalisation and counter-radicalisation: A gender perspective, Briefing, *idem*

<sup>7</sup> Understanding Women Terrorist Radicalization, Final Report on Women and Terrorist Radicalization, OSCE Secretariat - ODIHR Expert Roundtables, [URL] <http://www.osce.org/secretariat/99919?download=true>, consulted 23.01.2017

<sup>8</sup> Radicalisation and counter-radicalisation: A gender perspective, Briefing, *idem*

<sup>9</sup> Good Practices on Women and Countering Violent Extremism, GCTF, *idem*

<sup>10</sup> The Case of Roshonara Choudhry: Implications for Theory on Online Radicalization, ISIS Women, and the Gendered Jihad, Wiley Online Library, <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/poi3.101/full>, consulted 23.01.2017

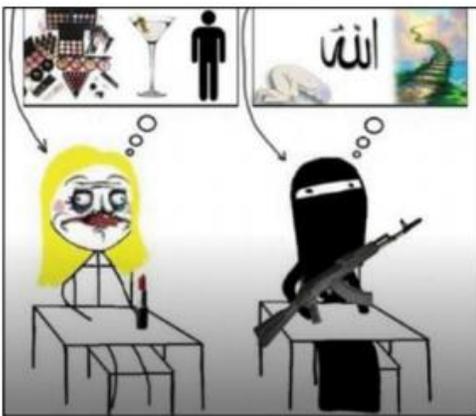
## Why a communication is needed?

Addressing the conditions that lead to terrorism;

Promoting gender equality;

Considering the essential role of women as policy shapers...

→ **effectively prevent radicalization**



## What do we want to achieve with this campaign?

Raise awareness on the importance of a gendered approach;

**Decrease the influence of terrorist groups & reduce the recruitment of young women.**

## OUR GOAL: DEFEAT TERRORISM BY EMPOWERING WOMEN

It is fundamental today for the EU to raise awareness about the role and condition of women in the radicalization process, understand the importance of a gendered approach of radicalization and the need to target women as key-players in the countering radicalization.

### A gender perspective to address specific conditions

According to recent research on countering violent extremism (CVE), the women are essential in preventing radicalisation and extremism<sup>11</sup> and effectively prevent terrorism in their community. The European Union should therefore further consider the gender perspective in their counter-radicalization strategy.

Indeed, women's involvement in counter-radicalization can address the specific conditions and gender-based factors that lead women to be part of extremist movements<sup>12</sup>. Especially, the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment is vital to prevent women radicalization as far as the most concerning problem is the fact that they do not find satisfying and inspiring models in our western society. Making young women consider new options for their future by showing them more attractive models to which they can identify themselves could preserve them from finding alternative solutions in extremist groups. Furthermore, the jihadist movements use typically Western female stereotypes to denigrate Western women, presenting them as superficial and obsessed with trivialities (cf. picture)<sup>13</sup>. We could avoid the efficiency of such campaigns by delivering a more valuable image of women in our society.

In addition, although women have a key-role as mother, sister and/or wife, their role as educator, community member and especially as policy shaper should be more considered<sup>14</sup> as it confers them a special power against extremism.

### OUR TARGET: YOUNG MUSLIM WOMEN IN URBAN AREAS

In our campaign, we are targeting Muslim teenagers and young women from European urban areas.

The main reason is that most of the girls joining the *Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant* (ISIL)<sup>15</sup> are just emerging from adolescence.

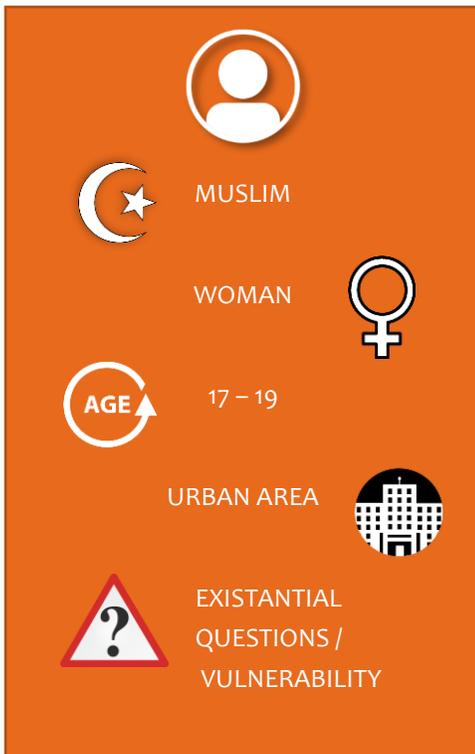
<sup>11</sup> Radicalisation and counter-radicalisation: A gender perspective, Briefing, *idem*

<sup>12</sup> Understanding Women Terrorist Radicalization, Final Report (...), OSCE, *idem*

<sup>13</sup> Women and violent radicalization, Research Report, Centre de prevention de la radicalisation menant à la violence, Québec, [URL] [https://www.csf.gouv.qc.ca/wp-content/uploads/radicalisation\\_recherche\\_anglais.pdf](https://www.csf.gouv.qc.ca/wp-content/uploads/radicalisation_recherche_anglais.pdf), consulted 23.01.2017

<sup>14</sup> Understanding Women Terrorist Radicalization, Final Report (...), OSCE, *idem*

<sup>15</sup> The Levant is a geographical term that refers to the eastern shore of the Mediterranean - Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Israel and Jordan. ISIL, ISIS, Islamic State, Daesh: What's The Difference?, International Business Times, [URL] <http://www.ibtimes.com/isil-isis-islamic-state-daesh-whats-difference-2187131>, consulted 23.01.2017



### Cases analysed

Roshonara Choudhry, 21  
(2010 attack toward British MEP  
Stephen Timms);

Inès Madani, 19 & Ornella  
Gilligmann, 29 (2016 plot attack on  
Gare de Lyon station);

Two girls, 17 and 19 (Sep 2016,  
arrested in Nice for plotting attack);

Safia S, 15 (Feb 2016 stabbing some  
female police officer)

They often start being radicalized between seventeen and nineteen years old<sup>16</sup>. In this period, young women face identity problems and are vulnerable regarding their personality and belonging to a community. These are existential questions to which ‘total Islam’ offers answers and results in the formation of a “shell identity” that is generally at odds with their family and western society.

It’s important to stress out that there are many different paths to radicalization, thus it is difficult to establish one profile that encompasses all women and girls susceptible to radicalization based on location, ethnicity, family relations. However, we can still underline that 90 to 100% of foreign fighters – all genders combined – come from urban or built-up areas<sup>17</sup>. That’s why our campaign will specifically focus on young women from European urban areas.

### Relevant cases

Analysing the women attacks in the last years there is a pattern showing that all the female terrorists are young and different from the groups of women who have been joining ISIS in Syria. They want to act instead of remaining behind the scenes. The case of R. Choudhry for example evidences the shift happening in the society roles. She was a good student and although she was living under patriarchal norms, she was financially helping the family, so she was taking the role of provider<sup>18</sup>.

### The perceptions we need to consider to achieve our goal

One of the main perception that Muslim women feel in the Western countries is an anti-Muslimism sentiment. Especially after the recent attacks, a lot of restrictions related to religious symbols have been applied, and many of them are directly related to women, such as the Burkini ban or the Hijab ban.

Many women feel also impacted by counterterrorism policies, when they are part of a group that feels disproportionately targeted<sup>19</sup>. Muslim women are often marginalized and isolated within their community, in many cases their role is relegated to “wife” and “mother” and they are excluded from public spaces since even many mosques ban women.

The situation is not different in schools, often young Muslim women are secluded and they feel unfairly targeted by the institutions approach toward radicalization. In the case of Rashonara Choudhry for example, she told prosecutor that she felt marginalized because of the presence of the International centre for the Study of Radicalization on the site of the University she was attending.

<sup>16</sup> Women and violent radicalization, Research Report, *idem*

<sup>17</sup> The Foreign Fighters Phenomenon in the European Union, Profiles, Threats & Policies, ICCT Report, [URL] <https://www.icct.nl/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/ICCT-Report-Foreign-Fighters-Phenomenon-in-the-EU-1-April-2016-including-AnnexesLinks.pdf>, consulted 23.01.2017

<sup>18</sup> The Case of Roshonara Choudhry: Implications (...), Wiley Online Library, *idem*

<sup>19</sup> Good Practices on Women and Countering Violent Extremism, GCTF, *idem*

## Key performance indicators

Percentage of young female foreign fighters in future years;  
Social media statistics (number of views, shares, comments...) ...

## How do we want to achieve our goal?

Intervene by empowering women at a crucial stage of their identity development.

## Our Key Messages

I WANT = I CAN

...become a lawyer, an artist, a politician

...become whatever I want!

Let's wide the scope of possibilities.

## OUR STRATEGY: INTERVENE AT THE TURNING POINT

By targeting teenage girls and young women, the purpose of the campaign is to intervene at a crucial stage to change the conditions that make women more susceptible to radicalization. At this stage of their life, Muslim women are constantly renegotiating a variety of identities at the same time imposed by the community and by a wider society. In many cases, they live in a family where the norms are imposed by the patriarchal figure of their father or their brother and they go to school or work in a society where these norms are challenged. A wider society sometimes imposes rules that are opposite to the ones imposed by the religion, for example the veil ban.

The campaign aims to empower women at this stage to take the lead of their own life and have a voice in their family and in their society. Educated and skilled women with their own source of income are more resilient to the pressures of a patriarchal family. They can express their opinion and interact more freely within their community. Studies have shown that they are not willing to engage in terrorist groups wherein the role of the women is the stereotypical one of becoming a "Jihadi Bride"<sup>20</sup>.

Empowering women outside and within the family, giving them authority and credibility, both as mothers and sisters and as policy makers and decision makers is essential for preventing radicalization.

## OUR KEY MESSAGES: I WANT = I CAN

*If I WANT = I CAN ...become a lawyer, an artist, a politician. If I want I can become whatever I want! Let's wide the scope of possibilities.*

With these key messages, we want to empower women **deconstructing gender stereotypes**. We want to show them the different possibilities they have in life and the fact that these possibilities are not restricted to just becoming the wife of someone, or the mother of someone.

Role models are very important in life and especially in the adolescence period where they have the power to shape their vision, their ideas and their actions. Therefore, showing to young women, role models, to whom they can refer to, it is essential, especially if they don't see these kind of role models in their families or close relationships.

In our campaign, we are presenting female Muslim models highlighting their personal achievement, obtained through hard work and trough their personal commitment

We want young Muslim women to have in mind: "If I have the strong will to become a lawyer an artist or whoever I want and I work hard to achieve that, I can do it".

<sup>20</sup> Radicalisation and counter-radicalisation: A gender perspective, Briefing, *idem*

## What type of communication should we use?

*Channels:*  
online + out-of-home;

*Type:*  
Bottom-up;

*Transmitter:*  
Small women organization

## OUR COMMUNICATION MIX: TOWARDS A RELATIONSHIP OF TRUST

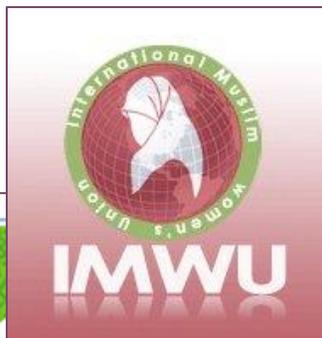
Our campaign will mostly be performed online. As we have noticed in our strategy, many young women feel segregated both in their community and in the outside world and they use internet as an alternative space where they feel less lonely and free to communicate and express themselves. This is by the way also the channel ISIS has been using to reach the women and capitalize on this gender segregation, disseminating information and trying to recruit them.

As almost 100% of extremist fighters come from urban or built-up areas, we will also carry out a similar billboard campaign that will take place in European urban areas at risk of radicalization; Paris, Brussels, etc. Moreover, an out-of-home campaign is relatively accessible – can even be clandestine in some cases – and we want to avoid a top-down communication.

Indeed, such an awareness campaign coming directly from the European Union can have a negative impact toward our target group, of young Muslim women, because they feel constantly targeted by counter terrorism campaign and organization just because of their faith. A communication from the institutions may seem displaced, seen as an initiative to protect citizens from further terrorist attacks. Whatever the reasons, the European institutions often transmit an image of an "ivory tower" whose intentions are unclear, which inspires a certain mistrust. In addition to that, adolescence is a period in the life where the individual typically questions the role and power of constitutions. Therefore, a message coming from influencers not linked to institutions has a far better chance to impact.

That's why our communication will rather involve small women organizations at grassroots level, since they have in general better access to our targeted individuals. We are willing to collaborate with organisations like the European Forum of Muslim Women<sup>21</sup> and the International Muslim Women's Union Europe<sup>22</sup> as well as similar organizations at a national level (throughout Europe) like the Coalition of Muslim Women in Germany<sup>23</sup>. The interests of such associations<sup>24</sup> are clearly directed towards our target audience. This makes it possible, on the one hand, to inspire the confidence of young Muslim women and, on the other hand, to make them feel important and understood, which can then lead them to feel powerful.

At a first stage, we want to collaborate with those organizations to find the right feminine Muslim models to fit with the message of our campaign. At a further step, we want those organizations to spread our campaign through their social channels. And they have also key-contacts such as online influencers we can involve.



<sup>21</sup> The European Forum of Muslim Women, [URL] <http://www.efomw.eu/>, consulted 24.01.2017

<sup>22</sup> The International Muslim Women Union : Europe, [URL] <https://www.facebook.com/International-Muslim-Womens-Union-Europe-132548233433952/?fref=hovercard>, consulted 06.03.2017

<sup>23</sup> The Coalition of Muslim Women in Germany, [URL] <http://www.muslimische-frauen.de/about-amf-english/>, consulted 06.03.2017

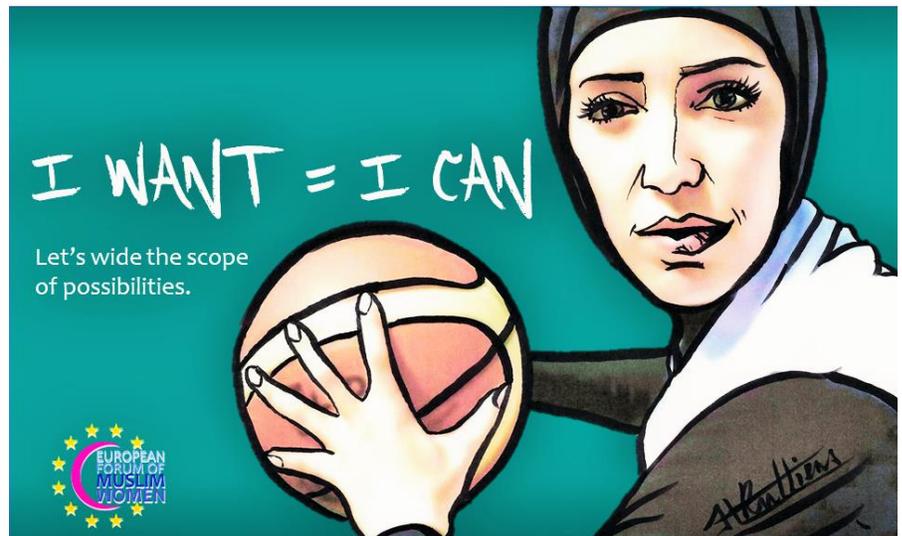
<sup>24</sup> Many other associations for Muslim Women can be found on the website of the Women's Islamic Initiative in Spirituality & Equality [URL] <http://www.wisemuslimwomen.org/activism/region/C59/Po/>, consulted 06.03.2017

# OUR COUNTER-RADICALIZATION CAMPAIGN

Our campaign will be based on **photographic and video projects** with interviews.

The projects will show **different profiles** of Muslim women in their work environments.

The projects will have a broad range of profile choices, we will interview a **lawyer, a musician, an artist, a politician and an athlete.**



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