



# Spotlight on Preventing Radicalisation leading to Violent Extremism



The past two decades have seen an unprecedented focus on policies addressing the threat of radicalisation and violent extremism, with significantly increased funding invested in prevention programmes. Several European countries have a longstanding history of addressing extremist ideologies, associated with the far right and left, as well as separatist movements, pre-dating the more recent focus on Islamist extremism. These early experiences lay the foundations for evidence-based interventions and policy-making.

While the importance of national governments in setting counter-radicalisation policies cannot be dismissed, the role of municipal actors is crucial in ensuring preventive radicalisation interventions are implemented successfully. The **IcARUS** review of the literature in the field of preventing radicalisation leading to violent extremism provides some important insights for future work in the field.

## Measuring Outcomes

While significant resources have been invested in counter-radicalisation interventions, there is some evidence of insufficient clarity around aims and outcome measurement, which render establishing effectiveness difficult. Rigorous evaluation of interventions provides a mechanism of accountability for public resources and helps strengthen institutional development. To be able to demonstrate that investments are generating valuable social outcomes:

- **Clearly defined, meaningful, and consistent** outcome measures for evaluations are necessary to determine success.
- There is a need to **identify the insights** provided by and distinguish between both process evaluation and outcome evaluation.
- **Interventions** should be evaluated against the context in which they are conducted.



## The Importance of Partnerships

Effective interventions require a multifaceted and cohesive approach connecting a wide range of partners at all levels of intervention. They also involve end-users in the design, delivery and promotion of interventions, so as not to undermine their effectiveness. For multi-stakeholder partnerships to be successful, clear and open communication between partners is key.

- **Developing inclusive and community-focused programmes** ensures broad applicability, mindful of and suited to the local context.
- **Targeted, secondary prevention interventions** should consider enlisting a wide support network - peers, family, teachers, coaches, religious leaders, etc. - allowing for responses tailored to individual and local contexts.
- **Clearly communicating** expectations between partners from the outset provides a robust foundation from which to deliver effective outcomes.



## Building Resilience

Radicalisation leading to violent extremism is not limited to a certain ideology. It is a dynamic process which evolves over time and place, and in response to social and technological change, such as the Covid-19 pandemic and novel forms of communication. Research has identified a variety of protective factors. Many of these overlap with those known from juvenile delinquency, and include **non-violent peers, bonding to school, attachment to society, highlighting the promise of broad and holistic interventions** aimed at building resilience and empowerment at an early age.

Experiences of participation in everyday democratic processes of dialogue and decision-making can provide an anchor to commonly held value systems, countering extremist values via a greater sense of inclusion and empowerment.

For primary prevention programmes in educational settings and open youth work to be successful and not counterproductive, evidence highlights they need to:

- Ensure **integration** of all minorities;
- Equip students with tools to **learn critical thinking**, rather than focusing on a particular ideology or cause;
- Empower students with ways in which they can **actively participate in the democratic process**;
- **Clearly define core values** (e.g., democracy, human rights)
- Provide a safe space for **exploration and discussion** without the fear of referral to authorities.



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### Consortium



European Forum for Urban Security (EfuS)



FH Salzburg  
Fachhochschule Salzburg  
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Plus Ethics



Erasmus University Rotterdam  
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Laboratory of Urban Criminology - Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences (Panteion)



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The IcARUS project Innovative Approaches to Urban Security aims to rethink, redesign and adapt existing tools and methods to help local security actors anticipate and better respond to urban security challenges. This factsheet is based on the IcARUS Review of Accumulated Learning and cross-analysis of urban security.



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