



Participation

Analysis of communication strategies against
extremism and radicalisation

Deliverable D4.5

*K McDonald¹, I Pîrlogea², D Dolghin², L Marinone³, M Manchenko⁴, N
Czyżewska⁵, M Shangoyan⁶, R Grigaliunaite⁶, S Ciaperoni⁶, M E Doufexi
Kaplan⁶, Georgia Alexandrou⁶, C Annovi⁷*

1 MUHEC

2. PATRIR

3. EDF

4. CESIE

5. PPWP

6 KMOP

7 CE.S.I.

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Project coordinator

Name	Prof. Francesco Antonelli
Organization	Università degli Studi "Roma Tre"
Email	Francesco.antonelli@uniroma3.it
Postal address:	Dipartimento di Scienze Politiche Università degli Studi Roma Tre Via G. Chiabrera, 199 00145 – Rome (RM), Italy



Version history

Version	Date	Author	Description
V1	02/01/2023	Isabella Pırlogea Dana Dolghin	Leading Section 2 on Misogyny
V2	10/0102023	Nina Czyżewska	Writing sub-section 2.2.4 Campaign 4 #NiePrzesadzam, Poland".
V3	07/01/2023	Maryna Manchenko Ruta Grigaliunaite Silvia Ciaperoni	Leading Section 3 Online communication and writing sub section 3.3 BRAVE section
V4	015/02/203	Markos Shangoyan Maria Elli Doufexi Kaplani	Sub-section 3.2 on COMMIT
V5	10/03/2023	Claudia Annovi	Subsection 3.1 Be Internet Citizen
V6	10/02/2023	Kevin McDonald	Leading sub-section 4 on Creativity, ethics and subjectivity and writing subsection 4.3 EveryonesInvited and 4.4 #BecasuelamJewish
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V11	28/02/2023	Necla Acik	Final check and editing and lay outing
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Author list

Name	Organization
Kevin McDonald	MUHEC
Dana Dolghin	PATRIR
Isabella Pırlogea	PATRIR
Lorenzo Marinone	EDF
Maryna Manchenko	CESIE
Claudia Annovi	CE.S.I.
Nina Czyżewska	PPWP
Markos Shangoyan	KMOP
Maria Elli Doufexi Kaplani	KMOP
Georgia Alexandrou	KMOP
	KMOP

Summary of the Project

The PARTICIPATION project primary purpose is to prevent extremism, radicalization, and polarization that can lead to violence through more effective social and education policies and interventions that target at-risk groups to be performed through the establishment of a holistic framework and the engagement\involvement of social actors, local communities, civil society, and policymakers.

Objectives and expected impact:

- ❖ *to develop a holistic, multidimensional model based on participatory fieldwork and a mixed-method approach;*
- ❖ *analyzing and discussing through an action research strategy involving young people in a different side of Europe, the socio psychologic mechanisms that lead to extremism, radicalization, and polarization;*
- ❖ *to identify future perspectives and trends of hate speech, extremism, and radicalization;*
- ❖ *developing communicative tools, education approaches, and community-based strategies;*
- ❖ *to improve the awareness of young people and communities as well as the society as a whole;*
- ❖ *to realize databases and a systematic set of indexes and early-warnings;*
- ❖ *developing a set of policy recommendations with the participation of stakeholders, policymakers, and targets.*

The PARTICIPATION project starts with the assumption that a broken top-down approach in research and preventive design is needed. A holistic approach leads to consider vulnerable people as protagonists of the research processes and as producers of knowledge on themselves, including the way and the strategies for preventing extremism and radicalization. So, suppose a mixed method approach that combines qualitative and quantitative data is a fundamental methodological way to catch all the complexity of processes at micro, meso, and macro levels. In that case, it will be linked to an action research approach, based on open discussion focus groups, traffic between researchers, stakeholders, practitioners, and social actors (particularly young people for reasons above).

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Executive summary

While the notion and the definition of ‘counter-narratives’ are widely studied and supported in the EU, a lack of empirical evidence persists in this field, both about the study of the communication processes involved in such narratives, and the investigation of their effectiveness. Recent years have seen a significant transformation in patterns of communication, moving away from a linear ‘sender-receiver’ model to multi-author narratives, reflecting the development of participatory culture and new forms of media. Such forms of communication involve the increasing significance of affect and emotion, where ideas are associated with feelings, and where messages achieve resonance through the sharing of feelings. These communication patterns are amplified by the emergence of a participatory remix culture, evident in the significance of memes as communications media.

Such transformations are also evident in extremist communications, shaped by the diversification of violent extremism, the emergence of post-organisational paradigms of radicalisation, and the hybridisation and convergence of different expressions of violent extremism. These have led to a significant change of paradigm of radicalising communications, from the linear communications associated with organisations seeking recruits, to participatory cultures and multi-author narratives.

Objectives

The objective of this deliverable is to contribute to building an evidence base that will help understand such communication ecologies, in particular the place of affective communication in extremist communication and in efforts to counter such communications.

The report builds on research undertaken in PARTICIPATION, through case studies of communication actions in five countries (Greece, Poland, United Kingdom, Romania, and Italy) that seek to build alternative narratives around the relationship between ideas and feeling. The report highlights the diversity of these actions, from state-led communication campaigns, NGO-led actions, to grass-roots ‘bottom up’ actions. Despite the diversity of the cases explored, a number of central themes emerge. They highlight the importance of moving beyond a ‘sender-receiver’ approach to a much stronger focus on experience and the importance of shared feelings in communication campaigns, as the basis of resonance. Rather than seek to address an audience, the actions explored in this report create ‘affective publics’ and illustrate the importance of ‘co-creation’ and personal transformation in campaigns against extremist communications.

Recommendations

The report concludes with recommendations regarding communication. It proposes complementing the ‘audience and message’ model embedded in the RAN GAMMA+ model with an increased focus on co-creative communications and the creation of ‘affective publics’ linking feelings and ideas. On this basis, the report proposes that the evaluation of communication campaigns

needs to more directly address the scope for remix, circulation and resonance, though a communication model based on participation.



1. Introduction

1.1 The task:

Even though the notion and the definition of counter-narratives are widely studied and supported in the EU, a lack of empirical pieces of evidence still persists in this field, both about the study of the communication processes put in place and the investigation of their effectiveness. This task aims at **(i) analysing the literature** as well as **(ii) past and current initiative** to investigate how different radicalisation pathways have very different communication 'ecologies', all of which are fundamental to integrate into communication strategies.

Radical groups have changed a lot their communication habits in the last few years, publishing content to gore sites, YouTube, or even using live streaming in a gamer platform. The task will analyse the **affective structure of radicalisation messages**. Several aspects will be taking into account, such as the **target audience** (intended, unintended, supporters, adversaries and neutrals); **identification of a specific target** (young people, women, ...); measures used for **evaluating the efficacy of the strategic campaign, geopolitical context and gender perspective**. The task will produce D4.5.

1.2 Building on key themes emerging across PARTICIPATION

This deliverable serves as a bridge between the research focused first-two years of PARTICIPATION and the actions in the final year that focus on impact and transformation. As detailed in the 'task' statement above, the core objective of this deliverable is **to address the place of 'affect' or emotion and feeling, both in experiences and pathways of radicalisation, and in communication actions** aimed at addressing radicalisation and violent extremism.

A number of important themes have emerged across the research actions undertaken by PARTICIPATION in its first two years. Together they point to a **changing paradigm in radicalisation and violent extremism**. The most significant of these are:

1.2.1 The diversification of violent extremism and radicalisation

This has been at the heart of the research actions undertaken by PARTICIPATION. The initial focus of actions to counter the development of violent extremism focused on the emergence of violent Islamist and jihadist extremism, an approach that consolidated through the 2010s with the development of the Islamic State group in Syria and Iraq, and the significant movement of young Europeans to join this armed conflict.

The period following the military defeat of the Islamic State group has seen a significant **diversification of forms of violent extremism** that have been explored in different actions undertaken in PARTICIPATION. These include the emergence of **far-right** violent extremism, significant growth of expressions of **hate crime** that have radicalised dimensions, the emergence of **INCEL** based violent misogyny, and the growth of **conspiracy theories** based on fear and the

construction of a 'monstrous other', framing an imaginary of urgency, emergency and a struggle against hidden and threatening forces. The most significant of these conspiracy theories has taken the form of QAnon, a cluster of conspiracies that emerged on the 4chan website in the mid 2010s, and which were central to the attack on the US Capitol on 6 January 2021, and which have 'Europeanised' in the period since, amplified by fears and anxieties associated with the COVID pandemic. The significance of this development in Europe was highlighted in December 2022 with the arrest of members of a network allegedly involved in plotting a coup, as well as planning to kidnap a government minister. QAnon theme were central to the terrorist attack on two shisha bars in Hanau/Germany in February 2020, when the gunman posted a video to social media repeating key claims that emerged in the QAnon conspiracy.

1.2.2 The development of 'post-organisational' violent extremism

Most analysis and policy-focused engagement with the growth of the Islamic State group focused on its development as an organisation. This in turn drew on a model of communication framed in terms of 'propaganda', where the aim of IS communications was to 'indoctrinate' and 'recruit' vulnerable people to its cause.

The forms of violence extremism that have become increasingly evident in the period since are not the product of 'organisations'. Instead, the development of such violent imaginaries and practices emerge in **participatory cultures and networks**, a development amplified by **social media and wider digital culture**. This development was highlighted by PARTICIPATION research with young people discussing their experiences of encounters with extremism, where there was a complete absence of reference to 'organisagtion', and where pathways to violent extremism were experienced in ways that are completely different from beign 'recruited' by an organisation'.

This is not to deny the role of organised actors in contemporary violent extremism. It is clear however that **pathways to contemporary violent extremism cannot be understood as a process of 'recruitment' and socialisation by an organisation**. This transformation has major implications for the way extremist communications are understood, and counter-communications are developed.

1.2.3 Hybridisation and convergence

These different expressions of violent extremism cannot be understood as independent and unrelated. They increasingly manifest similar themes, and identifying and responding to such themes may play a key role in ensuring potential impact of communication actions seeking to address violent extremism.

This hybridisation and convergence is evident in the place of themes of masculine and feminine within radical movements. **Ironic models of masculinity** that have emerged in **online INCEL** forums are increasingly evident in Islamist networks in Europe and the phenomenon known as **Islamogram** (ISD 2022), and this model of masculinity is specifically referenced by the actors involved in recent terrorist attacks in Europe. The attacker on the Halle/Germany synagogue in 2019 refers to himself as both an INCEL and a NEET, while the attacker on the mosque in Oslo in 2019 circulated a meme immediately before the attack, where he refers to himself as a 'chad', a

model of powerful masculinity constructed within INCEL culture. Other convergence points emerge, such as the increasing importance of an imaginary framed in terms of conspiracy, where this conspiracy is aiming at the obliteration of the white population of Europe by means ranging from the development of COVID, compulsory vaccinations against COVID, or mass immigration aiming at the gradual disappearance of the white population of Europe.

One of the most **important dimensions of this convergence is the place of misogyny** in contemporary pathways to violent extremism. This theme was highlighted in the survey of school students undertaken within PARTICIPATION, where close analysis of the data underlines the constitutive relationship between misogyny and openness to violent extremism.

1.2.4 From organisation and recruitment to participatory culture and multi-author narratives

The research undertaken by PARTICIPATION underlines a shift, where pathways to radicalisation need to be reframed, **moving from a model of recruitment into, and socialisation by, an organisation to instead be understood as taking place with participatory cultures, where ideas and feelings are remixed and repurposed.** This is most evident in digital culture and the remixing of memes.

Memetic communication today plays such a central role in radicalisation communications because memes allow two things that are fundamental to communications becoming 'viral'. First, they are **based on the association of ideas and feeling.** Second, they can be **remixed and repurposed,** a dynamic that is central to contemporary participatory culture, from digital networks to fashion.

1.2.5 Memes as media of communication

While once organisations formed the basis of extremist violence through structuring communities, today this **experience of 'recognition' and 'belonging'** is increasingly associated with involvement in **participatory remix cultures,** where memes are central to communication. Memes have been described as 'multimodal artefacts remixed by countless participants, employing popular culture for public commentary' (Milner 2013). They may consist of still images, images with a phrase, GIFs (Graphic Interface Format animations) or videos. While originally developing within internet 'geek' culture, memes have emerged as one of the principal media of political communication online, linked to the logic and networks of social media, as well as 'the way a society expresses and thinks about itself' (Denisova 2013).

Memes play a central role in community construction through experiences of shared recognition of meaning (McDonald 2015), and have been **central to transforming extremist narratives,** framing these as the product of a youth movement, offering 'transgressive appeal', and presenting themselves as a counterculture rebelling against a repressive establishment (Lovik and Tuters 2018). Originally considered a limited media for the creation of online communities, meme communities increasingly develop as offline actors as well (illustrated by Maly's (2019) study of the transformation of an ethnonationalist meme sharing community into a Flemish ethnonationalist

activist movement). Memes are a participatory medium of communication, embedded in a remix culture that invites experimentation and participation.

Memes are an example of **'spreadable media'**, an online participatory culture that extends beyond platforms and beyond digital culture itself. They are compressed, structured around contradictions, and are designed to circulate in real time networks via repetition. Memes have emerged as a fundamental vehicle for the **mainstreaming of extremist narratives** in many regions of Europe today, firstly in digital culture and then beyond. They challenge us to understand the politics of 'idea compression' (Lovik and Tuters 2018), as well as the fundamental importance of the contemporary acceleration of visual culture to communication and identification today, that together allow memes to express ideas and affects that otherwise cannot be articulated.

The ability of political communications to mainstream is closely associated with **their capacity to become embedded in participatory culture**, and so become the object of remixing and recirculation. An important characteristic of extremist communications is a separation of 'literal' and 'implied' meaning, increasingly achieved by **irony, parody and satire** (Greene 2019). James Caron (2021) notes that as political communication, satire can be analysed as both political speech and comic speech, suggesting a **metaphor of a wave state** – a wave existing as both particle and movement. Satire from this perspective exists as a 'hybrid form', mixing irony and earnestness to create a hybrid structure of affect. Geoffrey Baym (2007) explores this as a **process of 'discursive integration'** where content becomes increasingly fluid, blurring 'the languages and practices of news, politics, entertainment, and marketing discourses'. There is a **fundamental transformation that has been highlighted by PARTICIPATION research**. While political extremist communications previously were generated by organisations with identifiable communications strategies (propaganda paradigm), this has been profoundly transformed by the development of digital communications and the participatory and remix logics of digital and youth cultures. Unlike older white supremacist and ethnonationalist movements, **extremist communications today rely on irony, humour, parody and memes, with the participatory logic of digital culture central to their mainstreaming**.

Humour plays a decisive role in such communications. This allows the association of ideas and feelings that may not otherwise be possible. Laughter is a powerful experience of 'inclusion', not based on a 'shared identity', but a **'shared experience'** (McDonald 2019). This experience is 'felt' through experiences such as surprise, amusement, or recognition of incongruity.

1.2.6 The importance of emotion and affective experience

The stunning growth of post-truth conspiracy narratives within extremist cultures and networks underlines the **centrality of emotion and feeling to experiences of radicalisation**. Violent extremist groups in the 1970s took the form of underground organisations, such as the *Red Brigades* in Italy or the *Weather Underground* in the United States. These manifested a strong hierarchical culture where ideology and ideological debates played a central role (McDonald 2013). **Contemporary expressions of violent extremism are radically different**. Ideology has given way to **affective**

communication, most evident in the place of memes within extremist cultures, where **memes work by creating feeling rather than communicating ideology and political programme**.

Contemporary violent extremism manifests a desire for rupture, chaos and destruction. This highlights the disinformation and fake news that play such an important role within the radicalised post-truth cultures of the conspiracy theories that recur across imaginaries of violent extremism today.

1.3 This deliverable

Engaging with feelings and affective communications is perhaps the most pressing challenge facing counter- and alternative narratives today. There are several reasons for this. The conceptual inheritance received from the 1970s underlines not only the centrality of organisations to radicalisation and violent extremism, but also the centrality of ideology and programme. Over much of the decade of the 2010s, counter radicalisation was influenced by ideas of producing 'counter-arguments', particularly when referencing interpretations of religious texts. While the limits of this approach are now clearly understood, there is **still a lack of clear understanding regarding ways to address the place of affect and feeling within pathways to violent extremism**.

To a significant extent this reflects wider understandings of communication, both within academic disciplines and wider societies. In academic debates from the 1970s there emerged as view, strongly influenced by philosophers such as Jurgen Habermas, that the outcome of communication is framed by the 'best argument'. This led to the dominance of a rationality-centred model of communication, one where emotion and feelings were not integrated into understandings of communication, or if taken into consideration, were approached in terms of the 'irrational'.

Fifty years later, understanding emotion and affect has emerged as central to the analysis of social life, reflecting wider social transformations we are living, involving a **shift away from organisational society** (structured by stable organisations) **to models of social life shaped by flows, movement, communication and 'resonance'** (Rosa 2021). The reference to resonance involves an emerging approach to communication across a wide range of academic disciplines and traditions, signalling a transformation in the way people and cultures interpret and experience the world. This highlights the place of intensity not-yet-mediated-by-culture, the **search for 'presence' and a desire for 'immediacy'**, the importance attached to **visceral experience** as the basis of authenticity, and an overall cultural transformation involving a privileging of 'access to the world through the **body and the senses** than through concepts' (Pernau 2021).

It is in this context that **emotion and affective communication become increasingly central** to public life and culture. 'Feeling' becomes increasingly important to social and political life, with movements, including extremist movements, emerging around flows of experience and emotion. In this context, we cannot reduce political life to discourse and debate, perceived only in terms of 'rationality'. Instead, the challenge of understanding contemporary extremism and radicalisation, as well as responses to these, demands of us that we recognise the extent to which

communication extends beyond language and concepts **to capture the role of feeling in both experiences of radicalisation, and in actions to counter this.**

In terms of the challenge of PARTICIPATION, there is a **fundamental shift** at work here. Social and political life are not made up of organizations, roles and rules, but increasingly movements, emotion communities, and **experiences of personal subjectivity lived in relation to others.** This transformation has fundamental implications for pathways into radicalisation and extremism, that are **increasingly structured in terms of affect and feeling more than ideas and programmes.** This is particularly evident in the place of conspiracy theory in contemporary societies, mobilising both fear and fascination, and amplified by the sensual and personalised forms of sharing involved in cultures built through digitally mediated communications.

While the social and historical sciences over much of the 20th century tended to dismiss emotion as necessarily reactive, and most often an expression of frustration, inability to cope with the modern world, or as fundamentally irrational. Towards the end of the 20th century there emerged an increasingly clear awareness that **feelings are a fundamental source of moral judgement and values** (Joas 1996), and **play a fundamental role within action and decisions.** Across academic disciplines there is an emerging break with an older model premised on a separation of body and rationality, where social expression of emotions was framed in terms of 'the crowd' (Le Bon 2017) and outbursts of irrationality.

The recognition that **social actors are embodied beings** has been increasingly associated not only with a recognition of the importance of emotion and affect in major social transformations, this has also increasingly come to focus on the **cultural productivity of emotions**, and in particular the role of emotion and feeling as fundamental to the production of concepts.

Experiences of feeling need to be placed at the centre of understanding the development and transformation of extremism, once again most clearly evident in the case of conspiracy theory, where the 'content' of the conspiracy is largely irrelevant to its development and radicalisation, driven instead by fascination, fear, excitement and at times horror.

This deliverable, however, does not set out to present a systematic analysis of transformations in extremism and associated communications. This has been developed in earlier deliverables, in particular D2.1, D2.2 and D2.3. Instead, our **task here is to explore attempts to counter and prevent violent extremism and radicalisation.** And PARTICIPATION does so with a particular **focus on young people and gender.** There are a range of reasons behind this option. For the purposes of this deliverable, we can highlight two in particular.

- 1) The focus on young people is framed on the basis that young people are living this new social model in particularly important ways – above all in terms of digital sociality, and also disengagement from older forms of social and political participation, such as voting, membership in political parties, trade unions and other forms of hierarchically organised forms of collaborative action. This is not to suggest that young people are disengaged or

passive. On the contrary, **young people play a central role in new forms of social and political mobilisation**, above all those that take the form of emotion communities.

- 2) The PARTICIPATION project has its second focus on the theme of gender. This is because of the central place of gender relations in debates about the future of European society. And in terms of PARTICIPATION's focus on building new responses to pathways to violent extremism, **gender plays an increasingly central role in experiences and cultures of extremism**. This was underlined in the survey of European young people undertaken by PARTICIPATION in 2022, which highlighted the close association of misogyny and an openness to violent extremism.

This deliverable does not set out to undertake a systematic analysis of communication actions seeking to prevent extremism and radicalisation. There are other reviews of the relevant literature that offer a good oversight of the breadth of communication strategies. Nor is our aim to undertake a systematic evaluation of 'counter narratives' and 'alternatives'. This is a major task is also currently being addressed by different programmes of research and evaluation.

Our goal is more focused. **This deliverable explores three thematic areas that have emerged as central across PARTICIPATION**. The first is the growing importance of **digital communication** actions, this development being a response to the growing importance of digital communications in experiences of radicalisation. The second focus of this deliverable is **movements and action against misogyny**, given the importance that this phenomenon demonstrates in contemporary experiences of radicalisation and extremism. The third focus sets out to capture the **creative and affective dimension of these actions** and will pay particular attention to the place of artistic and cultural production in affective experience.

These three focus areas are shaped by the increasing consensus among actors working against radicalisation that prevention work needs to understand and address the kinds of contexts and situations in which violent extremism becomes possible. For that reason, and in the light of work undertaken over the first two years of PARTICIPATION, **the theme of gender relations is shared across these three focus areas**, and in the light of this, we locate current work on alternative and counter narratives within broader European actions.

2. Misogyny and extremism: campaigns, contexts and affects

2.1 Anti-gender movements at European level

In “europeanization” discourses, gender equality has been a central dimension of “European values” and the European “way of life” and “indispensable to achieve peace, security, economic prosperity and sustainable growth around the world.” (European Commission 2018). Primarily focusing on the representation of women and empowerment of women, gender equality has also been one of indexes used to “measure” the “European” barometer across the EU. Gender equality has been one of the central areas of the yearly Atlas of European values, for instance.

Nevertheless, with the rise of the radical right and conservative actors, gender politics more general represent a field of dissonance within the EU space, exacerbated by the gaps at the institutional (top-down) level.

Gender - and the politics around it - has emerged as central to the current “illiberal” contestation of democracy, pointing to the extent contemporary extremism, and violent extremism, can be understood as an expression of opposition to democracy, while not necessarily opposition to the EU per se (Mos 2022). **The importance of gender rights to the construction of Europe** has meant that new actors and narratives need to be located within the field of communicative actions against extremism. One such institutional actor is the European Court of Human Rights. It has increasingly become a more decisive actor in the debate about gender equality and recognition of gender identity, overturning decisions by national courts of law such as Romania (2021) and France (2017). **A key field of contention in this context is LGBTQI+ rights**, which, although inscribed in general rights of protection, continue to be under challenge. On November 26, 2019, the European Parliament (EP) debated a resolution on public discrimination and hate speech against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) people, in response to the proliferation of so-called “LGBT-free zones” in Poland. However, as Mos (2022) has argued, the anti-LGBTQI+ is increasingly a vehicle for **mainstreaming extremism**.

Women continue to be the focus of public communication and policy perspectives and “narratives” of the work on gender. The need is urgent. **Political actors based outside Europe play an increasing role in financing initiatives opposing both gender equality and LGBT+ rights**, according to the Open Democracy's Tracking the Backlash project (Archer and Provost, 2020). Such funds have been directed rope towards undermining EU legislation or defending Member States, for instance in two cases to defend Italy's position against gay marriage, or at least seven cases involving Poland, to defend policies regarding divorce and abortion that contravene decisions made by the European Court of Justice (ECJ) and the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR).

Other prominent European anti-gender actors have been confirmed to also be receiving money across the Atlantic (Denkovski and Kreitlow 2021: 4).

Such international actors setting out to undermine the EU's focus on gender rights extend beyond North America. Russian oligarchs have also provided significant funds to anti-gender movements and organisations with the EU, this project increasingly framed by Russian geopolitical interests and objectives in Europe centred on promoting anti-EU, anti-liberal, and anti-human rights actors and agendas. Such actors are increasingly seeking to influence elections in Western Europe, evident in the EU elections of 2014 and 2019 and national elections in France and Italy (Datta, 2021). There are ongoing campaigns in countries in Europe with notable anti-gender actors (Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Romania, Ukraine) funded by conservative and extremist US-based organizations tackling reproductive health. **Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) that can be counted as supporters of the anti-gender movements have also doubled from 2016 to 2020.** Their presence mobilises further funding opportunities for anti-gender activities (Schutzbach, 2019: 7). The financing of European anti-gender actors does not only come from sources outside of the EU, the majority (66.9%) stems from sources within the EU itself (Datta 2021: 27).

Digital space occupies a central place in such mobilisations against gender equality and rights,, and to the growing acceptance of expressions of misogyny. In a proposal for a directive of the European Parliament and the Council on combating violence against women and domestic violence in the EU published on 8th of March 2022, significant importance was given to the increasing threat of cyber violence targeting women and women's rights. The Incel (involuntary celibate) community was exemplified as an emerging issue, with women being systematically targeted online by violent right-wing extremist groups and terrorist group intending to spread hatred against them (European Commission, 2022). This amplifies the need to pay attention to the phenomenon which was not and still isn't largely given credit in Europe in both research or policy. The European Parliament's Digital Services Act has set new common legislative priorities for 2022 looking to improve collaboration and preventive action on violence against women in the digital space (European Parliament 2022).

There are numerous **legislative provisions on cyberviolence against women** pushing for better monitoring of hate online and respect for human rights in Europe, equality and non-discrimination. However, in 2021, research conducted by the Secretary of the European Parliamentary Forum for Sexual and Reproductive Rights has revealed that, in total, USD 81.3 million has come into the EU from ten NGOs and think tanks in the US within the last ten years to establish a large legal infrastructure within the EU to successfully influence and lobby legislatures against the right to abortion, Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights, LGBTQI rights, and Comprehensive Sexuality E-education at both the EU and the Member States level. Notably, this funding has nearly doubled in the last decade USD 7.6 million annually (Datta 2021: 15).

The **mainstreaming and hybridization of extremist narratives** signalled by PARTICIPATION research are increasingly evident at institutional level, as sociologist Franziska Schutzbach (2019:7) argues. She proposes that anti-feminism and anti-gender mobilisations are emerging as a 'hinge': they

form a kind of common denominator for the convergence of actors who otherwise have little in common – from extreme right, Christian-fundamentalist circles, “concerned parents”, to conservatives, feature writers, liberals and also ‘left-wingers’ (Schutzbach, 2019). Many of these initiatives focus on **mobilising for fund raising**, using this as a platform to engage with a wider public (Datta, 2021: 45).

What is particularly important to note from the perspective of this deliverable is the affective structure of such communication campaigns. Such communications are built around emotions of anxiety, fear, and anger. Others are built around emotions of loss and disorientation. Those that prepare pathways to violent extremism are increasingly framed in terms of themes of ‘nation’ and the role of women as mothers necessary for the survival of the nation, supposedly confronted by an existential threat of a ‘great replacement’, framed in terms of the ‘death’ of the nation.

The association of gender rights and collective death is central to the mutation of an anti-democratic movement into violent extremism. This is evident in the central importance of the theme of gender in the declarations made by terrorist actors in Europe over recent years, as in the case of Halle, where the author of the attempted mass murder at a synagogue announced in his online message that ‘women are the cause of the decline of the west’, and framing his violence as an action against this decline.

While not explicitly framed in terms of supporting terrorism, the PARTICIPATION youth survey demonstrated that the most important theme associated with an openness to violence against people (as opposed to property) takes the form of agreement with core themes that have been **embraced and amplified by anti-gender movements** in Europe. For this reason, analysis of counter-narratives seeking to address such communications is an urgent challenge.

2.2 Counter-narrative campaigns: “communication ecologies”

Campaigns tackling anti-gender discourses take place in a complex system, where various actors interact and co-create narratives that circulate and are shared. Such **communication environments** are increasingly emerging as spaces for the development of radicalization and extremism. These are increasingly recognized as particularly hostile environments to those identifying or identified as women. It has become increasingly evident that such movements and discourses thrive in a participatory culture, where ideas and narrative spread via shared platforms, the digital space and mainstream media. At the same time, analyses of the rise of the 24-hour news cycle, the range of partisan news sources, and the role of social media algorithms in political campaigns yield insights for our media and information ecosystems that affect the circulation of conservative and right-wing messaging.

In this sense, **anti-gender campaigns develop in “communication ecologies”**, a term that builds on Niklas Luhmann’s (1989) theory of ecological communication, according to which communication

is dependent on environment, self-creation and continuous calibration. This participatory culture employs, directs and curates the various and ever-increasing communication techniques today. There is something happening in relation to ideology, devalued more broadly in the neoliberal political space and also in relation to a strong emphasis on lifestyle choices and personal freedoms. Many debates about gender continue to eschew political and social conditions. Indeed, empirical research in Europe does confirm that campaigns against gender politics merge with notions of freedom of speech, rights and consciousness. They contest gender equality and LGBT rights and invoke the intriguing notions of “gender ideology”, “gender theory” or “(anti)genderism” (Paternotte and Kuhar, 2018).

Our analysis of campaigns addressing such developments, in particular here actions against gender quality or LGBT+ rights are framed in terms of ‘freedom’, suggests that ‘top-actions’ can have only limited success. The challenge is to develop forms of communication that can link ideas and feeling, where these open out other understandings of human interdependence, vulnerability and possibility.

2.2.1 Campaign 1: “Sexism: See it. Name it. Stop it!”

The campaign “Sexism: See it. Name it. Stop it!” was initiated by the Council of Europe in partnership with several transnational organizations. As such, **this campaign is an example of a transnational/supranational approach to mobilizations against misogyny** (Council of Europe, 2020). It was designed to be taken up by national NGOs’ campaigns within the project “Mobilise against sexism!” were conducted by the member organisations of the European Women's Lobby (EWL) in Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Ireland, the Netherlands, Portugal, Romania and Spain in 2020-2021 to raise awareness and combat sexism in key sectors of society. It used the tools produced within the Council of Europe Campaign “Sexism: See it. Say it. Stop it!”, including an action page, a video and a quiz explaining what sexism is and what can be done to prevent and combat it. Tools made available include standards (recommendations), national NGO campaigns coordinated by an umbrella organization in Brussels (EWL), as well as Facebook and Twitter presence.

This **campaign engages with both mainstream media and the digital space**, through a specific website dedicated to the issue and materials that can be distributed on social media. Printed materials and information brochures set out to reach a wider audience. Despite the evident interest in reaching a large pool of users of the digital space, this campaign remained limited to producing and circulating to awareness-raising materials.

While offering valuable resources, much of the social media engagement developed by this campaign did not set out to embed an interactive dimension in its content creation. In its channelling and dissemination of information, it **does not disrupt networks of information or repurpose certain messages**. Actors targeted for involvement are primarily grassroots stakeholders that are seen to be multipliers of this process, with little targeting of institutional and governmental actors that perpetuate such narratives in politics, policy or law. The general audience it targets, in international and national campaigns, aims to offer a counter-narrative in

that it works with the community most prone to the internalization of such norms (girls, women) and by raising awareness and introducing a language of opposition it can change paths of dissemination.

As counter-campaign, the message of this particular **Council of Europe campaign works with notions of sexism as “policy narrative”**, meaning stories (scenarios and arguments) which underwrite and stabilize the assumptions for policymaking in situations that persist with many unknowns, a high degree of interdependence, and little, if any, agreement (Roe, 1994). In other words, **narratives zoom in on a particular issue to propose a message that can translate to a wide pool of audiences and reach a degree of consensus**. In this case, “sexism” is channelling broader notions from stereotypes and biases, to discrimination and even violence to counter issues of misogyny and in more general terms the intersectionality of biases and specifically gender discrimination. According to a working definition of the term, this:

“is linked to beliefs around the fundamental nature of women and men and the roles they should play in society. Sexist assumptions about women and men, which manifest themselves as gender stereotypes, can rank one gender as superior to another. Such hierarchical thinking can be conscious and hostile, or it can be unconscious, manifesting itself as unconscious bias. Sexism can touch everyone, but women are particularly affected.”(EIGE, 2020: 6).

In this sense, the campaign targets a diverse pool of members of society, and broadly related to sexist narratives, with a specific counter-narrative for the group affected most.

2.2.2 Campaign 2: 'Doing nothing does harm'

Some practices of counter-narratives that promote a more engaged perspective on sexism and promote the individual responsibility of information and awareness towards “sexism” can cover gaps identified in top-down educational approaches, that have little scope for ‘co-creation’. One **example of a campaign that opens out greater space for co-creation is the 'Doing nothing does harm'** campaign undertaken by an Australian NGO, Our Watch by Thinkerbell (Bradley, 2022). This campaign addresses a specific dimension of digital culture, namely the algorithm to provide targeted content. The campaign works with short clips of underlying or explicit sexism and invites the viewer to take action. Those who do not, although they have watched the clip, and subsequently targeted with informational, awareness messages in relation to the content produced (Miller, 2018).

2.2.3 Campaign 3: Anti-“tradwives”

In terms of content, while addressing sexism is vital, it is important to address the opposition to gender equality and LGBT+ rights emerging in particular expressions of women’s movements themselves. These can be considered as **countermovement**, an example being the “tradwives” phenomenon. This is **a community promoting conservative gender roles and the fulfilment of women within the household**, and has experienced a very significant investment of resources in the social media environment, being promoted as a lifestyle “alternative” that offers a **new type of**

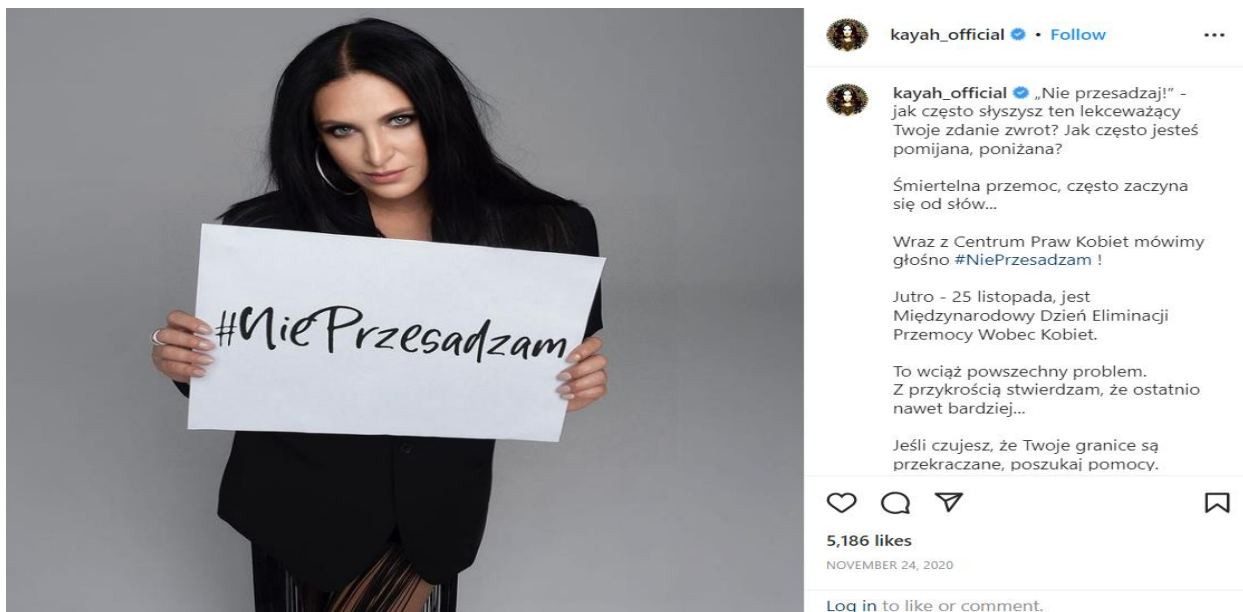
femininity that promotes well-being and offers a respite to a generally destructive environment for women (Rottenberg and Orgad, 2020). On the one hand these narrative claims to promote balance and a more sheltered individual position for a woman. But there is equally another dimension within this mobilisation, namely a **focus on the role of women securing the future of the nation**, framed by a quite different affective structure, namely **emotions of fear, anxiety and disorientation at the loss of traditional forms of security**.

2.2.4 Campaign 4 #NiePrzesadzam, Poland

A much more participatory campaign addressing movements against women took place in social media in Poland in 2020. This campaign, "#NiePrzeszkadzam" [I do not exaggerate], was launched in November 2020 to with the **aim of stopping verbal violence against women in Poland**. In that sense, participants are addressed as co-creators and actors. The campaign was initiated by Babel, the language learning platform, together with the Centre for Women's Rights Foundation (Fundacja Centrum Praw Kobiet). It was located within a wider international environment by being launched on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, celebrated on the 25th of November. The aim of the campaign was to raise awareness on violence against women not only occurring in physical form, but also that in everyday interactions, that can lead to physical violence. The central experience being addressed was the growth of hate speech directed towards women.

The **#NiePrzeszkadzam campaign used several techniques to communicate**. Firstly, it involved many well-known women bloggers, influencers and celebrities, including Kayah, Red Lipstick Monster, Klaudia Halejcio and Joanna Kieryk. Anna Wendzikowska an actress, journalist and model became the face of the campaign and the main ambassador. Their task was to encourage Polish women to share stories of verbal abuse they have experienced on social media using the hashtag #NiePrzesadzam. This dimension of sharing what first may be experienced as personal experience emerges as a core dimension of this movement, and other that we will discuss. Participants are not addressed as an audience, but as protagonists and transformative actors.

Figure 1 Singer Kayah promoting the #NiePrzesadzam campaign on her social media



Additionally, posters promoting the campaign featuring its main ambassador were spread around Warsaw to increase the visibility of the campaign. This campaign demonstrates the power of combining both top-down and bottom-up approaches. It was initiated and coordinated by Babel and the Centre for Women's Rights Foundation and supported by celebrities who promoted it and spread the message. But on the other hand, it focused on hearing out the women who experienced verbal violence either in their professional, educational or private life.

Figure 2 Official poster promoting the #NiePrzesadzam campaign



Addressing verbal violence against women, the campaign aimed to demonstrate the scale of the phenomenon and the consequences it entails. Harmful words and phrases in many cases lead to

physical aggression, which needs to be spoken about loudly. The campaign pointed out that chauvinistic remarks and vulgar expressions are only some of the manifestations of verbal violence against women. There are phrases rooted in the Polish language and culture that bear certain meanings and in many cases are expressions that depreciate women, considering them inferior and weaker. A “man's decision”, a “man's hand”, “the weak gender” are examples of it. Polish proverbs also carry a negative message: “Where the Devil cannot go himself, he sends a woman” or “Baba z wozu, koniom lżej” (a woman from the cart is easier for the horses).

Misogynistic and hateful texts or comments are also spread indirectly in song lyrics or online forums. They affect the self-esteem of millions of girls and women. An act of speech, such as an offensive social media post, is at first glance a string of words. It is only its meaning that can lead to serious emotional damage for the recipient. Language shapes everyone's perception and leads from prejudice and stigmatisation to disrespect and aggressive behaviour. Recognising that words can be a source of violence is therefore an important step in the quest to create a place free of violence - both in the everyday world and in virtual reality (Centrum Praw Kobiet (website)).

Very often we are indifferent to those expressions because they are embedded in the language and often justified as folk wisdoms passed on from generation to generation. This is why they should be opposed to. Unfortunately, it is still common for women who speak out about violence to be ostracised, to be treated as oversensitive, hysterical or crazy. Simply drawing attention to the inappropriateness of someone's abusive behaviour can provoke such a reaction. Women are therefore not only more likely to experience violence, but they are also denied the right to speak about their hurt, their emotions and their needs, and made it more difficult to assert themselves by belittling their experience. The #NiePrzesadzam campaign encouraged women to speak out clearly and without being subjected to finger-pointing.

The campaign addressed the affective structure of radicalisation messages by pointing out the phrases that are derogatory to women, stressing that those hurtful phrases can lead to increasingly dangerous forms of violence. It also shows the importance of language, its meaning and the way words play a crucial role on how perceptions of a certain group are formed. The campaign appealed to the emotional site of the radicalisation messages directed towards women. The personal experiences shared on social media showed how the verbal violence impacted the victims and how it made them feel. We analyse this process below.

Most of the post shared on Facebook and Instagram with the hashtag #NiePrzesadzam contained informative content about the campaign, violence about women, verbal violence and on where to seek help. However, comments contributed extended **beyond ‘awareness raising’**, and involved discussions and stories shared which focus on personal perception of the language on how the phrases make them feel. One woman writes on Instagram “Oh, yes - ‘don't exaggerate’ is one of the most damaging (and irritating) phrases for me. It depreciates someone's feelings, undermines sensitivity.... It makes the other person's opinion seem irrelevant. Takes away power, and often heard - undermines self-confidence.... And if you feel that things are going badly for you or that something is important to you, then no, you DON'T OVERREACT. Thank you for this voice”. Other women shared experiences of suffering violence, both physical and verbal, and escaping from

those relationships and the difficulties to get the courage to do so. The stories of personal experiences shared by the victims of verbal aggression were posted on social media and everyone could read them. They also encouraged other women to speak up for themselves and get the courage to leave the toxic relationships and “be happy again”. This theme of desire, to recover what has been lost or destroyed, is a fundamental dimension of such communications.

The campaign was primarily directed towards women in terms of creating an opportunity to share experiences of verbal violence. But within this, is important to underline the importance of the participation of celebrities and influencers, who played a role of **amplifying the campaign** to allow it to reach different age groups of Polish women and girls. As such, this campaign did not simply address women. It addressed the whole of Polish society.

Although the campaign had nationwide reach thanks to the use of social media, the physical presence of the campaign was only limited to the capital. The posters were not put up in any other cities in the country. Considering that not everyone is on social media, especially the older population, the campaign did not manage to reach out to the whole society. It is important, as the elderly are often the ones using proverbs and figures of speech bearing negative connotations, often without realising it.

A strong point of the campaign was the involvement of celebrities and influencers as it brought more attention to the campaign. But the core of this action is the personal stories of the woman involved. This highlights the central importance of storytelling in communicative actions, and the extent that connections to stories depends upon emotional imagination – **the ability to feel what another person is feeling**. This campaign achieved an **affective resonance**, highlighting the **relational and interactive character of emotions**. This challenge of resonance emerges as fundamental to communications and actions seeking to counter extremism.

There are no official documents available on the evaluation of the #NiePrzesadzam campaign. The success of the campaign can be, however, observed in the wide coverage of the topic by various online news platforms and women's blogs. Moreover, the most popular post of the campaign posted by the singer Kayah gathered 5,186 likes on Instagram and 3,2 thousand likes on Facebook and was shared 517 times, while the post posted by the campaign's face Anna Wendzikowska gathered 2,946 likes on Instagram.

2.2.5 Campaign 5: #HaveAWord, United Kingdom, 2022

Initiated by the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, in March 2022, **the campaign is an example of a national approach to mobilisation against misogyny**. The campaign has the 2022 Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy at core which sets out measures to make London a safer city for women and girls and a place for equal opportunities (Home Office, 2022).

The campaign plans to bring together partners from across the sporting world, high-profile male influencers, and include videos online and posters across the city in spaces where men will be captive audiences, with the goal of reminding men of their responsibility to challenge unacceptable attitudes and behaviour amongst their peers. It aspires to urge and inspires men to

make themselves responsible for effecting the change that is needed to root out sexism and misogyny from their society. The campaign has, therefore, **men at the centre of action and as a target audience**. It highlights that seemingly 'harmless' attitudes and behaviour can lead to intimidation, threats, and violence, and make the case that it is men's responsibility to be allies for women and girls by changing their behaviour and challenging the behaviour of those around them. City Hall has partnered with advertising, marketing, and public relations agency Ogilvy, who have offered their pro bono support to create the campaign.

The short film at the heart of the campaign (HaveAWord) shows a man who is out with his friends harassing a woman on her own while she waits for a taxi (Khan, 2022). As the man's behaviour becomes increasingly threatening, the campaign highlights how easily misogynistic behaviour can escalate into more violent acts. At the same time, one of his friends is confronted by his subconscious telling him to speak out. The campaign includes a partnership with Crystal Palace Football Club and is using the hashtag #HaveAWord. The film was played ahead of the team's game against Manchester City in March.

Apart from campaigning, the initiative has a **public health approach** and structural change focus through ensuring victims receive a better engagement and outcomes from the criminal justice system, and address the behaviour of the perpetrators of abuse. The campaign advocates for a cultural shift in prevention of violence towards women and girls by putting the onus of responsibility on men. The **message 'men must change'** addresses all men, highlighting that misogyny and violence towards women and girls is not an issue with the minority of men who commit violence, but with all men, with men who are sexist, who continue to behave inappropriately around women, who perpetuate a toxic form of masculinity or who just stand by silently when women feel threatened or are being threatened. City Hall of London has partnered with SafeLives organisation and their campaign called 'Voices of Men and Boys' that started in 2019 to enhance the message that 'change starts with men, and it's about men (SafeLives, 2019)'.

Affect is central to this campaign. It is structured in terms of stories, situations where women find themselves the victim of harassment and potentially other forms of violence. But it primarily addresses men, confronting them with an experience where they **encounter and feel the vulnerability of another**, in this case a woman who shares a social space with them (on a train, walking on the street, being in a bar, etc). This campaign is framed in terms of **feeling the vulnerability of another**, and provoking a response of responsibility and care. The campaign sets out to create an 'atmosphere' into which men can enter, and which they can potentially transform the way they are feeling (Pernau, 2021), provoking the possibility of an experience of **feeling responsible** for what is happening to another person whom they encounter, but whom they do not know.

3. Online communication campaigns

3.1 Be Internet Citizens

The Internet and the digital space offer enormous advantages and tools for people, whether by using them as a means of education or information, a way to connect with distant relatives or friends, or to find new inspiration online. The various benefits provided by the Web led to a significant increase of Internet users in Europe over the last decades: while in 2011 the total number amounted to an estimated 450 million at European level, the figure rose to 684.64 million in 2021 (Statista, 2021). Interestingly, **the most prolific users of the Web are young individuals** (aged 15 to 24 years old), a generational segment that is almost completely online (97%) in Europe and that is 1.24 more likely to connect than the rest of the population at global level (International Telecommunication Unit, 2021).

However, the digital online world can **also produce serious harms**, such as misinformation and disinformation, cyberbullying and the spread of hate speech. Young people seem particularly exposed to these threats, and, in some cases, adopt risky and criminal online behaviours. An EU-funded research found that criminal and delinquent behaviours are widespread among 16-19-years-old youngsters, with one in four individuals having tracked or trolled someone online, one in three have committed digital piracy, and one in ten have incited violence and hate speech (Milmo, 2022).

As highlighted both in 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3 PARTICIPATION deliverable (Marinone et al. 2021; Acik and McDonald, 2022a, 2022b), the role of **Internet and social media to encounters of young people with extremism** is significant nowadays. Results from the PARTICIPATION survey at schools showed that **experiences of online extremist recruitment are positively linked to statements approving violent extremism** (Acik and McDonald 2022b). The survey and focus group findings (Acik and McDonald 2022a) point out that racial and social divisions as well as *us-versus-them* narratives – that represent potential drivers of radicalization of various forms – can be **exacerbated in the digital space** and reinforce hatred. In the same way, fake news and conspiracy theories foster distrust and play a significant role in the destruction of trust, a process that plays an important role in the development of different forms of extremism today.

This emerging pattern is associated with a changing age profile associated with pathways to extremism, with available data pointing to an **increasing openness to violence** against people among school-age people in Europe. This pattern was highlighted in the PARTICIPATION survey of school students. In the light of these developments, it is clear that digital education has emerged as an important dimension of communication actions seeking to counter the development of such an openness to violence. To the extent that pathways to violent extremism involve conspiracy theories and experiences of online hate, educational campaigns are now emerging across Europe that set out to develop critical thinking when encountering online materials and experiencing digital worlds.

An example of this kind of communicative action is the *Be Internet Citizens* (BIC) project, set up in 2018. The project addressed young people aged 13-15 in various areas of the United Kingdom and was developed in partnership with the Institute for Strategic Dialogue, YouTube Creators for Change, Beatfreeks and expert youth facilitators (Phillips et al. 2020). Therefore, *Be Internet Citizens* aims at creating a specific program for the formal and informal educational sectors to increase young people's ability to stay safe online and to develop skills and dispositions that might prevent online radicalization processes.

Given the importance of the concept of digital citizenship for the whole program and the lack of a standardized conceptualization at European level, it is worth mentioning the definition proposed by BIC partners: "Digital citizenship education develops the knowledge, skills, behaviours and attitudes needed for students to become positive and responsible actors online. This begins at a young age with an understanding of how to be confident, safe explorers online, then extends into recognizing their rights and responsibilities online, how to be critical consumers of information and, for teenage students, how to respond to hateful digital content effectively" (Phillips et al. 2020, p.11).

Be Internet Citizens was a multidimensional campaign. Here we will consider its structure, the system of evaluation for assessing the results, the concrete outcomes of the project.¹ We will also address the relevance of the project for wider PCVE communication campaigns.

3.1.1 Structure of *Be Internet Citizens* program

The main goal of *Be Internet Citizens* was to **teach young people to enhance online critical thinking, digital skills, and positive behaviour** in order to increase their resilience against hate speech and extremism. BIC became recognized as a PSHE-accredited program – hence recognized by the national body for promoting Personal, Social, Health, and Economic education in UK primary and secondary schools.

In order to reach out to a young audience as wide as possible, the program consisted of two types of resources targeting both formal and informal educational contexts:

- ❖ Unit of work for teachers;
- ❖ Community toolkit for youth workers.

Moreover, two types of delivery models were elaborated to test the efficacy of the program according to different approaches:

- ❖ School workshops (direct delivery);

¹ The analysis of *Be Internet Citizens* campaign relies heavily on the Impact report issued in 2020 by the Institute for Strategic Dialogue and on the website of the campaign. See Phillips et al (2020) and <https://internetcitizens.withyoutube.com/>

- ❖ Train-the-trainers: Teachers and youth workers training (indirect delivery).

The first part of the programme involved direct workshops in 11 schools across the United Kingdom, hence reaching roughly 1500 students. The school workshop was designed to teach students the entire curriculum through interactive sessions during the school day.

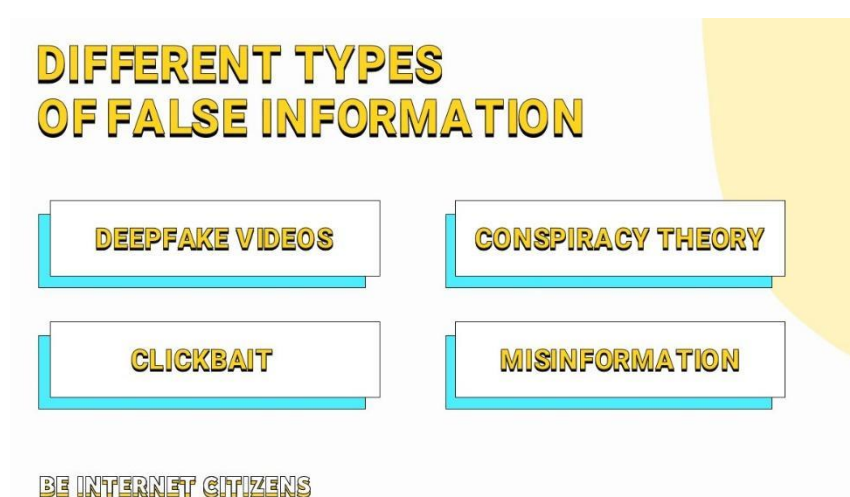
This was followed by training sessions addressing external youth facilitators and teachers. The influence of this program was estimated reach over 20,000 young people (Phillips et al. 2020: 19).

3.1.2 Content

In both units of work, teachers and youth workers are expected to establish a number of ground rules for the lessons, such as listening to others' interventions, confidentiality, non-judgmental approach, and right to ask questions. Both the Units of Work for Teachers and the Community Toolkit comprises the **following lessons**, which are available on BIC website in PDF and PowerPoint formats:

- ❖ **Fact vs Fiction:** *the learning goal of this lesson is to understand what terms such as "disinformation" and "misinformation" mean, the consequences they have on people, and how to halt their spread online. Therefore, after this session students are expected to be able to identify common traits of mis/disinformation, explain potential motives for posting inaccurate information online, fact-check any information encountered online and report any type of dis/misinformation. Teachers and youth workers are expected also to resort to case studies, brainstorming activities, simulations and videos to explain better these phenomena (See Figure 3) and a number of supporting networks are provided;*

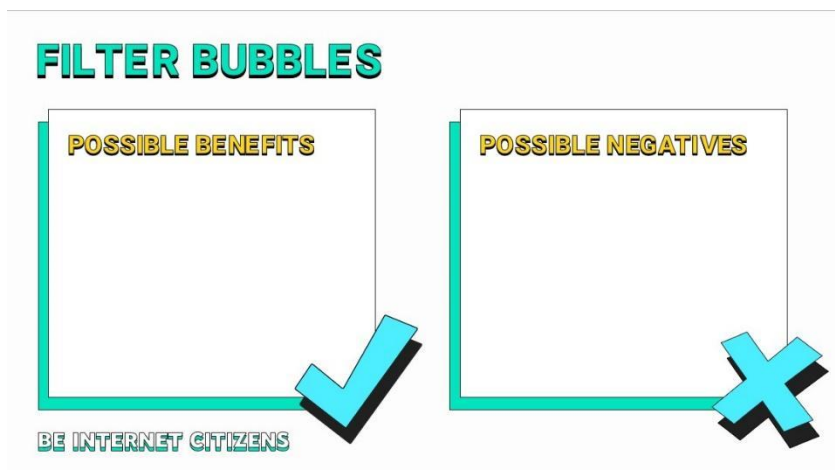
Figure 3 BIC Diagram of Types of False Information



- ❖ **Three sides to every story:** *the goal of this lesson is to teach about different forms of biased writing, and how online filter bubbles can shape our biases and opinions. At the end of it, students are expected to be able to explain what biased writing is, analyze the effects of media bias on individuals and society, define what a filter bubble is and explain its impact on*

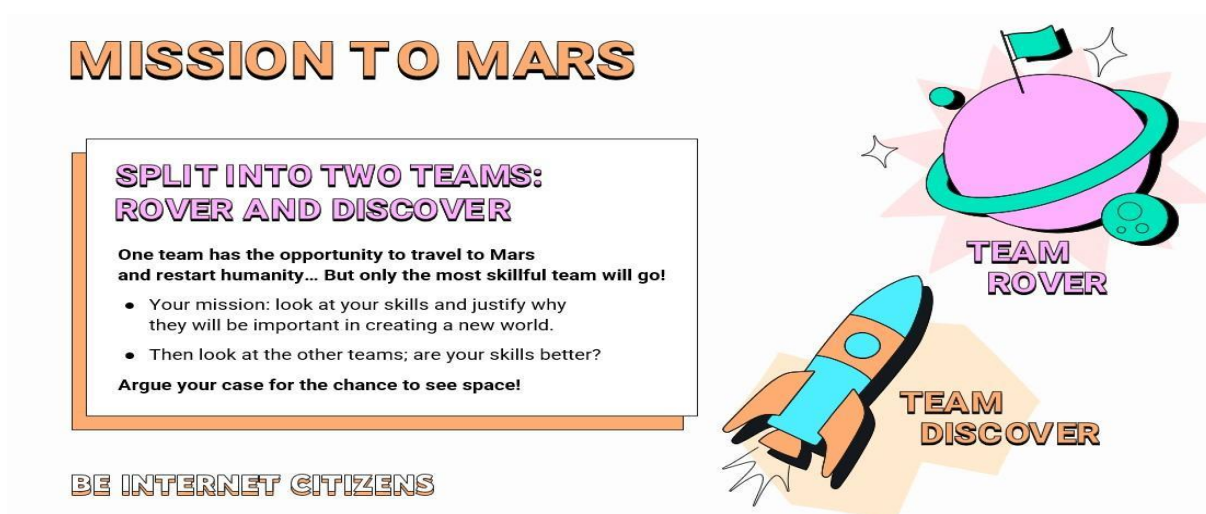
individuals and society. Teachers and youth workers are invited to resort to case studies, interactive activities, and simulations to explain better these dynamics (See Figure 4).

Figure 4 BIC Diagram: Simulation of Filter Bubbles



- ❖ **Us vs Them:** the objectives of this session is to understand what stereotyping is and how it leads to binary thinking as well as to reflect on individual biases and how they might affect our opinions and worldviews. At the end of this session, students are expected to be able to explain stereotyping and the consequences it can have on society, identify concrete examples of binary thinking in individuals' lives, as well as to explain what an echo chamber is and understand the positive and negative consequences associated with them. In order to reinforce these concepts, teachers and youth workers are expected to conduct also class activities (See Figure 5).

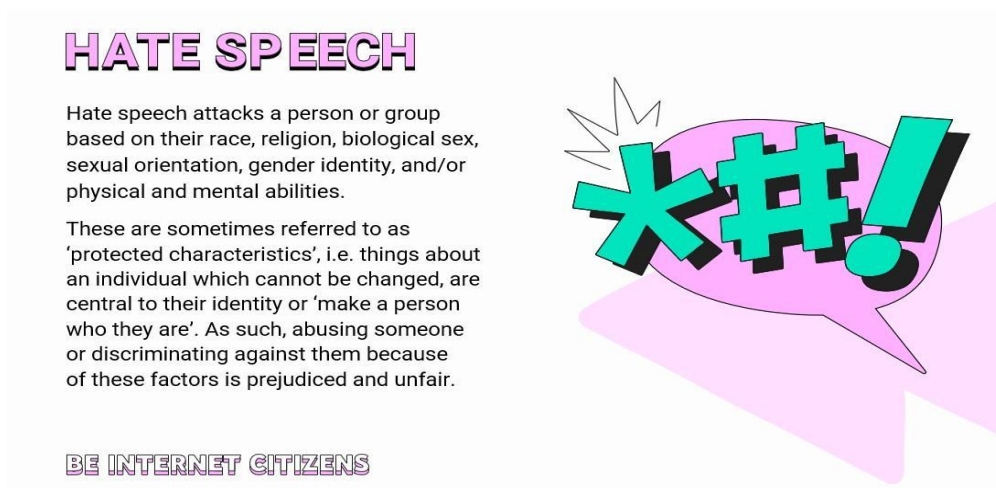
Figure 5 BIC Diagram: Class Game on Binary Thinking



- ❖ **Speaking up, speaking out:** the main objectives of this session is to teach students to understand the difference between free speech and hate speech and how to effectively

respond to online hate and abuse. At the end of this lesson, students are expected to be able to define hate speech and identify online hate speech cases, explain the real-world harm caused by online hate speech for themselves and others, and be more confident using a range of responses to verbal abuse online. As for other cases, teachers and youth workers are provided with standardized definitions of the concepts mentioned above, and are expected to resort to various types of activities (Figure 6).

Figure 6 BIC Diagram: Definition of Hate Speech



Besides these 4 standardized lessons, a fifth creative lesson was included in these resources to encourage participants to produce a creative output reflecting new digital citizenship knowledge.

3.1.3 Evaluation of the Be Internet Citizens program

Be Internet Citizens also included a well-structured evaluation system to assess the concrete results of the entire program. More specifically, this evaluation system aimed at ensuring that BIC managed to reach its target audiences, identifying in what ways the project helped support change among young people, and providing insights for future educational actions.

The evaluation included a pre- and post-survey, a longitudinal survey, focus groups and interviews, both with teachers and young people that participated in the program. For participants to the school workshops (direct delivery), pre-, post-, and three- and six-month follow-up surveys were taken in order to understand the impact both in the short and long term of the program. The same methodology of evaluation was implemented for teenagers that were taught by teachers and youth workers who had attended the event.

To assess the real impact of this program, BIC partners used three measures:

- ❖ **Average confidence:** *this measure aimed at assessing young people's overall confidence levels throughout the program and was calculated through the average percentage increase or decrease on a 7-point Likert scale;*

- ❖ **Individual confidence:** *this measure aimed at assessing the change in the number of individuals who reported high levels of confidence before and after the program. This different measure was based on a 5-7-point Likert scale;*
- ❖ **Knowledge tests:** *alongside confidence scales, objective measures to test participants' knowledge on digital citizenship concepts was deemed necessary. These measures were delivered through multiple choice or open text questions (Phillips et al. 2020, p.7).*

3.1.4 Results of *Be Internet Citizens* program

The Impact Report of *Be Internet Citizens* program (Phillips et al. 2020) presents in detail the results of the entire campaign through tables gathering the answers of participants as well as a thematic analysis.

The *Be Internet Citizens* offers an important benchmark for PCVE online campaigns in several ways. For the purposes of this analysis, it is important to note that it focuses on skill-building, framed within a wider educational culture of problem-solving learning and critical engagement with educational materials. Thus, framed within the existing model of curriculum 'delivery', the overall programme offers scope for 'scaling up' and a wide impact. This is of critical importance when addressing young people's experience of digital worlds, in particular in the light of the importance of conspiracy theories, in particular those associated with networks such as QAnon, among young people.

In our introduction above, we highlight **the importance of the association of ideas and feelings, the cognitive and affective, in experiences of radicalisation**. Successful counter and alternative narratives require a similar cognitive and affective structure. While a pilot, this programme points to the possibility to embed such a form of action within the wider school curriculum, where this not only involves 'information' about conspiracies and hate crime, but also builds experiences creating a critical engagement with such material, framed in terms of an affective experience of 'being a citizen' framed in terms of agency and confidence. This pilot underlines the importance of a current attempts approach across the European Union to embed an engagement with digital life within educational curricula. It signals the importance of the association of ideas and feelings within such initiatives.

3.2 COMMIT

The project COMMIT - *COMMUnication campaign against exTremism and radicalisation* (COMMIT, 2021), which was funded by the European Union's Internal Security Fund – Police, aimed to contribute to the prevention and dissuasion of susceptible and vulnerable young people from radicalisation, extremism and terrorism. The project strived for the active participation of those involved. It did so though seeking to **develop skills relevant to co-create counter-narratives** that promoted: active participation and citizenship, democratic values, along with tolerance and cooperation.

The campaign set out to **identify and resist extremist online content**. The campaign was implemented online via posts on social media – primarily Facebook and Instagram, while TikTok

was used supplementary in some cases. The central focus of the campaign was the increasing incidence of **hate speech** in online worlds, assessed through a series of actions grouped together under the theme 'Hate – A Course in Three Lessons'. The aim was to increase awareness of aimed the functions and impact of hate in everyday life, as well as how young people can prevent and combat hateful expressions in both online and offline environments.

The campaign involved **three sub-campaigns**, each focusing on a different thematic:

- ❖ ***Fear and Hate Speech – an intimate relationship***, Jul 2021-Oct 2021. *This first section addresses fake news, hate speech and populist propaganda online, aiming to highlight the ways these phenomena emerge and thrive on fear and experiences of loss and uncertainty of identity.*
- ❖ ***In-grouping & Scapegoating: why we love enemies***, Nov 2021-Feb 2022. *This sub-campaign concentrated on violent radicalisation and extremism and the techniques extremists deploy to create a negative identity and call upon people to become part of networks and groups involved in polarization and scapegoating.*
- ❖ ***Active bystandership: The magic bullet***, Mar 2022-Jun 2022. *Taking as a central point the promotion of human rights and European values, the last campaign brought prevention into focus. Active bystandership and participation were put into the spotlight, involving participants in seeking to construct responses to extremist communications framed in terms of 'active bystandership'.*

With these three sub-campaigns, COMMIT disseminated key messages to young people, pertaining to a **holistic approach** towards the prevention and tackling of hate speech that is a core element of polarization, radicalisation and extremism. **Affective communications** played an important role across this campaign, once again seeking to **associate ideas and feelings**. In this case, humour played an important role.

Humour has emerged not only as a significant dimension of radicalisation, but also communications against this, and as such is increasingly present in work undertaken by the Radicalisation Awareness Network, RAN (RAN@ Working Group, 2012). Humour can play an important role in the creation of 'out-groups' (Sandberg & Andersen, 2019, p. 457), and studies of radicalisation processes underline the extent to which humour is central to practices of humiliation of 'the other' (McDonald 2018).

Even though the rationale of top-down promoted humour by RAN@ has its specific limitations, it still "brings forth an 'enlarged mentality' – a form of thinking that accommodates manifold perspectives" (Ördén, 2018, pp. 10-11). Focusing on **counter and alternative narratives**, the elements of the COMMIT campaigns strived to address and counter-narrate **the affective structure of radicalisation messages** by introducing humour and counter-affective aspects, while young people's habits and interests were further addressed through the use of memes and forms of communication present within youth culture.

In order to **increase the audience's engagement**, the project consortium introduced the 'hate button' during the final steps of the second sub-campaign. The 'hate button' represented a call to action that was featured in posts with audio-visual or visual content, urging the audience to like or comment on the respective message; otherwise, it would refer and redirect the post recipient to a support hotline. This endeavour showed significant results in Instagram posts pertaining to polls.

The campaigns included informative posts (Figure 7), posts with examples on how to react to certain situations and ways one may contribute to the prevention and tackling of the phenomena at hand (Figure 8), memes (Figure 9), posts with affective content (Figure 10), testimonies (Figure 11) and other relevant material.

Figure 7 COMMIT: Information Post

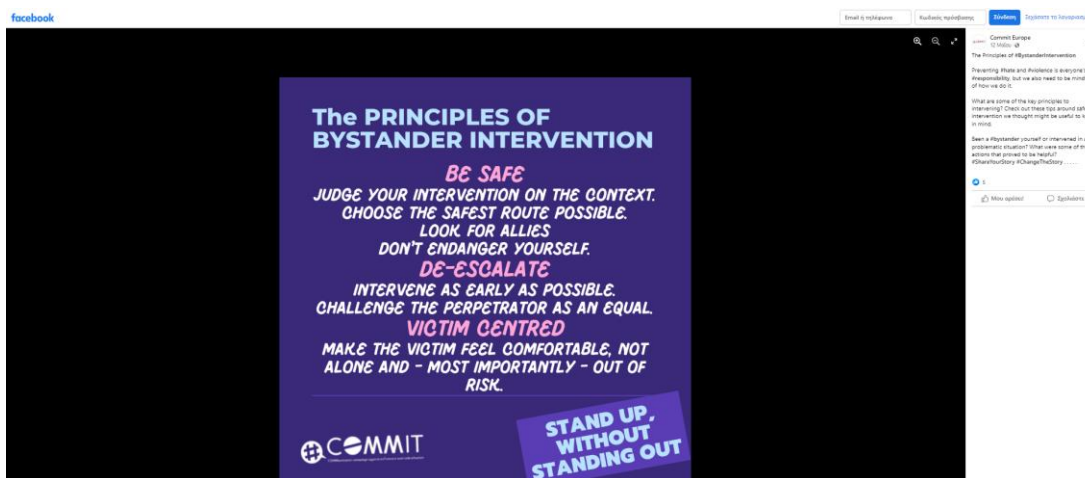


Figure 8 COMMIT: Post with Examples



Figure 9 COMMIT: Memes

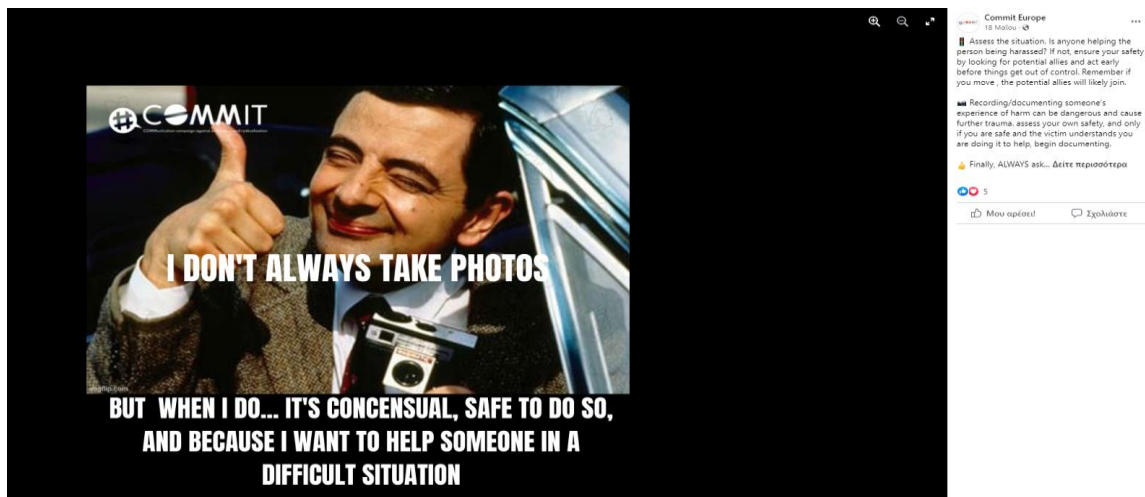


Figure 10 COMMIT: Affective Content

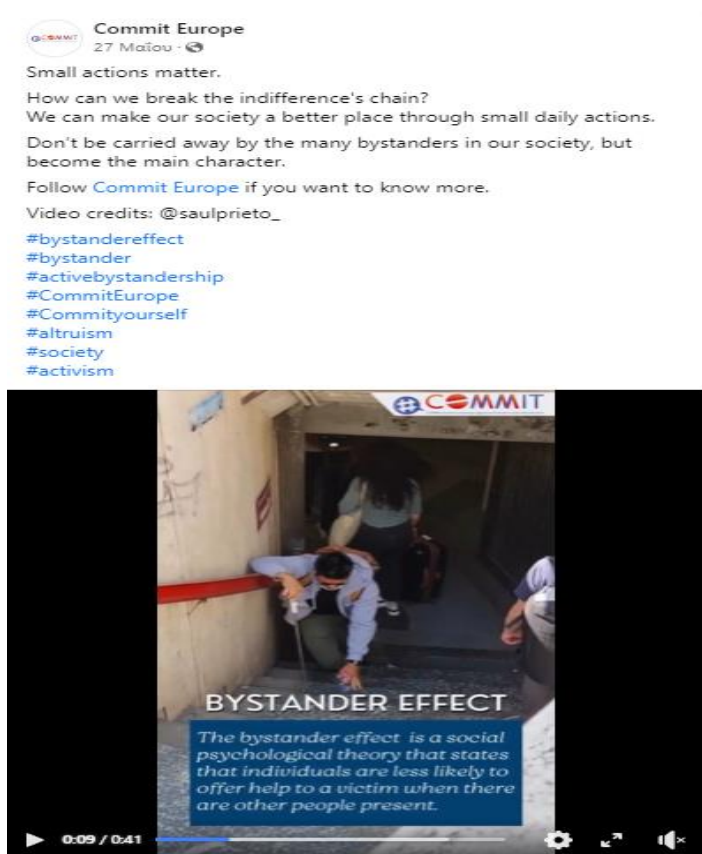
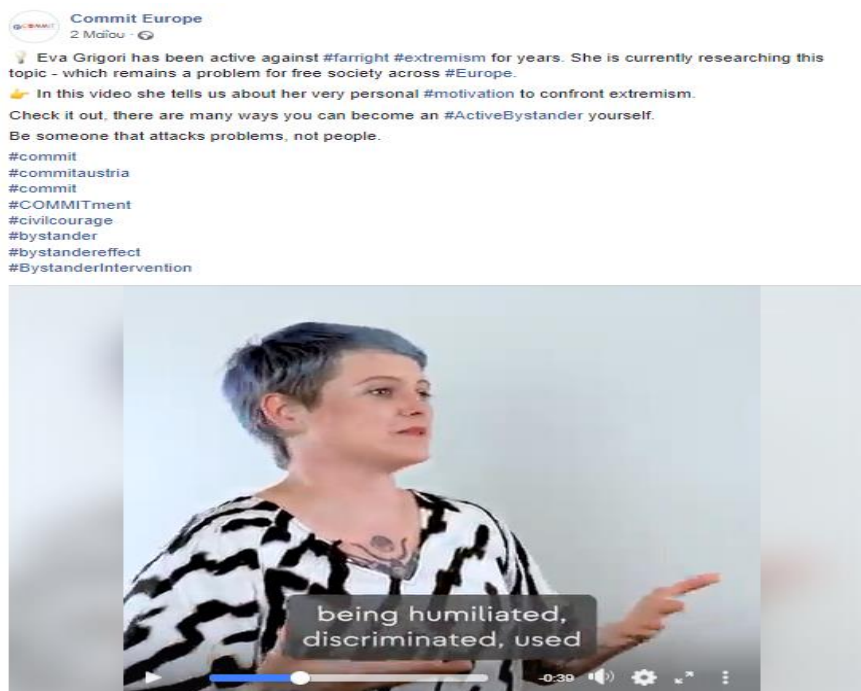


Figure 11 COMMIT: Testimonies



3.3 DO ONE BRAVE THING (D.O.B.T.)

The *Do One BRAVE Thing* project (D.O.B.T.) was funded by the Internal Security Fund-Police. It was implemented from January 15, 2019 to May 14, 2021 by PATRIR (Romania), ZA CLOUD SRL (Romania), ActiveWatch (Romania), Instytutu Bezpieczeństwa Społecznego (Poland), Budapest Centre for Mass Atrocities Prevention (Hungary), Political Capital Policy Research and Consulting Institute (Hungary) and CESIE (Italy).

The project aimed at empowering young people to challenge extremist narratives they experience in their daily lives and to enable young people to **develop counter-narrative campaigns** to challenge hate speech and extremist rhetoric online. It encourages them to non-violently address their political grievances through policy advocacy.

The target audiences for both types of campaigns were young adults between the ages of 18 and 26 in all project countries - Poland, Hungary, Romania and Italy. Additional target audiences of the project's campaigns included youth organizations and professionals, as well as organizations working with youth (including schools and organizations raising awareness and engagement) to help them understand and identify the signs of fake news, radicalization and polarization.

The project's campaigns were divided into two types. The **first is BRAVE Campaigns**, implemented and led by the project consortium. These were a series of campaigns carried out by BRAVE primarily through social media platforms, postings and films. The campaigns aimed to achieve four goals. Firstly, to raise awareness and understanding among youth about radicalisation and fake news. Secondly, to empower youth with tools and knowledge to identify and detect fake news. The third goal was to empower youth to develop their own campaigns and have the motivation and courage to engage in campaigns. Finally, the campaigns aimed to inspire youth to take positive action to address real issues and challenges in their communities and in Europe more widely.

The **second type is BRAVE YOUTH Campaigns**, which were implemented by youth trained during the BRAVE Bootcamps. A wide range of campaigns were inspired by BRAVE Bootcamps, from challenging fake news and hate and discrimination online, to promoting inter-community solidarity, challenging conspiracy theories around the COVID-19 pandemic, addressing bullying in schools, addressing gender-based violence and more. Youth themselves chose the campaigns they considered were most relevant to them and their peer groups in each country. The campaign ran from September 2019 to May 2021.

Social media platforms for the *Do One Brave Thing* (DOBT):

- ❖ Facebook: www.facebook.com/DoOneBraveThing
- ❖ Facebook Group: www.facebook.com/groups/DoOneBraveThing/
- ❖ Instagram: www.instagram.com/one_brave_thing/
- ❖ YouTube: www.youtube.com/channel/UCCqw8_WGKIZLGYDtFlxYGbQ

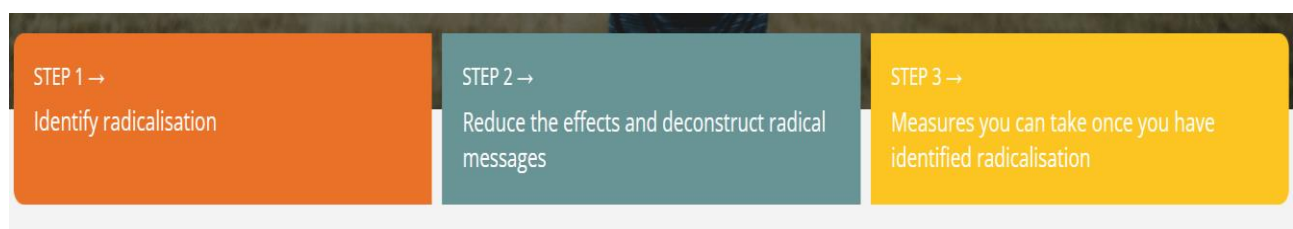
3.1 The campaign structure

The campaign's website contains a large number of resources, addressed to young people and related to radicalisation, extremism, hate speech and other phenomena. It deconstructs extremist narratives, provides tips on how to recognize them online and contains an informational campaign "10 ways to be Brave" on how to challenge radicalisation in daily life.

"10 ways to be brave" is divided into **three steps** (Figure 12):

1. *Identification of radicalization;*
2. *Reducing the effect and deconstructing radical messages;*
3. *Measures to take once radicalization was identified.*

Figure 12 BRAVE: Steps of the Campaign




Each step contains 3-4 actions related to the topic of a step.

"Step 1. Identify radicalization" is composed of three actions:

1. ***Keep your eyes and ears open*** – focused on red flags and signs of radicalization
2. ***Break your "information bubble"*** – focused on verification of all of the information individual reads online and responsible sharing of this information.
3. ***Get yourself informed and make an impact*** – focused on the importance of knowing the characteristics of radical positions, the main views and messages on the topics most frequently discussed by radicals, as well as possible responses to these messages and claims.


Figure 13 BRAVE: Content of “Step 1

Identify radicalisation



1. Keep your eyes and ears open


Significant changes in behaviours, customs and habits can signal radicalisation. Usually, people involved in a radicalisation process tend to isolate and confine themselves in their own beliefs, becoming unwilling to engage with different opinions and condemning others' point of view. Sharing polarizing/radical content online, false information and embrace conspiracy theories could be a potential red flag.



2. Break your “information bubble”

Exclusionary rhetoric, hate speech, polarising and radicalising ideas can be spread online without control - quickly and widely. On online platforms and social media, it is much easier to hide your own identity, stay anonymous and spread hatred without facing the impact that this has on other people.

There is a perceived sense that there are no consequences to such behaviour online. On the other hand, we can become vulnerable to manipulation of online radical content due to information overload. We lack the time to process, understand and go deep into every piece of information we come across. At the same time, we



3. Get yourself informed and make an impact

In order to be able to stand up against prejudices, exclusion, discrimination and radicalisation, it is important to get yourself well prepared in advance!


Inform yourself on the characteristics of radical positions and the main views and messages on the topics most frequently discussed by radicals. You can find well-documented recurring themes. You should plan what you would say or do in different situations and circumstances: pay attention to the communication of radicals, and then, think about how you would argue with or respond to their claims.

“Step 2. Reduce the effects and deconstruct radical messages” contains 3 actions as well:

4. **Spot the signs** – focused on the importance of recognizing the signs of extremism, including encoded numbers, symbols, slogans and signals recalling extremist ideologies, as well as double-checking their meaning.
5. **Listen carefully** – focused on paying attention to how people comment on divisive topics such as politics, tones, sentiments and body language they use, the content of their speeches.
6. **Be critical** – focused on the importance of critical reception of the information read online (on social media posts, online articles, forums or blogs) and research of the origins of facts and data, presented in a post or an article.


Figure 14 BRAVE: Content of “Step 2

Reduce the effects and deconstruct radical messages




4. Spot the signs

Radical symbols or slogans can be right in front of your eyes, in full daylight. Online news, a slogan on a political poster, even the message you hear on your favourite podcast can contain radical messages. Try to spot the signs of extremism. Radical messages are usually presented in a polarised way and demonize the other side, using insults and inciting to take violent action against an individual person or someone belonging to a minority group. For example, extremist groups often use encoded symbols and numbers to express their ideology publicly. Be aware of symbols, slogans and signals recalling extremist ideologies. If you suspect to be in front of a radical symbol, double-check its meaning to make sure you know what is going on!



5. Listen carefully

Radicalisation signals can also be identified in the way people around you speak about current events. Listen carefully to what surrounds you. Pay attention to how people comment on divisive topics such as politics. Try to identify the tone and the sentiment they are using when debating these topics. Check if they are using harsh words or expressions to describe something they disagree with. Observe carefully their body language to understand if they are showing violent or aggressive behaviours. Finally, focus on the content of their speeches: are they following a rational reasoning or are they simply repeating slogans? Are they speaking favourably, supporting or endorsing the standpoint of an extremist faction? Radicalisation can be blunt or subtle. Deconstruct conversations and discussions and pay attention to what people say and especially to how they say it.



6. Be critical

Be critical of what you read online and don't get fooled. The Internet is full of tricky messages, be it on social media posts, online articles, forums or blogs. Make an effort to analyse and reflect carefully on what you find online and ask yourself some questions when scrolling. Follow a logical order, do some research. Is what you are reading based on facts and ascertained data? If not, you are probably facing an opinion article.

Read more carefully and focus on emotions – e.g. if the opinion shows strong anger and resentment, incite or justify the use of violence - and pay attention to details. If the outcome of your analysis makes you think you are facing a radical message, report the dangerous content to the online moderators of the platform. Speak with your friends, family or teachers to evaluate the possibility of

7. **Contact the right people** – suggesting that the person who identified signs of radicalization, turns, based on particular circumstances, to their teachers, school psychologists, family members, police, crisis intervention centres and/or social workers.
8. **Never neglect your own safety** – stating that “being BRAVE doesn't mean being reckless and giving useful suggestions on how to assure one's own safety while encountering radicalized groups or individuals, as well as when organizing public events or interacting with them online.
9. **Join and promote local initiatives** – presenting the benefits of participation in community actions, online or offline groups, networks, events or actions: signing petitions, organizing peaceful demonstrations, creating teams that state that extremism is unacceptable in their community.
10. **Be BRAVE and speak up!** – underlining the importance of speaking up and acting against discrimination and radicalization. This action also includes a video call for action (Do One Brave Thing (2019).

“Step 3. Measures you can take once you have identified radicalization” contains 4 actions:

The *Do One Brave Thing* project's website also contains pages on the analysis and sharing of the information, creation of counter-narrative campaigns, an external resource hub and a collection of success stories. The project also has a YouTube channel that contains 38 informative videos – interviews, important information, success stories, etc.²

To sum up, **this campaign signals two important themes**. **Firstly**, it addresses young people in terms of their **agency**, offering skills and tools to facilitate **becoming transformative actors**, shaping their world. **Secondly**, it places **affective experience** at the heart of this process, namely **feeling brave**. This is distinguished from feeling reckless, and as such sets out to explore with participants that actions have consequences, including unintended consequences that may have negative impact. Above all, this is an approach that framed by an important intuition that is increasingly highlighted in academic research: emotions are not something that one has, rather they are lived in practice.

² <https://www.youtube.com/@DoOneBraveThing>

4. Creativity, ethics and subjectivity

In this section we **explore several campaigns** that highlight more **directly personal transformations** occurring within actions that address themes associated with violent extremism, ranging from hate speech, violence directed at racial and ethnic minorities, to misogyny.

4.1 OLTRE Project

The first of these took place in Italy, the OLTRE project. **‘Oltre’** translates into English as **‘Beyond’**. Project **‘OLTRE l’orizzonte. Contro-narrazioni dai margini al centro’** [**‘Beyond the horizon. Counter-narratives from margins to the centre’**] (2018-2020) was funded by the EU under the Civil Society Empowerment Programme (CSEP) within the framework of the Internal Security Fund – Police (ISF-P).³ The main aim was to run an online communication campaign at national level in Italy to tackle radicalisation among second-generation (2G) Muslim youth (ages 18-30).

The **direct target audience is young Muslims living in Italy** at risk of marginalization/social exclusion. The secondary target group of the campaign is **youth living in urban areas in Italy**. Both groups are **‘prosumers’ of the campaign**, that is, they were at the same time users and producers. As it will be explained more in details below, the project identified a selected group of representatives from both target groups and from seven Italian cities and engaged them in a **process of co-creation of the campaign**. Criteria for selecting this group are territory (finding a balance between all macro-regions, including major islands) and gender (balancing young men and women in each city).

Importantly, the co-creation process involved participants in choosing the issues they deemed most important to address. The choice was made to focus predominantly on discrimination issues, as they are perceived as part of everyday life, and thus an important entry point to engage the attention of the wider target audience. In this regard, it is important to highlight that gender issues were discussed throughout the co-creation process as they emerged regularly from the main issues addressed, e.g. the veil.

4.1.1 A participatory process to understand communication ecologies

A defining feature of this project is the way it understands **‘communications actions’**, which is not limited to the actual campaign. Each preliminary step is not only integrated in the campaign, but it is itself an inseparable part of it. This is due to the co-creation approach adopted, whereby the contents of the campaign are created by young people who are part of the target audience:

“From an operational point of view, the project gave a “voice” to these potentially vulnerable young people, involving them in participatory processes, creating permanent

³ The analysis of project OLTRE relies on the contents of the campaign available on Instagram, Facebook, YouTube and the project website (<https://oltre.uniroma2.it/>); on scientific production by members of the project; on remote interviews with four partners in the OLTRE consortium covering all phases of the project conducted in November and December 2022.

and open communication spaces and co-constructing possible alternatives and positive narratives that would reduce their social vulnerability”. (Macaluso et al. 2022:8)

Through in-depth interviews of potential co-creators of the campaign based on their life stories, discussions and self-reflections between representatives of the primary target group (**action-research**), and **art-based activities** such as laboratories relying on the Theatre of the Oppressed (TO) methodology as well as laboratories of photography, the **understanding of different communication ‘ecologies’** is refined in an **ongoing process** that spans the entire duration of the project. Indeed, this process **integrates the engagement of local communities** with identification and analysis of communication ecologies. All the phases of the project serve the double purpose of equipping the creators of the campaign with the right tools to generate an effective communication (while also functioning as a practice of prevention of radicalisation for those involved), and of exploring multiple dimensions of communication ecologies.

While all phases are instrumental in shaping the understanding of different communication ecologies, interviews and action-research play a major role.

In-depth interviews - The first phase of the project consists in in-depth interviews **with potential co-creators of the campaign**, contacted by partner CSOs among Muslim youth in 7 Italian cities (Rome, Bologna, Turin, Milan, Padova, Palermo, Cagliari). Interviews are organised in a way that allows the participants, through their life story, to explore different dimensions following a personalised path. Dimensions, or sections of the interview, are designed according to the Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN) kaleidoscope of risk and protective factors against radicalisation and include family, education, ideology, relationship with peers, perception of Italian society and sentiments of belonging, political opinions, ideas about religion, use of social media, TV shows/series of interest, perception of safety, attitude towards intercultural conflicts. Findings from the interviews are then analysed to identify key issues that may be the most stimulating and/or controversial for the wider target audience of Muslim youth. These issues feed the phase of action-research.

Action-research – This phase consists in **self-reflective discussions within peers** by the co-creators of the campaign. Muslim young people, together with young people of Italian descent, debate about the shared issues identified during the interviews, which will then become the key arguments of the counter-narrative campaign. This phase relies on the PKIC (*perception-knowledge-incorporation-change*) model of communication of social problems (Macaluso et.al., 2020), whereby perception and knowledge about a given issue can be effectively tackled by reflective action-research, in this case involving young Muslim participants. The moment of creation of the campaign is identified as the step where a change in the established social imaginary can eventually be triggered through peer discussion, leading to the incorporation of new concepts and experiences, and a shared production of meaning. In OLTRE project, Muslim young people reflect on how they are perceived by others, on the identity they bring into play in their everyday lives, and on the role on media in framing social issues as well as identity problems.

It should be emphasized that in both phases, the understanding of the communication ecologies starts with the individual experience of a representative of the target audience, which is later compared and refined through collective discussion among peers. This allows for an understanding that includes more than just the classic 'material' elements of communication ecologies, e.g., the most widely used social platforms, or the topics that are most debated or able to attract the attention of the target audience. In fact, the understanding broadens to include **elements related to perception and the affective dimension**, that is linked to being-situated in a given communication environment, which in turn is shaped by individual, community, national and global factors.

This process results in both an understanding of, and an action on, the wider communication ecologies in which the young people find themselves. **Besides the value that the co-creation process has in terms of prevention of radicalisation for the participants, it also paves the way to identify key issues around which the campaign will be built.** In OLTRE project, reflective discussions among co-creators resulted in the choice of five main issues: sport for Muslim youth, the theme of the veil, food, key concepts of Islam, identity and debunking of clichés about Muslim young people. These are the key themes at the base of all the different parts of the campaign – on social media (Facebook, Instagram), through a webseries, and with a graphic novel.

For each piece of content, the co-creators select a theme, analyse the way it is framed (including competing or opposing representations), deconstruct the frame, and build a new frame which encapsulates counter- and alternative narratives. The **participatory nature of this process**, which relies on reaching consensus among the mixed group of co-creators (involving both Muslim and non-Muslim young people), aims at **putting into dialogue different communication ecologies**, tackling the most common prejudices, **shifting perceptions**, with a view to adopt a balanced narrative.

4.1.2 Co-creation as a means to address the affective structure of radicalisation messages

A major effort in OLTRE project is devoted to **exploring how emotions enters into play** when the target audience is exposed to messaging about controversial or otherwise sensitive issues, and to **building on these findings to enhance the effectiveness of the campaign**. Just as in the case of understanding different communication ecologies, here too the affective structure of radicalisation messages is addressed in two different ways. First, through participatory, preliminary work, co-creators are involved in art-based activities; second, the findings are used as a base for building the actual communication campaign directed at the wider target audience.

Preliminary work to address the affective structure of radicalising messages takes place primarily in **two co-creation laboratories**: one dedicated to Theatre of the Oppressed (TO) activities, and the other dedicated to photography (and a graphic novel).

4.1.3 Theatre of the Oppressed

TO is a form of theatre that activates the public and functions as a way in which '*spect-actors*' explore, enact, analyse and transform the reality they themselves experience, as well as to initiate collective processes of personal and social change. It is based on the concept that human being is an indissociable unity of body, mind, and emotions. These three elements are jointly activated in TO activities. In the seven TO laboratories held within OLTRE project with Muslim young people, two main techniques were used: forum-theatre and image-theatre.

Forum-theatre is based on the presentation of a problematic scene which functions as a stimulus for *spect-actors*. Their active intervention is required to resolve the situation, or to enact potential alternative 'finals', or ways of conduct, by substituting the protagonist on stage. Typically, forum-theatre starts from a negative, oppressive, or simply uncomfortable situation. Throughout the play, the host of the forum questions the audience about the reality and effectiveness of the proposed solutions, problematising them.

In the OLTRE project, forum-theatre sessions usually started with the host asking *spect-actors* to tell/enact stories of discrimination they have experienced first-hand. In this way, the emotions sparked by these events are first shared, then analysed from different angles/cultural backgrounds, and finally used to stage an effective reaction, where the effectiveness considers the feelings of both the subject and the object of discrimination.

The still image in Figure 15 below shows another TO technique used in OLTRE project, image-theatre. Image-theatre is a technique based on constructing images with people's bodies, or staging a sort of still image of concepts, feelings, and more complex realities. Still images are then energised with audience intervention or independently to explore internal tensions, conflicts, desires and possible changes. In this case participants are working on the theme of discrimination because of the veil, which is one of the key issues raised by most of the young Muslim participants. Feelings of being discriminated, hatred, anger towards a perceived injustice are elaborated during the TO laboratory to explore potential solutions that take into account the act of hate, the victim's feeling, as well as the reasons that led the person to commit this act.

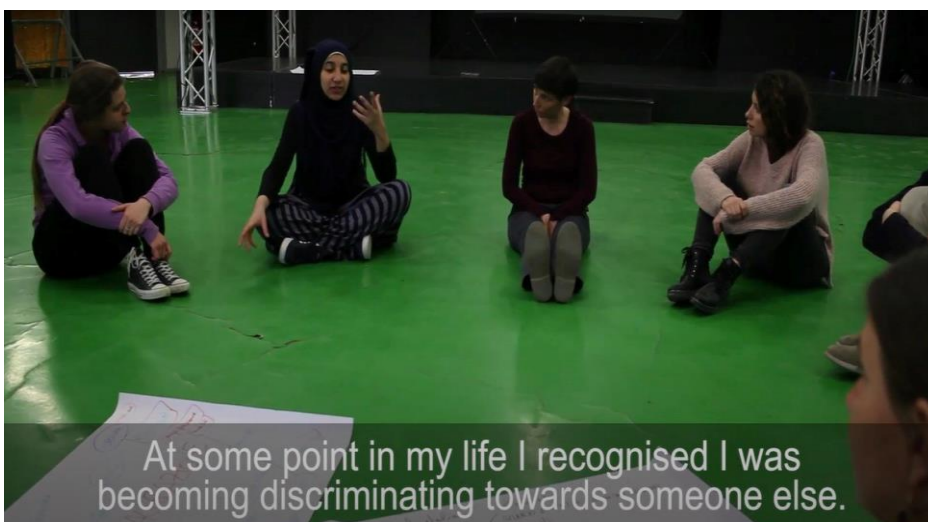


Figure 15 OLTRE: Theatre of Oppressed Technique (Image-Theatre I)



In the OLTRE project, this technique is used mainly to challenge co-creators to explore their identity in all its nuances, including both latent tensions and overt conflicts (e.g., Islam-terrorism link; feeling “foreign and yet at home”; complexity and richness of multi-belongingness). This includes seeking to trigger a path of self-reflection on potential “cascade effects”, e.g. reciprocal discrimination exemplified in the frame below. These reflections are shared and discussed during the laboratory as well as during the process of co-creation of the campaign. Other uses of image-theatre consist in visually explaining the personal understanding of a word (e.g., discrimination, risk, prejudice, ...), and commonplaces and clichés about Muslim young people circulated by the media (see Figure 16).

Figure 16 OLTRE: Image Theatre II



4.1.4 Laboratory of photography and graphic novel

During a one-day workshop in each of the seven cities involved in the project, a group of local Muslim young people photographs places of the city that have a special meaning for each of the participants. The tour is the occasion **to discuss matters related to everyday life as well as to explore meanings and emotions attached to these places**. A selection of the photos was then used to run the campaign on social media and to create a graphic novel. The latter combines photos with sentences about identity taken from both laboratories.

Figure 17 OLTRE: Graphic Novel I



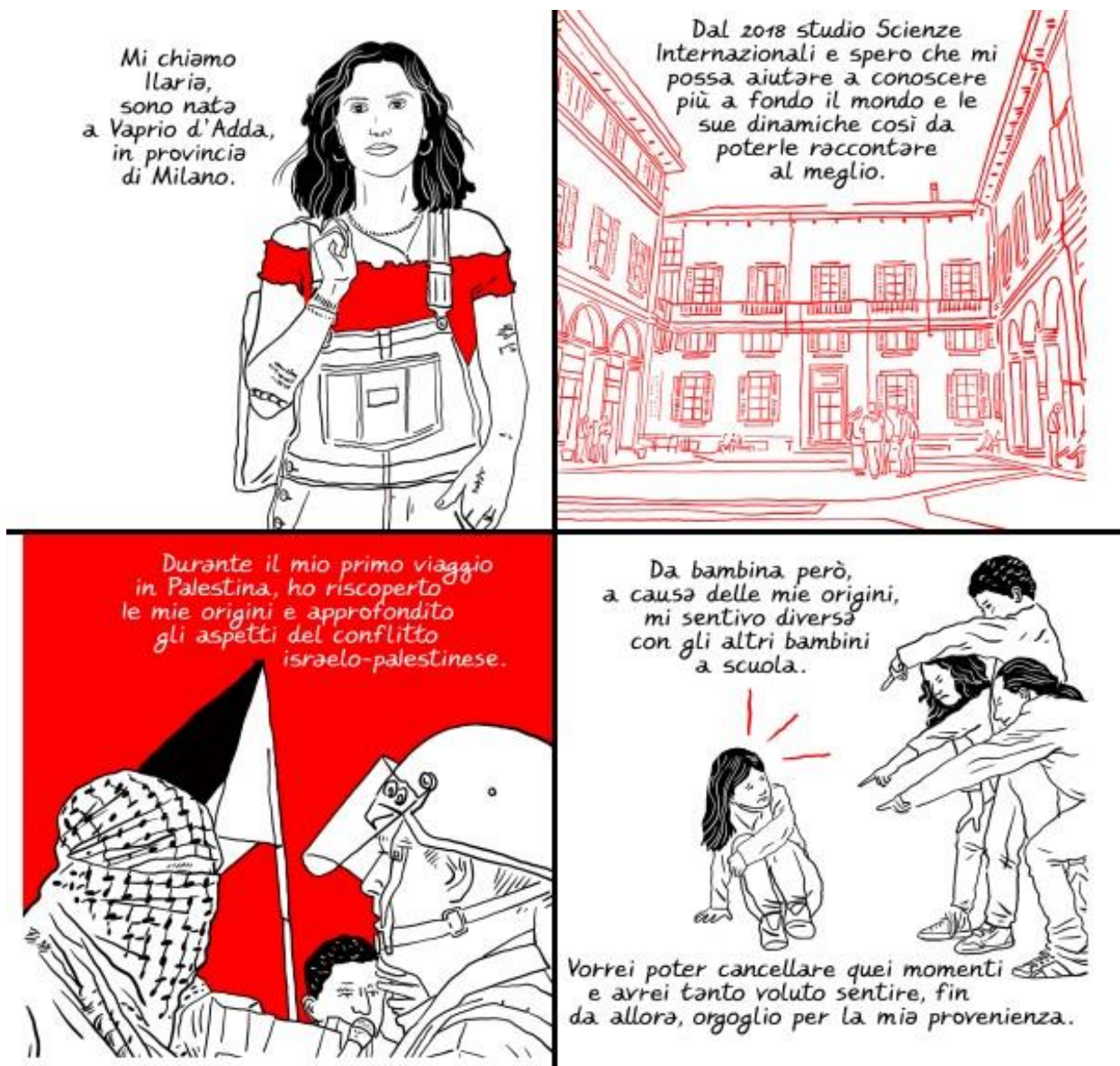
Note: The excerpts from the graphic novel above read: "Hi my name is Houda..." "I'm 16..." "I was born in Bologna and I'm a student" "I described my image as a condominium of identities and it depends which door you knock to" "In a condominium there are many nuances, the same applies for me" "I'm like a condominium, animated by many pieces that make my identity".

Figure 18 OLTRE: Graphic Novel II



Note: The text above reads: "My name is Malek and like the people in the boat behind me, I've made a long and risky journey myself to come here in search of my future" "I've known their same fears and frustrations and the effort to integrate in an increasingly hostile society that ignores how much it costs leaving your family & world to go towards the unknown" "I identify very much with this mural" "I see in it the hope that pushes so many defenceless human beings towards terrible adventures, always hanging between life and death, like stormy waves in the sea ready to swallow us or our desperate fellow travellers" "This painting is a tribute to many silent lives lost for good and to those that, having survived, are confronted with new storms..." "...new threats, those of unjustified hatred towards the weakest".

Figure 19 OLTRE: Graphic Novel III



Note: The text above reads: "My names is Ilaria, I was born in Vaprio d'Adda, near Milan" "Since 2018 I am studying International Studies and I hope it'll help me understand better the world and its dynamics so that I can help find the best way" "During my first trip to Palestine, I rediscovered my origins and looked more in depth into the Israeli-Palestinian conflict" "However, as a child, because of my origins, I felt different from other kids at school" "I wish I could cancel those moments and I would have loved to have heard, since back then, pride for where I come from".

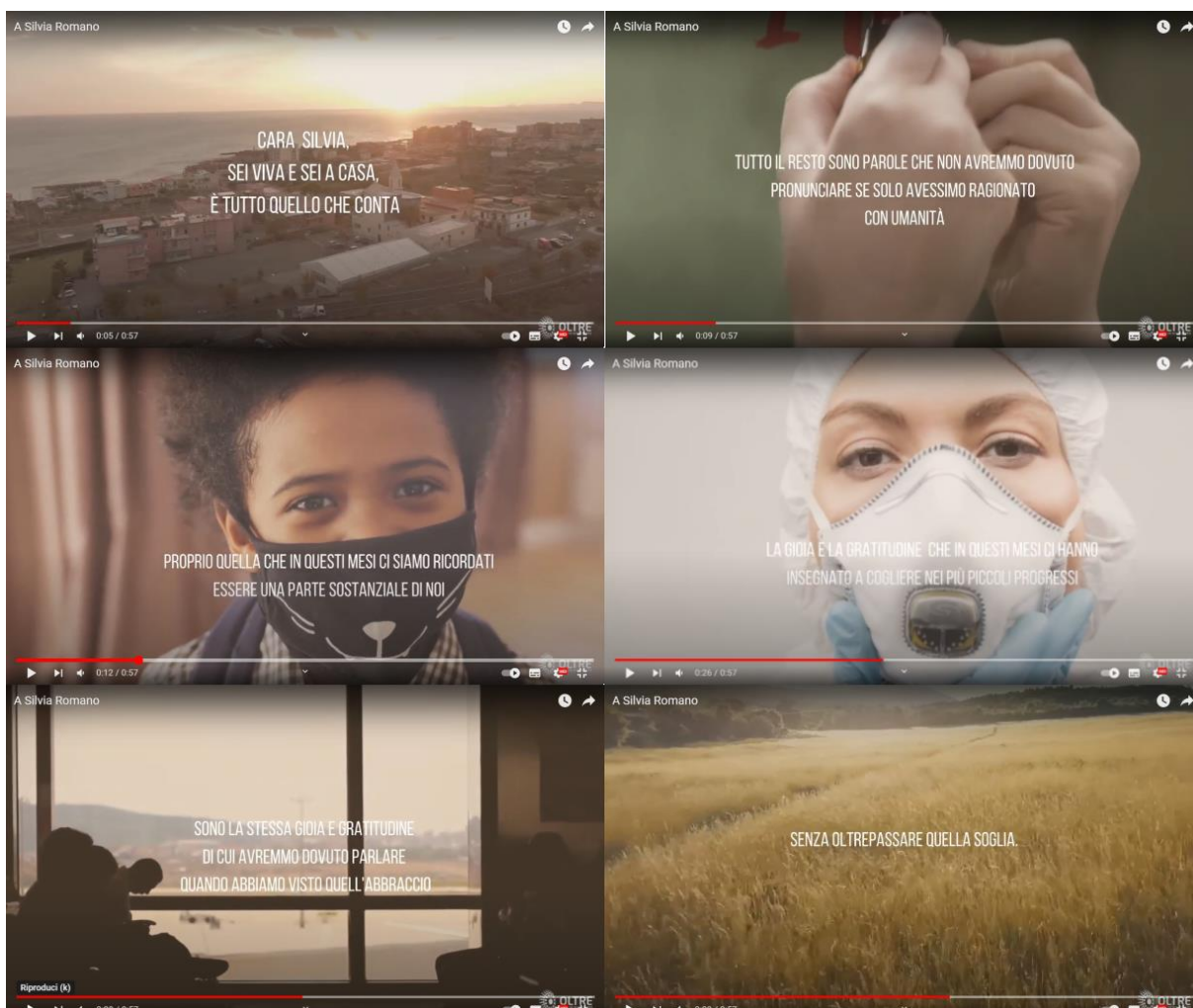
4.1.5 Co-creation of the campaign's contents

The construction of the actual counter-narrative campaign also rests on **collective reflection**, by privileged representatives of the target audience, on the chosen themes. The co-creation process, in this case, brings together people from different backgrounds and with even very distant socio-cultural inclinations. The discussion generated focuses on the different perceptions and meanings participants attach to an event, a gesture, a phrase, and pays special attention to the emotional states triggered and how to convey them through the campaign content. The process eventually

arrives at a shared decision, in which consensus coincides with allowing space and giving equal dignity to the views of others. The way the content deals with the issues covered by the campaign, therefore, seeks to return a plural position, which is useful in defusing possible 'black and white' reactions of the target audience.

For example, in a post on the campaign's Instagram channel dated May 14, 2020, the group of co-creators discusses the return home of Silvia Romano, an international cooperation worker kidnapped in Kenya by the jihadist organization al-Shabaab in 2018. The event sparked a very bitter debate in Italy, with a significant wave of Islamophobia especially in online conversations, because Silvia Romano had converted to Islam while in captivity, changing her name to Aisha and wearing a veil. Choices she did not disavow once she was freed. The campaign treats this event by shifting the focus from the veil to Silvia Romano's embrace with her mother upon her return to Italy, an iconic scene in which the emotional bond with the family is highlighted as the only thing that matters at such a juncture, in defining the person's identity. Not the convert but the daughter. An emotion known to all is thus used to unhinge the foundations of discriminatory thinking that relies on the equation veil = imprisonment, coercion: "a person's freedom is not measured in meters of cloth."

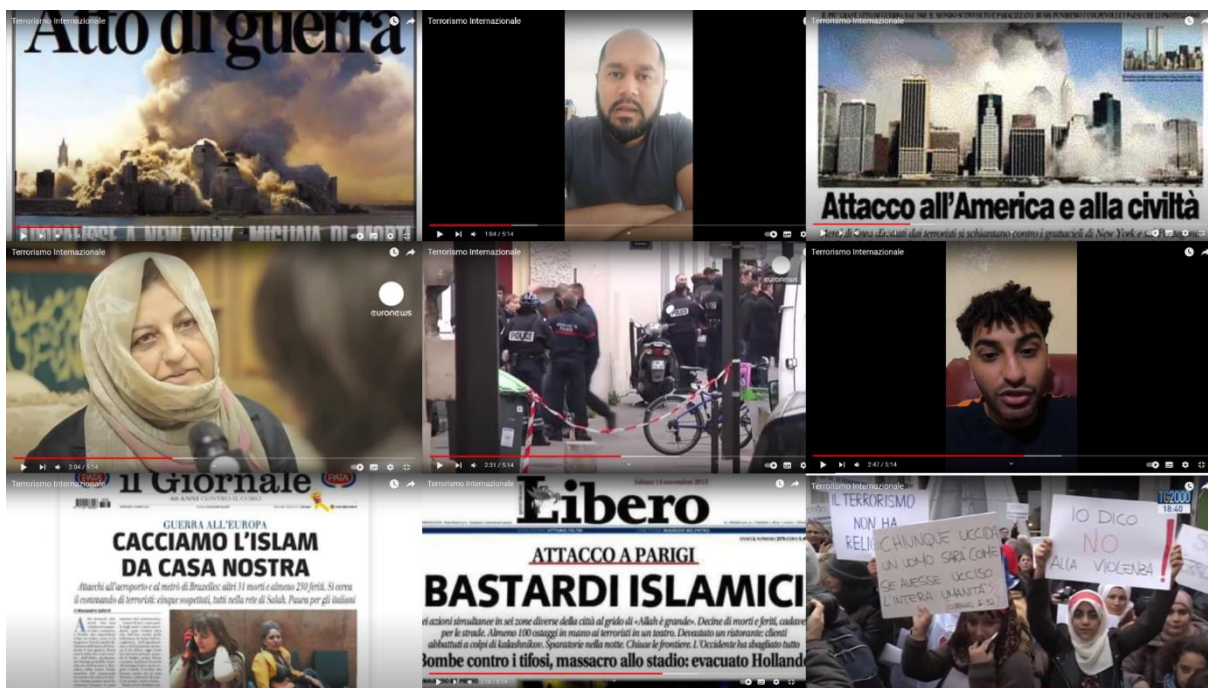
Figure 20 OLTRE: Co-created Videos on Silvia Romano



Note: Excerpts from the video about Silvia Romano read, left to right and top to bottom: “Dear Silvia, you’re alive and you’re home, that’s all that matters” “All the rest is just words that we should have not spoken if only had we reasoned with humanity” “That exact humanity that in these months we remembered being a substantial part of us” “The joy and gratitude that these months have taught us to see in the smallest progress” “are the same joy and gratitude we should have spoken about when we saw that embrace” “without trespassing that threshold”.

Another content of the campaign consists of a video comparing the Sept. 11, 2001 attack in New York (first row in the image below) and the 2015 Paris attacks (second and third row).⁴

Figure 21 OLTRE: Video campaigns related to terrorist attacks (9/11 and 2015 Paris)



The post aims to analyse one of the most effective mechanisms in extremist propaganda - the belief that we are victims constantly under attack - by not denying but emphasizing the negative impact these terrorist attacks have had on the Islamic community worldwide. The video, however, proposes alternative ways of responding to discriminatory situations and seeks to trigger a process of identification of the viewer-the target audience-with the protagonists of the video practicing these alternative ways. This process is described as follows:

“The fruit of the concerted, mutual decision of the group of creators on form and content is expressed in a polyphony of voices and images that act as a counter-narrative to dominant visions, expressed in the video through the narrative of some media and journalists. An effect of empathy is produced and a potential change of perspective in the observer by reporting, through common experiences – “everyday social practices” such as school routines – and therefore also experienced by the public, the reactions of classmates or

⁴ The video is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fOOzGuTyNic> (last accessed 27 January 2023).

passengers on the underground, by describing through the eyes of children and young people the accusatory looks encountered by people who do not identify with the ideology and terrorist actions, but are homologated and overwhelmed by the cliché that associates religion and terrorism. Re-reading the attacks from the point of view of the Muslim community, which is represented as comparably damaged in the short and long term by the effects of international terrorism, alternative communicative practices are used in an attempt to make the public change their point of observation by “putting themselves in the shoes of others” and using a “ritual repetitiveness to facilitate the process of incorporation”. (Macaluso et al. 2020: 124).

4.1.6 Evaluating the efficacy of the campaign

The campaign co-creation process is also relevant in terms of monitoring and evaluation (M&E). The OLTRE project complements the classic M&E of the online counter-narrative campaign with a qualitative, *in-itinere* evaluation, integrated into each phase of the project, which aims to assess the transformation process triggered by the co-creation activities against the backdrop of the theory of change on which the project itself is based.

This type of evaluation is considered as crucial to identify the link between the activation process of the selected group of co-creators and the results of the campaign; to go beyond a simple descriptive evaluation of the campaign (*how* it changed) and **identify the transformative process in its complexity** (*why* it changed). In addition, the evaluation conducted in this way also makes it possible to identify how and why the campaign content changed during the two years.

Operationally, among the project partners, one team is exclusively dedicated to evaluation and participates in all phases of the campaign, including preliminary research and co-creator group discussions. This team then has the opportunity to intervene regularly through participation in project coordination group meetings. The evaluation team then conducted focus groups with both co-creators and project partners to develop a final evaluation of the activities.

This campaign signals **important aspects for counter and alternative narrative development**. Above all it highlights the role of young people as co-creators of the communication to be made, and at the same time, underlines the role of artistic practice as a medium to explore experience, identify lived emotions, and through these, to construct concepts around which the communication campaign is to be built.

4.2 “X them out”: an art-based campaign against violent far-right sentiments in Greece

4.2.1 The Greek socio-political context and the rise of far-right

Golden Dawn (GD) is the openly neo-Nazi, racist and anti-Semitic Greek formation (Psarras, 2012), which managed to become a force to be reckoned with in the Greek Parliament in 2010, after 30 years on the political side-lines (Klapisis, 2014). The results of the double parliamentary elections of 2012 strengthened its power to a percentage of 6.92%, granting it 18 seats in the Greek Parliament

(Figgou et al., 2013). The qualitative analysis of the results revealed a high penetration of Golden Dawn among people under 35 (and even more among people who voted for the first time in 2012) and a balanced distribution of votes, both in urban and semi-urban, as well as in rural areas of the Greek territory (Klapisis, 2014). The percentage of 9.39% in the European elections of 2014 and the election of three of its members to the European Parliament, proved that GD had expanded its influence, having deliberately handled the accusations that weighed on its entire leadership group of forming and directing a criminal organization, after the murder of Pavlos Fyssas, in September 2013. These prosecutions were used as "evidence" of its unconventional character and the war that the "corrupted" system had started against its members (Klapisis, 2014).

Studying the causes that led to the rise and maintenance of GD in Greek society is complex and should consider several crucial factors. Undoubtedly, the unfavourable economic circumstances (i.e., financial crisis, harsh austerity measures, decreased living standards, unemployment) favoured the Golden Dawn's rise (Klapisis, 2014), which presented an alternative model to that of the collapsing new liberalism (Stylianidis & Mamaloudis, 2016). Golden Dawn took advantage of the insecurity about the future established in Greek society by giving simplistic answers to complex problems and providing security (Stylianidis & Mamaloudi, 2016).

However, the rise of the GD was not a sudden phenomenon (Dragona, 2015) and it is misleading to consider the economic crisis alone as the sole generative cause (Klapisis, 2014). The financial crisis highlighted several gaps in the Greek system that had plagued post-colonial Greece for decades. The far-right benefited from clientelism, the emergence of political scandals, the mass media disdain by the Greeks, and the tolerance, or even the support, that the dominant political system showed over the years to nationalist and racist formations (Stylianidis & Mamaloudi, 2016). The myth of "Greek uniqueness", the widespread conspiracy theory that wants the destruction of Greece at the centre of foreign powers, anti-Semitism, racism and xenophobia attest to the existence of a far-right reserve in Greeks, which was triggered by the economic crisis (Klapisis, 2014).

On April 20th, 2015 began at the Athens Three-Member Appeal Court of Felonies the trial of 68 GD defendants with the offence of joining or directing a criminal organization along with other offences (i.e. homicide, complicity in homicide, attempted murder, illegal carrying of weapons, causing bodily injury, extortion, drug possession, damage of foreign property). The main evidentiary proceedings lasted a total of 453 hearings, during which 131 witnesses of the indictment were examined, 16 prosecution witnesses, 69 defence witnesses and hundreds of prosecution documents were presented. Among the documents, which size was estimated to be close to 1.5 Terabytes, were thousands of texts, videos, photographs and audio documents, related to the Nazi ideology and criminal activity of the organization. The trial ended on October 22nd, 2020, with the unanimous decisions of the Court, which included (among others) the recognition of GD as a criminal organization based on Article 187 of the Criminal Code.

In parallel with the extremist activities of GD and its supporters, a **range of activist and grassroots initiatives that counter the extremist discourse** of GD run throughout the years. For example,

Angelique Kourounis's "Golden Dawn - A Personal Affair"⁵ (which has won 36 awards in national and international film festivals) and "Golden Dawn – A Public Affair"⁶ documentaries aim to explore how the Greek neo-Nazi party functioned (the former) and to investigate all the possible forms of resistance to this ideology that spreads all over Europe (the latter). The Golden Dawn Watch⁷ initiative, organised by the Hellenic League for Human Rights, the Greek Observatory against Fascism and Racist Speech in the Media, the Antifascist League of Athens and Piraeus, and the City of Athens Migrants' Integration Council, and supported by antiracist and antifascist organisations, foundations, NGOs, citizens' groups and migrant organisations aim to monitor the trial against Golden Dawn. The argumentation and the rhetoric of the trial are also depicted in the books "With the bees or the wolves"⁸, and "Standing in Public View: The Rhetoric in the Trial against Golden Dawn"⁹, with the former being also dramatized in September-October 2020 for more than 4.000 spectators. Social kitchens, antiracist festivals and campaigns are also decisive in minimizing the actions and impact of the radical right, with the current article shedding the light on one of the most popular art-based campaigns, "X them out"¹⁰.

4.2.1 The counter-narrative campaign "X them out" in Greece

"X them out!" is a street campaign designed to pinpoint and highlight the unseen criminality related to violent racist attacks in public space. The **campaign attempts to visualize a topography of racist violence in Greece** through:

1. **an interactive map** (Figure 23) depicting places in Greece where racist attacks have happened. For the moment, 50 attacks have been registered. Each attack is described by a short text and a picture.
2. **stickers** (Figure 22) with unique QR codes, which are stuck on the site of the attack in Greece. The QR code leads to the aforementioned map.

⁵ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X9_8H33wloc

⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fwCGSU0Gqxl>

⁷ <https://goldendawnwatch.org/?lang=en>

⁸ https://antipodes.gr/book/me-tis-melisses-i-me-tous-lykous?gclid=CjwKCAiAk--dBhABEiwAchlwkY2QGhj56XwXt7L5eSJhEWmxk4ju-7azSCLOPtG3aV5XRCv3lC5E3RoCq5QQAvD_BwE

⁹ ['Ορθιος σε δημόσια θέα: Η αγόρευση στη δίκη της Χρυσής Αυγής by Χρύσα Παπαδοπούλου | Goodreads](#)

¹⁰ <https://valtousx.gr/en/>

Figure 22 "X them Out!" Interactive Map



Figure 23 "X them Out!" Stickers



Figure 24 "X them out!": Example of the "Hook" method in campaigns' text titles I



The "X them out!" campaign combines illustrations with descriptions of xenophobic attacks initiated by members or supporters of GD that have been witnessed or reported to the police. Its communication **messages deploy emotion-based elements**, as according to RAN (2015: 6), "emotions are more important than evidence. Facts and statistics can be dismissed or obfuscated by opposing statistics. Appeals with emotional resonance have greater power". Indeed, campaign's discourse and illustrations aim at the audience's emotional provocation. For example, short texts' titles apply the "hook" method (Figure 24) to grab readers' attention, by using a "surprising statement" that challenges a central argument in the radical discourse (e.g., the use of violence), revealing that it is based on flawed reasoning and is detrimental to the target audience's interests, values and beliefs (Rasheed, 2020).



Today you die

Piraeus, August 2017

A little after 7pm, a group of eight Golden Dawn members, headed by Sotiris Develekos, attack the Favela free social centre, at 11 Navarchou Votsi St. The members of the assault squad are wearing helmets and holding torches, crowbars and flares. They attack the people there with unprecedented ferocity. "Today you die, today we burn you," they shout. Five people are injured, three of them seriously. They are rushed to Nikea hospital. Among them is the Fyssas family lawyer, Eleftheria Tobatzoglou.

Figure 25 "X them out" Example of the "Hook" method in campaigns' text titles //



I will slaughter you!

Halkidiki, June 2011

Nikolaos Rigas, a Golden Dawn parliamentary candidate, hits Bari and Klodian from Albania on the head with a baton. While hitting them, he shouts: "Fuck your Albania! Fuck your entire race! I will slaughter you!" They are both transferred to hospital with serious bodily injuries. Nikolaos Rigas is convicted by Polygyros First Instance Court of dangerous bodily harm, verbal abuse and threats.

The illustrations themselves attempt to depict the cruelty and brutality of these incidents. The absence of censorship despite the sensitive content, the use of colours (mostly black, red and grey) and Nazi symbols, the depictions of weapons and the attacks themselves, along with the expressions of both the perpetrators (expressions of rage and anger) and victims (expressions of fear and helplessness) aim to create an atmosphere of fear and desperation. **These feelings are used by the campaign's initiators to raise awareness around the incidents**, bringing to light attacks that may not have been mentioned by the mainstream media. Adding to this, the campaign's call

for action that encourages individuals to inform the initiators about racist incidents in their neighbourhood (for them to stick the relevant QR sticker) aims to their active citizenship and them being active bystanders in their communities. All of the above contribute to the reduction of feelings of loneliness and helplessness the migrant populations may suffer from.

Figure 26 “X them out!”: Example of the colours used in illustrations



The campaign applies a victim-centred narrative next to the illustrations supporting **the voices and experiences of Golden Dawn’s victims**, publishing their version of the assaults and counterattacking the dominant far-right narrative (Figure 27 and Figure 28). Narratives are rich, compelling and memorable fostering communication, memory and learning processes (Schank & Berman, 2002, in Avraamidou & Osborne, 2009). Narratives can influence the audience’s “understandings and beliefs, and essentially, promote a societal and cultural change” (Avraamidou & Osborne, 2009, p. 1687) and add value to the **campaign’s art elements** by providing not only valuable information but also the context in which the emotions are evoked.

Figure 27 "X them out!" Example of victim-centred narrative I





By the throat

Vainia, Ierapetra, February 2013

Three Pakistani workers, Mazar, Ali and Hanif, are cooking in their home. An assault squad of 15 people surrounds the house and goes inside. Among them, there are members of the local Golden Dawn branch, including Savas Garofalakis, Giorgos Petrakis, Aristodimos Daskalakis, Emmanouil Mavrikakis and Emmanouil Psyllakis. They grab Hanif by the throat and threaten him: "If you don't go, we will kill you!" They kick and punch them, and hit them with wooden planks on the head and the body. Then, they set the house on fire. The three workers are hospitalised in Ierapetra. The Golden Dawn members are arrested and convicted of unprovoked dangerous bodily harm by Lasithi District Court.

Figure 28 "X them out!" Example of victim-centred narrative II





Men with dogs

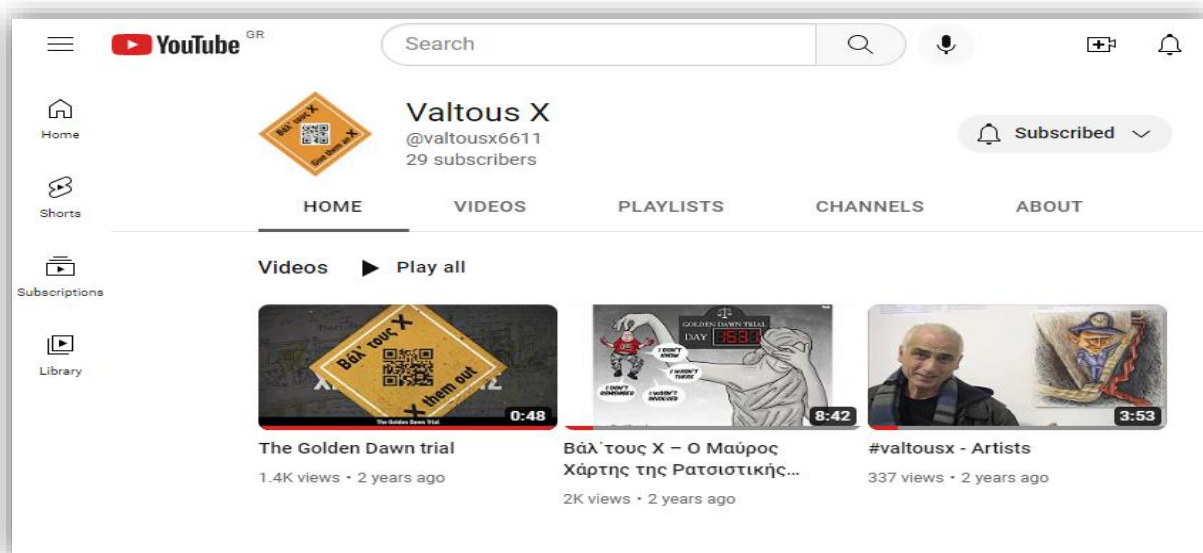
Attiki Square, May 2013

A group of men with dogs surround a 22-year-old Syrian refugee, asking where he's from. Before he has any time to answer, they start punching and kicking him until he collapses. Although there are bystanders, no one comes to his aid. The incident is reported to the police, but they make no arrests. The incident is included in the 2014 National Report on Racist Violence, published by Doctors of the World and the Greek Council for Refugees.

Counter-narratives may target a range of audiences from individuals, to specific groups of people and society as a whole (Kessels, 2010). Based on the different communication tools utilised it can be inferred that the "X them out!" campaign aims to influence society in total irrespective of the specific characteristics of its members. Campaign initiators have used different dissemination methods to ensure that the message has reached as many as possible. The internet-based

initiatives of the campaign, such as the QRs, the YouTube channel¹¹ (Figure 29), the Website¹² (Figure 30) and the Instagram account (Figure 31), raise the possibility of reaching young individuals, and those who are familiar with and have access to technological means (e.g., smartphones, internet connection), while the offline activities, such as the art exhibition (Figure 32) in Athens (24/1/2020-2/2/2020), along with the relevant book (Figure 33) aim to further attract older individuals and those who may not have access to digital devices. It is worth also mentioning that the art exhibition was open to the public every day, including weekends making it accessible to both employed and unemployed stakeholders. The same exhibition was free of charge, appealing to everyone irrespectively of their financial status. Lastly, all communication tools are available in Greek and English, targeting also non-Greek speakers, including migrant populations.

Figure 29 "X them out!" YouTube channel



¹¹ <https://www.youtube.com/@valtousx6611>

¹² <https://valtousx.gr/en/>

Figure 30 "X them out!" website

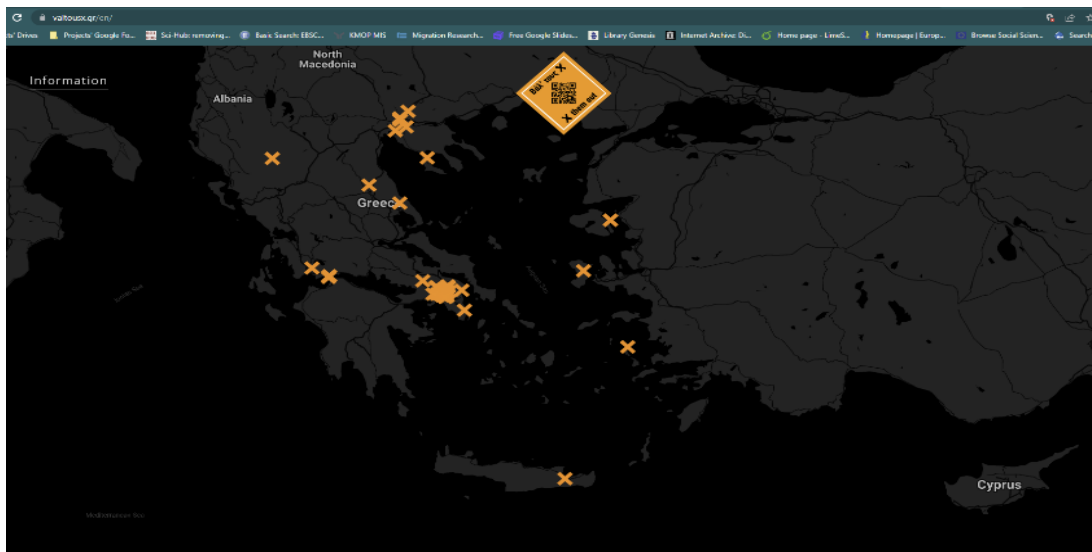


Figure 31 "X them out!" Instagram page

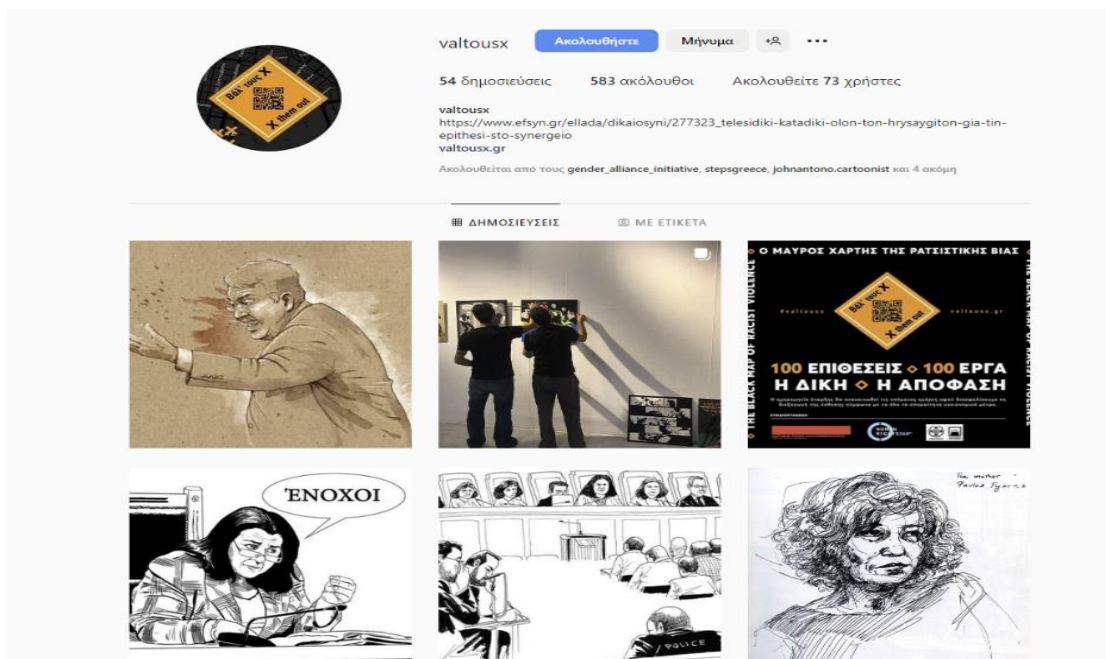


Figure 32 "X them out! Arts exhibition in Athens"

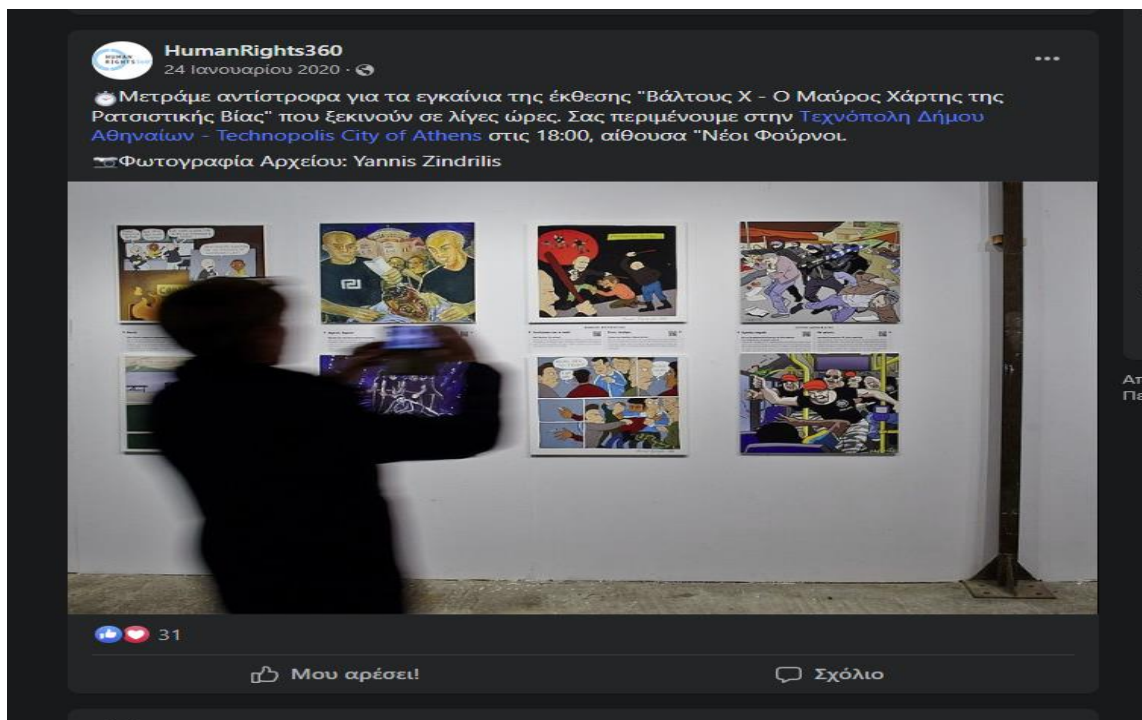


Figure 33 "X them out!" Book

Tags: ΦΩΤΟΓΡΑΦΙΑ

ΒΑΛ' ΤΟΥΣ Χ: Ο ΜΑΥΡΟΣ ΧΑΡΤΗΣ ΤΗΣ ΡΑΤΣΙΣΤΙΚΗΣ ΒΙΑΣ (ΔΙΓΛΩΣΣΗ ΕΚΔΟΣΗ ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΑ-ΑΓΓΛΙΚΑ)

Εκδότης: [ΤΟΠΟΣ](#)
 Συγγραφέας: [Συλλογικό Έργο](#)
 Isbn: 9786180015744
 Διαστάσεις: 240X170X0
 Αριθμός σελίδων: 296
 Ημερομηνία έκδοσης: 28/11/2019
 Διαθεσιμότητα: [ΔΙΑΘΕΣΙΜΟ](#)

Αποστολή σε 1-3 εργάσιμες ημέρες (υπό την προϋπόθεση επαρκούς αποθέματος)

Τιμή: 45,00 € **13,50 €**

Ποσότητα

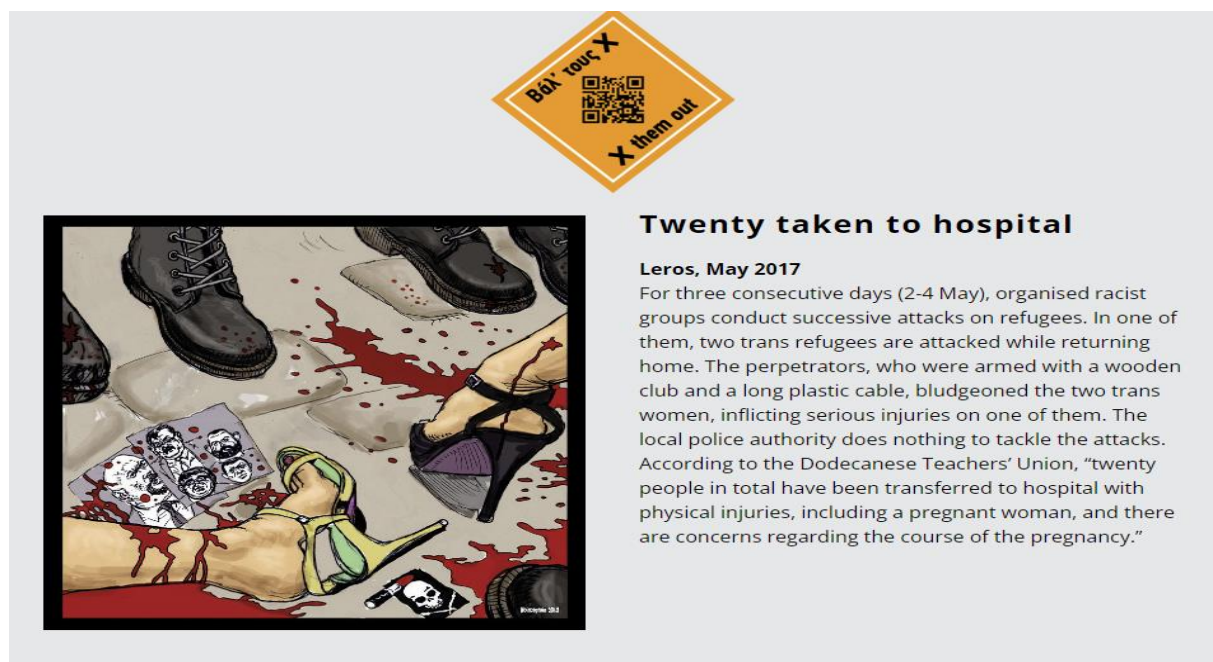
1

Προσθήκη Στο Καλάθι

Followers, views and reactions in campaign's social media are indicative of the audience's engagement. Specifically, the Instagram profile counts 538 followers (latest update on 18/01/2023) with the most popular post having 250 likes (published on 17/09/2020), and the most popular reel having 2.287 views (published on 22/09/2020). The YouTube channel counts 29 followers (latest update on 18/01/2023), with the most popular video having 2.049 views (published on 21/04/2020). Initiators' social media provide also valuable information regarding stakeholders' engagement; the most popular post - relevant to the campaign- on two of the initiating

organizations involved in the campaign's social media, counts 947 reactions and 71 reposts, and 207 reactions, 70 comments and 37 reposts.

Figure 34 "X them out!" Golden Dawn's xenophobic and transphobic incident against trans refugees

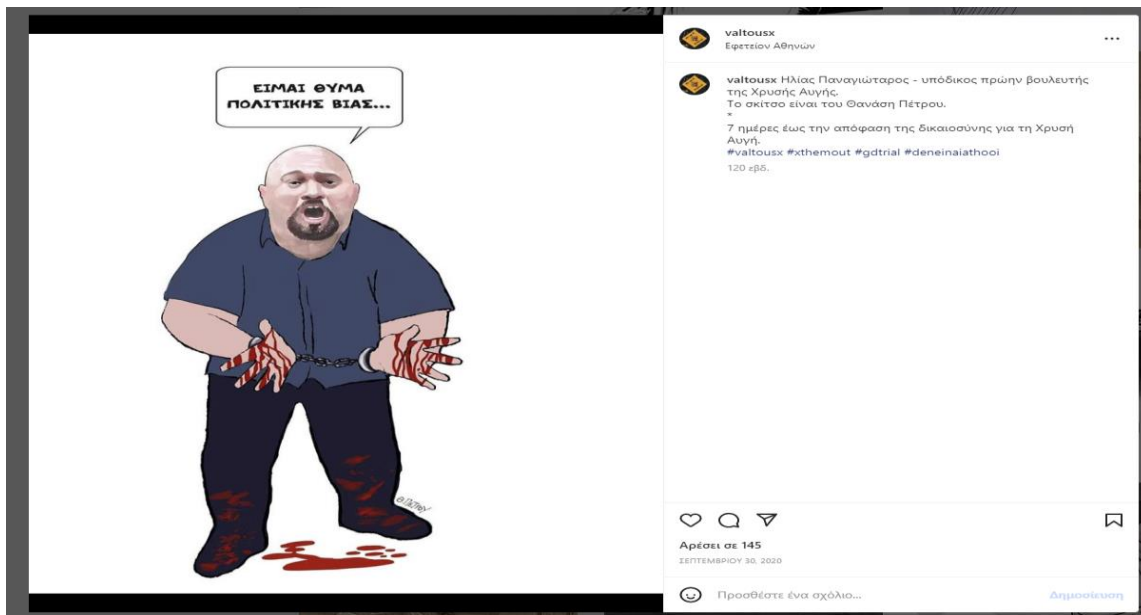


The **gender perspective constitutes part of the campaign** in two different but complementary ways. Firstly, the initiative records and depicts more than 10 incidents with female victims or victims belonging to the LGBTQIA+ community, representative examples of double vulnerabilities and intersectionality (Figure 34). Secondly, the initiative is enriched with counter-narrative feminist and women experiences by not giving the space exclusively to men illustrators.

The campaign strives to prove that it constitutes a **core element in counter-narratives** to the radical right ideology and that it goes hand-to-hand with the socio-political context in which it is active. In this regard, partnered visual artists of the campaign were permitted to attend the GD trial and sketch the main defendants, thus providing visual material of proceedings (for example see Figure 35) that seem to have gone unnoticed by the national and international media. The above can be considered proof of the campaign's success to gain people's trust, especially the prosecution's trust, in covering the trial. This privilege (as limited reporters had access to the courtroom) was recompensed by parties interested in following the trial, considering that the most popular posts on the campaign's social media are the ones published few days before Court's final decision.¹³ In addition to the trial's illustration, the campaign supported the trial by donating all the proceeds from the sale of the book to the civil action lawyers, as a solidarity act against far-right extremism.

¹³ Court's final decision which led to the condemnation of Golden Dawn was on the 7th of October 2020.

Figure 35 Example illustration from the Golden Dawn trial



This campaign addresses the impact of racist violence in the street, a form of violence that seeks to silence and render minorities invisible, and deny them a space in the city. The campaign's action involves mapping places where violence has occurred, and **through artistic production**, it sets out both change the meaning of such violence by making its victim human and visible, and to inscribe this in the memory of the city through posters and online links marking sites of violence, and locating them in another communication ecology – not one of people being silenced and rendered invisible, but as stories of human vulnerability connected by the emotion of empathy.

4.3 EveryonesInvited.uk

In the United Kingdom in June 2020, Soma Sara, a young university student shared on Instagram her experiences of what she called '**rape culture**', describing her own experience of sexual violence and abuse as a school student. This was a period where sexual violence against women and girls was an important public issue, and had recently been at the centre of an award-winning BBC television series, "*I may destroy you*". The intensely personal nature of Soma's story set in motion a **powerful process of resonance**. Other young women recognised themselves through the encounter with this story, and they began posting their own experiences as responses. In the week following her post to Instagram, Soma Sara received over 300 anonymous responses. At which point she joined with others to create what would first be a website where everyone would be invited to share their story anonymously. Everyonesinvited.uk was created, a website to allow girls and young women to share their experiences of sexual assault, and a campaign calling for personal experiences was initiated.

The growth of #EveryonesInvited highlights important dimensions of digital public spheres in the **creation of 'affective publics' as 'structures of storytelling'** (Papacharissi 2016). This movement first

emerged among school girls, and would later extend to university students. Its development is fundamental to understanding the potential of communication to address extremism and radicalisation today. And it is within such 'structures of storytelling' that we encounter the productivity of artistic communication.

The stories these girls and young women share are experiences of rape, sexual harassment, slut-shaming, coercion into sex or the sharing of nude photographs, as well as harrowing stories of the response of friends, classmates and teachers. A year after the initial post, over 16,000 testimonies had been received. Of these, a shift in focus to universities meant that over 1,000 accounts of sexual assault by female university students were included. By June 2022, only two years after the original Instagram post, there had been over 50,000 individual submissions to the website, with over 98,000 people following the EveryonesInvited Instagram account.¹⁴

While the accounts of sexual assault were anonymous, many of these accounts named schools and universities. The names of these hundreds of educational institutions were published, provoking a government response, with the Parliamentary Education Committee calling for an independent investigation, which were taken up by both Police and the Ministry of Education. The principal instrument for inspection of schools in the UK, OFSTED (Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills), undertook an investigation of a sample of the schools identified on the site, and interviewed some 900 students and children. This review concluded that sexual abuse towards girls in schools was widespread in the United Kingdom, and that it was becoming 'increasingly normalised' (Ofsted 2021)

Our aim here is not to evaluate the actions of schools, universities, police and government in responding to this movement. Our focus here instead is to **understand the power and resonance of this action**, something that without doubt changed the public conversation in Britain. Misogyny in schools, a critical pathway to violent extremism, was successfully made a political and cultural issue. How can we understand this?

The posts to **EveryonesInvited.uk** are **deeply personal**. They focus above all on the personal experience of being sexually violated as a girl or young woman. Our task here is not to analyse these as a whole, but to signal some of the central themes that emerge, which we can see in a small number of extracts from some of the thousands of uploaded testimonies:

'He didn't lose anything. No one helped me. And I lost myself.'

'The girl I was with that night told me not to tell anyone what he did to me because it could ruin his life. I felt so alone'

'he completely changed me and I'll never be the same again. And I hate him for what he did to me and I hope karma gets him soon.'

¹⁴ <https://www.instagram.com/everyonesinvited/>

'If we speak out loudly enough, we can stop other girls having to face what we have. I want to create a world where every girl knows she is priceless and beautiful, and is never treated otherwise'

'I felt dirty and ashamed that I felt like I had given in, even when I didn't want to and I had made that clear. I felt that it was my fault for putting myself in that position... It has taken me years to realise that I was coerced, and that his actions were unacceptable. I have always felt as though it was my fault.'

The aim of this website is to '**platform testimonies**' that are both intensely personal and universal. While the perpetrators of violence are present in these accounts, as are teachers and friends, these are all accounts framed in the first person, they are accounts of the **subjective embodied experience** of sexual violation, lived as a girl or young women, in an environment of school or university that is charged with the responsibility of creating a space of safety and security. These are accounts of the destruction of individual integrity, and mirror the themes that are central to #MeToo and #BlackLivesMatter. It is important to recognise the centrality of such movements to contemporary public life, and the difference that these represent from previous generations of social mobilisation (Rosanvallon 2021). These are **movements built around personal experiences**, and can be understood as **expressions of collaborative autoethnography**, a development we encounter in the similar movement that emerged in Poland (see section 2.4 in this report), and also in the use of 'theatre of the oppressed' techniques by young people in Italy (see section 4.1 in this report). At the centre of such collaborative autoethnography is the action of storytelling – where a story can only be told by virtue of the action of listening.

#EveryonesInvites is a powerful example of a **networked public**, one in which feeling and emotion are central. It is a movement based on storytelling, one where the participants together construct awareness of experiences of mind and body, an example **where sentiment and emotions produce meaning-making** at a collective level, constituting a creative process where values are accessed through feeling (Joas 1996). The power of this public space extends well beyond the 50,000 schoolgirls and students who have shared their testimonies, touching teachers, lecturers, families, as well as thousands of boys and young men. #EveryonesInvited emerges as an affective public, one 'suggestive of not-yet-fully-formed possibilities and potentialities' (Papacharissi 2016 311).

There is a kind of practice at stake in this public, where emotions are productive of concepts. In the few sentences we have reproduced above, these focus on naming, understanding and responding to an experience that is first lived as shame. This **emotion recurs widely in analyses of extremism**, with an argument often presented that shame is transformed into hatred of another, a significant contribution to contemporary expressions of extremist hate crime in Europe.

The affective public created by these girls and young women does not follow such a path. Instead, there is a central **focus on subjectivity and collaborative self-care**, often framed within a language of healing or recovery of a self that has been brutalised or negated through the experience of violence. This 'not-yet-fully-formed possibility' is present in the narratives that these girls and young women share, and are particularly evident in artistic practices shared in a Zine created by participants who wish to share their story.

The media are simple – poetry, narrative, digital art. But the processes of transformation that these artistic productions signal are of great importance to understand.¹⁵ Again we have space for only a small selection.

A poem by a young woman, Alice Wong, explores an experience that is both restorative and devastating, and produced not only through words, but also through the craft of knitting (Figure 36).

Figure 36 EveryonesInvited: Knitting and Poem by Alice Wong



My tears are very energetic. And why shouldn't they be? Crying is restorative, warming and devastating. You cry for your own personal reasons, but when you do cry, it's energetic. Hot, fast tears are full of stories and experiences, pain and laughter.

Alice Wong

Another young woman explores freedom through water (Figure 37):

Figure 37 EveryonesInvited: Water and Freedom



I do not wish to live in fear forever — I want the freedom to do what I want when I want. I liken the notion of freedom to water (which this piece mimics), something which is freely-flowing and unconstrained no matter it's given environment. I can only help that one day I may be as carefree as I used to be.

¹⁵ <https://www.everyonesinvited.uk/zine>

In this case, the image evokes a possibility and a potential, it is suggestive, not-yet-fully formed. It evokes freedom lived as desire, not shame transformed into hatred of self and other.

#EveryonesInvited is not an example of what is often called Preventing Violent Extremism. But in a context when an increasing acceptance of **misogyny is strongly associated with an openness to violent actions**, these 50,000 schoolgirls and young women offer us a powerful example of the kinds of affective public that can **produce transformative communications**.

What is fundamental to recognise in this case is the role of affective experience as productive of concepts. Rather than be considered an individual or collective biological state, emotion is lived and transformed, made productive of 'not-yet-fully-formed possibility'. In this, **artistic practice** plays an important role. Such practice becomes a medium to explore the experience of shame constantly described as an erasure or a fracturing of the self. Reconstructing subjectivity is fundamental to the collaborative action we encounter in #EveryonesInvited, one that these young women have framed within a language of 'healing'. This allows these young women to transform shame, not into hate, another emotion that is just as destructive of subjectivity, but into works of art that are full of possibility and potential, as free, unpredictable and life giving as swirling water.

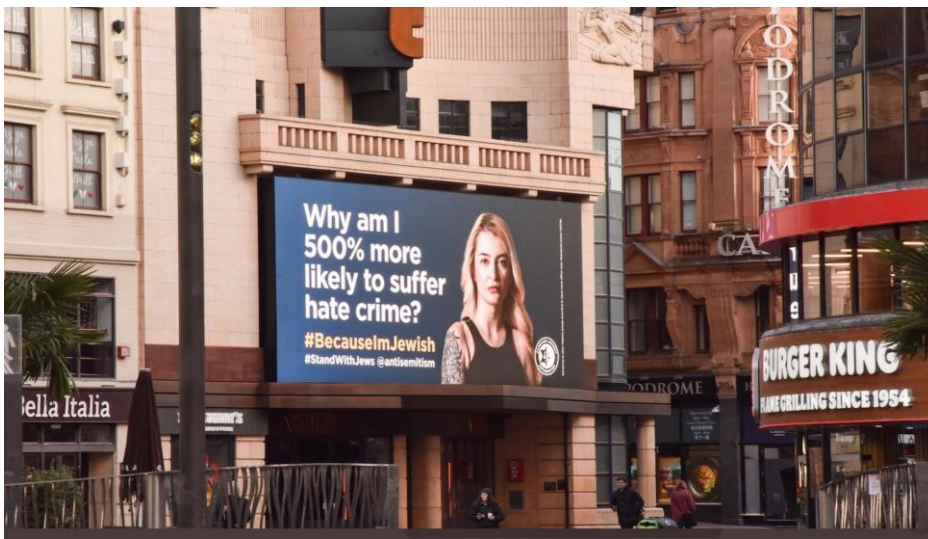
4.4 #BecauseImJewish

An increasing awareness of the growing role of antisemitism in extremism and radicalisation is evident across the field of practitioners, researchers and policy makers who are attempting to understand and respond to contemporary expressions of extremism, in particular (although not limited to) the growth of far-right violent extremism.

Once again, our task in this deliverable is not to focus on the development of antisemitism, but instead to consider movements and actions that are seeking to counter this. And here to we see emerging actions that mirror the form of affective public that we encounter in #EveryonesInvited.

One example of this is a campaign in 2023 that seeks to transform streetscapes with large images, coupled with an online campaign of action. Both these actions are focused on individual testimonies, where people seek to **make personal experience public**. As #EveryonesInvited, these actions seek to make visible something that is previously invisible, and to have this recognised as an experience of suffering.

Figure 38 #BecauseImJewish



As we saw with #EveryonesInvited, such communications are in the first person. We encounter the centrality of personal experience in the communication of a young woman, who speaks unscripted on Twitter, as part of #BecauseImJewish:

'As soon as the minority stops being visible at all, people think they can get away with anything. And they think it doesn't matter that you hurt people's feelings because, 'Oh, they didn't hear me. But no, they do. They did. They're hearing you, and they're hurting, but they are not going to say anything because they're scared. And that's not okay.' (19 January 2023)

This is an account of **'invisible hurt'**, an experience of being invisible, silent, and scared. This young woman speaks of the impact on her of the pervasive presence of antisemitism on social media in particular, which has emerged as one of the unifying themes of the conspiracy theories that have originated from 4chan, and which have been vehicle in particular through QAnon. These conspiracy theories aim at the dehumanisation of Jewish people, from producing the emotion of horror at myths of child kidnapping to humour at jokes aimed at humiliation of Jewish people.

It is in this context that we can understand the importance of #BecauseImJewish. This is an appeal to recognise the humanity of the person on the basis once again of an **appeal to the emotion of empathy**. The aim of this **'alternative narrative'** is not to 'fact check' the incredible and offensive nature of claims originating from 4chan. Instead this communication sets out to **share an experience of suffering, and in the process, build an experience of empathy**. Just as we encounter in #EveryonesInvited, this young woman on Twitter posting to shares a desire, to live in freedom of fear.

5. Conclusions

1. The empirical work being undertaken across the different programmes of research in PARTICIPATION has underlined a **changing paradigm of pathways to violent extremism and radicalisation**. While organised actors are present in this field, the overall pattern that has emerged is that violent extremism is increasingly post-ideological and post-organisational, and as the search for organisational and ideological purity becomes less central to extremist cultures, we see increasing **convergence and hybridisation**. This is evident, for example, in the place of the figure of 'the chad', a form of ironic alpha-male that emerged in Incel culture, being taken up by far-right violent extremists and increasingly among pro-jihad networks.
2. This emerging context means that older communication paradigms based on models of 'propaganda' are less adequate to capture the forms of communication associated with the development of extremist networks and cultures. Models of propaganda are based on a linear 'sender-receiver' model, where the agency associated with the development of extremism is associated with the sender, a proposition highlighted in analyses that frame the 'receivers' of such messages as 'vulnerable'. PARTICIPATION research has underlined instead the extent that **extremist communications are increasingly embedded in participatory remix cultures**.
3. The importance of such participatory remix cultures is evident in the **role of memes in radical communications**. Memes consist of an image and text, and 'work' through the interaction of the two dimensions involved in experiencing both the image and the text. Often these will be 'incongruent', evoking a sensation of strangeness, humour, memory, or recognition.
4. The communication paradigm associated with extremism is one that is increasingly framed in terms of '**resonance**'. This consists of recognising a shared feeling, and in turn sharing it with others. This **emotional dynamic** is at the heart of the mainstreaming of extremist themes highlighted by PARTICIPATION research.
5. The **centrality of affect to radicalising communications** is particularly illustrated by the rise of conspiracy theories, which are embedded in a culture of urgency, danger and hidden menace, while also shaped by powerful experiences of discovery, recognition, anxiety and dread. The place of conspiracy theory within contemporary political discourse underlines the development of a 'post-truth' paradigm in political life, a paradigm that makes the mainstreaming of extremist communications increasingly possible.
6. Communication actions aiming at preventing violent extremism demonstrate an increasing awareness of **emerging communication models**. The examples of communication campaigns and actions highlight important innovations. These actions are not framed as 'counter propaganda'. Nor are they simply attempting to package messages in a new way, though associating feelings with ideas.

7. Instead, the different actions we have explored in this deliverable seek to support or create what amount to **affective publics**, where we see the development of moral emotions associated with cultures and practices of sharing experience.
8. What is of critical importance in the examples explored is the **agency involved in experiences of communicating**. These campaigns illustrate a process of change from an older sender/receiver model to a new approach to countering extremist messages, that place the agency of the persons most concerned by the issues involved at the centre of the communication.
9. Where these actions have taken the form of campaigns, there has been an explicit **focus on 'co-creation'**. Where these actions have been embedded in the educational curriculum, there has been an explicit focus on critical thinking, exploring and debating, as opposed to passively receiving a counter message.
10. Some of the most powerful campaigns we have considered place personal transformation at their centre, not only in terms of 'resisting' extremist messages or experiences of misogyny, but framed in terms of **desire for freedom, recognition, dignity**. These actions are not built around countering a message, but around 'positive' feelings such as possibility, recovery, freedom, recognition.



6. Recommendations

1. The Radical Awareness Network has developed models for the development and evaluation of communication campaigns. A **key tool is the GAMMA+ model**, that involves the following elements: Goal, Audience, Message, Messenger, Media, Action plus Monitoring and Evaluation.

This deliverable recommends **three changes** be considered by RAN in relation to this model:

(i) While offering important guidelines for communication campaigns, the GAMMA+ model focuses on 'changing minds and behaviours', with an implicit suggestion that it is the 'mind' that shapes 'behaviours'. This model will be strengthened by a much more sustained engagement with the relationship between **ideas and feeling at the centre of experiences of transformation**, in particular the importance of moral emotions.

(ii) The GAMMA+ model proposes that 'campaigns should produce a constant stream of content for their target audience to interact with'. While a valuable objective, the GAMMA+ model will benefit from a considering how communications take place within participatory remix cultures, and setting out to understand how what it conceives of an 'audience' can also become 'actors', and how the message directed at audiences can be explored, changed, adapted, repurposed and shared by those who receive it. An important measure to understand **the impact of a communication campaign is the extent to which it can be remixed and shared**, and the GAMMA+ model will be significantly strengthened by integrating this dimension.

(iii) At the centre of the actions and communications we have explored there has been a **process of 'subjectivation'**, of persons becoming actors in different ways, from learning to exercise critical thinking in an educational context to using art to transform the meaning of place or to rediscover a desire for freedom. These are much more than 'changing behaviours'. They highlight capacities and desires at the centre of being human. Recognition of the importance of such dimensions has played an important role in the move from 'counter narratives' to 'alternative narratives'.

However, the processes we have considered in this deliverable suggest more complex experiences of creativity and moral emotion are at stake. On this basis, we propose that RAN reconsider the focus on 'message' and 'audience' and consider **framing communication within a more embodied and experiential paradigm**, one that will allow a clearer understanding of the relationship between feelings and ideas, the place of autoethnography in experiences of transformation, and the place of moral emotion in personal transformation.

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