counter@ct

preventing and combating online radicalisation

Practical Guide | Part 1
Prevent and Combat Online Radicalisation and Extremism

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Prevent and Combat Online Radicalisation and Extremism

This practical guide was written to summarise the practical experience gained by the partnership in Counter@ct project and it is not aimed to be a general guide to be strictly followed by any organisation. One of the lessons learned is that both national and international contexts are very important and it always changes overtime. Also, the target group and all its members must be considered in their uniqueness and any choice about the campaign must be made just after getting to know them.
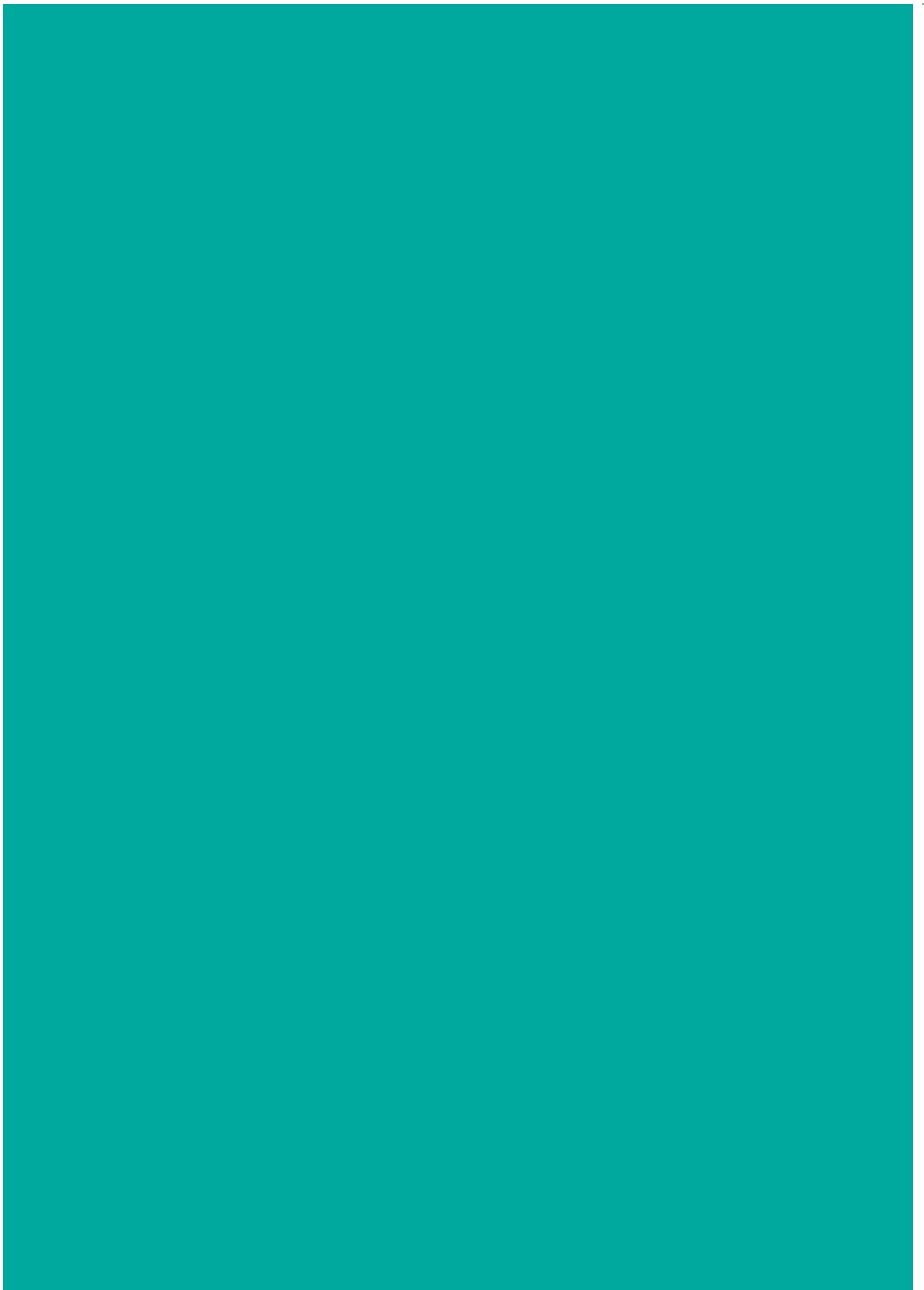
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Chapter 1:

how to implement an online counter-narrative campaign and its underlying communication strategy

Chapter 1

1.1. Studying the target audience and their context

Before beginning to conceptualize a positive alternative narrative campaign, it is essential to study the target audience and its context. In Counter@ct project the target audience was 15-26 years old migrants and refugees. This choice was based on the empirical assumption that these youngsters were especially vulnerable to radicalisation processes especially due to a potential stigmatization of migrants and refugees in Western societies.

The desk research conducted in the beginning of the project resulted in a literature review paper which concluded that many of these assumptions were previously pointed out by authors in published articles on the subject. There were many vulnerability factors that could play a role on radicalisation, making it an extraordinary complex process. Many of these factors had something in common as they could be expressed through common grievances.

However, not every assumption could be confirmed as some subjects were not detailed by the available literature or were simply not matching the initial assumptions. The consideration of migrants and refugees as an especially vulnerable group for radicalisation is a partial truth. The opinion of the High Commissioner for Migrations in Portugal is that the 'second generation' (sons or daughters of migrants and/or refugees) is more vulnerable than their parents, for example.

It was also pointed out by JRS Portugal that migrants and refugees have potentially very different life stories between themselves and that it was not possible to consider them as one group. In addition to this, migrants and refugees living in Portugal are a very diverse group considering their nationalities, ages, religions and cultural backgrounds.

Young people were certainly confirmed as a more vulnerable group both by literature and by the specialists involved. However, it was a very large group to be considered as the target group of our campaign. Also, many assumptions were made about the online habits of these youngsters that were not detailed in studies in Portugal.

With the intention of overcoming these shortcomings and to gather some reliable information from people that would effectively be targeted by the campaign, some interviews were made with migrants and refugees living in Portugal and also with some specialists on the subject.

Interviews with professionals working with migrants and refugees in Portugal were very enriching. The main conclusions were that, in their opinion, all of them had contacted many times with radical propaganda and that the difficulties of hosting and of the integration processes were the main reasons migrants and refugees decided to leave Portugal. On the other hand, the interviews with the potential members of the target group were much harder to conduct as, for instance, it was a challenge to schedule them. Apparently, this rejection had two root causes: the high number of professionals and organisations aiming to contact these youngsters and a distrust on organisations and especially on talking about the specific subject of radicalisation. The simple lack of interest was also an identified factor. Moreover, the subject of radicalisation was handled as a taboo and many of the interviewees just did not answer questions regarding this specific subject.

From the interviews it was clear that, in order to reach the target audience, it was necessary not to address the subject directly and the storytelling focused on positive stories seemed to go along with this special circumstance.

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Even if it was previously identified that migrants and refugees of some specific countries were more vulnerable to radicalisation processes due to potential previous contact with radical propaganda and/or violent extremist groups (i.e., countries where there is terrorist activity), it was a consensus among specialists that radicalisation could have many ideological roots.

As it was not possible to cover all kinds of radical ideologies (i.e., far-left, far right, and religious inspired), and every country of origin of migrants and refugees and/or the languages they speak, it was necessary to make some options. First of all, in the recent literature and also in some specialists' opinions far right and jihadist extremism are the two biggest threats in Europe. Combining all this information, it was possible to build a model in which the positive alternative narrative would give positive examples of integration of migrants and refugees living in Portugal and adapt its message. These options also made possible to fight the rising polarisation around the subject and not to reinforce it.

Considering that only a few people would be invited to give their testimonies and having in mind there should be a diversity of identities and vulnerabilities, a decision was made to interview migrants and refugees equally, both men and women from different countries of origin and religious background. We took in consideration that stigmatisation due to any of these characteristics should not be reinforced by our campaign and that the target audience should relate with the interviewees.

The interviews conducted enabled us to learn more about these youngsters' online habits. Finally, it was of utmost importance to listen to them and learn from their stories in order to frame the campaign in a way that our audience could relate to the testimonies given.

1.2. Applying the GAMMMA+ Model

Although GAMMMA+ model is a quite useful tool to design a campaign . In order to apply it properly, there was a need to go beyond it. In an early stage, many challenges were faced in order to establish a consensus on what the definition of radicalization is and which types of radical ideologies the campaign would cover. All this complexity had its consequences in the development of a model of what the campaign should and should not be.

The goal was previously established: to change the mindset and make youngsters less prone to adhere to radical ideologies leading to violent extremism. Project Counter@ct was focused on primary prevention due to the fact that in Portugal there is no significant phenomenon of terrorism and violent extremism, so the main goal was to undermine extremist propaganda through positive stories of integration of migrants and refugees.

It is important to mention that one of the conclusions of the desk research was the fact that difficulties in hosting and integrating migrants and refugees were exploited both by far-right populist movements and by jihadist extremists. In this sense, the main goal was to debunk the idea that there is no room for these migrants and refugees to live in Portugal so, at least in theory, undermining this idea would lessen the risk of migrants and refugees to simply leave the country and therefore contribute to the reduction of polarisation.

The risks were many. By showing positive stories of integration, it was possible to unintentionally give the idea that Portugal was a dream for foreigners looking for a better life. Also, if the campaign just showed positive stories of integration, it could potentially lead to alienation of the audience that would not relate to the testimonies.

The audience should surely be redefined. As previously mentioned, the target group was previously defined as young (16-25 years old) migrants and refugees. In fact, this target group was too broad so there was the need to identify the most vulnerable individuals, namely the ones who potentially had had previous contact with extremist propaganda.

Having in mind the results of the desk research and the interviews, it was possible to understand that in countries with a high polarisation and more activity of extremist groups, the contact with extremist propaganda was more common and made these youngsters more vulnerable to radicalisation - which is described in the literature as a vulnerability factor external to the individual. As radical ideologies became popular in some countries, it was easy to find propaganda advocating for them all over the internet. This content was shared sometimes unintentionally by relatives, friends or acquaintances that were part of their social networks.

Many other vulnerability factors are present in the literature and are categorized as personal, relational, psychological, of social identity or external to the individual. It was not possible to adjust the target in correspondence with all these factors due to lack of reliable data about the target group and due to the excessive complexity of its interplay. It is reasonable to say, for instance, that people that that are experiencing a life crisis or do have identity issues could be more vulnerable to radicalisation processes, but it is hard to reach them specifically in an online campaign.

In a scenario of rising far-right extremism which fuels hatred against migrants and refugees, it is also important to target another audience. So, it was decided to have a primary and a secondary target group. The first one is already described, whilst the second was the general Portuguese society. Yet again the Portuguese society is a very broad definition but the objective in this case was to 'humanize' migrants and refugees through their stories

Considering that there were two target groups , the message should be able to reach them both. Regarding the first target group (young migrants and refugees) , it was necessary to recognize their grievances to avoid the risk of alienation. In this way, people giving their testimonies were invited to tell not only the positive aspects of their integration processes but also the many difficulties they had faced .

Surely that every story of a person is unique, and it is not possible to generalise their own personal experiences, but it was possible to develop an interview script in which all the individuals were invited to give their testimonies, namely the difficulties in their lives since their departure from their homeland and a positive note on how it got better. The message was therefore positive but not in an unreal way. The difficult aspect s were always shown in a slightly emotional way, appealing to similar feelings in the audience.

Regarding the second target group (general audience), it was intended to promote empathy towards the interviewees. Therefore, towards migrants and refugees in general. The message was clear: migrants and refugees are people who came to live in Portugal for many different reasons and who had dreams like anyone else.

Considering the need of being relatable and the concept of storytelling, we wanted to find people who told their own in their own language, giving emotional and trustworthy testimonies about the good and bad parts of being a migrant or a refugee. It was quite challenging to find these people. We encountered a desire for privacy and a sense of distrust about the aims of Project Counter@ct as the main reasons for declining to participate the project. Also, it was easier to get man interviewees instead of women, especially in the Muslim community. The concept of campaign was tested in a previous workshop with beneficiaries of JRS Portugal and , at this moment, it was concluded that the campaign interested the audience and that there was a need to make some technical adjustments (e.g., speed of the subtitles, the content of some teasers, etc.)

The strategy was to invite the primary target audience to talk generally about their experiences in Portugal. A previous interview was made in order to make them feel more comfortable in sharing personal details about their lives before being in front of a camera. Also, a research was made in some cases in order to avoid giving publicity and linking the campaign to non-desirable events or organisations.

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From the desk research it was also concluded that young migrants and refugees in Portugal interacted mainly through WhatsApp, YouTube and Instagram. Some of them were also on Facebook. All these channels were considered but as we decided to control them through Client Scape, WhatsApp was not chosen as a means for dissemination because it could not be integrated there. Client Scape was considered useful as it was decided to answer the antagonistic comments already foreseen in the literature reviewed.
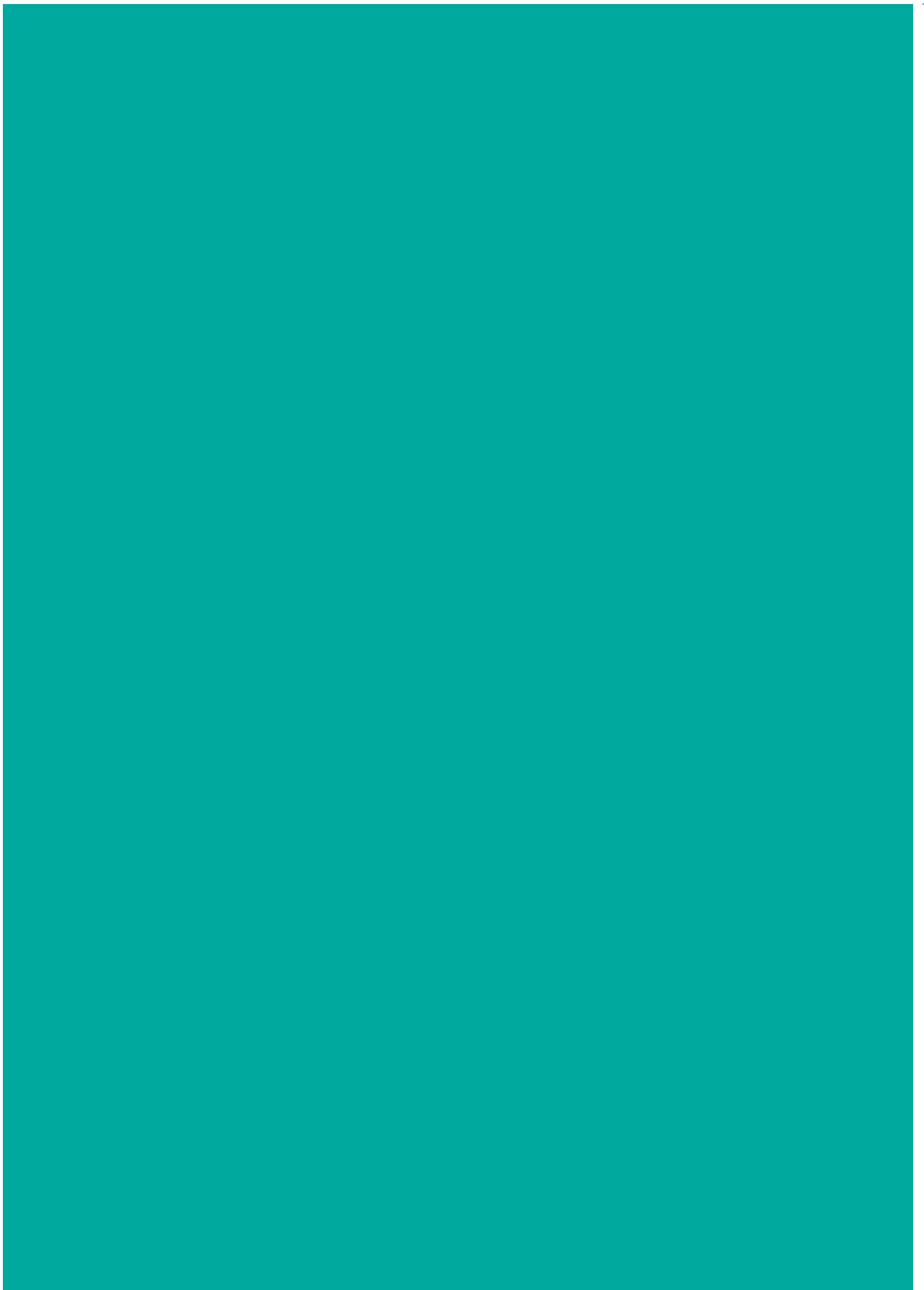
Finally, it was necessary to define a call to action for the campaign. By clicking on the link of the website's campaign and 'learning more' about the story of the people of the testimonies – which was materialized in the hashtag #learnmoreaboutmystory - it would be possible to measure the interest of the audience in the campaign products as it will be explained in Chapter 2.

Chapter 2:

how to develop indicators and an impact assessment methodology

First, you have to monitor and evaluate the effects/changes that your communications campaign is trying to promote. This is key to know if you are running a successful or unsuccessful campaign and to guide re-planning efforts in a current or a future communication strategy.

Developing Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) from the beginning will always be an added value for your campaign in several ways. It will allow you to adjust and improve your campaign, based on the feedback and data you collect and you will be able to demonstrate the reach, performance and impact of your campaign to third parties. This may be key when you apply for funding or seek to persuade stakeholders to scale up your campaign[1].

As stated, regular monitoring and evaluation can strengthen the impact of your campaigns. A powerful evidence basis can be used to support your campaign to spur on supporters to further action, or demonstrate that certain policies are improving people's lives to decision makers. It can be extremely useful in the post campaign period to keep the pressure on and monitor how any policy commitments translate into practice and whether the desired change makes a real difference to people's lives.

Monitoring and evaluation can also be crucial for supporting wider (inter)organisational learning or be used to demonstrate accountability to stakeholders, internal and external, providing evidence to feedback on performance and achievements in the campaign.

Communication campaigns can have effects because they directly aim to persuade individuals and/or because their messages are disseminated through social networks and/or because they try to influence policy decisions in institutions. Knowing whether the scope of the effect is individual, social or institutional is the most important problem in communication evaluation. Each level of effect requires measurement of different outcomes, and different strategies for showing that influence has occurred.

Hence, to evaluate is to assess delivery of policies, activities or, like in this case, a communications campaign. Beyond being a formal requirement, evaluation should be about improving the work we do, about adding to our professional skills and experience and about helping our colleagues/partners to improve in a specific area or subject matter.

While there are similarities with policy and programme evaluation, evaluation of communication actions differs in a number of ways. Beyond having its own terminology, these evaluations often use different methods and communication specific metrics and/or indicators. Best practices in communication evaluation refer to careful planning ahead and "on time" measurement, because, once your communication activities are closed it is usually too late to measure, it may even be too late to measure once you have just started your activities.

In Counter@ct we took several methodological and operational options trying to ensure we went further than using only online metrics, even if we valued those, and there was a strong effort to have an evaluation strategy defined since the beginning of the project. The M&E process was valued from the start and considered essential for the project's success.

1 GAMMA +, paper written by Alexander Ritzmann (co-chair of RAN C&N) with the support of Marije Meines, RAN CoE
https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/about - ran/ran-c-and-n/docs/ran_cn_guidelines_effective_alternative_counter_narrative_campaigns_31_12_2017_en.pdf

Chapter 2

2.1. Defining the Theory of Change

As in any evaluation process the first thing we had to create was a shared understanding of the campaign logic, the assumptions on which the project based its definition. We also had to define the M&E objectives. In this effort we felt we should involve all the project partners and relevant stakeholders.

The participation early on of relevant stakeholders is of great value and will result in a better M&E system. If possible, the beneficiaries or users should also be involved, so that the people who will actually benefit from the campaign are able to inform the indicators of what success will look like and how you will know when your campaign has achieved its goal.

The starting point for any campaign should be an understanding of what the problem to address is and pinpointing a solution to that problem. This is also true for the M&E process.

As far as instruments or tools go we felt that developing a Theory of Change would be useful as this process would be helpful in a few different ways.

A Theory of Change (ToC) is an instrument that is important in creating a shared understanding of the logic and objectives of a campaign or project and in doing so is also helpful to define which questions should the evaluation answer and define the M&E objectives. You should identify what you want to know and why you want to know it from the outset and a ToC is a great way to do just that.

The basis of a Theory of Change is to state the ultimate aim and impact you want to achieve and then describe what would need to happen to reach that point. The main elements of the theory of change model are:

- stating a clear aim or ultimate **impact** you want to achieve

- mapping the **activities** that we should undertake to achieve that campaign aim

- mapping of how you will achieve your **outputs** and then the **outcomes** that work towards the ultimate aim
-
- understanding different ways of achieving the change you want

- build the evaluation model

- identify the assumptions on which the campaign was/will be built on

- map the external factors that could affect our effectiveness and we should take into account for develop mitigating strategies

Theory of Change (ToC)

Resources/ Inputs	▷	Activities	▷	Outputs	▷	Outcomes	▷	Impacts

Assumptions	External Factors

Evaluation
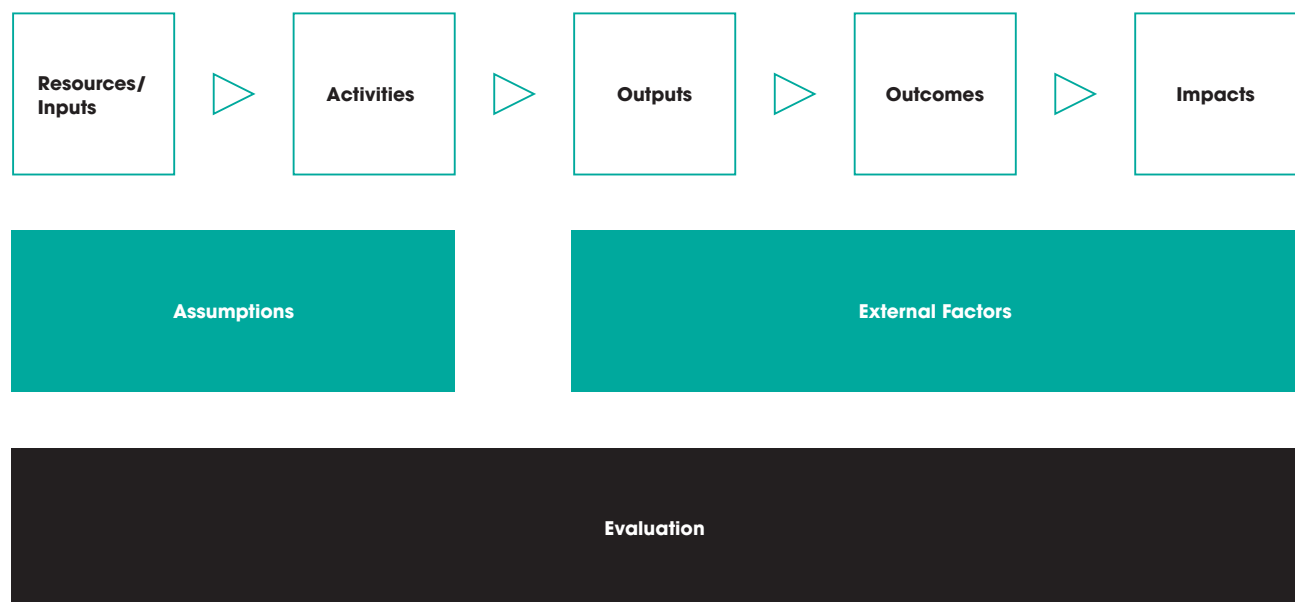
The ToC elements include:

1. Resources include the human, financial, organisational and community resources a program, project or a campaign has available to direct towards doing the work. Sometimes this component is referred to as Inputs.

2. Activities are what the programme, project or campaign, will do with the resources. Activities are the processes, tools, events, and actions that are an intentional part of the implementation process. These interventions are used to bring about the intended changes or results. Your Intended Results include all of the campaigns desired results (outputs, outcomes and impact).

3. Outputs are the direct products/results of programme, project or campaign activities and may include types, levels and targets of services to be delivered by the program.

4. Outcomes are the short-term or long-term changes relating to any given activity outputs.

5. Impact is the fundamental intended or unintended change resulting from the outcomes that occurs as a result of programme, project or campaign activities within a particular timescale.

6. Assumptions, the belief system that we use to define the strategy of our campaign.

7. External factors, the things that you do not directly control but can influence the real ability for your campaign to reach its goals.

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The use of a ToC strengths for planning are that it:

- Provides a common language and approach for planning and evaluation where everyone has the same framework as the starting point

- Builds the capacity of partners and project coordinators to think more strategically about their goals

- Makes implicit assumptions explicit and therefore easier to test and modify in the light of experience

- Builds from the actual strategies and activities that campaigners undertake but gives a clear framework to integrate thinking about these

- Keeps focus on the final goal to be achieved and clarity about steps along the way

- Provides a framework for developing different scenarios about how change might happen and how to plan for contingencies.

In respect of delivery its strengths are:

- It identifies the resources and milestones for a plan and allows projects to test the relationship between the planned different activities at the beginning of the process

- Allows for adjustments in the framework against the experience of testing these out during the campaign

- Makes clear and then "forces" projects to test, the relationship between activities, outputs and outcomes

In respect of Evaluation processes its strengths are:

- It encourages a prospective not just retrospective evaluation approach. The framework allows you to specify the prerequisites to change and the steps to achieving them, so you can build in the milestones and conditions needed

- It focuses on the contribution towards the achievement of the stages of the process, rather than worrying about overall attribution between agencies

- By using the actual activities and objectives drawn from policy and campaigns analysis and focusing on the activities that campaigners actually do, it allows you to move away from 'evaluation speak and onto the actual ground that campaigners occupy. This mirrors the process campaigns actually take, without imposing additional frameworks onto the process

- It makes explicit the underlying assumptions and relationships behind activities, allows these to be tested and related to final goals organisations are aiming to achieve

In fact, a Theory of Change clearly expresses the relationships between actions and hoped for results, and could also be described as a roadmap of the strategies and belief systems (e.g., assumptions, 'best practices', experiences) that make positive change in the lives of individuals and or community. A Theory of Change can be articulated as a visual diagram that depicts relationships between initiatives, strategies and intended outcomes and goals.

In the process of developing a ToC one should start by clearly defining the problem or issue in a very robust way and immediately after that is important to agree on shared assumptions in order to build a strong strategy. This definition of the "problem" is also relevant to pinpoint the audiences or target groups (primary and secondary) of your project or campaign.

After that we must got to the impact level and move from macro to micro level. From impacts to outcomes, then outputs, then activities and Inputs in the end. Finally we should reflect on the external factors that could hinder the success of the campaign. After all this information is organised and the causal relationships made we can go and develop our evaluation model.

2.2. Developing a baseline

A baseline, the initial data that will serve as your starting point, is a must-have for a good evaluation. During implementation of your communication campaign or project, one should be able to compare the baseline with the new data gathered over time to assess progress, make course corrections and measure success. When we already have a baseline, this is a good time to revisit it and determine whether you need to broaden it to include more data, as may be the case if you have refined your objective or audiences. You will need to research whether this additional data is available.

The ToC and the correct definition of the issue one wants to address and the communication strategy we want to use is central to develop a good baseline.

Here are some examples of the types of information used to determine baselines:

- Audience knowledge of and attitudes toward your organisation and/or issue

- Common misconceptions and misinformation about your issue

- Audience values that directly affect your issue

- An analysis of projects, programmes, issues or messages that could compete for your audience and media attention

- An analysis of how your issue has been presented or framed in traditional or social media

- A list of 'influentials who support and oppose your issue

For developing a good baseline we can use already available data on the problem or issue, audiences and target groups or previous interventions/campaigns efforts.

In our case the baseline came from the preliminary study, revision of literature and best practices analysed by the project's team complemented with the discussion among project partners about first hand experiences with the project's target group and social issue that Counter@ct aimed to tackle.
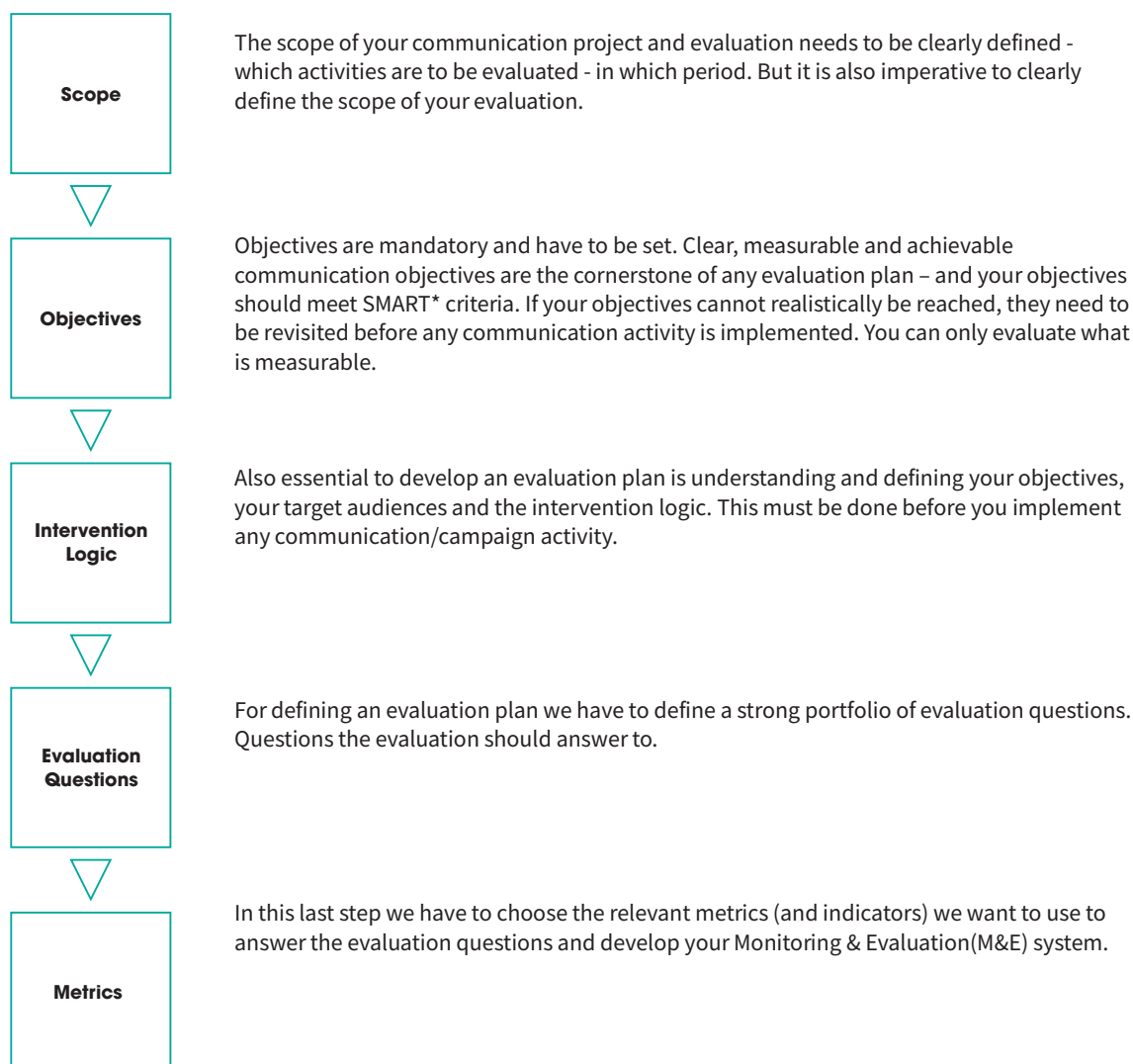
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2.3. Developing the evaluation plan

For effective evaluation of communication projects and/or campaigns, a basis for measurement is necessary. If one needs to measure change we have to at least have an assessment of our starting point.

If we engage in a large scale activity, an ex-ante evaluation or a preparatory study can help you identify these. In the case of Counter@ct the preparatory study was key to give us a clearer understanding of the reality in Portugal regarding the social issue we aimed to tackle and also the primary and secondary target groups perceptions and behaviours regarding this same problem.

In our own process in Counter@ct we used both the preliminary study and the developed ToC in the creation of the evaluation baseline process. Setting out the baseline involved for us and we could say that for everyone, the definition of the evaluation baseline process should follow the following steps:

Scope

The scope of your communication project and evaluation needs to be clearly defined - which activities are to be evaluated - in which period. But it is also imperative to clearly define the scope of your evaluation.

Objectives

Objectives are mandatory and have to be set. Clear, measurable and achievable communication objectives are the cornerstone of any evaluation plan – and your objectives should meet SMART* criteria. If your objectives cannot realistically be reached, they need to be revisited before any communication activity is implemented. You can only evaluate what is measurable.

Intervention Logic

Also essential to develop an evaluation plan is understanding and defining your objectives, your target audiences and the intervention logic. This must be done before you implement any communication/campaign activity.

Evaluation Questions

For defining an evaluation plan we have to define a strong portfolio of evaluation questions. Questions the evaluation should answer to.

Metrics

In this last step we have to choose the relevant metrics (and indicators) we want to use to answer the evaluation questions and develop your Monitoring & Evaluation(M&E) system.

Keep in mind that the evaluation and project/campaign objectives will help in guiding your choice of indicators & metrics as well as the correct understanding of the causality model that is a relevant component of the ToC.

*SMART: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Result-focused and Time-specific. Once you've come up with your objective, ask yourself, "Does this pass at least four of the five SMART criteria?" If not, it may be time to revise your objective.

It is important to stress that we should aim to as stronger participation as possible from relevant stakeholders in all these phases. Higher participation levels will lead to a stronger more meaningful evaluation.

Another important aspect for developing the evaluation plan is to make it access all the main communication project areas of intervention. In the case of Couter@ct we had the main activity, the online campaign in itself, but also the sessions with migrants and refugees and also at schools. It was important to make sure that we had evaluation questions focusing on all areas of the project and guarantee the relevant metrics to answer them.

It is important then to create this logical relationship that goes from the evaluation objectives, to the evaluation questions, metrics, indicators, data sources and the information gathering instruments.

Objective		Question		Metrics/I		Data		Data Collection
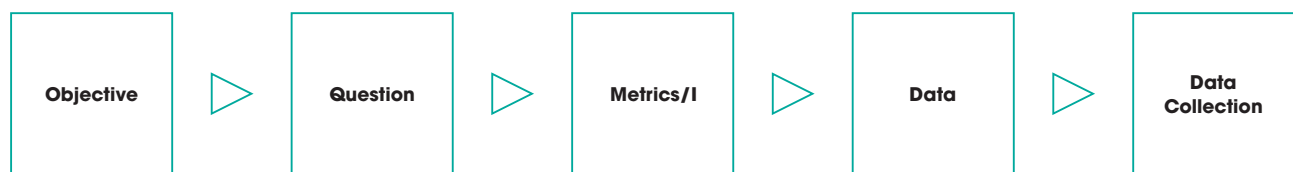
It can be useful to cluster the evaluation questions in relevant categories like "efficiency", "effectiveness" or "impact". This categories can be important to help evaluators develop a strong evaluation narrative when at last they have data and want to analyse it.

When we developed Counter@ct's Evaluation Plan we decided to organise it by analytical categories as we felt this could lead to a more robust change of narrative when we got the indicators to answer the questions.

A strong point for any evaluation is, as stated before, to get all the relevant stakeholders "onboard" and that's why the evaluation was an ever present matter in the partnership meetings and project activities and all options were validated by all the partners.

This strong partnership in the evaluation process created an effective commitment from all, not only with the evaluation but, more important, with the project as a whole.

Finally, it is important to stress the relevance of the evaluation team to be in close contact and work with the communication professionals involved and the communication agency responsible for the campaign.

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2.4. Choosing indicators_ going beyond the online metrics

Let us start by stating a couple of options in choosing indicators and data collection methods that we feel are good options and practices.

First off all one should aim for a mix-method approach in these evaluations to get relevant quantitative and qualitative data from a variety of sources. The different information sources is particularly relevant when we are talking about qualitative data. As we all know qualitative data refers to people or groups perceptions of reality and getting as many perspectives is important to avoid perception bias.

On the Counter@ct evaluation we used a triangulation strategy for qualitative data, gathering perceptions about specific changes from at least three (3) stakeholder groups.

Secondly, we aimed to have a variety of data sources from the beginning, we used online metrics and statistics collected with the online services used in the campaign but also we used interviews, individual and group, and other data gathering strategies to attain a rich mix of data.

Another thing we think is a good practice is to have a process of on-going data collection and to work closely with the communications team and other partners having short updates using evaluation briefings.

Another thing we thought useful was to have a pre-screening of the campaign with a "test audience" from our primary and secondary target groups. This was useful to get their perceptions of several topics and also to get their feedback on a number of items on the campaign videos. This was useful for both the evaluation process and the online campaign fine tuning.

In short, keep it simple – develop a small number of indicators to capture changes. Aim to gather a mix of evidence from internal and external sources. Be clear from the outset, clarify roles and responsibilities and make time for this in campaign planning. This can be built into existing structures such as team meetings and one-to-one meetings. It is more important to measure the impact or the effects of your activities rather than the effort put in, i.e. number of postcards sent, events held etc.

Attributing credit or trying to prove causal links between a campaign and its activities and social change can be complex, so instead of looking for proof of your success, it is important to aim to build evidence that could reasonably be used to make a connection. What this means is that we choose a "contribution claim" instead of an "attribution claim". We feel is almost always impossible to have a counterfactual analysis in this type of project and because of that we should avoid, in most cases, experimental designs and trying to attribute a specific weight to our intervention in a social change or impact.

Other specific problems in communication evaluation include: Which indicators of success can you measure? What is the best way to monitor these indicators, so you can adjust the campaign if necessary?

A final recommendation, once your campaign is complete, collect specific 'lessons learned 'from your data and experience that could improve the effectiveness of your next campaign and can be shared with others. Use this to promote your campaign and your campaigning skills. A learning environment is well worth investing in (it is also useful for external funding).

Keep it Simple

Communications M&E does not have to be complicated. Only seek to measure what can be measured, and be realistic about how much can be tracked given your resources and time.

▽

Do not just focus on online statistics

Think more broadly about M&E to include quality and usefulness, stakeholder perceptions and uptake and use of your outputs, even if you only pick a few indicators.

▽

Do not overclaim

Do not try to prove your campaign or project is responsible for all the change. Take into account context and other interventions as possible driving forces for change

2.5. Assessing the impact of Counter@ct

As we have said before we could have a contribution or an attribution approach to impact evaluation. In the first one, we collect evidence that is strong enough to sustain that a project or a campaign as contributed to a desired impact through its achieved outcomes, in the second we have to give a specific value to our project's "responsibility" on the impact we claim to have.

These two different approaches to impact assessment are based in different impact definitions and we feel that a contribution definition without the need to attribute a specific weight to our interventions. In Counter@ct we were very careful in the design of our impact-oriented M&E system in this regard and while there are many different definitions of 'impact 'we defined impact as per the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD):

"Positive and negative, primary and secondary long-term effects produced by a development intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended"

(OECD-DAC 2010)

This definition led us to our first problem: could we evaluate long-term effects? Was that an overclaim? Could we really evaluate impact?

The answers to these questions led us to focus on short-term outcomes and to a contribution approach to impact evaluation in which we aimed to use data to build a strong claim that Counter@ct contributed to a larger systemic goal of lowering or ending discrimination against refugees and migrants and build a positive perception of their role in Portuguese society.

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Mainly it is because of this option that we refer to our M&E system as "impact oriented". We knew it was impossible to make a long-term systemic impact evaluation and we wanted to remain in a methodological strong position.

We will stress again that Impact is distinct from "outputs" – which are the direct products resulting from the implementation of the project activities – and from "outcomes" – which are the intermediate-term changes in the target group(s) who have been engaged in the intervention and which precede, and are usually a pre- condition for, impact to occur.

There are particular challenges to assessing the long-term results:

- it is usually harder to gather evidence that they actually occurred;

- They are often not visible during the life of a short-term intervention; and

- They are more likely to be affected by other interventions and other factors.

In practice, a single intervention is rarely sufficient to produce the intended social impacts alone and there are often multiple alternative ways to achieve them. It is far more likely for there to be a situation of joint causal attribution or alternative causal paths.

Joint causal attribution is when the intervention produces the impacts in conjunction with other interventions (i.e., complementary or other ongoing interventions) or certain contextual factors (i.e., impacts will only be achieved if favourable conditions are present and/or unfavourable conditions are removed).

The alternative (or multiple) causal paths, are when a particular intervention can produce the impacts but they may also come about through other interventions (e.g., participants are able to access services through an alternative provider) and/or external factors. These situations are common and have important implications for how impact assessment is conducted and how the findings are used – especially in terms of scale-up of the intervention or potential replication elsewhere (Rogers 2014).

As said in the definition we've chosen, a project's impact has many dimensions to it:

- positive or negative – that is, beneficial or detrimental as judged by those affected by the intervention or other stakeholders

- primary or secondary – they may relate to the objectives of the intervention or may be side-effects or spill-over effects

- direct or indirect – there may be a direct causal link with the intervention activities or they may come about through cascaded activities

- long-term – they are dependent on other results being achieved first, and thus, take longer to be materialised or observed

- intended or unintended – they may be specifically targeted through the chosen activities or they may be additional

- foreseen or unforeseen – they may be predicted on your planning or not.

It was our methodological option to focus on the "positive and negative", "primary", "direct" and intended dimensions of the campaign/project impact. The choice was, as it always is, contextual. The focus of the

evaluation was shaped by stakeholder interests and intent, available resources (like time or budget) and also by the nature of the project's activities.

The main project activity was the communications campaign and that, as an evaluation subject, is a very targeted and defined activity that should be evaluated as such and to force a broader impact claim.

It was also necessary to achieve an understanding inside the project's partnership about other two major items: timing and calendar for evaluation and evaluation design choices.

There are always two important issues to decide in any evaluation and in this case, there was a consensus to have evaluation as on-going process during all the projects implementations was the best option and that, in line with the decisions about impact that we presented before the design should be a non-experimental one. So, to sum up, we opted for an on-going evaluation, using qualitative and quantitative data, focused on outcomes and in the creation of a contribution for impact narrative.

With the choices being made we felt that the on-going nature of the evaluation made it mandatory to use a strong monitoring of the campaign and of the other project activities. Because of that the M&E team worked very closely with the communications team, other partners and APAV's project team trying to guarantee that the project had a strong and relevant monitoring system.

Maybe it is important to say what Monitoring and Evaluation have in common but also the differences as some people mix it up a little.

Monitoring is the routine tracking and reporting of relevant information about an intervention. This information can be about the intervention's inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes and impacts but also to emerging issues or results, and also about the internal and external context in which the intervention operates.

Monitoring is and should be used primarily for internal management and accountability. Intervention managers and implementers can use monitoring information to assess whether the implementation of the intervention is on track with the plan and to identify and correct any deviances and challenges in a timely manner.

Usually, at least a subset of this data is often reported to senior management or funders (upward accountability), intervention beneficiaries (downward accountability) and/or peers or implementing partners (horizontal accountability).

Evaluation refers to discrete studies that aim to produce an overall evaluative judgement about the merit, worth or significance of an intervention, in addition to descriptions of the way things are and analysis of causal relationships. Evaluation findings are intended primarily to inform decisions about a specific intervention but also about future investments and planning.

Another important step when creating an M&E system for a communications campaign is to develop a robust and meaningful Call to Action (CtA). |With a strong CtA you want to provide your reader /viewer with some form of actionable task that could give us a metric related to our project outcomes or intended impact.

Some ideas about developing a strong CtA for a communications campaign:

- Use a strong command verbs to start your CtA

- Keep it simple (one and only one thing)

- Use words that provoke emotion or enthusiasm (you could use storytelling as a way to achieve this)

- Try using the first person

- Give your audience a reason why they should take the desired action

- Take Advantage of Fear of Missing Out - FOMO (when appropriate)

- Include strong visuals

- Plan for the media you're using and devices your target audience will use

And after developing your CtA you should ask yourself some key questions like: is my CtA clear? is my CtA feasible? is my CtA easy?

A good CtA will help you translate your objectives into change behaviour and perception change indicators and are a good strategy to get relevant metrics for outcomes and impact.

In short, by having a clear and validated shared understanding of the project logic and goals, defining the projects outputs, outcomes and impact(s) and agreeing on what success means for the project, choosing an impact definition and framework to support the M&E design phase and then validating with all the relevant stakeholders a compatible evaluation approach and a strong and relevant "Call to Action" (CtA) in the case of a communications campaign, we are able to develop a good "impact oriented M&E".

2.6. A summary of what we did regarding M&E in Counter@ct

If we wanted to summarise the core evaluation process and methodological options made, these would be the main points:

1. we created a shared understanding of the project strategy and goals using a Theory of Change

2. defined what impact was and what changes we aimed to evaluate

3. created an open and constant dialogue with the project partners and especially with the communications and project teams

4. developed an evaluation plan in line with the impact framework we've chosen

5. created a set of data collection tools, both online and offline, that granted us access to the relevant data to measure the process of implementation key points but, especially, the outcomes and outcomes to impacts causal connection

6. create an evaluation panel from both the primary and secondary target groups to access and react to the campaign in a before/after assessment strategy

7. collect and analyse in "real time" the data from the campaign guaranteeing that we got qualitative and quantitative indicators and metrics and go beyond online statistics

8. create evaluation briefings and a dashboard with relevant data to communicate internally and externally and have as short as possible feedbackloops

9. write a final evaluation report to get to major conclusions and point to relevant recommendations

Before we finish our report on the evaluation process, we feel it is important to share some of the lessons learned and that can be used by similar M&E systems.

- Validate all phases of the M&E process and products with key stakeholders. We mean you should put things like: evaluation questions, indicators and metrics, evaluation plan, relevant data and main conclusions up for discussion and validation

- Do not over-claim or try to hyper-simplify what is complex in nature. Avoid trying to access value or meaningful change based on a small set of what you can consider key performance indicators (KPIs)

- Create a strong and meaningful Call to Action for your campaign. One that can give you a metric to access you outcomes/impact(s)

- Do not try to force an attribution narrative if contribution is the only strong narrative you can make

- Draw conclusions based exclusively on the data you have collected in this evaluation process

- Use quantitative and qualitative indicators and/or metrics and do not focus only on what is "easy to measure"

- Make clear recommendations and explain why you are making them (always relating to your conclusions)

- Create engaging ways to present your findings to promote evaluation use and perceived added value

The use of communications as a tool to change behaviour, perception, knowledge, policy or practices is very enticing and is certainly a powerful strategy but one where the causal relationships are sometimes hard to make, even more if you are looking to measure long term impact or contribution to long term impact.

We think that the most important aspect of developing a strong impact oriented M&E system is to create a strong shared foundation. A strong foundation for an M&E system is one that uses good scientific and practitioner's knowledge, that creates, from the start a strong space for debate and to validate strategical, methodological and operational decisions and, finally, one that creates meaningful data that can be use in re-planning and fine-tuning of the project during the projects/campaigns implementation.

Chapter 3:

how can campaign managers deal with the impact of an online counter-narrative campaign?

Chapter 3

3.1. Defining a campaign management strategy

Considering the complexity of the conceptualization of the campaign and also the many risks that were foreseen both in literature and in the designing stage of the campaign, there was a need to build up a strategy to manage it. To materialise this strategy a written document was elaborated containing a detailed description of the campaigns strategy which was called Counter@ct Campaign Management Plan – This is my story (Annex I).

In its first chapter there is an introduction to the project's campaign (that is fully held online), its objectives, how to measure them, the channels of dissemination and the funnel of interactions that would be used for the dissemination of the campaign and that should lead to the campaign's website.

The campaign dissemination strategy consisted in posting short videos (teasers) that would be uploaded to YouTube APAV channel and disseminated through Instagram and Facebook APAV pages. These posts on social media platforms would contain links to the Campaign's webpage which would in turn contain a small text about the testimony and the complete video of each.

Different types of dissemination were planned organic dissemination that should be made by the people invited to give their testimonies, the partnership of the project and also the audience through reshares of the posts. These actions were not considered to be enough to reach the target audience, so it was also decided to pay Facebook and Instagram advertisements to hyper-target the dissemination and to better reach the projects' primary target group.

Also, a chronogram was set up in order to plan the dissemination that would be made story by story, c allowing the ads to reach the target audience and to get as most interactions as possible. Considering the languages, the paid ads would disseminate videos subtitled in different languages to different target groups considering the different languages they have set up in their social media platform profiles.

The concept of the campaign and all its justification were also described in this document leading the reader to understand the rational and also the many risks underlying it. Many risks both online and offline were considered, bearing in mind the many backfire effects described in the literature and in the experience of other projects. Considering all those risks and the strategies to avoid and/or respond to them, APAV updated its general procedures for social media management, including specific procedures for the project's campaign management.

These detailed schemes were used to establish the responsible units and the expected action for each kind of interaction to the content of our campaign. Also, many kinds of interactions were described and a scheme to categorize them was presented in order to help the first line responders to acknowledge which would be the best response to each of them.

All these schemes resulted in a diagram describing the kind of interaction, the expected APAV action and the person responsible for these actions inside the organisation - also considering the partnership and the possibility of referring cases to the Portuguese Criminal Police and the Portuguese Security Intelligence Service. For this purpose, an exercise of anticipation of many possible problems was made and it resulted in a detailed diagram synthetizing all possible scenarios.

Also, and due to previous experiences at APAV, there was the possibility of an eventual cyberattack that could jeopardize the objectives of the campaign. So, the documents also contained a detailed procedure on what to do in case of cyberattacks, considering how to minimize its effects and specially the responsible unites to take action in case it happened.

3.2. Preparing for the impact of negative and antagonistic contents

From all the risks taken into consideration, hate speech was certainly the one that preoccupied us the most. The number of hateful comments that appear daily on social media and the sensitivity of the topic that the project was handling were indicators of the high probability of the existence of negative and/or antagonistic comments advocating for the dehumanization of migrants and refugees. So, there would be a need to respond to it and to protect the people giving their testimonies to the project.

Some exercises were made in order to anticipate negative and antagonistic interactions that could appear on social media in response to our posts. Based on the available literature, other projects' experiences and APAV experience in managing its own social media, the project's team got prepared to respond to them. The strategy passed through categorizing interactions to define whether it was adequate to simply ignore, remove or to engage in conversation with them, combining different techniques in some cases.

Categorizing comments is not an easy task. Some of them are just unintelligible or are difficult to categorize and ascertain the appropriate action to take. At least in theory it was possible to categorize them as supportive, constructive, negative or antagonistic. There is no need to supportive and constructive comments but negative and antagonistic should be answered.

For this purpose, a continuous monitoring of social media was needed and an integrated approach involving the different actors was planned. As it is possible to learn from Counter@ct Campaign Management Plan – This is my story (Annex I) some of the interactions, especially mainly comments on social media platforms, could fall under the Portuguese criminal law especially considering hate speech (Article 240.º of the Penal Code) and incitement to terrorism (Article 4.º of the Law on Combatting Terrorism). In all of the cases pre-written answers were elaborated in order to serve as guidance and to optimize the whole process.

A referral mechanism was stablished with the institutional partners but also a procedure to safeguard the evidence of the criminal offense and a procedure to remove the content. In general terms, in these cases the user would be warned by private messaging that his/her comment was considered to be hate speech or incitement to terrorism and that it would be removed. To safeguard the evidence of the occurrence of the crime the comment was just hidden, and a print screen was made and sent to the competent authorities according to the formal proceedings of each of them. The referral mechanism and the authorities involved will be detailed in Chapter 5.

Although, even if many of the comments could not be considered hate speech, incitement to terrorism or any other crime, they were simply negative and reinforced the narratives that the Project aimed to counter. In this sense, it was necessary to answer them with facts that could reinforce the alternative positive narrative the campaign aimed to disseminate. In any case it was not the idea to be an active part of an endless discussion - like it is common among social media users -but just to correct misconceptions.

In these cases, the answers would be given as a public comment in order to show to passive spectators another

point of view, reinforcing the message of the project's campaign and give facts that contradicted the perceptions of some members of the audience that were antagonizing it. In any of the cases, in practice it was not easy to answer to the vast majority of the comments as they were simply hateful and not falling under the criminal law as an opinion that did not rely on any concrete fact that could be corrected. It was also observed that many of the profiles commenting were fake or simply did not have any relevant information.
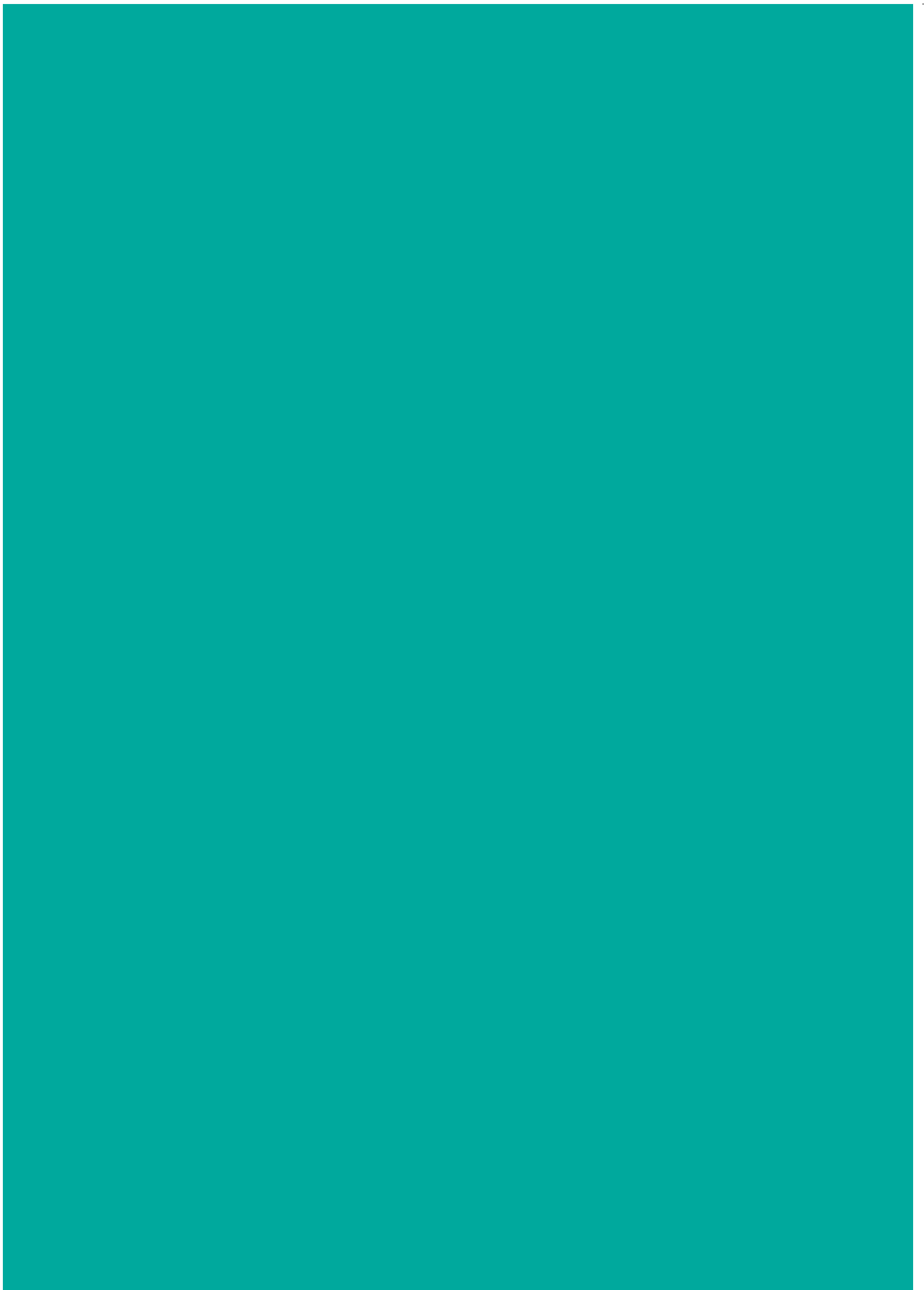
In this scenario and due to the need of not allowing APAV social media to become a meeting point for all kinds of trolls and malicious profiles, many of the comments were just hidden and referred. In some cases, after being warned that the content of the comment could be considered hate speech, they were removed by the author but in most of the cases the users just kept posting hateful comments or even answering back APAV messages trying to ridicule the intent of raising awareness or just denying that those comments could be considered hate speech. Also, due to external events (i.e. the 2020 terrorist attacks in Nice and the murder of an Ukrainian citizen by the hands of the Portuguese Foreigners and Boarders Service employees) that were related to the topics of terrorism, refugees and/or immigration, there were many comments that were not directly related to the campaign. Finally, in practice it was seen that the pre-written answers were more useful to inspire the campaign manager to elaborate a case by case answer according to the nuances of each comment.

Chapter 4:

how to develop awareness raising and training sessions

4.1. Going offline and raising the awareness of the target audience for the risks of radicalisation

In complement of the positive alternative narrative online campaign, it was also planned to give offline awareness raising sessions targeting the same audience with the same objectives (Annex II). Initially sessions were planned to approach directly the topic but as previously mentioned in Chapter 1, but this approach was not recommended by Renovar a Mouraria and JRS Portugal (the partner organisations working directly with migrants and refugees). Regarding in person sessions, it seemed that the invitation to attend an awareness raising session on radicalisation caused discomfort to the participants or even made them feel stigmatised due to religious beliefs, place of origin or ethnicity.

To build up the structure of the awareness raising sessions the strategy for the conceptualization of the online campaign was adapted. Groups of migrants and refugees would be invited to see one of the campaign videos and afterwards a brief discussion about the video would take place. Questions were elaborated to dynamize the session having in mind the many vulnerability factors that were previously identified in the desk research and interviews.

The previous interviews made during the desk research phase, during the recording of the testimonials and also during the workshop with a few members of the target group about the first video, were quite useful to get to know the target audience better and to understand their opinions on the subject. This allowed to adapt the questions in order to facilitate their discourse and to avoid a feeling of stigmatisation.

Due to the sensitivity of the subject, we preferred small groups so participants would feel more comfortable to speak up. Besides that, participants should ideally speak the same language in order to avoid information loss. Whenever necessary an interpreter was invited to join the session to assure that the participants fully comprehended it. Also, whenever it was possible, groups would be homogenic considering the legal status (migrants or refugees), nationality, cultural background, gender, religion, etc.

In some cases, it was also useful to invite for the session professionals directly working with them. In other cases, not. The differences are not easily readable, but apparently it has to do with the professional's relationship with the beneficiaries of their organisations. In some cases, their presence was a facilitator and in some other cases people felt discouraged to speak up in their presence.

An ice braking activity was planned: to serve traditional Portuguese food and to speak about it. Afterwards, one of the videos of the campaign would be shown. The video was chosen due to the potential identification of the people on the group with the person giving the testimony. If they spoke the same language even better. The main focus was to discuss their experiences as migrants and/or refugees and to get to know them better.

There were two immediate objectives in these sessions. The first one was to identify possible warning signs due to disruptive behaviour and/or lack of participation. The second immediate objective was to build a trust relationship and compel them to reflect about their own story, showing positive examples of people they could identify with and who coped with very difficult situations, leaving a final positive message.

Chapter 4

Although the structure of the awareness raising session proved to accomplish its objectives, it is important to mention that the facilitator of the awareness raising session has to be very flexible due to different kinds of groups with different backgrounds. Special attention must be given when giving these sessions to children as, in many cases, the testimony videos are not attractive enough to them. Even if these sessions were not planned to be given to children, the planning could be adapted to briefly discuss empathy towards different people and to introduce different ways to achieve their aims without hurting others.

4.2. Training for campaign managers on developing and managing online counter-narratives

Considering the experience gathered in conceptualizing, planning and preparing the online campaign it was possible to structure a training course focused on disseminating the knowledge acquired among campaign managers and general public interested in learning more on how to develop a positive alternative narrative online campaign (Annex III).

The basic structure consisted in just two modules: the first one was the radicalisation process vulnerability factors and corresponding protective factors; second module, it was explained the specificities of a counter narrative campaign and, in the project's more specific case, a positive alternative narrative one, its risks and how to prepare for its impact.

The main objectives of the training course were to give competences to professionals working in communication and social sector to develop a counter narrative campaign using GAMMMA+ model and to be aware of the risks underlying them, especially the negative impact of hate speech. Once it was understood the risk of the campaign, there was a need to learn how to handle it.

Considering the many concepts approached – based on the literature review and the good practices collected during the desk research – and also the practical experience in managing the project's campaign, the training course focused very practical aspects. Activities consisted in exercises to learn key concepts, and practical cases. The final evaluation was also a real case and participants were invited to answer antagonistic comments.

Even those professionals that worked previously with awareness raising campaigns and in the social sector were not familiar with many of the concepts explained. Also, when there was a need of applying these concepts in concrete cases many grey areas have shown up. Also, there were some participants who questioned the scientific bases of some concepts as they are not widely discussed and which unknown by them.

It is important to have a strong literature review and to show that the knowledge shared might be used for many proposes. In this sense participants were invited in one of the exercises to elaborate a structure of their own counter narrative campaign, aiming to deconstruct any narrative they wanted to. This approach was particularly enriching as participants got deeper in the subject and started to find out themselves the difficulties in developing this kind of campaign.

Finally, the training course also served as an awareness raising session for campaign managers considering the power of propaganda itself and promoting more literacy on the subject. It is important to remark that focusing too much on a specific cause during the training course might alienate some participants that have themselves strong opinions on the subject although it also helps to catch the attention of those who are sympathetic to it. If the idea is to provide useful tools, a more neutral approach is recommended.

Chapter 5:

how to improve multi-stakeholder cooperation to prevent and combat online radicalisation

5.1. Who to involve in the prevention and combat to online radicalisation

To effectively prevent and combat online radicalisation a multi-stakeholder approach is essential. The partnership of Counter@ct project involved many key-actors such as the Portuguese criminal police, the Portuguese Security Intelligence Service, organisations supporting migrants and refugees (Renovar a Mouraria and JRS Portugal), private companies (Digital Xperience and Logframe) and victim support organisations (APAV, Victim Support Europe and Fundazioa Fernando Buesa Blanco).

This multidisciplinary work revealed to be valuable as different approaches, practical experiences and theoretical knowledges added to the project's products a deep and innovative perspective on online radicalisation. For this purpose, every opinion counts and there was a need on conciliating many different points of view to go further. Taking in consideration different opinions led to a more complete research that helped to build up the foundations of the project and to elaborate all its products. It is not enough, though.

Due to the complexity of the radicalisation phenomenon and the many levels it operates, an effective prevention and combat might just be effective with the involvement of all the key-actors and the strengthening of synergies that establish a compromise in a continuous work as to preventing radicalisation leads to the prevention on violent extremist and the occurrence of victimisation incidents against people, selected groups and/or mass violence incidents.

There are many stakeholders that must be involved in this process in order to prevent the phenomenon in a primary, secondary and tertiary way, so as to say prior of the individual's radicalisation process, when it is occurring or even in the deradicalization of individuals. It is also well known that youngsters are an especially vulnerable group to the phenomena of radicalisation and violent extremism due to their specific development stage and the fact that they are living in a digital world. Even if radicalisation does not occur through digital platforms, it has been frequently observed that it is where youngsters have their first contact with radical propaganda, initiating a process that is materialized out of it.

In this sense, the prevention of the phenomena must involve civil society, in particular the ones working directly with more vulnerable individuals, groups and/or communities; entities and authorities in the area of youth and education, including school workers, associations of youngsters or young workers; health authorities and services; families, communities and social protection services; local authorities, in a tight cooperation with civil society and national authorities, reinsertion and prison services; local national and cross- border national law enforcement agencies; victim support organisations and victims of terrorism and violent extremism.

The importance of this cooperation was widely shown on Counter@ct project, being necessary to go beyond the partnership itself and to involve many different organisations and professionals in order to make awareness raising sessions viable and to disseminate the online campaign to a wider audience. During the project's seminar, that reunited many experts from different fields working in the prevention of the phenomena, cooperation and synergies were the topic that was discussed the most.

Chapter 5

5.2. Key synergies: how to cooperate and refer

There is a strong need to share knowledge in the field of radicalisation. Besides the need of sharing good practices and a strategy on preventing the phenomenon on its different levels is essential an integrated approach which bears in mind the roles the many stakeholders have to play. A concerted strategy on cooperation must approach the phenomena in all its complexity, both in a bottom-top and a top-down perspective, starting with individual interventions groups or communities, and never forgetting narratives and strategic communication.

This strategy must not be designed regardless the involvement and the opinion of the many key-actors that, due to their proximity with more vulnerable individuals, groups or communities, are essential in the early identification of risk factors and who start prevention efforts focusing on protective factors

Also, this strategy cannot disregard the opinion of communication specialists, in the many channels and platforms as they are essential not only in the construction of prevention initiatives focused on narratives targeting some specific audiences, but also in wider efforts in local and/or national level.

Even if the campaign was just online, it is not possible to just go offline. Training events and wider debates such as conferences are essential so the knowledge can be shared, concerted and put in practice by the different key-actors so to promote the planning and the alignment of their efforts, that must be joint, in preventing and combatting radicalisation and violent extremism.

Part 2 of the Practical Guide - Preventing and Combating Online Radicalisation and Extremism outlines in detail the Campaign Management Plan, based on the extensive theoretical framework underlying the development of alternative narrative campaigns targeting vulnerable audiences. The Campaign Management Plan also has an eminently innovative character, it provides not only a set of procedures to be initiated in the event of criminal offences or cyber-attacks on APAV's critical structures, but also a guide of pre-prepared responses to various types of interactions that were anticipated with a campaign such as #thisismystory.

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Annex 1

Awareness Raising Sessions targeted to young migrants and refugees
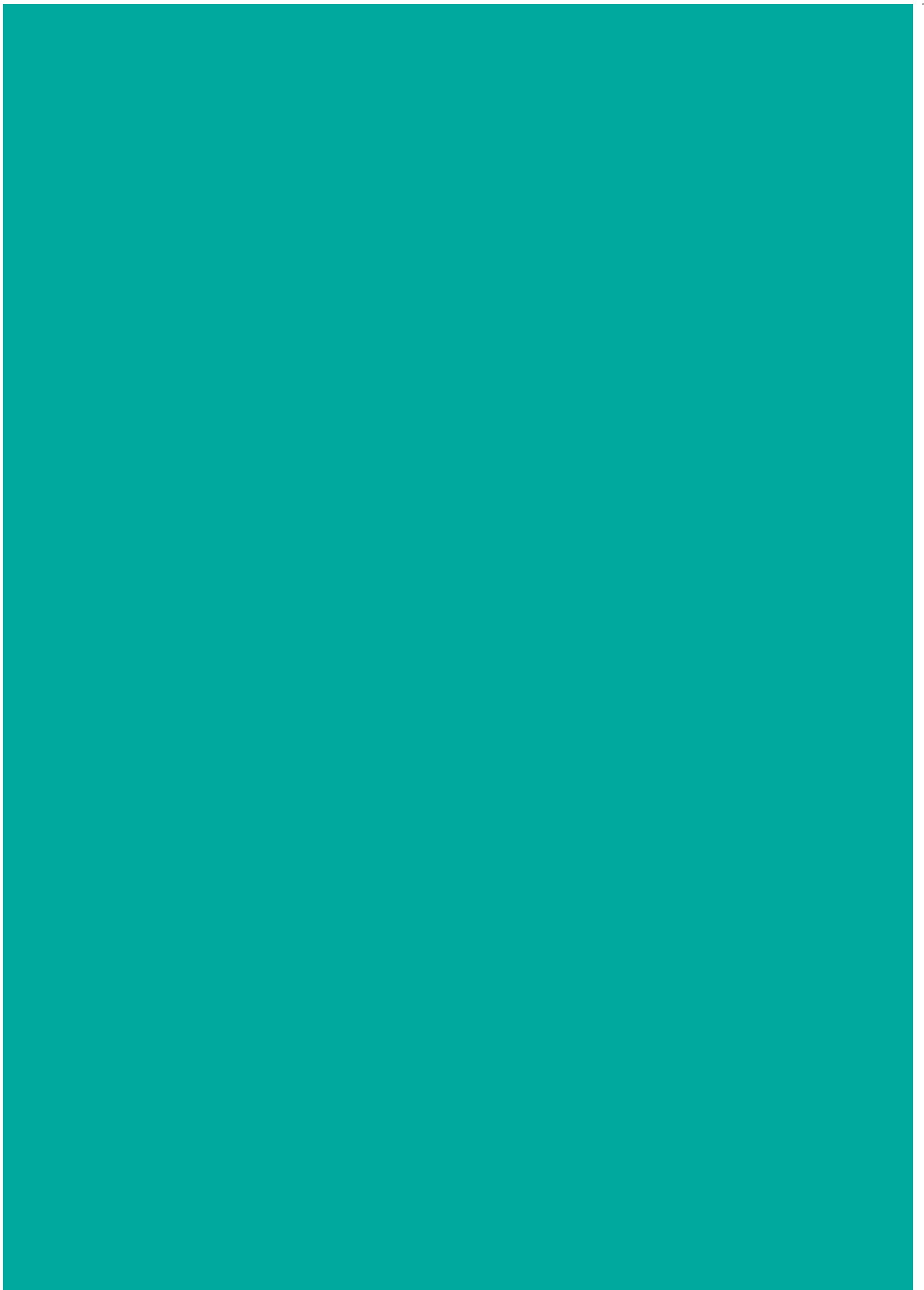
Share your story!

Awareness Raising Sessions targeted to young migrants and refugees

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Share your story!

activity: implementing **14 awareness raising sessions per partner country** (1,5 hours and approximately 6 participants each) targeting young migrants and refugees

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Share your story!

Session plan

Step 0 | Ice-breaking activity
Step 1 | Testimony video
Step 2 | Identification
Step 3 | Sharing your story
Step 4 | Positive examples

Share your story!

step by step: 1 | Testimony video

Share your story!

step by step: 2 | Identification

• How does the group identify with the story?

• Are their life stories similar or different to the one told in the testemony ?

• What do they have to say about this similarities and differences?

Share your story!

step by step: 3 | Share your story

relational — personal — social identity — psychological — external

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Share your story!

step by step: 3 | Share your story

relational

• So, is there a specific reason why you came here? How was the trip?
• Do you have your family here? What about friends? If no, how did you cope with their absence?
• Do you remember the first people you've met here? How do you met them? Do you still talk to them?
• Do you keep in touch with your friends from your homeland or that are living in another countries?

Share your story!

step by step: 3 | Share your story

personal

• Do you feel homesick? What's the thing you miss the most? (it can be a person, a place, an everyday habit, etc.)
• Thinking about the first months here in Portugal and now, what did change?
• There are many people that feel lost, alone and helpless in this process. Did you feel something like that? How did you cope with that?
• Are you faithful? How do you live your faith? Did your

Annex 1

Share your story!

step by step: 3 | Share your story

social identity

- Do you feel connected with the ones around you?
- Would you say you belong to Portugal? What did you keep from who you are and what did change in you?
- Do you ever feel stigmatised due to you beliefs or place of origin? How was it ?How does that situation made you feel? What did you think about it? It is normal to feel angry when it happens… Did you feel it? How did you cope with this?

Share your story!

step by step: 3 | Share your story

psychological

- That are many people that feel angry and/or sad after some bad experience but there are also people that feel like this constantly… Do you feel like this?
- Do you consider you changed since you left your homeland?
- Did you lived difficult moments in this period? What was the toughest moment and the happiest moment? What about now?

Share your story!

step by step: 3 | Share your story

external

- Do you believe Portugal is a positive environment for migrants and refugees?
- Do you think the Government understands migrants needs? Explain.
- How do you deal with diversity? (e.g. people with different ideas, origins, sexualities, religions or political views)

Share your story!

step by step: 4 | Positive examples

How did you overcome difficulties in your integration process?

Is there any positive example you may refer to?

Annex 2

Training course for counter-narrative campaing managers

Prevenção da Radicalização

Curso de formação em contra-narrativa
de gestores de campanha

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Prevention
of
Radicalisation

step by step

Module 1 | Describing the problem
Module 2 | Between myths and facts
Module 3 | Building up a strategy
Module 4 | Backfire effect

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Prevention
of
Radicalisation

Describing the problem

society | community | relationships | individual

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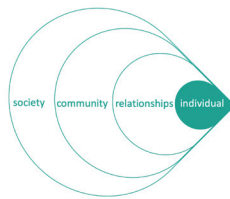
Prevention
of
Radicalisation

Describing the problem

Academics may disagree on the particular vulnerability factors that contribute to a conducive environment for radicalisation, but the ones that appear time and again in relevant literature are the following seven factors, when present in a given target audience:

- identity issues;
- personal crises;
- history of criminality;
- exposure to extremism;
- grievances;
- unmet aspirations;
- and system failure.

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Prevention
of
Radicalisation

Describing the problem

As is reflected in the academic literature, vulnerability, like other aspects, has particular local dimensions and reflections. There could be local conditions such as:

- poor access to services;
- low attainment in education;
- a significant wealth disparity;
- a lack of community cohesion between migrant groups and indigenous populations;
- a recent history of violence in the local area;
- established narratives about the local area;
- and local grievances relating to any of these conditions.

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Prevention
of
Radicalisation

Describing the problem

PORTUGAL: Agencies and officials in Portugal allocated free housing for 18 months to refugees. However, many respondents **said basic conditions were often lacking**, including **electricity and water supply**, and housing was often **located in areas with poor transport links and far away from the places to work**. There are also **problems with social integration and security** in areas where migrants and refugees are housed. After 18 months, refugees have to find another house and cover all costs themselves, which is extremely challenging, particularly as refugees are faced with considerable hurdles to secure employment and social integration.

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Prevention
of
Radicalisation

Describing the problem

SPAIN: In SPAIN (Barcelona), all group participants had only short-term contracts in low-skilled and low-salary sectors (e.g., as cleaning staff in hotels), and that sector was becoming more competitive. One participant said: "In cleaning jobs, there are always Dominicans. Immigrants always do that kind of work." Participants noted the importance of Catalan language skills to find a job, but that this was no guarantee of better working conditions. In general, participants did not feel content with their jobs, but said they needed a job to get documentation.

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Prevention
of
Radicalisation

Describing the problem

➡ the radicalisation of "European fighters' is a complex and dynamic phenomenon that is based on a series of global, sociological and political factors;

➡ it does not correspond to one single profile, and affects men, women, and particularly young European citizens of all social origins, who share the common trait of feeling at odds with society;

➡ causes of radicalisation may equally be socio-economic, ideological, personal or psychological, and, for that reason, it has to be understood in the light of the background of each individual concerned

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Annex 2

Describing the problem

Prevention of Radicalisation
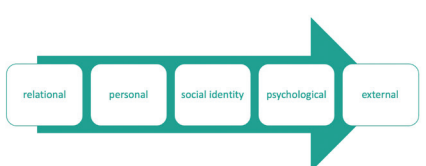
- terrorism cannot and should not be associated with any specific religion, nationality or civilisation;
- adolescents are a particularly vulnerable group, as they are at a difficult stage in their lives when they are developing their value system and seeking meaning, and are at the same time highly impressionable and easily manipulated;
- groups as well as individuals can be radicalised, and the development of response to individual and to group radicalisation can be different.

Describing the problem

Prevention of Radicalisation

Vulnerability factors

relational | personal | social identity | psychological | external

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Describing the problem

Prevention of Radicalisation

Vulnerability factors

relational
- Family disaffiliation
- Network of contacts in radical circles
- Distancing from circle of friends

Describing the problem

Prevention of Radicalisation

Vulnerability factors

personal
- Troubled adolescence or difficult transition to adulthood
- Difficult life events (death of a loved one, job loss, etc.)
- Existential or spiritual crisis

Describing the problem

Prevention of Radicalisation

Vulnerability factors

social identity
- Sustained or self-imposed isolation
- Identity disorder
- Sense of being stigmatised due to one's beliefs or origin

Describing the problem

Prevention of Radicalisation

Vulnerability factors

psychological
- Psychological frailty or disorders
- Psychological rigidity
- Episodes of psychological distress

Describing the problem

Prevention of Radicalisation

Vulnerability factors

external
- Polarised and polarising societal debates
- Government positioning on poorly understood national and international issues
- Highly sensionalised public and media discourse
- Extremist discourse and propaganda that is readily accessible

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Describing the problem

Prevention of Radicalisation

Protective factors

relational | personal | social identity | psychological | external

Prevention of Radicalisation

Describing the problem

Protective factors

relational
- Belonging to a non-violent social network (physical or virtual)
- Stable relational environment
- Quality relationships with a positive role model
- Strong family connection

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Prevention of Radicalisation

Describing the problem

Protective factors

Personal
- Stable family situation
- Support, guidance and listening during life events
- Positive educational and career prospects

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Prevention of Radicalisation

Describing the problem

Protective factors

social identity
- Stable identity
- Strong sense of social integration and community acceptance
- Strong social bounds (real or perceived)

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Prevention of Radicalisation

Describing the problem

Protective factors

psychological
- Critical thinking and cognitive moderation
- Emotional and mental resilience against attempted indoctrination by individuals outside their social circle
- Strong social bounds (real or perceived)

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Prevention of Radicalisation

Describing the problem

Protective factors
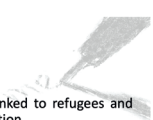
Building up a strategy

external
- Presence of counter-extremist discourse in general society
- Open social debates advocating tolerance, respect and integration
- Reinforcement of the principles of shared community
- Collective resilience against hateful ideologies and hate speech

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Why storytelling?

- Telling people's stories is a way of debunking myths linked to refugees and migrants which therefore contributes do reduce polarisation
- Showing positive examples of integration counters narratives based on the idea that refugees and migrants do not fit in Western societies
- Showing real stories contributes to reduces unreal expectations migrants and refugees commonly have considering the countries they are immigrating to
- These narratives help the audience to re-signify their stories in a positive way trough a process of identification

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Topics for debate

Which do you think are the most common myths related with migrants and refugees in our society?

- Refugees are in fact 'economic migrants'
- Migrants are 'stealing' Portuguese people jobs
- Immigration contributes to the rise of criminality
- People with Muslim background does not fit in western societies due to a clash of values

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Topics for debate

From the perspective of a migrant or refugee, which are the most common myths regarding living in Portugal?

- The "Eldorado dream"
- Good and free public services
- Very progressive society
- Safe country
- Dynamic economy
- Plenty of jobs and good salaries

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Slide 1

Prevention of Radicalisation

building a strategy

M & E

- Engagement is always good in terms of metrics but not every engagement goes along with your goal
- In case the impact seems to be more negative than positive, you should reinforce your message and readapt your strategy
- Answering negative/antagonistic interaction is a good way of reinforcing your message

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Slide 2

Prevention of Radicalisation

building a strategy

Excercise 2

- Considering the GAMMMA+ model build up a campaign strategy;
- Split up in pairs and present a list in bullet points;
- Use your creativity and try to link this exercise to some real situation you have already faced;
- You have 30 minutes to draft it.

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Slide 3

Prevention of Radicalisation

building a strategy

Knowing how to classify people's comments on campaign content can help campaigners choose which type of response is required. A useful method is to categorize comments into four types:

supportive   constructive

negative   antagonistic

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Slide 4

Prevention of Radicalisation

building a strategy

Category of interactions

CATEGORY OF COMMENT				
SUPPORTIVE	NEGATIVE	CONSTRUCTIVE	ANTAGONISTIC	ENGAGEMENT
X	o	o	o	Like or Ignore
X	o	X	o	Positive
o	X	X	o	Informative
o	o	X	o	Positive and informative
o	o	X	X	Forcefully Informative
o	X	o	X	
o	o	o	X	Ignore, Hide or Delete

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Slide 5

Prevention of Radicalisation

building a strategy

When disseminating a campaing it is natural to face comments, shares or even autonomous posts that aim to polarise the discussion around the subject ou even that clearly contains a radical and/or extremist message such as:

R I S K

- Hate speech
- Incitement to violence or discrimination
- Reinforcement of hatred toward the most vulnerable groups and also against the promoters of the campaign

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Slide 6

Prevention of Radicalisation

building a strategy

Avoiding risks trough an informated strategy

Very important to get to know:

- The social and political context involving the target group
- General data over criminality against the target groups, specially hate speech and hate crime
- The general public opinion - specially key influencers in general media and social media

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Slide 7

Prevention of Radicalisation

building a strategy

HELPFUL TIPS

- It is also very important to go beyond oficial data and and try to contact directly the target groups to understand their opinions
- If possible also involve them in building up the campaign
- Collect their perceptions before and after the dissemination of the campaign to measure its impact

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Slide 8

Prevention of Radicalisation

Backfire effect

Unless great care is taken, any effort to debunk misinformation can inadvertently reinforce the very myths one seeks to correct

To avoid "backfire effects", an effective debunking requires three major elements:
- the refutation must focus on core facts rather than the myth to avoid the misinformation becoming more familiar
- any mention of a myth should be preceded by explicit warnings to notify the reader that the upcoming information is false
- the refutation should include an alternative explanation that accounts for important qualities in the original misinformation

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Annex 2

Prevention of Radicalisation

the familiarity of the backfire effect

People tend to be more attached to ideas that were previously validated than to new information

- The best way to deal with this backfire effect is not mentioning the "myth" itself

- However, as sometimes not mentioning the myth is not a practical option it is important to emphasize the facts when refuting

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Prevention of Radicalisation

the overkill of the backfire effect

A simple myth is more cognitively attractive than an over-complicated correction

- Simple language
- Short sentences
- Subheadings and paragraphs
- Avoid dramatic language and derogatory comments that alienate people
- Stick to the facts

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Prevention of Radicalisation

the worldview backfire effect

For those who are strongly fixed in their views, being confronted with counter-arguments can cause their views to be strengthened

Messages can be presented in ways that reduce the usual psychological resistance

Confirmation Bias: people selectively seek out information that bolsters their view
Disconfirmation Bias: the flipside of Confirmation Bias

- Self-affirmation
- "Framing" it in a way that is less threatening to a person's worldview

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Prevention of Radicalisation

filling the gap with na alternative explanation

When you debunk a myth, you create a gap in the person's mind. To be effective, your debunking must fill that gap

Expose techniques used to misinform

Provide an alternative causal explanation for why the myth is wrong

- cherry picking
- conspiracy theories
- fake experts
- etc.

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Prevention of Radicalisation

response strategies

To accompany the categorization of comments, it can be useful to produce a set of pre-written responses for questions about the campaign or challenges to its message

- According to the specific context and content of the comment, it can either be deleted, denounced, ignored or responded to

- The main objective is to provide the framework conditions for an open and respectful dialogue

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Prevention of Radicalisation

response strategies

(1.) Ignoring: Simply ignoring antagonistic comments can cause great damage in the long run, as it fuels hatred towards the target audience

(2.) Deleting or blocking: Deleting certain comments or blocking its author is one of the most effective ways to combat hate speech. A potential risk of the collective exclusion of certain opinions or users from mainstream platforms is, the emergence of isolated networks such as "Gab", which promise "freedom of expression" and serve as a catchment basin for radical ideas

(3.) Counter speech: Counter speech has been described as the most effective remedy in combatting online hate, as it fosters dialogue, safeguards the right to freedom of expression and promotes a culture of mutual respect

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Prevention of Radicalisation

response strategies

Answering antagonistic comments

Counter speech is an important measure to fight hate speech online, but it must be exercised following some principles

- The statement must refer to the content of the comment not to the author
- If the comment you are responding to is based on false facts, refer to reliable sources in order to support your argument
- When stating your point of view put your emotions aside and try neither to humiliate nor insult the other
- Remember that some messages are written with the aim to provoke. Put your emotions aside and try to stay calm and objective

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Prevention of Radicalisation

response strategies

Presenting facts to correct misstatements or misperceptions

- Numerous studies have tested the strategy of correcting misperceptions with facts. Unfortunately, it has not been proven to be very successful, as the speaker addressed often developed a defensive attitude.

- This has been described as a "backfiring effect", due to the fact, that humans naturally strive for consistency and seek to maintain their worldview. The goal of this strategy is not to convince the original speaker, but to reach the passive bystanders.

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Prevention of Radicalisation

response strategies

Pointing out hypocrisy or contradictions

- Similar to the first strategy the spokesman is pointed out to contradictions or hypocrisies.
- While it might again lead to a defensive attitude, it also gives the individual the opportunity to justify himself, reflect and avoid similar behavior in the future.
- According to the dissonance theory of attitude change individuals are more likely to change their attitudes if they have conflicting beliefs.

Prevention of Radicalisation

response strategies

Warning of offline or online consequences

- Warning the authors of hateful posts about offline consequences, has been proven successful, as it mostly resulted in them deleting the post.
- Reason for this might be, that people tend to forget that laws also apply in virtual spaces. Behaving as if they "live in an make believe dimension, separate and apart from the demands and responsibilities of the real world".

Prevention of Radicalisation

response strategies

Affiliation

- Based on characteristics like gender, skin color, religion or nationality each individual automatically forms part of various social groups.
- Depending on the context the focus lies on a different identity.
- Social experiments show that common identities suggest trust and safety. Because in-group members are perceived as more trustworthy and honest, we tend to be more open towards their opinions.

Prevention of Radicalisation

response strategies

Denouncing hateful or dangerous speech

- Another strategy is to name hate speech as such and raise awareness of what hate speech can do.
- When doing so it important to denounce the content of the hateful comment and not its author

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Prevention of Radicalisation

response strategies

Humor and sarcasm

- Another strategy is to name hate speech as such and raise awareness of what hate speech can do.
- When doing so it important to denounce the content of the hateful comment and not its author

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Prevention of Radicalisation

response strategies

Tone

- The tone of social media posts occurs along a wide tonal and emotional range from angry and vicious to empathic.
- Different tones have different effects and for example responding to a hateful content with empathy can lead to de-escalation of the situation or even an apology from the original speaker.

Topics for discussion

- Thinking about the different myths we have discussed which antagonistic comments you believe are more likely to appear as a response to our campaign?
- Considering the strategies we have discussed, which are the best ways to respond to it?

Topics for discussion