



Civic education as preventive measure and inclusionary practice

D10.2 Synthesis Report

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Executive Summary

This report synthesizes findings from country analyses of civic education programs as deradicalization tools in Germany, Italy, France, Turkey, and Bosnia-Herzegovina. The D.Rad project conceptualizes radicalization through the I-GAP spectrum of injustice, grievance, alienation, and polarization. Civic education can potentially impact alienation and polarization by fostering critical thinking, democratic literacy, active citizenship, and resilience. Programs analyzed adopt participatory approaches like role-playing and theater to avoid counter-indoctrination risks.

The report introduces key concepts like critical thinking, empathy, democratic literacy, active citizenship, resilience, and socio-emotional learning that many programs aim to build. It outlines the methodology used to select and analyze relevant national programs, focusing on participatory methods but also including some top-down initiatives for comparison. Programs spanned NGOs, government policies, EU projects, and public-private partnerships.

The report summarizes approaches and results of analyzed programs in Germany, Italy, France, Turkey, and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Germany focused on NGO workshops using roleplaying and guided discussion. Italy examined participatory EU projects engaging youth in counter-narrative creation. France covered government school programs, rehabilitation partnerships, and NGO counseling and workshops. Turkey looked at police disengagement efforts, religious reeducation, and an EU critical thinking project. Bosnia highlighted youth engagement, online counter-messaging, and reintegration assistance.

Comparative analysis identified youth and prisoners as common target groups needing resilience. Participatory methods successfully built critical thinking and empathy but required tailoring and trust. Roleplaying and multi-stakeholder involvement were impactful. Definitional questions around radicalization and stigmatization risks arose. Dialogue, storytelling, and individualized support facilitated disengagement.

In conclusion, civic education has strong potential but requires nuanced, sustained application informed by target populations. Avoiding unintended exclusion and embracing participation, dialogue, and creativity can trigger long-term attitudinal shifts, within careful program design and realistic expectations.

1. Introduction

D.Rad (DeRadicalisation in Europe and Beyond: Detect, Resolve, Reintegrate) is a comparative study focused on radicalisation and polarisation, primarily among young people in urban and peri-urban areas in Europe and beyond. It employs the I-GAP spectrum, which explores injustice, grievance, alienation, and polarisation, to understand the driving factors behind radicalisation. By analysing actors, networks, and social contexts, D.Rad aims to identify the building blocks of radicalisation, such as victimisation, a sense of powerlessness, and "us vs. them" identities. The project involves a wide range of contexts, spanning multiple countries and academic disciplines. Its dissemination methods include labs, hubs, policy papers, workshops, visual outputs, and digital galleries. D.Rad seeks to provide a comparative analysis of law and policy, assess existing interventions, and address online radicalisation with the help of AI professionals.

In the framework of the D.Rad project, WP10 – entitled Civic education as preventive measure and inclusionary practice – seeks to prevent youth radicalisation through civic education and to identify new pedagogical methods and interactive, participatory tools for building pro-social resilience to radical ideologies. Specifically, the WP intends to foster social cohesion, democratic literacy, active citizenship and a shared sense of belonging to counteract tendencies of grievance, alienation and polarisation through the development of a civic education activity for community organisations, youth centres, social/educational workers and interested citizens.

Against the project's background, the country teams of France (the American University of Paris), Germany (Freie Universität Berlin), Italy (EURAC Research), Turkey (Istanbul Bilgi Universitesi), and Bosnia and Herzegovina (PRONI Centar za omladinski razvoj) have produced a series of country reports examining a set of relevant education programs implemented in their national contexts as deradicalisation tools. As the definition of radicalisation is not unanimous or universally held, especially at the practitioner level, programs to combat this phenomenon have different approaches. Programs are conditioned not only by the type of radicalisation they want to counter (political, religious, or ethno-nationalist extremisms) but also by target audience, geographical, social, economic, and political factors. The purpose of these reports has therefore been that of compiling comparative analyses of a set of civic-education programs as deradicalisation tools in order to understand challenges, different approaches and solutions with a focus on effective practices. These programs encompass various stakeholders, including the youth sector, social workers, civil society organisations, and the educational/pedagogical sector. In the selection of the programs, attention has been paid to the representation of programs that deal with different target groups and different radicalisation strands. The final goal of the reports has been that of indicating a path for the construction of an effective and innovative activity of civic education as preventive measure and inclusionary practice in the framework of WP10 of the D.Rad project. While civic education programs can take different forms such as classroom-based learning, informal training, experiential learning, and mass media campaigns, country reports have mainly – but not only – focused on participatory approaches such as role-plays, theatrical activities, and other interactive tools. A participatory approach to civic education programs may indeed have the power of actively promoting civic engagement and democratic values without succumbing to counter-indoctrination dynamics.

This synthesis report offers an overview of the main methods, challenges and solutions highlighted in the above-mentioned country reports on civic education as a preventive measure and inclusionary practice. Firstly, it introduces the main concepts and methodologies used in the selection of relevant programmes, as well as in their analysis. Secondly, it singles out the most relevant aspects underlined in the analysis of the individual programmes at national level, focusing specifically on the dynamics between methods/approaches used and results achieved in their implementation. Thirdly and finally, it compares the lessons drawn in each country report to identify potential common trends and promising paths in the field of civic education as a deradicalisation tool and preventive practice.

2. Concepts and methods

The D.Rad project conceptualises *radicalisation* as the psychological and ideological transformation of an individual driven by a perceived injustice, leading them to reject the established political and legal framework, embrace an alternative identity that justifies violence, and subsequently engage in action, potentially with violent consequences, to advance their cause. However, despite the emergence of such experiences of alienation, they do not inherently drive individuals towards acts of violent extremism. Indeed, it is precisely the existence of conceptual and effective gaps between lawful protest, radicalization, and violence that provides an opportunity and a space for effective interventions of preventive nature.

Accordingly, D.Rad's approach to radicalization is based on perceptions of injustice, which subsequently give rise to feelings of grievance, alienation, and polarization. This conceptualization is depicted through the I-GAP spectrum (injustice-grievance-alienation-polarization):

- The radicalization process is closely tied to conflicting narratives of justice or injustice. These narratives play a crucial role in connecting an individual's feelings of victimhood to a broader cause or purpose (Leuprecht et al. 2009; Pemberton and Aarten 2018). While some individuals might be radicalized due to personal injustices they have experienced, others may be driven by opposition to the justice claims made by rival groups.
- The concept of grievance is explored in different disciplinary contexts, such as international relations (Collier and Hoeffler 2004), social movement theories (Crossley, 2002; Ennis and Schreuer, 1987), and political sociology (Ivarsflaten 2008; Maškarinec and Blaha 2014; Kriesi 2012). In opposition to "greed," grievance is examined to understand civil wars' foundations, and in social movements, it is seen as a mobilizing force framed in relation to injustice. Overall, grievances play a crucial role in motivating action and proposing solutions in various contexts, shaped by framing issues as injustices and responding to perceived injustices or democratic deficits.
- In recent research, alienation has been identified as a key factor contributing to radicalization (McCauley 2012; Ventriglio and Bhugra 2019; Blackwood, Hopkins & Reicher 2012). Ventriglio and Bhugra define alienation as an individual's sense of unease or discomfort resulting from their exclusion or self-exclusion from social and cultural participation (Ventriglio and Bhugra 2019, 18). This disconnection from immediate social, political, and economic ties, when combined with other vulnerabilities, can make

individuals more susceptible to recruitment into violent extremism. Structural alienation may lead individuals to embrace a new and more radical sense of collective belonging.

- Polarisation refers to the widening divergence of political attitudes or behaviours towards extreme positions, resulting in a breakdown of constructive dialogue. This phenomenon is characterized by the emergence of "us and them" identities, leading to increased segregation between different groups. Extreme manifestations of polarisation include hate crimes, xenophobia, intolerance, and street violence. Political scientists have noticed a recent trend where the "radicalisation of the mainstream right" is driving polarisation (Minkenberg 2015; McNeil-Willson et al. 2019). Additionally, online technologies have accelerated this process by allowing extreme discourses to infiltrate the mainstream, gaining new audiences and fostering cultural and political divisions (e.g., Nagle 2017).

With regard to the classification of *prevention*, one can distinguish between primary, secondary and tertiary prevention. Primary prevention is understood as all those activities that aim at preventing violent extremism by targeting the society as a whole: their goal is to "strengthen democratic, critical and social skills, and build resilience among [especially] young people without explicitly addressing the challenges of extremism and radicalization" (Schmid, 2020, p. 24). Instead, secondary prevention focuses specifically on groups that can be considered at risk of radicalisation: such measures mostly often overlap with crime prevention measures. Finally, tertiary prevention includes all those programs, projects and activities aimed at individuals who have already moved to extremism to prevent them from resuming their radical behaviour patterns: clearly, the main purpose of tertiary prevention is to prevent the commitment of (further) crimes and to support the disengagement of radicalised individuals from extremist environments.

Accordingly, the preventive component of civic-education programmes can work at different stages of radicalisation, thus being therefore directed towards different target groups. For the purpose of this analysis, *civic education programmes* are meant as all those initiatives of instruction that aim at affecting "people's beliefs, commitments, capabilities, and actions as members or prospective members of communities" (Crittenden & Levine 2018), as well as foster critical thinking and promoting "civic engagement and support democratic and participatory governance" (Rietbergen-McCracken 2018). Such programs have been found "to help shape personal efficacy (i.e., an individual's belief in their ability to effect change, political participation, and tolerance" (Mouritsen & Jaeger 2018, p. 2), as well as "to foster individuals' desistance from terrorist groups by broadening the scope of their political values, ideals, and concepts (e.g., justice, honour, freedom) and by introducing alternative perspectives and worldviews" (Koehler 2017, p. 224; see also Horgan, Altier, Shortland, & Taylor, 2016; Yehoshua, 2014).

Civic education may indeed have a positive impact on the *I-GAP spectrum* – as conceptualized in the D.rad project, especially in regard to alienation and polarisation. On the one hand, the unifying theme in most contemporary studies in the field of alienation is the individual's feeling of powerlessness with respect to wider, apparently hostile forces, leading them to lose agency in their everyday surroundings and interactions with others. On the other hand, political scientists have identified the origins of recent polarization in the shift from social class divisions to divisions over postmaterialist values as being central to the crisis of Western political party systems (Inglehart and Baker, 2000).

Therefore, civic education programs aim to turn injustice frames, alienating dynamics and polarizing narratives into activities to improve community life. They can involve different actors, in

particular the youth sector, social workers, civil society organizations and the educational/pedagogical sector with the aim of fostering democratic literacy, critical thinking, pro-social resilience to radical ideologies, active citizenship and a shared sense of belonging in a constructive and non-conflictual way. Given these different goals, civic education programs may take different forms, “including classroom-based learning, informal training, experiential learning, and mass media campaigns” (Rietbergen-McCracken 2018).

In D.rad’s WP10, emphasis is put on those programs that adopt a *participatory approach* to civic education. In general, participatory approaches are those where “all participants involved are able to express their impressions and ideas in order to produce change and to achieve a fuller comprehension of the community background” (Cecchini & Donati 2020, p. 136). Specifically, these methods emphasize the involvement of marginalized voices and beneficiaries, empowering them and encouraging civic engagement, problem-solving capabilities, and cooperation networking (Chiodini 2020). By utilizing participatory techniques such as role-plays, theatrical activities, and other interactive tools, civic education programs can avoid succumbing to counter-indoctrination dynamics, while actively promoting critical thinking, empathy, democratic literacy, active citizenship, resilience, and socio-emotional learning – concepts that can be defined as it follows.¹

- *Critical thinking* is the ability to make reliable judgments based on reliable information.² It involves key steps such as formulating questions, gathering relevant information, and considering different perspectives. Academic research has found that there is “a positive relationship between critical thinking reflection attitude and academic achievement” (Nasrabadi, Mousavi, Kave Farsan, 2012, as cited by Ghazivakili et al., 2014). Nevertheless, enhance critical thinking effectively, it is important to draw on the experiences of both teachers and students (Lee, Wang, & Lim, 2021).
- *Empathy* holds significant importance in the realms of civic and peace education. It entails comprehending and empathizing with the emotions of others. Educationists have employed various pedagogical approaches to foster empathy, such as group work and cooperative tasks involving multiple students. Student learning in this area often occurs through exposure to diverse scenarios. Research on this topic suggests that the effectiveness of educational methods can be bolstered by incorporating activities that facilitate the development of empathy and the acquisition of necessary affective skills (Ratka, 2018).
- *Democratic literacy* encompasses the capacity of all individuals to be acknowledged, valued, and respected as legitimate and esteemed members of society (ESEO, 2022). Once again, education assumes a pivotal role, predominantly through non-formal educational approaches. The utilization of theatres serves as a noteworthy example of how community members can actively engage in organizing theatrical events to raise awareness and foster democratic literacy within their localities.

¹ This analysis and its conceptualization have been curated by Zahid Ahmed: <https://www.deakin.edu.au/about-deakin/people/zahid-ahmed>

² Definition available at <https://www.monash.edu/learnhq/enhance-your-thinking/critical-thinking/what-is-critical-thinking#:~:text=The%20term%20critical%20comes%20from,judgements%20based%20on%20reliable%20information.>

- *Active citizenship* can be defined as actively engaging in one's local community and exemplifying values such as respect, inclusion, and assistance towards others (DFAT, 2022). Numerous activities embody the essence of active citizenship, including protests, campaigns, voting, and charitable volunteering. Volunteering serves as a prominent example and can take various forms, such as collecting donations for charitable causes or contributing money. Several organizations strive to raise awareness among individuals, encouraging them to become active citizens, as this positively impacts communities. To this end, educational programs can focus on equipping participants with the necessary skills and knowledge to foster resilient societies, wherein community members are interconnected by a strong sense of trust in one another.
- *Resilience*, in essence, refers to the ability to recover from challenging experiences, and it holds significant importance in the development of one's personality. Individuals who lack resilience may become susceptible to exploitation by extremist groups. Consequently, the cultivation of resilience against extremist ideologies has become a primary objective in the prevention of violent extremism through education. This process involves a strong emphasis on critical thinking and socio-emotional learning. Academic research has found an established link between resilience and pro-social behaviour, as well as life satisfaction (Koirikivi et al., 2021). Once again, civic education assumes a pivotal role in fostering pro-social behaviour, which is essential for developing resilience against difficult circumstances and extremist ideologies. Civic education achieves this by prioritizing empathy and promoting voluntary actions that benefit others, such as offering assistance, sharing, consoling, comforting, collaborating, and safeguarding individuals from potential harm.
- *Socio-emotional learning* (SEL) encompasses five key components or skills: self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision making, social awareness, and relationship skills. Through SEL, students acquire and apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and regulate their emotions, establish and achieve positive goals, demonstrate empathy towards others, foster healthy and respectful relationships, and make responsible decisions. Empirical studies (Durlak et al., 2011) revealed that students who received effective SEL training exhibited various positive outcomes, including improved academic performance, enhanced attitudes and behaviours such as increased academic motivation, heightened commitment to education, increased time devoted to academics, and better classroom conduct. Additionally, they displayed a reduction in disruptive behaviours, noncompliance, hostility, delinquent behaviour, and disciplinary referrals. Educators prioritize the socio-emotional learning of their students by incorporating a range of activities that encourage communication, cooperation, emotional regulation, empathy, and self-control.

Given this conceptual background, each one of WP10 partners analysed three deradicalisation programmes/projects (4 in the case of France) – implemented in their respective countries – that adopted a civic education approach. Although, as previously mentioned, the focus has mainly been on programmes adopting participative approaches, also more top-down initiatives have been included to analyse their strengths and weaknesses with a comparative perspective. Furthermore, the programmes/projects selected comprise both initiatives funded and implemented by national institutions as well as international/European programmes. Such choice

depended both on the relevance of a particular approach – i.e, programmes with innovative inclusive perspectives –, as well as on the general deradicalisation landscape of a specific country – i.e., the lack of established and significant national civic education programmes against radicalisation.

With regard to the methods of analysis, WP10 partners were asked

- to ascertain the primary contributors, initiatives, and individuals involved in programs (including affiliated organizations);
- to explore the methodological framework of deradicalization embraced by the selected programs (such as participatory role-plays, theatrical activities, online platforms, lectures, dialogue-centric approaches, etc.), and
- to examine how this framework influences their target audience selection, the programme/project's implementation, and its final results.

The overall analysis was based on an examination of the program's action strategies, as well as relevant literature and original research, which may include interviews with individuals responsible for program implementation.

3. General overview of the selected programmes

WP10 partners have comprehensively analysed 16 programmes: 6 NGO-led initiatives; 4 EU-funded projects; 3 national programmes; 2 private-public partnerships; and 1 UN-led project. Among these, only 7 programmes/projects are still active, while 9 were implemented in the last decade but their activities have come to an end.

The following sections will synthesise the main results per each country report and highlight common their features, issues, challenges and solutions.

3.1 Germany

The country report for Germany focused on three NGOs programmes:

- Verantwortungspädagogik (“pedagogy of responsibility”) method used by the Violence Prevention Network;
- narrative discussion groups project conducted by the “cultures interactive” nonprofit organisation;
- “Stage free for respect” (Bühne frei für Respekt), which is a project of the “Miteinander” nonprofit organisation implemented within a cluster of Vielfalt tut gut (“Diversity does good”) programme.

The Violence Prevention Network (VPN) implements the "pedagogy of responsibility" method in workshops aimed at breaking down myths and stigma surrounding Islam and Judaism among German youth. Their activities include interfaith tandems, trips to religious sites, roleplaying exercises, and guided discussions on the Middle East conflict. VPN's approach encourages

transparent engagement with prejudices without shaming students, with the aim of fostering more sincere acceptance of inclusion and tolerance. Particularly impactful activities noted are roleplaying scenarios like UN simulations and visits to sites demonized by radical narratives. VPN recommends that workshop leaders themselves be Muslim or Jewish in order to build trust and credibility with participants. They also advise conducting portions of the workshops outside of school in order to disassociate the activities from regular curricular activities. The general principle of offering compassion and not shaming is maintained in VPN's work with radicalized individuals seeking an exit, as they encourage ideological detachment through dialogue.

The Cultures Interactive Narrative Discussion Groups facilitate lived-experience narration and open discussion of issues concerning deprived communities among school pupils over one to two semesters. The aim is to strengthen democratic practices, counter prejudices and violence, and promote narrative and social skills. Discussions are voluntary, confidential, and focused on issues raised spontaneously by the pupils themselves. Program evaluation found a positive perception of improved social competencies but a more modest assessment of strengthened democratic attitudes resulting from participation. Relationships with teachers are noted as important but also pose a risk of compromising the confidentiality of the group discussions if they participate.

The Vielfalt Tut Gut initiative "Stage Free for Respect" used theatre and roleplaying in workshops with far-right inclined school youth in order to encourage reflection on politics in a tolerant environment. Documented activities were aimed at provoking the questioning of unexamined bias through fictionalized everyday situations. A global program evaluation rated the preventive-pedagogic projects very positively overall in their influence on far-right endangerment among youth. However, an issue noted is that activities conducted directly in school settings may discourage participation due to association with strict curricular activities. The evaluation also highlighted the need for defined criteria on what constitutes far-right endangerment or risk among youth.

In summary, all three programs utilize interactive methods aimed at countering far-right radicalization among German youth, with VPN and Cultures Interactive focused on intergroup contact and direct engagement with prejudices while Vielfalt Tut Gut uses arts and roleplaying to encourage reflection. While statistical assessments are limited, the participative approaches appear relatively well-received based on available evaluations. However, successfully applying these methods outside of strict curricular contexts appears an important factor for their appeal and impact.

The programs analysed showcase German stakeholders' significant investments in participatory deradicalization methods. They encourage critical reflection on lived experiences and active engagement in diagnosing and deconstructing one's own prejudices through tolerant opinion exchange. Even radicalized views are approached through dialogue rather than being immediately suppressed. Activities promote interacting with groups of different backgrounds to demystify views of the 'other.' A common challenge is establishing connections between facilitators and participants, especially students in school settings, which makes some youth hesitant to engage beyond mandatory activities. Roleplay and theatre activities are useful for critically examining biases from a 'depersonalized' angle and empathizing.

3.2 Italy

The country report for Italy focused on three EU-funded projects coordinated directly by Italian research institutions and targeting specific sectors and stakeholders in the Italian context:

- OLTRE – “Oltre l’orizzonte – Contro-narrazioni dai margini al centro” (Beyond the Horizon - Counter-narratives from the margins to the center);
- PRACTICE – “Preventing radicalisation in school by empowering teachers through continuing professional development”;
- PROVA – “PREvention Of Violent Radicalisation and violent Actions in intergroup relations”.

The OLTRE project focused on preventing Islamic radicalization among young Muslims living in Italy through the creation of positive narratives and exposure of contradictions in radical ideologies. It involved a national consortium of academic and civil society partners, plus the involvement of celebrity “ambassadors.” OLTRE took a highly participatory approach, with target youth involved in research interviews, creative workshops, and the co-design and co-communication of a social media campaign. It shifted focus from radicalization itself to broader issues like religion, identity and discrimination that were raised by the participants. This allowed regeneration of community bonds and provided means for cultural recognition. The counter-narratives helped deconstruct violent extremist messaging.

The PRACTICE project provided training for teachers on topics of radicalism prevention, critical thinking teaching, and promoting common European values. It involved an initial mapping research phase followed by the development of a training program complete with suggested activities and guidelines. While the program itself was developed in a top-down manner, it includes participatory student activities aimed at co-defining key issues and concepts. PRACTICE places focus on critical thinking as a resilience tool against factors leading to radicalization. The participatory approach was seen as helping adapt the training contents to local needs.

The PROVA project utilized participatory methods to prevent radicalization of juvenile offenders in Europe. It involved stages of research, training, workshops, and evaluation. PROVA engaged relevant stakeholders early on to ensure their commitment, create lasting networks, and gain insights into current radicalization prevention practices. It used participatory training methods and workshops involving narrative, theatre, and other creative methods to reduce conflicts and promote positive relationships. PROVA highlighted the participatory approach as beneficial across all phases from networking to final evaluation, allowing tailoring to local needs and achieving lasting impacts.

In summary, all three projects showcase participatory approaches, but with some differences. OLTRE directly engaged the target youth population throughout the process for more organic counter-narrative development. PRACTICE focused its participatory components more narrowly within student activities after top-down training program development. PROVA most fully embedded participation methods across all stakeholder groups and throughout the project phases. OLTRE and PROVA both involved targets early on to get better commitment and insight into issues. All three utilized creative methods as a way to reduce conflicts and biases. PROVA most fully realized the benefits of a sustained and embedded participatory approach.

The analysis of programmes implemented in Italy indicates that coercive approaches fail to offer effective, long-term answers to radicalization, lacking preventive components. Top-down

initiatives relying on pre-defined concepts, issues and needs also lack flexibility and adaptability to varying contexts. Instead, preventive actions seem to require an interdisciplinary approach to better identify and analyse the varied social, political, legal, behavioural, psychological factors causing radicalization, and consequently those reversing or preventing it. Different disciplines can offer methodologies for specific interventions within a wider deradicalization approach. Participatory approaches like focus groups, group work, role-play and theatre fostered empathy, inclusion, mutual understanding, knowledge sharing and communication skills - all factors demonstrating increased resilience to radicalization. Specifically, participatory approaches foster critical thinking - the ability to assess and question information, ideas, and argument validity. This acts as a shield against propaganda and supports independent identity and opinion building. Participation can extend beyond planned activities to reshaping methods through co-definition and co-design perspectives. Including stakeholders in defining issues and needs positively impacted commitment and focus, enabling more targeted interventions. Co-design helped participants gain new skills and a sense of belonging. Stakeholder participation in evaluation can also help researchers and policymakers better detect processes of change. Finally, analysis of OLTRE, PRACTICE and PROVA showed radicalization can only be tackled long-term with involvement of youth. Collaborating extensively with education institutions enables preventive actions addressing radicalization factors and building resilience as early as possible.

3.3 France

The report for France comprised three categories of civic education: programmes designed by the French Ministry of Education and implemented in the school environment; public-private partnerships initiated by the government and executed by private organisations as a complementary element of the judicial and penitentiary mechanisms of deradicalisation; and state-sponsored educational activities designed and realised by a private association specialising in work with youth under risk:

- The programme of the French Ministry of Education “Policy for the prevention of violent radicalisation in schools” (*Politique de prévention de la radicalisation violente en milieu scolaire*);
- The RIVE and PAIRS public-private partnerships;
- The deradicalisation activities implemented by the *Itinéraires* association.

The program implemented by the French Ministry of National Education is part of the broader government strategy against jihadist radicalization. It focuses on early prevention of radicalization through civic education, promotion of republican values, and training of school staff to identify students potentially at risk. Educational tools include ethics and civics courses, media literacy instruction, development of critical thinking skills, and the objective study of religious facts. The policy also introduces detection-oriented measures such as reporting systems for flagged students and monitoring of youth suspected to be undergoing radicalization. However, this approach raises concerns about its efficacy, potential for stigmatization of Islam, and the securitizing role given to schools. Assessing radicalization as a distinct educational challenge may also inadvertently exacerbate the phenomenon the government aims to eliminate.

The RIVE and PAIRS initiatives are public-private partnerships focused on rehabilitation of individuals involved in jihadist radicalization. RIVE, which operated from 2016-2018, compelled

participation of convicted individuals, utilized risk assessment tools, and did not provide housing aid. The current PAIRS program initiated in 2018 allows some voluntary participation, focuses more on empowerment in its approach, and provides transitional housing solutions. So far no recidivism has occurred among participants of either program, but there is insufficient data to definitively confirm successful deradicalization or directly attribute it to participation in these programs. Key obstacles faced include lacking scientific assessment tools, flawed execution of program evaluations, and disagreement on the need for private service providers alongside public efforts.

The French NGO Association Itinéraires has provided preventive counselling and social services with a focus area on radicalization since 2015. A small, specialized team carries out family support, risk assessments, and referrals for reported radicalized youth. Recently the association expanded into primary prevention activities. These include workshops on values, professional development trainings, sports programs, and awareness events. Itinéraires' 2021 report cites participation numbers and testimonials as indicators of its impact. However, it acknowledges the need for more scientific assessment of the preventive tools used. Success is measured not through quantitative deradicalization data but through the association's ability to collaborate with partners, accompany individuals, and provide complementary educational support.

In summary, the French case illustrates varied approaches to radicalization involving policy, rehabilitation partnerships, and NGO preventive work, with challenges around assessment and unintended consequences. Opportunities for participation seem limited in the top-down policy approach but are encouraged more through the collaborative methods of the NGO.

The analysis focused on programs by the French government over the past decade tackling jihadist radicalization through deradicalization and prevention initiatives targeting youth and prisoners. Significant investments have gone toward education-focused efforts in public schooling, judicial institutions, and social welfare for at-risk youth. The experience so far highlights some preliminary conclusions about the potential benefits and risks of these deradicalization methods. Educationally approaching political violence could help reduce polarization and rebuild state-society trust, as civic programmes and shift from a "war on terror" mentality indicate. However, expanding state control and conflating religiosity with radicalization risk alienating individuals. Associations avoiding explicit deradicalization may avoid these pitfalls. Reintegrating disengaged persons through social ties, opportunities, and democratic participation seems more promising than curriculum itself. Surveillance and punishment alone are likely to be insufficient - rehabilitation and prevention through considerate educational approaches have potential but face challenges. In summary, the report on France weighs the pros and cons of educational deradicalization versus alternatives, highlighting tentative conclusions from the French cases about impacts, risks, and the difficult but important role education could play in constructive approaches to radicalization.

3.4 Turkey

The report for Turkey focused on two national programmes and an EU-funded programme:

- The Disengagement and Deradicalization Program implemented by the Adana Police Department;

- The deradicalization activities of the Turkey's Presidency of Religious Affairs, commonly known as the *Diyanet*; and
- Secularism and Radicalization in Prison (SERA) project.

The Disengagement and Deradicalization Pilot Program (2009-2015) of the Adana Police Department was initiated as a collaboration between law enforcement and families of radicalized individuals. It targeted young people considered at risk of extremism or already convicted. The program conceptualized deradicalization as disengagement, mindset change, and societal reintegration. It relied on providing vocational courses, practical support, and psychological assistance as incentives alongside warnings of legal consequences for non-cooperation. The program evolved from a local pilot to a model adopted nationally, indicating perceived success. However, its reliance on police contacts and lack of civic education components point to weaknesses.

Diyanet's seminars and prison preacher initiatives aim to counter religious radicalization through activities like Quran teaching, religious discussion groups, and moral counselling conveying the state's approved spiritual messages. The voluntary programs have low prisoner participation, partly due to wariness of state-affiliated religious guidance. Their narrow focus on ideological debate seems ineffective for most radicalized individuals. As admitted in Diyanet's reports, better training, diverse activities, NGO collaboration, and improved prison conditions could enhance these programs.

The Secularism and Radicalization in Prison (SERA) project conducted civic education training for teachers to provide values, critical thinking, skill-building and other activities for radicalized and at-risk prisoners. The wide range of participatory activities elicited mixed results in Turkey. While valued for community-building and self-reflection, many components proved unfeasible in prisons and outcomes depended on proper tailoring for each context. Overly time-consuming, potentially risky, or culturally unsuitable activities diminished appeal.

In summary, the Turkish cases indicate challenges around law enforcement leadership, narrow ideological focus, and practical restrictions in prison settings for civic education programming. Multi-stakeholder collaboration and activities tailored to individuals and conditions seem to enable more promising participation and results. But lack of systematic impact assessments makes drawing definitive conclusions difficult.

Overall, the analysis of Turkish programmes finds that Turkey seems to suffer from a lack of a comprehensive deradicalization policy framework. Consequences include a focus on punishing already radicalized individuals rather than prevention, limited civic education programs, and lack of success of existing initiatives. The Adana police program was considered successful for its low recidivism but does not involve education/social policy and retains a security-only approach. Diyanet's religious education lacks a comprehensive view of radicalization's psychological and social dimensions. The SARE project represents the most developed but faced cultural and prison environment compatibility issues. These programs offer lessons. Unless Turkey develops an interdisciplinary policy framework involving civil society, social workers, and psychologists, programs will remain limited and unable to address injustice/grievance factors causing radicalization. Comprehensive reintegration is needed to prevent recidivism. In summary, the lack of a systematic policy approach focusing solely on punishment prevents progress in tackling radicalization root causes through civic education.

3.5 BiH

Finally, the report on BiH focused on one UN-funded action and on two activities implemented by an NGO:

- The Reintegration of returning Foreign Terrorist Fighters (RFTF) and their Families from Conflict Zones project by the International Organization for Migration (IOM);
- The Youth Countering Violent Extremism project by the PRONI Centre for Youth Development; and
- The YouVolution - Youth for Change project by the PRONI Centre for Youth Development.

The IOM project on reintegration of returning foreign terrorist fighters and their families provides humanitarian assistance, capacity building for institutions, and individual support plans to help reintegrate returnees into Bosnian society. It has changed some institutions' perceptions and built skills, though community engagement is still needed to combat stigma. Lack of legal status for children born abroad and public attitudes opposing resources for returnees pose challenges. Impact assessments are unavailable but the tailored, collaborative approach seems promising.

The YouVolution project by PRONI Centre trained youth in establishing and networking youth clubs, including through peer workshops on relevant social issues, research on youth needs, and advocacy for club spaces/support. It increased youth capacities for engagement and forged bonds across communities, though COVID hindered in-person meetings. Officials' provision of space and the web platform for promoting youth activities are successes, but impact data is lacking.

PRONI's Youth Countering Violent Activism project organized advocacy for anti-hate speech laws, meetings to establish a no-hate speech youth network, human rights training, and research on radicalization attitudes. It aimed to provide tools to counter online radicalization and create resilient, engaged youth. Multisector cooperation and civic identity building are seen as key lessons, though assessments of impact on radicalization are unavailable.

While evidence is limited, the cases showcase multilayered efforts to develop institutional capacities, foster youth participation, and counter online extremism. Tailored reintegration plans, participatory workshops, and hate speech advocacy seem potentially impactful based on qualitative assessments. More data on deradicalization effects would aid conclusions.

The three Bosnian projects discussed all take a multidisciplinary approach and actively involve youth in planning and implementation to give them agency and a voice. Media, especially social networks, play a major role in radicalizing Bosnian youth by facilitating recruitment, community building, and hate speech that can marginalize minorities. In response, the projects established online platforms to counter such radical narratives and spread awareness, recognizing media's influence. They also involved institutions like police to acknowledge the need for multidimensional radicalization prevention. However, factors like unemployment, segregation, and marginalization remain, likely worsening radicalization without socioeconomic improvements. While the projects contribute knowledge and awareness, government institutions bear primary responsibility for systemic change. In summary, the analysis emphasizes the projects' participatory, multidimensional approaches countering online radicalization, but notes they cannot substitute for addressing root socioeconomic factors, where government responsibility is key.

4. Comparative analysis

Across the various country contexts examined, specific shared target groups, approaches, issues and methodologies emerge in efforts to implement civic-education programmes as a means of combating radicalization. Notwithstanding specific differences, a number of core principles and tensions arise repeatedly and can inform future programming.

One clear commonality is the fundamental importance of involving at-risk youth, as it is often considered the key demographic requiring dedicated prevention efforts through civic education.³ Report excerpts from Germany, France, Italy, and Bosnia-Herzegovina explicitly highlight disenfranchised and marginalized youth as vulnerable to messages of violent extremism, social exclusion, and lacking in civic identity or efficacy. Providing these youth with alternative perspectives, critical thinking skills, and avenues for participating in public life is seen as preventively inoculating them against radicalization. Consequently, schools are identified repeatedly as sites requiring interventions with vulnerable youth, although challenges arise in voluntarily engaging those students already distrustful of education systems. Beyond classrooms, community centres, and youth clubs, may be other spaces for reaching young people outside regular school activities. Nevertheless, tailored activities are required to meaningfully engage different age groups. For example, the Turkish report notes that, while playing games or storytelling might foster cooperation, teamwork and conflict management, some games, such as drawing can appear childish and condescending to some participants. Therefore, it become crucial to carefully selecting those activities that likely to resonate with different members of the selected target groups.

Prison populations stand out as another critical target demographic for civic education programming – although also coupled with the youth target group when focusing on juvenile offenders. Given radicalization risks during incarceration, efforts to provide prisoners with skills for critically assessing extremist ideologies and non-violent outlets for grievances are documented. However, reports emphasize that programs in prisons face unique constraints. The Turkish report explains that civic education activities should be designed in a feasible way considering the prohibitions in the prisons, lack of materials and restrictions on the movements of the prisoners. Furthermore, when the target group consists of returnees from foreign conflicts as well as individuals convicted of terrorism tailored reintegration programs are needed to incorporate civic education elements aimed at disengagement. Nevertheless, deradicalisation efforts targeting detainees may also require a case management approach for these groups through the provision of individualized mentoring and planning to meet specific needs. Accordingly, it is vital to tailor both content and format to resonate with participants' realities.

In terms of broader approaches, the adoption of participatory methods seems to be related to the ability of civic education efforts to foster critical thinking, empathy, cooperation, and skills development. Small group discussions, roleplaying, arts, sports, and theatre-based activities enable first-hand experiences to be processed, differing perspectives to be explored, and connections to form. The Italian report indicated that participatory approaches (focus groups, groups works, role-play and theatrical methods) were found to be much more useful in fostering empathy, inclusion, mutual understanding, knowledge sharing and communicative skills, all

³ An approach that has been criticized for often overlooking other strands of radicalization: see, for instance, D.Rad's Report D.3.3 on Stakeholders of (De)-radicalisation, available at <https://dradproject.com/?publications=d3-3-synthesis-report>

factors that have been demonstrated to increase resilience to radicalisation processes. Roleplaying specifically allows participants to depersonalize sensitive topics and engage perspectives distinct from their own identities or lived realities. Letting participants shape content also signals a participatory ethos. For example, the OLTRE project described in Italy “enabled a space for dialogue and sharing, in which it was demonstrated not only that different imaginations can coexist, but that they can enrich each other” (Macaluso, Siino & Tumminelli 2022, p. 120). Employing inclusive facilitation approaches, even when radical views arise, is also highlighted as impactful. The German report notes that facilitators do not rush to contradict or rebuke the pupil immediately but use the situation for political education, respectfully supporting the open and frank expression of the thoughts, observations, and feelings. In other words, while not accepting radical positions, refusing to immediately shut down dialogue created openings for critical reflection.

Incorporating multi-stakeholder involvement and community-based participation also consistently emerges as an effective pillar. The PROVA project in Italy demonstrated the importance of interdisciplinary approach and community engagement in designing resonant interventions. Locally rooted initiatives tap into on-the-ground insights while building crucial networks. Relying solely on school teaching staff risks short-circuiting this community linkage, as students may not feel comfortable candidly discussing sensitive topics with their regular instructors. Outside facilitators and spaces, like NGOs organizing activities in informal community venues, help circumvent this challenge evident, for instance, in the German case examples. Overall, cultural competence and avoiding securitized, coercive programming is underscored to build trust. However, it is important to note that the French report warns that school-based initiatives which classify students as potential threats can breed mistrust and be counterproductive. Furthermore, it is fundamental to avoid simplistic definitions of radicalization and recognise nuanced identities.

A number of key issues and tensions consistently arise in civic education aiming to combat radicalization as well. One is definitional questions around what constitutes dangerous extremism or radicalization, with overly expansive scopes criticized. Accordingly, typical psychological or social issues as bullying, teenage relational problems with authority, search for group membership or discovery of political ideas are at times incorrectly diagnosed as a sign of radicalisation and may be met with exceptional, and often unnecessary, measures – see, e.g., the report on France. Similarly, the Turkish report mentions the lack of clarity around defining organizations as ‘terrorist’, while Germany discusses the loose nature of what entails an ‘at-risk’ classification. Avoiding assumptions or profiling of target groups is cautioned to steer clear of stigmatization. Another tension is balancing customization with avoiding the perception of targeted stigmatization. While tailoring programs to resonate with specific vulnerable groups is considered effective, the Turkish report questions whether direct state-organized deradicalization initiatives foster distrust from the outset among populations feeling aggrieved and profiled. Overly securitized programming risks being viewed as an extension of state suppression.

In terms of concrete methodologies referenced across contexts, certain interactive formats recur frequently. Arts, roleplaying exercises, sports and recreational activities are repeatedly highlighted as opportunities to build critical thinking and relating skills beyond traditional classroom didactics. Roleplaying enables perspective-taking by inhabiting roles distinct from one’s own views. Meanwhile, practices like mentorship and individualized planning appear effective in guided reintegration of high-risk individuals (secondary and tertiary prevention), such as returnees or ex-convicts. Dialogue facilitation in safe spaces offers the forum for unpacking lived experiences and

unhealthy biases through guided discussion and storytelling, allowing violent mindsets to be cautiously deconstructed rather than reinforced through condemnation.

Overall, civic education initiatives reveal potential but also complexities around definitions, stigmatization avoidance and programmatic assumptions. Further cultural competence, localized co-design and creative, interactive delivery mechanisms can strengthen efforts to leverage education in preventing violent extremism.

5. Conclusion

Specific priority target groups, tensions, approaches, issues and methods have repeatedly surfaced in the analysis of civic education programs aimed at combating radicalization. While specifics may differ, principles like participatory engagement, critical thinking development, community-rooted programs, and non-judgmental facilitation provide promising foundations.

Ensuring psychological safety to foster open dialogue and tailoring to local needs is vital as well. Youth, prisoners, returnees, and at-risk individuals are often represented as key demographics requiring support. However definitional questions around these categories persist, while stigmatisation dynamics may arise from a overfocused approach. Harnessing lived experiences while providing proper guidance for processing them constructively is paramount.

To conclude, civic education programs reveal a strong potential. However, this potential requires nuanced, culturally grounded techniques, sustained efforts across societal sectors, and continuous open-minded recalibration when applying general good practices to dynamic local realities. If thoughtfully designed with primary attention to participants' needs and perspectives, participatory educational interventions can play a valuable role in mitigating radicalization's complex drivers, although they also represent only one facet of the multipronged response this complex phenomenon demands.

Accordingly, one must build on emerging civic education lessons while avoiding overpromising specificity or speed of impact. Careful targeting and co-development can trigger transformative long-term change, but it is crucial to remain vigilant against unintended exclusion or coercion.

5. References

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