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YEIP Youth Empowerment and Innovation Project

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NEWSLETTER

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ABOUT THE PROJECT

The Youth Empowerment and Innovation Project (YEIP) is a 3-year Erasmus+ funded programme that aims to design a youth-led, positive policy prevention framework for tackling and preventing the marginalisation and violent radicalisation among young people in Europe. The project started in March 2017.

Led by young people and coordinated by Dr. Theo Gavrielides (Founder and Director of The IARS International Institute), YEIP is delivered in partnership with 18 partners from seven EU countries to construct and test innovative, policy intervention models founded on the principles of restorative justice, positive psychology and the Good Lives Model (GLM).

YEIP is implemented through the construction and field validation of tools (YEIP PREVENT model/ interventions, toolkit, training) in 4 environments (schools, universities, prisons, online) in the 7 participating EU member states of Greece, Cyprus, the UK, Sweden, Portugal, Italy and Romania.

YEIP was created in response to a current social need to have more effective youth policies that can enhance young people's social inclusion and minimize the risk of radicalization with greater 'buy in' from youth themselves. The YEIP innovative policy intervention will generate a set of actions that will help address this need at the local, national and European levels. This measure is founded upon restorative justice and the Good Lives Model (GLM), which assumes that we are goal-influenced and all seek certain 'goods' in our lives, not 'material', but qualitative, all likely to increase or improve our psychological well-being (Ward, Mann and Gannon 2007). This approach is aligned with the underlying philosophy of 2014 EC report on youth workers, which asks for a more coordinated effort in supporting young people with fewer opportunities by tapping into their talents and not by further marginalising them.
YEIP aims to lay the foundations for systemic change at the national level and EU levels. The ultimate objective is for the project to help implement the EU Youth Strategy's objective of preventing the factors that can lead to young people's social exclusion and radicalisation. The project is also in line with the EU's Counter-Terrorism Strategy of 2005 (revised in 2008 and 2014).

The success of this youth-led project will demonstrate to European citizens the leadership and determination of EC institutions in rooting out the reasons that lead to young peoples' marginalisation and radicalisation, firming up in this way trust and confidence.

YEIP CONSORTIUM

YEIP is led and co-ordinated by the IARS International Institute and delivered in partnership with 18 partners from seven EU countries.

The partnership includes:

RESEARCH PARTNERS

UK: The IARS International Institute - Coordinator

Greece: KMOP

Cyprus: CARDET

Italy: Anziani e non solo

Portugal: INOVA+

Sweden: Linne Universitetet

Romania: Fundatia Schottener Servicii Sociale

PUBLIC AUTHORITIES

UK: The Home Office | **Greece:** Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate Change Koinofelis Epicheirisi Ipiresion Neapolis Sykeon (Common Benefit Enterprise for Services of Neapolis Sykies) | **Cyprus:** Municipality of Engomi, | **Italy:** Regione Ligura | **Portugal:** Câmara Municipal de Oliveira de Azeméis | **Sweden:** Lansstyrelsen I Kalmar Ian | **Romania:** National Council for Combating Discrimination, & Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sports – Institutul de stinte ale educatiei.

YEIP was developed in response to the Call for proposals EACEA No 34/2015 Key Action 3: Support for policy reform - Initiatives for policy innovation – [European policy experimentations in the fields of Education, Training and Youth led by high-level public authorities]. The project is co-funded under Erasmus+ Grant Agreement N° 2016-2927 /9.

THE CASE STUDIES

During our fieldwork and test trials, young people taking an active role as peer research discussing with their peers their experiences, opinions and suggestions regarding the prevention of violent radicalisation.

In this section we report on some case studies form the participating YEIP countries. They serve as examples of active and positive youth participation and engagement.

The case studies presented here are also available in the respective native languages

CASE STUDY FROM THE UK

The YEIP project in the UK conducted interviews and focus groups at two separate schools. One was a secondary school in Huntingdon, Cambridge. Here we interviewed 8 individuals who were 15 years old. The other was a further education college in Newham, London. Here we interviewed 16 young people between 16 and 20.

The young people from Huntingdon were all white British, with one exception (Asian) and the young people from Newham were from a spectrum of ethnic backgrounds.

During the focus group, our young researchers asked the individuals "do you feel British?" This had an entirely divisive response from those in the Huntingdon school – who all unanimously said they did – to those in Newham who said they didn't.

In Huntingdon the responses suggested that they all felt "very English" but that there wasn't anything that defined that feeling specifically. Some said "the way I speak" or, "it is where I was born"; some suggested it was "the type of food and politeness".

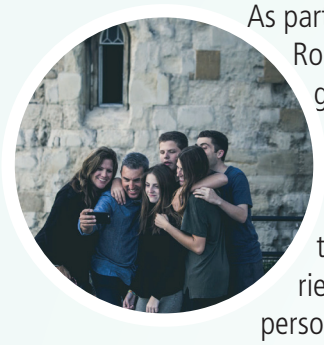
As a group they were all reflective on what other people consider British; from an outside perspective. They could all see why someone wouldn't feel British but to them it was a concept that was alien. All their families came from the same area that they lived in and had British roots. They were white and relatively privileged which gave them a philosophical understanding of the issues being addressed but maybe not a realist one.

In Newham the answers varied greatly. "I feel like you can't technically be British, but you can explore what 'British' means. Like you can do different stuff and different activities and find out what it really means, but I don't think you can be British". When they were asked about living in England most of the students said they would leave. "I don't see myself living in England for a really long time. I'd live in the US or Japan or something, Japan sounds cool."

Some of them went further and considered the conflict between their origins and their British surroundings. "Basically, the way I think of it is, when I'm around my family obviously they're following that sort of philosophy, when I'm in a school setting, when I'm working they will be following some of the British ways of doing things, so I think you need to conform to that. You can't be too far away from that, I think you'll run into trouble if you're like that."… "I've lived here most of my life, my parents work here, they contribute… I think I am entitled to be called British. I was actually bullied but I think I'm entitled to be called British".

There was nothing in their answers that suggested being British was anything special or unique. They all strongly identified with their heritage and considered themselves to be "from" Nigeria, or India, or where their families were from. They did not feel like they would introduce themselves as English. They said that "I don't know what it is being British… but when I think about it… I just know I'm not *that*".

CASE STUDY FROM ROMANIA



As part of the YEIP project, the fieldwork was carried out by a group of 16 young volunteers in Bucharest, Romania and Warsaw, Poland. It involved young people in high schools, universities, NEETs, and migrants. The objective of the research was threefold. First, to assess the conceptualisations of marginalisation and radicalisation and among young people. Second, to collect young people's input on the prevention of these phenomena. Third, to inform the development of prevention tools based on the Good Lives Model as a preventive framework for radicalisation. Based on the initial training of the young volunteers on qualitative research methods, two focus groups and 33 interviews were carried out. In order to facilitate discussions, encourage participants to express their opinions and share personal experiences a case study was presented. The case study was developed based on a real-life case story involving discrimination and violence towards a young migrant woman.

Suraya is a young refugee woman from Afghanistan. She is 16 years old and has arrived in Romania one year ago with her parents and 4 sisters. They live in a refugee center. Her family holds a traditional view on women and she wears her head covered with a hijab when she goes to school. She is in the 10th grade.

From the first day she joined her class, her classmates displayed a negative attitude towards her because of her veil, Islam and her hidden motivation to do some harm in Romania. She was too embarrassed to discuss this issue openly with her teachers. However, she spoke about it with her parents who decided she should drop out of school. However, Suraya insisted that she wanted to go to school despite her colleagues' attitude and her sense of isolation and loneliness.
One day she was in the tram returning home from school. After repeated episodes of verbal harassments one of her classmates cut her face with a razor. No one in the tram had any reaction. Suraya cried all the way home from school and told her parents what happened. Her parents asked her to go to the police but she feared that lodging a claim may also result in her need to drop out of school. Eventually, she agreed but she also sought help from NGO representatives working on integration matters.

Together with Suraya they agreed to go to her class and hold a series of sessions on forced migration, the meaning of refugee, cultural sensitiveness, diversity etc. Suraya was very confident that her colleagues knew nothing about her and her intentions in Romania. She also feared that punishing her colleagues may trigger more violence towards her which would eventually force her to drop out of school. The school sessions were very interactive and fun. Intercultural mediators along with the young migrants who volunteered for the YEIP project in Romania also joined to expose their culture, foods, music and achievements in Romania.

As a result, Suraya's colleagues had a better understanding of her reasons to cover her head and what a refugee is and ceased to treat her abusively and violently. A step forward was made by her colleagues who started to join her during breaks and ask her more about her country of origin. Also, teachers became aware of their critical role in promoting class diversity and inclusion.

The approach taken to address Suraya's situation based on the involvement of the victim and the offender emphasized the meaningful contribution of positive psychology and the GLM for changing the negative attitude and behavior of the young students.

This case study is also available in Romanian

CASE STUDY FROM GREECE

A., an 18-year-old girl, who lives in an area where drug deals prevail, was involved with drug use since the age of 12, as she had access to the trade point, next to her house. She believes that if she were living in another area, or country, her life would not have taken this course. As reported when she was interviewed, in this case, marginalisation and as a result potential radicalisation has to do with the place where she grew up and her personal experiences related to that area.

After consuming drugs for several years, she was hospitalised in a psychiatric clinic and lost a year of school due to absence. Teachers told her that she should choose between her high school diploma and the discharge paper from the clinic. As described, educators are doing their best to communicate to students that they have to try hard to finish school, but children do not opt for hard work, since everything becomes too difficult.

She often gets angry with injustice and lack of respect, giving examples of chasing her teacher inside the school building because of being disrespectful to her. On the other hand, she gets joy when she overcomes difficulties and forms a better self. As she explains, the one thing that upgraded her life was the psychiatric clinic that assisted her on quitting drugs and finding herself again.

As described, when she was consuming drugs, she was lost; she used to hit her mother, leave her house, while there was a time that she got arrested for having cocaine, and after consuming it in the police station, she started asking to sue her parents. The past year, the consumption has led her to use violence, even though she was against it. Characteristically, she underlines that it was not her using violence, but the drugs. She reports that the substances were leading her to extreme and radical behaviour that she has never expressed before.

When asked whether she has ever felt discriminatory treated, she talked about her teacher referring to her using degrading expressions. When she reacted, she got expelled.

In the described case, one can notice a carried away young woman that got involved in a difficult situation at an early age, through which she exhibited violent behaviour. Education and information is needed for children to understand the dangers and possible consequences of several matters.

This case study is also available in Greek

CASE STUDY FROM CYPRUS

The pseudonym given is Marios. Marios is a young 16 year-old from Greece who recently moved to Cyprus with his parents. He explained to us that when he first came to the school he faced an incidence of bullying due to his ethnicity being Greek. Specifically, his Cypriot classmates expressed hateful remarks to him for his nationality. At this point we must explain that in Cyprus, public opinion is split with regards to the nature of involvement of the Greek government during the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974. Some believe that the Greeks are to blame for the Turkish invasion, while others believe that they were allies of the Cypriot government.Following this incident, and having felt victimised as well as alienated due to psychological/verbal bullying, Marios shared his experience

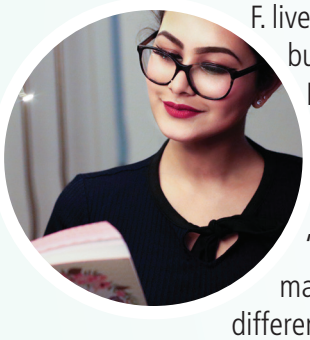
with his parents. He explained to our Young Researcher that being able to openly discuss this with his parents, enabled him to understand, in an unbiased way, the nature of political involvement from the Greek government.
His parents explained that historical events are not always absolute and so both sides must be heard, such that perhaps the Cypriot students had some justification for making those remarks. Of course they acknowledged that aggression was unjustified, yet their open discussion about it taught him how to hold a critical perspective on the matter.

Marios explained the importance of open and honest dialogue with his own positive role models (his parents) and how that helped him to cope better in School. Not only, he was able to stop the bullying through openly discussing the matter with his peers. Marios shared that on many occassions of witnessing bullying he is now able to step-in and resolve the conflict by encouraging his peers to "think critically" and "openly discuss their differences".

This input was remarkable in that it introduced and emphasised the role and importance of positive role models and open dialogue, both on a peer-to-peer and peer-to-adult level.

This case study is also available in Greek

CASE STUDY FROM ITALY



F. lives in Emilia Romagna and is a university student with foreign origins. Her parents come from Morocco, but she was born in Italy.
Her experience in the world of youth associations helped her to overcome the problems of discrimination and bullying suffered during the middle school by her classmates due to the fact that she is Muslim.
Without the help of a youth association, F. believes that her life could have been totally different:
"If I had not been supported by associationism and I did not grow up in that context, many problems, many situations that I experienced in my adolescence would led me to different results or to think differently, to act in a different way. […] If I think to my adolescence, small episodes could have made me a monster.

For example, I belong to that generation that was in the middle school during the years 2001 and 2002. 2001 was a bad year for Muslims because of the Twin Towers issue. So, during the most critical growth phase […] I had to bear criticisms, prejudices, physical and verbal violence by my classmates.
[…] In your life these are things that, if you do not run into the right paths, can lead you to mature in yourself hatred, anger that, if you do not vent them in other ways, can then lead to hatred and rejection towards others ".

Thanks to the support of a youth association, F. was able to react to the abuses and reinforce her personality and identity:
"In high school I started to react after having met the association that helped me to form my identity, to believe in my values, to take a position and also to assume roles and responsibilities.
[…] I was no longer the silent F. that suffered, bore and did not react. I became the F. who began to intervene, to speak, to defend herself, to react, to explain herself, to make herself known, to ask teachers if I could intervene on certain issues proposing initiatives. […] These are all things that helped me to appreciate myself, to recognise my values as Italian Muslim girl.
[…] These activities contributed to my formation, because they made me feel important, I took on roles, I felt responsible and when a person feels important, he/she is not able to let other things get him/her down".

F. thinks that, just like the associationism, the school world should also help and support young people to strengthen their personality and to acquire an active and responsible role in society for countering hatred and violent radicalism:

"Even at the school level, I think it's important that teachers and educational plans, start taking these things into consideration. […] At present, if these things do not start from a single involved teacher moved by his own motivation, this kind of things are not carried out. […] If you do not do these things in school when do you do them? […] If you first-hand do not find out and look for information, nobody explains you these things. Also, if you limit yourself to what is broadcasted on television, it is even worse!".
For F. feeling welcomed in a community or a group, such as the school group or the group of local associations, and feeling supported and sustained by them in the personal growth allows people to acquire useful tools to fight extremist messages.

This case study is also available in Italian

CASE STUDY FROM SWEDEN

The young man's name is Bashir. He is 18 years old and comes from Afghanistan. Due to war in his home country he fled, travelling through countries such as Iran, Turkey, Greece and so on, ending up in Sweden in 2016. Currently, he is seeking asylum and is waiting for a decision from the Swedish migration office on whether he can stay in Sweden or not. While awaiting what will happen to him in the future, Bachir is learning to speak Swedish and is doing his best to get good grades, through a language program. Bashir thinks that Swedish is a little bit difficult, and although he should have started the gymnasium now, he still needs to practice his Swedish to meet the criteria for this according to the Swedish curriculum. As Bachir came to Sweden unaccompanied he found it difficult to concentrate in school. He worried a lot about his family, but this recently changed.
He explains:

I didn't have any contact the first 1,5 year here, but three months back I found them. I was happy when I talked with my mother. Especially when you talk to someone you haven't talked to in a while, and specially your mother, of course. I felt I was flying, I was happy and felt good. The was the happiest day I have ever spent in Sweden. Yeah, and about school – students and teachers are really good and kind. I don't really have so many friends. I always keep my circles small. I don't have many friends. I had two friends, but they got a negative decision from the migration office. So, they left to Germany and France. I am all alone now.

The above excerpt captures many intersecting aspects that have come to affect Bachirs' sense of belonging, his hopes, worries in school and his everyday life. His thoughts about his family, and the feelings when getting in contact with them, knowing that they are alive and safe, is of course formative for the time of the interview. However, in the narrative we also get a glimpse of how friendships are developed and lost in a new country, here with class mates and teachers. Furthermore, we have the presence of the Swedish migration office, that affects him not only through his comrades, but also the insecurity of what will happen to him. To this end, and although Bachir talks positively about school his narrative really exemplifies a sense of marginalization, and of being somewhat excluded from the possibility of choice. Bachir continuous to talk about school and education, comparing his life now, and how it was back in Afghanistan.

School is like a second home for me. When I come here and see the teachers and students, they are nice to me and I feel safe in school. Not back in Afghanistan, then I was thinking, hope I can make it home today. Because the Taliban's controls the province where I am from. So, I was afraid. I was not so motivated to go to school every day. The teachers here, they try to understand you and they ask when they see that you are sad. But it's not like that in my country. Like they say, home is not four walls, it's a feeling. When you go somewhere and you feel good, it's your home. You feel safe and you feel normal. But life is not so easy. So, I'm in a specific place, I can't cross my line. Hope I can soon, but I don't think so. Everything will

change. Every life line has it's time.

Bachirs' story is filled with frustrations, longings, separations. In a way he finds himself in "place" were his future is painted by insecurity and worries. At the same time there is also a presence of hope, and a struggle to belong somewhere. There is for example a wish expressed to be able to contribute to society. The most important persons in Bachirs' life right now is his family and teachers at school. He feels safe in school and is also eager to learn and to become something. The possibility to use social media in order to keep contact with his family is of course also central for him when trying to look positively upon his future.

This case study is also available in Swedish

CASE STUDY FROM PORTUGAL

Rosa is 16 years old and lives in a small village in the center of Portugal with her father, a Mozambique native. Rosa called the attention of the young researchers during the Focus Group and also through the interview because she referred to topics that are under YEIP'S investigation aims, namely, issues about extreme political ideologies, racism and homophobia.
Rosa was herself victim of bullying because of her skin color and her physical aspect (e.g.; being called "fat"), and that might have contributed to her mindset and feelings towards marginalization.

Regarding political ideologies, Rosa said that she is annoyed and angry because of the different opinions that her colleagues, and her father as well, often express (e.g., some of her colleagues were sympathetic to Hitler and they supported the idea that immigrants should return to their home countries). Rosa stated that she wished to change the perspectives of her colleagues, since those ideas could have as consequence "the repetition of historical episodes, such as Nazism".

Rosa has also been in contact with extremist messages addressing the LGBTI community from a Portuguese political party, which worried her a lot about the future of society. She also points out that homophobia exists at her school community, but with more emphasis on the male homosexual relationships, and that the relationships between women homosexual are respected.

Another problem has been identified by Rosa, that may be a possible cause of marginalization: financial capacity, that can prevent some young people of accessing or acquiring to specific goods (e.g., expansive clothing brand, news technologies), that others have access to easily.

Throughout the interview Rosa has shown to have good coping skills and strategies, once she has overcome the situations mentioned above with success. However, Rosa affirms that the school did not have an active role in this process and that schools, in general, are not prepared to deal with these situations and phenomena. It is suggested by Rosa that more direct contacts between the schools and the families should be encouraged. She also stated that this type of projects is very important by enabling the development of efficient tools to support young people to deal with these problems.

This case study is also available in Portuguese

YOUTH RADICALISATION: YOU CAN MAKE THE DIFFERENCE!

We are asking you to help us by completing a short questionnaire which should not take more than 5-8 minutes. To participate and fill out the survey it is required an age between 16 and 29. Your responses are completely anonymous. The data that we collect from you will form the foundations for the prevention tool of the YEIP project, promoting positive approaches to tackling youth radicalisation.

To thank you for your contribution, we are offering the opportunity to win bursaries for you to attend the project's final conference in London next year. To participate, we ask that you give us your email address at the end of the survey.

All results and news are available there and on our Facebook Page "YEIP Project", keep posted! If you or anyone else requires help with any of the topics discussed, please contact us at: yeip@iars.org.uk Thank you so much for your collaboration!

ONLINE SURVEY

Surveys are available in (click on the links below to take part)
ENGLISH | GREEK | PORTUGUESE | ROMANIAN | ITALIAN

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Youth Empowerment and Innovation Project, led by young people will construct and test innovative policy intervention models. Join our network, please register filling out the application form

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