

# Newsletter

## EDURAD: ADDRESSING VIOLENT RADICALISATION - A MULTI-ACTOR RESPONSE THROUGH EDUCATION

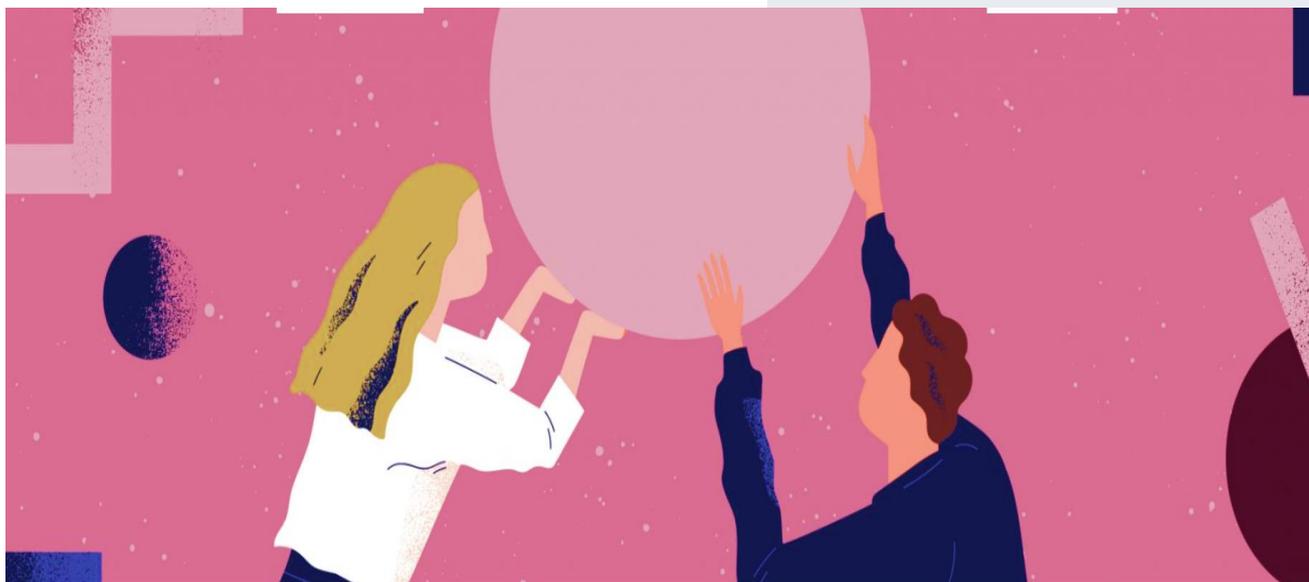
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## Educational Responses to Extremism in Cyprus

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This issue presents the main findings of the research conducted for the EDURAD project, on the role of education in Cyprus in preventing radicalisation and/or violent extremism. The results of the research are presented in the [Cyprus - Country Report](#). The report highlights the different ways education in Cyprus is viewed to contribute to prevention as well as the needs and expectations of educators and other practitioners in the field.

### ***What is the context in which PVE-E has developed in Cyprus?***

The Cypriot context of prevention of (violent) extremism through education differs substantially from what is normally the case in other EU member

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### IN THIS ISSUE

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#### EDUCATIONAL RESPONSES TO EXTREMISM IN CYPRUS

A brief overview of policy and professional perspectives on the role of education in addressing extremism.

Cyprus - Country report available at: <http://edurad.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Cyprus-Country-Report.pdf>

states. The most significant disparity can be found in the fact that Cyprus does not have a national prevention policy. This lack of national policy has meant that PVE-E in Cyprus is not organised around established legislation or policy implemented by the state, but instead takes place mostly in the form of de-centralised initiatives, actions and practices. Even though the legal and institutional framework in Cyprus does not lay down provisions that are specific to the prevention of radicalisation and extremist ideologies, the latter are addressed under the scope of international co-operation and national security strategy. In terms of national security strategy there is limited information since the *Cypriot National Strategy on Radicalisation* is a confidential document and thus not publicly available.

### ***What role does education currently play in preventing extremism?***

The move of the overall EU prevention strategy into domains such as education and youth action, has also been reflected in recent P/CVE action in Cyprus. This action has taken primarily the form of training and capacity building. The [Cyprus Youth Board](#) has been especially active in the area of PVE-E, with its activities being supported by the Ministries of Justice and Public Order, Foreign Affairs, and Education and Culture.

In terms of building the capacity of educators to address radicalisation in school environments, Cyprus has been engaged in the development of training tools like the “Managing Controversy: Developing a Strategy for Handling Controversy and Teaching Controversial Issues in Schools” programme (RAN, 2019b: 38-39). This tool, alongside others of similar scope, shows the participation of Cyprus in initiatives of international (mostly European) cooperation that seek to implement new educational approaches and practices to prevent radicalisation and extremism.

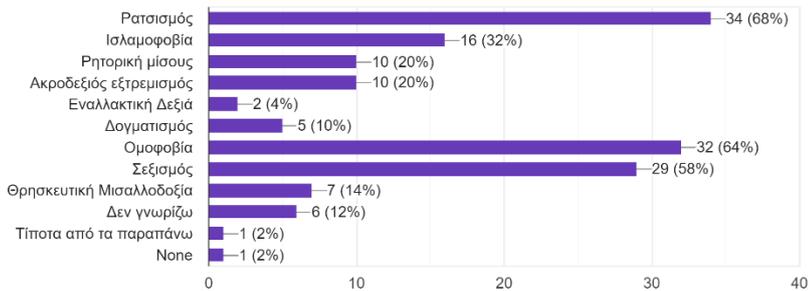
### ***What issues of extremism did educators identify?***

A survey was conducted that involved the distribution of fifty (50) questionnaires to practitioners (or other relevant actors) in the field of education and youth.

To the question regarding the forms of discriminatory incidents among youth they have encountered in their line of work or personal lives, the respondents’ replies mainly focused on three of the options provided: racism (68%), homophobia (64%), and sexism (58%). Conversely, dogmatism and alt-right were more rarely encountered, with only 5 (10%) and 2 (4%) respondents respectively reporting to have been confronted with such incidents. In general, when asked for a definition, respondents did not associate extremism with a particular extremist ideology, movement or group. Instead, the association they established was between extremism and the hostile *manner* in which certain views were expressed as well as with the capacity of those views to become violent.

7. Στην σχέση σας με νέους, αντιμετωπίζετε οποιαδήποτε από τα ακόλουθα περιστατικά; (επιλέξτε όσα ισχύουν)

50 responses



### ***What concerns and challenges did educators raise about addressing extremism?***

In addition to the questionnaires, focus groups with ten (10) practitioners in Cyprus were held. Most of the participants noted the absence of an institutionally based strategy of prevention in Cyprus. The educators among participants reported that education in Cyprus has significant pedagogical gaps, which have had a substantial impact on the ability of educators to respond to incidents of extremist behaviour in the classroom. The main challenges that were reported involved the following:

- 1) a shortage of officially provided pedagogical material on extremism and on how to handle incidents of extremist behaviour
- 2) the unavailability of capacity building training for educators
- 3) need for a multi-actor network that strengthens communication and cooperation between different actors that are active in the pedagogy of young people.

### ***What seems to be needed to strengthen pedagogical responses to extremism in Cyprus?***

There was a common understanding and advocacy among participants in all focus groups about which pedagogical values are both lacking and needed to improve the capacity of the educational system to address extremism adequately. Correspondingly, there was also a shared view regarding the introduction of these pedagogical values at an early stage (primary education), as well as the limitations that teachers face in responding to extremist behaviour at schools. When talking about need and expectations, the following were highlighted as needs to be addressed:

- 1) a better framework for understanding extremism
- 2) building a more comprehensive and sustainable response by involving actors and institutions other than teachers and schools
- 3) develop and use critical thinking as a tool of prevention
- 4) recognize the underlying connections between extremism and other violent behaviour (i.e. bullying) at schools in order to develop pedagogical strategies that would respond to both.

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