

Newsletter #3 Austria / Germany

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



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Tackling Radicalism Through Storytelling

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Motto

“Let’s talk AND listen....”

Storytelling & comprehensive listening

The German-Austrian module presents two techniques with their video to encourage trustful communication as a key to preventing extremist developments in schools. Through “narrative storytelling” and “comprehensive listening”, it is possible to create a context for mutual understanding and self-reflection and to promote the feeling of acceptance, belonging, and being valued, thereby strengthening resilience against extremist promises.

When individuals or groups take up strong polarising positions, for example, regarding political or religious subjects, conflicts arise, and communication

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often breaks down, leading to perceived personal attacks and fuelling polarising and radicalising dynamics.

In this case, narrative storytelling can serve as a tool for communication, breaking down barriers and allowing people to see the other person's perspective and reflect on their own views and prejudices.

Beyond creating a safe space to speak freely, this module also emphasises another aspect of narrative storytelling: comprehensive listening. While public speaking or even communicating with another individual about sensitive topics can cause a great deal of stress, showing people that they are genuinely heard disarms defensive behaviours and statements. Moreover, when people genuinely listen, it creates a sense of comfort and community, preventing polarising viewpoints as a person's community becomes more diverse. The listeners learn something about how the narrator behaved and what their motivation and background are. In this way, comprehensive listening can create a way to better understand why someone is doing something and why they act the way they do. Listening to others is vital for broadening a young person's horizons. By sharing their own experiences in this context, young people can reach a greater sense of openness and trust between each other.

Online-module and video animation

The online module introduces narrative storytelling and comprehensive listening for professionals and young people. It includes guidance on teaching narrative storytelling and comprehensive listening using video animation. Divided into short units, it shows how to record and reflect on learning experiences while using the tool and how to achieve further learning objectives with different target groups.

A friendly animation walks us through examples of communication roadblocks. Students take on extreme or polarised positions, for instance, in the classroom, and statements are made that cannot go unaddressed. These situations call for a type of intervention, and, in this case, that type of intervention is narrative storytelling and comprehensive listening.

As the video shows, narrative storytelling is different from simply restating facts: it is about remembering something the narrator has experienced by activating their memory and recounting how it happened. They tell a story from the beginning and continue without being interrupted by the audience. The storyteller can engage in self-reflection while the others listen closely. The listeners begin to understand what the narrator is saying and participate in their story by closely listening.

Target groups

The German-Austrian module reaches out to professionals working with children and young people. From teachers to social workers, the online module and the video animation reveals the benefits of narrative storytelling and comprehensive listening. Anyone working with children, teenagers, or young adults, such as teachers, counsellors, or even youth group leaders, should find the video engaging and informative.

The online module and the video animation are also applicable in the context of an educational seminar, counselling, mediation, group action for training, or even to be used by the individual trainer. Additionally, trained young people who act as mediators in their schools can benefit from the video animation and learning about the practice of narrative conversation.

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