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National Report on Youth Radicalisation in Greece

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Key objective of the country report

Radicalization is the process by which one a person accepts the use of force as means to achieve political, ideological or religious goals (Centre for Security Studies, 2016). It should, however, be noted that radicalization does not necessarily lead to violent extremism or terrorism and that radicalised behaviours are not necessarily problematic. Crucial is the recognition of individuals and groups that are vulnerable to radicalization in order to for appropriate measures for timely and effective intervention to be implemented. This report was developed in the context of the Work Package (WP) 1 “Building the Foundations” of the European project “Youth Empowerment and Innovation Project - YEIP”, under the Erasmus+ Programme and will be used for a comparative analysis of the state of the art regarding marginalisation and youth radicalisation in the 7 participating countries; the U.K., Greece, Cyprus, Italy, Portugal, Romania and Sweden. This analysis will be conducted by the IARS International Institute. The project aims to create a policy tool for the prevention of youth radicalisation in Europe, which will be based on the use of the positive psychology, restorative justice and the Good Lives Model (GLM). The purpose of the national report is to present the state of the art in terms of youth radicalisation in Greece and the existing policies and prevention strategies for dealing with violent youth radicalisation in Greece and Europe in order to build the foundation for WP2 which includes the development of the innovative YEIP tool and its piloting

Methodology

In order to record and analyse the current situation in Greece regarding the marginalisation and youth radicalisation qualitative research was conducted. The methods used were the following:

1. Desk research: Secondary research based on Greek and international literature was considered necessary in order to fully understand and record the Greek situation regarding the subject at hand and identify existing policies and prevention measures for dealing with violent youth radicalisation in Greece and Europe. Furthermore, the existence of such measures based on the values of the GLM and restorative justice was investigated.

2. Field research: This included two (2) semi-structured interviews with experts in the field of youth delinquency, marginalisation and radicalisation in order to verify information from the desk research (Appendix: Interviews' participants). Three (3) focus groups were conducted with professionals from mental health services and juvenile detention centres, young people and ex-offenders. The first consisted of seven (7) mental health professionals who have extensive experience in working with vulnerable youth, including young offenders and aimed at acquiring information on youth radicalisation in Greece and the opinions of experts on the GLM based measure that YEIP is attempting to create. The second focus group consisted of five (5) professionals from juvenile detention center X and three (3) young individuals who were offenders before and were detained in the juvenile detention centre X. This and the one-day visit to the juvenile detention centre aimed at collecting information regarding the practical implementation of GLM values in dealing with youth delinquency. The third focus group consisted of six (6) young people and attempted to collect their views on the factors contributing to youth radicalisation in Greece and their opinions on the GLM and restorative justice.

Key findings from the literature review

Radicalization is the process in which a man has radical views in comparison to the existing state of affairs (Bartlett, Birdwell and King, 2010) and is ready to seek and support changes in society that are threatening to this existing state (Dalgaard-Nielsen 2010). Radicalization can lead to extremist acts of violence when the person who is radicalized develops a willingness to accept and in many cases exert violence.

Radicalisation in Greece. The domains of active radicalisation in Greece include political radicalisation, hooliganism and religious radicalisation although very limited (Anagnostou & Skleparis, ELIAMEP 2015, 2017). In the last year (2016) there were 17 arrests for actions related to extreme radicalisation, in other words terrorism most of them related to religious extremism, one related to political extremism and one undefined. The same year 3 people were convicted of terrorism related to political, left-wing motives.

Community factors leading to radicalisation. The most important factors that lead to youth radicalisation in Greece are social exclusion, the need for the development of an identity, poverty, lack of social support and mobility and discrimination (Centre for Security Studies, 2016).

Ways of dealing with those factors. In order to tackle youth radicalisation and marginalisation that can lead to it, it is necessary to create a feeling of social inclusion in young people through the familial, educational and social environments. The community factors leading to radicalisation can be tackled firstly in educational institutions through the formal (and informal) education of young people on the topics of acceptance, diversity, human rights, democratic values and active participation in society, given that education is considered the cornerstone for the defence against racism, segregation and extremism; secondly in the internet by eliminating extremist propaganda (European Commission, 2017) and thirdly in young-offending institutions or juvenile detention centres by implementing specific social support and education programmes that give a sense of belonging to young offenders and allow them to develop competences and skills to create new identities.

Legislation tackling radicalisation in Greece. There is no legislation regarding radicalisation in Greece but there is relevant legislation for the punishment of violent radical acts such as terrorism, organized crime, hate crimes, hate speech, violent/non-violent extremism and hooliganism (Ministry of Justice, Transparency and Human Rights, 2017).

Prevention policies, services and actions in Greece. There are no specific prevention policies for tackling youth radicalisation in Greece but there are national policies for preventing youth delinquency which follow the European Union (EU) guidelines for youth radicalisation prevention (European Commission 2016; Thessaloniki Youth Protection Society, 2016). Those include prevention at the population level, at the group level involving work with vulnerable youth and at an individual level involving work with youth that have already committed a crime/violent act. Critical role in the prevention or deradicalisation process play the family, the community and the interaction between the two. In Greece, services such as the Advocate of the Child (<http://www.0-18.gr/>), Child Care Services (<http://www.epimelitesanilikon.gr/>) and the Ministry of Education (<http://www.minedu.gov.gr/>) offer valuable support.

GLM-based and restorative justice prevention models in Greece and Europe. To the best of our knowledge explicit GLM-based and restorative justice prevention policies do not exist in Greece. There are however detention centers and programs/actions whose work is aligned with the values of the GLM, such as the agricultural detention centres. In Europe, there are GLM based-programmes which tackle not only violent radicalisation but also youth delinquency both at school and community level. The most prominent are the Aarhus and the Mechelen models, the PREVENT strategy and the Exit in Germany (European Institute for Peace, 2016).

Mapping of the relevant stakeholders and institutions. The relevant stakeholders and institutions in Greece include three (3) non-governmental organisations, one (1) education centre, three (3) juvenile detention centres, one (1) university, three (3) research institutions, four (4) local authorities and six (6) ministries/policy teams.

Key findings from the field research

Interviews. The main goal of the interviews was to verify the information collected via the literature review. The most important findings of the interviews were that there are no known GLM based and restorative justice prevention policies in Greece, no statistics or research on prevention programs or policies and no national strategy to tackle youth radicalisation.

Focus group with mental health professionals. The main findings of the first focus group related to the reasons behind youth radicalisation with direct focus on the need for an identity, especially in cases where young individuals are marginalised and excluded from important to them social groups. The authoritative model of detention for offending individuals that exists in Greece was criticised and alternative ways of detention were proposed, aligned with the values of the GLM and restorative justice. The importance of developing feelings of autonomy, agency and responsibility were stressed.

Focus group with professionals and ex-offenders from the juvenile detention centre X. A crucial finding from the second focus group was that models based on the values of the GLM work in the case of juvenile detention for those who want to escape criminal behaviour. Such models work only if the offenders are given responsibilities and activities to develop a sense of control, agency and autonomy and only if there is trust between the professionals and the

offenders and both are treated as equals. The participation of ex-offenders in the second focus group gave us an insight in the results of such models, the most important being the development of an identity through access to education and participation in a wide range of activities. Critically, they expressed that through such a model of rehabilitation they were able to maintain a hope about the future and a desire to re-integrate in society.

Focus group with young people (university students). The most important finding from the third focus group related firstly to the integration of vulnerable young people (who feel socially isolated or excluded) into society and secondly to the importance of this being an interactive process. One cannot expect vulnerable youth to adapt during an integration process when the society or social group in which they re-integrate does not change itself.

Reflective Section

The marginalization and violent, mostly political, radicalization of young people in Greece has been rising over the last ten years with the outbreak of the harsh economic crisis affecting the country, the disappointment of young people with the political system, the increase in the number of refugees and immigrants and the lack of structures for their integration. Although radicalisation in Greece is predominately of political nature (extreme right or left wing ideology) sometimes it extends to hooliganism with political ideologies dominating sport associations. The existing legislation and prevention policies are limited and target primarily violent extremist acts. Policies used to prevent youth delinquency however exist and the ones that are in accordance with the EU guidelines for tackling youth radicalisation can be used for this phenomenon too. There are no GLM based prevention policies although there are some detention centres who work with some GLM values. Discussions with professionals who work in such a detention centre, with ex-offenders who have been released from the same centre, with mental health practitioners and with young students indicate that such models can work towards the development of an identity in young, vulnerable individuals. By treating them equally, without discrimination and giving them goals and skills through participation in activities, they achieve the development of a sense of agency, identity, autonomy and responsibility. Above all this process allows them to have hope and thus invest in their future and integrate socially. Suggestions regarding the integration of

the above findings into future policies and how those relate to YEIP are included in the national report.

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