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ORPHEUS Policy
Recommendations for
an Innovative Violent
Extremism Prevention Method

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Title: ORPHEUS Policy Recommendations for an Innovative Violent Extremism Prevention Method

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THE ORPHEUS POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

General Prevention: Prevent Risk with a Broad and Positive Approach

- 1 Develop the Safe Spaces Concept
- 2 Measure the Needs of Young People Through Active Dialogue
- 3 Establish and Preserve Partnerships with Civil Society Organisations
- 4 Establish a Prevention Network or Join an Existing One

Specific Prevention: Reduce Risk by Directly Responding to Risk Factors

- 5 Develop Safe Spaces to Tackle the Interplay of Risk Factors
- 6 Train Professionals to Raise Their Confidence and Skills in Addressing Risk Factors
- 7 Support Young People and Professionals in Discussing Controversial Issues
- 8 Support Young People in Their Struggle Against Injustice
- 9 Emphasise the Agency of Young People in Prevention Work
- 10 Support Young People to Develop Their Critical Literacy and Online Awareness
- 11 Promote Positive Alternatives to Violent Extremist Narratives

ORPHEUS POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

ORPHEUS (**O**ffline and **O**nline **R**adicalization **P**revention, **H**olding back **E**xtrémism and **U**pholding **S**ecurity) was a 4-year project to develop a new integrated prevention model to tackle the risk factors for violent extremism in democratic societies, regardless of ideological background, by fostering resilience in young people and professionals supporting them.

The following recommendations are made on the basis of the development, piloting and evaluation of the ORPHEUS integrated prevention model by an international, multi-partner consortium including local governments, youth work, education and training organisations and universities, drawing on the expertise of frontline professionals working with young people, such as teachers and youth workers, researchers and policymakers.

After meticulous field work, pilot applications and the analysis of project findings and results, we can say that the ORPHEUS prevention model is efficacious in contributing to the prevention of social alienation, radicalisation, violent extremism and promoting social bonding of individuals and building resilience in young people against the aforementioned threats in a sustainable way. Therefore, the following policy suggestions are made with the aim to achieve the project's defined goals in a larger context and with the hope that the ORPHEUS integrated violent extremism prevention model cross-pollinates and influences prevention methods and programs across many other regions.

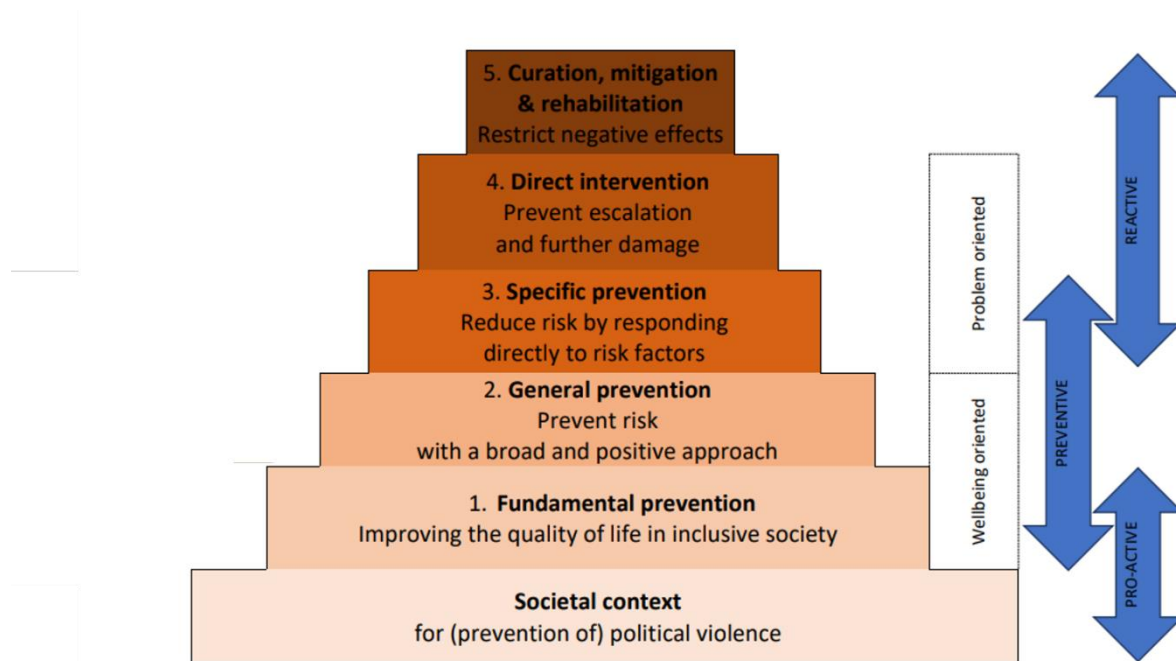
The recommendations offer guidelines for policymakers and prevention managers to implement the ORPHEUS prevention model in their regions. A key component of the development of the model has been cross-border collaboration, with experts and specialists sharing good practices and innovation.

As a consequence of this approach, some of the recommendations made below may already be common practice in some areas and innovative in others, and vice versa for other recommendations. It is expected that readers will use the recommendations within their own context, adapting them to the context of each organisation in order to face local challenges such as social alienation, polarisation, radicalisation and violent extremism in a relevant and sustainable way.

An Integrated Approach: The Prevention Pyramid

The ORPHEUS prevention pyramid is an integrated model for developing prevention policies and practices aimed at a combination of general and specific measures.

The pyramid metaphor suggests that all prevention work starts from the ground or basic level of the broader societal context: specific prevention practices are considered as part of improving the quality of social life of citizens in democratic inclusive societies. Or to put it the other way around: prevention policies and practices should not disrupt or deteriorate the quality of social life. Prevention work thus should have specific and critical attention for the general living conditions in society.



Framework for the integral prevention of radicalisation towards political violence – Görgöz, Vanhove & Van Bouchaute, elaborated on the model of Deklerck, J. (2006)

Further characteristics of this model are:

- It is not a phased or tiered approach of prevention and it does not involve the idea of a cascading sequence of prevention efforts in time. On the contrary, the model starts from the analysis of a perceived problem and leads to appropriate actions on different levels with special attention to avoid counterproductive effects of some (more problem oriented) measures on other prevention levels.
- The model makes a clear distinction between problem oriented (negative) versus wellbeing oriented (positive) prevention approach.
- The model differentiates five levels of prevention, from general to specific prevention; making the difference with direct intervention and curation as the reactive part of integral prevention.

In general, we advocate more attention for the lower levels of the prevention pyramid as opposed to a prevention approach 'higher' in the pyramid. Direct intervention and curation/mitigation are in fact more reactive interventions with more explicit tasks for security services, whilst social and educational actors are more appropriate to deliver preventive efforts in fundamental, general and specific prevention. Effective specific prevention needs a basis in the 'lower' broader, wellbeing-oriented levels.

The ORPHEUS recommendations have been organised accordingly, with a particular focus on Level 2 (General Prevention) and Level 3 (Specific Prevention) of the pyramid.

GENERAL PREVENTION:

PREVENT RISK WITH A BROAD AND POSITIVE APPROACH

A broad and positive approach to prevention is in line with the core values of an open democratic society. Additionally, it is more efficient and effective because prevention costs are lower than reactive intervention or counter policies that require the involvement of multiple criminal justice system institutions (law enforcement, courts, rehabilitation institutions).

Recommendation 1:

Develop the Safe Spaces Concept

The ORPHEUS pilot experimented with the concept of 'safe spaces', *"where young people can meet each other, supported by professionals they trust. In these safe spaces delicate topics are address comfortably, young people are stimulated to engage in social institutions, and are supported in the public expression of grievances. These safe spaces are organised in such a way that they enable us to offer a pedagogical support as opposed to a disproportional repressive reaction."* (ORPHEUS application)

It is tempting to use safe spaces for tackling specific risk factors in prevention work. However, in a broader and more general perspective, we connect safe spaces to the second layer of the pyramid: "prevent risk with a broad and positive approach". In that perspective, safe space work relates to ideas on civic education for all young people. This view implies two challenges:

- we warn against a view on "the model citizen within a harmonic society": a democratic society inevitably implies differences in views and lifestyles, so a "one size fits all" approach is not appropriate or productive;
- we also warn against reducing 'safe spaces' to an instrument in prevention work: a safe climate and a trust relation are in the heart of good educational practices

Recommendation 2:

Measure the Needs of Young People Through Active Dialogue

The ORPHEUS pilot activities and analysis have shown that it is important for grassroots institutions to understand and engage with the current and developing needs of diverse and dynamic communities.

It is especially important to establish and maintain active dialogue with young people to ensure their voices are heard and acted upon, helping to prevent polarisation and social alienation, two risk factors for violent extremism. It is essential for organisations to be inclusive in their outreach activities to ensure the most isolated, vulnerable and at-risk young people are able to participate.

Advice on engaging young people in active dialogue is available in the ORPHEUS toolkit, which includes guidance on supporting young people to have difficult conversations, express their grievances and fight against the injustices they experience. The ORPHEUS prevention model provides an effective framework to support institutions in achieving this.

Recommendation 3:

Establish and Preserve Partnerships with Civil Society Organisations

Civil society organisations are an important feature of democratic societies, representing the interests of a wide range of different groups, including young people and / or those from marginalised groups. ORPHEUS's pilot activities and research indicate that public officials should make organised and consistent attempts to support and collaborate with such organisations, to ensure that there is ongoing open dialogue and, in particular, to support the establishment and maintenance of active dialogue with young people discussed in Recommendation 2.

Recommendation 4:

Establish a Prevention Network or Join an Existing One

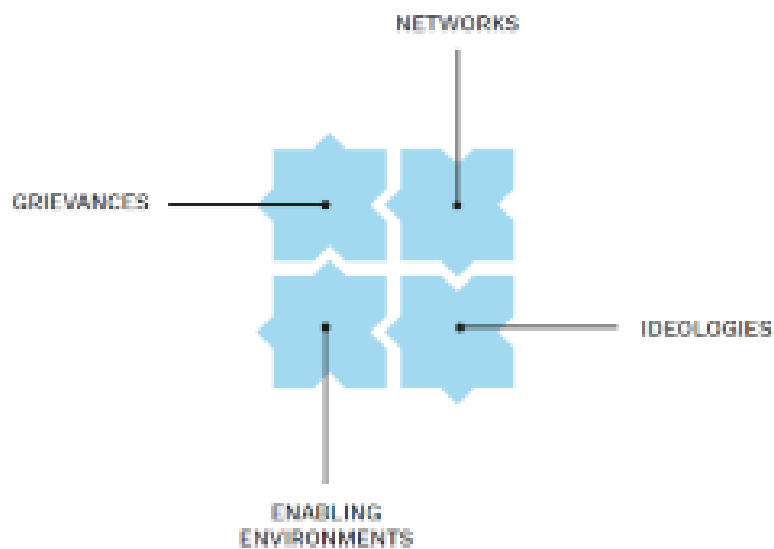
Violent extremist networks are grooming and recruiting young people, operating globally beyond national boundaries. Local prevention efforts are crucial but may, on their own, be insufficient to face these challenges.

Therefore, we recommend engaging in cross-regional / cross-border collaborative networks with other professionals to boost combined action against online and offline recruitment of young people. Such initiatives can be challenging in terms of finding a common ground and language, but if facilitated effectively, and with the full participation of young people, they may be more efficacious than isolated efforts. Members of the network will share good practices, innovation, the preconditions for success of various initiatives and challenges faced, as well as educating, informing and supporting each other about current and emerging threats and potential solutions, as demonstrated by ORPHEUS itself, as a cross-border, collaborative process between a network of professionals from a variety of specialisms.

SPECIFIC PREVENTION:

REDUCE RISK BY DIRECTLY RESPONDING TO RISK FACTORS

Linear models of pathways towards violent extremism are commonly used but fail to grasp the diverse paths and timing towards violent extremism. Hafez & Mullins (2015) did not find evidence for this linearity and suggested a puzzle metaphor based/focusing on the interdependence of four components: grievances, networks, ideologies, and enabling environment and support structures.



Recommendation 5:

Develop Safe Spaces to Tackle the Interplay of Risk Factors

Building on the puzzle model safe spaces can be developed to tackle the interplay of three risk factors by:

- addressing controversial topics and promoting inclusive alter-narratives (**narratives, ideologies**)
- stimulating young people to strengthen their positive networks and engage positively with social institutions (**networks**)
- supporting young people in the public expression of grievances (**grievances**)

The concept of safe space is not so much characterised by a location, institution, organisation, but by the philosophy behind it. This starts with an understanding of what a safe space can mean for young people. A safe space can be described as, on the one hand, a confined space where a lab is set up for learning experiences with a freedom of expression that is not always possible in the outside world. This may evolve into a space where discussions about societal issues are given a central place. In addition to being a 'closed' space, the safe space is also a 'public space' connected to the outside world, and in that sense the lab is never completely closed. All conflicts in society can just pop up in the safe space. It is a small step from that interpretation of safe space as a lab for the public debate to the idea of 'making the debate public'.

In our publication "From Safe to Brave Spaces", we elaborate on how we can support young people from being mere participants in a Safe Space. We elaborate on how young people can transcend the borders of a Safe Space, and how to take initiative to communicate and connect with the wider society.

Recommendation 6:

Train Professionals to Raise Their Confidence and Skills in Addressing Risk Factors

ORPHEUS aims to increase the skills and confidence of professionals working with young people in relevant competency areas by strengthening them through training.

Policymakers should encourage, support or provide the opportunity for professionals to take part in this training which will empower them in their work with young people and upskill them in handling problematic and sensitive matters in relation to young people and establishing social bonding between vulnerable young people and the community.

The training on **Dealing with Controversial Issues** is the overarching training, acting as an umbrella beneath which all the other training modules sit.

- This training focuses on offering young people opportunities to express their **grievances** in an interactive, constructive and informal environment;
- Attention for a safe and respectful climate during intense discussions and for recognising opposites without lapsing into enmity contributes to **positive networks**;
- For the puzzle element of '**ideologies**': this training helps key persons to support young people in critical thinking on ideas, narratives.

The four other trainings also address specific factors:

- **Strengthening Personal Safety in Safe Spaces** supports skills, knowledge, ability and confidence to build safe spaces amongst and with young people and in their relationship with professionals (positive **networks**);

- The training on **Moral Panic, Youth and Counter Culture** supports frontline workers in coping with the countering elements of youth culture. By highlighting the positive elements of youth culture, frontline workers can make an important connection with young people (positive **networks**);
- The training on **Critical Literacy and Online Awareness** aims to support professionals in acquiring the skills, knowledge, ability and confidence to support young people to develop critical thinking skills to be able to evaluate effectively the information they encounter online (**ideologies**);
- The training on **Politicisation (Get Up Stand Up: Supporting Young People In Their Struggle Against Injustice)** focuses on supporting professionals in creating channels with young people to address their **grievances**.

Recommendation 7:

Support Young People and Professionals in Discussing Controversial Issues

Because controversy and allowing controversy are part and parcel of a democratic society, controversies should not be avoided but given a well-considered place. Dealing actively with controversy also has advantages for young people growing up in a vital democracy: (1) it is formative for their role as citizens; (2) it sharpens their critical awareness and (3) it is good for developing their skills.

Dealing with controversy is a very concrete and practical pedagogical challenge. Professionals need support in at least four key elements:

- maintaining a relation of trust and confidentiality with the young people;
- coping with their own lack of confidence;
- dealing with the question 'what is negotiable and what isn't?'
- being seen to be taking the issue seriously, without the perception of condoning certain attitudes.

That is why in the ORPHEUS training 'Dealing with Controversial Issues' these challenges are addressed for both formal (e.g. during class) and informal (e.g. during leisure time activities, youth work, sports) contexts.

Recommendation 8:

Support Young People in Their Struggle Against Injustice

ORPHEUS's safe space pilots have shown that young people actually needed and wanted to talk about their grievances when they were given the opportunity. Young people should be supported in their struggle against economic, cultural and political injustices if we desire to build a democratic, diverse and promising future. During pilot applications young people addressed that they felt their voice was not heard. Hence, it is important that local authorities facilitate, recognise, listen and respond to these voices.

Such an approach will make young people understand that their views are valued, included in the policy making process and it will feed their sense of belonging to the community. Professionals working with these young people must be given time and opportunities to support them when they want to express their grievances about experienced injustices. ORPHEUS has created a training module and guidance manual, **Get Up Stand Up: Supporting Young People In Their Struggle Against Injustice**, to equip professionals with the skills and confidence they need to support young people in this area.

Recommendation 9:

Emphasise the Agency of Young People in Prevention Work

The ORPHEUS model strongly emphasises the involvement of young people, not as the ‘objects’ of prevention activity, but as subjects, actors and equal citizens. In other words, the ORPHEUS model centres young people as co-creators of prevention efforts, with appropriate pedagogical support from professionals. This approach opens a new pedagogical framework beyond the dichotomy of ‘safeguarding’ the potential victim or ‘signalling’ the potential criminal, instead harnessing young people’s natural idealism and empowering them to feel part of the solution.

The ORPHEUS pilot activities have confirmed the effectiveness of this approach and the training modules and guidance manuals available in the ORPHEUS toolkit are specifically designed to support professionals in adopting it.

Recommendation 10:

Support Young People to Develop Their Critical Literacy and Online Awareness

Young people, when visiting online spaces such as social media platforms and chat rooms, may be exposed to propaganda and ideological grooming from those who wish to recruit them into committing violent extremist acts. Therefore, it is essential that young people are able to effectively evaluate information that they encounter online.

ORPHEUS's approach, in line with its emphasis on the agency of young people, is to move from a purely safeguarding perspective, that may cultivate a passive approach to risk from children, to a more empowering and resilient stance, helping young people to develop their media and information literacy skills and enhance their critical thinking and sense of global democratic citizenship, increasing their resilience to online grooming.

ORPHEUS provides two training modules to support the development of young people's media literacy skills, one for professionals and one aimed directly at young people.

Furthermore, the incorporation of media literacy training into school curriculums alongside the development of peer-led schemes, where a small number of young people are specially trained in online safety and can pass on their learning to their peers, is encouraged.

Recommendation 11:

Promote Positive Alternatives to Violent Extremist Narratives

An important part of ORPHEUS's integrated approach to tackling the risk-factors for violent extremism is the promotion of positive alternatives to violent extremist narratives. 'Alter-narratives' do not target specific violent extremist narratives directly, but are positively framed, empowering perspectives on topics of relevance to young people that are often presented in stereotypical or polarising ways, such as immigration, youth culture and race and ethnicity. Alter-narratives can provide opportunities for young people to address one another and discuss hot topics, speak for themselves, promote a pluralistic approach and support politicisation, while also helping to raise critical awareness and increase resilience to ideological grooming. ORPHEUS has developed 12 short alter-narrative movies and a guidance manual to support content creators to develop their own alter-narrative content.

Conclusion

The recommendations offered above focus on Level 2 (General Prevention) and Level 3 (Specific Prevention) of the ORPHEUS Prevention Pyramid, emphasising the prevention mechanisms that can be achieved with the tools provided by ORPHEUS.

However, the project activities also highlighted the significance of many wider societal issues which contribute to the root causes of violent extremism. These issues, most of which sit within Level 1 of the Prevention Pyramid, Fundamental Prevention: Improving the Quality of Life in an Inclusive Society, are beyond the scope of the project to address, or offer solutions for. They may, however, fall within the purview of policymakers to influence or enact, and we therefore offer some additional observations of policies which, if consistently implemented and supported, may weaken the underlying risk factors leading to violent extremism, such as social alienation, grievances and polarisation, and promote social bonding and a sense of belonging. This, in turn, allows for wellbeing-oriented prevention models such as ORPHEUS to have a wider and more in-depth preventative effect.

- Making active and consistent efforts to secure all-inclusive welfare policies in support of social justice and equity
- Increasing the provision of financially supported social participative structures for young people to attend at low or no cost, such as leisure, social and sports clubs
- Political and community leaders should consistently deliver clear messages and actions supporting inclusivity of every individual regardless of their origin, skin colour, religion, sexual orientation, gender or any other distinguishing feature that makes their identity
- Schools, youth organisations, adult training facilities and integration entities should promote values that can be accepted by everybody regardless of their background such as social justice, human rights, equality, equity, democracy and democratic citizenship
- Zero tolerance of discriminatory treatment by public officials

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