European Crime Prevention Award (ECPA)

Annex I

Approved by the EUCPN Management Board in 2018

Please complete the template in English in compliance with the ECPA criteria contained in the Rules and procedures for awarding and presenting the European Crime Prevention Award (Par.2 §3).

General information

1. Please specify your country.

Denmark

2. Is this your country's ECPA entry or an additional project?

This is an official ECPA entry from Denmark

3. What is the title of the project?

Children and young people's online life on the edge

4. Who is responsible for the project? Contact details.

Danish Center for Prevention of Extremism, UCL University College, Professionshøjskolen Absalon and Save the Children Denmark

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5. Start date of the project (dd/mm/yyyy)? Is the project still running (Yes/No)? If not, please provide the end date of the project.

The project started on February 2020 and is still running

6. Where can we find more information about the project? Please provide links to the project's website or online reports or publications (preferably in English).

Børn og unges online-liv på kanten. Hvordan forebygger vi, at det udvikler sig ekstremt? | Professionshøjskolen Absalon (phabsalon.dk)

Children and young people's online life on the edge – How do we prevent it from developing extremely?

The aim of the project is to make an education programme to equip municipal professionals so they can be better at preventing extremism online among children and young people.

The internet and social media have created a new social reality where users can interact with each other and potentially create new kinds of communities while sharing knowledge on an unprecedented scale. However, the internet has also become an arena where extremist groups and individuals are able to share hateful or polarising content and connect with children and young people who may be manipulated into sharing racist statements, for example, that are directed at a particular group, or videos with violent content.

Children and young people are now more likely to encounter content or ideological attitudes in their online lives that can be characterised as extremist.

This can include unpleasant conspiracy theories or jokes that pop up on gaming platforms and display dehumanising perceptions of others. Furthermore, it has become easier for children and young people themselves to seek out social media and platforms with extremist material, e.g., on 4Chan/8Chan, closed Discord channels or hate groups on e.g. Facebook and TikTok, where they can contribute hateful content themselves.

New phenomena such as echo chambers, trolling, grooming, misinformation and fake news have come to the fore, and research has become increasingly aware of the mechanisms that lead to polarisation and extremist behaviour on online fora. But online culture and phenomena doesn't stay online. There often is a slip over effect, this became more pronounced during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The main part of the project has been to create an education programme/a five-day training seminar for municipal practitioners working with children and young people such as police, educators, social workers, mentors etc.

With focus on the mechanisms than can lead to extremism and radicalization the education also deals with issues such as bullying, social grievances, exclusion and inclusion mechanisms, grooming, fake news and conspiracy theories. And with special attention on establish dialog and relations with parents and children.

The development of the education is based on a knowledge foundation that consists of:

• A desk research with a review of existing research literature on extremism online

• A mapping of current research and practice initiatives in the Danish context of relevance to the education

• A qualitative study of professionals' educational needs and young people's experiences online

• A co-creation workshop, where the participants with expert knowledge and practical experience in the field gave their bid for knowledge for the education and developed methods for use in the course

From this the content of the 5 weeks education program was created; Children and online culture, Individual's pathway to extremism with focus on grooming, Conspiracy Theories, The roles of parents - and at last didactics in conflicts and dialogues about difficult topics. The aim is that participants are more equipped with knowledge and tools to prevent children becoming a part of extremist milieus and from the evaluations we are on the right track.

The education gives competences to relate nuanced and exploratory to how online phenomena affect key processes in the lives of children and young people.

Tools for being able to enter into dialogue with children and young people about their online lives as well as inappropriate/worrisome trends online, including also being able to initiate open discussions with children and young people.

Competences to apply approaches and methods in the work of preventing online extremism and to develop and adapt such approaches and methods to one's own practice.

7. Please give a **one page** description of the project (**Max. 600 words)**

8. Which **crime prevention/ reduction mechanisms** were used in this project to contribute to crime prevention and/or the reduction of crime or the fear of crime? Multiple answers are possible.

> ☒**Establishing and maintaining normative barriers to committing criminal acts**
> e.g. 'Offenders, we are watching you' campaigns
> ☒**Reducing recruitment** to criminal social environments and activities by eliminating or reducing the social and individual causes and processes that lead to criminality
> e.g. social and financial support for disadvantaged families
> ☐**Deterring** potential perpetrators from committing crimes through the threat of punishment
> e.g. decreasing the time between arrest and punishment
> ☐**Disrupting** criminal acts by stopping them before they are carried out
> e.g. increasing police patrols in vulnerable areas
> ☐**Protecting vulnerable targets** by reducing opportunities and make it more demanding to carry out criminal acts
> e.g. placing locks and cameras
> ☐**Reducing the harmful consequences** of criminal acts
> e.g. initiatives to recover stolen goods
> ☐**Reducing the rewards** from criminal acts
> e.g. restorative justice programmes
> ☐**Incapacitating** (or neutralising) perpetrators by denying them the ability (capacity) to carry out new criminal acts
> e.g. imprisonment of key gang members
> ☐**Encouraging** desistance from crime and rehabilitating former offenders so they are able to settle back into a normal life
> e.g. prison rehabilitation programs

> Explain how this/these crime prevention mechanisms were used ((**Max. 300 words**)

> The project is first and foremost a prevention project - created from what is called "the prevention triangle" in the field of countering extremism and radicalization. It's a widely known and common picture of how to target young people in preventing crime. According to the Danish "triangle" perspective of prevention, there is a layer of "prevention to all" at the bottom, "prevention to the children and young people at risk" in the middle, and "Children and young people who are involved in extremist activities" at the top.

> This project focuses on the two bottom layers, with some threads to the top, in order to better understand the field of extremism.

> Especially the desk research made the foundation for establishing and maintaining normative barriers to committing criminal acts. The purpose of the

desk research was to unearth and identify existing knowledge about online extremism with a focus on prevention in order to gain a broad overview of what has been worked with on a national and international level, as well as how significant phenomena were defined and understood.

On the basis of this an education was designed to help practitioners with knowledge and tools in their work with preventing extremism online. This included learning tools for being able to enter into dialogue with children and young people about their online lives as well as inappropriate/worrisome trends online, including also being able to initiate open debates with children and young people.

Finally, the course trained practitioners in how to apply different approaches and methods in the work of preventing online extremism and to develop and adapt such approaches and methods to one's own practice.

II. **The project shall have been evaluated and have achieved most or all of its objectives.** For more information on evaluation, click here

9. What were the reasons for setting up the project? Was this context analysed before the project was initiated and in what way (How, and by whom? Which data were used?)? In what way did this analysis inform the set-up of the project? (**Max. 150 words**)

Children and young people are now more likely to encounter content or ideological attitudes in their online lives that can be characterized as extremist. While research has become increasingly aware of the mechanisms that lead to polarization and extremist behaviour on online fora, practitioners working with children and young people call for new knowledge and methods to prevent hate speech and dehumanizing tendencies to spread.

The Danish Centre for Prevention of Extremism which supports preventive work among practitioners, prevention partners and educators often experiences that these professionals call for new methods and techniques to promote resilience and to enter into dialogue with the target group about their experiences online. The Centre has since 2016 worked with prevention of extremism online. Since 2016, the Centre has initiated a range of initiatives on which this educational program builds upon.

10. What were the objective(s) of the project? Please, if applicable, distinguish between main and secondary objectives. (**Max. 150 words**)

The primary objective of the project is to design and carry out an education programme to equip municipal professionals so they can prevent extremism online among children and young people.

In order to do so, a huge knowledge base was necessary and that was the secondary objective of the project.

First and foremost a desk research. The purpose of the desk research was to unearth and identify existing knowledge about online extremism with a focus on prevention in order to gain a broad overview of national and international initiatives, as well as how significant phenomena were defined and understood.

Besides the desk research three other elements were of importance:

• A mapping of current research and practice initiatives in the Danish context

• A qualitative study of professionals' educational needs and young people's experiences online

• A co-creation workshop, where the participants could engage in discussions with expert in the field

11. Has there been a process evaluation?[1] Who conducted the evaluation (internally or externally?) and what were the main results? Which indicators were used to measure the process? Did you make changes accordingly? (**max. 300 words**)

There has been an external process evaluation.

The evaluation was based on a questionnaire survey with answers from the course participants. The questionnaire survey was followed up by a short interview survey with randomly selected course participants.

The questions was connected to the competence, knowledge and skills goals at the course.

There has been made an evaluation report after each course round and an overall report at the end of the project.

This has made it possible to use the evaluation both formatively and summatively.

As a formative example the report has been a part of a co-creation workshop with an external committee with participants from the customer field,

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[1] **Process evaluation:** Also called *implementation evaluation*, or *monitoring*, this process documents **how the activities were implemented** in order to determine any deviations from the original planning. It facilitates finding explanations for when the results of the intervention are not as expected.

researchers and other people with great knowledge and experience with the field, in order to develop and improve the course for future courses.

The evaluation generally shows great satisfaction with the course, and it is expressed that there has been a great need for a course like this.

The evaluation also shows that the participants will recommend the course to others in the field. It is also pointed out that there may be a need for a superimposed course.

The evaluation has therefore achieved all of its objectives.

12. Has there been an outcome[2] or impact[3] evaluation? Who conducted the evaluation (internally or externally?), which data and evaluation method were used and what were the main results? Which indicators were used to measure the impact? (**Max. 300 words**)

An internal process evaluation has been carried out. The educational programme was evaluated by Professionhøjskolen Absalon. Overall, the respondents rated the program as "good" or "really good". The evaluation includes a questionnaire and supplementary in depth interviews. The evaluation is based on the first three programmes. There has been changes according to the evaluation e.g. more practical tools and exercises tailored for the target group were enrolled in the education .

III. **The project shall, as far as possible, be innovative, involving new methods or new approaches.**

13. How is the project innovative in its methods and/or approaches? (**Max. 150 words**)

The project is innovative in its multi-method approach. Through the desk research a solid knowledge base was created in form of a knowledge synthesis and mapping of all existing knowledge about online extremism among children and young people with a focus on prevention.

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[2] **Outcome evaluation:** Measures the **direct effect** (i.e., extent of the changes) **of the intervention on the target group, population, or geographic area**. The information produced by the outcome evaluation determines at what level the **objectives were achieved**.

[3] **Impact evaluation:** Measures **long-term effects** of the intervention on the target group, as well as **indirect effects** on the broader community. The information produced by the impact evaluation determines at what level the **ultimate goals** of the intervention were achieved.

A qualitative study consisting of interviews with practitioners and focus group interviews with children were carried out to map the target groups' vulnerabilities, experiences online and educational needs.

A co-creation workshop was made to increase networking between researchers, partners and practitioners. At the workshop the design of the education was discussed and evaluated in order to ensure that the education was not only knowledge-based but also based on all existing practical knowledge in the field of prevention. And new methods that are specifically tailored for the target groups, e.g., an "emoji dialog tool" was created.

We haven't come across similar training programmes in the EU.

IV. **The project shall be based on cooperation between partners, where possible.**

14. Which partners or stakeholders were involved in the project and what was their involvement? (**Max. 200 words**)

The Danish Centre for Prevention of Extremism. The project was funded and commissioned by the Centre which also described the task and the aim of the education.

UCL, University College conducted the desk research and was involved in designing and teaching in the course/education

Professionshøjskolen Absalon was involved in all single parts of the project including being in charge of the evaluation of the project.

Save the Children Denmark was involved in creating and designing the education and teaching in the course/education. Especially because of their extended knowledge about Children online, child participation and grooming tactics.

V. **The project shall be capable of replication in other Member States.**

15. How and by whom is the project funded? (**Max. 150 words**)

The project was funded by The Danish Centre for Prevention of Extremism. The Centre is part of the Danish Agency for International Recruitment and Integration which operates under the Ministry of Immigration and Integration.

16. What were the costs of the project in terms of finances, material and human resources? (**Max. 150 words**)

The cost of the project was 2.350.000 DKK. This includes development of the training programme and the organising three training programmes over a period of 10 months.

17. Has a cost-benefit analysis[4] been carried out? If so, describe the analysis, including how and by whom it was carried out and list the main findings of the analysis. (**Max. 150 words**)

No, there has only been carried out an evaluation.

18. Are there adjustments to be made to the project to ensure a successful replication in another Member State?

Some adjustments might be useful. It depends on the culture and prevention policies of the countries and how e.g. police, social workers, teachers etc. are co-working with prevention. The Danish prevention model is based on several legislations and rationales as depicted in "The Prevention triangle"

19. How is the project relevant for other Member States? Please explain the European dimension of your project.

The internet has no country boundaries. Communities and interest groups on TikTok, Snapchat, Instagram, Reddit, 4Chan, 8Chan and gaming communities in Minecraft, Among Us or maybe in Fortnite – in combination with Discord and Twitch is how life is in all the European countries. And corona lockdown has made it even more important to carry out educational programs which target the fact that children and young people are likely to encounter content that can be characterized as extreme. New methods of how to prevent those things develop into the extreme are more important than ever and practitioners all over Europe working with children and young people should be given the opportunity to better understand and engage in dialogue with the children about what they experience online in order to prevent phenomena such as hate speech and dehumanizing tendencies, grooming, trolling and the spread of misinformation and conspiracy theories.

Before Corona, when children came across fake news and almost believed it – or was in an online gaming situation where hateful rhetoric was explicit – they could talk about it at school with their friends and teachers. Their inner compass was adjusted each day. That has not been a possibility during the Corona lockdown. Children have been much more on their own. The Echo chamber for radical views in many online (gaming) communities have grown every day. Furthermore - many children have felt alone in the lockdown. And the common dynamics of these exclusionary communities is that members feel a sense of belonging. Over the last year there has been an increase from extremist groups trying to manipulate different gaming communities often via Discord and twitch. Taking advantage of the longing for belonging.

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[4] **Cost-benefit analysis**: A type of economic evaluation that compares the direct and indirect cost of the resources employed in the intervention, with the equivalent economic value of the benefits.

And even though we are at the end of the corona pandemic, with a lot of children and youth back in the physical world, we can still see the traces of the misinformation pandemic. A misinformation pandemic that is local, national, European and World vide.

Please provide a short general description of the project (abstract for inclusion in the conference booklet – **max. 150 words**).

Children and young people's online life on the edge – How do we prevent it from developing extremely?

The aim is to make an education programme to equip municipal professionals so they can be able to prevent extremism online among children and young people.

With the focus being on the mechanisms than can lead to extremism the education also deals with issues such as bullying, social grievances, exclusion and inclusion mechanisms, grooming, fake news and conspiracy theories. And with a huge aspect of including perspectives from parents and children.

The development of the education is based on a knowledge foundation of:

• A desk research

• A mapping of current research and practice initiatives in the Danish context

• A qualitative study of professionals' educational needs and young people's experiences online

• A co-creation workshop, where the participants with expert knowledge and practical experience in the field gave their bid for knowledge to the project.