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ARMOUR STARTS WITH A BOOST!

The ARMOUR Project started on 01/01/2019 with a boost from all partners towards a successful implementation!

Focusing on project management, dissemination framework and tools, and alignment of initial research project steps for achieving the outcomes expected, the project partners rolled up their sleeves and start working!

ARMOUR Newsletter #1 will walk you through these initial baby steps of the project and will present you the overall project design...

ARMOUR - A radical model of resilience for young minds



Newsletter #1

January –
February 2019

Learn more about the project, its design and structure, the partners involved and its first steps!



/TheARMOURmodel



@TheARMOURmodel





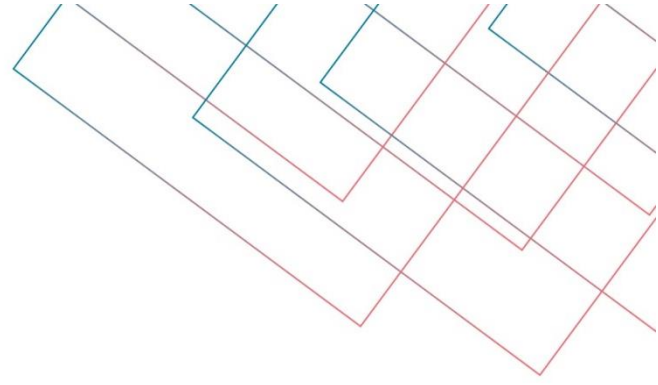
What is ARMOUR about?

The ARMOUR Project (01/2019 - 12/2020) aims to address **societal polarization** caused by the adoption and spread of extremist ideologies by creating an **interdisciplinary model of learning** helping individual and mainstream communities build resilience to ideologies and behaviours specific to **violent extremism**. The project will help both existing and potential influencers to model opinions by integrating skills on how to:

- **create a message** that deals with common concerns and interests of the middle ground society;
- **develop critical thinking** to delineate propaganda from solution-oriented discourse;
- **capitalise assertiveness** and **emotional intelligence** into mediating speech that engages and connects with the diverse categories of the silent majority; and
- **use anger management** and **conflict resolution** to contain and push back the discourse of the radical pushers and joiners.

ARMOUR targets a diverse range of potential influencers: **middle ground people** and **first line practitioners** in state institutions and CSOs working with young individuals in the EU that are susceptible and vulnerable to radicalizing. It does so by providing individuals in the community and practitioners the know-how, as well as a toolkit consisting of an **experimental creative lab architecture** in which to create, test, and promote psychological and community behavioural and communication strategies aimed at correcting reactions to perceived or real grievances and thus promote resilience to push and pull factors involved in advancing radicalization and violent extremism.





ARMOUR objectives

The main **project aim** is divided into **four specific objectives**:

- **Increase and leverage the awareness and knowledge of first-line practitioners regarding radicalization and polarization among children and youth:**

Using a mix of academic know-how, partners' experience as well as examples of best practices collected, through expert interviews and focus groups ARMOUR will prepare a repository of best practices (which will be further on used in the design of the ARMOUR experimental laboratories and trainings).

- **Increase the skills of first-line practitioners and members of vulnerable communities in addressing radicalization and polarization among children and youth:**

ARMOUR will design and implement **experimental laboratories**, who aim to teach first-line practitioners tools for developing social competence, problem solving, emotional competence and autonomy building. The experimental labs will include a total of seven laboratories per country - three individual agency labs, three community capacity building labs and one state response building lab.

Further on, ARMOUR will design and implement a **train the trainer programme** (TTT programme) aimed at teaching first-line practitioners how to design and use the experimental labs in their work.

Both the experimental labs and the TTT programme will take place in six ARMOUR partner countries - Italy, Malta, Greece, Spain, Romania and the Netherlands.

- **Strengthen cooperation and exchange of expertise among practitioners working with children and youth:**

Through its different engagement activities, such as the focus groups, the experimental labs and the TTT programme, ARMOUR will create a framework which will enable first-line practitioners from across the ARMOUR partner countries to interact and exchange expertise. Altogether the ARMOUR methodology and tools will form the **ARMOUR Toolkit** that will allow experts from all over Europe and beyond to create, test, and promote psychological and community behavioural and communication strategies aimed at promoting resilience to advancing radicalization and violent extremism processes.

- **Raising awareness on polarization and promoting moderate narratives and voices to the silent mainstream majority:**

To achieve this goal ARMOUR will design and organize a social media campaign promoting credible alternatives and positive narratives aimed at capacitating both individuals and communities in creating viable solutions, alternative non-violent ways of expressing grievances and effecting positive change within society.



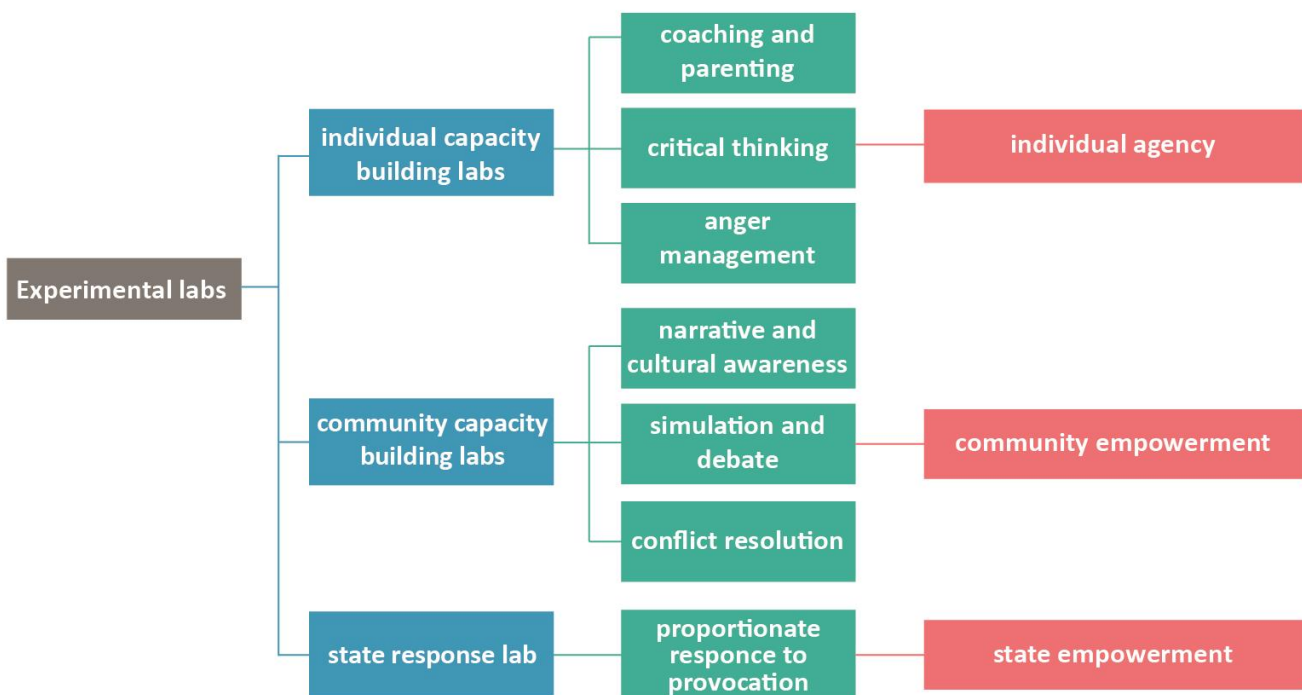
Why is ARMOUR different?

The ARMOUR **methodology** is based on a two-fold assumption: countering radicalization in Europe can be done successfully by

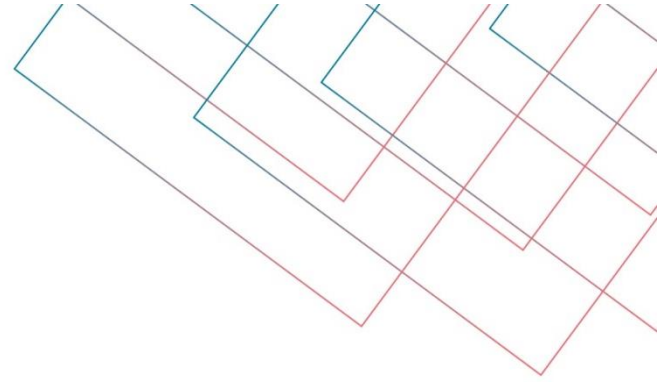
- addressing root causes through education, and
- building strong partnerships at the local level aimed at mobilizing local communities.

With respect to that the **experimental labs** are to be created with special attention on **developing and testing individual capacity building and social skills of support**.

The labs represent a **safe place** where participants can experience alternative ways of responding to push and pull factors of social polarisation and extremism. The focus is placed on internalizing and further facilitating learning by others of practical, hands-on strategies and personal skills of conflict resolution, peace building, critical thinking, anger management, proportionate response, etc.



The **experimental model** is then to be promoted through an on-site and online campaign thus providing effective alternative narratives of self-value and community building and changing the traditional target audience of previous projects – from radical pushers and joiners to the silent majority in the middle.



ARMOUR design

To achieve its objectives, the ARMOUR Project designs a specific **experimental model** and breaks down the work into **six separate flows**:

- **Work Package 1 ‘Management and coordination of the action’** oversees that the project is completed on time and within budget, the project's objectives are met and that every partner provides their results in accordance with project plan and needs.
- **Work Package 2 ‘Mapping challenges, needs, innovative solutions required in the process of prevention and de-radicalization’** aims to
 - (a) identify challenges and needs of first-line practitioners working with children and youth in the area of countering violent extremist idea and behaviour;
 - (b) identify and analyse best practices and available tools; and
 - (c) validate the initial concept of the experimental laboratories.
- **Work Package 3 ‘Experimental labs’** seeks effective design, testing and implementation of a set of seven experimental labs based on (1) the cognitive-behavioural instructional model and (2) the learning by doing model. It is to provide trainees with an essential set of skills and behaviours easily usable and adaptable in their daily professional activities.
- **Work Package 4 ‘Integrating best practices and training’** aims to design and carry out a train the trainer programme for first-line practitioners and civil society representatives on
 - (a) best practices in the field of countering extremist ideologies and polarization among young people, and
 - (b) integrating and using the ARMOUR experimental labs in their countering violent extremism activities.

The training programme will empower first-line practitioners and civil society to better address the phenomena of radicalization and polarization among young people both by helping them make better use of existing knowledge in this field and by providing them with a clear tool they can use in their work, that does not require an extensive allocation of resources and is complementary to existing efforts in this field.

- **Work Package 5 ‘Evaluation, testing and validation of design’** is to carry out an impact assessment of the experimental labs. A rigorous impact assessment methodology will be elaborated and implemented, including quantitative and qualitative methods, aiming at measuring and registering the results of the labs in connection to the expected results and planned objectives, in terms of both impact and process.
- **Work Package 6 ‘Communication, dissemination and leverage’** deals with all communication and dissemination activities for the ARMOUR Project.





ARMOUR outcomes

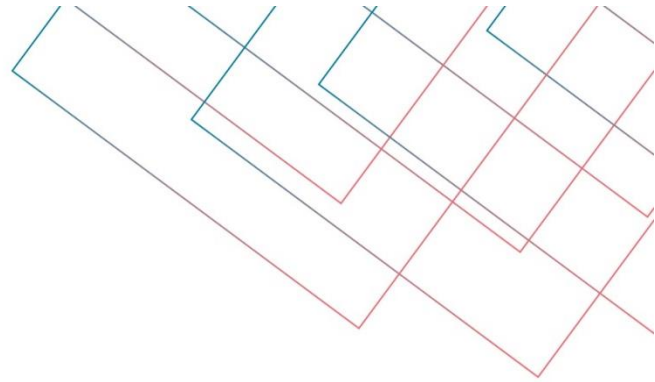
- Reports on best practices in tackling right-wing extremism, left-wing extremism and religiously inspired extremism
- A total number of 49 two- and one-day experimental laboratories with a minimum of 150 participants taking place in seven different countries
- Development of a train the trainers programme with a minimum of 250 participants taking place, again across seven countries
- Design and validation of an ARMOUR Toolkit, containing the results of both the experimental labs and the train the trainers programme
- A social media campaign promoting credible alternatives and positive narratives aimed at capacitating both individuals and communities in creating viable solutions, alternative non-violent ways of expressing grievances and effecting positive change within society.

ARMOUR partners

Nine partners from eight different EU Member States joined to implement the ARMOUR Project!



This project was funded by the European Union's Internal Security Fund — Police, under Grant Agreement No. 823683.



Most recent project developments

The ARMOUR Project [kicked-off](#) on 17-18 January 2019 in Malta. During the meeting, the partners discussed and approved key aspects of the project future development including its stages and the overall implementation plan and outlined the dissemination and evaluation strategies and criteria.

The ARMOUR's consortium, led by the [Euro-Arab Foundation for Higher Studies](#) (Spain), is also made up of the [Center for Security Studies - KEMEA](#) (Greece), the [‘Mihai Viteazul’ National Intelligence Academy](#) (Romania), [SYNYO GmbH](#) (Austria), the [Italian Ministry of Justice](#) via Provveditorato Regionale, [Agenfor International Foundation](#) (Italy), [LIBRe Foundation](#) (Bulgaria), the [University of Malta](#) (Malta) and the [University of Groningen](#) (Netherlands). A total of 19 team members took part in the initial project meeting, including all Work Packages Team Leaders.

The meeting was kindly hosted by the University of Malta.



During the first project month, ARMOUR Project Coordinator - Euro-Arab Foundation for Higher Studies (Spain) – prepared the [Project Management Plan](#). This deliverable presents the core management handbook for ARMOUR and is designed as a living document that should be updated continuously throughout the project.

The ARMOUR [Communication and Dissemination Plan](#) was also prepared in January 2019. It reflects the overall objectives of the ARMOUR Project and outlines the major steps in the implementation of all activities related to dissemination of information and raising the stakeholders' awareness on the all project activities and tools for developing social competence, problem solving, emotional competence and autonomy building.

At the end of January 2019 ARMOUR went live on social media! Join the ARMOUR Community on both [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#)!



ARMOUR initiated its first research steps!

The **basis** for all further ARMOUR activities is the process of **mapping challenges, needs, innovative solutions required in the process of prevention and de-radicalization**. Agenfor International Foundation (Italy) is leading the team behind this crucial task.

ARMOUR will identify 60 **experts** from Spain, Italy, Greece, Malta, Romania, Austria and the Netherlands **working with children and youth** on counter-radicalization and carry out **interviews** with them. The interviews' methodology underlines the different stages of the implementation of the interviews, aims at supporting the ARMOUR partners in preparing, setting up and running the qualitative interviews, reporting the collected information and providing insights; and provides partners with some necessary working tools, templates and related documentation to facilitate them in the implementation of their tasks.

The content of the interviews will then be used as a basis to prepare the guidelines for the discussion in focus groups. The **focus groups** will be carried-out with participation of **first line practitioners**, including academia representatives, educators, youth workers, social services and specialist professionals working with youth and child as psychologists, minor's services and law enforcement authorities.

Using this **three-tiered structured**, ARMOUR ensures that the tools and content of the [experimental laboratories](#) adequately address jointly or independently all strands of extremist ideologies.

The design of the interviews and the focus groups is currently on its way and the project team is internally validating the initial scenarios. Stay tuned for the results!

