

[www.armourproject.eu](http://www.armourproject.eu)

## ARMOUR FOCUS GROUPS

May and June were busy months for our teams arranging and conducting the important WP2 Focus Groups identifying challenges and needs of first-line practitioners working with children and youth in the area of countering violent extremist idea and behaviour, identifying and analyse best practices and available tools, and validating the initial concept of the experimental laboratories. More than 60 practitioners took part in the discussions and contributed to our research activities!

What else? Public events, interesting publications, first experimental labs steps, and more....



[/TheARMOURmodel](https://www.facebook.com/TheARMOURmodel)



[@TheARMOURmodel](https://twitter.com/TheARMOURmodel)

## ARMOUR - A radical model of resilience for young minds



**Newsletter #3**  
**May – June 2019**

Learn more about the project, its design and structure, the partners involved and the most recent news at [www.armourproject.eu](http://www.armourproject.eu)!





## ARMOUR Focus Groups

The **basis** for all ARMOUR activities is the process of [mapping challenges, needs, innovative solutions required in the process of prevention and de-radicalization](#). These first steps of the project include: mapping the relevant stakeholders on national level; conducting qualitative interviews and focus groups with selected expert profiles; and identifying challenges and needs of first line practitioners working with children and youth in the area of countering violent extremist idea and behaviour, as well as best practices and available tools.

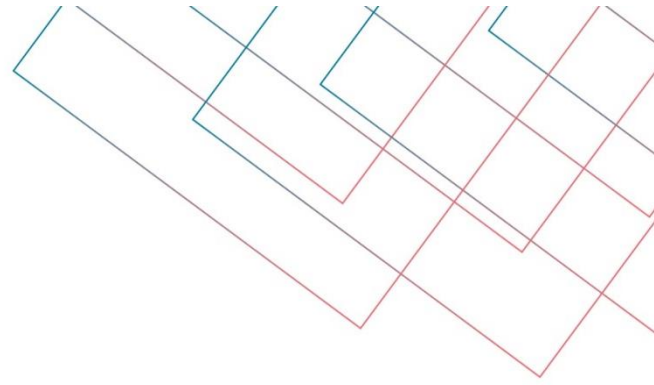
During the March – April 2019 period, ARMOUR conducted a series of interviews, and now the second stage of the qualitative research took place. The focus groups aimed at validating the interviews results and obtaining relevant inputs for the next project tasks.

The **group discussions** covered the following topics: radicalisation and violent extremism understanding; factors, drivers and key elements for each of the three types of ideologies (religious-inspired, right-wing and left-wing extremism); as well as existing tools, services, protocols, programs, strategies and policies, practitioners' challenges, needs, required skills and recommendations towards effective prevention and intervention programs with minors and youth.

The **focus groups** were 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. They engaged more than 60 experts and took place in seven partner countries – Austria, Greece, Italy, Malta, Spain, Romania, and the Netherlands.







*ARMOUR Focus Group in Granada, Spain*

The ARMOUR Focus Group in **Spain** took place on 4 June 2019 and was hosted by our partner Euro-Arab Foundation for Higher Studies (FUNDEA). A total of nine first-line practitioners took part. Participants put focus on the use of tools for diagnosis, observation, registration and collection of information, design of valid strategies and joint actions together with social services, educational centres, non-formal education centres, associations, and police corps. Another point raised was about educational segregation and the lack of resources in schools. Focus was also placed on the need for establishing local communication

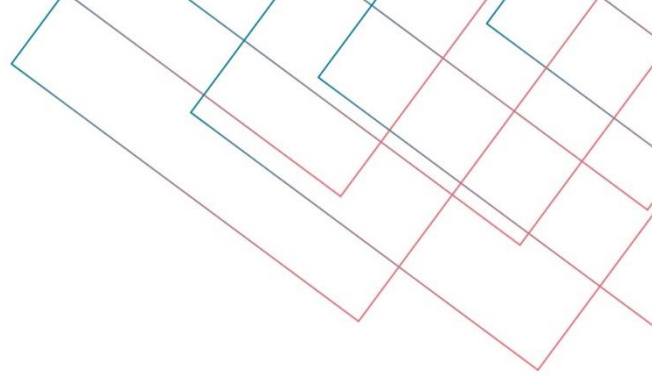
and coordination paths, as well as boards and meetings with the different actors that are present in the community.

The ARMOUR Focus Group in **Greece** took place at Athens Plaza Hotel on 10 June 2019 and was hosted by our partner Center for Security Studies (KEMEA). Thirteen participants attended the focus group. All come from relevant agencies and institutions, with the respective background in politics, research, education, religion, social services, law enforcement, etc. Among other thing, all participants agreed that a teacher support network should be established in order to detect elements of radical dynamics in their early form and counter them properly. It was underlined that as in schools all psychological pressure derived from the family environment lashes out, there should be a permanent counsellor within each school unit, so he/she can provide continuous support anytime. They also noted the importance of “counter narratives” initiatives must start from school in a bottom-up approach for extreme ideologies to be limited.

The ARMOUR Focus Group in **Italy** was held in Bologna (Emilia-Romagna Juvenile Court) on 10 June 2019 and was hosted by our partner Agenfor International Foundation. Seven participants attended the focus group, one took part via Skype. Among the professionals there were the President of the Court of Minors of Emilia-Romagna, a social worker, a sociologist, a mediator, a community director for minors and young adults. The participants united over various preventive approaches and the overall necessity of such measures especially in schools and online.



*ARMOUR Focus Group in Athens, Greece*



The ARMOUR Focus Group in **Romania** was held on 11 June 2019 and was hosted by our partner “Mihai Viteazul” National Intelligence Academy (MVNIA). Sixteen first-line practitioners attended the focus group. The discussions highlighted the idea that education and instruction (to parents, teachers and children) are the base in preventing radicalization. The participants put emphasis on the practitioners’ skills to be good observers to understand the children’s/youths’ needs and to know various and persuasive techniques. Another important aspect is the possession of multi-disciplinary knowledge in psychology, history and religion, in order to identify signs of radicalization or work on the de-radicalization process.

The ARMOUR Focus Group in **Malta** was held on 21 June 2019 and was hosted by our partner University of Malta (via the Department of Information Policy and Governance). All the practitioners highlighted a need for an increase in resources to go along with the introduction of prevention and other measures concerning radicalisation, as many of them already experience a lack of resources to cover their current activities.

Most participants recognised that they would have difficulties in recognising a radicalised individual. It would depend on the extent to which the single practitioner would follow the activity of the child (online and offline) and on the stage of the radicalisation process. Youth workers said they would be able to spend more time investigating it, while social workers recognised, they work at a pace that is too fast to focus on this.

Reporting to police increases stigma for children and young people. Participants acknowledged the need to build a system that would avoid these processes, maybe through social work services.

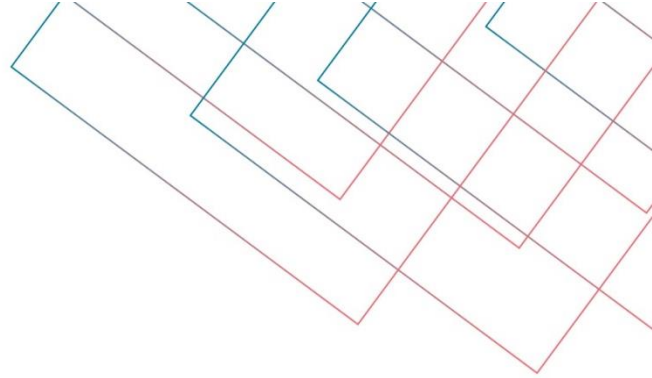
Participants were sceptical in defining cases of radicalisation when the child or young person is in teenage years and without a clear idea of where the beliefs they are showing come from. To understand whether it is radicalisation they said they would need more elements and to investigate the overall situation in depth.



*ARMOUR Focus Group in Bologna, Italy*



*ARMOUR Focus Group in Malta*



The ARMOUR Focus Group in **the Netherlands** was held on 26 June 2019 and was hosted by our partner University of Groningen (via the Security, Technology and e-Privacy Research Group). Seven practitioners took part: a youth worker, a policeman, a researcher, two policy advisers from different municipalities, someone from child protection and a process coordinator radicalisation from a governmental network.

The general conclusion was that the problem lies not in the absence of programmes or tools, but also in the accessibility and availability of those programmes and tools for first line practitioners.

Another improvement could lie in attaining more data. The general public is aware and afraid of religious extremism but doesn't seem to care about left and right extremism. Showing the actual numbers on radicalisation in general could raise awareness.

The last recommendation was to mobilise other partners, especially schools, to create awareness about the problem and offer knowledge and skills on how to notice and deal with problematic behaviour.

The ARMOUR Focus Group in **Austria** is to take place on 4 July 2019 and will be virtually hosted by our partner SYNYO GmbH.

---

*The extract of findings presented in the present newsletter is exemplary and not exhaustive!*

**Overview of all relevant findings and their analyses** will be implemented by the ARMOUR Team during the summer period.

Meanwhile, based on the results from the expert interviews and the preliminary review of the focus groups, the ARMOUR Team has already started working on the **Experimental Laboratories methodology and design**.

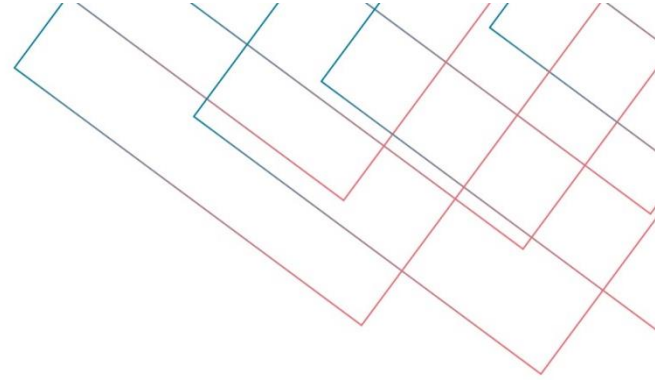
The main aim is to provide trainees with an essential set of skills and behaviours easily usable and adaptable in their daily professional activities. The labs will be created as a safe chamber where participants can experience alternative ways of responding to push and pull factors of social polarisation and extremism as well as various strategies and techniques of replicating skills within the community.

Furthermore, the experimental labs aim to provide practitioners with a better understanding of risk factors in the community, family, school, as well as in peer-to-peer communication, and to teach them how to respond in concrete situations and equip them with a first aid emergency toolkit containing smart solutions – e.g. resolving conflicts in principled ways, thus fostering relationships and facilitating bonding between potentially adverse individuals, teaching youth how to control behaviour by making choices which satisfy their needs, offering opportunities to resolve conflicts peacefully, etc.

The experimental labs are expected to engage over 125 professionals in 6 EU countries - Italy, Malta, Greece, Spain, Romania and the Netherlands, and are planned to start in the beginning of 2020.







## TAKEDOWN Final Conference: Europe did not measure the seriousness of radicalisation

**“The European institutions have not been able to gauge the seriousness of radicalisation”**, has declared José Luis Serrano, Head of Area at the Intelligence Centre for Counter-Terrorism and Organized Crime, in Valencia during the closing ceremony of TAKEDOWN, a H2020 European project that has investigated for three years the social, psychological and economical aspects of terrorism and organized crime as well as their impact in social cohesion, with the aim of developing prevention and intervention tools aimed at professionals in the sector.

The event, under the banner “New Approaches for Fighting Radicalization, Terrorism and Organized Crime”, has been the finishing touch to three years of work on this project funded with more than three million euros by the European Union’s Horizon 2020 program, and also considered as an example of [“success”](#) by the European Commission. The meeting, held on 18 June 2019 at the headquarters of the Local Police of Valencia, has been inaugurated by the mayor of the city, Joan Ribó, and has gathered more than 150 people from 18 countries, including members of law enforcement agencies, researchers from different fields and professionals in the sector.

Throughout the day, the results of TAKEDOWN have been presented, highlighting the digital platform [First Line Practitioners](#), an innovative tool for training, advice and information, aimed at professionals who work with people who are vulnerable to radicalization processes, such as social workers, educators, psychologists or police officers. Amongst the topics addressed were also cybercrime, cooperation between key actors in the fight against violent extremism, the nexus between terrorism and organized crime, the financial aspects of these two phenomena that



threaten the security of the European Union and its population. The ARMOUR Project, in the face of Javier Ruiperez, FUNDEA (Spain), presented insights from the first stages of the project mapping challenges, needs and innovative solutions required in the process of prevention and de-radicalization, and what to be expected by the future experimental labs being an innovative interdisciplinary education oriented model of learning addressing societal polarization caused by the adoption and spread of extremist ideologies.

More about the event and the activities under the project can be found at: <https://www.takedownproject.eu>.



## ARMOUR at Expert Exchange in Tunis

Experts gathered in Tunis for an exchange dedicated to **'New Perspectives against Radicalisation - Preventing Radicalisation and Promoting Democracy through International Exchange'**.

The expert exchange was coordinated by [INJUVE](#) (Spanish Institute of Youth), [IJAB](#) (International Youth Service of the Federal Republic of Germany) and [Club Culturel Ali Belhouane – Tunis](#), and supported by [Demokratie leben](#), and took place between 24<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> June 2019.

[FUNDEA](#), part of ARMOUR's [team](#), represents the project and brings the attention to a short session on "Towards a global approach to religious and political fundamentalism". The presentation focuses on how we can explain the strong resurgence of religious identity, how we're going to deal with this phenomenon, and whether we could turn a group of young people who are target for terrorist influence into positive force against it.

*Do you know who else is part of the [ARMOUR Team](#)?*

*Check the organizations below and get in touch!*



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



## ARMOUR repository is growing!

*ARMOUR continues building a repository of guidelines, tools, articles, etc. developed by third parties and identified by the ARMOUR Consortium as best practices in the social polarization field for first line practitioners working with children and youth. Some new entries are shown below!*

### FIRST LINE >>> PRACTITIONERS

The platform [firstlinepractitioners.com](https://firstlinepractitioners.com) provides latest information and knowledge, practical guidelines and useful supporting tools for first-line-practitioners and the public in order to facilitate collaborative activities against radicalization, terrorism and organized crime. The toolkit aims at supporting professionals, who are looking for an intuitive compilation of relevant resources related to radicalization, violent extremism, terrorism, organized crime and cybercrime. The toolkit helps them to reduce the

large amount of information by allowing them to choose from a variety of areas and challenges. A dedicated dashboard provides them with a set of [similar cases and relevant practices](#), [related public services](#), [apps and tools](#), [knowledge articles](#) and further [external resources](#).

**Are you interested in cooperating or taking part?**

**Do you want to know more about the project or any of our activities?**

**Get in contact via [office@armourproject.eu](mailto:office@armourproject.eu) or follow us online @TheARMOURmodel**

