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## #7 Highlights

ARMOUR reporting on pretesting and validation of the pilot Experimental Labs

Experimental Labs launched in Romania and Greece

Dates for Experimental labs in Spain and Netherlands are announced

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



Newsletter #7  
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Learn more about the project, its design and structure, the partners involved and the most recent news at [www.armorproject.eu](http://www.armorproject.eu)!



## ARMOUR launched the first Experimental Labs

The **ARMOUR Experimental Labs** aim to represent a safe chamber where participants can experience alternative ways of responding to push and pull factors of social polarisation and extremism. [Seven topics](#) were explored in 2019 designing a dedicated curriculum on social competencies, problem solving, emotional competence and autonomy building, mediation, and negotiation. Each Lab was designed to provide a framework, scenario, and detailed set of exercises and simulations that can assist participants in experimenting with the respective topic.



The Experimental Labs were pretested in the November-December 2019 in Romania and Malta with sociologists, psychologists, trainers, security experts and practitioners from civil society organizations, who were provided with presentations of the guidelines, methodology, curricula, and a selected number of exercises. The aim of the pre-testing sessions was to collect **effective feedback** from as varied a set of practitioners as possible, on the overall design, philosophy, objectives, expected outcome and types of exercises under the Experimental Labs' curricula.

In early January 2020, **ARMOUR reported on the results** and feedback received and adjusted the Labs' content and exercised where needed. The official launching of the Experimental Labs in the ARMOUR partner Member States was ready to begin!

Shortly after, the **Experimental Labs in Romania** were announced with a total of seven Labs taking place:

- 30 January 2020, [Conflict Resolution Lab](#)
- 31 January 2020, [Proportionate Response Lab](#)
- 13 February 2020, [Critical Thinking Lab](#)
- 14 February 2020, [Coaching and Parenting Lab](#),
- 26 February 2020, [Anger Management Lab](#)
- 27 February 2020, [Debate and Simulation Lab](#)
- 28 February 2020, [Narrative and Cultural Awareness Lab](#)



The Labs were hosted by "Mihai Viteazul" National Intelligence Academy and attended by 15-20 practitioners each. The experts came from various fields of interests, such as teachers, youth workers, social services, specialist professionals working with youth as psychologists, law enforcement agencies and security professionals. They learned, tested, and experimented with the tools and techniques offered and provided their feedback. The exercises were appreciated by the participants as they have provided them with knowledge, skills, and detailed guidelines on how to approach each topic.



On 27 February 2020 in Athens, **ARMOUR Experimental Labs in Greece** were hosted by KEMEA. One of the Lab was on critical thinking, while the other one offered simulation and debate techniques applicable in interventions targeted at young individuals that are either vulnerable to or in the process of radicalisation.



Each of the Labs continued for 4 hours and was attended by 17 practitioners, coming from both private and public schools, and representing various professional fields ranging from schoolteachers (school principals) to sociologists and psychologists providing services within school environments. Representatives of non-formal education also attended the Labs (NGOs staff).

The participants embraced the two Labs and vigorously participated in the implementation of the model exercises selected by the organizers. They all agreed upon the need for including these constructive techniques into the official secondary education curricula and expressed their strong interest in joining to similar initiatives in the future.

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Experimental Labs in **Spain** and **the Netherlands** are already planned to take place in March 2020.

The events for the Netherlands will be held on 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> of March with two separate ARMOUR Experimental Labs taking place: one on anger management and another on narratives and identity, both in relation to radicalisation. The events will be hosted by our Dutch partner – University of Groningen.

For Spain, the events are organized by FUNDEA as following:

10 March 2020, Coaching and Parenting Lab

11 March 2020, Debate and Simulation Lab

17 March 2020, Conflict Resolution Lab

18 March 2020, Proportionate Response Lab

Further dates for Experimental Labs in Malta and Italy will be announced.

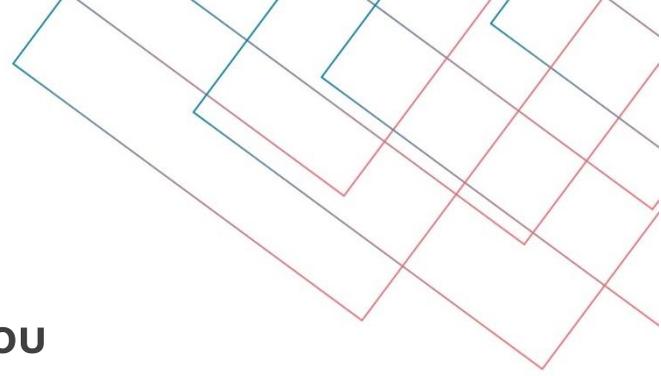


During the first months of 2020, the ARMOUR Team also initiated the preparation of the future training of trainers and the feedback loop needed to properly evaluate the project outcomes. Some preliminary review of best practices in countering radicalization and polarization among young people is currently taking place. It will cover ongoing programmes from Bulgaria, Italy, Greece, Malta, The Netherlands, Romania, and Spain.

Later, [Work Package 4 'Integrating best practices and training'](#) activities will continue with the design of the training-of-trainers' curricula incorporating the Experimental Labs' feedback and the trainings' facilitation.



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



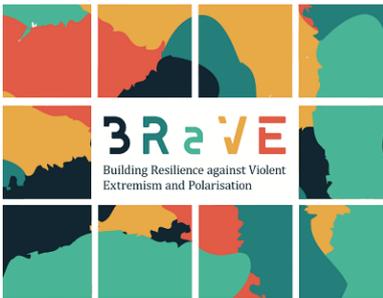
## New practical tools and guides for you

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!

### DIGITAL EXTREMISMS

Readings in Violence, Radicalisation and  
Extremism in the Online Space

[‘Digital Extremisms: Readings in Violence, Radicalisation and Extremism in the Online Space’](#) is a book that explores the use of the internet by (non-Islamic) extremist groups, drawing together research by scholars across the social sciences and humanities.



BRaVE work in recent months results in [a systematic and critical review](#) of contemporary literature on processes of polarisation, the role they are perceived as playing in creating a matrix of adversities that can lead to increased vulnerability to what is often termed ‘violent extremism’, and the potential impact of practices that are understood as building pro-social resilience to such adversities.

Three European projects [J-SAFE](#), [MINDb4ACT](#) and [JPCOOPS](#), joint forces to deliver a comprehensive train-the-trainers catalogue on radicalisation prevention and investigation. The idea is a continuation of the shared efforts of the [DERAD](#) and [TRAINING AID](#) projects (co-funded by the Justice and ISF Police Programmes of the European Commission) that trained over 3000 European professionals during the 2017-2018.

The [training catalogue](#) covers seven different topics.

J-SAFE

MINDb4ACT

JP-COOPS

A new EU research project - [PAVE \(Preventing and Addressing Violent Extremism through Community Resilience in the Western Balkans and the MENA\)](#), was launched on 1<sup>st</sup> February 2020. It aims to tackle the global issue of radicalisation by examining its root causes and driving factors.

PAVE



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## What is planned for our training of trainers for 2020?

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Based on the design of the train the trainer (TTT) programme that is currently under preparation, ARMOUR will carry the trainings in six countries and they will include three days of face-to-face training followed by two weeks of distance learning.

The total number of participants taking place in the programme is planned for a minimum of 250 participants. The training groups (of approx. 20 participants per group) will include a mix of first-line practitioners and civil society members, so as to facilitate multidisciplinary approaches and networking.

Conducting the trainings will be followed by a thorough evaluation of the TTT programme. ARMOUR will use an adaption of the IMTEE model of evaluation which combines variables of training evaluation and effectiveness for comprehensive assessment. Thus, the TTT programme will be validated on three dimensions, including reactions to the training content and design, changes in the learner and organisation payoffs.

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**We continue our work to provide you with an innovative framework and tools for addressing societal polarization.**

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

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

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