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ARMOUR - A radical model of resilience for young minds

PRESS RELEASE

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ARMOUR Model to be officially presented during the #EUPrevent Conference

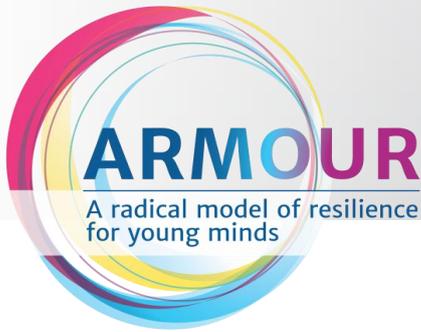
The ARMOUR (“A radical model of resilience for young minds”) Project, implemented with the financial support of the European Commission, aims to address societal polarisation and radicalisation by strengthening resilience of individuals, communities, and vulnerable groups (children and young people in particular), and to promote interaction and cooperation between different local actors from the public sector. Over two years, the project explored models of intervention, capitalizing on the capacity of individuals, civil society, and institutions’ representatives to occupy public discourse and help maintaining the social cohesion within the natural differences. As a result, the ARMOUR Model was produced as a preventative approach to address the vulnerabilities which feed the breeding ground for radicalisation providing for a set of tools for first-line practitioners.

The ARMOUR Toolkit will be officially presented at the European ‘Preventing Polarization and Violent Radicalization’ Conference (#EUPrevent), 26-29 April 2021, which brings together the expertise of researchers, practitioners, and policymakers, and addresses current challenges of radicalization and polarization in Europe and provides suggestions for a way forward in policy and practice.

ARMOUR Project, 8 March 2021 – In 2020-2021, after a series of research activities, ARMOUR evolved upon the creation of experimental labs, where special attention was placed on developing and testing individual capacity building and social skills of support. The labs represented a safe environment where participants could experience alternative ways of responding to push and pull factors of social polarisation and extremism. ARMOUR



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emphasized the process of 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.

ARMOUR sought cost-effectiveness and accessibility of its experimental model by focusing not only on the nature of the model itself but also on how it could be implemented. The labs' concepts were expanded in an interdisciplinary model of learning helping individuals and mainstream communities build resilience to ideologies and behaviours specific to violent extremism. The project aimed at both existing and potential 'influencers' to model youth's opinions by integrating skills on how to

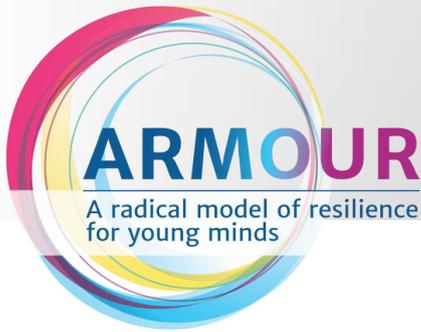
- create a message that deals with common concerns and interests of the middle ground society;
- develop critical thinking so as to delineate propaganda from solution oriented discourse;
- capitalise assertiveness and emotional intelligence into mediating speech that engages and connects with the diverse 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.

This resulted in a series of training activities and tools dedicated to first-line practitioners working with young people between 10 and 18 years of age (teachers or training assistance, social and youth workers, psychologists, law enforcement officials and security experts, representatives of civil society organizations working with youth, etc.). The full set forms the ARMOUR Toolkit being the theoretical guidelines and hands-on materials visualizing and explaining the ARMOUR Model.

The project tools will be publicly presented to a wider professional audience for the first time during the #EUPrevent Conference. The latter will take place online, 26-29 April 2021, and is organized by 6 ISF-P European Commission funded projects - Rhizome against Polarization, CHAMPIONS, YoungRes, WayOut, ARMOUR and Bridge, representing a pool of knowledge of over 30 organizations across Europe from 15 different countries. The event is an opportunity for experts and practitioners to share best practices and develop strategies to tackle polarization and extremism, including the ARMOUR Model, among others.

ARMOUR tools for building individual resilience against polarization and (violent) extremism will be promoted via two dedicated workshops. For registration and agenda updates, please visit the www.firstlinepractitioners.com platform.





The ‘A radical model of resilience for young minds’ project – ARMOUR, aims to address societal polarization by providing a unique model for strengthening resilience of individuals, communities and vulnerable groups (such as children, youth, etc.) to polarisation, and promoting interaction and cooperation between different local actors from public sectors that specialise in working with vulnerable groups in preventing extremism. ARMOUR seeks cost-effectiveness and accessibility of its model by focusing not only on the nature of the model itself but also on how it is being implemented.

Behind the ARMOUR project (01/2019 – 06/2021) is a consortium made up of 9 entities from 8 different countries: Austria, Bulgaria, Greece, Italy, Malta, the Netherlands, Romania, and Spain.

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