

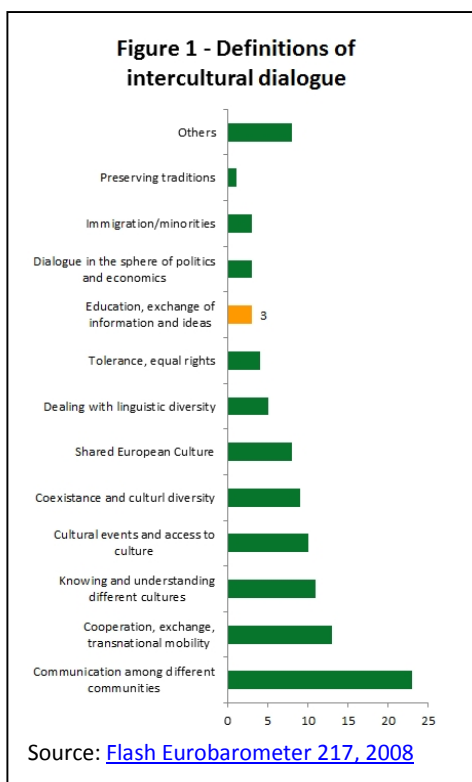
Education and Intercultural Dialogue as tools against radicalisation

At a time of rising concerns in Europe over radicalisation and violent extremism, the role that education and intercultural dialogue can play in promoting respect for diversity, pluralism and human rights is increasingly under the spotlight.

Roles and concepts

Education is the competence of the Member States and the European Union's role is one of support and coordination. In 2008, the [European Year of Intercultural Dialogue](#), the European Commission identified intercultural dialogue as 'essential for creating respect for cultural diversity, improving coexistence in today's diverse societies and encouraging active European citizenship'. This was to be achieved by raising awareness of the cultural sphere to empower EU inhabitants 'to manage cultural diversity'. Education can contribute both inside and out of schools. A survey at the time revealed a plurality of associations with the term intercultural dialogue. Figure 1 indicates the percentage of respondents attributing specific meanings. Few

mentioned education, yet each theme could be the focus of an educational project that questions radicalisation.



Characteristics of extremism

To counteract extremism, intercultural education requires a clear understanding of the issues it is addressing. A [roundtable](#) by the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) in 2012 indicated that though noteworthy specificities exist, there are interesting similarities in the messages delivered by different violent extremists, including elements of the Far Right and Jihadists. These draw out simplistic, black and white scenarios which vilify and dehumanise others to the extent that it becomes permissible to use violence, physically harming or even killing victims. Messages also tend to be gendered with a strong emphasis on patriarchal values which encourage macho attitudes and behaviour in young men and conformity to traditional norms and roles in young women. There is debate on how best to deal with radical statements which are not accompanied by violence. [Bradford police](#) in the UK points out that these messages may create an environment which makes violent acts permissible and need to be dealt with firmly. The OSCE round-table report emphasised the use of pluralistic, democratic debate as a pedagogical tool to counteract one-sided assertions. In discussing

online hate speech, [UNESCO](#) identifies a necessity both for a legal framework and citizenship education.

The attraction of radicals and violent extremism for young people

A [teachers' platform](#) points out that radicalisation does not just concern young, [white](#), working class people or marginalised, [young migrants](#) but reaches unexpected groups like well-educated, young girls. The sophistication of the [Jihadist propaganda strategy](#) corroborates the enrolment of highly educated recruits. Young people are attracted to violent radical groups by a combination of pull and push [factors](#). They are pulled towards extremist, violent groups in search of a strong sense of identity and belonging. At the same

time, a heightened sense of [loyalties](#) or perceptions of social injustice and diffidence towards authorities may push them away from mainstream society. Often young people are groomed by individuals who use the [social media](#) to reach out to them and respond to their emotional needs as they encourage a simplistic understanding of the evil that needs to be fought.

The educational response - policies and programmes

Efforts in intercultural education target both at-risk groups as well as the general population. When focused on young people at risk of radicalisation and violent extremism, responses depend on the identification of different dynamics. Children and young people from a [socio-economically](#) disadvantaged background, especially if they are migrants, face bigger [obstacles](#) in their schooling, with increased risks of underachievement and marginalisation. Policy efforts seek to [improve](#) the quality of education so these young people can [succeed](#). They also offer [opportunities](#) for non-formal education to enhance their employability and participation in civic life.

[Subjects](#) such as [history](#), [religious education](#) and foreign languages can also contribute because of their potential in fostering greater mutual understanding or focusing on specific cultural heritage. Yet, as intercultural tensions are increasingly expressed in religious terms, some argue the necessity of securing the formation of [religious leaders](#) of minority religions within higher education institutions in the EU to allow migrant communities to develop a European brand of religious practice.

Another strand of intervention, which can also be directed towards well-educated young people who are at-risk, aims at developing awareness and resistance. Specialist [agencies and organisations](#) are using both [formal](#) and [non-formal educational](#) contexts to complement or possibly even offer an alternative to penal measures. These programmes engage young people in a [dialogue](#) which offers counter narratives and alternative [role models](#). They also develop critical thinking, a reversal of the grooming process discussed above. Teachers are on the frontline of these actions and they too are [networking](#) to clarify their role and identify necessary support in terms of structures and training. Other [programmes](#) target convicted terrorists in a bid to de-radicalise them and avoid the spreading of radicalisation in prisons.

On a more general level, [mobility programmes](#) and volunteering opportunities provide positive experiences of intercultural encounters and engagement which could help prevent radicalisation. However, it can be difficult for EU mobility programmes to [reach](#) marginalised young people as they often target students in tertiary education or vocational training and the numbers that can be reached are limited.

In the [Paris declaration](#), following the 2015 terrorist attacks in France and Denmark, the Education Council declared that education must also help students become active, open-minded members of society. At national and sub-national level, efforts are to be focused on fighting inequalities, racism and discrimination, developing media literacy and the use of critical judgement. In this way education would lay the foundations for future success, respect of others and the rule of law as well as strengthen social ties and a sense of belonging. Ministers also indicated that the priority at EU level is to support and coordinate Member States' efforts by implementing the priorities of peer learning and the exchange and dissemination of good practice in the [Education and Training Strategic Framework 2020](#). Among other things, the Commission proposed reinforcing the role of education in the [integration](#) of prospective migrants by teaching them the host country's language and history and by providing information on institutions. [Erasmus+](#) contributes towards the development of policies and actions in this field by supporting strategic partnerships, cooperation platforms and joint projects on citizenship education, volunteering and youth mobility projects.

European Parliament

In its resolutions of [2012](#) and [2013](#), the EP focused on the role of non-formal education in the form of volunteering and cross-border volunteering to provide citizens with skills that enhance their employability and at the same time develop social inclusion or a sense of European identity and foster civic participation. Parliament will soon vote on a resolution discussing '[Antisemitism, Islamophobia and hate speech in Europe](#)'. The Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE) is drafting a report on '[The prevention of radicalisation and recruitment of European citizens by terrorist organisations](#)' (rapporteur Rachida Dati, EPP, France). The Committee on Culture and Education (CULT) has recently organised a number of hearings related to [intercultural dialogue](#) and the [prevention of radicalisation](#). It is currently discussing a draft report on '[The Role of intercultural dialogue, cultural diversity and education in promoting EU fundamental values](#)' (rapporteur Julie Ward, S&D, UK).