

Combating radicalization: a global issue

In a changing world where national borders are becoming blurred, where access to information is increasingly democratized, where opinions are shared in a click, where ideas travel through cyberspace and where the world is at our fingertips, we need to focus on what brings us together and inspires us to be better human beings. With acts of terrifying violence spreading across entire continents, the values of solidarity and compassion are essential solutions for tackling this growing phenomenon. Radicalization takes root in a wide variety of environments and affects all societies, irrespective of gender, race or status, and it is above all through openness and dialogue that we can combat it.

The Government of Québec and UNESCO'S Information for All Programme (IFAP) have decided to pool their efforts to organize an international conference to enhance understanding of the phenomenon of radicalization and to identify concrete courses of action to counter its emergence. One of the goals of this international conference will be to shed light on the digital methods used by extremists to attract new members and to determine how best to identify ways to take concrete actions to effectively combat their criminal activities. The conference will be held from October 30 to November 1 in Québec City, a UNESCO World Heritage site, under the theme "Internet and the radicalization of youth: preventing, acting and living together."

The Internet is an incredible medium for exchanges between cultures and for sharing knowledge, a place of extraordinary discoveries where freedom of expression thrives and develops. But, the Internet is also a darker place where extremism can flourish and easily influence vulnerable or fragile individuals. Young people, with their appetite for risk and their willingness to sign on, often become easy prey for certain movements seeking their support for a cause that may appear noble and exciting.

Young people are key to permanently eliminating radicalization. We need to get them involved, seek out their opinions, listen to them and, above all else, give them the tools they need to become involved and vigilant users of the Internet. We need to encourage them to build a future where tolerance, universal human rights and dignity prevail.

The combat against radicalization is a world-wide phenomenon that requires an open and committed dialogue. The goals of the conference build on the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism presented by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Ban Ki-moon, on January 15, 2016. While the talent and knowledge of experts and researchers in the field have given us the tools to combat radicalization more effectively, it is through active listening, empathy and dialogue that we will be able to make a difference each and every day in our respective networks. We need to talk about the challenges we face, demystify our experiences, share our stories. And we need to bring radicalization out into the open.

Let's send a positive and clear message to the world. Let's remain united in adversity, open ourselves up to each other, and make our differences something to be discovered and cherished.

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<http://en.unesco.org/ConfQcUNESCO/home>

<http://www.mrif.gouv.qc.ca/fr/radicalisation>