COOPERATIVE HARMONISED ACTION MODEL TO STOP POLARISATION IN OUR NATIONS

D4.2
Practical manual on organising CHAMPIONs roundtables to tackle polarisation in a community

Project Details

Acronym:	**CHAMPIONs**
Title:	Cooperative Harmonised Action Model to Stop Polarisation in Our Nations

Coordinator:	**INSTITUTUL ROMAN PENTRU ACTIUNE, INSTRUIRE SI CERCETARE IN DOMENIUL PACII - PEACE ACTION, TRAINING & RESEARCH INSTITUTE OF ROMANIA (PATRIR)**, Romania

Reference:	823705
Type:	ISFP-2017-AG-RAD

Program:	Internal Security Fund — Police
Theme:	Preventing and countering violent radicalisation

Start:	01 January 2019 – 31 March 2021
Duration:	27 months

Website:	www.championsproject.eu

Consortium:	**INSTITUTUL ROMAN PENTRU ACTIUNE, INSTRUIRE SI CERCETARE IN DOMENIUL PACII - PEACE ACTION, TRAINING & RESEARCH INSTITUTE OF ROMANIA (PATRIR)**, Romania
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Deliverable Details

Number:	**D4.2**
Title:	**Practical manual on Organising CHAMPIONs Roundtables to tackle polarisation in a community**
Lead beneficiary:	HSNR
Work package:	WP4
Dissemination level:	Public (PU)
Nature:	Report (RE)
Due date:	31 December 2019
Submission date:	
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Reviewers:	_____

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1. Introduction

This manual is aimed to provide practical support in organisational issues to active citizens, especially first-line practitioners (FLPs) - those professionals from different disciplines, professions, institutions, and agencies, who are in direct, daily contact with fellow citizens[1] - in their efforts to take action against the causes and the manifestations of polarisation and radicalisation in their communities by enhancing collaboration with other local stakeholders. In line with the long-term aim of the project CHAMPIONs to transfer this pilot model to other communities across the EU by enabling FLPs to establish rountables, this manual provides practical support in all aspects around the organisation of such an event. A guide to how to prepare the content and how to mentor roundtables can be found in a separate document called '*Conceptual Handbook on Mentoring a Roundtable*'.

1.1. What is the CHAMPIONS project?

The project CHAMPIONs aims at empowering FLPs with different backgrounds and from various disciplines, professions, institutions and agencies, and other stakeholders[2] in one municipality to jointly develop effective detection and response solutions to counter polarisation, build resilience, and protect vulnerable groups in their local communities. The project supports FLPs in two ways. CHAMPIONs' central action is to establish permanent offline working groups - CHAMPIONs Roundtables - that provides a platform to discuss issues related to polarisation, offers trainings to build capacity to design solutions and coordinates the implementation of collaborative actions to most effectively address the drivers of polarisation in the respective municipality. The roundtables will be facilitated by an online platform to be created during the project combining three central instruments:

- **Alert** a collation of tools and services developed under other EU-funded projects that enable FLPs to bring attention to key focal issues to address in their community (e.g. social media monitoring tools);
- **Arena** a communication and cooperation mechanism that enables instantaneous information exchange either privately, between collaborating FLPs, and publicly through sharing good practice and highlighting strengths / weaknesses of certain actions;
- **Training Yard** a capacity-building resource centre which FLPs can engage with either individually or as a group, complete with learning materials, video-tutorials, good practice guidelines / handbooks and case study simulation exercises developed through the project action.

Besides FLPs, CHAMPIONs also engages the wider community through awareness-raising events.

The project takes place in selected municipalities in Romania, Hungary, Poland, and Germany as a pilot but it is designed to be transferred to other communities across the EU.

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[1] FLPs include police, teachers, local doctors, social workers, counsellors, community-leaders, religious leaders, NGOs / CSOs working with vulnerable groups.
[2] For instance, members of local government, policy-makers at the local level.

2. What are roundtables and what are they good for?

Within the project CHAMPIONs, a series of roundtables take place in pre-selected municipalities in Romania, Hungary, Poland, and Germany to provide a platform for onsite multi-agency cooperation. Roundtables are customised to the needs of local stakeholders and build upon the lessons of the research and needs assessment period of the project. Roundtables base upon already identified issues of polarisation, community tensions and/or manifestations of aggressive intolerance and group-focused enmity in the respective municipality and aim at developing joint monitoring and response solutions.

Roundtables are designed to be the key component of multi-agency cooperation at the local level as they bring together representatives of different groups and provide them with a structured platform to share their views and design solutions in a collaborative manner.

2.1. Aims of the roundtables

- Bring together local stakeholders
- Provide safe space/platform for structured cooperation (discussion, sharing experiences, designing solutions, joint solution of cases, creating a roadmap, coordinating actions)
- Create a local network, strengthen the spirit of collaboration among participants
- Reduce the personal and institutional hurdles of cooperation by strengthening personal ties and raising awareness about the expertise, duties and responsibilities and way of work of different groups of stakeholders

3. To DOs before the roundtable

3.1. Design the structure and schedule of the roundtables

A series of roundtables are needed to achieve the goals outlined above and to accompany participants through the process from getting to know each other until working jointly on solutions. The process consists of the following milestones/activities:

- joint monitoring and response solutions to key challenges identified with the help of the CHAMPIONs online platforms, especially the Training Yard
- Developing a roadmap to implement solutions
- Coordinating actions, discussing actual challenges, joint solution of cases, sharing experiences (Getting to know each other and landscape of local stakeholders, building trust among participants)
- Getting to know the aims and frames of the process
- Setting the conceptual framework, raising awareness about polarisation and radicalisation
- Creating the practical and ethical/behavioural frameworks of cooperation
- Mapping the state, manifestations, drivers and causes of community tensions, polarisation and radicalisation
- Developing the CHAMPIONs online platforms Alert and Arena)
- Continuous monitoring and evaluation of the collaboration and the implementation of solutions

The above activities have to be included in the series of roundtables. While some elements can be implemented in one session, others might require autonomous sessions or even spread across more

roundtables. The structure of the sessions has to be decided upon local needs and circumstances. However, you can find some guidelines on this in the document called '*Conceptual Handbook on Mentoring a Roundtable*'.

The **schedule of the roundtables** also depend on local needs and circumstances. However, it is recommended that the roundtables take place every 2 or 3 months. This way, participants will not be overburdened with the events and have enough time to think about and probably implement what they agreed upon. **It is of key importance that the schedule and the topic of the roundtables are agreed upon with the participants and are clearly communicated with them well in advance** so they can harmonise it with other duties.

If you assign the facilitation of the roundtable to an external expert or a colleague, ensure that you have a common understanding and vision of the aim and the course of the event. Discuss both the general concept and the detailed structure with them and design the process together.

3.2. Choosing the venue

Before announcing the roundtables and inviting participants, organisers have to find a suitable venue for the events. It is recommended that all roundtables take place at the same venue - this gives participants a feeling of stability and they can better plan their attendance.

A suitable venue should meet the following requirements:

- It should **be big enough** to accommodate the number of desired participants and **have enough space** for plenary sessions and small group sessions as well.
- The place should provide a **friendly and safe atmosphere**, where participants feel welcome and can share their views openly and freely.
- **Neutrality:** The venue has to be a neutral place, on "no man's land", which is not linked/committed to any participants, where each participant feels confident.
- **Accessibility:** The venue has to be easily accessible by all transportation means (especially by public transport) and by all participants (especially people with disabilities or members of socially disadvantaged groups).
- **Furniture and arrangement of space:** The venue has to provide the necessary furniture for both plenary and small group sessions and the arrangement of the furniture has to be quickly moveable.
- **Equipment:** You should make sure that the venue can provide the following equipment, if these are necessary for the roundtables: flipchart and flipchart paper, markers, projector, laptop, roll-ups, sound technique.
- **Catering**: You might want to provide some drinks and snacks at the event. Discuss with the provider what is available/needed and what it costs. Otherwise you can also prepare the basic catering by yourself.

Before making an agreement with the venue provider, visit the venue and see for yourself whether it is suitable for your needs and fulfills the requirements.

3.3. Selecting and inviting participants

3.3.1. Target groups

The participants of the roundtables are targeted to be representatives of the following groups:

● **first line practitioners (FLPs)** - a group which includes police, teachers, local doctors, social workers, counsellors, community-leaders, religious leaders, NGOs / CSOs working with vulnerable groups, from different disciplines, professions, institutions, and agencies;
● **members of government**, local authorities, policy-makers;
● **non-traditional FLPs**, e.g., representatives of local businesses.

3.3.2. Invitation process

The specific **number of participants** can vary per location as well as per roundtable depending on the local context. The minimum suggested number is 5 FLPs per roundtable. However, **consider the number of actual participants when choosing the working methods for the event**. For roundtables with 12-15 participants or more, include working group sessions, where participants work in small groups parallelly. At roundtables with less than 15 participants plenary sessions are suitable.

Do pay attention to the following aspects when inviting possible participants to the roundtables:

● **Ensure gender balance and the representation of minority and vulnerable groups**.
● **Ensure the representation of as many different professions, disciplines and stakeholder groups as possible** in order to include as many aspects into the discussion as possible.
● **Consider the possible dynamics between participants** in the roundtables and try to ensure a diverse, lively and fruitful discussion and cooperation through the composition of participants.
● **Consider turn-out rates:** Not all invitees will be able to attend the event and it happens every now and then that participants cancel their attendance in the last days ahead of the event due to other commitments or unforeseen events (e.g., illness). Therefore, do have a "waiting list" or have more people from the same profession in your list of invitees so that they can substitute each other. Moreover, invite more participants than you would actually hope to attend the event.

As roundtables are designed to be invitation-only events, participants can be invited in the following ways.

● Participants will be invited through **official letters of invitation** via regular mail, email, or hand-delivered to participating institutions or agencies. These letters of invitation should clearly state the time, place, aim, agenda and a general description of the participants of the roundtable as well as what materials, if any, they are required to bring.
● **Invitation can be personal**, addressed to certain individuals or **institutional**, addressed to the head - or their delegate - of a certain institution/authority/organisation.

3.3.3. Registration (RSVP)

To be able to track the number of participants, ask invitees to respond to the invitation. You can ask them to submit their responses via one of the following methods:

● **Email**, in which they answer your specific questions about their needs.
● **Digital RSVP forms** where they have to fill out a short questionnaire and the results will be collected automatically (e.g., Google Form, RSVPify, Replied App).

Ask participants to provide answers to the followings:

- Consent to data protection policy and data processing methods at your organisation, which have to correspond to the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) of the EU and national data protection regulations
- Name
- Profession
- Position and institution
- Email address
- Phone number (for emergency cases)
- Dietary requirements
- Special needs of participants (e.g., room for breastfeeding, childcare, medical considerations, assistance upon arrival)
- Any other issues, comments

You can add further questions about expectations, interests and/or motivation. However, consider how much time it requires to fill in the form. Do not make the RSVP too complicated and time-consuming for the participants!

Take **privacy and data protection** aspects into consideration when creating the RSVP form and processing data of participants. Include in the invitation letter or in the RSVP form a section that explains the data protection policy and data processing methods at your organisation and ask participants to express their consent to it.

3.3.4. Communications with invitees and participants

Your **communication with participants has to be clear, easily understandable, supportive and empowering**. The invitation letter has to clearly state the aim, the agenda, the length, the date and the place of the event as well as the roles and tasks of the participants during the whole process and at the respective event.

Once participants have registered for the event via the RSVP method of your choice, **confirm their registration via an email** and thank them for their interest and willingness to dedicate their time and energy to your cause. Do announce in this email when they will receive further information on the event so that they can plan accordingly.

Send a **reminder letter with all the necessary, final information** ahead of the event at the time, which you announced in the confirmation email. Usually it should be done 2 to 4 days before the event.

3.4. Monitoring and evaluation

To keep track of the invitation process, maintain a sheet in which you record every step of reaching out to (future) participants. The sheet should include the following information:

- Name of invitees
- Profession of invitees
- Position and institution of invitees
- Contact details of invitees
- Date when the invitation letter was sent
- Date when the remainder was sent
- Confirmation of the invitees whether they can attend the event
- Dietary requirements of participants

- Special needs of participants (e.g., room for breastfeeding, childcare, assistance upon arrival)
- Any other issues, comments

Evaluate the invitation process regularly based on the number of confirmed participants and try to adjust it if necessary, for instance by including additional names in the list of invitees, reaching out to invitees through additional channels.

Design the evaluation process early on by going through the following steps:

- Identify the criteria of success
- Develop the indicators with which you can measure the success
- Decide which evaluation method you would like to apply
- Prepare the necessary material for the evaluation method you have chosen (e.g., evaluation sheet, evaluation questions)

Suggestions for criteria for the evaluation process:

- Diversity of professions, disciplines and stakeholder groups represented at the roundtable
- Relevance
- Appropriateness
- Effectiveness
- Efficiency
- Coherence & Coordination
- Sustainability
- Impact
- Resilience
- Gender
- Youth Inclusion
- Ownership
- Capability

4. To DOs at the roundtable

4.1. Organisational issues

On the day of the roundtable, **arrive at the venue at least 1 hour before the official starting time** and check whether

- the furniture is arranged in the way you need it
- all the equipment you need are provided
- the technique works
- the catering has arrived (if you ordered).

Set up a **registration table** at the entrance where the following items are provided:

- attendance sheet to be signed by participants
- agenda of the event
- participant list (only if participants agree to be included and their data to be shared)
- summary of the initiative/project

- name tags
- related dissemination materials (e.g., flyers, studies, pens, notepads)

In the attendance sheet, **ask participants to consent to the followings**:

- appearance in pictures and videos taken during the event for publishing
- data protection policy and data processing methods at your organisation
- sharing their names and email addresses with other participants of the roundtable

4.1.1. Checklist of items to be prepared for the roundtable

- flipchart and flipchart paper
- markers
- projector
- laptop
- sound technique
- catering
- roll-up of your institution and partners, possibly donors
- attendance sheet
- name tags
- agenda of the event
- summary of the initiative/project
- participant list (only if participants agree to be included and their data to be shared)
- dissemination materials (e.g., flyers, studies, pens, notepads)
- bell or alarm clock for the facilitator
- detailed agenda of the roundtable with time frame dedicated to each session (for organisers and the facilitator)
- List of participants with brief description, background information (for organisers and the facilitator

4.2. Facilitation

Facilitation is a key ingredient of a successful roundtable. The facilitator has to ensure that

- the event runs smoothly
- the event is successful and delivers the expected results
- participants feel empowered and valued and that their participation mattered

For this to happen, the facilitator needs to provide the following:

- common understanding and acceptance of the rules and frames of the roundtable (e.g., maximum length of statements, ethical guidelines, contributions in order of request)
- inclusion of all participants in the discussion by empowering those participants who tend to speak less
- inclusion of all important aspects by guiding questions
- keeping the time frames of the event
- cooperative atmosphere and lively and fruitful discussion

4.2.1. Checklist for facilitators

- Introduce yourself at the beginning
- Summarise the aims of the event at the beginning

- Introduce the agenda and course of the event to the participants
- Share all necessary technical and organisation information with the participants (location of bathrooms, time of breaks, consent to appear in pictures and videos)
- Make notes during the introduction round and memorise the names of participants
- Encourage those who tend to be silent to speak up
- Summarise what has been said at certain points of the discussion to refresh the debate and encourage further contributions
- Keep the time and other rules resolutely but politely
- Keep a list of those who would like to contribute to the discussion
- Have a detailed agenda of the roundtable with time frame dedicated to each session
- Have a list of participants with brief description, background information
- Have a notepad and a pen to make notes
- Have a clock and probably a bell to keep the time frames

4.3. Taking minutes and pictures and recording

There has to be a dedicated person (or probably two) whose sole task is to take minutes of the discussion. This task has to be clearly separated from the task of facilitation. The minutes-taker has to briefed about guidelines of taking minutes and he/she has to be clear about what is expected from him/her exactly, in which form he/she has to take minutes and what is expected to be the output of the minutes taking.

Alternatively (or in addition) you can also record the discussion either via audio recording or video recording for internal use and documentation purposes but for this you need the permission of the participants in advance.

Someone from the organisation team (or a professional) has to be commissioned to take pictures at the event. You can use these for documentation purposes but also for public communications (if participants have expressed their consent to it). Even though the roundtables are not public, you might want to communicate them afterwards.

4.4. Evaluation

Dedicate time to participants providing feedback on and evaluation of the event at the end. This can be done via the following methods:

- Evaluation round: participants are asked to provide feedback orally
- Evaluation sheet: participants fill in a questionnaire
- Evaluation activity: participants provide feedback with the help of an activity (e.g., via taping post-its on flipcharts)

The evaluation can include the following aspects:

- Satisfaction with the organisation of the event (e.g., communication, venue, date, time frame, catering)
- Satisfaction with the way of facilitation
- Feedback on the working methods applied during the event (e.g., activities, exercises, games)
- General evaluation (impressions) of the event (e.g., usefulness)
- Satisfaction with the results, outcomes, lessons learned compared to the expectations
- Feedback on the materials shared
- Mapping future expectations, desired topics to discuss etc.

- Any other issues participants want to share

5. To DOs after the roundtable

5.1. Follow-up with the participants

After the event, send a **follow-up email** to the participants. Besides expressing your gratitude to the participants for taking part in the event and sharing their views, this also gives you the opportunity to

- send them the presentations, texts, speeches and other materials that were mentioned or shared at the roundtable
- send them the minutes of the event (and ask them to comment on it)
- send them pictures taken at the event
- ask them to send you any additional thoughts they might have since the event
- announce the following steps (possible action points and deadlines) of the process of collaboration
- announce the date, location and topic of the next roundtable (if already set)
- send them the evaluation sheet (if you used one and if someone did not have the opportunity to fill it in at the roundtable)

If you think it is helpful for maintaining the contact and keep participants updated, you can send them **newsletters** regularly (but not too often) in the period between two roundtables. However, do use this tool only if you can provide them with content that is useful and valuable for them.

5.2. Harvesting the results and evaluation

- Finalise the minutes as soon as possible after the event
- Evaluate the roundtable and the whole organisation process with your colleagues and partners and the facilitator
- Process the evaluation sheets as soon as possible to evaluate the event
- Identify the action points and the topics that need to be further discussed at the next roundtable
- Create a roadmap: identify tasks, assign responsible persons to the tasks, and set a deadline for each item
- Summarise the key outcomes of the discussion, your impressions of the event, the results of the evaluation and the upcoming action points and deadlines in a short report for yourself

5.3. Administrative tasks

- Pay the invoices for the services you used (e.g., venue, catering, photographer, facilitator)
- Keep all the materials for the record (e.g., attendance sheet, evaluation forms, pictures, agenda)