

YouthRightOn: Resilient Youth to Far-Right Narratives Online

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#EUPrevent

find
another
way

youth
right
on

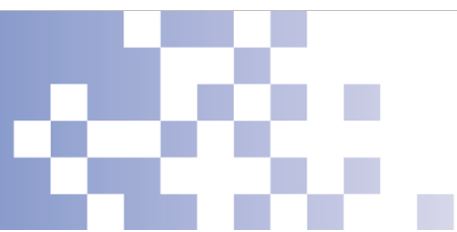
CSD

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DEMOCRACY

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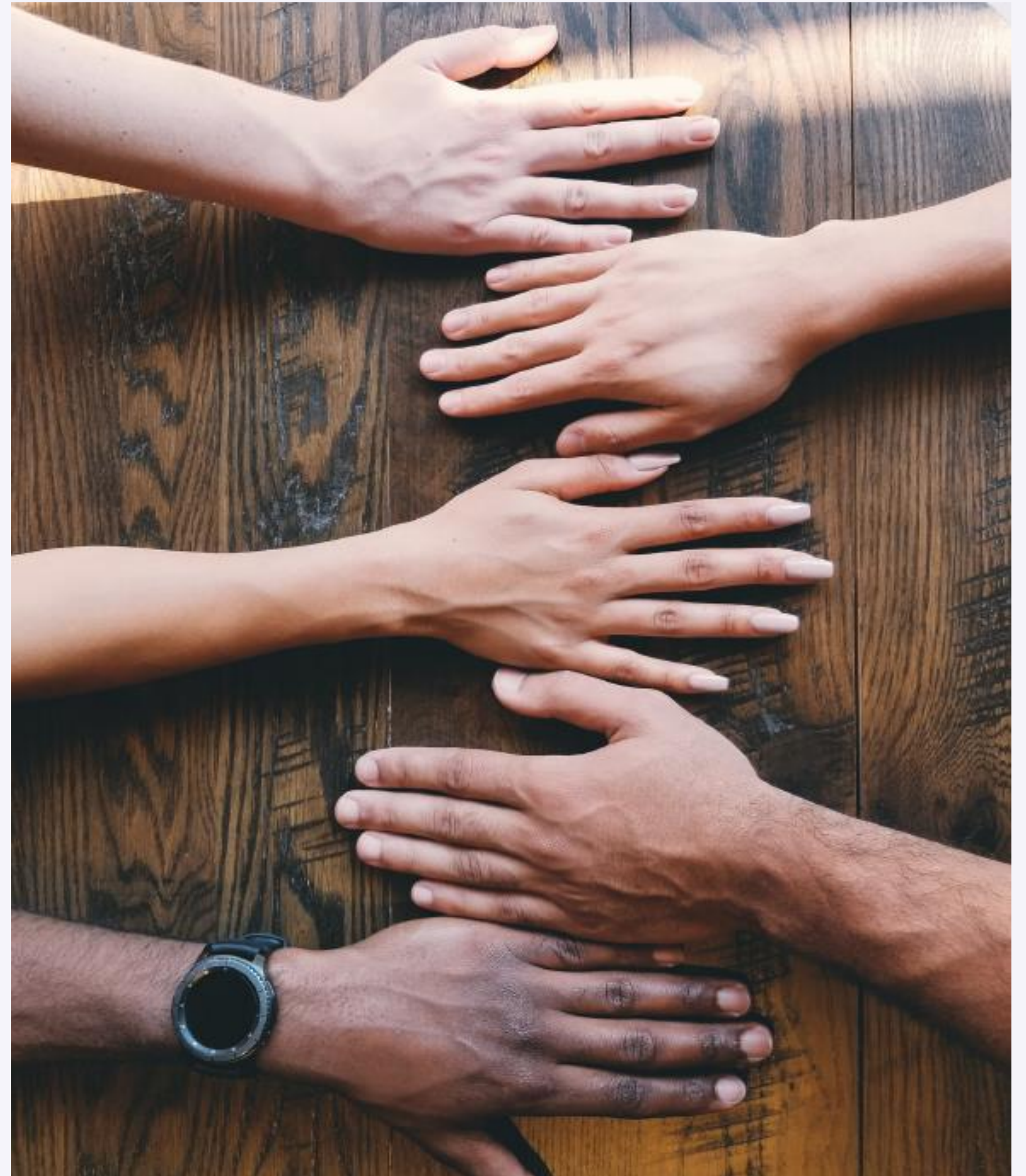
ARC FUND



Funded by the European Union's Internal Security Fund — Police.

Objectives.

- **Understand** far-right extremist narratives online most appealing to youth (14-19yo) in Bulgaria; push and pull factors; delineate vulnerable groups
- Develop **alternative narratives and implement an online campaign** as active tool for radicalisation resilience
- Design pragmatic **off-line activities** for vulnerable youth groups to maximize the impact of the online campaign (school lessons)



Audiences.
Narratives.
Diagnostics.

Грешка 404:
Истината не е намерена

намери
друг
начин

Diagnostics.

- Analysis of **far-right narratives** online (FB) and how they are disseminated
- National **representative survey** of attitudes among youth (f2f, 1,019 respondents 14-19yo, June 2019)
- 10 **focus groups** with pupils and teachers nationwide




Audience Vulnerabilities to Far-Right Messages.


! **Wide approval** among youth of some **polarizing narratives** - demonizing “others” as major threats and urging for (violent) action, normalization of violent rhetoric


BUT


✓ Broadly accepted narratives are **not deeply internalized** by the majority, subject to change via critical thinking, reflection, debate

 **30%**
Anti-systemic
Anti-EU/NATO

 **45-60+%**
Anti-Islam
Religious
exclusivist

 **63+%**
Anti-migrant

 **70+%**
Anti-Roma

 **8-14%**
Approval of
different acts of
political
violence, hate
crimes

 **20-25%**
Far-right activism
readiness
(**7%** in violent
anti-Roma
protest)

 **26%**
Approval of
“migrant
hunting”
(vigilantism)

Audience Segmentation.

Passive “endorsers”

- **Demographics:** boys, 16-19yo | vocational schools | middle class
- **Endorse** to a greater extent **far-right narratives**
- **Lower political awareness** | express **political dissatisfaction**
- Greater **exposure to violence** (school, neighbourhood)
- **Lower level** of prior civic engagement (**civic apathy**)
- Informed mainly by **social media and influencers** (rather than by family and friends)
- **External locus of control**, but **positive self-image**

“Activists”

- **Demographics:** boys, 15-16yo
- Engage actively with **violent/hateful** online content | **(far-right) activism readiness**
- **More informed about politics** (time spent reading news) | express **political discontent**
- Greater **exposure to violence** (school, neighbourhood)
- **Higher level** of **previous civic engagement** (**activism**)
- **Lower trust in family**
- **Negative image** of self and social relationships (**belonging, social validation**)

Campaign Goals.

- **Main goal:** reduce vulnerabilities to far-right narratives among youth 14-19yo in Bulgaria
 - Reduce target group's support for anti-minorities sentiments and messages
 - Reduce target group's support for use of violence against minorities
 - Increase target group's awareness of alternative perspective on "others"
 - Increase target group's engagement with resilience building activities
- **AUDIENCE:** 14-19yo in BG (around 300k), target - reach at least 25%
- **TWO TARGET SUB-GROUPS** based on diagnostics
- **MESSAGE AND THEORY OF CHANGE:** achieve the above by enhanced critical thinking, develop skills to resist manipulation, foster awareness and openness to alternative views, understand the downsides of violence, increased civic engagement as a positive alternative

G Goal

A Audience

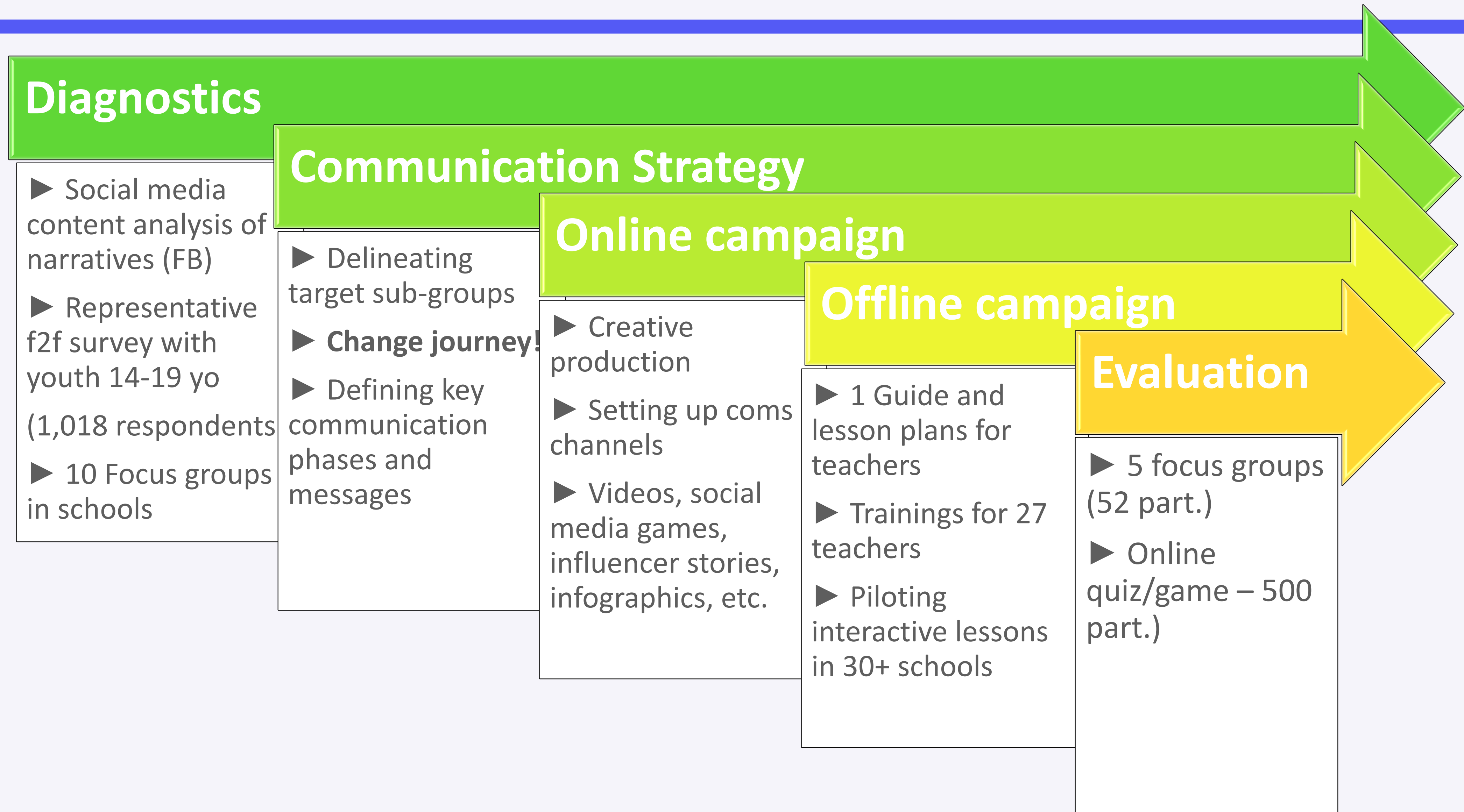
M Message

M Messenger

M Media

A Action

Milestones.



**Media.
Messages.
Messengers.**



Media.



CHANNELS

- 1 campaign website
- 1 project website
- 3 social media profiles
- 4 media partnerships

TOOLS

- 13 campaign **videos**
- 1 animated **story**
- 10 **infographics**
- 100+ social media **posts**
- 3 social media **mini-games**
- 50+ **influencers’ stories** and posts
- 66 media articles



Messengers.

- Influencers
- Peers
- Positive role models

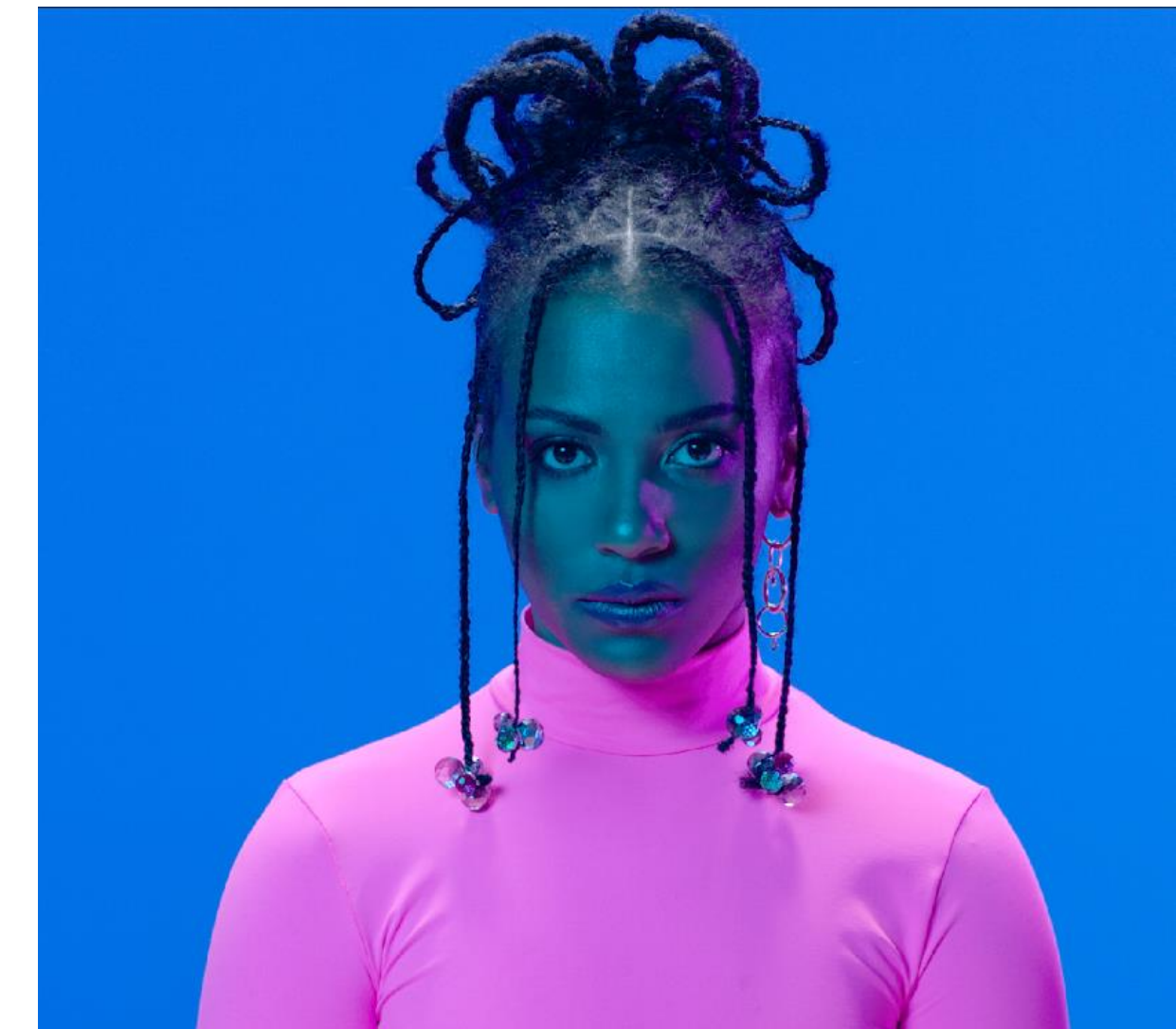
Pavel Kolev & Icaka

Two of the most beloved Bulgarian influencers Pavel Kolev and Hristo Stefanov, known as the “Players”, took a stand with their faces, embraced the messages of the campaign and interacted with the kids.

130 000 Facebook followers

425 000 Subscribers on YouTube

323 000 Joined Instagram followers



Messages.

CHALLENGE

EDUCATE

EDUCATE

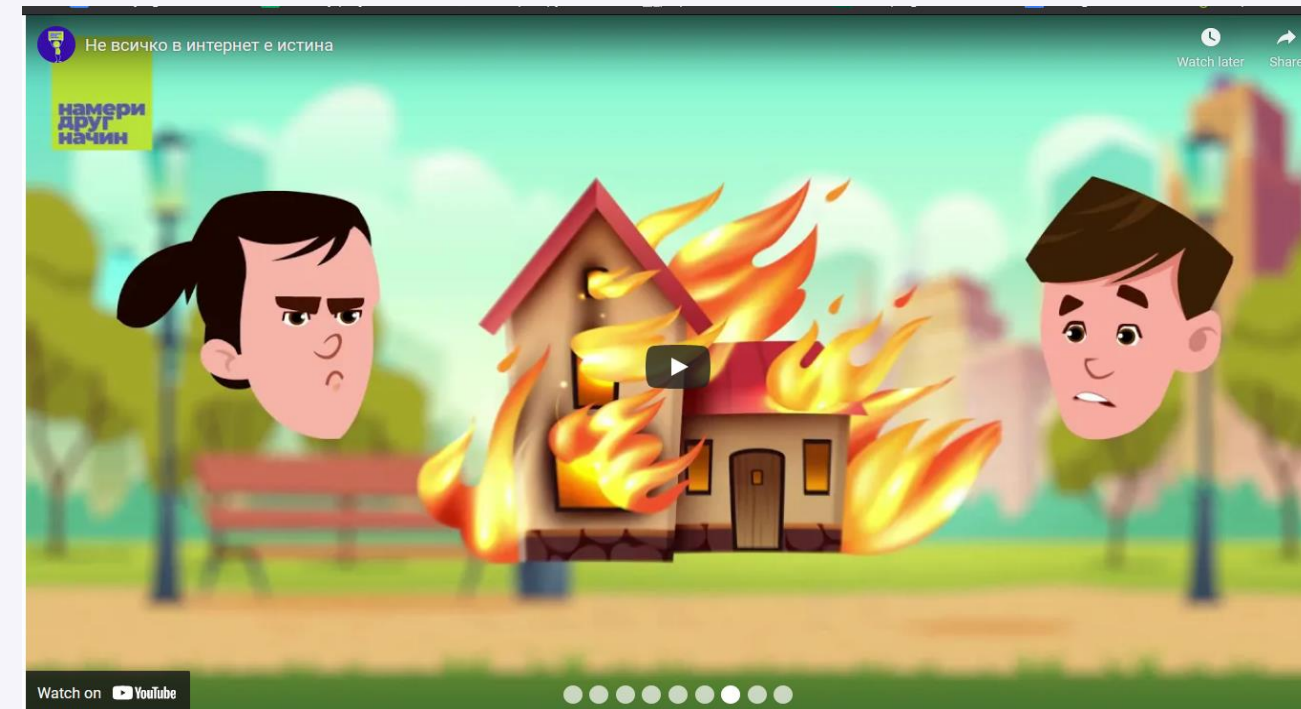


REACT video

- Influencers and teens react to real hate comments on social media

Key messages:

- Become aware of how normalized hate has become
- Invitation to challenge yourself and how you react to such content – **there is another way**



Debating narratives about “others” (Roma, refugees, LGBTI)

- Not all “others” are the same, learn more before judging and labelling, walk in their shoes.
- Not all stories on the internet are true. Share only those stories that you know are credible.



Debating narratives about “others” (Roma, refugees, LGBTI)

- Search for other viewpoints, before forming your own. Things are not what they look like.
- Before sharing aggressive content, ask yourself whose interests it is serving. Don't allow to be manipulated.

Messages.

EDUCATE

INSPIRE

ACT



4 educational mini-videos

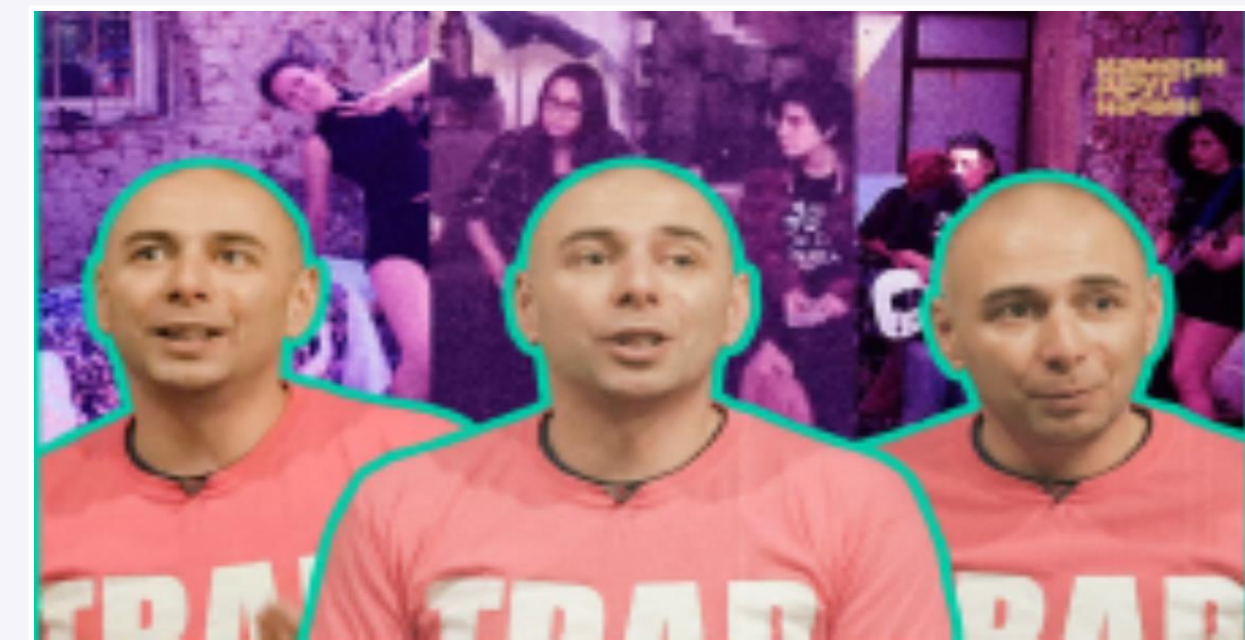
- Hate speech
- Propaganda
- Echo chambers
- Critical thinking

Messages: be aware, recognize and resist manipulation, think critically, form your own opinion



Taking the wrong path to violence – helping others

- Violence and aggression do not pay off
- The consequences of violence are the opposite of what you are looking for
- Do not succumb to manipulation
- People who go down the wrong path and make a mistake deserve help and support. Don't give up on them



Alternative spaces for youth engagement “Trotoara Room for Angry People”



- Everyone can go down the wrong path
- You can always find support if you are open to it
- Asking for support is a sign of strength.
- There is a place for you to express your anger and creativity and connect with others

**Results.
Lessons.
Takeaways.**



Audience reach.



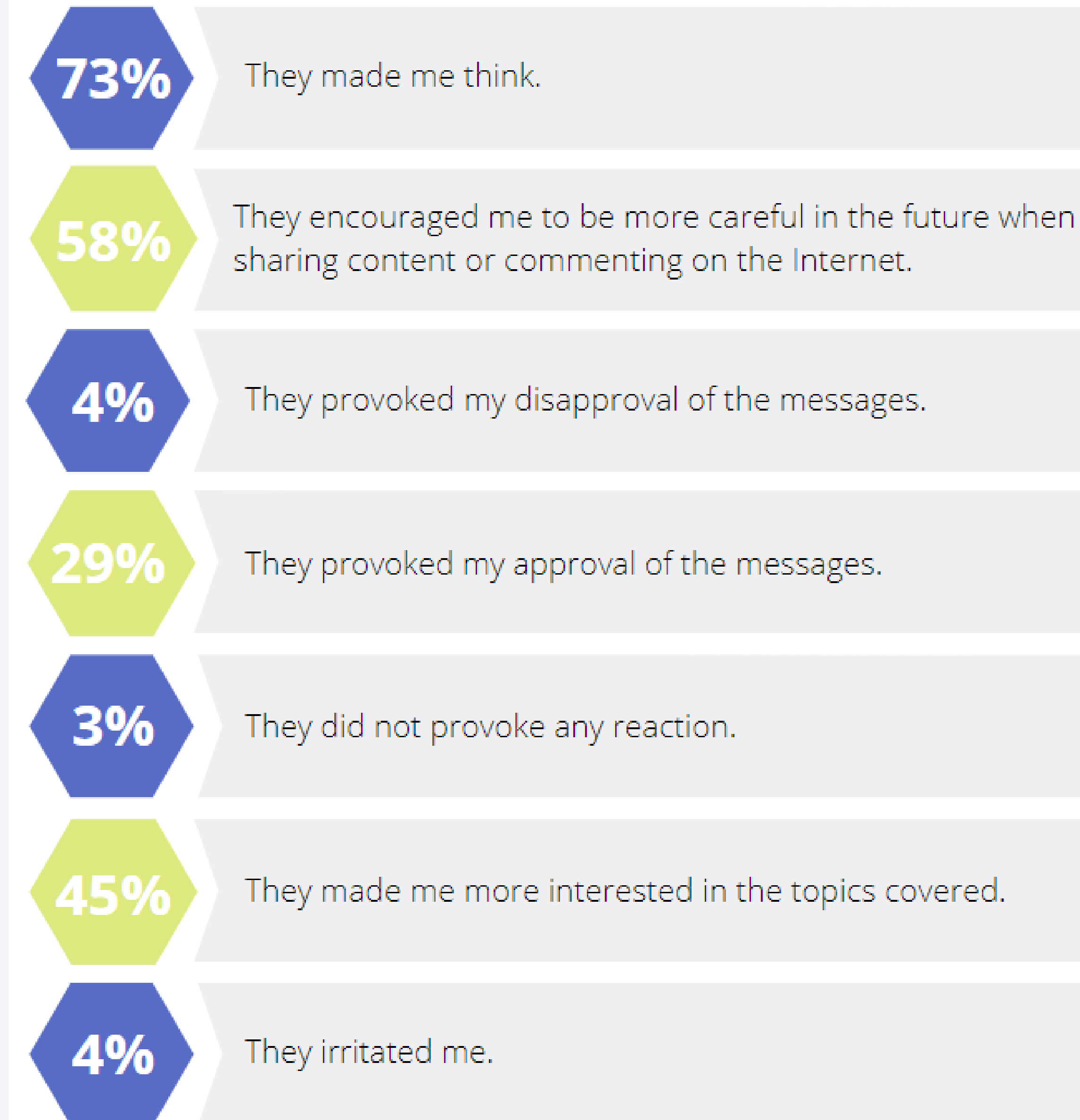
	 Facebook	 YouTube	 Instagram	TOTAL
Fan base	909	836	431	2,176
Engagement	28,438	506*	6,615	35,559
Video views	232,576	374,608	8,822	616,006
Total reach	516,634		402,533	919,167

* Video comments

Evaluation.

- ✓ Five online focus groups (52 pupils)
- ✓ Online game/quiz with prizes (500 resp.)
 - ▲ **80+%** of surveyed **recognize** the core campaign messages after watching selected materials
 - ▲ **65%** of the surveyed say the campaign messages **resonate** with their personal experiences
 - ▲ **66%** of those exposed to the campaign materials would **report** aggressive/hateful online content (compared to only **6%** prior to campaign)

Q 11. What type of reaction did the materials that you saw provoke in you? (more than one answer is possible)



Takeaways for Campaigning.

- Understanding the audience is key, realistic goals
- Use a change journey model
 - How do audiences feel, think and behave now and where we want them to be?
 - Do they have the capacity, willingness and resources to get there?
- Offline + online interventions = complementary effect
- Critical thinking + emotional competences = go hand in hand
- Sustained engagement and addressing negative reactions
- Evaluation – before and after data is ideal
- Mixed teams work better, but need shared language (researchers, activists, youth, comms experts)

Takeaways for Policy.

- Alternative narrative campaigns need to be part of a holistic, whole-of-society approach to prevention of polarization and radicalisation
 - Systematic societal “sanctioning” and intolerance towards hate speech, hate crimes, disinformation and extremist narratives (including far-right)
 - Critical thinking, media literacy + social/emotional competences – integrated in the school curriculum
- Sustainable funding and capacities on use of strategic communication in P-CVE (e.g. EC’s Civil Society Empowerment Program)
- Mainstreaming of “counter-radicalisation” work not always helpful. Basic pro-democratic education, social and emotional competences are good on their own.

Thank you!

LEARN MORE AT:

www.youthrighton.com

www.anotherway.bg

www.csd.bg



This project was funded by the European Union's Internal Security Fund — Police.



Resilient Youth against Far-Right Extremist Messaging Online

CHALLENGE / EDUCATE / INSPIRE / ACT

The Project.

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PROGRAMME

Internal Security Fund —
Police
ISFP-2017-AG-CSEP
Action Grant

GRANT No.

812589

DURATION

January, 2019 - June, 2021

COORDINATOR

Center for the Study of
Democracy

PARTNERS

Applied Research and
Communications Fund

D:istinkt Group
Communications Agency