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Contents

Abstract

This report presents a comprehensive inventory and comparative analysis of youth protection programs and public awareness campaigns related to online gaming and radicalization, focusing on initiatives targeting individuals outside the gaming scene, such as parents, educators, social workers, and the broader public. The analysis concentrates primarily on initiatives from non-EU countries to allow a comparison of European projects, covering programs launched over the past decade. It identifies and examines various initiatives, from government-led awareness campaigns and NGO-driven education projects to school-based interventions and media literacy programs that address radicalization risks in digital environments, including gaming platforms.

The study employs a structured desk research methodology, drawing on academic literature, policy documents, practice-based reports, and platform guidelines. Particular attention is paid to these campaigns and programs' design, implementation, and perceived outcomes. A comparative lens is applied to highlight best practices, recurring challenges, and notable innovations in preventing and countering violent extremism.

Findings indicate that while few programs focus exclusively on gaming-related radicalization, many address it within broader efforts to promote digital safety and resilience. Programs frequently include modules on critical thinking, media literacy, and the recognition of manipulative online behaviors. Successful initiatives often combine digital and face-to-face formats, involve multi-stakeholder collaboration, and feature testimony from former extremists or affected individuals. Several EU-based campaigns – such as those coordinated through Safer Internet Centers or the Radicalization Awareness Network (RAN) – have demonstrated measurable impacts in outreach and awareness-building. Non-EU examples from North America showcase innovative formats for parent and teacher engagement, gamified prevention tools, and youth-led counter-narrative projects.

However, the analysis also highlights the limitations of "awareness-only" approaches. Informational campaigns, if not embedded within broader support structures such as peer mentoring, community moderation, or trust-building mechanisms, tend to achieve only superficial or short-term effects. Sustainable prevention requires integrating awareness efforts into multi-layered ecosystems that enable critical reflection, resilience-building, and active engagement within digital youth communities.

The report concludes with a discussion on how these international examples may serve as a foundation for developing preventive measures tailored explicitly to gaming environments in the EU. It offers recommendations for future policy and practice, including integrating gaming-specific awareness content into existing digital citizenship frameworks and promoting intersectoral collaboration to strengthen youth resilience to extremist content in online games.

1 Introduction

In recent years, concerns have emerged regarding the potential for violent radicalization through online gaming platforms. Extremist groups are leveraging the vast audiences and social features of games to promote their ideologies. Notable incidents, ranging from the dissemination of extremist propaganda in gaming chat rooms to the gamification of real-world violence (e.g., attackers referencing first-person shooter aesthetics), have prompted concern among policymakers and the general public. A 2023 study by New York University found that extremists are exploiting online gaming and gaming-adjacent sites to promote hatred and violence, leveraging the social trust formed in gaming communities to indoctrinate youth (Olaizola & Barrett, 2023). The Federal Bureau of Investigation has identified online gaming platforms as a primary concern in counterterrorism efforts, given their capacity for rapid dissemination and extensive reach (Weil, 2023). In addition, the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) conducted a survey that estimated 83 million of the 110 million online gamers in the U.S. had been exposed to hate or harassment within six months. Furthermore, 9% of young gamers reported encountering white-supremacist extremist ideology during gameplay (Anti-Defamation League, 2024). These findings underscore the emergence of radicalization as a salient threat within the gaming milieu, necessitating the implementation of preventative measures. Furthermore, it is imperative to disseminate this awareness beyond the confines of the gaming community itself. Parents, teachers, social workers, and the general public must understand how extremist recruitment and grooming can occur in interactive digital games. It has become a recurring phenomenon that young individuals often refrain from engaging in discourse with adults concerning their experiences with online gaming. The absence of communication engenders a lacuna in knowledge, a circumstance that extremists can exploit.

Recent research highlights the evolution of digital games into dynamic social spaces where political discourse and identity construction increasingly occur. In their recent study, Soto de la Cruz et al. (2025) systematically reviewed contemporary political expressions within gaming environments. Their findings illustrated how ideological narratives, including extremist content, can permeate gaming culture. Awasthi (2024) similarly underscores the significance of gaming platforms as emerging yet frequently disregarded frontiers for extremist recruitment. A United Nations-commissioned study (Schlegel & Amarasingam, 2022) emphasizes that preventive efforts must consider the complex interaction between entertainment, socialization, and radicalization dynamics within video games. The development of effective prevention strategies necessitates the implementation of public awareness campaigns and educational programs aimed at mitigating the impact of these issues. Concurrently, over the past decade or more, a comprehensive array of youth protection programs has been developed globally. These programs are designed to strengthen communities in the face of the threat of radicalization; they range from school-based interventions and digital literacy curricula to community outreach, help lines, and deradicalization programs. A comprehensive evaluation of these initiatives, encompassing their design, methodologies, and outcomes, can provide significant insights for countering extremism within the gaming sector.

This report offers a comprehensive inventory and comparative analysis of international (non-EU) campaigns and programs. The primary objective of this initiative is to raise awareness about the nexus between games and radicalization among individuals outside the gaming

community, including parents, educators, and community stakeholders. The secondary objective is to safeguard youth from radicalization, particularly emphasizing these programs' design, implementation, and outcomes.

A thorough investigation of concrete examples from multiple global regions has been undertaken, particularly on more recent instances dating from approximately 2010. The survey meticulously delineates each program's contextual framework, objectives, activities, and evaluative outcomes. Subsequently, we identify common themes, best practices, challenges, and lessons learned across these initiatives. A critical component of this study involves analyzing how these efforts could inform preventive measures against radicalization in the gaming sector. Furthermore, the text presents recommendations for how the European Union might benefit from and build upon these international examples.

2   Methodology

The present study employs a structured desk research methodology to methodically collect, analyze, and synthesize extant knowledge and practical initiatives related to the prevention of radicalization in gaming environments and youth protection programs outside the European Union. A particular emphasis is placed on awareness-raising campaigns, community interventions, educational initiatives, and multi-agency approaches, while maintaining a comparative perspective across different global regions. The general approach was discussed with partners in the GEMS consortium to ensure uniformity with analyses of other relevant questions (Feta & Armakolas, 2024; Halilovic-Pastuovic et al., 2024; Kudlacek et al., 2025a, 2025b; Moonshot, 2024).

The research process was initiated by establishing a comprehensive set of keywords and developing search strategies per the project objectives. These included search terms such as "gaming radicalization awareness", "youth protection from online extremism", "counter-extremism gaming campaigns", "youth radicalization prevention programs", "online gaming content moderation", "gaming trust and safety extremism", and "community resilience to radicalization", among others. The searches were conducted iteratively, allowing for refining keyword combinations based on emerging findings and ensuring thematic depth and regional diversity coverage. Information was systematically gathered from multiple categories of sources. A comprehensive review of the extant academic literature yielded a substantial corpus of theoretical foundations, empirical data, and critical analyses of radicalization pathways and prevention strategies. Policy papers and strategic frameworks from governmental and intergovernmental organizations informed the understanding of institutional approaches to youth protection and counter-extremism. In addition to academic and governmental sources, policy resources from specialized working groups were included, such as the Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism (Lamphere-Englund, 2025) and the International Centre for Counter-Terrorism (Hartgers & Leidig, 2024). The documents under consideration provided critical insights into emerging design principles for countering violent extremism within gaming spaces. Moreover, they offered practice-oriented frameworks that complemented the extant academic literature. Practice-oriented reports from non-governmental organizations, think tanks, civil society initiatives, and industry white papers from technology and gaming

companies provided insights into the real-world implementation of awareness and prevention programs.

A comprehensive desk research was conducted using a variety of academic databases, including EBSCOhost, Web of Science, and Google Scholar. In addition, specialized repositories were consulted, such as those of the RAND Corporation, the Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD), and Moonshot CVE. Government portals and reputable news outlets that provide investigative coverage of gaming-related radicalization trends were also utilized. A systematic source evaluation matrix assessed credibility, methodological soundness, timeliness, and relevance.

The comparative approach is predicated on identifying similarities and divergences across countries and programs. Such similarities and divergences are particularly evident in the design of the programs, including the themes and methods employed. Additionally, the implementation modalities of the programs, as well as the outcomes reported or perceived, are also subject to comparison. The extraction of best practices was achieved through critical synthesis, while explicitly addressing tensions between prevention goals and the socio-technical realities of gaming ecosystems.

The limitations inherent in desk research include potential language barriers (especially for initiatives documented only in non-English sources), selective reporting biases, and the rapid evolution of digital spaces. Triangulation of information from multiple independent sources was employed wherever possible to enhance reliability. The structured desk research constitutes the empirical basis of the study, thereby enabling a systematic comparative analysis and the formulation of evidence-based recommendations for adapting and improving preventive measures in the context of the European Union (Schlegel, 2022).

3   Inventory of Awareness Campaigns on Gaming & Radicalization

The following section provides a comprehensive catalog of major campaigns and programs in and outside the EU that aim to raise awareness on the link between gaming and radicalization, particularly among parents, teachers, social workers, and the general public. It is important to note that these individuals may not possess the necessary expertise to engage with the gaming community. These initiatives underscore the necessity of educating and equipping individuals who interact with or care for youth to prevent extremism in gaming. The efforts' origins, target audiences, objectives, content, and available indicators of reach or impact will be addressed.

3.1   European Union

In recent years, the European Union has seen the emergence of numerous initiatives aimed at enhancing public awareness concerning the potential dangers associated with radicalization in digital spaces. These initiatives also target individuals outside the gaming community. They aim to equip these groups with the knowledge and strategies to support youth resilience and prevent radicalization. Despite the paucity of programs that address gaming radicalization in isolation, there is an increasing recognition of the need to incorporate gaming platforms as relevant environments within the broader context of digital extremism prevention

efforts. The subsequent section delineates the major EU initiatives and national programs, providing a synopsis of their objectives, target audiences, methodologies, and, when applicable, their evaluated or perceived impacts.

Insafe/Safer Internet Centers

The European Commission provides financial support to the Insafe network of Safer Internet Centres (SICs), which operate in each EU member state. These centers implement national campaigns, organize training sessions, and develop educational resources to promote safer and more responsible use of online technologies among youth. While initially focusing on cyberbullying and general internet safety, many SICs – such as Germany's klicksafe.de and France's Internet Sans Crainte – have increasingly incorporated awareness of online radicalization risks, including risks associated with gaming spaces, into their programs (klicksafe.de, 2025; Internet Sans Crainte, 2025). Evaluations have shown that SIC activities have achieved high participation rates and led to the widespread dissemination of educational materials. Furthermore, evaluations have demonstrated that SIC activities have resulted in measurable improvements in the online safety behaviors of participants. The Insafe network's success is attributed to its capacity to integrate consistent EU-wide frameworks with national contextualization and adaptation.

Radicalization Awareness Network (RAN) – Communication and Narratives Working Group

The Radicalization Awareness Network (RAN) Communication and Narratives Working Group, established within the European Union in 2011, is a specialized body that falls under the aegis of the RAN. The RAN, which the European Commission initiated, comprises a working group tasked with analyzing communication and narratives to identify radicalization processes within online communities, including gaming environments. Although not exclusively focused on gaming, RAN's workshops, publications, and practitioner meetings have contributed to disseminating knowledge among frontline workers, such as educators, youth workers, and community leaders, regarding the mechanisms through which extremist narratives can propagate within online subcultures. The influence of the RAN is evident in its policy recommendations, training materials, and the incorporation of its findings into national counter-radicalization strategies across member states (Radicalization Awareness Network Communication and Narratives Working Group, 2024).

Austria: Saferinternet.at

Saferinternet.at, based in Austria, has been in operation since 2005. The Centre provides comprehensive resources, training workshops, and awareness campaigns targeting children, parents, teachers, and youth workers. While the program's primary focus is on issues such as cyberbullying, digital privacy, and disinformation, it also explicitly includes content on online radicalization and manipulation tactics, particularly in social media and increasingly in gaming contexts. Educational materials, including guides on "extremism online" and teacher toolkits, provide age-appropriate explanations of radical content and recruitment strategies. Saferinternet.at collaborates with national education authorities and non-governmental organizations to deliver prevention workshops within educational institutions. Evaluations have indicated a robust uptake of educational materials and a sustained demand for in-person training

programs. Feedback from educators has highlighted a notable increase in confidence in addressing radicalization and hate speech in digital environments (saferinternet.at, 2024).

Germany: klicksafe.de

The German Safer Internet Centre's klicksafe.de initiative offers a comprehensive set of educational materials on digital safety. These materials address a wide range of topics, including privacy, cyberbullying, extremism, and radicalization online. In response to the evolving nature of threats, Klicksafe has expanded its focus to include gaming platforms as an area of concern. The initiative is responsible for producing various materials intended to raise awareness about the manipulative tactics employed by extremist groups within the context of online games. These materials include parent guides, webinars, teaching modules, and public campaigns. An evaluation of the use of Klicksafe materials in educational institutions has revealed a high utilization rate. The review has also received positive feedback from teachers and students, indicating an enhancement in their ability to identify extremist content online (klicksafe.de, 2024).

Germany: "Schau hin!"

The "Look!" public information campaign is a program the German Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women, and Youth supports. The initiative offers practical counsel to parents and caregivers on managing their children's media consumption, including the risks associated with online gaming environments. Despite its broad approach, "Schau hin!" unambiguously confronts the perils of hate speech and radicalization within digital media. An analysis of monitoring reports reveals that the brand has achieved notable recognition among German families, and there has been a discernible increase in parental engagement with their children's online activities (Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women, and Youth, 2024).

France: Internet Sans Crainte

As part of the French Safer Internet Centre, Internet Sans Crainte implements a variety of public awareness campaigns and school-based programs to promote safe and responsible internet use. In light of the evolving digital landscape, the initiative has incorporated discussions of online radicalization risks into its digital literacy curricula, including potential threats linked to gaming platforms. According to national evaluations, there has been an enhancement in digital risk awareness among participating students and an increase in teacher confidence in addressing sensitive topics, such as radicalization (Internet Sans Crainte, 2025).

Netherlands: Samen Digitaal Veilig

The Dutch Safer Internet Centre coordinates Samen Digitaal Veilig, an initiative that promotes digital safety among the general public, parents, and educators. While the primary focus remains on online privacy, cyberbullying, and misinformation, Samen Digitaal Veilig has included elements addressing radicalization risks in online communities, noting gaming platforms as potential areas of vulnerability. Feedback from educators and municipalities indicates that participants feel better equipped to engage in conversations about digital risks, including extremist recruitment tactics (Samen Digital Veilig, 2025).

Sweden: Medierådet (Swedish Media Council)

The Swedish Media Council (Medierådet) was established in 2006. It operates under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture and is responsible for conducting in-depth research on young people's media use. Recent publications have drawn attention to the intersections between gaming, youth culture, and exposure to extremist ideologies. Medierådet has enhanced critical media literacy among educators and social workers through educational campaigns, research dissemination, and stakeholder training. Survey data suggest workshop participants have increased their awareness levels, although longitudinal impact studies are still limited (Medierådet, n.d.).

Spain: PantallasAmigas

PantallasAmigas, a Spanish non-profit organization, collaborates with the national Safer Internet Centre to develop educational content. The content is designed to promote safe and responsible use of technology among youth. Radicalization pathways via digital games and social platforms are recurrent in campaigns and materials. Evaluations demonstrate extensive use of PantallasAmigas resources in Spanish-speaking educational settings and strong engagement with their online awareness materials (PantallasAmigas, n.d.).

Italy: Generazioni Connesse

The "Generazioni Connesse" (Italian for "Connected Generations") initiative, which has been administered by the Italian Safer Internet Centre since 2012, endeavors to promote the cultivation of digital citizenship competencies within educational institutions. Acknowledging the pervasive influence of digital ecosystems, encompassing gaming environments, on the radicalization risks of youth is imperative. In response to this critical concern, the project has meticulously developed a series of modules designed to fortify students' resilience against the insidious influence of manipulative content. Independent evaluations have reported an enhancement in students' abilities to assess online information critically and a notable strengthening of media literacy competencies among educators involved in the program (Generazioni Connesse, n.d.).

Poland: SaferInternet Poland

The Polish SaferInternet Centre administers national awareness campaigns emphasizing online safety, privacy, and the risks of digital radicalization. Despite the absence of a pronounced gaming-specific emphasis, the campaigns consistently address extremist threats in digital environments that are pertinent to gaming audiences. Surveys administered following campaign participation have indicated heightened parental vigilance and enhanced teacher preparedness to identify early warning signs of radicalization among youth (SaferInternet.pl, 2025).

3.2   United States: Online Safety and Anti-Extremism Campaigns

FBI – "Don't Be a Puppet"

Outside the European Union, a noteworthy example is the "Don't Be a Puppet: Pull Back the Curtain on Violent Extremism" campaign initiated by the United States Federal Bureau of Investigation in 2016. The website was developed as an interactive tool to educate adolescents about the deceptive tactics employed by violent extremist groups and to strengthen youth resilience against radicalization. It contains a variety of engaging activities, quizzes, and videos that systematically guide users through a series of themes. These themes include the manipulation of grievances by extremist recruiters and the development of online identities. While the target demographic of the FBI's primary focus is adolescents, the bureau has explicitly encouraged "resource officers, coaches, school administrators, parents, and families" to review the site and utilize it to raise awareness in their communities. The primary message, "Do not become a puppet", encourages young individuals to engage in critical thinking and to refrain from unquestioningly adhering to extremist propaganda (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2016).

The initiative was a pioneering government effort in the U.S. to address youth radicalization as a preventable phenomenon. The Federal Bureau of Investigation reported that community groups and schools expressed interest in incorporating the website into educational outreach initiatives. Nonetheless, the initiative encountered controversy during its development phase. Civil liberties groups initially expressed concerns that it might stigmatize specific communities, such as Muslim Americans (Sidahmed, 2016). The Federal Bureau of Investigation modified the content before its release. Despite lacking formal public evaluation data, the program's impact persists in the context of FBI field offices' community outreach initiatives. It has exemplified the efficacy of employing interactive media and straightforward communication in awareness campaigns. Subsequent to this, the FBI has persisted in the production of content tailored to young people on subjects related to hate crimes and online safety.

ADL – "Hate Is No Game" Reports & Education Efforts

The Anti-Defamation League, a U.S.-based NGO, has emerged as a prominent voice on the issue of hate and extremism in online games. Beginning in 2019, the Center for Technology and Society at the ADL initiated the publication of an annual research report series bearing the title "Hate Is No Game." This series meticulously documents the prevalence of harassment and exposure to extremist content in the context of online multiplayer games. These reports revealed alarming statistics, including the finding that in 2022, 15% of adult gamers and 9% of young gamers (ages 13-17) reported being exposed to white-supremacist extremist ideology while gaming. The ADL has utilized these findings to raise public awareness through media and policy advocacy and pressure the gaming industry to implement more robust content moderation measures.

Of particular significance is how ADL has integrated its research with developing practical guides and educational resources for parents and educators. In 2021, the ADL published a lesson plan for middle and high schools entitled "Don't Let Hate Ruin the Fun: Youth and Online Games." This is a complimentary resource that educators or youth leaders can utilize

to initiate classroom discussions concerning online hate and radicalization in gaming. The lesson incorporates interactive activities, such as students physically indicating their agreement or disagreement with statements regarding their gaming experiences, to elicit their perspectives. The curriculum also provides data from ADL's surveys for students to analyze, fostering critical thinking about bias and propaganda in games. A salient point that emerged from the analysis was that "young people usually don't talk with their parents or family members about online gaming". This finding underscores adults' need to proactively engage and learn about these spaces. ADL's materials are designed to promote open dialogue among families and empower youth to articulate their experiences with hate in gaming contexts.

The ADL's awareness initiatives have achieved high public awareness through news coverage and strategic partnerships. The statistic that tens of millions of U.S. gamers encounter hate in games has been cited in congressional hearings and public forums, helping to establish extremist content in games as a pressing societal issue. Certain school districts have adopted the implementation of educational tools, with the subsequent dissemination of these tools occurring through the medium of national educator networks. Although specific outcome measures (e.g., changes in student attitudes) have not yet been published, anecdotal feedback from teachers indicates that these resources address a critical gap in digital citizenship education by addressing extremism, in addition to bullying and pornography, as online risks. ADL updates its surveys and toolkits annually, maintaining the issue's visibility within the public discourse (Anti-Defamation League, 2024).

PERIL and SPLC – "Parent & Caregiver's Guide to Online Radicalization"

Another influential American initiative is the collaboration between the Polarization and Extremism Research and Innovation Lab (PERIL) at American University and the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC). Consequently, these experts collaborated to produce "The Parents & Caregivers Guide to Online Youth Radicalization". The guidebook, which was first released in 2020 and subsequently updated, is designed for parents, caregivers, and teachers. Its objective is to assist these groups in comprehending the methods by which extremists utilize online communication to target children and young adults. The document provides a concise, accessible summary of the various pathways through which a young individual may encounter extremist propaganda (Southern Poverty Law Center &Polarization and Extremism Research and Innovation Lab, 2021). These pathways range from social media algorithms to multiplayer game chats. Additionally, it offers guidance on recognizing warning signs of radicalization in a child's behavior or speech. Of note is the emphasis on tangible prevention and intervention strategies, focusing on constructive communication. For instance, it provides guidance on engaging in non-confrontational dialogues if a child articulates extremist perspectives, along with referrals to relevant resources. The guide also informs readers of "new risks" (e.g., emerging platforms or memes), reflecting the rapidly evolving online ecosystem.

This guide's dissemination has occurred in various forms, including a freely available PDF download and community workshops. In the digital age, PERIL cautions, it has become increasingly expedient for individuals to radicalize without leaving their homes. These resources became even more salient during the pandemic as youth spent more time online. The PERIL–SPLC guide has emerged as a foundational resource for training sessions conducted by parent-

teacher associations and law enforcement outreach programs in the United States, suggesting a significant degree of adoption.

Although a guidebook is considered a soft measure, the "Building Resilience & Confronting Risk" guide is supported by evidence-based principles (Southern Poverty Law Center &Polarization and Extremism Research and Innovation Lab, 2021) . The text synthesizes insights from interviews and studies, condensing them into a coherent and accessible format. According to the SPLC, the program was downloaded thousands of times in its inaugural year. Moreover, it has been translated into multiple languages (e.g., Spanish, German) to reach diverse communities. The perceived outcome of this initiative is an enhancement in parents' digital literacy. Adults are more vigilant in their awareness of extremist recruitment tactics and more confident in their ability to guide their children. This example demonstrates the value of partnerships between researchers and advocacy groups in translating academic knowledge on radicalization into practical prevention advice.

Children and Screens Institute with the Institute of Digital Media and Child Development

The Children and Screens Institute, in collaboration with the Institute of Digital Media and Child Development, published a parenting tip sheet in 2023. The document, titled "Youth and Online Polarization and Radicalization: Frequently Asked Questions", is a valuable resource for parents and caregivers seeking to understand the complex issues surrounding online polarization and radicalization in the context of youth. Frequently Asked Questions and Suggestions for Parents." This resource, which is intended for a general parent audience, compiles insights from leading researchers regarding how youth may be exposed to extremist content in various online environments, including video games. It responds to frequently asked questions (FAQs) systematically and in an organized manner. The following inquiries were posed: "How are youth being radicalized online?", "What signs indicate that a child may be embracing extremist views?", and "What measures can parents implement to safeguard their children?". A notable aspect of the text is its dedicated section on online video games, which provides a rationale for the appeal of such games to extremists. The section explains that games cultivate "social trust with strangers" through teamwork. This concept can be manipulated to establish connections with individuals before adolescents fully comprehend the nature of their interactions. The article also mentions that increased hours of gaming correlate with higher exposure to certain extreme ideologies (e.g., racist narratives), citing initial research findings. The recommendations emphasize the importance of parental engagement, advising them to adopt a similar approach to other online activities. This involves fostering an open dialogue with their children, utilizing safety settings, and even participating in games to better understand the gaming environment (Children and Screens Institute, 2025).

As an awareness-raising document, this Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) publication gained attention by being among the first parent-oriented publications to identify online games as a potential vector for extremism explicitly. The Children and Screens tipsheet was a medium for disseminating current research findings to parents. This dissemination occurred in an accessible format and included comments from the Polarization & Extremism Research Lab and the Middlebury Center on Terrorism, Extremism and Counterterrorism. Although its direct outcomes are challenging to quantify, it constitutes a component of an expanding public education ecosystem concerning digital extremism in the United States.

Media Campaigns and Public Service Announcements

In addition to formal programs, the United States has witnessed a series of media-driven awareness initiatives. TV shows, technology publications, and parenting magazines (e.g., Parents.com) have featured articles like "Teens Playing These Games Are Exposed to Harassment – Here's What Parents Can Do", frequently in conjunction with organizations like ADL. The U.S. Department of Justice and other agencies have incorporated the topic into broader internet safety campaigns. Although media coverage does not constitute a structured "program", it has been demonstrated to significantly amplify awareness messaging from programs such as ADLs or PERILs, extending reach to millions of viewers and readers.

In summary, U.S. efforts in this domain employ a multifaceted approach, integrating complex data and research to illuminate the prevalence of extremist content in games with practical guides and interactive education. This strategy aims to empower non-gamers to engage with youth regarding these issues. These campaigns frequently entail a collaborative effort among various entities, such as government entities, community organizations, and non-governmental organizations in conjunction with academic institutions. The dissemination of these campaigns is often facilitated through contemporary communication channels, including websites, social media platforms, webinars, and traditional media outlets, to achieve optimal visibility.

3.3   Canada: Community-Centered Campaigns and Resources

CPRLV – "What If I Was Wrong?"

Canada has demonstrated a proactive stance in the development of community-oriented prevention campaigns. The Centre for the Prevention of Radicalization Leading to Violence (CPRLV) in Montreal was established as one of the world's first independent, non-profit radicalization prevention centers. The CPRLV initiated an awareness campaign entitled "What If I Was Wrong?". The objective of this campaign was to promote resilience and critical thinking skills as protective factors against radicalizing and extremist discourses that may result in violence. The slogan "What if I was wrong?" was selected as a straightforward, thought-provoking message to encourage self-reflection. The campaign addressed five extremist narratives that often appeal to youth or isolate them, such as "Us against them" or "One vision for all", and challenged these worldviews (Centre for the Prevention of Radicalisation Leading to Violence, n.d.).

The content for "What If I Was Wrong?" included digital posters and shareable graphics that carry the slogan and counter-messaging points, short video clips featuring former extremists sharing moments when they began questioning the hateful ideologies they had been involved in, and educational guides and workshops. CPRLV has developed companion guides designed for educators and youth workers to promote discourse surrounding the campaign's thematic elements. Furthermore, they provided in-person workshops for youth groups, transitioning to an online format. In these workshops, participants would view videos or posters and subsequently engage in guided critical thinking exercises concerning extremism and its impact.

To ensure broad accessibility, all campaign materials were available on a dedicated bilingual website (in English and French). By leveraging CPRLV's extant network (comprising schools and community organizations in Montreal and beyond), the campaign disseminated throughout Quebec and reached other provinces, thus establishing a model for replication.

The "What If I Was Wrong?" campaign is regarded as a best-practice example in the prevention community. A salient strength of the program was its "holistic" design, which integrated online content with offline engagement. As a campaign case study noted, providing actionable resources and opportunities for dialogue, as opposed to awareness posters alone, likely made the impact more tangible. Another factor contributing to the campaign's success was the messaging strategy employed. The slogan used in the campaign struck a balance by inviting a moment of doubt rather than directly confronting the beliefs of the target audience, which can often result in defensiveness. This subtle approach has the potential to sow a seed of doubt and spark a conversation rather than attempting to persuade someone to abandon their belief system outright. The campaign proved particularly impactful in the educational sector; educators reported that it facilitated discourse on sensitive issues non-judgmentally. An analysis of CPRLV's annual reports reveals that hundreds of educators downloaded the materials, and the videos amassed tens of thousands of views online in the initial year. While it is challenging to quantify the number of youths "deterred" from extremism, there were anecdotal cases of students coming forward to discuss concerns after viewing the campaign, which CPRLV could follow up on. The success of this campaign underscores the efficacy of grassroots organizations in tailoring counter-extremism messaging to local contexts and the potential of former testimonies to humanize the issue.

Extreme Dialogue

Extreme Dialogue is a project that commenced as a partnership between Canadian Public Safety officials, the Institute for Strategic Dialogue (a UK-based think tank), and film producers. The project was initially funded in 2015 by Public Safety Canada. Short documentary films and educational toolkits were produced to facilitate "safe, constructive discussions around extremism and radicalization in educational or community settings." The initiative was initially implemented in Canada and the UK, and subsequently expanded to include Germany and Hungary, operating as an open-access resource. Each film in the series presents a case study of a real individual's experience with violent extremism. Each film is accompanied by a Teachers' Handbook and a lesson plan to facilitate group discussions with adolescents aged 14 to 18. The materials prompt critical thinking by asking students to identify the factors that led the person in the film toward extremism and how they eventually rejected or were harmed. This initiative aims to "cultivate resilience against extremism through active discourse and enhanced critical thinking." The program was implemented in various settings, including classrooms, youth clubs, and sports teams. It is important to note that this initiative's focus extended beyond gaming, encompassing a more extensive examination of extremism in its various forms. A notable aspect of this initiative was its pertinence in assisting youth in discerning extremist narratives and cultivating empathy through personal narratives. In light of the recent emergence of extremist recruitment within gaming subcultures, a methodology involving personal storytelling could be employed to engage gamers, for instance, through the sharing of experiences by a former extremist gamer (Extreme Dialogue, n.d.).

The impact of Impact Extreme Dialogue was assessed through a qualitative analysis. Teachers reported an increase in student engagement with extremism, and the films were lauded for their ability to facilitate empathy and relate to those impacted by extremist ideologies. By 2017, the Extreme Dialogue films had been shown in dozens of schools in Alberta and Ontario, and the UK's Educate Against Hate portal endorsed them as a recommended resource. A notable outcome of the initiative was cultivating educators' confidence in addressing extremism, a subject many felt lacked adequate preparation for. This confidence was cultivated through constructive means. The project demonstrated the value of first-person narratives and inspired similar efforts. For instance, organizations in Australia and the U.S. have created video series of former survivors to use in workshops. In gaming, the lesson learned is that compelling storytelling, even in the form of brief YouTube videos, can catalyze reflection among young audiences. These audiences, who may otherwise disregard warnings from authorities, are susceptible to the impact of storytelling when presented compellingly (Extreme Dialogue, n.d.).

Digital Literacy and Online Safety in Canadian Schools

Although not exclusively focused on extremism, Canada has incorporated components of counter-radicalization into comprehensive digital literacy and online safety curricula. For instance, the federal Get Cyber Safe campaign, which is chiefly concerned with cybersecurity, periodically incorporates blog posts addressing the identification of online hate and extremist recruitment tactics. Various school boards have organized parent nights in educational institutions, with guidance from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) and non-governmental organizations. Information sessions of this nature frequently feature law enforcement officials or experts from the CPRLV. These individuals are tasked with elucidating the indications of extremist influence, which may manifest as sudden ideological shifts or clandestine internet usage. Additionally, these sessions promote resources such as the CPRLV's help hotline (Centre for the Prevention of Radicalisation Leading to Violence, n.d.). Despite the decentralized nature of these efforts, they have contributed to a heightened awareness among Canadian parents and teachers that radicalization can occur among "ordinary" youth, not only through in-person religious settings but also via online communities, including gaming.

Adopting these discourses within academic communities signifies an escalating level of cognizance. In the late 2000s, such discourses were infrequent; however, by the late 2010s, it became more prevalent for Canadian secondary schools to incorporate a module on hate and radicalization as part of civics or social studies, frequently employing global occurrences (e.g., students departing to join ISIS) as illustrative exemplars. Establishing a dedicated prevention center (Centre for the Prevention of Radicalization Leading to Violence) in Canada has contributed to normalizing the concept that radicalization is a preventable phenomenon and not exclusively a matter of criminal justice. Community surveys in Montreal revealed that following several years of outreach by CPRLV, a greater proportion of residents were able to recognize the signs to watch for and knew where to seek assistance (the CPRLV helpline received numerous calls from concerned parents, indicating that awareness had been translated into action; Centre for the Prevention of Radicalization Leading to Violence, n.d.). The aforementioned community-level vigilance is a significant outcome that Europe may wish to emulate through the implementation of analogous campaigns.

3.4   United Kingdom: Internet Safety and Counter-Extremism Guidance

The United Kingdom has established robust awareness initiatives that have garnered international acclaim and frequently serve as models for other nations. The UK's strategy integrates counter-extremism initiatives with safeguarding and internet safety measures in its public outreach efforts.

Educate Against Hate

The UK government, specifically the Home Office and the Department for Education, operates EducateAgainstHate.com, a comprehensive website that provides teachers and parents with information on preventing extremism. This platform offers guidance on online radicalization and comprises Q&A-style articles intended to address parents' concerns. For instance, one article poses the question, "How can parents safeguard their children from the dangers of online extremism?" and subsequently guides parents on practical steps to take, including the importance of open communication regarding online content, the utilization of parental controls, and a comprehensive understanding of their children's digital platforms. In the " Parents " section, the subject expounds on the potential dangers extremist influencers pose on social media forums. It has been posited that extremists may also exploit online games and gaming chat applications to target youth, occasionally indirectly via Discord or analogous services where gamers congregate. The site also provides links to external resources, including guides from Parent Zone on gaming platforms and tips from Childnet International to assist parents in staying informed about their children's activities in games (HM Government, 2025).

The tone of UK materials is reassuring yet frank, emphasizing the potential vulnerability of any child and the exploitation of common adolescent insecurities by radicalizers. The suggestions mentioned above are embedded within the overarching paradigm of effective parenting in the digital era. Cultivating trust in children is paramount for encouraging the disclosure of their online experiences. Moreover, a state of heightened awareness concerning any alterations in children's behavior is equally crucial. Educate Against Hate disseminates success stories concerning community-led initiatives, albeit indirectly, raising awareness regarding the manifestations of positive interventions. A blog post by a founder of a grassroots organization described the organization's efforts to engage parents in challenging conversations about extremism and the impact of these efforts on the community.

Educate Against Hate (HM Government, 2025) has emerged as a comprehensive resource center for extremism-related awareness in the UK, catering to a diverse user base. This includes educational institutions that utilize the platform for staff development and informational purposes. Additionally, the platform is a valuable source of guidance for parents seeking online advice on pertinent issues. The website reportedly received millions of visits in its initial years, and the UK government has acknowledged its role in enhancing referral rates to the Prevent program, attributing this increase to increased teacher and parental awareness regarding what constitutes a reportable concern. The United Kingdom effectively destigmatized seeking guidance on extremism by packaging the issue within the broader context of general safety-guarding. In doing so, it positioned this issue alongside other concerns, such as self-harm or drug use, on a parent's radar. The site's gaming content is still somewhat limited,

primarily pointing to general digital safety organizations. This suggests room to expand with game-specific advice as the threat evolves. However, the UK's model of a government-endorsed yet user-friendly portal could be replicated in the EU context to raise awareness.

Prevent Tragedies and Mothers' Campaign

During the period in which ISIS recruitment was at its peak, UK authorities initiated the #PreventTragedies campaign, which specifically targeted mothers with the message that young people were at risk of online radicalization. Despite its initial focus on travel to Syria (a topic that emerged before the prominence of the gaming angle), this campaign is noteworthy as an exemplar of public outreach via social media. The program included videos of mothers who had lost sons to ISIS. These mothers made appeals, urging other parents to "talk to your children about what they view online" and to seek help if they suspect radicalization. Empowering parents, utilizing relatable messengers, and accentuating the online nature of recruitment can be equally applied to the gaming context. In essence, the UK government acknowledged that parents are front-line allies in prevention and crafted messaging specifically for them.

This brief campaign has been documented to have resulted in a notable surge in calls to the national anti-terror hotline by parents. This observation suggests that heightened awareness among concerned individuals can precipitate tangible actions when they know the appropriate channels to access assistance. Family-centered campaigns have also been adopted in other settings, including by non-governmental organizations in the United States, such as Parents For Peace (2025). In the context of gaming-related extremism, a comparable strategy – involving a parent or former extremist gamer recounting their narrative – has the potential to resonate with audiences that a conventional public service announcement may not reach.

Media and NGO efforts in the UK

In the United Kingdom, British non-governmental organizations such as the Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD) and Moonshot CVE have engaged in active research and discreetly administered campaigns concerning online extremism, encompassing gaming platforms. For instance, ISD researchers have frequently appeared in the media to discuss the targeting of hobby groups, such as gaming communities, as a tactic for extremists to recruit new members. In an ABC News interview, one researcher expounded on how hate groups employ game modifications (mods) to normalize extremist symbols within youth culture. Illustrative of this phenomenon is a mod in a popular shooter game that enables players to assume the role of Nazis. Such media appearances function as informal awareness campaigns, alerting international audiences (including those outside the European Union) to the lesser-known threat vectors. Although Moonshot CVE is predominantly recognized for its interventionist approach, the organization also provides community groups with briefings on emergent online extremist trends. A notable example of this briefing is the organization's efforts to educate teachers on the pervasion of extremist memes, derived from gaming and anime subcultures, into student discourse.

Synopsis of Awareness Campaigns

The Extremism and Gaming Research Network (2025) has compiled an international reposi-tory of prevention practices and policy recommendations, serving as a transnational platform to foster resilience. In the European context, Schlegel (2021) has provided extensive insights into primary and secondary prevention measures on gaming platforms, offering valuable comparative data for awareness interventions beyond the EU.

Across the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom, the discourse surrounding games and radicalization has evolved from initial broad warnings about "online extremism" to more nuanced content addressing the specific context of gaming. A commonality among these ini-tiatives is providing knowledge to individuals outside the gaming realm to facilitate their en-gagement with youth. These campaigns have increasingly drawn attention to the fact that extremist propaganda can be disguised as "fun" or "edgy humor" in gaming spaces. They also underscore the necessity of technological tools and settings, as well as sociological factors such as open communication and critical thinking, to counteract such propaganda.

4   Inventory of Youth Protection & Resilience Programs

In this section, we turn to youth protection programs in and outside the EU that have a broader scope in preventing or countering radicalization. These programs often go beyond raising awareness; they involve structured interventions, skill-building, and support mecha-nisms to protect young people from extremist influence. We focus on the design (subjects, methods), implementation, and any reported outcomes of such initiatives globally. While not all are gaming-specific, each offers relevant insights into fostering resilience or providing safety nets for youth in the face of radicalization risks. We cover community programs, edu-cational interventions, mentoring, and deradicalization initiatives from North America, Asia-Pacific, and other regions where information is available.

4.1   European Union

Civil Society Empowerment Programme

The Civil Society Empowerment Programme (CSEP) is an EU initiative under the RAN/EU In-ternet Forum that supports NGOs and grassroots organizations in creating online counter- and alternative-narrative campaigns against violent extremism (European Commission, n.d.). Led by the European Commission's DG HOME, CSEP provides funding and training to "credible voices" such as youth groups, former, and community leaders, empowering them to produce content on digital platforms targeted at vulnerable youth (European Commission, n.d.; Hart-gers & Leiders, 2024). The key objective is to enable civil society to push positive narratives and enhance digital resilience. Methods include grant funding for over 20 projects between 2017 and 2021, workshops on social media use, and expert evaluations of campaign effec-tiveness (European Commission, 2024b). Outcomes highlight dozens of online campaigns from videos to social media initiatives and reaching at-risk youth, although evaluations note that measuring actual audience impact remains challenging (European Commission, n.d.).

Youth Empowerment and Innovation Project

The Youth Empowerment and Innovation Project (YEIP), a transnational Erasmus+ project co-ordinated by the IARS Institute (UK), involved 18 partners across Europe (Gavrielides, 2020a, 2020b). YEIP developed a youth-led model for preventing violent youth radicalization using principles of positive psychology and the Good Lives Model (CARDET, 2020; Gavrielides, 2020a, 2020b). Target groups included young people in schools, universities, and youth of-fender institutions across seven countries (Gavrielides, 2020a, 2020b). Methods involved training 75 young peer-researchers who conducted surveys and interviews with over 3,500 youth and stakeholders, piloting interventions focused on well-being and inclusion. The pro-ject outcomes included policy recommendations and a freely available study summarizing the youth-led findings (Gavrielides, 2020a, 2020b). YEIP's approach is particularly relevant to P/CVE efforts as it directly involves young people in designing solutions and focuses on im-proving life opportunities as a buffer against radicalization (CARDET, 2020).

ARMOUR Project – A Radical Model of Resilience for Young Minds

The ARMOUR Project (A Radical Model of Resilience for Young Minds), funded by the EU's ISF-Police programme, was coordinated by the Euro-Arab Foundation with nine partners from eight countries. ARMOUR aimed to strengthen resilience among children and youth ages 10–18 against polarization and extremist influences (ARMOUR, 2021). Its key objectives were to equip first-line practitioners such as teachers, youth workers, and social workers with tools to prevent, detect, and intervene in early radicalization (Fundea, 2018). ARMOUR developed an educational toolkit of "experimental labs"—interactive workshops designed to build critical thinking, emotional coping, and civic engagement (ARMOUR, 2021). The project ran pilot labs, a train-the-trainer programme, and an online awareness campaign, resulting in a validated set of tools now used by practitioners across Europe (Fundea, 2018). ARMOUR's focus on youth resilience and digital awareness contributes significantly to countering extremist re-cruitment tactics (ARMOUR, 2021).

Dialogue About Radicalization and Equality

The Dialogue About Radicalization and Equality (DARE) project, funded by Horizon 2020, in-volved 17 partner institutions coordinated by the University of Manchester (Gavrielides, 2020a, 2020b). DARE significantly enhanced understanding of why and how young people aged 12-30 become radicalized or resist radicalization across different ideological spectrums (ARMOUR, 2021). The project integrated ethnographic research across 13 countries, produc-ing extensive reports, policy briefs, and a public data archive (Oslomet, 2021). Its findings offer critical insights into identity search, grievances, and online influences, which inform more effective prevention strategies (ARMOUR, 2021).

Youth Counselling Against Radicalization

The Youth Counselling Against Radicalization (YCARE) project, funded through Erasmus+, fo-cused on training youth counsellors and social workers to address better early signs of radi-calization (ARMOUR, 2021). A consortium including Cultures Interactive (Germany) led YCARE to develop a toolkit comprising manuals, educational games, and demonstration videos.

Training workshops were conducted across several partner countries, helping frontline professionals to improve their intervention competencies and strengthening the protective effect of mentorship (ARMOUR, 2021).

PRACTICES – Partnership Against Violent Radicalization in Cities

The PRACTICIES project, funded under Horizon 2020, mobilized a network of European cities alongside humanities, social sciences, and ICT experts to understand radicalization's roots in urban areas better (ARMOUR, 2021). Led by the University of Toulouse, it analyzed extremist recruitment narratives. It developed practical tools for municipalities, such as early warning systems, social media analysis software, and educational curricula for city practitioners. PRACTICES focused on creating community dialogues and digital monitoring instruments, linking academic research directly to frontline prevention practice (ARMOUR, 2021).

MINDb4ACT – Mapping, Identifying and Developing Actions to Tackle Radicalization

MINDb4ACT, another Horizon 2020 project, sought to innovate counter-extremism policies through experimental and participatory approaches (ARMOUR, 2021). With 18 partners, including universities, think tanks, and security agencies, the project piloted "living labs" where policymakers, practitioners, and civil society actors collaboratively developed interventions. Methods included scenario-based training, strategic policy games, and pilot projects in prisons and schools. Outcomes of MINDb4ACT include ethical guidelines for P/CVE initiatives and practical recommendations to make prevention strategies more adaptive and youth-accessible (ARMOUR, 2021).

BRaVE – Building Resilience Against Violent Extremism and Polarization

The BRaVE project under Horizon 2020 mapped and assessed existing P/CVE initiatives across Europe to foster knowledge exchange and support evidence-based policymaking. BRaVE developed a public database of good practices, organized surveys and evaluations, and produced policy toolkits to address hate, polarization, and early radicalization risks among youth. Its focus on identifying replicable youth engagement models significantly strengthened prevention strategies (ARMOUR, 2021).

CHAMPIONs – Cooperative Harmonised Action Model to Stop Polarization in Our Nations

CHAMPIONS, funded through the Internal Security Fund, piloted local collaboration models in Hungary, Poland, Germany, and Romania. Multi-agency teams comprising educators, police, social workers, and NGOs worked to detect and respond to local signs of radicalization and community tension. Each "CHAMPIONS" working group received specialized training and used a digital platform for case information sharing. The project demonstrated that such cooperation improves early detection and allows for tailored support of vulnerable youth (ARMOUR, 2021).

BRIDGE – Building Resilience to Reduce Polarization and Extremism

BRIDGE, coordinated by the European Forum for Urban Security (EFUS) and funded by the Internal Security Fund, supported cities in France, Germany, Belgium, and Austria in

identifying and mitigating polarization trends that could lead to radicalization. Key activities included training local coordinators, developing early-warning indicators, and facilitating dialogue forums. Outcomes included strengthened local diagnostics and action plans tailored to specific community needs, focusing strongly on youth environments such as schools and neighborhoods (ARMOUR, 2021).

YoungRES – Strengthening European Youngsters' Resilience Through Serious Games

YoungRES is an ISF project that innovatively used digital gaming to build youth resilience against extremist propaganda (ARMOUR, 2021). Led by a tech-social consortium in Spain and Italy, the project developed a serious game platform simulating decision-making scenarios around hate, fake news, and recruitment tactics. Pilot studies showed that participants demonstrated improved critical thinking and awareness after playing the game. YoungRES thus directly addresses radicalization risks in digital and gaming environments by leveraging youth-friendly methodologies (ARMOUR, 2021).

RaP – Rhizome Against Polarization

The RaP project, funded by the ISF and led by GVC (Italy), emphasized a grassroots, community-driven approach to strengthening resilience among youth vulnerable to extremist propaganda. Through participatory workshops, youth mentor training, and local awareness campaigns (e.g., social media challenges and cultural events), RaP empowered communities to engage proactively before polarization escalated into radicalization. Outcomes included the establishment of new local networks and advisory inputs for inclusive municipal policies (Rhizome against Polarization, n.d.).

France: "Stop-Djihadisme" Campaign and Family Support Initiatives

In response to a sharp rise in youth radicalization and terrorist incidents between 2014 and 2016, France launched the Stop-Djihadisme campaign (Lahnait, 2019). This initiative provided digital resources—including infographics, videos, and practitioner guidelines – to educate citizens, particularly families and educators, about recognizing and countering extremist recruitment tactics. The campaign's national hotline ("Numéro Vert") enabled early intervention, with over 7,000 calls received by 2016 (Lahnait, 2019). In parallel, centres such as the CPDSI (Center for Prevention of Sectarian Drift Linked to Islam) offered psychological counseling and family support, framing radicalization as a sectarian phenomenon treatable through deradicalization counselling. Although the formal partnership with CPDSI ended in 2016 due to methodological controversies, the overall approach marked a shift toward decentralized and family-centered prevention efforts under France's updated Plan PAR (Lahnait, 2019).

Germany: "Live Democracy!" Programme and Hayat De-Radicalization Counseling

Germany's Demokratie Leben! (Live Democracy!) programme, launched in 2015, funds local and regional initiatives promoting youth empowerment, political education, and digital resilience against extremist ideologies (European Commission, 2024a). The programme supports over 600 initiatives annually, including school-based workshops on media literacy and NGO-led counter-narrative campaigns. Complementing this broad prevention landscape is Hayat-Deutschland, Germany's pioneering NGO-led family counselling programme for individuals on

the path to Islamist radicalization (European Commission, 2024a). Operated by the ZDK Society for Democratic Culture, Hayat offers confidential, long-term support to families and coordinates interventions with educational, social, and security services where needed. Evaluations highlight Hayat's role in preventing travel to conflict zones and fostering successful disengagement from extremist environments (European Commission, 2024a).

Denmark: Aarhus Model

Established in 2007 in Denmark's second-largest city, the Aarhus Model remains a widely cited example of multi-agency collaboration in preventing youth radicalization (Folketinget, 2024). Built on the SSP (school-social services-police) cooperation framework, the model introduced the "Info-House," where cross-sector professionals jointly assess cases of concern and design early interventions (Hemmingsen, 2024). A distinctive feature is its mentorship programme, offering individualized support and reintegration assistance to youth at risk of radicalization or returning from conflict zones. Rather than prioritising criminal prosecution, the Aarhus Model aims to fulfil the welfare state's responsibility to protect individuals from extremist paths (Hemmingsen, 2024). Since its national adoption in 2014, Denmark has seen a substantial reduction in foreign fighter departures, and the model's emphasis on trust-building with minority communities is credited for increasing early reporting and successful interventions (Henley, 2014).

Netherlands: Comprehensive Action Programme and Local Approaches

The Netherlands has pursued an integrated strategy since launching the Comprehensive Action Programme to Combat Jihadism in 2014 (Lahnait, 2019). This national framework combined security measures with strong community engagement, education, and youth work. Municipalities such as Amsterdam and The Hague established dedicated multidisciplinary teams collaborating with schools, youth clubs, and religious communities to detect early signs of radicalization and offer non-repressive support pathways. The Netherlands also pioneered digital interventions, piloting the redirect method with Google to expose users searching for extremist content to counter-narrative material (Helmus & Klein, 2020). These approaches have significantly reduced youth departures to conflict zones and enhanced trust between authorities and communities (Lahnait, 2019).

Belgium: Local Networks and Family Support

Facing one of the highest per capita rates of foreign fighters in Europe, Belgium developed a multi-layered prevention framework combining municipal action and civil society engagement . Municipalities such as Vilvoorde and Molenbeek established local multi-agency prevention cells integrating police, educators, and social workers, who collaboratively identify and support at-risk youth. Belgium also fostered innovative community-based initiatives like Mothers for Life, a peer-support network of mothers affected by radicalization, who now advocate for prevention through storytelling and school engagement. National centres such as CAPREV offer free counseling services for radicalized individuals and their families. These combined efforts drastically reduced the number of Belgian youth departing for Syria after 2016 and highlighted the effectiveness of community-centric, preventive approaches.

4.2 United States: Community-Based Interventions and Resilience Building

Parents for Peace – Family Helpline and Intervention Program

Parents For Peace (P4P) is a U.S. non-governmental organization that employs a public health approach to preventing radicalization. The organization was established in 2011 by the father of an American student who had become a terrorist. Its initial purpose was to serve as a support network for families affected by extremism. By 2017, P4P had initiated a pioneering confidential helpline, providing a direct line of communication for parents, friends, and youth to access in cases of suspected extremist radicalization. The program's design is rooted in addiction intervention models. When a call is placed, trained first responders conduct an intake assessment and connect the family with P4P's expert intervention team. The team's composition may include clinical psychologists and former extremists who engage in individualized work with at-risk individuals, typically young people, and guide families on supporting deradicalization processes. The intervention protocol is comprised of multiple phases, including education about extremist ideology, skill-building (e.g., critical thinking, coping mechanisms), and often pairing the individual with a mentor who has assisted them in leaving extremist groups (Parents for Peace, n.d.).

The target audience for this initiative is two-fold: first, youth (or adults) already on a path to radicalization, and second, their concerned family members. The objective is to intervene in the process of radicalization before it escalates to violence or causes irreparable harm. P4P places significant emphasis on addressing underlying causes, such as personal trauma or grievances, through counseling. Furthermore, P4P treats violent extremism as a malady that can be healed, rather than merely a crime to be punished.

P4P's Director has stated that the helpline and intervention program have assisted hundreds of individuals disengaging from extremist activities. This process has also served to avert potential acts of violence. While each case is unique, P4P reports several success stories, including the deradicalization of a mother's son, who had become involved with an online white nationalist community, and the assistance provided to a college student in leaving a neo-fascist group. The measurable outcomes include the number of calls, which has steadily grown each year, indicating that more families are aware and seeking help. There have also been qualitative life changes in those cases, such as individuals who have renounced extremist beliefs and, in some instances, even become peer educators. A National Institute of Justice evaluability study identified P4P as one of the few community interventions in the U.S. showing promise, noting that it addresses a critical gap beyond the reach of law enforcement. The success of Parents for Peace underscores the significance of readily available support services for at-risk youth and families. This model has the potential to be adopted or expanded in other regions, including Europe's gaming context, where parents might encounter extremist influences but may not be aware of where to seek assistance.

Peer-to-Peer (P2P): Challenging Extremism

This pioneering youth-driven initiative was initially sponsored by the U.S. Department of State and subsequently by the Department of Homeland Security, in collaboration with Facebook (U.S. Department of State, 2016; European Commission, 2019). The competition, which was conducted over an academic semester, engaged university students (and subsequently, some high school students) worldwide in developing campaigns or initiatives to counter violent extremism within their respective communities. While not exclusively focused on gaming, several student projects addressed online radicalization, hate speech in gaming, or used gamification. For instance, a team of scholars from a U.S. college developed a mobile application that utilizes game-like quizzes to educate users on identifying false information and extremist rhetoric. Another Pakistan team implemented a social media campaign, FATE (From Apathy to Empathy), which employed video testimonials to mitigate sectarian animosity. In the inaugural year of P2P, participation from over 45 universities across 17 nations resulted in the development of numerous mini-campaigns. The program's design element, "students as creators", is pivotal. It treats youth as potential victims and formidable agents in the prevention process.

P2P initiative resulted in the establishment of a repository of grassroots projects, with some of these projects continuing beyond the confines of the competition. The teams successfully implemented their ideas and were awarded small grants to scale their initiatives. A notable outcome of this initiative was the cultivation of a new generation of young professionals dedicated to P/CVE initiatives. The findings indicated that, when equipped with the appropriate instruments and motivated to do so, young individuals possess the capacity to formulate messages and interventions that resonate profoundly with their peers, frequently surpassing the effectiveness of those produced by adults. Despite the constraints imposed on formal evaluation, the program garnered significant recognition from the Obama administration as a best practice. According to Facebook, there has been an enhancement in the capacity of participants to counteract hate speech on its platforms. The peer-to-peer model has since been adapted in various forms. For instance, the U.S. Invent2Prevent program continues to address this challenge in high schools (Homeland Security, 2025). The relevance of this initiative to the gaming field is evident in the creativity exhibited by the students in their proposed solutions. For instance, several teams proposed Minecraft servers dedicated to facilitating cross-cultural exchange, underscoring the innovative potential of this approach. For stakeholders within the European Union, the promotion of youth-led innovation in the effort to combat extremist narratives (potentially through the implementation of hackathons or challenges) has the potential to generate novel strategies that are expressly tailored to gaming communities.

Targeted Violence Prevention Grants

In recent years, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Center for Prevention Programs and Partnerships (CP3) has allocated funding to various local prevention initiatives. In the 2022-2023 period, several funded projects have explicitly emphasized youth resilience and digital literacy, which intersect with the broader phenomenon of radicalization prevention (Homeland Security, n.d.).

Boise State University (Idaho) received a grant to develop digital educational products for secondary school students that promote human rights and "increase individual resilience to recruitment narratives for hate and violence." The initiative encompasses the development of innovative curricula in collaboration with teaching professionals, which are expected to encompass interactive modules or gaming elements designed to engage students within rural communities. The design is informed by recognizing that small or underserved communities face challenges accessing cutting-edge resources. In response, the plan involves utilizing dynamic digital tools that are accessible even in environments with limited internet connectivity. Although the program is still in the implementation stage, Boise State's initiative underscores the importance of designing age-appropriate, compelling content that can capture the attention of adolescents in a media-saturated environment.

The Cherokee Nation (Oklahoma) received funding to implement a community-wide training program on violence prevention skills for students, parents, teachers, and community members. The organization focuses on enhancing school climate through summits and workshops, which seamlessly integrate anti-bullying initiatives, conflict resolution techniques, and anti-extremism education. By conceptualizing the program within the broader context of school climate and culture, it becomes possible to address extremist propaganda as one of several toxic influences. The Cherokee Nation's integration of tribal and cultural values underscores the significance of culturally tailored prevention strategies.

Although the results of these programs funded by the Department of Homeland Security have not yet been formally established, they signify a transition towards evidence-based, community-driven prevention initiatives within the United States. The allocation of grants is contingent upon developing evaluation strategies, thereby necessitating data collection about metrics such as the augmentation of student knowledge and the number of educators who have been trained. This data is anticipated to be disseminated in the forthcoming years. A recurrent theme in both design and preliminary reports is the cultivation of critical thinking and empathy in youth, serving as a form of inoculation against extremist narratives. For instance, these programs frequently incorporate modules on identifying misinformation and manipulative content, such as conspiracy theories or racist tropes. These skills are relevant to resisting extremist recruitment in games or other settings. The involvement of teachers and community figures is also critical, as these programs are not one-time initiatives but are integrated into the fabric of youth education and support.

The Use of Gamified Media Literacy to Induce Immunity to Extremist Manipulation

American institutions have explored the use of games or gamified content to inoculate users against extremist manipulation, building on psychological research. One expert-driven project (involving Google Jigsaw and American University's PERIL lab) developed brief 30-second animated videos to play as ads before YouTube content, subtly teaching viewers how to recognize common disinformation tactics. This approach, which does not conform to the conventional paradigm of a "program", utilizes a low-dose exposure to propaganda techniques akin to a vaccine, enabling youth to discern and resist extremist messaging more effectively. Similarly, the Middlebury Center on Terrorism, Extremism, and Counterterrorism (CTEC), with the support of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), has been developing a simulation game and an accompanying curriculum for adolescents. The objective of this initiative is to

"build resilience among adolescent internet users who may be exposed to violent extremism online." This initiative aims to facilitate a virtual experiential learning opportunity for adolescents, focusing on extremist recruitment tactics and disseminating misinformation. Following this experiential learning phase, participants will engage in a reflective process guided by a structured curriculum. The simulation is likely scenario-based, such as a chat interaction or social media feed, and subsequently debriefed by an instructor.

These efforts are currently in the pilot stage. However, preliminary studies on inoculation games (e.g., an unrelated UK-based "Bad News" fake news game) have demonstrated quantifiable enhancements in players' capacity to discern manipulative content. If the findings regarding extremist content are indicative of a broader trend, they suggest that interactive learning has the potential to preemptively dissuade youth from embracing extremist ideologies. The scalability of these platforms is a significant advantage, as YouTube pre-rolls can reach an audience of millions, and web games can be distributed at no cost. The challenge lies in maintaining the currency of content in light of the evolution of extremist tactics. Nonetheless, these programs reflect the integration of cutting-edge methods (i.e., gaming, psychology, and CVE) that could be applied widely by EU institutions interested in modern prevention pedagogies.

4.3   Canada: Multi-Agency and Holistic Programs

CPRLV – Youth Intervention and Outreach

In addition to conducting campaigns, Montreal's CPRLV operates a comprehensive, youth-focused program that combines awareness, training, and direct intervention. These institutions are responsible for the training of school personnel in the identification of early indications of radicalization, as well as the implementation of a protocol for the intervention with at-risk youth in a manner that is both supportive and non-criminal. The design encompasses the utilization of multi-agency intervention teams, comprising psychologists, social workers, and police as necessary, that convene to formulate customized intervention strategies for referred youth. This approach parallels the UK's Channel program, albeit within the context of a community NGO. Furthermore, CPRLV administers educational workshops for youth within the confines of schools, emphasizing cultivating critical thinking skills. These workshops frequently employ creative arts and projects as pedagogical tools, such as assigning students to devise counter-hate messaging. The organization meticulously tracks outcomes, including the number of referrals. For instance, in their first two years, they handled over 200 referrals, many of which were teenagers flagged by schools or families. Documented cases have shown that timely intervention can prevent youth from joining terrorist groups overseas or engaging in violence domestically. CPRLV's comprehensive model encompasses all aspects of extremism prevention, intervention, and research. The institution's commitment to addressing extremism is evident in its educational initiatives, such as the publication of guides designed to inform and equip professionals and stakeholders with the necessary tools to discuss extremism with young people in sports clubs.

CPRLV's efforts have demonstrated a quantifiable impact on preventing incidents and redirecting individuals toward positive pathways. For instance, their public reports indicate that

in a given year, most youth cases in which they intervened did not progress to crime or violence, and many resumed healthy social integration (e.g., returning to school, reconciling with family, etc.). The center's experience also underscores several challenges, including the engagement of sceptical parents, issues concerning confidentiality, and the assurance of follow-up over extended periods. Nevertheless, it remains a noteworthy exemplar of a municipal-level comprehensive youth protection program that has effectively countered radicalization. The principles mentioned above – namely, early intervention, collaboration across sectors, youth empowerment, and family support – are widely applicable.

Canada's Community Resilience Fund (CRF) projects

The federal Canada Centre for Community Engagement and Prevention of Violence (under Public Safety Canada) administers the CRF, which has funded numerous pilot projects nationwide since 2017. Design-wise, many are *"protective factor"* programs – strengthening identity, critical thinking, media literacy, and conflict resolution – rather than focusing on any specific ideology. Implementation often happens through community organizations with the government in a supporting role.

While many of these projects are small-scale, they have collectively contributed to developing a knowledge base regarding effective strategies for youth radicalization prevention. Evaluations have indicated that communities that have implemented such programs have experienced heightened awareness and augmented capacity. For instance, teachers who participated in training reported increased confidence when discussing extremism. Youth in a leadership program also reported increased willingness to stand up to hate speech. A recurrent outcome across many projects was the enhancement of coordination between educational institutions, communities, and law enforcement entities in addressing extremism as a collective responsibility. Given its applicability to coordinating responses to extremist activities on gaming platforms, the EU would be wise to consider adopting a multi-sector network approach. Such a strategy would necessitate collaboration among technology companies, educators, and law enforcement agencies.

4.4 United Kingdom: The "Prevent" Strategy's Youth Component

Channel Program

The UK's Channel program, an integral component of its comprehensive Prevent strategy, stands as a notable exemplar within individualized intervention initiatives targeting individuals at risk of radicalization. The Channel is a multi-disciplinary panel process. When a teacher identifies a young person, police officer, etc., as exhibiting signs of radicalization, they can be referred to the Channel. A local panel utilizes a structured framework to assess an individual's vulnerability. If the assessment is deemed successful, the individual is granted access to a bespoke support plan, contingent upon their consent, given the voluntary nature of Channel. These services may encompass mentorship sessions, often facilitated by a vetted intervention provider skilled in ideological dialogue, mental health support, education, career guidance, and other wraparound services designed to address the underlying issues. Many cases within the Channel fall under the category of youth or young adults, thereby classifying them as a

youth protection mechanism, albeit one administered by government agencies (Metropolitan Police, n.d.).

The design of the program is intended to ensure that safeguarding is prioritized. Channel is positioned as analogous to programs that protect youth from drug abuse or gang violence, rather than as punitive measures. It is customary for parents to play an active role in this process, receiving guidance on how to assist their child in disengaging from extremist influences.

The UK Home Office disseminates annual statistics concerning Prevent/Channel. In recent years, several hundred individuals have received Channel support each year (for example, in 2021, approximately 688 cases involved Channel interventions, about half of whom were under 20). Most cases involving Channel are typically closed following their conclusion, with no evidence of radicalization. This outcome is regarded as a success, although it is acknowledged that demonstrating a negative outcome, specifically the absence of radicalization, is challenging due to the inherent complexity of such phenomena. There have been documented cases in which the intervention of these channels has successfully diverted young individuals from affiliating with neo-Nazi groups or from traveling to join ISIS, thereby potentially averting potential tragedies. However, the program has also encountered challenges and criticisms. Some contend that the program's broad scope, characterized by numerous referrals, has resulted in a strain on resources due to the failure of many referrals to culminate in intervention. Additionally, assessing long-term attitudinal change has been identified as a complex undertaking. Nonetheless, Channel remains a cornerstone of the UK's approach and has inspired similar models elsewhere (e.g., Norway and the Netherlands developed their multi-agency panels). In the context of gaming-related radicalization, the Channel model posits that the identification of at-risk gamers, potentially through reports of extreme online behavior or concerns expressed by friends or family, could facilitate the establishment of a support infrastructure to assist them. This approach diverges from a singular focus on bans or law enforcement measures.

4.5   Australia: Online Safety and Counter-Extremism Measures

eSafety Commissioner Initiatives

The Office of the eSafety Commissioner of Australia, an entity primarily tasked with ensuring the safety of children in the online sphere (prevention of cyberbullying, exploitation, etc.), has recently begun to incorporate violent extremism into its purview. The eSafety website offers guidance analogous to that of the UK for parents regarding the utilization of parental controls, the comprehension of gaming risks, and the identification of extremist content. Although Australia has not experienced large-scale extremist recruitment cases comparable to those observed in Europe, there is a recognition of far-right activity manifesting online. In response to this concern, eSafety, a government entity focused on online safety and security, has established collaborative partnerships with think tanks to produce webinars for school counselors. These webinars address crucial topics, including youth radicalization, offering valuable insights and guidance to professionals working with at-risk populations. The approach

is characterized by a greater emphasis on prevention and a more comprehensive scope, encompassing digital citizenship (eSafety Commissioner Initiatives, 2024).

Australian Federal Police

The Australian Federal Police (2023) disseminated targeted public warnings concerning the infiltration of gaming platforms by extremists during the holiday season, reflecting an escalating law enforcement focus on gaming spaces as risk environments. In the domain of proactive youth protection, the Monique Burr Foundation's "Play it Safe" initiative offers gaming-specific safety education for children and caregivers, emphasizing digital literacy and threat awareness. About the evaluation of interventions, Lippe et al. (2022) presented the results of a controlled evaluation of an online game designed to prevent violent extremism. The review demonstrated positive changes in the participants' critical thinking and resilience to extremist narratives.

Community-led projects

The Australian government allocated funding to a series of modest community initiatives under the Living Safe Together program, initiated around 2015, and subsequent endeavors (Australian Government, n.d.). The initiatives encompassed youth mentoring programs in major cities such as Sydney and Melbourne to deter young individuals from embracing violent ideologies. One notable initiative focused on Muslim youth grappling with feelings of alienation, offering workshops on leadership and critical thinking to mitigate the appeal of ISIS propaganda. Another innovative Australian initiative was an interactive mobile application game called "Everyday Racism" (2013) by the NGO All Together Now. This application utilizes a simulation approach, immersing users in the experiences of diverse individuals and communities. For instance, it enables users to empathize with the challenges faced by individuals of color, particularly Muslim women, by simulating encounters with racism. The application delivers this experience through daily simulation tasks offered to users via their mobile devices. The objective of the study was to enhance empathy and awareness of prejudice. While not explicitly addressing extremism, the reduction of racist attitudes has the potential to diminish the support for far-right radicalization. Incorporating a gamified application in awareness campaigns exemplifies the innovative approaches being explored.

Indonesia and Southeast Asia

In the context of countering terrorist recruitment of youth, nations such as Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines have confronted this challenge. While the primary focus has historically been on religiously motivated recruitment, there has been a recent shift towards exploring online strategies as a potential target. In their efforts to educate youth about the manipulations of extremist groups, some NGOs have employed various techniques, including street theater, online campaigns, and school programs. In Singapore, the government has initiated a program entitled "Digital Literacy for Life", incorporating modules on identifying extremist propaganda (Infocomm Media Development Authority, 2024). Notably, these modules explicitly address the potential implications of online gaming chats on children's digital literacy, advising parents to exercise caution in this regard. These programs underscore that the issue

is not exclusive to the West. Awareness and youth resilience have become increasingly integral components of counter-extremism strategies worldwide.

Middle East and North Africa (MENA)

Several MENA countries, frequently with international support, have established youth centers and activities to mitigate the threat of radicalization. For instance, non-governmental organizations have established "peace gaming" events in countries such as Lebanon and Jordan. These events involve youth from diverse sectarian backgrounds engaging in cooperative games, which may include both video games and live-action activities. These events aim to foster trust among participants, thereby challenging the prevailing "us versus them" mindset. The Hedayah Center in the United Arab Emirates (a global CVE center) has curated a library of counter-narrative content and conducted training for youth influencers to promote positive alternatives online (Hedayah, 2024); its work has also been acknowledged by authorities from within the EU (Bavarian State Ministry of the Interior, for Sport, and Integration, 2024).

Although there is a paucity of documented outcomes from these regions in the extant literature, they are unified by a common preventive logic. This logic entails the engagement of youth, channeling their energy into positive experiences, debunking extremist narratives, involvement of parents and the community, and evaluation of results to refine approaches.

Examining this inventory reveals various programs, including family counseling helplines, school curricula, peer-led campaigns, and government-coordinated interventions. Each of these elements has the potential to inform the development of strategies specifically targeted towards the gaming sector. This analysis will proceed to examine this possibility in the subsequent section.

5   Comparative Analysis of Initiatives

A comparative analysis reveals significant variations in policy-oriented approaches across different regions. Wallner et al. (2025) present a comprehensive study on extremism in gaming spaces, in which they advocate for a combination of moderation tools, user empowerment, and platform accountability. Meanwhile, the GIFCT (2025) working group highlights the need for cross-platform coordination and standardized safety benchmarks. At the industry level, stakeholders imply that mounting public pressure has prompted certain gaming companies to tighten community guidelines and trust-and-safety measures (Osborn, 2024). However, significant inconsistencies persist across various platforms.

Having previously enumerated many initiatives, the following chapter will undertake a comparative analysis to distill common themes, best practices, challenges, and lessons learned across these campaigns and programs. Despite the differences in context, including country, target ideology, and scale, there are striking similarities in how these initiatives approach the problem of youth radicalization and extremist influence. Furthermore, divergences in the learning process present opportunities for further education. This analysis will also identify gaps not adequately covered by existing programs relevant to the gaming sector.

5.1   Common Themes and Strategies

Emphasis on Critical Thinking and Digital Literacy

Most programs, including an interactive FBI website and community workshops, prioritize cultivating critical thinking skills in youth, empowering them to engage thoughtfully with the content they encounter. This phenomenon is frequently conceptualized as a form of inoculation against manipulation. For instance, the Federal Bureau of Investigation's "Don't Be a Puppet" educational materials instruct adolescents to evaluate extremist messages critically. The Parents' Education and Resources for Information and Learning (PERIL) and the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) guide recommend that parents foster media literacy in their children to enable them to discern extremist strategies. The initiatives funded by the Department of Homeland Security share a similar focus on understanding violent content and training youth in the interpretation of propaganda. This finding aligns with a prevailing consensus emphasizing empowering individuals' cognitive defenses as a sustainable strategy to prevent radicalization. In the gaming context, where content moderation cannot comprehensively monitor all content (Kudlacek et al., 2025a), it is imperative to cultivate an informed youth and general population capable of identifying and rejecting extremist propaganda. This approach serves as a robust defense against the dissemination of extremist ideologies.

Multi-Stakeholder Involvement

Most programs are characterized by a collaborative effort among various actors, including government agencies, non-governmental organizations, educational institutions, community leaders, and private technology companies. Similarly, the ADL relies on the cooperation of gaming companies for its surveys and other research initiatives. This comprehensive societal approach is regarded as imperative due to the intricate nature of radicalization as a social problem. The resolution of this issue necessitates a collaborative effort that transcends the limitations of a single sector. Each stakeholder contributes unique strengths, including providing funding and coordination by governments, the infusion of trust and specialized knowledge by NGOs, the daily access to youth by educators and parents, and implementing systemic changes (e.g., platform policies) by companies. The primary challenge lies in ensuring stakeholder coordination and preventing disseminating redundant or contradictory messages. A close examination of the programs reviewed reveals that those with a delineated partnership structure (e.g., formal referral networks in Channel or advisory boards in NGO programs) tend to function more efficiently.

Use of Former and Affected Individuals

A powerful common element is the involvement of former extremists or survivors/victims of extremist violence in the initiatives. CPRLV's campaign incorporated former testimonies, Extreme Dialogue films focusing on firsthand accounts, and Parents for Peace's utilization of former individuals as interventionists. This finding suggests a best practice: personal narratives are compelling in discrediting extremist propaganda and eliciting empathy. The provision of authenticity is a distinguishing feature of this pedagogical approach, a quality that may be absent from traditional academic instruction. In practice, when an individual who previously held extremist beliefs acknowledges their misjudgment and presents the underlying

rationale, it can profoundly impact the defenses of a young person who is exhibiting similar tendencies and the perceptions by parents, teachers and even peers. Many programs have cited positive audience responses to these stories, with students demonstrating high emotional engagement and parents recognizing the potential for such events to occur to any individual. The logistical challenge of identifying and training suitable speakers or storytellers has been addressed by networks such as Against Violent Extremism (AVE), a global network of former speakers. AVE has been instrumental in providing speakers in multiple countries and overcoming this challenge.

Conceptualization of (De-)Radicalization as a Preventable Phenomenon and a Shared Responsibility

All awareness programs effectively communicate the notion that radicalization is not inevitable and that communities (be they familial, educational, or social) can proactively mitigate it. This represents a departure from previous perspectives that regarded extremism exclusively as a security concern for law enforcement. By conceptualizing it in a manner consistent with other youth risks (e.g., substance abuse, gang involvement), programs facilitate the approachability of the issue. For instance, the UK's Educate Against Hate and the U.S. parent guides both analogize extremist recruitment to other forms of harmful influence, demystifying it. The merits of this approach are manifold. Chief among them is the reduction of stigma, encouraging individuals to seek assistance. A parent might feel more at ease seeking help for a mental health concern, just as they would for any other issue. The challenge lies in balancing the depiction of extremism and its seriousness. An urgent tone, not alarmist characterize the most effective programs, and encouraging rather than accusatory. The public health model employed by Parents for Peace exemplifies this approach, conceptualizing radicalization as a collective, manageable condition.

Combining Online and Offline Engagement

A recurring design feature is that programs do not rely on online content alone to change attitudes; they often blend it with offline or interactive components. CPRLV's campaign encompassed both online poster advertisements and offline workshop events. ADL's research is available online, but its educational materials, in the form of lesson plans, are intended for integration into classroom settings. The Middlebury Simulation, a digital game under development, aims to facilitate discussion among educators. This combination is critical because information alone is not always sufficient to effect a behavior change. Human interaction, whether a class discussion, a counseling session, or a guided activity, facilitates the articulation of questions, the processing of emotions, and the personalized reinforcement of the message. Programs without an interactive component (e.g., if a government merely released a pamphlet PDF and did not undertake further actions) tend to garner less traction. Consequently, a lesson has been learned: hybrid models, combining online material and offline dialogue, effectively engage youth deeply on these issues.

It is imperative to emphasize the underlying protective factors. A preliminary examination of youth protection programs reveals that they do not inherently prioritize ideology. Instead, these programs concentrate on cultivating general life skills and fostering support networks, reducing the likelihood of radicalization. The Cherokee Nation's initiatives concerning school

climate, the Canadian projects that promote a sense of belonging and identity, and Channel's efforts to address mental health needs, among others, are all designed to enhance protective factors (e.g., social cohesion, self-esteem, critical thinking, problem-solving, empathy). This finding is consistent with the results of previous studies that indicated that factors such as social isolation, unaddressed trauma, or identity crises can render youth more vulnerable to extremist recruitment. Therefore, vulnerability mitigation is achieved by implementing various factors, including mentorship, community engagement, and therapeutic interventions. The lesson from this analysis is that effective programs often treat the whole person, not merely the ideological aspect. Consequently, a recommended approach entails incorporating extracurricular activities such as sports, arts, volunteering, and other constructive outlets within prevention programs, in addition to the mere discussion of extremism. In the context of gaming, this could entail the promotion of pro-social gaming activities, such as cooperative game events that incorporate diverse groups, as a component of a prevention strategy. This approach would prioritize promoting positive gaming experiences over merely disseminating warnings concerning problematic content.

Tailoring and Cultural Relevance

Initiatives that succeed in achieving their goals are typically well-tailored to their target audience's cultural and local context. The infusion of Native culture characterized the Cherokee Nation program, while Indonesia's approach utilized Islamic education frameworks. Australia's strategy involved the implementation of an anti-racism frame that resonated with their specific context. The notion that a single solution can accommodate the diverse needs of all individuals is a fallacy. This phenomenon is particularly salient in the European Union context, characterized by a rich tapestry of cultures and gaming communities. The language, examples, and messengers should be appropriate for each sub-audience. The youth demographic exhibits a high degree of sensitivity to authenticity. A well-received meme or reference Croatia may not be equally impactful in Portugal, and vice versa. Programs often deliberately incorporate youth participation in the design process to ensure cultural congruence. For instance, peer-to-peer student campaigns have historically demonstrated notable success in fostering peer engagement. Therefore, it is imperative to engage the target community in program development.

Challenges in Evaluation and Adaptation

A salient theme from the extant literature is that measuring impact is difficult but essential. According to several sources, including experts cited by the GAO, many initiatives are recent and require further research to ascertain their effectiveness. A scant number of the programs have undergone robust longitudinal evaluations. The UK's Channel program is a rather rae exception, as it has undergone ongoing reviews, and specific projects have been subjected to academic assessment. Nevertheless, there is an emerging trend of increasing emphasis on metrics. For instance, the Department of Homeland Security stipulates that grant applications include evaluation components. Programs are learning to define outcomes, including changes in knowledge (as measured by pre-/post-tests administered during workshops), behavioral changes (e.g., the number of at-risk individuals who disengage), and community-level indicators (e.g., a reduction in hateful incidents at a school). A key lesson emerges from this analysis: Incorporating evaluation into program design from its inception is instrumental in facilitating

continuous enhancement. A salient challenge pertains to the attribution problem: If radicalization does not occur, is it attributable to the program or alternative factors? Programs have been developed to address this issue by collecting testimonies or using control comparisons, when deemed ethical.

To summarize, analyzing the common threads among diverse programs reveals a shift in approach, transitioning from strategies rooted in fear and repression to those more comprehensive, empathetic, and youth-empowering.

5.2 Best Practices Identified

From these considerations, specific best practices can be deduced.

Holistic Educational Design

Integrating factual learning, emotional engagement through storytelling, and active participation in discussion or role-play has facilitated a more profound comprehension of the subject matter. An exemplar of this approach can be found in the educational package offered by Extreme Dialogue, which combines film with a suite of activities. Such approaches, however, should not only be used to address the youth, but also parents, educators, social workers, and the general public.

Positive Alternative Narratives

The mere statement that "hate is bad" is insufficient; the provision of positive identities and communities is imperative. Sports teams initiating "No to Hate" days are aimed at providing youth with a sense of purpose and belonging, thereby counteracting extremist narratives. Similar approaches could be used to strengthen motivation and self-efficacy among educators and parents.

Accessible Reporting/Help Mechanisms

Awareness efforts frequently encompass the provision of guidance about helplines or resources. For instance, the Parents for Peace helpline or the UK advice lines are examples of such resources. It is imperative to ensure that individuals have access to the available resources and know the methods to obtain them. Moreover, it is crucial to guarantee that these interventions are not subject to punitive measures, as this is instrumental in promoting early intervention strategies. The existence of a successful P4P helpline serves as a best practice that merits replication on an EU-wide scale, perhaps in the form of an EU-wide helpline.

Engagement with the Gaming Industry

Although the inventory above indicated that most initiatives are external to the industry, some have engaged companies. The ADL's advocacy for enhanced policies within gaming companies, or the adoption of the P2P program by Facebook, underscores the potential for expanded reach through collaborative efforts with digital platforms. The optimal approach in this situation is twofold: first, companies must be compelled to implement enhanced

safeguards, and second, they must be engaged in disseminating counter-messaging. A particularly salient illustration of this strategy is YouTube's Creators for Change initiative, which engaged prominent YouTube content creators in producing content promoting tolerance.

Targeted "Inoculation" Content

Incorporating brief interventions – including videos and mini-games – within the media environment of youth, with the objective of pre-emptively countering extremist content, constitutes a novel best practice. The financial burden on the individual is negligible, and disseminating this information is highly feasible through online channels. The crux of the matter is ensuring that these materials are highly quality and grounded in empirical research. For instance, findings from the field of psychology may be applied to determine the types of warnings or frames most effectively resonating with viewers (Carthy et al., 2020; Braddock, 2022; Roberts-Ingleson & McCann, 2023).

5.3   Challenges and Gaps

A fundamental challenge that cuts across many of the reviewed initiatives is the insufficient cooperation and limited trust between key stakeholder groups involved in the prevention of radicalization in gaming contexts. Despite increasing recognition of the gaming ecosystem as a space vulnerable to extremist manipulation, there remains a significant disconnect between actors who could contribute valuable insights and solutions: gamers themselves, gaming companies and platforms, researchers, practitioners in social work and education, and further experts in the field of preventing and countering violent extremism.

Efforts to address radicalization risks in gaming environments often struggle with mutual skepticism: gaming communities may perceive outside interventions as moralizing or uninformed, while prevention professionals may lack the cultural and technical understanding to effectively navigate gaming cultures. At the same time, companies may be hesitant to engage in collaborative work due to reputational risks, regulatory concerns, or unclear mandates regarding responsibility. This fragmentation impedes the development of comprehensive, credible, and context-sensitive prevention strategies.

What is needed is a cooperative framework that fosters sustained dialogue and trust-building between these actors. Such frameworks could enable the co-design of interventions that are both culturally resonant and evidence-informed – ensuring that preventive messages are not simply delivered to gamers, but developed with them. Meaningful collaboration across sectors is essential to bridge knowledge gaps, avoid duplicating efforts, and leverage the strengths of each domain to create more robust and impactful initiatives. Further aspects include:

Reaching the Most At-Risk Youth

Many awareness campaigns and school programs inherently engage youth currently enrolled in school or whose parents are paying attention. However, individuals who already manifest signs of extremism may evade or resist these messages. A persistent challenge identified is the difficulty of reaching disaffected youth. This demographic often harbors a profound

mistrust of authoritative figures. In certain instances, programs employ former professionals to reach these individuals, given their perceived reliability. Conversely, other researchers have sought to use edgy social media approaches to engage youth more contemporarily. However, ascertaining the extent to which at-risk individuals receive the necessary interventions remains challenging. Within the domain of gaming, this challenge is especially salient. Adolescents socialized within private gaming chat channels or marginal Discord servers may not be engaged in classroom discussions or exposed to public service announcements (PSAs). Consequently, interventions implemented within those at-risk environments (or through peers in those environments) may be necessary to address the identified gap.

Maintaining the Relevance of Content in a Rapidly Evolving Online Culture

Extremist subcultures demonstrate a high degree of dynamism, manifesting as novel memes and platforms. Programs frequently encounter difficulties in updating their systems with sufficient expediency. To illustrate, a module developed in 2016 might not incorporate current information regarding Discord or the most recent games, which could result in its appearance of obsolescence by 2025. The Children and Screens FAQ was developed to incorporate the most recent trends in the field. The most efficacious strategies for addressing this issue include implementing iterative updates, analogous to the annual surveys conducted by ADL to ensure the currency of content, and incorporating youth advisors who can provide current insights on online trends. The integration of gamification elements within extremist rhetoric is a dynamic phenomenon; as such, any educational curriculum must demonstrate adaptability to maintain its relevance.

An Evaluation of Causality

As previously stated, substantiating a particular program's efficacy in "preventing radicalization" poses significant challenges. This phenomenon can be attributed to the impossibility of measuring an unexpected event. While it is possible to assess changes in knowledge and attitudes, determining whether an individual would have radicalized but did not is frequently based on anecdotal evidence, such as a parent's statement that they believe their child was "saved." Long-term tracking is imperative; however, it necessitates considerable resources. Nevertheless, the existence of specific qualitative triumphs, including personal testimonials that indicate a shift in perspective, can function as compelling evidence to substantiate the efficacy of programs.

Resource Constraints and Scalability

Many programs are operated with restricted financial resources or under the constraints of short-term funding commitments. The cessation of a pilot can present significant challenges in terms of maintenance. The efficacy of a comprehensive toolkit is contingent upon its continuous promotion and integration. Scalability is a distinct issue that requires separate consideration. A program that functions effectively in one city might not be capable of being replicated at a national level without adaptation and significant investment in the training of facilitators. Conversely, digital interventions, such as online campaigns, offer the advantage of scalability but may compromise personal connection. Achieving the optimal balance between depth, characterized by intensive interventions for a select few, and breadth, marked by light-

touch awareness for a more extensive population, poses a strategic challenge. In an ideal scenario, a multi-layered strategy would be employed, encompassing broad awareness nets and targeted assistance for those demonstrating need.

Privacy and Freedom of Expression Concerns

This issue is of particular concern in the European Union, where any program that involves the monitoring or intervention in youth behavior is subject to close examination. Concerns have been raised regarding the potential implications of programs such as Channel on civil liberties and the possibility of stigmatizing specific communities. For instance, religious students have reported feelings of being profiled. Similarly, efforts to moderate gaming spaces frequently give rise to contentious debates concerning the tension between censorship and free speech. The most efficacious programs are distinguished by their transparency, voluntariness, and emphasis on violence prevention rather than ideological policing. Nevertheless, the challenge persists in formulating both efficacious and rights-respecting interventions. For gaming companies, the implementation of anti-extremism measures can elicit resistance from specific users. The challenge of moderating extremist content while preserving game enjoyment is an ongoing tension.

Siloed Efforts and the Need for Knowledge Sharing

A notable lacuna is that many of these initiatives have been operating in isolation, frequently lacking awareness of each other's existence and operations in real time. The necessity for enhanced international knowledge exchange, a principal objective of this report, is evident to facilitate the rapid acquisition of insights from the experiences of other nations. While international organizations such as the United Nations and global non-governmental organizations facilitate some degree of exchange, there is ample room for formalizing these processes. For instance, establishing an international repository of counter-radicalization educational materials, meticulously curated and translated, could assist smaller countries lacking the capacity to develop their materials from the ground up.

Another structural gap relates to what could be termed the fluidity of the field – the rapid and often unpredictable evolution of gaming cultures, norms, and communicative practices. Code words, inside jokes, workaround methods, and avoidance strategies (used both by gamers with benign intentions and those with harmful agendas) can spread swiftly across platforms and communities. This dynamic nature of gaming subcultures presents a significant challenge for practitioners and researchers attempting to monitor or respond to extremist infiltration. Static frameworks or infrequent knowledge exchanges are ill-equipped to keep pace with these shifts. To remain effective, prevention efforts must adopt mechanisms for rapid knowledge updates and agile adaptation. This could include cross-sector information-sharing platforms, practitioner-researcher task forces, or community-led monitoring that captures emergent trends in real time. Embedding such practices into broader prevention strategies can help close the gap between slow institutional response cycles and fast-moving online environments.

A salient lesson derived from this analysis pertains to the efficacy of preventive measures, which are most effective when implemented proactively and positively, as opposed to a

reactive and fear-based approach. Many early anti-radicalization initiatives (pre-2010) were predicated on warnings, emphasizing the potential repercussions of specific actions, such as "refrain from this behavior to avoid adverse consequences". As demonstrated in the preceding discussion, contemporary approaches manifest a heightened degree of intricacy and subtlety. These modern approaches prioritize the cultivation of skills, the fostering of community, and the promotion of a positive identity. A growing body of research has demonstrated the ineffectiveness of fear appeals, particularly among youth, who have been shown to respond more positively to aspirational and empowering messaging.

A secondary lesson that can be extrapolated from this analysis is that engaging youth as partners can yield substantial benefits. Programs such as P2P or the mere existence of a youth advisory council for a project ensure the approach is relatable. Furthermore, it fosters a sense of engagement among youth, empowering them to act as advocates for the cause rather than merely passive beneficiaries.

A predominant perspective posits that the extremist threat has undergone a digital metamorphosis in virtual platforms such as social media and gaming. Therefore, prevention strategies must evolve to align with this digital landscape. Initiatives that leverage technology, such as educational games, online campaigns, and social media analytics to target content, appear to be more effective in addressing current and future radicalization trends when compared to those reliant upon conventional workshop methodologies. This does not imply the obsolescence of offline methods; rather, it signifies the necessity of a fusion of these approaches.

In light of these comparative insights, a more nuanced understanding of strategically prioritizing prevention measures within the gaming sector can be developed. In the subsequent section, an analysis will be conducted to determine how the aforementioned programs and approaches can establish citizen awareness and youth protection. This analysis will also examine the necessary adaptations that might be required.

6 Applicability to Preventing Radicalization in the Gaming Sector

Which methodologies can be utilized to adapt or leverage the strategies identified to address extremism in online games and gaming communities? To answer this question, one should address both the direct applicability of the subject matter and the unique considerations that gaming might require.

6.1   Relevance of Existing Approaches to Gaming

A salient finding is that numerous core principles and methodologies from these programs are directly pertinent to the gaming context.

Digital Literacy and Inoculation

As previously mentioned, the critical evaluation of online content by youth is a fundamental component of prevention strategies. This phenomenon is especially evident in games, where extremist ideas may manifest as jokes, memes, or casual conversation. "Inoculation videos",

a term denoting educational videos on YouTube, could be expanded to encompass gaming platforms. This could manifest in the form of brief in-game Public Service Announcements or load-screen tips that provide players with subtle educational content without compromising their gaming experience. Notably, certain games have already incorporated anti-toxicity recommendations; the integration of anti-extremism prompts, such as "Reminder: If an individual disseminates hate or conspiracy theories, users can mute or report them. Acknowledging that leveraging existing technological capabilities could play a pivotal role in achieving this objective is imperative. The aim is to ensure these communications do not evoke a sense of intrusion. Digital literacy programs have laid the foundation for developing a repository of content and methodologies. This repository serves as a valuable resource for researchers and practitioners in related fields, providing a comprehensive collection of materials and approaches that can be drawn upon for various purposes.

Integration of Positive Narratives within the Context of Gaming Culture

Experts in the field assert that gaming spaces possess considerable potential for community-building and could incorporate positive social narratives, which is, in essence, a call to action for developing more positive campaigns within games. For instance, YouTube's "Creators for Change" initiative engaged influencers to produce counter-hate videos. Similarly, it is conceivable to envision prominent game streamers or esports figures disseminating anti-extremism messages as part of their streams or during tournaments. The "No Hate "campaign, a notable initiative in sports, can serve as a paradigm for promoting inclusivity and respect within athletic settings. It is recommended that prominent game studios and esports leagues consider implementing "Gamers Against Hate" days. By doing so, these entities would effectively communicate their stance against extremism and foster a more inclusive and welcoming environment within the gaming community. Evidence from related fields, such as sports and YouTube, indicates the potential for these campaigns to garner traction and establish norms. This endeavor aims to repurpose them in a manner that aligns with gaming aesthetics and heroes.

Family Engagement & Helplines

Many programs have been developed to cater to parents and caregivers, offering them knowledge and resources. This finding is immediately applicable to parents, who need to be aware that extremist recruitment can occur in games, as well as on social media platforms such as Facebook and in religious institutions like mosques. Guides such as the SPLC/PERIL one can be updated with a greater emphasis on gaming examples (many already mention gaming in passing). Parents For Peace's helpline, which has assisted hundreds of individuals, serves as a paradigm for a specialized program that could be publicized explicitly for gaming-related concerns. For instance, an EU or national helpline could train counselors on issues such as online gaming communities. The helpline could also offer guidance when a parent expresses concerns about their child's prolonged engagement in gaming activities and the emergence of extremist ideologies. Parents may encounter difficulties identifying pertinent resources or establishing communication channels. Establishing support lines dedicated explicitly to gaming-related issues could address this gap in connectivity. The presence of P4P indicates the feasibility of the proposed initiative. Additionally, the potential for expansion on an international scale or replication in the European Union is noteworthy.

One might rightfully argue that demographic data consistently show that the average gamer is well into adulthood, with many active participants in gaming communities falling between their mid-20s and mid-30s. This age profile complicates outreach strategies that are primarily tailored to parental mediation or youth counseling. Adults engaged in gaming are unlikely to benefit from interventions targeting parents or school systems, and they may also be more resistant to institutional messaging due to higher levels of autonomy and digital literacy. At the same time, younger gamers and particularly adolescents remain a critical group due to their heightened developmental vulnerability and their evolving political and social identities. Prevention strategies must therefore avoid a one-size-fits-all logic and instead adopt age-sensitive approaches.

Intervention Programs for At-Risk Gamers

The Channel model and community interventions demonstrate the efficacy of structured assistance for individuals. This could translate into an "online channel" in which the individual in question is not immediately banned if extremist behavior is identified in a gaming community (by moderators or peers). Instead, they are referred to an intervention program. This approach is intended to prevent the individual from becoming further radicalized and entrenched in their radical beliefs. To elucidate this assertion, it is imperative to contemplate the ensuing scenario: A guild leader becomes aware of a member disseminating radical rhetoric on the Discord platform. A more constructive approach to this issue would be sharing a program to discreetly facilitate individual engagement. One potential avenue for this engagement could be through a former extremist mentor who played video games. It is evident that this procedure necessitates meticulous execution and the explicit consent of the individual to participate, akin to the voluntary nature of Channel. While the concept may appear novel, it is not implausible within the context of existing practices, such as interventions already conducted via phone or in person. The novelty of the communication medium is evident in the transition from phone or in-person interactions to a Discord chat or in-game voice interaction. This shift does not signify a fundamental change in the method itself, but rather a modification in the medium used to facilitate the intervention. The Moonshot CVE "one-to-one" engagement approach, which involves the placement of advertisements and the subsequent availability of counselors for chat sessions with users who have clicked on the advertisements, could be employed in gaming contexts. A search on a forum for the term "Aryan Brotherhood Minecraft server" can yield an advertisement or prompt that offers assistance or presents alternative narratives. This prompts a connection with a live responder. This is precisely how Moonshot functions on search engines; adapting to game-related search or forums is a conceivable prospect.

Initiatives Led by Youth in the Gaming Sector

The concept of peer-to-peer initiatives, wherein students assume leadership in developing solutions, serves as a foundational principle. When provided with the requisite resources and support, the gaming community can produce counter-extremism content that is both effective and impactful. To illustrate, modifiers can engineer game modifications that subtly counter extremist propaganda. This is a counterpoint to the creation of radicalistic modifications by extremists. For instance, modifications could present players with the consequences of that ideology. It is noteworthy that game jam competitions have the potential to develop

mini-games that promote tolerance or dispel extremist myths. This approach is analogous to how hackathons have addressed social issues. The P2P outcomes are indicative of the remarkable creativity exhibited by young people. If the EU or other entities were to sponsor a competition titled "design an intervention in your favorite game to prevent hate", it is probable that solutions would emerge that would exceed the imagination of traditional authorities.

Incorporation into Existing Youth Protection Structures

In many countries, various structures have been developed to protect children and ensure their safety in the online environment. These structures may include school counselors and internet hotlines, among others. The insights derived from these programs can inform the refinement of training for these professionals to incorporate gaming-specific radicalization scenarios. For instance, a school's safeguarding policy might soon explicitly mention monitoring for extremist content in students' gaming discussions, just as they currently mention social media. Awareness campaigns have been demonstrated to equip individuals with the rationale and, in some cases, the necessary materials to engage in the desired behaviors. The prevailing perspective of treating it in a manner akin to other risks signifies its integration into frameworks that already address cyberbullying or self-harm content, with the requisite specialization.

6.2   Unique Considerations for Gaming

A set of unique characteristics distinguishes the gaming sector from similar approaches. These features may necessitate adjustments or the implementation of novel approaches.

Anonymity and Fantasy Environments in the Context of Gaming

A prevalent practice among gamers involves engaging in activities under aliases and within fan-fantasy worlds. This phenomenon can result in a blurring of the distinction between edgy role-playing and real extremist belief systems. It is conceivable that a youth might disseminate extremist memes in a game, perceiving it as a form of "trolling" or an integral component of the gaming environment. This behavior may be attributable to an absence of comprehension regarding the underlying ideology, which could be acquired over time, potentially resulting in a more profound understanding of the ideology. In gaming, the prevention challenge must be approached with a certain degree of ambiguity. Conventional programs that depend on real identity may overlook the activities behind a gamer tag. Consequently, effective strategies in gaming contexts cannot depend on easily identifying a person's offline identity. Instead, the focus could be shifted towards content moderation, community management, and empowering peers within the game to intervene. This underscores the necessity for enhanced collaboration with gaming companies, which possess substantial data on user behavior. The GAO report indicated that the FBI and the DHS should improve their information-sharing practices with gaming companies. This enhancement is imperative for two primary reasons: first, to identify potential threats, and second, to facilitate their prevention. If companies could determine concerning behavior patterns early on and share this information with a civilian prevention network that utilizes privacy-respectful protocols, interventions could be implemented more promptly. This is a multifaceted issue that merits discussion.

Entertainment Context and Resistance to "Preaching"

Individuals who engage in video gaming tend to exhibit a strong aversion to the presence of overt moralizing within the context of their entertainment activities. A substantial challenge will be delivering preventive content without encountering rejection due to its perceived corniness or intrusiveness. Any official campaign must be collaboratively created with gamers, particularly those who wield significant influence, to ascertain an optimal tone. The efficacy of comedic or deeply narrative approaches in this context is a subject that merits further investigation (Keir, 2023). One potential avenue for exploration lies in the observation that certain games are characterized by storylines that function as a vehicle for imparting social lessons, albeit indirectly. Another concept that merits consideration is the integration of extremism prevention measures within the context of gaming literacy. For instance, when new players join a gaming platform, a portion of the introductory tutorial could encompass a discussion of community guidelines, emphasizing a zero-tolerance policy for extremist content. This approach could be conceptualized as cultivating an environment characterized by enjoyment and security for all participants. This establishes the standard from the outset.

Scale and Technology Leveraging

The substantial magnitude of the gaming population necessitates the implementation of manual interventions, such as individual counseling, which cannot be universally accessible to address mild symptoms. Automation and artificial intelligence have the potential to play a significant role in this context. For instance, implementing AI moderators that filter content and provide nudges to users could be a valuable strategy. One such example is the Redirect Method, which has been piloted in multiple contexts, including gaming-adjacent platforms (Helmus & Klein, 2020). This approach uses targeted advertising and search engine optimization to guide individuals searching for extremist content toward curated counter-narratives or preventive resources. Its strategic use of behavioral data and platform infrastructure illustrates how large-scale digital interventions can be deployed in non-intrusive, scalable ways. Future campaigns should explore how similar techniques can be adapted for gaming environments, particularly through in-game ad networks, streaming services, or Discord integrations.

Community Self-Regulation

The inventory demonstrates the efficacy of community-led initiatives, including those initiated by youth and mothers. Leadership and moderation roles are frequently established within gaming communities, such as clans, guilds, and Discord servers. The training and equipping community leaders to address extremism is a promising approach. One potential avenue for further research would be developing an online training certificate program for "community moderators on countering extremism", drawing parallels with the existing training curriculum on conflict resolution. The adoption of this approach by some volunteer moderators could potentially enhance the resilience of the entire community. This approach is analogous to the training of teachers in the Prevent initiative or the training of coaches in the context of sports initiatives. The distinguishing factor is that these individuals serve as virtual community leaders. The program under discussion aligns with bystander empowerment, a concept specific programs have advocated. The objective of these programs is to impart the skills necessary to intervene when observing indications of radicalization.

Content and Narrative Approaches in Games

Games can incorporate narratives or content that fosters resiliency. For instance, there are independent games that simulate the mechanisms of propaganda. A notable example of this phenomenon is the game Through the Darkest of Times, which places the player as a resistance member in 1930s Berlin. The game's objective is to educate players about the dangers of fascism. Despite the unlikelihood of conventional video games being featured as afterschool specials, modification scenes and independent games possess the potential to serve as platforms for the integration of counter-extremism themes. The strategic allocation of financial resources to game jams or independent developers to create engaging games with these themes has the potential to yield popular titles that subtly educate. For instance, the game "Papers, Please" offers an engaging way to inform players about authoritarian bureaucracy. Europe possesses a substantial game development community that could be utilized for this purpose.

6.3   Building on International Examples

The European Union can directly draw upon the successes and lessons listed hereafter. It is imperative to adopt a public health framework to address the issue of gaming extremism. In alignment with the approaches adopted by Parents for Peace and CPRLV, this issue must be regarded as a preventable concern necessitating educational initiatives, proactive prevention strategies, and early intervention measures, rather than a mere reliance on law enforcement. Furthermore, member states should be encouraged to establish helplines or support services to address concerns regarding radicalization, if such services are not already in place. A potential course of action would be to expand the existing European radicalization helplines to include online gaming scenarios. Furthermore, this expansion should be accompanied by appropriate publicizing.

Integration of Digital Education

Using educational materials and experiential learning from U.S., UK, and Canadian curricula is recommended to facilitate incorporating modules addressing extremist gaming content into EU school programs. The EU could commission a localized version of ADL's lesson plan or PERIL's parent guide for use in European languages, with relevant examples (perhaps referencing local extremist incidents or trends). In light of the EU's prioritization of media literacy, particularly in combating disinformation, it is imperative to align the extremism-in-games initiative with these ongoing initiatives. The expense is incremental, yet the return is substantial. This initiative aims to enhance existing digital citizenship initiatives by incorporating this new information.

Application of pan-European Gaming Industry Agreements

The European Union has been demonstrated to possess notable convening power over prominent social media firms, as evidenced by its utilization of initiatives such as the EU Internet Forum. A parallel strategy could be employed to establish a Code of Conduct with prominent gaming companies (e.g., Sony, Microsoft, Steam/Valve, etc.; Kudlacek et al., 2025b) that emphasizes the prevention of extremism. In light of the findings by the ADL that game companies

are deficient in their moderation of content on social media, the EU may be well-positioned to advocate for enhancements, such as the implementation of enhanced reporting mechanisms for extremist activities, the acceleration of moderation processes, and the engagement in collaborative initiatives with law enforcement agencies and non-governmental organizations. One potential solution to this issue involves implementing technological concepts within European game servers, such as automated redirection or educational prompts. The European Union has the potential to provide financial support to pilot projects initiated by collaborating companies. This would facilitate testing proposed methodologies aimed at mitigating extremist content on online platforms. The industry should be compelled to adhere to the same standards as Facebook and Twitter regarding hate speech.

Support for Research and Evaluation

Further research is necessary to ascertain the effectiveness of these measures. The European Union possesses the capacity to spearhead research initiatives that concentrate on the nexus between gaming and radicalization. Preliminary studies are currently underway through initiatives such as the Radicalization Awareness Network. However, further empirical evidence is necessary to substantiate these findings. Moreover, it is imperative to incorporate a system for evaluating the success of new programs during their implementation. For instance, one might measure changes in community sentiment in a game after a campaign versus a control group. The European Union's academic network and financial support can address this deficit and disseminate their knowledge on a global scale.

Youth Engagement

The creation of EU-wide or national contests/hackathons for young people to propose solutions to extremism in gaming is also recommended. This pedagogical approach is designed to stimulate the generation of ideas and to raise awareness among participants. One potential approach involves the implementation of an EU "GameJam for Good", with a specific focus on counter-extremism as a unifying theme. Even those who do not explicitly address extremism may, through their games, cultivate empathy and cooperation, thereby indirectly countering extremist narratives. The peer-to-peer experience has been demonstrated to yield dual benefits, with both the output and the participating students assuming the role of ambassadors.

Cultural Adaptation within the European Union

Europe's heterogeneity necessitates adapting approaches to local contexts, particularly about language and prevalent extremist issues. For instance, Islamist extremism may be a more prominent narrative in France, while right-wing extremism may be more prevalent in Germany, among other examples. However, it is crucial to acknowledge the pervasive presence of extremist groups and ideologies throughout the continent. Campaigns must incorporate these nuances to accurately represent the situation's complexity to ensure credibility. Integrating domestic formers or particular local incidents within narratives has been demonstrated to function as a more efficacious medium for articulating salient points. To illustrate this point, one may consider the potential impact of referencing the Christchurch shooter's

gamified live stream. It has been observed that such a reference evokes a resonant response within a particular context.

Addressing the Grey Areas

The presence of extremism in gaming can be insidious, often masked by elements such as humor or modifications to the game's content. The European Union can engage in cooperative endeavors with modding communities, thereby fostering the propagation of beneficial modifications and, by extension, impeding the dissemination of malevolent modifications. Furthermore, collaboration with streaming platforms (e.g., Twitch, YouTube Gaming) is recommended, as these influencers have the potential to disseminate awareness. A considerable proportion of European youth exhibit a predilection for local language streamers compared to international ones. Therefore, engaging these streamers in training or campaigns, such as "Gamers vs. Extremism" events, would be advantageous in a manner analogous to the approach of Creators for Change in utilizing YouTubers.

Gaming-Specific Prevention Strategies beyond Generalized Online Safety Models

Innovative frameworks, such as the United Nations' "New Quest Unlocked" report (United Nations, 2024), advocate for policymakers to capitalize on the intrinsic engagement mechanisms inherent in games. These mechanisms include quests, storytelling, and achievement systems. By leveraging these mechanisms, policymakers can foster pro-social resilience narratives. Awasthi (2024) further supports the notion that gaming-specific prevention strategies must evolve beyond the confines of generalized online safety models. The author advocates for developing customized strategies that align with the distinctive characteristics of gaming cultures and the architectural design of gaming platforms.

In conclusion, the international examples provide a robust foundation. The organization disseminates messages that have been empirically validated, employing a methodology that incorporates interactive educational initiatives, helplines, and peer-based campaigns. The efficacy of these interventions is substantiated by the available evidence, which includes preventing violence, mitigating hate incidents, and other outcomes. The gaming sector has the potential to adopt these by collaborating with stakeholders unique to its ecosystem (game developers, platform owners, player communities). By taking this action, the EU can proactively extend its existing prevention architecture into what is arguably the new frontier of online extremist exploitation.

7 Conclusions and Recommendations

A substantial body of research has emerged in recent years that demonstrates the efficacy of proactive, positive, and multifaceted prevention strategies in addressing youth radicalization. In the context of the European Union, a diverse array of campaigns and programs – ranging from the websites of federal bureaus to non-governmental organization helplines, school curricula, and youth-led social media initiatives – have converged on a set of core principles. The abovementioned principles underscore the imperative of education and empowerment of youth, the engagement of families and communities, and addressing the social and emotional

factors that render individuals susceptible to extremism. As previously mentioned, the initiatives under discussion highlight the efficacy of prevention as a shared societal endeavor. This efficacy is achieved by integrating the reach of government institutions with the trust and creativity of local communities and young people.

In the context of games and radicalization, our research reveals an emerging awareness. The campaigns and resources developed in North America and the UK provide a solid knowledge base and toolset upon which to build. The elements above comprise educational content designed for non-gamers to comprehend gaming extremism. Early intervention models demonstrating potential for adaptation to online settings are also included, as are illustrations of youth and communities proactively countering hate within their respective domains.

A comparative analysis of these initiatives reveals several common success factors. These factors include a focus on critical thinking, relatable voices, collaboration across sectors, and the integration of online and offline actions. The challenges that persist include the difficulty of reaching youth who are deeply embedded in extremist subcultures and the need to update approaches for new digital trends constantly. Nevertheless, the willingness of various stakeholders to experiment through games, videos, or peer campaigns provides reason for optimism. Programs have evolved from a utilization of scare tactics to a focus on solution-oriented approaches that treat youth not merely as potential perpetrators or victims, but as collaborators in the prevention process.

These international examples offer valuable instruction for the European Union, which faces radicalization threats. The EU should pursue a comprehensive prevention strategy that includes the gaming sector as a key domain, rather than an afterthought. The EU stands at a critical juncture, with the potential to "leapfrog" by adopting effective practices from other countries and circumventing the pitfalls encountered. For instance, ensuring community support to avoid perceptions of stigmatization is a crucial step in this process. The European Union, characterized by its diverse cultural composition and multilingual population, exhibits a distinctive aptitude for adapting global lessons to local contexts. The EU's capacity for adaptability facilitates the establishment of a multifaceted array of initiatives under a cohesive framework to prevent violent extremism.

A fundamental finding of this study is that addressing radicalization in gaming is both a continuation of existing online prevention efforts and a distinct task requiring industry cooperation and cultural nuance. In a manner analogous to the eventual implementation of countermeasures to extremist propaganda on social media platforms (a development that was partly precipitated by concerted campaigns and research), gaming platforms have the potential to evolve as well. The efficacy of preventive measures in gaming is contingent upon their alignment with empirically validated offline strategies, namely community engagement, education, and early assistance, meticulously adapted to the medium of games.

It is imperative to acknowledge that prevention is an ongoing process, rather than a one-time solution. The extremist landscape is characterized by perpetual flux, with one avenue continually closed off. At the same time, another opens (for example, the present focus on games and Discord could be supplanted by an emphasis on virtual reality metaverses or other unanticipated developments). Consequently, a fundamental lesson from examining these

programs is cultivating adaptive capacity. The most successful initiatives – for example, ADL's ongoing research or CPRLV's evolving campaigns – are distinguished by constant learning and adjustment. The European Union should promote a culture of continuous innovation and evaluation in its preventive work. This would entail the establishment of feedback loops between researchers, practitioners, communities, and the technology sector.

While awareness campaigns play a crucial role in informing the public about the risks of radicalization within gaming environments, it is important to acknowledge their inherent limitations. Research has shown that informational interventions alone often fail to achieve sustainable behavioral change, particularly among vulnerable youth (Christmann, 2012; Ferguson, 2016). Without complementary measures such as peer support networks, mentoring programs, or active community moderation, awareness efforts risk remaining superficial and only creating temporary vigilance. Therefore, awareness-raising must be understood as a necessary but insufficient first step that should be embedded in broader, multi-layered prevention ecosystems. Future initiatives should prioritize combining awareness efforts with trust-building mechanisms, safe spaces for discussion, and opportunities for youth to critically reflect and act within their digital communities.

In summary, the experiences occurring beyond the borders of the European Union demonstrate that the cultivation of awareness and the safeguarding of youth from the radicalization process can be achieved and have a substantial impact when approached comprehensively. The EU can markedly strengthen its prevention arsenal by extending these approaches into the gaming realm and tailoring them to Europe's needs. The result would be twofold: first, the establishment of safer gaming communities; and second, the cultivation of a generation of young Europeans who are more resilient to extremist manipulation in any form.

In light of this exhaustive analysis, the following recommendations are proposed for the European Union and its member states. It is important to note that the recommendations presented here reflect the current state of the field. However, emerging research on the transformative potential of artificial intelligence suggests that the landscape may soon change in profound ways. The impact of AI as both a disruptive and enabling force in the gaming ecosystem cannot be overstated. For instance, it is already possible to develop functional and immersive game prototypes (so-called "vibe code" experiences; Lanz, 2025) without any prior coding expertise, relying solely on AI assistance. Tasks that previously required months of work and technical specialization can now be completed within hours. These developments may significantly alter access, content production, and moderation practices in gaming spaces, and thus deserve close attention in future prevention and policy frameworks.

Strengthen EU-Wide Awareness Campaigns on Gaming & Extremism

Building on the results and initiatives from the GEMS project, coordinated campaigns should be initiated nationally to educate parents, teachers, and youth workers throughout Europe about the risks of extremist exploitation in online games and the methods for countering it. This campaign can adapt content from existing guides (e.g., translate and tailor the PERIL/SPLC Parent Guide and the Children and Screens tips to European contexts). This initiative would leverage the trust these influencers have established with gamers, following a similar approach to YouTube's Creators for Change program.

Integrate Digital Extremism Literacy (Including Gaming) into School Curricula

It is recommended that member states be encouraged or mandated to incorporate modules on online radicalization, with explicit mention of gaming platforms, into their national education curricula or digital citizenship programs. The European Union possesses the potential to allocate financial resources to establish a working group composed of educators and experts. The development of a comprehensive curriculum package intended for utilization in secondary educational institutions across the EU would be the responsibility of this group. The package would have a particular emphasis on languages spoken throughout the member states. Educators must receive comprehensive training on how to facilitate discussions concerning extremism in games, how to address disclosures from students, and how to promote critical thinking. Such training can be facilitated through various avenues, including Erasmus+ seminars or workshops administered by the Radicalization Awareness Network. In the coming years, all students in the European Union must receive instruction on the subject of extremist manipulation online. This education should include games and be incorporated into existing curricula on cyberbullying and safe internet use. The objective of this initiative is twofold: first, to normalize this knowledge, and second, to ensure that students are equipped with the skills to respond effectively to extremist manipulation online.

Establish Helplines and Support Networks for Concerns Related to Radicalization (with Gaming Expertise)

The European Union should support establishing or expanding helplines within member states that adhere to the model established by Parents for Peace. These helplines could offer multilingual support and function as a centralized point of contact for families and peers seeking advice if they suspect someone is being radicalized, including via gaming. Helpline staff must receive training in understanding gaming culture and extremist trends. These helplines should be disseminated through educational institutions, community centers, and gaming platforms. The following potential avenues for publicity should be considered: in-game messages and community announcements. Moreover, the establishment of foster support groups for parents is recommended, modeled after an EU-facilitated network akin to Mothers for Life (a global network of parents of extremists). In this network, European parents would have the opportunity to share experiences and strategies confidentially. These actions ensure that as awareness is raised, a safety net is in place to assist those in need, thereby transforming awareness into action. The evaluation of success will be determined by the increased utilization of these helplines and the subsequent interventions that effectively deter individuals from resorting to violence. The European Union has the potential to collect anonymized case studies to demonstrate the impact of these interventions. This strategy would be analogous to the approach employed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Program for Public Health Intervention (P4I) in their publication of success narratives.

Partner with the Gaming Industry to Implement Safeguards and Campaigns

In the context of the GEMS project, the European Union has initiated a Gaming Industry Roundtable on Extremism, which convenes prominent figures from the gaming industry, including developers, publishers, and community platforms such as Steam, Discord, and Twitch. This initiative should be further institutionalized and could result in the EU and its member

states (also on a global policy level) advocating for specific actions that are backed by substantial evidence:

- Improved moderation tools and clear policies against extremist content in games (with transparency reports akin to those for hate speech on social media).

- In-game reporting mechanisms that allow players to flag extremist behavior specifically, and protocols to forward serious threats to relevant authorities while offering flagged users information or warnings (a kind of "second chance" education step before punitive action, where appropriate).

- Hosting public service events in games: e.g., a popular game might have a special event or message on International Tolerance Day, co-developed with NGOs, indicating the community's stance. This echoes sports "no hate" campaigns and could be symbolic in gaming communities.

- Content redirection: Implement something similar to the Redirect Method for gaming communities. For example, if a user communicates certain extremist slogans in chat, instead of just a ban, perhaps they receive an automated private message: "It looks like you mentioned [XYZ]. If you are encountering harmful content or need help, here are some resources…". This should be carefully designed with experts to be constructive.

- Collaboration on research: allow vetted researchers to study how extremist networks operate in gaming platforms (under privacy safeguards) to inform future prevention. An outcome of the roundtable should be an EU Code of Conduct for the Gaming Industry on Online Hate and Extremism, analogous to the existing EU Code of Conduct on countering illegal hate speech online, tailored to interactive media.

Empower and Educate Community Moderators and Influencers

Much gaming discourse occurs within user-moderated spaces, including clans, Discord servers, and fan forums. The EU, potentially through the RAN or civil society grants, should develop a training toolkit for community moderators. Utilizing a designated toolkit would facilitate the constructive instruction of community moderators in identifying and managing extremist content. This might include guidelines, a flowchart delineating the appropriate circumstances for warning, banning, or reporting users, and strategies for facilitating dialogue with users. It is recommended that webinars or short, certified courses be made available to those who volunteer to moderate game communities. This objective could be pursued in collaboration with prominent community platforms. For instance, a complimentary online course, "Moderating Safely", could be developed and endorsed by the European Union, accompanied by a certificate icon that content moderators are authorized to display. Furthermore, collaboration with prominent figures in the gaming industry is recommended. These figures include influencers and streamers with a substantial following, particularly among younger demographics. It is recommended that these individuals be encouraged to disseminate positive messages. For instance, interested streamers could be furnished with resources or talking points to be mentioned (naturally) during streams about teamwork, diversity, and

rejecting hate. This phenomenon of peer influence has the potential to exert a substantial influence on the development and maintenance of community norms. One measure of success would be the public endorsement of anti-extremism values by prominent streamers from various European countries. This would be analogous to how many have already come to champion anti-bullying or mental health initiatives.

Pilot Interactive Projects that Counter Extremism Narratives in Games

The European Union should allocate funding to innovative pilot projects that utilize gaming as a medium for fostering resilience. For instance, developing a modification or custom map in a popular game (e.g., Minecraft, Fortnite Creative) that subtly teaches cooperation and exposes the fallacies of extremist ideologies (much like a playable scenario) would be a valuable contribution. Alternatively, an EU-sponsored indie game could be developed, perhaps through a contest, that addresses propaganda and empathy. These experiences could be disseminated as optional activities through educational institutions or youth organizations. Furthermore, the incorporation of regional tournaments or events that prioritize the values of respect and inclusion is strongly advised. For instance, an EU-sponsored "Gaming for Peace" tournament could include diverse teams and supplementary educational content. The demonstration of the compatibility between fun and positive messaging by these pilots has the potential to influence game developers, prompting them to incorporate such elements more extensively in their future creations. A thorough evaluation of these pilots is imperative to determine if players demonstrate shifts in attitude and if the initiatives disseminate rapidly. The review will provide insights that will inform the scaling up of practical initiatives.

Addressing Underlying Social Grievances and Inclusion in Parallel

Finally, while not gaming-specific, a broader recommendation is offered: Many youth drawn to extremism (in games or elsewhere) cite feelings of alienation, marginalization, or anger at society. The EU should continue and strengthen initiatives that promote social inclusion, youth employment, mental health support, and community cohesion, especially in areas or populations where extremist recruiters (including online) prey on frustration. Programs that provide young people with a sense of purpose and belonging, such as youth clubs, coding camps, sports, and gaming communities focused on positive goals, can divert young people's energy away from extremist channels. Empowering youth with a sense of agency has been identified as a protective factor in the youth resilience efforts of various countries. Therefore, it is necessary to establish a correlation between the issue of gaming radicalization and broader social policies. For instance, it is imperative to incorporate discussions on identity, ethics, and respect within digital literacy curricula. Furthermore, all EU youth initiatives that are conducted online must be subject to a process of moderation to prevent extremist subgroups from co-opting them. It is imperative to amplify the voices of inclusivity and positivity within the online/gaming domain, thereby counterbalancing the influence of extremist perspectives.

The implementation of these recommendations necessitates commitment and coordination from all involved parties. It is anticipated that the implementation of these measures will result in a safer digital environment for youth and a reduction in the number of young people

who are susceptible to extremist violence. This survey of international examples has demonstrated the way forward.

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