Municipalities at work. Contrasting Radicalisation at local level: the case of Milan[*]

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Abstract: Whereas many studies have been dedicated to the analysis of national Italian P/CVE, very few systematic investigations have focused on the local level. Starting from this general consideration, the aim of this paper is to analyse a specific and significant case of Italian local P/CVE: that of the Lombardy Region with a particular in-depth analysis of the Municipality of Milan, in order to evaluate strengths and critical issues and to identify the most general recommendations for the development of more integrated national\local preventive programmes. The analysis shows that Italy lacks a clear and structured national strategy in the prevention of radicalisation and this limitation also has negative repercussions on policies at the local level where, although there are "happy islands" of implementation of prevention projects involving mainly young people and students, these efforts pay the price of not having guarantees of continuity and sustainability over time.

SUMMARY: Introduction. – 1. Violent extremism in Italy. Main characteristics. – 2. The national level: an overview of existing P/CVE policies in Italy. – 3. Municipal level in Italy. A case study of the Lombardy region: Milan. – *3.1. The methodological framework, the choice of the survey group. – 3.2. Background: violent extremism in the Lombardy region. – 3.3. Regional P/CVE in the educational field. – 3.4. State of the art school training implemented through the national project: reasons and statistics. – 3.5. Entering the municipality of Milan: an in-depth analysis on educational projects against violent extremism.* – 4. Discussion. – Conclusion.

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Introduction

In the last 15 years, public discourse along with relevant aspects of national, political and media debate have often insisted on the "exceptionality" of the Italian case compared to the European context characterised by structured and widespread radicalisation processes of different types. During this time, such judgment was based not so much on the irrelevance of a terrorist threat in Italy (e.g. the Italian GTI score has constantly been above 3.5 since 2011, compared to a European GTI score of around 1.5 in the same period[1]), but on the absence of significant terrorist attacks in Italy, in particular, those of religiously inspired incidents during the peak of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (2014-2017). According to leading scholars such as Farhad Khosrokhavar[2], this is due to three main reasons: a more recent and limited immigration from Islamic countries compared to other European countries (e.g. France, Belgium, Germany and the UK); more effective counter-terrorist action by the Italian Police, due to its decades-long experience in tackling terrorism; and the absence of poor ethnic neighbourhoods in Italian cities.

In reality, the country has not been marginal or peripheral concerning this dangerous process that unites ideologies of discrimination and terrorist violence. In this respect, as Vidino[3] states, a «widespread and punctiform threat, extremely heterogeneous in all its facets and in constant evolution» has been evident. We can, therefore, begin to recognise a specific "Italianness of radicalisations" that deserves carefully elaborated analytical attention and, at the same

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[1] Institute for Economics & Peace, *Global Terrorism Index 2022: Measuring the Impact of Terrorism*, Sydney, March 2022, https://www.visionofhumanity.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/GTI-2022-web-09062022.pdf.

[2] F. KHOSROKHAVAR, *L'eccezione italiana rispetto al jihadismo al tempo dello stato islamico*, in M. BERNARDINI, E. FRANCESCA, S. BORRILLO, N. DI MAURO (a cura di), *Jihadismo e carcere in Italia. Analisi, strategie e pratiche di gestione tra sicurezza e diritti*, Istituto per l'Oriente C.A. Nallino, Roma 2021.

[3] L. VIDINO, *Il Jihadismo autoctono in Italia. Nascita, sviluppo e dinamiche di radicalizzazione*, Istituto per gli Studi di Politica Internazionale, Milano 2014.

time, an Italian approach to the phenomenon (P/CVE) that has enabled, together with investigative and repressive interventions, and, although not widespread throughout the country, the development of methodologies, projects and programmes at a local level based on the pedagogy of the encounter, on the recognition of otherness and ethnic and cultural differences as specific conditions to contemporary democracies and inter-ethnic coexistence.

The absence of a more holistic and multi-stakeholder national plan to prevent homegrown violent radicalisation (as there is in France, Belgium, Spain, UK, Germany, etc.) has generated a *de facto* division of labour, characterised by high fragmentation, between national and local government levels: in the Italian constitutional framework characterised by a form of regional state[4], the former is focused on the investigative and repressive aspect; the latter, on the basis of local sensitivity, is focused on preventive measures that involve schools, social work and so forth.

Whereas many studies have been dedicated to the analysis of national Italian P/CVE, very few systematic investigations have focused on the local level[5]. Starting from this general consideration, the aim of this paper is to analyse a specific and significant case of Italian local P/CVE: that of the Lombardy Region with a particular in-depth analysis of the Municipality of Milan, in order to evaluate strengths and critical issues and to identify the most general recommendations for the development of more integrated national\local preventive

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[4] Regional/state/provincial level is a sub-division of government, which shares political, fiscal and economic powers with a central government. In a federal government, the regional\level is represented by a state government. In unitary states, like Italy, regional government is known as a provincial government. Such a provincial government does not have police forces: they are the responsibility of central government.

[5] Studies focusing on prevention policies at the local level in Italy have been carried out within a number of EFUS network projects: «Prevenzione della radicalizzazione – Guida metodologica per l'elaborazione di una strategia locale» (https://issuu.com/efus/docs/publication_liaise2-itv4), «Preventing Discriminatory Violence at the Local Level: Practices and Recommendations» (https://issuu.com/efus/docs/publication_just_env7), «Methods and Tools for a Strategic Approach to Urban Security» (https://issuu.com/efus/docs/publication_a_en), «EU Street Violence. Bande giovanili e violenza nello spazio pubblico» (https://issuu.com/efus/docs/street_violence_public-it).

programmes. In parts one and two, the main characteristics of violent extremism in Italy and the national approach to P/CVE will be taken into consideration. In section three, the case of Lombardy will be explored. Firstly the focus is on violent extremism and P/CVE in such a region, after which attention turns to the three most important projects implemented to prevent and counter radicalisation and violent extremism in schools, between 2018 and 2021 in Milan, the biggest city in Lombardy: *EXTRemism EMEndation; BULLOUT; Educating to differences with a view to opposing all forms of violent extremism*. In order to gather information and analyse these projects, the researchers carried out desk research and a set of qualitative interviews with the people in charge of each project (10 in total). Finally, in the conclusion strengths and critical issues of such a case are outlined, offering recommendations useful for implementing a more integrated prevention strategy.

1. Violent extremism in Italy. Main characteristics

In its recent past, Italy experienced a period of social and political turmoil known as the "Years of Lead" that lasted from the 1960s until the early 1980s, causing widespread domestic, political violence: right-wing, left-wing, anarchist and ethno-nationalist terrorism[6].

In the mid-1980s, terrorist attacks from the extreme right all but ceased. The left continued to engage in terrorist activity until 1988, although attacks became less frequent over time. The only type of violent crime that really persisted and even worsened was that committed by organised crime (Mafia, Camorra, 'Ndrangheta), that still represents a profound and deeply rooted challenge to Italian security[7].

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[6] L. STORTONI, *La repressione del terrorismo in Italia: L'intervento delle forze dell'ordine fino all'inizio degli anni ottanta*, tesi di dottorato presso l'Istituto Universitario Europeo, 1992.

[7] M.L. MANISCALCO, V. ROSATO, *Comparative analysis of existing policies: Italy*, TRIVALENT Project, 2017.

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Today, violent extremism in Italy is multifaceted and comprises a wider variety of groups and orientations that can be divided into 3 categories: 1) far-left extremism, 2) far-right extremism, and 3) Islamist extremism.

Far-left extremism spread through Italy in the late 1960s and consisted of a wide range of groups. The militancy of these extremist movements was grounded in Marxist-Leninist ideology. Starting from the so-called Years of Lead, the Red Brigades (Brigate Rosse, BR) was the largest, longest-lasting, and most broadly diffused left-wing terrorist group[8]. At its peak the organisation had thousands of active members and supporters, with its strongest presence in the industrial cities of Northern Italy. The Red Brigades attacked property rather than people until 1972; arson against factory managers' cars was particularly common as were raids against the offices of right-wing organisations. The primary targets of the Red Brigades were symbols of capitalism and the Italian state: these included politicians, especially those of the Christian Democratic party, law enforcement and factories. Its best-known attack during the period was the kidnapping and killing of Christian Democrat leader and former prime minister Aldo Moro in 1978[9]. Red Brigades activities began to decline in 1980. Members were arrested at higher rates, and they increasingly cooperated with authorities, leading to the capture of more members. After a period of inactivity, the New Red Brigades returned to the front line, committing a series of targeted assassinations (Massimo D'Antona, Marco Biagi, etc.) from 1999 onwards.

Since the mid-1980s, insurrectional anarchist groups and individuals have been responsible for dozens of attacks in Italy and abroad and, since the late 1990s, the Federazione Anarchica Informale (FAI), the militant anarchist insurrectional group has increasingly used more dangerous and violent methods, such as bombings and assaults. After the substantial dismantling of the left-wing terrorist group "Red Brigades for the Construction of the Combatant Communist Party" (Brigate Rosse per la costruzione del Partito Comunista

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[8] Centre for International Security and Cooperation (CISAC), *Red Brigades*, 2012, https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/red-brigades.

[9] L. STORTONI, *La repressione del terrorismo in Italia*, cit.

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Combattente - BR-PCC) in the 2000s, anarchist insurrectionalism has been the most dangerous form of violent internal subversive violence. Over the years, anarchist insurrectionalism has continued to show aggressive tendencies and today a large number of anarchist cells affiliated to the Informal Anarchist Federation (Federazione Anarchica Informale, FAI) are active in several Italian cities[10] and have managed, in some cases, to carry out disruptive attacks. According to the Europol TE-SAT Report 2018[11], in Greece and Italy the anarchist extremist milieu is considered to be «an antechamber to terrorism, in the sense that it provides fertile ground for radicalisation and recruitment».

In 2019, Italian authorities recorded the highest number of arrests of far-left affiliates (98) as well as failed, foiled and carried out left-wing attacks in Europe[12]. Moreover, in the past 15 years, the landscape of far-left extremism has gone through a process of fragmentation that makes it more difficult to monitor. Although today, far-left extremist groups are not as strong as in the past, this type of violent extremism still poses a threat to Italian security.

During the Years of Lead, from 1977 to November 1981, the far-right organisation, the Armed Revolutionary Groups (Nuclei Armati Rivoluzionari, NAR) was the most violent far-right group in Italy. It committed 33 murders in four years, had planned to assassinate various politicians and was also charged with the Bologna massacre in 1980[13]. Right-wing extremism in Italy is rooted in the survival of various fascist cells after the end of World War II[14].

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[10] A. MANTICI, *La minaccia anarchica in Italia*, in *Babilon,* 13 October 2017, https://www.babilonmagazine.it/italica-gruppi-anarchici.

[11] EUROPOL, *European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2018* (TE-SAT 2018), https://www.europol.europa.eu/publications-events/main-reports/european-union-terrorism-situation-and-trend-report-2018-tesat-2018.

[12] EUROPOL, *European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2020* (TE-SAT 2020), https://www.europol.europa.eu/activities-services/main-reports/european-union-terrorism-situation-and-trend-report-te-sat-2020.

[13] Centre for International Security and Cooperation (CISAC), *Armed Revolutionary Nuclei*, 2012, https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/armed-revolutionary-nuclei.

[14] Centre for International Security and Cooperation (CISAC), *New Order*, 2018, https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/new-order.

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In recent years, some extremist right-wing groups are considered equally dangerous as they have shown an ability to attract followers because of their xenophobic and racist ideas. Far-right extremist groups have integrated new narratives and frameworks due to internal and international political dynamics. On the one hand, the economic crisis which started in 2008 fuelled social grievances and resentment against the State[15]. On the other, the refugee crisis and the new wave of jihadist terrorism in Europe since 2015 has fuelled anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim sentiment[16]. The far-right extremist group that has engaged the most in anti-refugee and anti-Muslim mobilisation in Italy is New Force (Forza Nuova - FN), which embraces ultra-nationalism and Christian ultra-conservatism and whose ideology is articulated primarily in opposition to immigration, globalisation, and Islam[17]. Since 2015, FN has conducted several low-intensity violent activities, such as assaults against leftist, human rights, and pro-immigration civil society organisations and has conducted several anti-immigration and anti-Islam campaigns using hate speech and thus contributing to the further polarisation of Italian public opinion[18]. FN also has contacts with similar groups at a European level and are active in the international arena. Some of them fight in Donbass (Ukraine) for opposing sides: Ukrainian nationalist formations and pro-Russian separatists. The growth of violent radical actions, motivated by the "Great Replacement" conspiracy theory that inspired

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[15] Counter Extremism Project (CEP), Italy: Extremism and Counter-Extremism, 2020, https://www.counterextremism.com/countries/italy.

[16] *Ibid.*

[17] P. CASTELLI GATTINARA, *Forza Nuova and the Security Walks: Squadrismo and extreme right Vigilantism in Italy,* in T. BJØRGO, M. MAREŠ (eds.), *Vigilantism against Migrants and Minorities*, Routledge, Abingdon (OX) 2019.

[18] *Forza Nuova, 19 militanti a processo*, in *Ansa.it*, 18 February 2015, https://www.ansa.it/lombardia/notizie/2015/02/18/forza-nuova-19-militanti-aprocesso_65be03f8-b7ca-4cce-8849-f113db656e1d.html; S. GALLAGHER, *Italian police raid of neo-fascist militants finds air-to-air missile*, in *Ars Technica*, 15 July 2019, https://arstechnica.com/tech-policy/2019/07/italian-police-raid-of-neo-fascist-militants-finds-air-to-air-missile/.

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the terrorist massacre in two mosques in Christchurch (New Zealand) in March 2019, is a fear shared by European countries.

The last type of violent extremism to be analysed is Islamist violent extremism. Unlike France, Belgium, the United Kingdom, Spain, and Germany, Italy has not suffered any major jihadist attacks and has not seen the same degree of radicalisation and extremist activity. While Italy has escaped acts of terrorism, there has been a longstanding jihadist presence in Italy, especially in Lombardy[19]. Jihadist networks have been active in Italy since the late 1980s and hubs can be traced back to the early 1990s, a period in which there were significant arrivals of migrants. There has been a considerable jihadist presence in Italy since then: the country has served as a harbour for members of the Algerian Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC), Jamat-Islamiyya, the Algerian Armed Islamic Group (GIA, from French), Ansar al-Islam, and al-Qaeda[20].

Violent Islamist groups refrained from attacking Italy until the Italian participation in the US-led invasion of Afghanistan (2001) and Iraq (2003). Hence, during the 2000s, Italy experienced a new wave of lone-wolf terrorist plots and several security investigations, which led to the dismantling of dozens of jihadi cells[21].

More recently, with the rise of the Islamic State (IS) and the start of the Syrian civil war, Italy has shifted from being the transit point of foreign combatant to being the incubator of homegrown jihadism[22]. In fact, although Italy did not report a number of foreign fighters as high as other European countries (almost 1/13 of France's contingent[23]), a range of evidence raises concerns of a potential growth in violent Islamist extremism in Italy. New violent episodes have proved that Italy is not immune to this phenomenon and that there are

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[19] L. VIDINO, *The evolution of jihadism in Italy: rise in homegrown radicals*, in «CTC Sentinel» (Combatic Terrorism Center at West Point), vol. 6, n. 11-12, 2013, pp. 17-20.

[20] M.L. MANISCALCO, V. ROSATO, *Comparative analysis of existing policies: Italy*, cit.

[21] L. VIDINO, *The evolution of jihadism in Italy: rise in homegrown radicals*, cit.

[22] M.L. MANISCALCO, V. ROSATO, *Comparative analysis of existing policies: Italy*, cit.

[23] J. COOK, G. VALE, *From Daesh to 'Diaspora' II: The Challenges Posed by Women and Minors After the Fall of the Caliphate*, in «CTC Sentinel», vol. 12, n. 6, 2019, pp. 30-45.

limits to this "Italian exceptionalism"[24]: from August 2016 to July 2020 the number of monitored jihadi foreign fighters increased from 125 to 146, hence shedding light on an unexpected Islamist violent extremist activism in Italy[25].

According to an Italian intelligence report of February 2019, the jihadist threat, very articulate and deep-rooted, remains one of the main threats in Italy not only because the country has always had a special role in the jihadist imagination and narrative but also because of the persistent presence in the territory of radicalised subjects and those exposed to radicalisation processes[26].

2. The national level: an overview of existing P/CVE policies in Italy

In recent decades, Italy has developed various mechanisms to prevent extremist violence, combat terrorism and organised crime. The emergence of global jihadism in the 2000s (in particular since the 9/11 attacks) and the rise of new international terrorist organisations such as the Islamic State in the mid-2010s, followed by a new wave of jihadist attacks in Europe, led Italian authorities to integrate new measures and mechanisms to counter terrorism in compliance with several European directives. In particular, it prompted a reconfiguration of Italian P/CVE policies, which had remained mainly focused on left-wing and right-wing extremism[27]. However, Italy still lacks a more holistic, multi-stakeholder national plan to prevent domestic violent radicalisation, a systemic weakness that could undermine the ability of Italian authorities to identify and prevent the causes that lead to violent extremism.

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[24] M. GROPPI, *The Terror Threat to Italy: How Italian Exceptionalism Is Rapidly Diminishing*, in «CTC Sentinel», vol. 10, n. 15, 2017, pp. 20-28.

[25] *Number of monitored foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) in Italy from August 2016 to July 2021*, in *Statista*, 2023, https://www.statista.com/statistics/743716/monitored-foreign-fighters-italy/.

[26] Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri, Sistema di informazione per la sicurezza della Repubblica, *Relazione sulla politica dell'informazione per la sicurezza*, 2019, https://www.sicurezzanazionale.gov.it/sisr.nsf/relazione-annuale/relazione-2019.html.

[27] M.L. MANISCALCO, V. ROSATO, *Comparative analysis of existing policies: Italy*, cit.

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This section takes into consideration two trends in Italian P/CVE policies highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of the Italian system. First, the analysis focuses on the most relevant laws adopted in the past 20 years that were conceived to provide judicial and law enforcement mechanisms for preventing and sanctioning violent extremism. Second, the draft bill "Dambruoso-Manciulli" (named after the Italian prosecutor and the MP that proposed the law), that was presented in 2017 to provide a new radicalisation prevention plan, will be considered in order to underline the weakness of Italian P/CVE policies.

The Italian legal framework regarding the prevention, prosecution, and repression of violent radicalisation is largely based on the Criminal Code and the Code of Criminal Procedures[28]. Specifically, five laws that have included new mechanisms for countering violent extremism in Italy are worthy of mention.

1) Law 438/2001 equated international terrorism, such as al-Qaeda's transnational political violence, with the criminal category of associations with terrorist purposes and introduced a sanction for financing international terrorist organisations.

2) Law 155/2005, issued after the 2005 London bombings and 2004 Madrid attacks, created the crime of recruitment and training with the purpose of international and national terrorism. This law has also reinforced the powers of the State Police, the National Gendarmerie (Arma dei Carabinieri), the Judicial Police, and the Financial Guard to conduct investigations regarding terrorism. Moreover, the law allows the conducting of investigative hearings with detainees and inmates in order to gain useful information for the prevention and repression of terrorism.

3) Law 124/2007 significantly strengthened institutional cooperation among state agencies, public officers, and institutional and non-

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[28] V. VALIENTE-IVAÑEZ, A.B. GÓMEZ-BELLVÍS, F. MIRÓ-LLINARES, F.J. CASTRO-TOLEDO, E.B. FERNÁNDEZ-CASTEJÓN, *Legal Analysis of Counter-Radicalisation in a selected European Union Member States Report.* PERICLES EU Project: Centro RÍMINA para el estudio y prevención de la delincuencia (Universidad Miguel Hernández), 2019.

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institutional actors that have to deal with violent radicalisation. The aim of this law is to improve the monitoring, detecting, and management of radicalised or radicalising individuals.

4) Law 43/2015, issued after the 2015 Charlie Hebdo attacks and the massive IS mobilisation of European foreign fighters, aimed to harmonise the legislation developed up to then by introducing a "two-track" strategy of preventive and sanctioning measures against violent extremism and radicalisation[29]. First, it introduced harsher measures to prosecute new terrorist figures, such as foreign fighters and transnational terrorist recruiters or preachers. Foreign fighters are sentenced to 5 to 8 years of imprisonment, while prison terms for terrorist recruiters are 7 to 15 years. Second, the law has strengthened the capacity of the Postal and Communication Police to monitor online propaganda, which is considered a flourishing "market" for extremist recruitment and self-radicalisation. Third, in order to fight the increasing phenomenon of 'lone-wolf' terrorism, Law 43/2015 also provided for new mechanisms to prosecute either trainees or radicalised individuals who have self-radicalised, self-trained, and are willing to conduct a terrorist attack. Finally, from a procedural point of view, the law integrated new measures to allow the Judicial Authority to remove sites used for terrorist activities and propaganda whenever necessary[30].

5) Law 153/2016 incorporated new mechanisms into the Criminal Code to prolong prison terms for terrorism-affiliated individuals and included new indictable categories; namely, anyone gathering, offering, or lending goods or finance to be used in terrorist activities.

As can be deduced from the considerations above, Italy has prioritised a law enforcement approach to the phenomenon of violent extremism through the

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[29] M.L. MANISCALCO, V. ROSATO, *Comparative analysis of existing policies: Italy*, cit.

[30] M.L. MANISCALCO, V. ROSATO, *Comparative analysis of existing policies: Italy*, cit.

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implementation of a largely security-oriented and centralised system. Italian P/CVE policies focus first and foremost on Islamist violent extremism over the past 20 years. Moreover, the social environments that are believed to be conducive to violent radicalisation are prisons and online platforms, which P/CVE policies focus on[31]. As a result, the activities of the Italian authorities to counter violent extremism can be summarised in seven categories[32]: 1) intelligence and police investigations and surveillance; 2) monitoring webpages and social media; 3) countering the financing of terrorism; 4) administrative expulsions; 5) personal preventive measures; 6) judicial measures; 7) monitoring and counter-radicalisation programs within prisons.

This set of measures, combined with the longstanding capacity of the Italian authorities to detect and deter terrorist activities, has helped Italian law enforcement and judicial authorities conduct lengthy surveillance operations and pre-emptive raids. Moreover, the synergy between different intelligence agencies and between them and police forces, including penitentiary forces, has raised the effectiveness of Italian capabilities to counter terrorist recruitment and networking[33].

Nonetheless, the Italian P/CVE system is still flawed, as it presents various weaknesses that may undermine its effectiveness in the future. First, the Italian authorities resorted to a set of measures that were conceived to deal with far-right and far-left extremism when countering Islamist violent extremism. Due to the different ideological background to which Islamist-inspired violence refers, the strategy to fight Islamist violent radicalisation should integrate different approaches and perspectives. Therefore, it emerges that the Italian authori-

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[31] N. PIACENTE, *Radicalizzazione e prevenzione nell'ottica giurisdizionale in ambito nazionale ed europeo*, in *Rassegna della Giustizia militare*, n. 3, 2019, https://www.difesa.it/Giustizia_Militare/rassegna/Bimestrale/2019/Documents/3_2019/7_Piacente.pdf.

[32] D. BISOFFI, I. VAN DER VET, *Comparative analysis of national decision-making procedures – Making the policy-making in the context of counter-radicalisation: the case of Belgium, Italy and United Kingdom*, in E. REUGE (ed.), *White Book on CVEs. A collection of policy papers*, H2020 Mindb4Act Project, 2020, pp. 81-106, esp. 94.

[33] M.L. MANISCALCO, V. ROSATO, *Comparative analysis of existing policies: Italy*, cit.

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ties have not made clear distinctions between the various forms of violent extremism so far, even if they have been focusing on Islamist violent extremism since 2001. Second, the strategy adopted by Italy still lacks non-coercive measures for preventing violent radicalisation. Until now, the legal and judicial tools developed have focused more on ex-post intervention, not on creating a sustainable environment that avoids the emergence of radicalising factors that lead to violent extremism, such as socioeconomic grievances, discrimination and teenage identity crisis[34]. Furthermore, Italy does not have a specific strategy for deradicalisation or exit programs including multilevel and transdisciplinary actions.

The 2017 so-called "Dambruoso-Manciulli" law, containing "Measures for the Prevention of Jihadist Radicalisation and Extremism" (act 3558), specifically aimed to close gaps in the Italian legal system regarding P/CVE policies. Indeed, the proposed law, that had already been approved by the Chamber of Deputies in 2017[35], revolves around two goals. On the one hand, it aimed to develop a new strategy for the prevention of violent radicalisation by tackling all social environments. On the other hand, new education and information programs for civil society as well as all institutional and non-institutional actors dealing with violent extremism, such as teachers, social educators, and public officers, were devised. This dual strategy would operate at different levels through the creation of *ad hoc* institutions and centres for the coordination of the prevention plan. In this perspective, the Dambruoso-Manciulli law envisages the building of a National Centre for Radicalisation (Centro Nazionale sulla Radicalizzazione - CRAD) within the Department of Civil Liberties and Immigration of the Ministry of Interior Affairs. This centre would be charged with annually drafting a National Strategic Plan that underlines the evolution of violent extremism and defines the initiatives and projects to be implemented (act

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[34] D. BISOFFI, I. VAN DER VET, *Comparative analysis of national decision-making procedures*, cit..

[35] M. CARGASACCHI, *A Minor Undertakes De-radicalisation in Italy for the First Time*, in *International Observatory Human Rights*, 22 May 2018, https://dev.observatoryihr.org/blog/a-minor-undertakes-de-radicalisation-in-italy-for-the-first-time/.

3558, art.2). Moreover, the new strategy also includes the institution of Centres for Regional Coordination on Radicalisation (Centro di coordinamento regionale sulla radicalizzazione - CCR) and a Parliamentary Committee for monitoring jihadi extremism in various social environments (art. 4). The backbone of the Dambruoso-Manciulli law is also the inclusion of an education plan for all those who might deal with early stages of radicalisation, such as police forces, educational actors, and social and health workers. Finally, the law also laid the foundation for the development of a well-structured deradicalisation program that involves the social, cultural, and professional reintegration of former radicalised individuals, too (p. 8).

Italy's failure to adopt the Dambruoso-Manciulli draft law is a major opportunity missed by the country to proactively tackle violent radicalisation. The bill contained some important provisions aimed at empowering civil society in radicalisation prevention, from the provision of radicalisation training to first-line practitioners to the promotion of interreligious dialogue within schools. The bill's effectiveness, however, may have been reduced by its exclusive focus on jihadist radicalisation. The limited scope of the proposal, visible from the fact that the adjective 'jihadist' followed the term 'radicalisation' throughout the whole text, could have made the measure too tailored to jihadist radicalisation to be applied to other types of violent extremism that have come to threaten the security and stability of Italian and European society[36]. This is a significant shortcoming which needs to be addressed by future legislation, also in light of growing episodes of violence carried out by radical right-wing and left-wing groups and individuals. The most significant instance has been a shooting spree against migrants perpetrated by an extreme right-wing militant in Macer-

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[36] F. CAPANO, *Italy's Draft Law on the Prevention of Radicalization: A Missed Opportunity?*, in «Istituto Affari Internazionali – IAI Commentaries», n. 34, 2017, https://www.iai.it/en/pubblicazioni/italys-draft-law-prevention-radicalization-missed-opportunity.

ata in February 2018[37]. Further shortcomings in Italy's efforts to involve civil society in prevention policies emerge from a comparison with approaches adopted by other EU countries.

As observed by a government Commission set up in 2016 to study the phenomenon of radicalisation and jihadist extremism, Italy is still lagging behind when it comes to engaging the Muslim population; segments of it or specific individuals. The Commission found a comprehensive prevention strategy to be lacking, capable of operating at the macro level (e.g. to disseminate counter-narratives or alternative narratives reducing the appeal of jihadist messages), meso level (e.g. to positively engage with local communities and persons at risk) and micro level (e.g. to de-radicalise or disengage single individuals)[38]. The Commission advocated for a more active role to be played, alongside traditional counter-terrorism actors (law enforcement and intelligence agencies, prosecutors, etc.) by a plurality of civil society entities, both public and private: ranging from social and health services to schools and voluntary associations to local communities and families. Some of the gaps identified by the Commission are also clear from a comparison of Italy's policies and the RAN collection of counter-radicalisation practices. The findings of such comparison confirm the country's lack of initiatives to support families impacted by radicalisation, despite the fact that families can be valuable partners in counter-radicalisation by offering support to vulnerable members, fuelling doubts and, in the case of former detainees, facilitating their reintegration into society. Support should therefore be provided to families in order to increase their awareness and resilience to violent extremist ideologies as well as help them detect early signs of radicalisation

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[37] D. GAYLE, *Italy: failed Northern League candidate held over migrant shootings*, in *The Guardian*, 3 February 2018, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/feb/03/driver-opens-fire-african-migrants-italian-city-macerata.

[38] Commission on the phenomenon of radicalization and jihadist extremism, *Towards an Italian Approach to the Prevention of Radicalization* [in Italian], 2017, www.itstime.it/w/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Commissione.pdf.

and ways to find help[39]. Another deficiency in Italian policies concerns the absence of a multi-agency approach, enabling coordinated efforts by authorities and organisations at multiple levels; national and local as well as public and private, to support individuals at risk at an early stage of the radicalisation process. Specific civil society organisations which may contribute positively within the context of a multi-agency approach include community workers, charity workers and volunteers as well as representatives of religious communities[40]. What is also apparent in Italy is the lack of appropriate measures to engage with local communities and empower its key members in order to build trust-based relationships with public authorities.

The terrorist threat is nonetheless long-standing, serious and growing, and there are significant shortcomings that need to be addressed by future policies, not only against an ever-present jihadist threat but also in light of increasing episodes of violence carried out by radical right-wing and left-wing groups and individuals. Italy is dealing with considerable societal challenges that could lead to greater security difficulties in the future.

3. Municipal level in Italy. A case study of the Lombardy region: Milan

3.1. The methodological framework, the choice of the survey group

The analysis of policies at local level to counter radicalisation focused on the case of the Lombardy Region with a particular in-depth analysis of the Municipality of Milan, the largest city in the region and the richest and most cosmo-

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[39] C. CAPARESI, *Sostenere le famiglie nel processo di radicalizzazione violenta di un loro caro*, in «Manipolazioni e vessazioni. Rassegna internazionale di contributi teorico-pratici», n. 1, 2016, http://www.abusievessazioni.it/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/SOSTENERE-LE-FAMIGLIE-NEL-PROCESSO-DI-RADICALIZZAZIONE-VIOLENTA-DI-UN-LORO-CARO.pdf.

[40] RAN, *Preventing Radicalisation to Terrorism and Violent Extremism: Multi-agency Approach*, 2017, https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/ran-best-practices_en.

politan city in Italy. A regional focus has been identified because of a number of variables which are examined in the following paragraphs. First of all, the acknowledged presence of phenomena of social deviance also detected through numerous judicial investigations with reference to ethnic criminal groups and discriminatory narratives tending towards radicalism. The second reason for the selection of the Lombardy Region is due to the validity of the Regional Law 107/2015, Article 1 paragraph 7, which introduces, in addition to the investigative and repressive aspects, provided for by the national legislation, preventive and formative actions within Italian schools with reference to education of cultural differences. The significant statistical presence of several migrant communities resident in the territory of the Lombardy region for over 30 years indicates an equally important presence of students of migrant origin in primary and secondary schools (I and II degree) with particular reference to the hinterland of the Municipality of Milan. Another important aspect concerns the presence in the regional territory of established migrant associations, existing relationships between them and local institutions and the diffusion of places of worship of different religious faiths, which also act as places of meeting, exchange and social and political elaboration.

From a methodological point of view, a desk review and qualitative interviews were carried out to realise this case study. More specifically, the desk research was focused on literature concerning the main characteristics of violent extremism in Italy and the national and local approach to the P/CVE[41]. With regard to the interviews a sample of ten people was selected, four of whom were women and six men, all of whom were involved in European or national projects on the issues in question, in the city of Milan. In particular, four school leaders/managers (two women and two men) were selected, along with three members of the third sector (one woman and two men) and three university professors (one woman and two men). All were selected on the basis of their role in P/CVE (Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism) policy at the

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[41] See paragraphs 1 and 2 of this paper.

municipal level with a special focus on education. The aspects analysed in the interviews related to the prevention of extremism in young people in the educational field, with support at the local level and the schools present in the municipality of Milan. The issues investigated were:

a) *Type of initiative of P/CVE policy at the municipal level*: in the educational field what kind of P/CVE policy initiative is present at the municipal level?

b) *Objectives*: Which fields/topics/issues are covered/addressed by the policy/programs? Is social cohesion/inclusion taken into account, and how (directly by the policy/program; indirectly)?

c) *Implementation:* how are students involved? What type of approach is used? Top-down or bottom-up approach?

d) *Evaluation*: Concerning the project you were a part of what were the strengths? What were the weaknesses? Was it effective in the medium or long term?

Between March and April 2021, 10 interviews were organised: four online and six by telephone with the sample identified through the study of projects carried out in the Milan area. Fundamental to this was an individually prepared meeting with all the actors prior to the interview in which we explained why they had been selected and the importance of their experience on the variables that would be investigated.

Concerning the ethical issue, with each interview a consent form was completed, which also explained the aims of the project and why the participant was being interviewed. Anonymity was observed in all cases in order to ensure privacy as well as encourage openness from the interviewees in detailing their experiences. The reflection that inspired their elaboration with respect to the concept of radicalisation also included innovative phenomena in the debate, such as bullying and cyberbullying.

3.2. Background: violent extremism in the Lombardy region

An in-depth analysis of the Italian counter-terrorism strategy context on the approach to the phenomenon of radicalisation was well expressed in the measures at the macro level analysed above. From this point of view, it was important to look from the national to the regional level. Starting from the traumatic events that occurred in Europe over the last ten years, in Italy, various municipalities, supported by their local regions, decided to intervene locally on events that are often globally planned. This was because it has been realised that polarisation is capable of increasing tensions and this process could also be the potential cause of amplification of the various psychological and social factors that make people vulnerable to radicalisation. For this reason, the European Commission encourages the development of a local strategy aimed at raising awareness at national level, especially at the municipal level, concerning the risks, but also opportunities, in the development of both paths focused on prevention and good practices[42]. Focusing on the Lombardy region was a consequence of multifactorial aspects starting from institutional, legal, and social reasons[43]. The research focuses on this case study mainly due to the concentration of events and crimes related to Islamist terrorism in this Italian region over the last ten years. Thanks to careful monitoring of social networks, the police were able to prevent various acts of violence that were brewing in Brescia and its surroundings. Like the case of *Anas el Abboubi*[44], a rapper of Moroccan origin who arrived in Italy at the age of seven, was later accused of condoning terrorism, then released from prison due to a lack of serious evidence of guilt, yet once re-

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[42] Project LIAISE 20014-2016 and LIAISE2 20116-2018: https://www.cep-probation.org/projects/liaise-2/.

[43] With regard to the presence of Muslim communities in the country, it is interesting to note that Muslims in Italy are just over 1.5 million and a high percentage are concentrated mostly in Lombardy. (https://www.corriere.it/english/15_novembre_27/15m-muslims-italy-1000-under-observation-73aad138-952e-11e5-b54c-257f4e9e995d.shtml).

[44] https://milano.repubblica.it/cronaca/2019/01/23/news/terrorismo_foreign_fighter_condanna_brescia-217274818/.

leased from prison he left for Syria. Anas confessed that his hatred of the West began in adolescence, especially after 11 September, 2001, when he was often addressed with contempt as a "terrorist" and "Taliban". He founded *Sharia4Italy*, which was monitored[45]. Later, in 2014, the police started following a group called *"With or without you the caliphate returned"*, which was present in the municipality of Fiesse, near Bergamo. A year later, in 2015, under the operation name of *Van Damme*, the police broke up a group which had a direct connection with jihadists active in the Balkans. The central figure of *Imishiti Samet,* the mind of the cell and affiliated with Daesh, was arrested in the village of *Hani i Elezit* in eastern Kosovo[46]. In June 2016, *Naim Saghari*, a Tunisian, was expelled by decree of the Ministry of the Interior as he was considered dangerous. Digos had not escaped the phrases posted on the web praising Jihad, so his wife *Sara Pilè*, 27 years old from Brescia and living in Monticelli Brusati who had converted to Islam after her marriage with *Saghari,* was under special surveillance[47].

3.3. Regional P/CVE in the educational field

In accordance with Regional Law 107/2015[48], school projects involving the institution, citizenship, and the third sector were promoted with the aim of

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[45] https://milano.repubblica.it/cronaca/2013/06/12/news/brescia_arrestato_21enne_marocchino_ha_fondato_una_cellula_jihadista_online-60906825/.

[46] https://www.repubblica.it/cronaca/2015/12/01/news/terrorismo_arresti_e_perquisizioni_in_italia_e_in_kosovo-128530461/.

[47] https://brescia.corriere.it/notizie/cronaca/18_ottobre_18/bresciana-sara-pile-convertita-all-islam-resta-sorvegliata-speciale-potrebbe-partecipare-ad-attentati-1f81fd4e-d2ba-11e8-aa91-90c7da029bcf.shtml.

[48] The Regional Law 107/2015, Article 1 paragraph 7, states that one of the tasks and objectives of the school is the: «*Developing skills in the field of active and democratic citizenship through the enhancement of intercultural education for peace, respect for differences, dialogue between cultures, support for the assumption of responsibility and solidarity* […]».

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training and reforming pedagogies and training processes on the theme of ideology, violence, and participation. This means that continuous and compulsory training is essential for teachers in their educational and teaching methodologies. Each school, however, by virtue of the autonomy that characterises it, defines its own training activities together with the construction of networks with other schools in the region in order to share best practices, problems, and solutions. Some of the research projects funded in 2015 fall under this legal framework. Among them, is one called «Educational paths for differences in the perspective of contrasting all forms of violent extremism», advanced by the USR Lombardy, focused on training students with the aim of combating violent extremism, especially that of a religious nature, and based on the idea of encounter and dialogue as tools to avoid pedagogies aimed at minimising migrants' identities and the stories of their cultures.

The goal of the project was to offer advanced interpretative tools, enhanced management knowledge, and policies in order to organise mechanisms of general prevention; placing itself as an advanced reference to the phenomena of deviance; building social paths capable of bringing diverse backgrounds together and not only analysing and describing them in a formal way. It also aimed to build a strong territorial network between schools and local institutions, committed to strengthening the culture of difference and the prevention of terrorism. Through this approach, developed in parallel with the spread of alarm, for example terrorism of various origins, the need to find school managers and teachers with knowledge on the topic was identified. They must be able to develop educational programs within those provided by the competent ministry and be open to the concepts of respect, intercultural education and equal opportunities, as well as opposing all forms of bullying and cyberbullying. In this case, Pasta[49] writes interestingly on hate speech, forms of discrimination and even racist violence carried out and disseminated through the Network or Web 2.0. It is essential, he stresses, to get the message across especially to young peo-

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[49] S. PASTA, *Razzismi 2.0. Analisi socioeducativa dell'odio online*, Scholé-Morcelliana, Brescia 2018.

ple that the web is real and, almost always, public and deriving from the continuous and definitive inter-connection of many human beings. One recalls the effective expression of Floridi, also valid for hate-speech, in which he states the online is «*onlife*»[50]. Pasta's second consideration is on the assumption that the extreme paths of radicalisation, also through the web, must be interpreted according to a scale of behaviours and thresholds that indicate a process to growth of the same according to a sort of «*pyramid of hatred*». For this end, Pasta considers it essential to affirm new standards of authority and selection of sources, images, and messages and the trivialisation of content, together with other fundamental variables. That's why, the Italian Ministry of Education and Research (MIUR) has integrated the 2018 Digital Civic Education Curriculum with the National Digital School Plan and in this way, it can help prevent violent extremism.

3.4. State of the art school training implemented through the national project: reasons and statistics

In Samuel's chapter «At the crossroads: Rethinking the role of education in preventing and countering violent extremism»[51], he argues that: «*The best defence against extremism ideologies taking over institutions of learning is to develop an education system that will prepare and equip the students to debate and defeat extremist thoughts*». Finally, Samuel underlines that: «*the government and authorities are beginning to recognize this vulnerability in education institutes and are attempting to push the holes and prevent such institutions from becoming the breeding grounds of*

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[50] J. D'ALESSANDRO, *Luciano Floridi: "Vi spiego l'era Onlife, dove reale e virtuale si (con)fondono"*, in *Repubblica.it,* 29 settembre 2019, https://www.repubblica.it/dossier/tecnologia/onlife/2019/09/29/news/repubblica_onlife_floridi-237286128/.

[51] T.K. SAMUEL, *At the crossroads: Rethinking the role of education in preventing and countering violent extremism*, in A.P. SCHMID (ed.), *Handbook of Terrorism Prevention and Preparedness*, ICCT Press, The Hague 2020, p. 174.

violent extremism»[52] In 2015, the relationship between the Regional Education Office for Lombardy (USR), local institutions and schools, enabled the creation of a technical-scientific panel, which was composed of university experts (in particular Islamologists, pedagogists, sociologists, experts in immigration and child protection), some parents and qualified bodies and was brought together with the USR staff by the Region of Lombardy. This was in line with the aims of the Lombardy Region project, tasked with the development of an advanced and methodologically refined monitoring of the radicalisation processes already underway and a path aimed at supporting the intercultural programs of the schools concerned[53]. This monitoring began in 2016 and covered the Lombardy provinces of Bergamo, Brescia, Como, Cremona, and Milan. Its aim was to understand and analyse needs and also develop operational initiatives capable of specifically targeting personalities oriented towards radicalisation.

The monitoring was developed on a statistical sample of 444 1st grade high schools and 171 2nd grade high schools including a student population of approximately 198,400 1st grade students and 177,200 2nd grade students. To support the work of the *Scientific and Technical Committee*, studies were carried out on the subjects involved in the initiatives already launched or to be launched. In order to build active and participatory school environments in this sense, it is important to note that 99% of the 1st grade and 97% of the 2nd grade high schools stated that they had already undertaken initiatives consistent with the current program. The typology of these actions for both high school levels envisaged a prevalence of projects/initiatives that exceeded 50% followed by the organisation of curricular modules with extra-curricular courses. With respect to the distribution of those involved for both orders of education, both have mostly involved students. In the latter case, 23% for the 1st grade and 14% for the 2nd grade. Regarding the involvement of teachers from outside the

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[52] *Ibid.*

[53] D. CAMPANELLI, S. CHINELLI, C. CASAVOLA, *Educare alle differenze nell'ottica del contrasto a ogni forma di estremismo violento nella scuola di oggi*, https://usr.istruzionelombardia.gov.it/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/ArticoloEducarealleDifferenze.pdf.

schools, the presence of stakeholders such as associations, institutions, and professionals in the sector, the percentage was 93% in 1ˢᵗ grade schools and 91% in 2ⁿᵈ grade schools. Violent extremism according to the responsibility for the prevention and management of behaviours in violation of cultural differences were attributed primarily to the school manager (6%) and subsequently to teaching staff, parents, external experts, administrative staff and lastly just 5% to law enforcement officials.

In light of these data, some reflections are possible regarding the elaboration of favourable conditions for intercultural relations within schools which are mainly attributed to the elaboration of active citizenship and education for legality. As far as the type of interventions is concerned, in 2ⁿᵈ grade high schools, extra-curricular education prevails, while in the first grade 41% of schools claim to have previously inserted curricular activities related to the issues of law and prevention of radicalisation. Particularly important is the involvement of external experts in a percentage that is above 90%, thus including professionalism, skills, and advanced and innovative training experiences, even at an educational level.

Moreover, the distinction and analysis between the initiatives that have ensured the achievement of a positive result and those that failed with the objectives of the project have resulted in the elaboration of more advanced and coherent planning. In this respect, among the initiatives that have been most appreciated, the *Psychological Counters* and the *education to critical thinking* in paths that, in the first case, are *typically individualised* and in the *second instead collective*. Finally, as a last consideration, schools recognise the strategic and primary task to the relevant school leaders and teachers in identifying the cases in which to pay attention and in the elaboration of related project responses.

The next step was the design of a course for *"system figures"* for the school year 2016-2017 that involved 30 teachers and 10 leaders from the secondary schools of 1ˢᵗ and 2ⁿᵈ grade in the five provinces concerned, whose task was to develop courses and operational teaching activities. The course focused on strategic thematic areas starting from the preventive management of radicalisation, identifying and managing adolescent conflict, the construction of educational paths to differences and hate crime, to the role of online communication. Two

separate training courses were organised. The first took place between April 2018 and May 2018 and involved 33 school managers and teachers from Lombardy belonging to the provinces not yet involved. The second course, organised between April 2018 and June 2018, involved 20 teachers and managers already qualified with the aim of strengthening their planning and organisational skills with reference to prevention and direct intervention in the educational paths linked to the participating students. The *Scientific and Technical Committee* allowed the elaboration of an analytical document with a view to comparing all forms of violent extremism, which has finally inspired the subsequent lines of elaboration of the Lombardy USR.

From the beginning, therefore, the connection of the project between the various stakeholders (institutions, schools, student bodies, law enforcement, etc) as one of its main characteristics and a methodological approach based on advanced didactic reception, collective and participatory elaboration, listening and qualified training was evident. The Region of Lombardy, in the framework of its Law No. 24 of 6 November 2017 («*Regional aid and assistance for victims of terrorism*»)[54], also promoted two Conventions with the aim of supporting the USR's education to different projects with a view to combatting all forms of violent extremism in order to disseminate its contents and consolidate its governance. In 2017, the first agreement identified five schools in the provinces of Bergamo, Brescia, Lecco, Milan, and Sondrio with the aim of training teachers and managers in the territories of reference. The aim was to consolidate regional *governance* based on educational experimentation, pedagogies of listening, and virtuous paradigms identified in training courses already developed[55].

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[54] https://www.regione.lombardia.it/wps/portal/istituzionale/HP/istituzione/Giunta/SeduteGiunta/DettaglioSeduta/SeduteGiunta/20180521-seduta-009.

[55] The first results of this commitment were made public in November 2018 through a regional seminar, which was able to broaden the related reflections and awareness within some school centres and in collaboration with the University of Milan, involving students, teachers, and trainers from the third sector.

3.5. Entering the municipality of Milan: an in-depth analysis on educational projects against violent extremism

Having to make up for the lack of a law on P/CVE, the attention that emerged from the school environment, the third sector, thanks above all to the support of European projects, has meant that some phenomena, especially in complex cities like Milan, could be explored through projects that help young people, particularly in preventing hatred and the use of violence. The involvement of local authorities, schools, further and higher education institutions, law enforcement, academics, and community leaders was vital.

The choice of the following projects is justified because of their quality and also because the people interviewed participated in them and/or were even initiators and coordinators. Therefore, seeking their opinion on the motivations, methodologies, and implementation was very important for the research. Furthermore, through their experience in the field, feedback was obtained on opportunities, strengths and weaknesses as they themselves clearly understood the Milanese context and its characteristics. The projects themselves were studied first through online, institutional and academic sources and then through the selection of a sample to be interviewed in order to give as complete an analysis as possible. These are the projects analysed for the case studies: *Educating to differences with a view to opposing all forms of violent extremism*, *BULLOUT* and *EXTRemism EMEndation*.

• *Educating to differences with a view to opposing all forms of violent extremism*
The training project entitled *Educating to differences with a view to opposing all forms of violent extremism* was aimed at school managers and teachers serving in lower secondary schools in Milan and neighbouring provinces. The course, carried out in the school complex IIS "Oriani-Mazzini"[56], covered the following

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[56] The course was organised from October 2018 consisting of 5 meetings of 3 hours to Wednesday, 11 November. For more details: https://www.orianimazzini.edu.it/index.php/educarealledifferenze.

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topics: 1) The school as a context of education for dialogue and prevention of extremism; 2) (Cyber) bullying and extremism on the web; 3) Youth gangs and education for differences and the prevention of gender-based violence; 4) Education for religious differences and the prevention of extremism; 5) The resources of the territory available to schools.

As said by the leading manager of the "Oriani-Mazzini" school during the implementation of training: «*With this project, we tried to cancel, even physically, the other, who in these differences is the bearer of the two forms of extremism, the jihadist and the political one, allowed to work on two paths of action. The first intervention is when the subjects have already been involved, with the early identification of the danger and relative signalling, while the second is the activation of recovery and deradicalisation paths*»[57].

The inter-institutional elaboration and socialisation of the analysed and matured experiences allowed the signing, in 2019, of a *second convention*. This derives from a regional tender that has allowed the creation of a polo school also in the provinces of Como, Cremona, Lodi, Mantua, Monza and Brianza, Pavia, and Varese. The selection was made through the development of educational projects relating to a training course for teachers and managers concerning the prevalent categories of violent extremism, the factors that favour extremist radicalisation in young people, preventive interventions, methodologies, management of conflicts, and analysis of internet communication. The selection of the institutes took place in July 2019 and allowed in November of the same year the comparison of related works and documents and, at the same time, the adoption of specific intervention plans deriving from guidelines drawn-up by the technical-scientific panel of the Lombardy USR of 2018. The listening, processing, educational, and social intervention activities in the eleven polo schools continued in 2020, involving students and institutions not included until then, through online seminar activities. 2021 was committed, albeit with the consequences produced by a pandemic that had a huge impact on the entire

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[57] https://www.orianimazzini.edu.it/index.php/educarealledifferenze/category/104-educazione-alle-differenze.

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social and institutional body of the Region, to the dissemination in the Lombardy territory, through seminars and online conferences of the results achieved up to then through the work carried out in the previous few years. It is important to highlight that the development of an inclusive school environment derives, first and foremost, as also stated by the current school director of the IIS "Oriani-Mazzini" Institute in Milan, from the satisfaction of some basic needs for the teaching staff[58].

What emerges from interviews are: 1) The need for information and training experts in relation to the needs of students; 2) The need for external bodies and associations that are able to stimulate student curiosity regarding the educational and pedagogical prerogatives of the Institute; 3) The development of a continuous relational exchange between the various teachers capable of utilising virtuous methodologies, experiences, approaches and a common interpretation of the main issues that have emerged; 4) The need to suspend the use of the internet for teaching hours due to its excessive use as this lowers the attention thresholds in students and slows the formation of their critical thinking. As was mentioned in one interview: «*the latter seeks to develop or encourage it by encouraging the participation of students in favour of research and theatre projects, the sharing of ideas and opinions, active listening, the elaboration of text and language analysis, and finally the identification and processing of hate speech*»[59].

- *BULLOUT*

In line with the previous plan[60], the Lombardy Region, in implementation of the Regional Law 1/2017 «*Discipline of regional interventions in the field of*

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[58] https://www.orianimazzini.edu.it/index.php/educarealledifferenze.

[59] Online interview April 2021

[60] Starting from the autumn of 2015, an organizational model was strengthened with the aim of encouraging the training of teachers in Lombardy, of awareness-raising initiatives aimed at the school community, in particular parents, and the consolidation of competent intervention procedures. For this reason, a referent teacher at regional level was identified in coordination with a referent teacher for each UU.SS.TT as well as with the Postal and Communications Police, the Lombardy Co.re.com,

prevention and opposition to the phenomenon of bullying and cyberbullying», promoted the line of intervention called *BULLOUT*[61] with the general purpose of supporting projects for the prevention of and opposition to bullying and cyberbullying. This gave the Lombardy Region and Regional School Office the opportunity to sign an agreement on 25 September 2018 based on the scheme approved with DGR No. 539 of 17 September 2018[62]. The relationship between bullying, cyberbullying, and radicalisation is by no means irrelevant, as one might think without an in-depth analysis of the phenomenon. The various forms of persecution carried out through, for example, the internet and social media, among which undoubtedly bullying and cyberbullying occur, can be expressions of a personal path that lends itself to radicalisation and that can be expressed in some of its phases through persecutory behaviours. Some factors like action and language, behaviours adopted for example by a subject that tends or is moving towards radicalisation are clearly manifested against those who most clearly represent the ideological object of their ideological elaboration. For this reason, any manifestation, especially within the school, of behaviours, languages or attitudes of this nature, must be understood and developed as a pedagogical intervention of advanced critical elaboration.

The specific purpose of the *BULLOUT* project is to promote the implementation of projects aimed at some specific objectives, including the realisation of awareness, information, and training programs, including information technology, for minors and their families. Likewise, the aim is to create support programs for minors who are victims of bullying and cyberbullying, including through the intervention of competent external professionals, including local associations and institutions. Another objective is to promote recovery programs aimed at perpetrators of bullying and cyberbullying, even in this case

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the Universities and associations competent in the matter. All of this is with the aim of guaranteeing capillary actions throughout the region and the identification of particularly effective training models.

[61] https://www.cyberbullismolombardia.it/pag/bullout/28/.

[62] https://www.regione.lombardia.it/wps/portal/istituzionale/HP/DettaglioBando/servizi-e-informazioni/enti-e-operatori/sistema-sociale-regionale/bullout/bullout/.

through the intervention of professional figures, also with the aim of avoiding the criminalisation and possible social discrimination of the minor guilty of bullying or cyberbullying.

The expert involved, a sociologist from the Università Cattolica of Milan, who has long been committed to the prevention of radicalisation, in the context of the *BULLOUT* project, of which she has been responsible for the methodological aspects, states:

> *It made it possible to produce a participatory model of group work that made it possible to create, for example, a radio and a comic with the aim of telling the theme of bullying and cyberbullying. The project had a methodological line through a questionnaire disseminated in schools in order to verify if there had been bullying. Following the results, we moved on to working with experts on some issues such as the peer group, the inclusion and recognition of those who have bullying attitudes, intervening in cases of established bullying, working on self-awareness and finally reflecting on co-construction with reality and with others.*

On the other hand, with respect to the strengths of the project, the expert again notes that: «*in the participation of multiple stakeholders, not at all obvious*», while the impact that the pandemic has determined on it was significant. In this regard, she once again declares that: «*it has influenced the dynamics of training in schools and what saddens is the ever-clearer awareness of the isolation of the peripheries*»[63].

• *EXTRemism EMEndation*

It is work on these awareness-raising issues and was subsequently proposed in an Erasmus plus project, funded by the European Union entitled: *EXTRemism EMEndation*[64]. This research project aims to promote the active participation of young people in the P/CVE and radicalism issues and to find ways to combat them, through youth work and non-formal education. The *Young Ef-*

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[63] The telephone interview took place on 20 April 2021.
[64] https://www.goinpro.org/en/blog/2019/03/20/extremism-emendation-training-course-in-italy/.

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fect Association of Magenta and the *Circolo Acli* of Abbiategrasso, together with seven other international partners, believe it is very important to bring together young active people, youth workers, and activists from the different countries involved, to discuss issues such as extremist phenomena that today threaten security and peace in Europe.

The main objective of this project is to address radicalisation in young people through education in order to understand the phenomenon, the strategies and methods of prevention to be used. At the same time, it promotes cooperation between key actors, such as schools and public bodies. The activity involved 28 youth workers, representatives of the partner associations of the countries involved (in addition to the Young Effect Association, project leader and those based in Magenta, organizations from France, Spain, Turkey, Poland, Croatia, Bulgaria and Romania were also involved) and was hosted from 1 to 9 December, 2018.

One of the promoters of this research project, who is a training coach that followed all phases, in particular the public events, was interviewed.

He declared that he was: «*positively surprised about the participation of a specific political party (Lega) of the municipality and on the other hand, negatively surprised about the absence of the other political actor, despite being invited (for example Partito Democratico)*»[65].

Clearly, it was important to involve all the political parties and actors in public life such as the policy makers and other associations present in the same district. Only with the efforts of political, social, and educational systems, can we work together in respecting all cultures and, as Dewey and Lichtner argue[66], it is necessary to work on a democratic habitus, in collaboration with a school that teaches the difference between fundamentalism and democracy, that develops educational actions aimed at managing social and identity conflicts.

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[65] The telephone interview took place on 13 April 2021.
[66] J. DEWEY, M. LICHTNER, *Educare per la democrazia*, in «Scuola Democratica», 2010, pp. 1-23.

4. Discussion

According to the in-depth analysis of the missing P/CVE policies implemented in Italy, some considerations can be made. First, Italy should push for the implementation of P/CVE policies in particular within areas and cities that have many critical issues related to the phenomenon of immigrants, such as Lombardy, and in particular the large municipality of Milan considering that other Italian cities, apart from Milan, have meanwhile worked on this issue in response to the phenomena of degradation and violence, such as Turin[67].

The incentive, also in this example, was the support of European projects and the police force. Second, it should be emphasised that in Italy authorities have developed educational policies involving all the actors that participate in the education of children and youngsters as well as minors.

In conclusion, we can summarise that, as regards the case, studies of the projects carried out by the Lombardy Region have shown some unique characteristics that have allowed their development consistent with the reasons for their elaborations and also useful for the achievement of some of the planned aims, such as, cooperation with various territorial stakeholders that has enabled the sharing of experiences and knowledge that have aroused the interest and participation of students. We highlight the strengths and weaknesses of the projects analysed in order to offer an important contribution for future research on the topic and to contribute to the formulation and implementation of effective policies to prevent radicalisation both locally and nationally. The strengths are as follows:

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[67] Some Italian cities have worked in response to phenomena of degradation and violence, such as Turin which in 2020 established a City Council's Table against Violent Extremism to prevent intolerance, xenophobia, and racism: http://www.comune.torino.it/cittagora/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Linee-guida-istituzione-tavolo.pdf

1. The stakeholders and their participation made it possible to represent at least some of the interests in the field, correctly illustrating the overall picture of the phenomenon and the subjects involved as mentioned by the experts of the *BULLOUT* and *EXTRemism EMEndation* projects. In this case, as evidenced in the interview regarding the *BULLOUT* project with the professor involved: «*a strong point was the involvement of several stakeholders, which is not always taken for granted; and second, to have developed through the administration of questionnaires a more collaborative relationship between the university, the Lombardy Region and the schools involved*».

2. Moreover, another aspect of fundamental importance is the expression of a strategic collaboration of public bodies with private subjects, which is represented through participation in the educational paths provided with relative methodologies and pedagogies of experts on the main issues. Regarding the opinion of the interviewee on the *EXTRemism EMEndation* project she mentioned that: «*one of the strengths of the project was that it brought together different actors working on these issues from different angles, which led to a really important cultural and skills enrichment […]. In fact, the European youngsters who participated in this experience particularly enjoyed their experience in the Milanese neighbourhood. Once back in their home countries, some of the boys became mentors in the educational field*»[68].

3. The projects also made it possible to develop an active network of inputs and outputs broader than the class group and to animate the reflections and considerations made during the periods of school training in order to generate a continuous exchange between all participants. In this case, it is important to remember what was stated by the head teacher of the "Oriani-Mazzini" Institute in Milan regarding the results achieved by the communities of best practices, that these results emerged from the bottom up through the students. In the future, those projects will certainly be popular.

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[68] Interview, 20 April 2021.

Alongside the virtuous aspects identified, there are some critical issues that were mentioned by the interviewees:

1. First, the problem of economic funds that have been limited due to short-term projects. A substantially limited timescale did not allow for long-term cultural investment and consequently produced high perishability of the educational objectives assumed. This statement was supported by the entire target group, e.g. one of the representatives of the third sector stated: «*there is a lack of support, both economically and in terms of cooperation between partners, we try to get by using economic resources, which are few to deal with such a complex issue, [...] more should be invested in prevention*».

2. As detailed in the interview with one of the head teachers regarding the difference between the regional and national level, she mentioned that: «*in relation to the theme of integration values, there could be an expansion of the themes present in the civic education module, this according to new school regulations and this method would devalue the importance of the training developed through the project: Educating to differences with a view to opposing all forms of violent extremism*»[69].

3. The difficulties manifested in the systematisation of the core of the projects. The failure to develop a system has, in fact, made the projects unstable on a constitutive level, preventing them from consolidation in definitively structured practices and didactics. As detailed in the interview with one of the project leaders: «*[…] in these years what is evident is the worrying manifestation of violent extremism, we are not talking about religious extremism but rather youth violence, gangs of young people, disruption of gender relations, and episodes of political motivation, especially from the right, not to mention episodes of bullying and cyber bullying*»[70].

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[69] Interview, 21 April 2021
[70] Interview, 19 April 2021

Finally, we can affirm that as most of the interviews mentioned, the best practices and experiences gained, if they have produced immediate positive effects, have not been adequately promoted and disseminated. In this case, the partial sharing of best practices and methodologies also represents a limit for the territory and for the implementation of the same at the level of national institutions. For these reasons, it is important to promote projects that will gain funding, after careful and thorough evaluation, and so can be refinanced in order to provide continuity over time and thus, the generations involved can be supported and accompanied in the analysis and knowledge of complex phenomena, such as those analysed in this article.

Conclusion

From the analysis of the policies to counter and prevent radicalisation and violent extremism implemented so far in Italy, the most relevant factor that emerges is the discrepancy between the stalemate and inaction at national level and the vitality, albeit limited, at local level. The sector most affected by P/CVE initiatives is the educational one, which is acknowledged as playing a central role in raising young people's awareness of these issues. The projects analysed demonstrate the growing attention and openness of the Italian education system towards the prevention of all kinds of violence, but they still face enormous organisational, economic and planning difficulties due to the lack of a more holistic and multi-stakeholder national plan.

Starting with the interesting results of the qualitative research on the Lombardy Region case study, and in particular, on the Municipality of Milan, we propose some policy recommendations in order to improve P/CVE policies in Italy.

- Foster collaboration between stakeholders, both between the public and private sectors and between the national and local levels. Increase the

sharing and exchange of competencies, methodologies and experiences in the pedagogical field.

- Increase resources: the projects implemented to date are few, limited in certain areas of the country and of short duration. There is a need to invest in order to extend these initiatives nationwide and guarantee their long-term sustainability.
- Increase the promotion and dissemination of best practices and experiences gained. The results of good projects must be rewarded, while continuity and visibility must be ensured.

Harmonising education systems at national and regional levels with respect to civic education, particularly with regard to issues concerning education for differences and countering all forms of violent extremism.