

**Speech by the State Secretary for Health, Welfare and Sport, Martin van Rijn, at the EU Youth Conference 'Ready for life, ready for society'. Amsterdam, 7 April 2016**

**Ladies and gentlemen, Commissioner Navracsics, young Europeans!**

Over the past two days we've talked about inclusion, and how to prevent young people from feeling excluded from European society. Today we'll follow up on that by discussing how to prevent violent radicalisation. A very important issue. And, sadly, very topical.

We were all shocked by the Brussels bomb attacks, in which so many people were killed and injured. This tragedy was a terrible reminder that we must do everything we can to prevent young people from becoming radicalised.


That we must make every effort to prevent violent ideologies from poisoning the minds of young people growing up in our communities.

We must take firm action against those who spread hate and pose a direct threat to our security. And I have no doubt that our police and security services are doing everything they can to minimise that threat. But we must do also everything we can to prevent people from becoming radicalised in the first place. So how exactly do we do that?

The answer is that there is no easy answer. At what point does an idea become dangerous? At what point does an idea turn into a plan? It's not always easy to know what someone's thinking. And it can be even harder when the person involved is someone you know. Someone you care about.

If your son, your brother or your neighbour is becoming radicalised, who do you turn to? Who can you trust? Should you even get involved? Especially when you're not even sure what's going on in his or her mind?

It's hard to overstate the importance of having a strong presence in neighbourhoods where radicalisation is a problem.



That means police officers on the streets, of course. But it also means youth workers who know the families where radicalisation is a problem. Teachers with concerns about a pupil's behaviour. It means reaching out to parents, siblings and neighbours who discover that someone close to them is becoming radicalised or starting to express dangerous ideas.

To prevent radicalisation we need to know our young people. What's important to them? How do they want to shape their lives? And for that, we need to reach out to all corners of society. So it's crucial that organisations that work with young people join forces and talk to each other. Schools, the police, youth workers, youth organisations - they shouldn't work in isolation, but together with each other. Everyone needs to join together to prevent young people from radicalising.

These organisations must win the confidence not only of influential people in the community, but also of local residents and family members. So they won't hesitate to report their suspicions. During our debate I look forward to hearing how these organisations plan to do this and what kind of ideas you have.

If we all work together as closely and as hard as we can, we can do a lot to prevent violent radicalisation. In the last few days you've gone on various working visits in the Netherlands. For example, you've visited projects that help young people feel more connected with society.

Last Monday I went with some of you to the market in The Hague. One of the people we talked to was Appie El Massaoudi. A young entrepreneur who rents out market stalls and makes sure that rubbish gets cleaned up. He's also a coach for what we would call 'problematic youngsters'.

He knows better than anyone how important it is to get to know these guys. To understand their behaviour and to help them avoid making the same mistakes again. Without people like Appie, how would we know what's really going on in our urban neighbourhoods?



Before the conference started, you took part in the Streets of Europe project. You asked other young people what challenges they were facing. We can see the outcome here, in these stories and photos. And you've been doing the same thing in the past few days. Charting the problems that young people are dealing with.

Last night a lot of hard work was done to draw up a guiding framework. Today you'll be adding to this with a set of guiding questions. And this will form the roadmap for the upcoming youth conferences in Slovakia and Malta.

In a moment we'll be debating about preventing radicalisation. I'm curious to hear your thoughts, and I look forward to our discussion. Together we can prevent young people from feeling excluded and turning their backs on our society. Together we can help prevent radicalisation.

I wish you all an enjoyable and instructive day!

Thank you