



The Internet is an integral part of young people's lives. It is used by young people to do their homework, to browse the web or to communicate with one another, everything is done online. Yet, the Internet comes with its own share of risks. Young people are heavily influenced by the information that they see on online media channels, this unregulated practice has opened up many opportunities for terrorist organizations to spread their propaganda and influence the minds of young people. Recently, there have been many cases in Europe in which young people have become radicalised online and are being led down the path towards acts of terrorism.

To explore this rather new phenomenon and to find consensus on ways to fight this threat, UNESCO is organising a [two-day conference](#) in Paris on 16th and 17th June.

“We see the rise of a new generation of digital natives today,” said UNESCO Director-General, Irina Bokova. “Our task must be to empower a new generation of digital citizens at the global level – starting with education, new intercultural skills, and deeper media and information literacy.”

The Conference will support actions undertaken by states and the international community, by aspiring to fully understand the use of the Internet in fueling violent extremism and by exploring effective tools to counter its growth.

In this light, the Conference will discuss the insights and experiences of Governments, international organizations, research and academia, as well as Internet companies, and current case studies from around the world. It will also focus on the rich, multifaceted landscape of youth online engagement, particularly youth-led initiatives that are paving the way ahead.

“The youth equation holds the key to the future of many countries – especially those experiencing tensions or emerging from conflict. There are some 1.2 billion young people in the world today – between the age of 15 and 24 years old—with many societies featuring large bodies of unemployed youth, lacking education, skills and prospects, in a context of changing family structures, rapid urbanization, and rising perceptions of marginalization,” said Irina Bokova.

Violent extremism is contrary to the principles of the United Nations and its promotion of universal human rights and fundamental freedoms. It is also a rising threat to countries around the world that are undergoing profound political changes. Countering violent extremism calls for unified action from all segments of society. UNESCO provides a platform to encourage deeper cooperation through education, science, culture and communication, as well as support for Member States, civil society actors, academia and private sector to prevent and reduce youth radicalization online.

“UNESCO’s position is clear – the Internet and new ICTs must be platforms for positive engagement, peace, promoting respect for human rights and dignity, enabling dialogue and mutual understanding,” said the Director-General.

The Conference, organized in the framework of the Intergovernmental Information for All Programme (IFAP), will seek to create a global network of partners to support advocacy and knowledge sharing. UNESCO will also present the working proposal for a multidimensional pilot project, drawing on all existing work, to help empower youth to address online radicalization and extremism, and realize their aspirations to contribute to a more peaceful and sustainable world.

