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# COMMUNICATION STRATEGY: TAJIKISTAN

**These recommendations are designed to deliver communication campaigns by mass media, non-governmental organizations, government agencies and religious leaders to prevent violent extremism among the population of Tajikistan with an emphasis on youth.**

The Team at The Centre for Social and Cultural Design “Gonzo-Design” developed this Strategy at the request of the Centre for Religious Studies within the scope of the Internews implemented Project “Strengthening Resilience to Radicalization and Disinformation in Central Asia” with the financial support of the European Union.

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This communication strategy was produced based on study performed by the Center for Religious Studies from March to December 2020. The study included the content analysis of online platforms in six languages (Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Russian, Uzbek, Tajik, and Turkmen) and the field studies in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan, which interviewed 4,005 respondents, aged 18-35 to identify the value orientations of Central Asian youth and their media preferences.

Responsibility for the content of the publication lies with the Center for Religious Studies of Kyrgyzstan and “Gonzo-Design”.

The opinions presented in this publication do not represent the official views of the European Union.

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# INTRODUCTION

This communication strategy document represents a system of applied recommendations to deliver media campaigns aimed at PVE among the population of Tajikistan with an emphasis on youth. The strategy includes eight sections covering all aspects of communication process:

1. goal setting,
2. understanding the audience,
3. formation of messages,
4. understanding stakeholders,
5. review of effective channels and formats,
6. specifics of the context,
7. evaluation of communication efficiency,
8. presentation of potential risks.

The strategy provides an overview of messages, tools, approaches and contextual specifics for applied work among four stakeholder groups: government agencies, NGOs, media and religious leaders. Each group was reviewed based on regional characteristics and analysis of their current activities.

## HOW TO USE THE COMMUNICATION STRATEGY:

The communication strategy structure is based on fundamental principles of the communication model, which can be represented through the following definition:

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**Communication is the process of transferring information from sender to receiver through an environment in which both parties equally understand the information transmitted. A significant portion of information is called content and the outcome of transmission process is a message.**

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Therefore, this communication strategy includes the description of all participants, conditions, and mechanisms of communication. We answer the questions: what is required to broadcast? to whom? under which conditions? and how to achieve the desired effect.

# SECTION 1

## MISSION OF THE COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

### Goals, objectives, and impact

This section describes the motives and prerequisites for developing a strategy, including the description of expectations from its results. What kind of desired effects we wanted to achieve and what goals we set? What must happen if all the recommendations described in the strategy will be effectively implemented?

### Goal

Strengthening the resilience among youth to radicalization and misinformation leading to violent extremism by supporting the media, civil society, government institutions, religious leaders, and active citizens in Kyrgyzstan. This goal seeks to strengthen relevant national institutions, including through international cooperation.

### Main drivers of PVE:

1. Improving education of the population,
2. Reducing fragmentation in society,
3. Improving social infrastructure,
4. Developing interaction between the State and citizens.

## **Objectives:**

1. Creating and promoting alternative narratives among groups vulnerable to radicalization.
2. Strengthening the system of cooperation between local and global stakeholders.
3. Increasing the level of media literacy and critical thinking among the TA (Target Audience).
4. Developing communities and strengthening the group identity of the TA based on humanitarian values.
5. Reducing the level of disunity on national, religious, and ethnic grounds due to developed alternative factors to improve the internal ties among TA groups,
6. Popularizing humanitarian values and culture.
7. Promoting social and cultural values for systemic formation of personal identity of the TA.
8. Developing family values and strengthening intra-family ties.

## **Long-term impact:**

This strategy contributes to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by reducing the factors that contribute to VE for the next 15-20 years:

1. increasing the level and quality of life.
2. ensuring access to education for all segments of the population.
3. developing gender education.
4. promoting the processes of self-development and increasing professional competencies and enhancing social activities.
5. reducing the level of inequality within and between countries.
6. ensuring cities and human settlements are inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable.
7. promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development.

# SECTION 2

## TARGET AUDIENCE

### **To whom do we address the communication?**

Hereinafter target audience is referred to as TA

### **Understanding the project TA will help:**

1. use a suitable channel to communicate with the TA,
2. choose an effective genre and communication style,
3. plan and calculate communication effects and risks,
4. organize relevant promotion mechanisms.

### **The section addresses:**

1. Patterns of information perception among the TA,
2. Important mechanisms of information consumption for the TA,
3. TA value system,
4. Key factors in building credibility to information among the TA.

Under several studies, we have identified the population groups in Tajikistan that are most vulnerable to extremist propaganda and recruiting.

## Types of audiences who we can consider to be more vulnerable:

**1. Labor and external migrants, mainly living in Russia.** According to 2017 data, there are 1,094 Tajik citizens in ISIS; 85% of them are labor migrants recruited while

**2. Internal migrants** – these are mainly migrants from rural areas who moved to the capital city, and small and medium size business owners and farmers, who particularly suffered during of 2014-2016 crisis.

## Features of information flows for the TA of Tajikistan on the topic of PVE

- Exposure to the influence of state-owned channels due to almost a complete lack of independent outlets.
- Restrictions to access alternative sources of information.
- Insufficient number of counter-narratives in information domain due to general-accepted national policy.
- Lack of loyalty to Government due to poor social infrastructure.
- Poor religious literacy. Clergymen are under pressure by the Government and have no opportunities to obtain theological education.
- The population has no access to quality sources of religious education.

## Features of value orientations and priorities of the TA in Tajikistan

- **Identity**

The high level of identity crisis associated with both the Civil War and existing Government policy actualizes the willingness to seek spiritual and personal identity by the TA. This search is significantly complicated by inconsistency and discontinuity of country's ideological agenda.

- **Culture**

The cultural gap between secular (which authorities present as traditional) and religious attributes associated with national politics prompts a disordered process of interpreting and translating traditional images of meanings and values through discrimination of religious images and content. In addition, there is a cultural gap between the modernization (globalization) of society and traditionalism. The cultural values associated with the local traditional society conflict with the values of a modern, westernized, and globalized society.

- **Family**

Traditions of family relations and values remain integral in the view of the TA: intra-family ties, family planning, priority distribution, and formulation of roles in society.

- **Economy**

The economic crisis (after the Civil War) and lack of access to a well-established social sphere critically shift the emphasis to financial well-being in the TA value system. High unemployment rates and labor migration increase in degree of depression and despair among the TA.

- **Education**

An insufficient number and poor quality of educational projects and initiatives lead to a vacuum in representing the TA in such topics as self-development, digital professions, DIY, and others. It significantly distorts the system of self-assessment and planning the future of the TA.

# SECTION 3

## CONTENT

### WHAT DO WE BROADCAST TO THE AUDIENCE TO ACHIEVE THE PLANNED EFFECTS?

#### Using content guidelines will allow one to:

1. build an effective dialogue with the TA,
2. evoke the desired response from the TA,
3. qualitatively influence the level of awareness and education of the TA,
4. motivate the TA to make positive changes in habits, mind-sets, and actions.

#### The section addresses:

1. on which key senses we must build communication,
2. which messages to use and which to avoid,
3. which emotional messages and intonations to apply in communication,
4. how to choose communication stylistics.

## MESSAGES

### CATEGORIES OF DIRECT MESSAGES BY SEMANTIC GROUPS:

#### 1. POLITICAL

##### 1.1. Responding to violence and its propaganda.

To formulate and promote rebuttals to violent campaigns. It is necessary to create an absolute, clear attitude among the TA in relation to the issue of the illegality of violence.

## **1.2. Developing and promoting political literacy**

Accessibility and clear understanding of the global political situation will create the grounds for appropriate understanding and interpretation of real relations and priorities on the world stage.

## **1.3. Promoting the values of multiculturalism**

Coverage of global social processes and achievements (scientific, cultural, social, humanitarian) will enable one to undermine many hostile views about the West, Canada, and China and, as a result, to eliminate destructive and aggressive sentiments towards other states and cultures.

## **1.4. Promoting the values of ethnic diversity**

Strengthening the ideas aimed at acceptance and understanding of other nationalities, peoples and classes will reduce the level of fragmentation and potential for confrontations with other ethnic groups.

## **2. SOCIAL**

### **2.1. Popularizing the factors of high living standards and measures to achieve them**

Actions and ideas aimed at improving the quality of life: building roads, providing humanitarian aid, fighting corruption, etc.

### **2.2. Developing unity and continuity**

### **2.3. Building community and mutual assistance**

### **2.4. Developing identity**

To promote the ideas and values aimed at constructive creation and positive search through creativity, co-creation, education, volunteering, lifestyle, and fashion. Refutation of possibility to achieve the group identity based on religion and any militant images: a winner, group force, weapons, manifestation of power.

### **2.5. Promoting and building community**

To bring together the TA based on the ideas of brotherhood through positive constructive practices, common everyday interests, and mutual assistance.

### **2.6. Popularizing the idea of a free, healthy society**

To create positive images through the topics of self-development, equality, and justice.

## **3. RELIGIOUS**

### **3.1. Disseminating basic terms and information about Islam**

To deliver theological education in accessible, understandable, and easy formats and to preserve the integrity and stability of religious ideology and peaceful mission of Islam.

### **3.2. Promoting multi-confessional and religious tolerance**

Denial of discrediting other groups based on their religion.

### **3.3. Disseminating and promoting educational content**

To advance the qualification of religious leaders in the regions so they can play an important role and equipping them with new information about trends and challenges (related to religion) and new knowledge in PVE.

### **3.4. Promoting personality image through true values and good intentions**

### **3.5. Promoting the importance of family values and ties**

The presence of strong tangible intra-family ties reduces feelings of depression and loneliness and increases responsibility and consistency in actions and decision-making.

### **3.6. Developing the image of home**

To interpret and develop the concept of "home," is of importance in Islam, as a territory to preserve the love, peace, and well-being of family members.

## **4. HUMANISTIC**

### **4.1. Developing the principles of mutual help, empathy, and charity**

To develop the community principles through humanitarian values

### **4.2. Promoting moral obligations and true values in a positive context**

### **4.3. Promoting humanitarian and human rights values**

To prevent prosecuting others and justifying violence and aggression against people who violate social and/or cultural norms.

## Example

### 1. "Whisper of Wisdom"



The project aims at increasing religious tolerance. Life stories of religious communities during the coronavirus pandemic. This multimedia project on Tilda shares about various religious communities, how they live in the changing environment of quarantine during the COVID-19 pandemic. The project shows that even with ritual and external differences, we all live by sharing unique spiritual human values.

#### Pros:

It shows spiritual values that are understandable to ordinary people. The stories of parishioners and community members provide an opportunity to better understand people having different faiths. The project makes it possible to transfer them from the category of "they" are alien, strange, incomprehensible, and therefore dangerous and alien, into the category of "we" - people with similar values.

### 2. National minorities of Uzbekistan



A photo project that introduces the viewer with the stories of national minorities in an accessible format who live in Uzbekistan through photos and texts. Through simple free services (like Tilda), one can create educational and orientation projects which talk about exciting principles and problems in an accessible form (ethnic diversity is an example of this in this project).

## INDIRECT MESSAGES BASED ON THE TA PRIORITY VALUES:

Key values are combined into logical groups according to the principle of commonality of messages aimed at implementing values relevant to the TA.

### 1. FUTURE, SUCCESS, RESPONSIBILITY

- strong financial position for loved ones (firstly) and for yourself (secondly),
- make a mark on the world,
- personal self-development.

#### 1.1. Stress reducing due to financial instability

It is obvious that the situation with education and employment requires effective decisions and reforms at the State level. However, the objectives of communication include creating an effective emotional background among the TA and increasing the level of optimism in society. Only in an emotionally favorable environment, we may count on the emergence of civic initiatives, aspiration for self-development and mutual assistance, as well as the motivation to improve skills and knowledge.

## **1.2. Anxiety reducing due to responsibility for financial well-being in the family.**

Despite the fact that family support and responsibility is an important cultural basis, it is necessary to work with the negative consequences arising among the TA connected with this responsibility: alienation, powerlessness, feeling of not being good enough and successful, etc.

## **1.3. Escalation and transparency of topics of the future, its presentation, and components.**

Many ideas linked to well-being and successful future are formed among the TA due to stereotypes imposed by the cultural and social environment, in addition to unconsciously copying the practices that are constantly visible (TV, mass culture, YouTube). It is paramount to make the process of forming values and ideas as conscious and independent as possible. Questions and discussions addressed to TA will help raise the agenda of personal self-determination and reduce the level of stereotypes when developing values. Discussion formats among the TA about the future will also enable maintaining links with youth and strengthening inter-generational ties.

## **1.4. Developing small-scale and light educational formats.**

It is necessary to build a system of accessible and resource-intensive educational tools. This will fill the gap between not always available fundamental long expensive education and complete absence of any quick, simple, and applied tools for personal and professional development.

## **2. FEELING NEEDED, VALUABLE, AND LOVED:**

- building your own family,
- make a mark on the world,
- personal self-development.

### **2.1. Developing the culture of volunteering and civic social initiatives.**

Participation in social activities and opportunities to be engaged into practicing charity and social activity will significantly develop values that are important for youth communities: mutual assistance, a sense of community and unity (as opposed to a sense of alienation and loneliness), sharing challenges, an awareness and realization of one's own strength and capabilities.

### **2.2. Popularizing the concept of DIY (Do It Yourself).**

The post-Soviet environment and current national agenda, as well as cultural traditions have significant impact on the assessment of personality in isolation from society, family, and country. It prevents developing the ideas on the true value of each person and the importance of small deeds. Such practices can be safe while contributing to a more efficient and active society.

### 2.3. Broadening the understanding of development tools

Employment and income challenges can be partially addressed if the TA is more aware of potential ways of acquiring professional skills and self-promotion.

### 2.4. Promoting mentorship, motivation, and leadership

The resources designed for Implementation can significantly be reduced by using existing content on these topics. Costs will thus be limited to translation from foreign languages and distribution.

### 2.5. Promoting beauty and health topics

Popularizing sporty active lifestyles and involvement of the TA in the agenda of careful attitude towards themselves, not only in terms of aesthetics, but also in terms of investments in their future.

## 3. STARTING A FAMILY:

- creating your own family,
- sense of duty.

### 3.1. Developing sexual education

Despite the limitations associated with peculiarities of country context, it is important to look for alternative sources to identify the topics on gender and relations: sports, beauty, health, culture, communication, and self-development.

#### Example

##### 1. «What Would You Do If You Had No More Limits?»

A social video on menstruation in developing countries, women's access to education, and their opportunities.



##### 2. Sexual education under "Poplars" Project

Media project about sex education in Uzbekistan.



### 3.2. Developing the culture of cross-gender communication

The availability of clear and visual tools for maintaining connections in society, searching for common ideas and interests, co-creation and like-mindedness will play an important role in the natural process of conscious choice of a partner, and will increase the potential of community for the TA as a whole.

## **EMOTIONS AND INTONATIONS**

As part of the TA field interviews, we identified the gradations in the TA's emotional-sensitive perception of information. Which sensations and emotions certain types of media products evoke, how they affect the distribution of attention, perception, and motivation to any action.

### **Emotional guidelines based on the study of the TA value priorities:**

#### **1. Sense of community, non-loneliness, confidence in the future**

Recommended intonation tags are calmness, moderate dynamism, cohesion, and compatibility.

Not recommended intonation tags are anxiety, linearity, melancholy, aggressiveness, excessive emotionality, violence, and apathy

##### **Values:**

- self-confidence,
- happy family,
- striving for peaceful social interactions,
- approval of others.

#### **2. Stability, optimism**

Recommended intonation tags are dreaminess, romance, poetry, determination.

Not recommended intonation tags are manufacturability, haste, variability, fragmentation.

##### **Values:**

- preservation of national traditions,
- make the world better and right.

#### **3. Self-confidence, feeling important**

Recommended intonation tags are admiration, imagination, dreaminess, activity.

Not recommended intonation tags are envy, haste, comparability.

##### **Values:**

- self-determination (professional, religious, social).

#### **4. Security**

Recommended intonation tags are ease, leisurely, family.

Not recommended intonation tags are immensity, suppression.

##### **Values:**

- state, financial, and social stability,
- peaceful and humanitarian values,
- safety,
- safety and integration of labor migrants in foreign territory,
- striving for peaceful social interactions.

## 5. Well-being, success

Recommended intonation tags are spirituality, calmness, naturalness, authenticity.

Not recommended intonation tags are envy, haste, comparability.

### Values:

- strong financial position for yourself,
- strong financial position for loved ones.

# SECTION 4

## STAKEHOLDERS

### Who are the senders of messages?

In this section, we take a close look at four key categories of stakeholders involved in communication. Each stakeholder has its own limitations and potentials. We will identify the approaches, tools, and resources that are appropriate for each category.

Understanding the specifics of potentials and limitations of the project stakeholders will enable to:

1. Create brand new communication products,
2. Rationally use the resources for their creation,
3. Build partnerships and scale up the communication effects.
4. The section addresses:
5. How to scale up the lessons learned.
6. How to benefit from existing restrictions.
7. What new approaches and principles can be applied in working with the topic.

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MASS MEDIA IN TAJIKISTAN

1. Enhancing interaction between state and independent media.
2. Promoting important social issues for society.
3. Reducing mistrust to religious personalities, particularly mullah (a group of official and moderate clergy, who have certain mistrust among believers due to gaps in education, excessive conformism, and an inability to resist the propaganda of radicals).
4. Enhancing technical capabilities and tools.
5. Developing notification and information systems through its websites and social media using new tools to promote materials.
6. Developing channels and international partnerships will ensure coverage and creation of effective materials on labor migrants.
7. Launching programs and stories about the real life of people that would attract an audience to the narratives. For example, films like the documentary “Mardikor”

(which tells the story about the life of three women-laborers), and programs about cultural and historical heritage, family values and other topics focused on TA values.

8. Developing and duplicating video content in online publications and social networks.
9. Using multimedia tools for online resources.
10. Developing content in the Tajik language.
11. Monitoring the human rights of believers.
12. Covering and reviewing the state policy in religious sphere.
13. Creating a product covering the topic of gender equality.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NGOS IN TAJIKISTAN**

1. Developing and supporting specialized NGOs working beyond PVE.
2. Facilitating access and interaction with vulnerable groups of the population, including women's communities.
3. Enhancing cooperation between NGOs and government agencies.
4. Developing cooperation with the media and creating joint formats.
5. Developing and promoting their image to be recognized not only by donors, but also by the population to ensure by that their own visibility and facilitate interests, empathy, and active participation in their activities.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GOVERNMENT AGENCIES IN TAJIKISTAN**

1. Publishing data and materials on alternative social media platforms and partner organizations.
2. Developing reporting formats and promoting activities.
3. Preventing radicalization by government agencies through workshops and conferences.
4. Searching for alternative methods to develop national ideology.
5. Cooperating with the media, NGOs, and authoritative spiritual personalities.
6. Conducting open discussions with other stakeholders.
7. Developing links with followers of positive narratives and their promotion.
8. Creating joint actions and campaigns with NGOs and the media.
9. Improving websites and enhancing ministries by introducing multimedia tools.
10. Creating online programs and broadcasts.

11. Involving specialists from the Institute of Islamic Studies under the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan, unofficial spiritual authorities, and independent experts for dialogue with the TA.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RELIGIOUS LEADERS

1. Demonstrating active position to express opinions on conflict situations and social problems.
2. Proclaiming the peaceful mission of Islam through their sermons.
3. Confronting information propaganda of radicalism and extremism.
4. Establishing an advanced training center for religious leaders in the regions, including obtaining new information on trends and challenges (related to religion) and new knowledge and using them to oppose extremist information.
5. Creating a regional platform for discussions and experience sharing with representatives of clergy from other Central Asian countries.

### Successful examples of projects and utilization of channels

#### 1. Media-campaign "Combating Terrorism"



The project of "Vecherki" newspaper was entirely devoted to the issues and problems of radicalism and extremism.

#### Pros:

- multiple genres: long read, interviews, analytics, infographics, etc.
- online survey on: "Issues of radicalism in Tajik society: causes and possible solutions," reflecting the opinion of ordinary people in relation to the problem.

#### Cons:

- language limitation since the project is only in Russian and lacks access to a majority of the intended audience.

#### 2. Stability in Central Asia through Dialogue



- The Institute for War and Peace Reporting (IWPR) is not a local media outlet, but it has accomplished a great work in countering radicalism and VE. In particular, the publications concerned the coverage of topics on religions and confessions. In addition to journalistic materials and expert analyses, IWPR hosted various events with the participation of representatives of clergy, government and law enforcement agencies, representatives of civil society, including NGOs, and the media.

**Pros:**

- such approach facilitated cooperation between these stakeholders, after which journalists could gain access to information on extremism and terrorism. IWPR also developed a Religious Reporting Guide for Journalists.

**Cons:**

- purely theoretical nature of interaction.

# SECTION 5

## CHANNELS AND FORMATS

### How are messages delivered?

Panorama of current channels and formats will help:

1. Deliver messages to end TA.
2. Develop cross-platform and interdisciplinary communication.
3. Track and count the effectiveness of communication.
4. Maintain long-term relationships with TA.

This section addresses:

1. What genres and formats are relevant to the TA?
2. How is the information is perceived depending on the product and placement?
3. What stylistic foundations are relevant to the TA?
4. How priorities of attention and confidence are formed with the TA?
5. How to manage the motivation of the TA?

### Example

Let's assume that the project targets the elderly people living in a rural area. In such case, the suitable channel would be, for example, a series of short documentaries on TV. However, an interactive application for mobile devices would be a completely inappropriate format.

The channels relevant to TA in each country context are very specific and may not fit into the general logic of the media market. It is very important to take into account the local characteristics of the priority channels of Tajikistan.

Communication preferences are made up of several key factors:

1. internet speed and access,
2. formats and topics of priority content,
3. availability of existing sources of information,
4. established traditions of trusting sources.

## COMMUNICATION CHANNELS DIFFER BY NATURE OF THE TA INTERACTING WITH THEIR CONTENT:

### 1. STREAMING CHANNELS

Streaming - these are channels in which information is delivered to a user without special demand; a user does not control the information, which is received in a dynamic mode and uncontrolled stream.

**Pros:** constant reflexiveness, easy and quick access, it does not require special entry and decision-making

**Cons:** without immersion, it is impossible to calculate and predict the stop of attention; it is difficult to achieve deep involvement, it has an unstable level of trust.

**Examples:** all social media lines, television, outdoor advertising.

#### Drivers of attracting attention in streaming channels:

- bright contrasting emotions, both positive and negative,
- unequivocal intersection with personal values and interests of the TA,
- unpredictable and unexpected content,
- cognitive content: what the TA itself defines as useful knowledge or skill and understands how it can be used.

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#### Streaming channels that are relevant for the TA in Tajikistan:

**Social networks: OK, VK, Facebook (in order of their popularity)**

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Characteristic features of social media channels in Tajikistan:

- Systematic blocking of the Internet leads to fragmentary interaction with social networks and hinders the establishment of stable long-term communications through communities, public pages, thematic groups, and subscriptions.
- Insufficient traffic and/or lack of access to the Internet prevents the use of long, voluminous, and deep forms of communication products. Complex interactive formats, multimedia long reads, and other modern forms of online promotions are ineffective.
- Control and censorship of content by state agencies subject to compliance with the national policy of the secular state imposes restrictions on both the style and approaches to cover sensitive topics, especially those related to religion.
- The main focus of attention and confidence in content by the TA to social networks are expressed in topics related to the sphere of entertainment and personal communication and education to a lesser extent.
- OK is the most popular social network:
  1. Most users are labor migrants and people who are not engaged in intellectual work. Interaction with content can be considered rather passive and one-sided.

2. State agencies or their various affiliated institutions are not represented on this social network.
  3. It lacks an audience with quite progressive views and high levels of education; the OK audience is not motivated and has no capacity to participate in open discussions and conscious interpretation of messages created.
- Facebook is a widespread channel (13.8% of the TA), but it unites the educated part of the population, primarily civil society activists: journalists, experts and analysts, businessmen, representatives of political parties, civil servants, employees of banks, credit organizations, mobile companies, intellectuals, employees of scientific and research organizations, students, undergraduates, etc. Therefore, this social network is where the main discussion takes place concerning significant and urgent societal challenges.

## RECOMMENDATIONS TO USE RELEVANT SOCIAL NETWORKS IN TAJIKISTAN:

### 1) Creating and promoting educational formats

Simple, playful, short educational genres: cards, tests, and stories. It is important to broadcast informative context in an accessible way and thereby make them competitive with entertainment genres. Simplifying educational content will raise awareness about the risks associated with VE activities and make the agenda more mainstreamed and cited.

#### Example

##### “The ABC book for the Internet”



Multimedia content aimed at informing and educating Internet users, mainly young people, about the rules of communication and online safety. It applied an interactive online guide.

#### Pros:

- new game format for presenting materials in the Tajik segment.
- in Russian and Tajik languages.

#### Cons

- lack of systematic advertising campaign in a simple and understandable media segment for TA.
- the “Vecherka” newspaper Project, which audience are Russian speakers.

## 2) Developing discussion formats.

To initiate active participation of TA to talk about neutral, but at the same time, valuable topics from their perspectives: news, interpersonal communications, traditional culture, art, music, foreign languages. Engagement of different TAs in terms of their educational level and progressiveness into joint discussions will reduce the gap between various layers of audience and will create a common information field. This will reduce the level of isolation of vulnerable TA groups and help bridge their gap with progressive representatives of society.

### Example

#### “Global Goals Jam”



A series of discussions, workshops, and presentations from local groups (experts, creatives, stakeholders, citizens) on an important local topic.

## 3) Community building

Intensive promotion of topics relevant to TA will contribute to creating an online-friendly environment in which participants will benefit from a platform to form and exchange common interests. The development of online communities will improve the quality of remote communication in society and increase the level of motivation, curiosity, and empathy.

## 4) Developing collaboration formats with opinion makers and celebrities

According to the research outcomes, music and lifestyle content is the most popular among the TA. Engagement of musicians and media environment actors to promote positive narratives and value-forming discussions with the TA will help to increase the interest to such topics, and create an alternative environment on such difficult topic as VE through the promotion of important aspects of life.

### Example

#### Manizha and the UN



Manizha is a singer who became the first Russian Goodwill Ambassador to the UN Refugee Agency. She often talks on these social topics in her social networks and composes music dedicated to self-identification and migration.

## 5) Expanding the presence of non-governmental organizations, experts in Islamic studies, and independent activists in social networks.

To popularize the positive narratives and attitudes through personal accounts and public pages of authoritative and progressive public figures and educators (for example, specialists from the Institute of Islamic Studies under the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan). It will maintain a competent information field and stay in contact with the audience. Active social networking will help to not only expand the field of informational impact and be in emotional contact with the TA, but also to announce educational events and organize live broadcasts.

### Example

#### Rushnoi.Org



One key function of the website is to cover radicalization issues, both in the country and Central Asia as a whole. Much attention is paid to the situation in neighboring Afghanistan, which political processes may affect the security of Tajikistan, including the situation with extremism and terrorism. In a short time, the website has recommended itself as one of the best analytical resources on radicalization and VE.

#### Pros:

- Publications are in Tajik and Russian.
- The initiative and professionalism of expert journalists support the work of the publication without funding (low frequency of updates).
- The website success is due to the professional selection of personnel - analyst journalists.

## TV AND RADIO

Characteristic features of TV channels in Tajikistan:

- There are 34 TV companies: 8 national and 26 regional (including private) and 33 radio stations, of which 4 are national stations and 29 radio stations of various forms of ownership.
- All state TV channels have a national broadcast (First Channel "Tojikiston" ([www.tvt.tj](http://www.tvt.tj)), "Safina" ([www.safina.tj](http://www.safina.tj)), "Jahonnamo" ([www.jahonnamo.tj](http://www.jahonnamo.tj)), "Bahoriston" (children's channel), Varzish (Sport), Sinamo (Films), Football, Shahnavez), as well as all official radio stations (Tojikiston, Sadoi Dushanbe, Farhang, and Sadoi Tojik) have almost 100% coverage. This high coverage is ensured due to strong support from the state in the form of benefits and other privileges.
- Official media content mainly consists of public policy propaganda and broadcasting entertainment shows. Important problems of society are not reflected in these media. As a rule, the media raises the issues related to radicalization, extremism, and terrorism in the context of condemnation of the Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan.

- One current task of official mass media is to create distrust to religious leaders.
- Independent media are limited in their technical capabilities. Despite this fact, regional and cable channels are also widespread. Their content is mainly entertainment, so there is no competitive TV outlet with diverse content and that would satisfy the interests of the TA in Tajikistan.
- Despite the general tendency for young people to switch from traditional media to online broadcasting, in Tajikistan, classic media channels remain as most popular and in demand due to the limited access to the Internet. At the same time, the content of such channels as TV and radio is not adapted to the TA and remains as subjects of interest for the audience of older generations.

## RECOMMENDATIONS TO USE TV CHANNELS IN TAJIKISTAN:

### 1. Introducing programs aimed at opposing VE in TV and radio broadcasting.

Given the dependence of TV and radio broadcasting, it is necessary to develop alternative ways of covering topics and agenda concept. It is important to integrate formats that are organic for these channels and, at the same time, demanded for audience: talk shows and serials.

One of the presentation formats could be a talk show by involving independent experts, theologians respected in society, NGOs representatives and independent journalists. It is necessary to introduce formats of feedback with viewers, who could receive answers live. Ensuring the participation of respected people into the community and providing opportunities to communicate with them, which will contribute to a positive perception.

### 2. Synthesis of topics in TV programs.

Due to the sensitivity of the topic and almost complete absence of religious agenda on TV, it is advisable to synthesize indirect topics (see the section on Content) by integrating them into the format of programs, films, serials, and entertainment shows.

### 3. Popularizing progressive figures.

It is important to make visible representatives from among young people and active citizens who deal with addressing social challenges. Such practices will have a positive impact on the motivation and inspiration of the TA and will make visible private civic initiatives for independent scaling up.

### 4. Increasing in the share of youth topics and formats.

It is necessary to build a better match for the content designed for a youth audience. Expansion of youth-interested topics and formats in broadcasting, among other things, will reduce the intergenerational gap.

### 5. Developing the plots reflecting the lifestyle.

Light and dynamic lifestyle formats that reveal the topics of development, self-determination, and identity will help reduce the general level of depression and provide tools for self-realization and personal development.

## 6. Promoting youth-relevant values related to well-being through educational programs

In particular, the promotion of topics of economic growth, professional development and scientific progress through game, entertainment, and educational formats will meet the needs of TA in terms of value priorities, and at the same time educate the TA on issues essential for planning gender relations.

## 7. Implementing mentorship and motivation formats

Sharing successful stories of active and progressive representatives of the TA and popularizing personal examples. Such formats will encourage self-development, shift the focus of attention from the global agenda to a personal one, motivate a healthy lifestyle, and inspire active social activities.

### Example

#### Salam Neighbors!



The 2018 video project was dedicated to improving relations between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan; the countries had remained isolated from each other for many years. The border between the two countries was closed even to the closest of relatives who left on both sides. The video project shows how these ties were restored, how close neighbors started to get to know each other again, talk about some peculiarities of the life and life of two peoples in 20 cities of both countries.

#### Pros:

Such stories reveal the cultural and traditional component of the routines and lives of the people and it strengthens the combination of national identity and religion. Such projects can be attributed to educational narratives about real identity (when national and religious affiliations do not contradict each other), and a distorted concept from the outside is an erroneous interpretation of religion.

## 2. SPECIAL CHANNELS

Special channels are the channels that gather an audience on a central meaning or idea. It can be an interest, activity, hobby, or goal. The audience appeals to these channels with the intention to receive specific content.

**Pros:** there is an intention and motivation at the entry point, it has a permanent audience, certain level of confidence based on commonality after entry; they scale well subject to high-quality and long-term content saturation.

**Cons:** narrow focus, require follow-up

**Examples:** professional communities and groups, YouTube channels, newspapers, and magazines.

Special channels are powerful tools for building communities. They help scale ideas, narrow the gaps between social strata, and give a sense of oneness, which in turn can resist artificially created or negative unions such as VEs.

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## Current special channels in Tajikistan:

### Online: YouTube channels, online TV channels, vlogs, and thematic groups in social networks

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Characteristic features of special online channels:

- Video clips are the most popular online content format. Considering that the Internet in Tajikistan is very expensive, to save money, preference is given to short stories.
- The TA is especially interested in music videos.

## RECOMMENDATIONS TO USE SPECIAL ONLINE CHANNELS:

### 1. Engaging and creating user content

### 2. Developing experimental formats at the interface with science and art

### 3. Collaborating with musicians

Due to the high adherence of the TA to musical culture, performers can become key opinion makers and broadcast their views and assessment of VE, both in the lyrics and in open accompanying discussions and interviews.

### 4. Developing discussion formats

To deliver in genres of talk shows and lifestyle stories by inviting experts from the field of culture, history, and traditions, who may indirectly impact the topic of positive narratives and values.

### 5. Promoting young and active people

Popularizing and strengthening the image of established, but not very well-known young active citizens from the regions of the country.

### 6. Developing educational channels and communities

Re-broadcasting educational content from West-originated sources with educational content aimed at developing skills in digital professions and creative industries.

### 7. Popularizing the DIY (Do It Yourself) concept through regional and foreign bloggers

## 8. Developing and promoting the podcast culture genre

Light in terms of traffic and genre close to usual audio content and quite popular radio has high potential for mass targeted message delivery.

## 9. Using figurative and non-documentary formats

Use comics and animations to cover real stories on VE. Various visual techniques and mixed techniques reduce the risk for characters and at the same time helps to deliver the content to the TA in the friendliest way.

### Example

#### 1. Film “Mardikor” (Handyman/Manly work)



The documentary “Mardikor” was produced by the “180 Degrees” Project. The film tells the story of three women forced to earn a living by performing difficult “manly work.” The action of the film takes place in Bokhtar district of Khatlon Oblast. According to the Prosecutor General’s Office in 2017, there were 1,094 Tajik citizens within ISIS. The largest number of them - 400 people, were natives of Khatlon Oblast).

#### Pros:

- Covering socio-economic situation of population in a particular area vulnerable to radicalization.
- The film was shot in the Tajik language with the option to choose subtitles in Russian and English.
- Multiple publishing platforms - YouTube, Facebook, Instagram.
- The duration is 20 minutes, which is an optimal time given the high cost of the Internet in Tajikistan.

#### 2. Internet programs and talk shows where participants from “vulnerable groups” are invited to talk about their difficulties, experiences, and stories.

- Talk-show “Labor migrants talk about work, difficulties, and life in Russia.”
- YouTube program “Tajik migrants: to Russia for the future of children” - BBC Russian



## OFFLINE: NEWSPAPERS AND MAGAZINES

Characteristic features of special offline channels:

- They are the most reliable and popular source of information for the TA in Tajikistan.
- According to official data, there are 376 newspapers registered in the country of which 112 are owned by the State and 264 are owned privately. There are 245 magazines of which 114 are owned by the State and 131 are the privately owned.

- The TA places a high level of trust in print media content.
- Official publications are also popular. There is a publication such as Jumhuriyat (State-owned) ([www.jumhuriyat.tj](http://www.jumhuriyat.tj)) and Minbari Khalk (newspaper of the ruling PDPT party, materials in the newspaper are published on the website of the party [www.ndpt.tj](http://www.ndpt.tj)); Omuzgor "(Publication of the Ministry of Education); Sadoi Mardum (parliamentary) ([www.sadoimardum.tj](http://www.sadoimardum.tj)), it has up to 50 thousand copies and published 3 to 5 times a week, while independent newspapers publish up to 2-3000 copies per week. Due to mandatory subscription, these (State-owned) publications could last even during periods of financial crises, while many private publication owners had to decrease the numbers of published copies, and some had to close.
- Subscription to state print media is compulsory.
- Circulation of the most popular independent media does not exceed 12-15 thousand copies, which indicates a decrease in consumer interest in printed information products.

## RECOMMENDATIONS TO WORK WITH SPECIAL OFFLINE CHANNELS:

### 1. Expanding geography and multiculturalism.

To produce cross and collaborate on materials with similar media in countries of outflow of migrants. To implement interregional joint projects and initiatives.

### 2. Segmenting rubrics and audience types.

This will help increase both the audience and its potential interest in new topics. If the TA is involved in one rubric, it starts showing interest in other topics, since print media have a linear structure. Adaptation of rubrics for different types of audience.

### 3. Introducing personal stories and examples.

### 4. Introducing the formats and headings for interaction with the audience.

To organize polls, contests, publication of letters and stories from the TA. This will allow them not only to see a section of the TA and keep in touch with the TA but will also increase the level of self-confidence and significance.

### 5. Promoting materials in easy and accessible formats in social networks:

Stories, igtv, photo series.

### 6. Strengthening the reputation and image of specific authors.

It will increase trust in the content and create a more personal attitude towards the conveyed meanings.

### 7. Introducing educational rubrics.

## 8. Introducing sections with applied benefit for the TA.

Employment, self-development, and social activity.

## 9. Developing the image and modern stylistic techniques and formats.

To use contemporary illustrations and photographs in partnership with universities and young artists.

### Example

#### Gradarak

The non-profit organization "GRADARAK" creates modern libraries to spark new knowledge among the younger generation and equip them with interesting and cognitive leisure. "Our primary goal is to build libraries in remote villages of Armenia to improve the level of education and broaden the horizons of residents from these regions. Libraries and educational institutions can create collections and sections on exciting topics, invite experts, and attract young people by establishing safer environment for them



[Article on project](#)



## 3. PERSONAL CHANNELS

Personal channels are the channels in which we receive information from people who we know directly, and our perception depends on the quality of our relations with them.

**Pros:** Communication participants know each other, they communicate directly, it does not require special inclusion and participation from the TA, it has a high level of trust and emotional attachment, higher degree of involvement and responsiveness, where reputation plays a role.

**Cons:** It requires point of contact, interaction, and constant support.

**Examples:** Chats, instant messengers, chat bots, and professional groups.

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### Personal channels that are relevant for the TA in Tajikistan:

**Chats, groups, and channels in Viber, WhatsApp, and Telegram**

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Characteristic features of personal channels in Tajikistan:

- According to our research, the TA receives most information about news and global situation from relatives and friends, therefore the personal communication channels must be a priority for effective work.
- Personal communication is complicated by the fact that most families are divided due to labor migration.

- Blocking the Internet and social networks breaks the connection with loved ones.
- Personal channels allow transmitting small-size data streams, which would increase their potential impact in the face of problems with traffic and access to high-speed Internet.
- There is an increase in the number of users of social networks and instant messengers.
- Telegram - due to the closed nature of this instant messenger, the level of its popularity among Tajik users remains unclear today. However, it is known that Telegram has a significant number of various closed groups of religious extremists, who use the Russian language to communicate. It is also known that Telegram is actively used by ISIS - thus, in 2015, according to intelligence reports, the propagandists of this organization distributed materials to 14 thousand subscribers in more than 30 channels in various languages. Accordingly, Telegram is a convenient platform for Tajik extremists. In addition, Tajik users can use access to closed groups in the Russian language, which focus on post-Soviet audiences.
- Supporters of radical movements create their groups, channels, and public chats in instant messengers such as Viber and WhatsApp, however, the credibility of these resources seems to be also low. In the context of Tajikistan, propagandists of radical movements mainly use these platforms to send various messages and calls of a radical nature.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS TO USE OF PERSONAL CHANNELS IN TAJIKISTAN AND RUSSIA:**

### **1. Creating various forms and communication products aimed at maintaining communication between labor migrants and their families and loved ones.**

Game formats, messengers that unite friends and relatives on common issues, and relevant topics. Bringing migrant workers and their families together into sprawling and strong communities is critical. Building communities with online tools to strengthen family ties regardless of geographic location.

### **2. Creating local social public pages and services in instant messengers for communities of labor migrants.**

Products that address day-to-day social routine problems and serve the purpose of maintaining community connectivity and continuous awareness. Thematic functional areas can include medical consulting and information, consulting, and assistance to maintain health and personal safety, legal and migration support. There is the possibility to promote the product through private channels and bloggers.

## Example

### 1. Workeen

Workeen is an app designed help refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants navigate on the European labor market. The app developers claim that it can help them understand bureaucracy and prepare for interviews.



### 2. The service takes care of you

This map application is designed to search for free medical examination facilities. Its objective is to make sure that migrants understand the importance of cancer screening



3. **News applications or public posts on social networks on topics connecting family members and beloved ones in the context of internal and external migration.**

## 4. DEDICATED CHANNELS

Dedicated channels are the isolated stand-alone channels not linked to existing platforms and media.

**Pros:** There is the potential to build a community with strong ties; they respond to the request of the TA to create independent channels.

**Cons:** There is no ready audience, it must be created, and they require significant promotion.

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CREATING DEDICATED CHANNELS:

1. **Creating educational channels on digital communication and skills topics.** It is important to combine educational content with applied lessons and materials aimed at developing professional skills and potential employment.
2. **Developing thematic event formats to exchange views and participatory design.** This will create an opportunity for youth to emerge outside the institutional arrangements and engage in dialogue with decision-makers at all levels.
3. **Expanding online and offline platforms for TA to engage into social and economic activities,** such as promoting internships and learning opportunities through supervising the work of professionals, developing mentoring programs, improving career guidance and counselling in schools and Universities, expanding opportunities for volunteerism and summer programs.
4. **Establishing youth solidarity funds,** including small grant systems, to help promote PVE initiatives at the community, local, or grassroots level.

5. **Developing the mobile games industry to educate and raise awareness about radicalization and its consequences.**
6. **Developing and promoting accessible services on migration policy and social applied tools for labor migrants in host countries.** To integrate religious education and theology into the platform of such services (in a simple accessible format - audio and video).

### Example

#### “Civic Assistance”



The team of the Civic Assistance Committee consists of consultants on migration issues, lawyers, translators, coordinators of assistance programs, physicians, psychologists, teachers of Russian as foreign language, etc.

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ALL TYPES OF CHANNELS:

### 1. Cross-platform

Cross-platform communication broadcasts one system of messages with a unique idea in the format of different products: on several channels and genres. In this way, an ecosystem is built with common messages and values, but it has different means of dissemination and promotion.

What does it provide?

- increases coverage,
- increases recognition and, as a result, trust,
- provokes citation,
- provides a graded system for content engagement,
- covers different layers of the TA.

It is noteworthy that along with homogeneity and integrity of the system of effective messages and favorable narratives, there can be a high variability of genres and communication conditions. A single idea can be embodied in various forms: digital product and events, video and poster, message and lecture.

### 2. Partnership

To achieve effective communication, it is necessary to build models and forms of cooperation both between stakeholders and with other potential partners. By expanding the network of potential alliances, we can increase the impact and spread favorable messages.

### 3. Multiculturalism

In conditions when most vulnerable groups of the TA are outside the country such as in labor migration, the cooperation with other countries and international pro-

jects is critical. Despite restrictions imposed on interaction with Western organizations, alternative indirect thematic fields can be used to expand the outreach and impact on labor migrants.

The high potential for effectiveness will be revealed in interaction and joint work with the media in Russia and Turkey, including with cultural educational organizations and mass media. Due to high cultural and informational gap, many projects implemented in outflow countries and aimed at integrating migrants become ineffective, since they largely influence the local audience. If projects and initiatives are created on bilateral partnership, their effectiveness will increase significantly. The potential for trust among migrant community in such sources will be higher; the presence of expertise, support and participation will increase the strength of impact and can significantly affect the existing risks of radicalization in Russia.

### Example

#### “Don’t be silent”



The project aims to address violence domestically, which is indirectly related to the topic of radicalization. It includes anonymous stories from readers, describes incidents of violence, and statistics, advice from psychologists and expertise on the topic.

#### Pros:

- Private story can inspire other people to overcome the challenge.
- Creating an environment for communication, mutual assistance and problem sharing with other victims.
- Presence of user-generated content has attracted increased attention of the audience.
- Gained greater outreach due to applied tips and tools.
- Contributed to an open discussion, which resulted in eliminating most negative stereotypes.

#### Минусы:

- It has no demonstration of positive outcomes.

## ANNEX 1

This annex represents the theoretical material for understanding the practical recommendations made to each section in the main communication strategy document. Each section of the annex refers to the corresponding section of the main document and contains the theoretical evidence, goals, and objectives, of Sections 2, 3 and 5, the country context, performance evaluation and risks, and glossary.