



Countering Oppositional Political
Extremism through Attuned
Dialogue: Track, Attune, Limit

Website: <https://www.oppattune.eu>
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#OppAttune

Four billion, four hundred and eleven million Iraqi Dinars research funding hopes to manage extremist views

An international team of academics led by The Open University and including Hammurabi Human Rights Organization (HHRO) **has won four billion, four hundred and eleven million Iraqi dinars research funding, (€3.16m)** to help people manage **the development of extremist views** at home and abroad in the run up to major political events.

Psychologists at the Open University and Hammurabi Human Rights Organization (HHRO) are working on developing tools for the project that has been **funded by the European Commission's Horizon Europe programme** involving 17 partners across Europe and beyond its borders.

It will be used in the lead-up to **events that are likely to become polarised**, as was the case when the referendum on independence took place in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI), that, in extreme cases, split families.

The over-arching project is known as OppAttune and includes the development of a tool designed specifically for key target audiences to enable more productive democratic debate.

Yet it's aiming to reach far beyond dinner-table discussions. The new ground-breaking tool is being developed by academics who **hope it will limit the development of extreme narratives** through showing people that their views might be considered extremist by others.

They plan to have **the free self-test tool kit**, known as I-Attune, **available on the OU's Open Learn platform in 2025** to help citizens globally engage politically with each other without resorting to extremes. It will be available initially for three years but could be rolled out further.

Kesi Mahendran, Professor of Social and Political Psychology at the OU, is the scientific co-ordinator of OppAttune. The administrative co-ordinator is the Panteion University in Greece.

The project will allow citizens to assess **three key aspects**: their own **susceptibility to extremism**; their **capacity to tune into other positions** and their **ability to sustain dialogue** in highly polarized situations. In this context, the Hammurabi Human Rights Organization always emphasizes that achieving stability, social cohesion, and democracy cannot be realized without seeking creative tools for dialogue, respecting diversity, and avoiding hate speech, exclusion, and marginalization.

Kesi said: "Whether we sit around a dinner table discussing politics or in the echelons of power, democratic dialogue is crucial but there is huge capacity for ordinary people to either avoid politics or to become highly opinionated, partisan and entrenched."

Kesi continued: "Without the skills to navigate political situations, politicians and people in the media can easily mobilise others. The hope is OppAttune will give people the tools to maintain their political

conversations without becoming so extreme that opposing parties or groups find them so threatening that they are removed.”

Six target audiences have been identified and include:

- The public through on-line engagement with I-Attune
- Young people: including school-age children and people aged 18-24 in countries within Europe; particularly Germany, the UK and Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Pro-Democracy media influencers that have 10,000 plus social media followers that are directly engaged with democratic issues across Europe
- Practitioners and policy-makers across Europe engaged with: democratic debate; prevention and countering violent extremism; and freedom of speech.
- Political actors at a local and national level; pro-democracy political organizations within the eight implementation countries on either side of the European Union border - Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Kosovar region, Serbia, and Iraq (all post-conflict zones), as well as Portugal, Cyprus, the UK and Malta (all understood to have polarizing issues within their own borders that can be stirred up by political events).
- The scientific research community

ENDS

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About The Open University

The Open University (OU) is the largest academic institution in the UK and a world leader in flexible distance learning. Since it began in 1969, the OU has taught more than 2.3 million students worldwide and currently has over 208,000 students.

Seventy-one per cent of directly registered students are in full-time or part-time employment, and 76 FTSE 100 companies have sponsored staff to take OU courses.

In the latest assessment exercise for university research (Research Excellence Framework, 2021), over three quarters (76%) of OU research was assessed as 4 or 3 star – the highest ratings available, awarded to research that is world-leading or internationally excellent. The OU’s commitment to research and societal impact is recognised too with 82% of its research impact assessed to be world-leading or internationally excellent.

For further information please visit [The Open University](https://www.open.ac.uk)

About OppAttune

The OppAttune project brings together an ambitious multi-disciplinary team, it uses psychological, history, communication studies, anthropological and social science, as well as input from former government analysts, to study extremism and how politics and public opinion intersect.

It explores new methods for understanding public decision-making beyond charting social attitudes and public-opinion polling and it promises to have a strong scientific impact during and beyond its lifetime. Critically, the project designs inclusive and open ways of sharing knowledge gained by academics and will find tools and mechanisms for future public engagement initiatives for NGOs working in the field. It aims to benchmark and begin discussions about *everyday extremism*.

- *Partners include: The Open University (OU) UK (Scientific Co-Ordinator); Panteion University (Panteion) Greece – (Administrative Co-Ordinator); Glasgow Caledonian University (GCU) UK; American University in Paris (AUP) France; Malmö University (MAU) Sweden; Cultures Interactive (CI) Germany; Oesterreichische Akademie Der Wissenschaften (OEAW) Austria;); Universita Ta Malta (UoM) Malta; Özyeğin University (OzU) Turkey; Istanbul Bilgi Universitesi (Bilgi) Turkey; University of Cyprus (UCY) Cyprus; Institut Jozef Stefan (JSI) Slovenia; Universidade De Coimbra (UDC) Portugal; International Security Affairs Centre (ISAC) Serbia; Kosovar Centre for Security Studies (KCSS) Kosovo; Hammurabi Human Rights Organization (HHRO) Iraq and the PRONI Center (PRONI) Bosnia and Herzegovina.*