



STRATEGIC ORIENTATIONS ON A COORDINATED EU APPROACH TO PREVENTION OF RADICALISATION FOR 2024-2026

I. INTRODUCTION

The Commission prepares every two years ⁽¹⁾ Strategic Orientations on a coordinated EU approach to prevention of radicalisation (hereinafter “Strategic Orientations”). The Strategic Orientations support the implementation of the EU Counter-Terrorism agenda ⁽²⁾ to respond effectively and in a coordinated manner to the rapidly changing threat landscape.

The Strategic Orientations for 2024-2026 follow a whole-of-society approach and build on the implementation of the Strategic Orientations for the period 2022-2023 while taking into account new developments. For launching the preparations of the Strategic Orientations, the Commission gathered Member State’s representatives, practitioners, and members of the Research Advisory Board ⁽³⁾ at the first Town Hall meeting in April 2023 to collect their views and ideas on how to address lingering and newly emerging challenges to prevent and counter violent extremism and terrorism.

The period 2024-2025 reflects a transition towards the establishment of the EU Knowledge Hub prevention of radicalisation, launched in the second half of 2024. As of October 2024, the EU Knowledge Hub became fully operational.

It should be noted that the priorities identified in the Strategic Orientations are strongly interlinked. Even if some topics are developed more in depth under one specific priority, sometimes they are also mentioned under other thematic priorities as there are evident links. Therefore, these Strategic Orientations should be read as a comprehensive document. In addition, several cross-cutting mainstreaming priorities are also identified.

The detailed activities to implement the Strategic Orientations are based on a broad consultation process that the Commission organises with Member States. These agreed activities are then translated in Work Plans implemented under the EU Knowledge Hub. Good coordination and synergies should also be ensured with the activities of the EU Internet Forum to address violent and extremist content online.

Finally, the Strategic Orientations outline the priorities for the reference period broadly allowing for flexibility and adaptation to new challenges that might emerge.

⁽¹⁾ Since 2022; previously the Strategic Orientations were adopted annually.

⁽²⁾ [EUR-Lex - 52020DC0795 - EN - EUR-Lex](#)

⁽³⁾ Established under the Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN) – Policy Support

1. EXTREMIST THREAT AND EMERGING CHALLENGES

The threat of terrorism and radicalisation in the EU remains at a similar level compared to previous years. According to the EU Terrorism Situation & Trend Report (TE-SAT) published by Europol in April 2025 ⁽⁴⁾, Member States continue to view jihadist terrorism as the most prominent and lethal threat in the EU. The trend of very young individuals involved in jihadist terrorism-related investigations continued in 2024, with groups of minors being observed networking online, radicalise together and plan attacks ⁽⁵⁾.

This report also notes the emergence of young right-wing terrorists and violent extremists who are taking up a more active role as creators of propaganda, recruiters and organisers of attacks and active incitement. In the dynamic right-wing terrorist context, lone actors or small groups, often motivated by accelerationist ideas, pose the highest threat.

Hamas terrorist attacks in Israel on 7 October 2023, and Israel's subsequent response, have inspired and triggered attacks, calls for violence, and terrorist propaganda online across the entire ideological spectrum, thereby increasing the current threat to security in the EU. The conflict may also have long-term consequences in terms of polarisation and radicalisation, including significant levels of antisemitic and anti-Muslim content online, which young people may be particularly sensitive to. In comparison to the threat posed by jihadist terrorism and right-wing terrorism/extremism, the threat from left-wing and anarchist violent extremism scene is deemed low but increasing in some Member States and should not be overlooked. In addition, the TE-SAT report observes that the lines between different types of terrorism, including right-wing, left-wing, anarchist, jihadist, and other ideologies, are likely to become more blurred in the future. Points of convergence have already been observed among terrorist and violent extremist actors across the whole ideological spectrum.

Furthermore, potential new forms of extremism, such as violent anti-system/government extremism, not attributable to specific ideologies and often stemming from conspiracy narratives, have been observed in many Member States. The possible links between terrorism and organised crime are also a growing concern, not only due to its implications for national and EU-wide security, but also its impact on civil society, governance, and social cohesion. This emerging challenge is exacerbated by the exploitation of young individuals and groups by organised crime networks who utilise them in criminal activities and at the same time they indoctrinate them ideologically.

Terrorist organisations may exploit radicalisation processes in the online environment and target vulnerable individuals, specifically minors, to influence them to commit terrorist acts. In this respect, despite its well-known benefits, the internet is as a key channel for dissemination for terrorist propaganda and violent extremist content, which turns to be main source of radicalisation and inspiration for terrorist and violent attacks.

Europol has also warned of the emergence of online cult communities which mix terrorist and violent extremist activity with other online harms, including extreme violence, gore and child abuse activities. These emerging online groups normalise acts of extreme cruelty,

⁽⁴⁾ <https://www.europol.europa.eu/cms/sites/default/files/documents/TE-SAT%202024.pdf>

⁽⁵⁾ https://www.europol.europa.eu/cms/sites/default/files/documents/EU_TE-SAT_2025.pdf

extort victims and radicalise individuals into performing acts of violent extremism. They are formed by transnational and interconnected online groups ⁽⁶⁾.

Furthermore, the amount of disinformation and conspiracy narratives spread online and offline has increased since the COVID-19 pandemic. In some Member States, especially in Central and Eastern Europe, the impact of disinformation related to the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine poses a significant threat to security and social cohesion. They might fuel violent extremist narratives, regardless of the ideology propagated. Some Member States are concerned by the increase in undesirable foreign influence ⁽⁷⁾, which aims to increase discord among the population with the objective of undermining our democratic societies.

The sharply increasing number ⁽⁸⁾ of radicalised teenagers/minors ⁽⁹⁾ is also a growing concern in many Member States. Some of them have been involved in attack-plotting in recent years, in particular in relation to violent right-wing groups, but also jihadist and incel ones, connected online. In many cases involving minors, the initial attraction, motivation, or pull factor towards violence, including nihilistic violence and fixation on school shootings, may be linked to a grievance or to identity, or some other factor. This is the generation shaped by COVID, which fundamentally altered the dynamics of social interactions and what we observe now is one of the direct consequences. Over time, these violent impulses may become framed or reinforced within an ideological narrative rather than driven by it.

Foreign terrorist fighters and their family members have returned to the European Union only in small numbers so far, while there is still a significant number of them remaining in the camps in NE Syria. Some Member States have recently resumed the repatriation of children together with their mothers on a case-by-case basis. The resocialisation of these children with a special focus on teenagers will be a priority in the forthcoming years. Challenges related to mental health issues due to PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) pose difficulties to early rehabilitation and reintegration efforts.

Radicalisation in prisons and release of radicalised individuals are of particular concern for several Member States. Compared to previous years, an increasing number of convicted terrorists -or who were sentenced for other offences and radicalised in prison- have recently been released or are due to be released in the coming months/years. This poses a security threat to some Member States, which should be addressed through increased cooperation at EU level.

⁽⁶⁾ <https://www.europol.europa.eu/media-press/newsroom/news/law-enforcement-targets-online-cult-communities-dedicated-to-extremely-violent-child-abuse>

⁽⁷⁾ malign, intentional interference designed to damage democracy from state to state

⁽⁸⁾ Europol TSAT 2025, young people involved in the planning and preparation of terrorist activities https://www.europol.europa.eu/cms/sites/default/files/documents/EU_TE-SAT_2025.pdf

⁽⁹⁾ For the purposes of this document: a minor/child is an under-age individual, usually below 18 years old; a teenager is an individual aged 13-19 years old; a young person/young adult is an individual aged 18-mid-20's

2. THEMATIC PRIORITIES FOR 2024-2026

1.1. Prevention of violent and non-violent ⁽¹⁰⁾ extremist ideologies, fragmented¹¹ ideologies, and conspiracy theories & narratives

The extremist landscape in Europe has become more dynamic, diverse, and complex. Jihadist terrorism, violent right-wing, left-wing and anarchist extremisms remain important threats as in previous years. Nevertheless, in the last years, the phenomenon of the fragmented/mixed ideologies (and in some cases extremism where the ideological connection is not immediately apparent) has emerged and posed the challenge to understand the underlying reasons and how they might evolve into violence. In this context, new forms of extremism such as antisystem/anti-government extremism, are raising concern in several Member States. Furthermore, challenges posed by extremism that nevertheless bears links to violent extremism should be better explored also when it pertains to the online dimension. In order to prevent the development of all forms of extremist ideologies into violence, it is important to improve our collective knowledge and to deepen research on different ideologies, the ways they feed, overlap and fuel one another.

Conspiracy theories and narratives deserve a particular attention. They might be enabling pathways to radicalisation. Developing a sound knowledge and understanding of the link between radicalisation processes and conspiracy theories, narratives as well as of their sources of inspiration is key to define strategies to counter them effectively. In this context, it is necessary to conduct further research focused on vulnerable groups and individuals in society that are most susceptible to be attracted and manipulated by such theories or narratives. This would allow to define more structured and targeted ways to engage with these groups and individuals and to implement credible and effective counter- and alternative narratives when deemed appropriate. One of the most powerful tools to achieve this objective is the use of strategic communications, as well as to increase and disseminate knowledge on the detrimental impacts of disinformation and fake news in the manipulation of public opinion.

The main challenges under this priority would be to:

- Continue addressing Jihadism, which remains the most prominent terrorist threat to the EU;
- Continue addressing violent right-wing extremism, including international links;
- Continue addressing violent left-wing extremism and anarchist movements;
- Increase knowledge on the links between organised crime and terrorism and their implications on radicalisation and raised levels of violence.

⁽¹⁰⁾ Non-violent extremism may cause harm without necessarily constituting an offence, which makes it challenging to identify. Safeguarding fundamental rights, including freedom of expression, is a core obligation under EU law. This is explicitly recognised in the ProtectEU Strategy (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52025DC0148>) as well as in the current EU Counter-terrorism Agenda (COM(2020) 795 final).

⁽¹¹⁾ These are ideologies that borrow elements from two or more existing ideologies to create a mixed ideological content that is often mostly adhered to by an individual him/herself and/or a very limited group of people.

- Increase knowledge and understanding ways to identify mixed/fragmented ideologies, their triggers, similarities and differences with other ideologies and develop effective approaches to tackle them.
- Continue addressing violent anti-system/anti-government extremism and related emerging movements.
- Address the escalation of anti-Semitism and hate speech, specifically targeting Jewish communities and institutions considering the developments in the Middle East since 7 October 2023.

Guidelines for the activities:

- Build upon what has already been accomplished, continue work to develop and implement policies, practices, and tools to prevent all forms of violent and non-violent extremism, as well as exploring more thoroughly the shift from non-violent to violent manifestations of extremism.
- Continue increasing knowledge and research on the root causes and patterns of anti-government/anti-system/anti-establishment extremist movements, including their transnational links online and offline.
- Broaden knowledge and understanding on adjacent fields that may develop into violent extremism leading to radicalisation. Such fields may include but not be limited to climate change implications in relation to extremism, ecoterrorism, hate against women, antisemitism, LGBTI persons, or marginalised/ vulnerable groups.
- Increase awareness, structure knowledge, and develop capacities to identify conspiracy theories/narratives and disinformation in relation to extremism and develop policies and practices to counter them effectively.
- Support Member States in raising and increasing awareness, structure knowledge, and develop capacities to identify antisemitism, hate speech, conspiracy theories/narratives and disinformation in relation to violent and non-violent extremism and develop policies and practices to counter them effectively.
- Create and consolidate knowledge on how mixed/fragmented ideologies emerge and evolve, explore their transnational links and their influences on lone actors, and develop tailor-made measures to prevent and respond to them.
- Improve knowledge and skills of the P/CVE community and other stakeholders working with at-risk groups on tackling violent extremism in the context of a democratic society.

1.2. Prevention of radicalisation in prisons and probation settings, post-release measures, rehabilitation, and reintegration.

Addressing radicalisation in prisons and its related implications has been a long-standing priority in the Strategic Orientations, which still remains relevant.

The focus for the reference period is put on the challenges raised by the increased number of released radicalised individuals from prisons, who were sentenced for terrorism related offences or radicalised in prison. This can pose a threat to the security of the EU and its

Member States as these individuals can continue actions of proselytism outside prisons and become involved in the preparation of terrorist attacks as highlighted in the TE-SAT Report published by Europol in June 2023 and confirmed in both the April 2024 Report and August 2025 Report. To tackle this challenge from the P/CVE angle, a comprehensive approach is needed focused on developing targeted risk assessments and effective rehabilitation and reintegration efforts. It is essential to apply tailor-made approaches aiming to tackle the various possible circumstances.

Disengagement and rehabilitation interventions with radicalised inmates should start already in prison. Further improving and aligning risk assessment tools to detect early signs of radicalisation in prisons is necessary, as well as searching for compatibility across those tools as applied by different actors in the entire process from detention through rehabilitation and release. It is important to link risk assessment with rehabilitation and reintegration measures which would ensure continuity in the monitoring of released inmates, as well as risk mitigating measures when the risk is assessed as high.

The main challenges under this priority would be to:

- Address radicalisation in prisons and the threat posed by released inmates;
- Ensure the continuum between disengagement and reintegration processes after release.

Guidelines for the activities:

- Updating and sharing comprehensive knowledge on threats to security posed by radicalised individuals released from prison;
- Developing uniform risk assessment tools, to the extent possible, given the variety of circumstances across Member States, and providing support to implementing and evaluating them.
- Developing and testing new tools for rehabilitation, reintegration, and disengagement and providing support to implementing them.
- Promoting a continuum between risk assessment and disengagement/reintegration measures, inside and outside of prison.
- Reinforcing targeted rehabilitation and reintegration programmes for radicalised minors/young people, while in detention centres/prisons and after release, where relevant, combining psychological support, mentoring, and vocational training to reduce recidivism and foster social inclusion.
- Creating a holistic cognitive behavioural approach to case management including vulnerability assessment and sentence planning tools.
- Increasing knowledge on gender sensitive approaches in prisons and supporting development of programmes targeted at radicalised women.
- Exploring the role that former perpetrators of terrorist crimes who have repented may play in preventing addressing radicalisation in prisons balancing the potential risks associated with it.

1.3. New technologies and online dimension

The use of technology and the internet – including social media platforms, instant and encrypted messaging applications, online fora, websites and video gaming and adjacent spaces – continues to play a crucial role in the radicalisation and recruitment process of individuals and in spreading propaganda material across the entire ideological spectrum.

Violent extremists and terrorists exploit effectively new technologies. Challenges and opportunities related to Artificial Intelligence (AI) in relation to prevention of radicalisation should be further explored.

Anticipating and preventing the misuse of new technologies require constant assessment of the threat landscape and adaptable responses to be one step ahead and to ensure effective preventive actions. Better understanding the drivers and tipping points to offline action, identifying risk factors and behaviour online and developing effective content moderation policies by companies are key to address the challenges posed by the misuse of the internet by violent extremists and terrorists.

Considering the increase of mixed ideologies and borderline content, it is increasingly difficult to draw clear boundaries between extremism, violent extremism and terrorism online. This is in particular the case in the aftermath of terrorist attacks, when footage related to the attack circulates online and is oftentimes accompanied by high levels of disinformation and hateful language. Experts warn of a growing rise in online cult-like communities blending TVE (terrorist and violent extremist) and CSA (child sexual abuse) activities. These interconnected groups normalise extreme cruelty, exploit victims, and radicalise individuals toward violent extremism. Led by charismatic figures, they promote societal collapse through terror and chaos, spreading accelerationist ideologies that inspire mass violence. They recruit globally, targeting both offenders and victims. The EU Internet Forum brings together tech companies, EU Member States, and law enforcement agencies, as well as civil society organisations and academia to discuss these challenges and jointly develop holistic solutions to address them. Since 2022, the efforts of this voluntary public-private partnership are complemented by the EU Regulation addressing the dissemination of terrorist content online. The so-called TCO Regulation⁽¹²⁾ establishes a legislative framework obliging tech companies to remove terrorist content within one-hour after receiving a removal order from a national competent authority while protecting fundamental freedoms. In addition, the Digital Services Act, applicable as of 2024, has considerable impact on content moderation of illegal content online, the risk assessment done by online services and strengthen rights of users. Full implementation of the new rules and effective collaboration among relevant stakeholders will be crucial.

- The main challenges under this priority would be to prevent the misuse of the internet, new technologies and Artificial Intelligence (AI) by violent extremists and terrorists.
- Reduce the availability of terrorist, violent extremist, and borderline content that can lead to radicalisation online. Particular attention must be paid to the effects of algorithm-driven filter bubbles and echo chambers in the radicalisation process.

(12) <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32021R0784>

- Establish an evidence-based understanding of online radicalisation dynamics and implement effective measures to prevent and counter radicalisation across different digital platforms.
- Continue collaboration, in the context of the EU Internet Forum, with online platforms to reduce the availability of violent extremist and harmful content that can lead to radicalisation online.

Guidelines for the activities:

- Continue cooperation with private sector, in particular in the context of the EU Internet Forum, on content moderation in response to new trends, including fragmented eco-systems, effective and holistic crisis response online, mixed ideologies and financing activities by violent extremists.
- Increase knowledge on how AI could be effectively used in the prevention of radicalisation and deepen knowledge on how extremists take advantage of AI, including algorithmic recommender systems when radicalising networks/individuals ensuring synergies with the work undertaken by the EU Internet Forum and other international/global initiatives.
- Increase the understanding on how to prevent the misuse of the metaverse, web 3.0, deep fakes, decentralised platforms, non-fungible tokens and other (new) technologies in coordination with the EU Internet Forum and the EU Knowledge Hub.
- Increase knowledge on how online content and behaviour can support risk assessments on radicalisation and predict violent behaviour.
- Increase understanding and develop policies and practices to address both the positive and negative impact of influencers on radicalisation processes.
- Increase understanding of the links between online harms, including the growing overlap between CSAM (child sexual abuse material) and TVEC (terrorist and violent extremist content).
- Increase digital knowledge and skills in the field of strategic communication related to online challenges, including but not limited to addressing disinformation, misinformation, best practices in online interventions including alternate and counter narrative campaigning (also considering how offline activities support this).
- Continue applying and further developing media and digital literacy at school.
- Improve the response to a more complex online dimension following terrorist and violent extremist attacks to prevent illegal and harmful content from circulating and protect victims and vulnerable users online.
- Encourage enforcement and full implementation of the relevant EU legislation, notably DSA, TCO Regulation, AI Act.

1.4 Local dimension, polarisation, and resilience building

Thanks to their presence “on the ground”, local actors are usually the first ones to be confronted with signs of radicalisation. In many cases, local actors are also the ones responsible for acting on early signs of radicalisation, for example with help/interventions on a local level (i.e., individual support). Dynamics at local level can vary significantly but often local actors need support to deal with challenges posed by radicalisation processes, such as being ‘up to date’ with knowledge about the latest phenomena, best practices and/or financial support. Engaging with local practitioners should be encouraged and they should be supported in increasing their skills and capacities.

The whole-of-society approach, collaboration, and coordination between local, regional, and national levels, as well as involvement of civil society are key elements to underpin effective prevention policies and approaches. Support from national authorities and involving local actors in the prevention efforts at EU level allows them to gain experience and improve their skills.

The rise of disinformation and conspiracy theories/narratives, growing polarisation and increasing distrust in public authorities is a challenge for local actors involved in P/CVE work. An emerging trend of concern is the growing number of young people and children becoming involved in radicalisation. Tailored approaches should be applied to minors/young people exposed to external influences (such as peer networks, online propaganda) and those radicalised “from the within”, i.e. born and raised in radicalised families or communities. It is important to consider various actors involved, which - in the case of youth radicalisation - covers a wide range of professionals, including teachers, youth workers, and even parents and carers.

Several Member States consider it crucial to focus on education and resilience building of communities, improving abilities for early detection of potential conflicts at local level and stepping up exchanges between local actors and security/other crime prevention actors. The sport dimension should be considered both as a potential resilience factor against radicalisation and as a recruitment channel for extremist groups. Certain disciplines (such as football⁽¹³⁾, martial arts, active clubs⁽¹⁴⁾, and outdoor survival activities) are particularly vulnerable to infiltration by transnational extremist networks, underscoring the need for a coordinated EU approach to better understand and address the phenomenon.

Strategic communication at local level is also key. Creation of local multi-professional structures should also be encouraged to improve cooperation with national actors. The testimonies of the victims of terrorism are powerful tools to raise awareness of the human consequences of terrorism and violent extremism. Civil society organisations that collect these testimonies and involve victims in prevention programmes, at the local level and particularly among young people, must be supported and encouraged.

The main challenges under this priority would be to:

- Support local actors and increase their capacities to identify and act accordingly to prevent radicalisation in a changing extremist landscape;
- Support creation of multi-professional networks on local level and the establishment of a link between local and national approaches.

⁽¹³⁾ RWE, far left and salafist groups

⁽¹⁴⁾ Notably, active clubs linked to violent right-wing activities and ideology

Guidelines for the activities:

- Develop policies and practices to strengthen cooperation and coordination between local and national levels and support local actors in improving their skills and capacities;
- Create consolidated knowledge on how to build resilience and prevent polarisation online and offline, addressing all age groups with a particular focus on young persons/minors and covering various aspects such as emotional implications, critical thinking, media and digital literacy, including targeted approaches and interventions aimed at preventing youngsters from being attracted to violence or violent extremist beliefs;
- Develop practices and toolkits for local level actors to address radicalisation and polarisation on the ground, including through the involvement of local communities, religious communities, and youth organisations in creating safe spaces for dialogue and constructive civic engagement;
- Enhance the link with education at local level to address early signals of radicalisation in young people/minors and encourage Member States to consider including media and digital literacy as well as critical thinking into national educational curricula;
- Collecting policies and practices on how to improve exchanges between (1) security and the social, education and healthcare domains, (2) national and local actors, and (3) how to involve civil society actors in collaboration to implement the whole-of-society approach;
- Increase knowledge and skills in communication at local and national level, online and offline, including strategic communication with a focus on connecting local level actors with key strategic partners across governments, industry and other members of civil society;
- Update the Community Policing and Prevention of Radicalisation (CoPPRa) including an evaluation of the implementation of its first phase;
- Apply early prevention approaches to address radicalisation of minors in a whole-of-society approach fostering coordinated actions between schools, families, social services, local authorities, and law enforcement, ensuring that prevention mechanisms are accessible at a local level.
- Support the involvement of victims of terrorism in the work on prevention of radicalisation.

1.5 Lone actors and mental health

Lone actors with no clear affiliation to terrorist groups pose a significant threat to most Member States, which has been on the rise in the last years. They act seemingly alone and unattached but often serving the objectives of larger networks or organisations. The number of attackers with mental health issues over the past years is a growing concern. Radicalisation online and fragmentation of ideologies play a key role in the radicalisation process of lone actors. Preventing radicalisation online and better understanding the link

between radicalisation and vulnerabilities such as mental health issues is a challenge that should be thoroughly addressed.

The number of radicalised very young people and even children has increased alarmingly⁽¹⁵⁾. Minors, who are specifically vulnerable to external influences (or may become potential influencers themselves), have become a particular target for recruitment by violent extremists and terrorist actors online, therefore, strengthening their resilience is crucial. Borderline content or legal but harmful content is extremely difficult to identify and detect as it often evades traditional content moderation mechanisms. Such content communicated through humour or disinformation methods attracts the attention of young people, making them even more susceptible to the risk of being radicalised.

The main challenges under this priority would be to:

- Increase knowledge and understanding on lone actors, their behaviour, motivations, and triggers behind their actions;
- Prevent radicalisation of children and young people.

Guidelines for the activities:

- Deepen research and increase knowledge on how to better detect early signs of alarming behaviour and actions online and offline as regards lone actors.
- Develop specific measures to prevent radicalisation among children and young people, including through education, reaching out also to isolated individuals, as well as through strengthening the participation of young people and children in the prevention efforts.
- Increase knowledge on and improve understanding of mental health issues and other vulnerabilities in the context of radicalisation.
- Increase knowledge and research on how to correctly recognise the links between extremism, organised crime, drugs, and gangs and share policies and practices to tackle it.
- Develop age- and gender-specific approaches with a specific mental health focus to prevent radicalisation among all age groups.

1.6 Foreign terrorist fighters (FTF) and volunteers, including returning women and children

The proper management and reintegration of returning foreign terrorist fighters (FTF) and their family members involved in the conflicts in Iraq and Syria remain key for ensuring security in the EU. It is essential to deal with the long-term consequences of the conflicts in Syria and Iraq in the context of prevention of radicalisation. The permanence of children and teenagers with EU nationality in the camps in NE Syria represent a breeding ground for radicalisation and resentment against its home countries that needs to be duly

(15) Europol TSAT 2025 https://www.europol.europa.eu/cms/sites/default/files/documents/EU_TE-SAT_2025.pdf

considered. Challenges related to the reintegration within local communities of returning FTFs from Syria and Iraq are still on the rise in the Western Balkan countries, especially Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo due to the larger number of FTFs originating from these countries.

The number of volunteers having links to violent right-wing extremism travelling to join the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine either to join the Russian or Ukrainian forces has remained low. It is, however, important to follow-up on their impact on extremist networks and activities in the EU and to apply best practices and lessons learnt from the returnees from other conflicts.

The main challenges under this priority would be to:

- Ensure that targeted measures are envisaged for returning FTFs and their families to tackle the threats that they might pose and to reintegrate them back to the society;
- Support Member States, to the extent possible, in assessing and mitigating the possible threat posed by foreign fighters returning from the war in Ukraine, particularly those motivated by extremist ideologies.
- Support Member States, where appropriate, in sharing best practices for monitoring returning foreign fighters from the war in Ukraine, with the view to identifying individuals who could act as mobilisers or recruiters within violent extremist groups and mitigating the potential threat they may pose.

Guidelines for the activities:

- Providing support to implement measures to rehabilitate and reintegrate returnees from Syria and Iraq with a focus on women, teenagers and children.
- Increasing knowledge on and awareness of the returning volunteers from Ukraine and their possible impact on the extremist networks in the EU drawing on experiences from earlier conflicts.
- Supporting the proper and effective management of returnees with a view to preventing the development of radicalisation processes or countering them at the earliest stage possible.

1.7 Global and geopolitical factors and undesirable foreign influences

Terrorism, violent extremism, and radicalisation can often be related to external factors that the EU and its Member States have no or limited power to influence. To be able to tackle them even more effectively, it is essential that these external factors and processes are equally considered.

Efforts to prevent radicalisation beyond the EU have positive effects for the security of the EU and its Member States. Cooperation with priority third countries, in particular in the Western Balkans and Middle East and North African regions, as well as with the USA, the UK and Norway, should continue especially in view of identifying common challenges and exchanging best practices to tackle them.

While the impact on radicalisation of the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine has so far been considered as limited, the spread of Russian propaganda and disinformation has become a concern in all Member States, particularly in Central and Eastern European

Member States. Anti-immigrant sentiments, rising food and energy prices foster polarisation in societies and increase breeding grounds for extremism and antisystem /anti-government tendencies. Russia's war has also been driving the spread of violent extremist narratives and disinformation more broadly.

The October 7 Hamas attacks and the ensuing conflict in Gaza have ignited hatred through propaganda online, with calls to violence resulting in attacks within the EU. Antisemitism and threats against Jewish communities, their schools and synagogues have increased; antisemitic narratives, often instrumentalised by violent left-wing extremist movements, are leading to violent large-scale protests feeding polarization and grievances. Online propaganda, disinformation and hate speech reinforce the vicious circle of hatred and extremism. The situation can evolve depending on developments in the peace process. Addressing these challenges is crucial to prevent radicalisation processes in the EU.

The situation in Syria remains volatile, raising security concerns due to the possible resurgence of Da'esh and the uncertain future of FTFs in detention facilities and camps in Northeast Syria. The Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP) also represents one of the main external threats to the EU due to its capacity to spread propaganda online and inspire attacks.

Sahel, Horn of Africa and West Africa remain a matter of concern. The role of Russia and the activities of its affiliated groups, such as Wagner and the Africa Corps, and the steps backwards in the consolidation of democracy in certain African countries might have an impact on radicalisation and polarisation of diaspora communities in Europe. The situation in the Horn of Africa, as highlighted in recent threat assessments, also remains ⁽¹⁶⁾.

Another phenomenon that has seen an extensive and fast development is the so called Undesirable Foreign Influence. Such influence is often backed by direct or indirect financial flows or donations from foreign States or non-state actors to natural or legal persons operating in the EU. This growing concern needs to be tackled at national level and through cooperation at EU level. Such influences are usually aiming at facilitating activities that challenge EU values - including its democratic principles, fundamental rights, and the rule of law. More efforts are needed to raise awareness among all relevant stakeholders, including financial intelligence and local level actors as regards different forms of undesirable foreign influences supported by financial flows. Member States have highly appreciated the work done so far in the Project Based Collaboration on Undesirable Foreign Funding, acknowledging that this issue is of such a scale that a Member State could not be able to cope with it on its own.

The main challenges under this priority would be to:

- Collaborate with third countries to prevent radicalisation effectively inside and outside of the EU;
- Prevent Undesirable Foreign Influence targeting EU Member States.

Guidelines for the activities:

- Continue collaboration with priority third countries such as Western Balkans, MENA Region countries, Norway, the USA and the UK to prevent all forms of extremism.

⁽¹⁶⁾ This list of challenges connected to wars and conflicts in a geopolitical context is not exhaustive.

- Increase knowledge to prevent and detect the impact of Russian propaganda and disinformation on radicalisation and polarisation.
- Increase knowledge and awareness on antisemitism and hate speech in the context of radicalisation and to develop approaches to tackle hatred and polarisation resulting notably from the developments in the Middle East.
- Raise awareness and increase evidence-based understanding of Undesirable Foreign Funding and Influence among all Member States and further develop and spread best practices and methods to tackle them.
- Develop cooperation and exchange of information at EU level to address all forms of Undesirable Foreign Influences supported by direct or indirect financial flows from abroad, making use of on existing information exchange fora like the FIU Platform, FATF/MONEYVAL. This should encompass the collection and analysis of primary (anonymised) data to develop a data-driven understanding of undesired financial flows and donations.

2. CROSS-CUTTING/MAINSTREAMING PRIORITIES:

2.1 Strategic communication

Strategic communication is an overarching priority to be integrated in all EU activities on prevention of radicalisation as relevant. Its role for the future should be further stepped up and explored.

Topics covered include crisis communication by governments in the wider context of the media and social media landscape, overview of communication in the aftermath of a terrorist attack, lessons learnt from third countries and engaging with media. The role of the media concerning the prosecution of terrorists, FTFs and women, with a particular focus on how this coverage can be used for victimisation and radicalisation purposes should also be explored. Incorporating the experiences and testimonies of victims and survivors of terrorism should also be considered in strategic communication activities. When it comes to intervention from non-policy makers, the focus should be on how to connect wide scale strategic communication campaigns with practitioners and other actors at the local level. Efforts should focus on raising awareness of different forms of disinformation/misinformation as well as on pro-active communication for early detection of emerging issues, such as exploitation of (non-terrorism related) crises by extremist actors. Effectiveness of alternative and counter narratives and P/CVE offline interventions will be studied.

2.2 Evaluation

Evaluation of actions and interventions is essential for improving public policies. Strategies and practices for the prevention of radicalisation are relatively recent, but they, nevertheless, offer the necessary perspective to allow an evaluation process. It is essential that evaluation methods are an integral part of exchanges in this area to enable all stakeholders to improve the effectiveness of the available tools, methods, and approaches for practitioners and policy makers and promote the development of new ones.

2.3 Radicalisation of minors

The rising number of young people, specifically minors, involved in plotting or carrying out terrorist attacks, as confirmed by Europol and Member States' reporting, has made it essential to address this phenomenon at EU level applying a whole-of-society approach. Given its transversal nature it is now recognised as a cross-cutting priority in the Strategic Orientations to be addressed through relevant measures under each of the seven thematic priorities. Recognising the distinction between minors radicalised by external influences and those radicalised within their own families or communities, different approaches should be applied by relevant professionals.

2.4 Engaging victims of terrorism

Victims of terrorism possess firsthand experience and profound understanding of the devastating consequences radicalisation has on individuals and society, making their perspectives essential for crafting effective prevention strategies. Their involvement grounds counter-radicalisation efforts in real-world realities, enhancing empathy and credibility within communities. By sharing their testimonies and actively participating in prevention initiatives in schools, prisons, and other relevant settings, they play a crucial role by supporting local and national PCVE actors in strengthening resilience against extremist influences. It is, therefore, essential to give victims of terrorism a full role as stakeholders in all radicalisation prevention activities, including those related to the online environment, ensuring that their dignity is protected and their experiences taken into account.
