

POLICY BRIEF

YOUTH RADICALISATION AND INEQUALITY: WHAT THE EVIDENCE SHOWS

Inequality is often cited by experts as one of the main structural drivers impacting the path to radicalisation of certain individuals. DARE research teams in Croatia, as well as in France and Turkey, evaluated **whether the existing evidence base confirms the link between inequality and radicalisation and if so how, when and why.**

A clear understanding of the drivers of radicalisation is crucial to **designing and implementing effective and relevant policies aimed at reducing the risks of radicalisation and at increasing security and safety for all citizens.**

DARE FINDINGS

- **People who perceive themselves as unequal are more likely to become radicalised than people who live in the same conditions, but who do not consider themselves as unequal.** Subjective inequality may thus be more relevant as a driver of radicalisation than objective inequality.
- **Socio-political inequality as a driver of radicalisation is more relevant than economic inequality.** The link between inequality and radicalisation is context-dependent, if not case-by-case dependent. Inequality (such as poverty, marginalisation, disenfranchisement etc.), at the level of individual experience, does not consistently explain radicalisation. Indeed, feelings of victimisation, a sense of injustice and lack of human rights protection may also play a role, both at individual and group level.
- **Radicalisation is more a process than a state.** Each experience of injustice is reflected upon, interpreted and potentially mobilised, via a multiplicity of other factors, including socio-economic situation, personal background, family ties and national context.
- **Conflating issues of social exclusion and radicalisation with religion masks and undermines the need to address social issues faced by some specific groups, such as discrimination, racism, inequality.**
- **Inequality produces radicalisation but the focus on radicalisation also produces inequality through injustice/discrimination.** Reducing social issues faced by specific communities to the problem of radicalisation may strengthen their identity positions, making them even more vulnerable to radicalisation. Inequality and radicalisation are co-constructed phenomena.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO POLICY AND DECISION MAKERS

On the basis of these research findings, policy and decision makers should take the following steps:

1. Approach radicalisation as a holistic, contextualised (context dependent) and process-driven phenomenon and ensure this is reflected in policies, at all - individual, local, national or transnational - levels of relevant action.
2. Avoid disregarding perceived injustices as not objectively substantiated, and focus attention on the intersection between social exclusion and perceived injustice. The perception of injustice is real for persons exposed to it and should be dealt with as any other factor potentially leading to violent radicalisation.
3. Target radicalisation prevention measures towards the reduction of socio-political inequality (at both the individual and social level) as this may be more effective than focusing only on efforts to reduce economic inequality.
4. Allocate more resources to reducing subjective feelings of rejection and denial of dignity. Conditions should be met to facilitate a higher level of respect and fulfilment of citizens' socio-political rights.
5. Ensure that societal conditions facilitating a higher level of respect and fulfilment of citizens' socio-political rights are in line with policy shifts towards a 'whole-society' approach to countering radicalisation and extremism.
6. Support the political participation of citizens and residents in public life, from the local to the European level, individually and in groups, as a key aspect of the struggle against socio-political inequality.
7. Prioritise poorer districts or suburbs, where a high concentration of urban poor live and suffer the burden of social stigma.
8. Favour a community-led approach to prevent and counter radicalisation and support social sector professionals taking a leadership role to address stigmatisation, discrimination and the sense of injustice that may lead to radicalisation.
9. Ensure that existing and future prevention, as well as safety and security policies, do not exacerbate identity issues among groups most vulnerable to socio-political inequality and most targeted by counter-radicalisation measures, thus increasing the receptivity to radicalisation. For instance, take into account the influence of widespread negative representations circulating in the media about specific groups and their potential to contribute to the exacerbation of identity issues.
10. Support new empirical qualitative research that acknowledges the diversity of experiences of specific groups perceived as vulnerable to radicalisation. For instance, qualitative studies of individual pathways should consider the complex relationships between individuals becoming aware of socio-economic obstacles/injustices, identity issues and social inclusion.

SOME BACKGROUND ON THE DARE RESEARCH WORK

This Policy Brief was informed by the findings from the DARE research teams based in Croatia, as well as France and Turkey. Studies analysed in the review were selected from an initial pool of 5,511 publications, retrieved from databases and grey literature as well as cross-referencing searches.

The Croatian team conducted a systematic review of quantitative empirical findings and differentiated between: 1) level of investigation: individual (indicators such as income, education level, (un)employment etc.) and social (indicators such as national GDP or poverty rate); 2) type and ideological base of radicalisation (cognitive or behavioural, Islamist or far right, international or domestic terrorism); 3) type of inequality: economic or socio-political, and its objective/measurable or subjective/perceived basis.

141 studies with quantitative findings, published in English between 2001 and 2017, were analysed:

- 42 based on survey findings on non-radicalised individuals
- 15 based on biographical evidence of radicalised individuals
- 84 based on analyses of terrorism data (a macro-level study of terrorism determinants)

The French and Turkish teams conducted a meta-ethnographic synthesis of qualitative empirical studies to generate interpretive explanations of the relationship between inequality and radicalisation derived by synthesising findings of multiple empirical studies. The review identified key concepts and themes used in the selected studies to interpret relationships between inequality and radicalisation and drew cross-case conclusions by recognising concepts from one study in other studies.

94 studies with qualitative findings were analysed:

- 70 focused on Islamist radicalisation
- 24 focused on extreme right, racist or anti-Islamic radicalisation

DARE DEFINITIONS

Radicalisation is the process by which individuals or groups come to embrace attitudes, or engage in actions, that support violence in the pursuit of extremist causes. The DARE project focuses on radical Islamist and extreme right/anti-Islam(ist) radicalisation.

Inequality is the perceived (subjective) or the real (objective) unjust distribution of valued outcomes, resources, power and opportunities. **Economic inequality** refers, specifically, to the unequal distribution of economic outcomes, such as income, assets, wealth, capital and living standard. **Social inequality** denotes structural disadvantages arising from social stratification such as structural low group status or discrimination, based on membership of a social group (e.g. discrimination against some ethnic or religious minorities) and may be manifest also in inequality of political representation and legal and civil rights.

PROJECT IDENTITY

Project Name DARE : Dialogue About Radicalisation and Equality

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Consortium

- The University of Manchester (UNIMAN), UK
- Anadolu University (AU), Turkey
- Collegium Civitas University (Civ), Poland
- École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (EHESS), France
- The Institute of Social Sciences Ivo Pilar (IPI), Croatia
- Hochschule Düsseldorf – University of applied sciences (HSD), Germany
- European Network Against Racism (ENAR), Belgium
- The German Institute on Radicalisation (GIRDS), Germany
- The Higher School of Economics, St Petersburg (HSE), Russia
- Leiden University (UL), The Netherlands
- Oslo Metropolitan University (OsloMet), Norway
- Panteion University (PUA), Greece
- The University of Sfax (US), Tunisia
- Teesside University (TEES), UK
- The People for Change Foundation (Pfc), Malta
- The University of Oslo (UiO), Norway
- The University of Birmingham (UNIBHAM), UK

Countries Belgium, Croatia, Germany, Greece, France, Malta, The Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Russian Federation, Tunisia, Turkey, United Kingdom.

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Vision DARE proposes a new approach to radicalisation research as an alternative to traditional terrorism research that focuses primarily on acts and agents of terrorism. By understanding radicalisation as a *social* phenomenon, and through evidence-based research, DARE aims to broaden the understanding of radicalisation and non-radicalisation paths; demonstrate that it is not located in any one religion or community; and understand better the long-term origins, causes and psychological, emotional and social dynamics of radicalisation.

Goals

1. Understand radicalisation trends in historical, spatial and political context including their interaction and potential for cumulative effect.
2. Identify new trends in receptivity to radicalisation especially in relation to youth and gender and extend the field to the study of non-radicalisation trajectories.
3. Investigate the interaction of structure and agency in radicalisation through the intersection of societal (macro), group (meso) and individual (micro) factors in individual trajectories.
4. Enhance understanding of the role of inequality and perceived injustice in radicalisation.
5. Understand the relative significance of religion, ideology and extra-ideological (affective) dimensions of radicalisation, and how they are interwoven.
6. Develop new evaluation and intervention toolkits to counter radicalisation and maximise their impact through active collaboration with policy maker and civil society organisation stakeholders.

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