

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF COUNTER-RADICALISATION POLICIES IN EUROPE: WHAT THE EVIDENCE SHOWS

The DARE research team in Poland has assessed the legal frameworks and operative documents, designed to counter radicalisation (through preventing and countering violent extremism), of 16 states in wider Europe in order to increase understanding of processes of radicalisation (Islamist and extreme-right) and enhance capacity to effectively counter these threats.

DARE FINDINGS

Radicalisation and recruitment to terrorism are processes inherently social in nature



Policies should take a societal and educational approach to countering these threats

- **Radicalisation and recruitment to terrorism are processes inherently social in nature. A societal and educational approach is thus key to countering these threats.** Current security, counter-terrorism and counter-radicalisation policies do not sufficiently take into account long-term and socio-economic factors either at the national or European level.
- **The focus on the local community level is crucial when countering radicalisation.** Many European countries are launching programmes to address radicalisation, which are locally oriented (using a bottom-up logic) rather than centralised (employing a top-down logic). Countries are increasingly investing in training programmes for schools, teachers, police officers and security professionals to work at the community level.
- **There is an agreed need among stakeholders for reliable evaluation of counter-radicalisation and de-radicalisation policies and programmes.** It is crucial to include in all counter/de-radicalisation policies and programmes impact assessment measures that ensure rigorous and fair evaluation by the practitioners themselves, as well as by funders, states and civil society representatives. Only 27% of all analysed policies, action plans, legal acts, strategies etc. included evaluation or mentioned such a need.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO POLICY AND DECISION MAKERS

To European Institutions

1. Halt any new legislative or non-legislative proposal related to countering radicalisation until an impact assessment of currently available instruments, including the EU counter-terrorism directive, is undertaken.
2. Encourage Member States to include impact assessment measures in their prevention and de-radicalisation policies and fund projects with monitoring mechanisms and an evaluation component.
3. Promote a European “bank of ideas” compiling solutions to address radicalisation developed at national and local levels, to be used and shared as benchmarks by other Member States facing the threat of radicalisation and models that might be adjusted to other legal and cultural contexts. The Radicalisation Awareness Network could be responsible for ensuring such exchange of ideas.
4. Ensure a trans-sectoral approach to countering radicalisation, taking into account the multiple structural - socio-economic, ideological and geo-political roots of radicalisation as well as how these factors interact.

To Member States

1. Develop a multi-agency approach when designing and implementing prevention and counter-radicalisation policies, taking more specific account of issues at the local level and including (but preserving the autonomy of) NGOs where appropriate. Prevention and counter-radicalisation policies should be transversal, across policy fields, while acknowledging the micro level, including individuals and the need for tailor-made solutions.
2. Focus counter-radicalisation narratives on building a ‘shared future’ rather than simply recognising and respecting differences.
3. Take into account the broad range of ideologies and behaviours that radicalisation encompasses, as well as the process of cumulative radicalisation.
4. Design and implement effective monitoring mechanisms of the internet and social media platforms, extensively used as propaganda tools by terrorist organisations.
5. Address the needs of youth (the group most vulnerable to potential radicalisation) through social inclusion, empowerment and education policies and programmes, and take into account their views, as they are also agents of change.
6. Ensure communication strategies and tools to address radicalisation are properly designed and implemented and employ inclusive discourse. Make use of the European Communications Strategic Network designed to support Member States in this endeavour.
7. Support schools (and NGOs) in promoting civic activism, the use of democratic institutions and the understanding of civic values to empower young people to actively, and critically, engage in improving the democratic system.
8. Develop impact assessment measures to evaluate the effectiveness of counter- and de-radicalisation policies.

To NGOs

1. Support community institutions and leaders to better understand radicalisation within their communities and encourage them to develop further their own resilience mechanisms.

2. Develop in parallel greater offline interactions with and between young people through community cohesion programmes and exchanges (e.g. in youth centres, community meetings etc.).

SOME BACKGROUND ON THE DARE RESEARCH WORK

Findings are based on data gathered between 1 May 2017 and 10 February 2019, specifically:

- 25 interviews with experts (from 13 countries) in fields related to counter-radicalisation, counter-terrorism and de-radicalisation. Interviewees were – in the vast majority of cases – practitioners, representing a range of institutions at the national and the EU levels (RAN, Europol);
- Compilation and comparative analysis of 100 documents: strategies (13), policies (4), legal documents (12), programmes (33), action plans (25) and existing research studies of policies (13). Documents were collected from 16 countries: 12 EU Member States (Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom); and 4 non-EU but European countries (Norway, Russia, Turkey, Switzerland). 13 documents refer strictly to the EU level.

Methodology

- Analysis of the similarities and differences in national approaches to countering violent extremism;
- Comparison, through a synthesis approach, of these different national contexts to draw conclusions that reveal recent dynamics both in the process of radicalisation and in designing and implementing policies to counter it.

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. DARE's research focus is on radical Islamist and extreme right/anti-Islam(ist) radicalisation.

Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) and Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) are short hand umbrella terms for a plethora of non-coercive attempts to reduce involvement in terrorism.

De-radicalisation is the psychological process through which an individual abandons their extremist ideology and is theoretically rendered a decreased threat for re-engaging in terrorism.

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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