'Radicalisation' is widely used to refer to the *process* by which individuals or groups come to embrace attitudes, or engage in actions, that support violence in the pursuit of extremist causes.

This understanding of radicalisation offers policy makers and practitioners the means to identify pathways towards extremism and strategies for when and how to intervene. However, in practice, when to intervene remains dependent upon what is considered to be 'extremism'. In particular, policy makers must decide whether attitudes alone constitute harmful 'extremism' or only if translated into violent behaviour or support for violent behaviour.

In academic and policy circles the direction of travel has been towards extending the notion of extremism to include ideas or attitudes as well as behaviour, even though only a small proportion of those who hold radical ideas go on to commit acts of violence. At the same time, there is growing evidence that the discourse of radicalisation and targeting of particular communities as 'vulnerable' to extremism has stigmatising effects that can, themselves, become a driver of radicalisation.

While Europol data on terrorism show that right-wing extremism accounted for just 2-5% of terrorist attacks (2017-2019), right-wing offences may be under-reported and depoliticised as, in some countries, they are registered as hate crime, right-wing violence or ordinary violence. The 'mainstreaming' of extreme right ideas in political discussion also creates challenges for policy makers especially given the prominent role of social media and internet in how young people access information and form networks. This means that young people encounter right-wing extremist messages in increasingly routine ways while the 'costs' of becoming engaged in a 'right-wing extremist' milieu are lowered.

This makes it important to understand how young people encounter and respond to such messages. This can be done by adopting a 'milieu' approach, where researchers engage directly in the environments in which young people encounter radical(ising) messages and agents and follow, and discuss with them, how they interpret and respond to these encounters.

A clear understanding of what drives individual trajectories of radicalisation, but also what constrains and prevents young people in radical milieus crossing the threshold to violent extremism, is essential for developing effective prevention and counter extremism policy and practice.
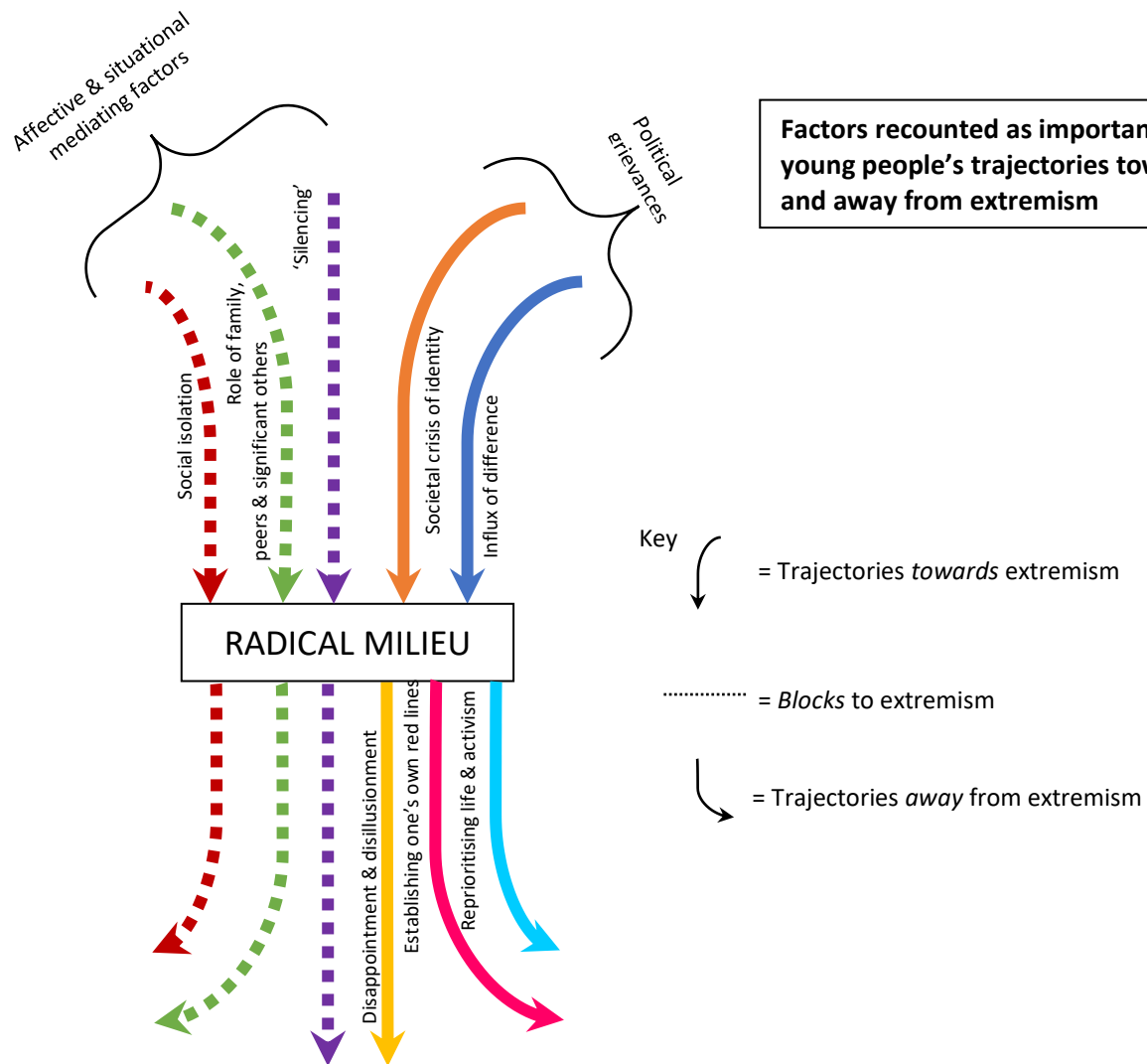
DARE DEFINITIONS

❖ *Milieus* are understood as physical and virtual (usually both), ideological and emotional spaces providing opportunities for voicing anger at perceived injustice, identifying 'like minds' or shared hurts and giving meaning to, and making sense of, life. They are also sites where important bonds are forged with others.

❖ *'Extreme right'* and '*anti-Islam(ist)'* are used to refer to the wide range of diverse milieus studied. 'Extreme right' is an umbrella term for political ideologies characterised by authoritarianism, opposition to democracy and exclusionary nationalism (including biological and cultural racism). 'Anti-Islam(ism)' refers to active opposition to what its proponents refer to as 'radical Islam' or the 'Islamification' of western societies. It often includes general antipathy towards Islam/all Muslims.

DARE FINDINGS

- Radical milieus provide supportive and sustaining social environments for those engaged in violent actions in support of political aims. They operate online and offline and are a site of circulation of grievance narratives and knowledge not accepted in mainstream circles.
- Young people in 'right-wing extremist' milieus articulate a range of political and personal grievances that contribute to shifts towards extremism.
- The most salient political grievance concerns the perceived unrestrained influx of refugees and immigrants and consequent demographic and cultural change. This is experienced as a societal crisis of identity that threatens the 'extinction' of white Europeans or 'civil war'.
- Young people feel stigmatised for expressing their views and, in some countries, that they are not represented or even 'silenced' in mainstream political circles. This can propel people towards more radical views.
- The majority of young people in these milieus, however, dissociate themselves from 'extremism', reflect on their own trajectories and, in some cases, establish their own red lines, delineating what is acceptable in terms of ideological positions and political actions.
- Ideologically, they consider views, movements and individuals associated with Nazism, white supremacism, (biological) racism and ant-Semitism to be 'too extreme'. Behaviourally, the use of, or support for, violence as a means to bring about change is viewed as illegitimate. In some cases, the imposition of one's ideas on others (even through means short of violence) is viewed as constituting extremism.
- These internal distinctions govern attitudes and behaviours and may halt movement towards, or trigger a step back from, extremism.
- In some cases, movements or influential milieu figures also act to 'keep a lid on' extremism as they seek to distinguish their movement from proscribed, anti-democratic, violent or paramilitary organisations or try to deter young people from joining more extreme groups.
- Milieu actors accuse external institutions (media, police, politicians, researchers) of failing to recognise such distinctions. The sense that actors on the right wing are indiscriminately labelled 'Nazis', 'racists' or 'far right' has become a grievance in itself.
- Dissociation with extremism is more than deviance disavowal. The majority of milieu actors express openness to dialogue with 'others', invite challenges to their views and express a concern with protecting others from following more 'extreme' pathways. They are thus open to engagement with P/CVE practices.
- Family, peers and significant others all play an important role in shaping both movement towards and away from extremism.
- Parents and siblings are often reported as sharing similar extreme right views and some respondents were introduced to right-wing extremist milieus in this way. However, in these cases, respondents explained how those family members had also guided them away from the more extreme or violent ends of the milieu.
- Friends were described as influencing entrance to 'right-wing extremist' milieus in some instances but also as reference points for what was 'too extreme' and not to be followed.
- Although family and peer relationships can pull individuals towards extremism, a lack of supportive and bonding relationships is also a factor in trajectories towards extremism.
- Respondents experiencing poor familial relationships reported low self-esteem and social isolation. This created a longing for community, which, combined with related mental health issues, could draw them towards 'right-wing extremist' groups.

- However, where such groups provided the sense of 'family' or 'community' desired, the growth in self-worth felt by individuals could protect against further radicalisation. Conversely, where the expectation of support and belonging was not met, feelings of disillusionment, hurt or betrayal could lead individuals towards more extreme groups or away from the milieu altogether.
- Gendered experiences (of non-acceptance or sexual objectification) can reinforce women's marginalisation in a group and increase disillusionment and movement away.
- Decisions to step away from extremism may be associated with individual decisions to reprioritise other elements of their life over activism. The most cited shift in priorities related to new intimate and family relationships, or new attitudes towards existing relationships.

Affective & situational mediating factors

Political grievances

Factors recounted as important in young people's trajectories towards and away from extremism

Social isolation

Role of family, peers & significant others

'Silencing'

Societal crisis of identity

Influx of difference

RADICAL MILIEU

Disappointment & disillusionment

Establishing one's own red lines

Reprioritising life & activism

Key

= Trajectories *towards* extremism

.... = *Blocks* to extremism

= Trajectories *away* from extremism

- Pathways to extremism are complex and non-linear. Their outcomes are profoundly shaped by the social structures within which they are embedded and the extremist ideas and behaviours diffused in the milieus. They also determined by (changing) context, situation and the agency of the young people on those journeys.
- Taking a milieu approach – rather than studying radicalisation by tracing trajectories from the end-point (in violent extremism) backwards – provides a more complex understanding of how individuals can be propelled towards extremist attitudes or behaviours but also how pathways of partial or stalled radicalisation, non-radicalisation and de-radicalisation are forged.

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 complex and non-linear process** that should be studied as such, that is, in situ and involving young people active in radical milieus, rather than from the end point of violent extremism backwards.

2. **Avoid disregarding grievances as perceived injustices that are not objectively substantiated.** Perceived injustice is real for persons exposed to it and should be dealt with as any other factor potentially leading to radicalisation.

3. **Engage with 'insider' perspectives on what constitutes 'extremism'** to understand how those in radical milieus distinguish between attitudes and behaviours that are 'acceptable' and those which are not.

4. **Develop a clear and consistent policy on whether, and which, attitudes and opinions are considered to constitute extremism.** Develop P/CVE interventions that are able to effectively demonstrate the socially harmful impacts of these attitudes.

5. **Consider right-wing radicalisation as the outcome of a complex relational process.** This means understanding radicalisation not as something that resides in 'them' but as the outcome of the interaction of multiple actors, including institutional actors.

6. **Consider whether 'condemnation strategies', that fail to distinguish between different positions on the 'extreme right' spectrum, are appropriate mechanisms for countering extremism.** They may have a stigmatising and counterproductive effect by reducing the cost of becoming 'extremist' (since they label individuals as such anyway).

7. **Develop complex and differentiated modes of engagement with young people** moving in 'right-wing extremist' milieus, recognising that attraction to these milieus is usually driven by a combination of political grievances (related to rapid social and cultural change, patterns of immigration, sense of societal crisis, alienation from 'elite' politics) and personal issues (social isolation, lack of self-worth, mental health problems).

8. **Take seriously the role of young people's agency in radicalisation pathways**. Recognising that young people reflect on their pathways, establish their own 'red lines' and make repeated decisions about steps towards, and away from, extremism allows important 'ways in' to engaging young people in preventing themselves and others crossing over into violent extremism.

9. **Promote a community-led approach to prevent and counter radicalisation** and support social sector professionals who actively engage with young people in radical(ising) milieus in a way that draws them into productive dialogue.
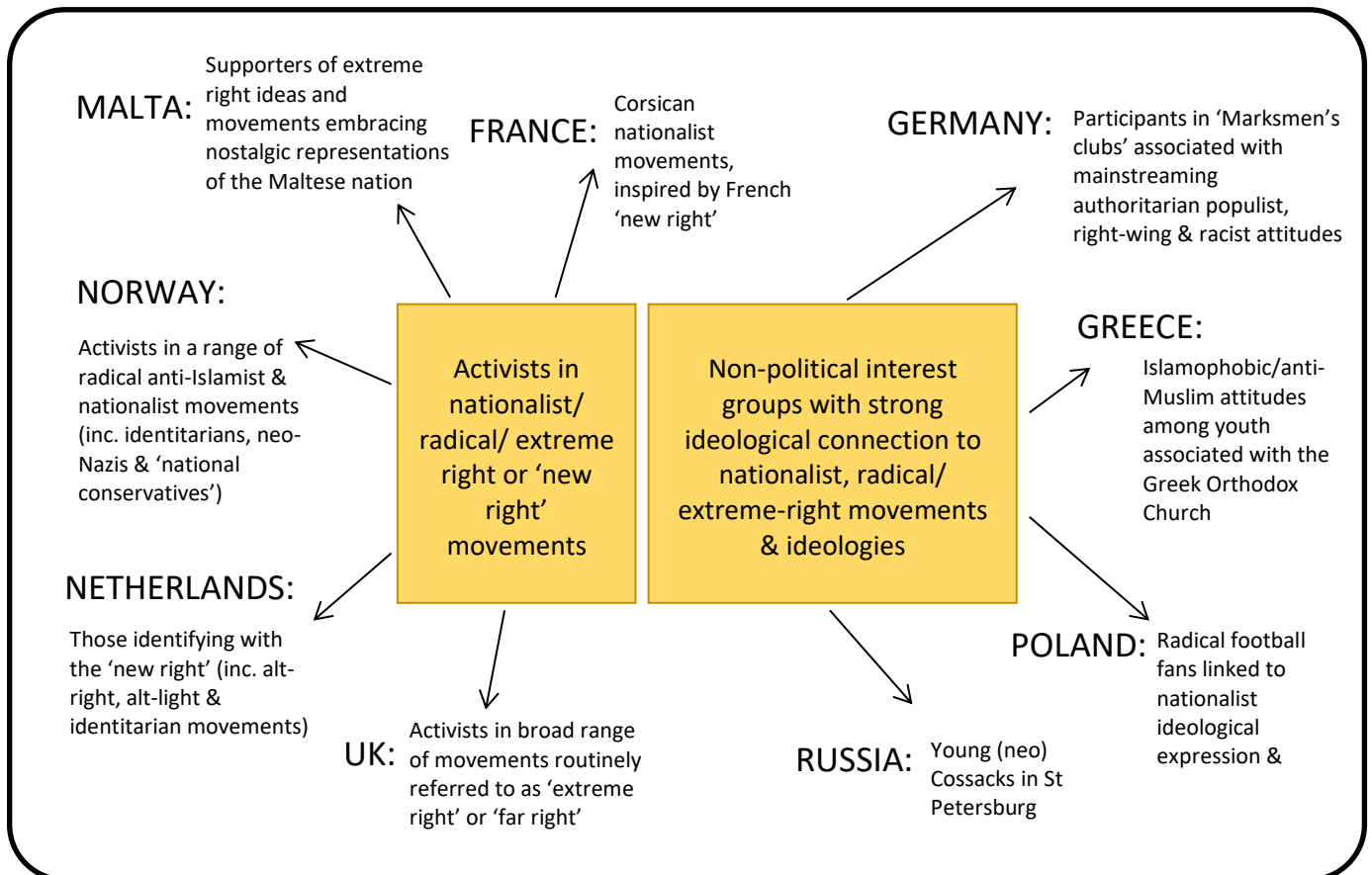
THE DARE RESEARCH

This Policy Brief was informed by findings from the DARE (Dialogue About Radicalisation and Equality) project. The project focuses on young people (loosely defined as those aged 15 to 30 years) and on two strands of extremism, referred to as 'Islamist' extremism (ISE) and 'right-wing' extremism (RWE).

> The DARE project uses a mixed-methods approach and has multiple research strands. This Policy Brief draws primarily from qualitative data collected and analysed in the course of conducting nine milieu-based ethnographic case studies of young people's trajectories through radical(ising) milieus.
>
> - These milieus were located in: France, Germany, Greece, Malta, Norway, The Netherlands, Poland, Russia and the UK.
> - In total 184 young people took part and 188 semi-structured interviews were recorded.

Overview of the milieus studied

MALTA: Supporters of extreme right ideas and movements embracing nostalgic representations of the Maltese nation

FRANCE: Corsican nationalist movements, inspired by French 'new right'

GERMANY: Participants in 'Marksmen's clubs' associated with mainstreaming authoritarian populist, right-wing & racist attitudes

NORWAY: Activists in a range of radical anti-Islamist & nationalist movements (inc. identitarians, neo-Nazis & 'national conservatives')

GREECE: Islamophobic/anti-Muslim attitudes among youth associated with the Greek Orthodox Church

NETHERLANDS: Those identifying with the 'new right' (inc. alt-right, alt-light & identitarian movements)

UK: Activists in broad range of movements routinely referred to as 'extreme right' or 'far right'

RUSSIA: Young (neo) Cossacks in St Petersburg

POLAND: Radical football fans linked to nationalist ideological expression &

[Centre box 1] Activists in nationalist/ radical/ extreme right or 'new right' movements

[Centre box 2] Non-political interest groups with strong ideological connection to nationalist, radical/ extreme-right movements & ideologies

PROJECT IDENTITY

Project Name	**DARE : Dialogue About Radicalisation and Equality**
Coordinator	Professor Hilary Pilkington, University of Manchester, UK
Consortium	- The University of Manchester, UNITED KINGDOM - Oslo Metropolitan University, NORWAY - École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, FRANCE - Anadolu University, TURKEY - German Institute for Radicalization and Deradicalization Studies, GERMANY - Leiden University, THE NETHERLANDS - Hochschule Düsseldorf – University of Applied Sciences, GERMANY - Teesside University, UNITED KINGDOM - Collegium Civitas University, POLAND - Panteion University of Social and Political Science of Athens, GREECE - Higher School of Economics, RUSSIA - The Institute of Social Sciences Ivo Pilar, CROATIA - European Network Against Racism, BELGIUM - The People for Change Foundation, MALTA - Sfax University, TUNISIA - The University of Oslo, NORWAY
Countries	Belgium, Croatia, Germany, Greece, France, Malta, The Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Russian Federation, Tunisia, Turkey, United Kingdom.
Funding Scheme	This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 725349.
Duration and Budget	4.5 years. Start 01/05/2017 - End 31/10/2021. Budget: €5 million.
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.
Website and more information	The cross-national synthesis report on young people's trajectories through right-wing extremist milieus as well as the nine country level reports on which it is based can be round on the project website: http://www.dare-h2020.org *This publication reflects only the views of the author(s); the European Commission and Research Executive Agency are not responsible for any information it contains*