

# Policy Brief N° 10

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## Current radicalisation trends in Central and Eastern Europe<sup>1</sup>

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Identifying trends in radicalisation, which should be the starting point and the basis for the proper design of new as well as reorientation of already undertaken actions in preventing radicalisation. Without current knowledge and a proper understanding of the current trends in the development of the threat of radicalisation, its most common forms appearing at the national or regional level and in individual local environments, the risk factors reinforcing this threat, it is impossible to plan, design and implement effective preventive measures (Kordaczuk-Was, 2018: 61-66).

The term 'radicalisation' is most often associated with radical behavior leading to acts of extremism and terrorism. Meanwhile, radicalism is not only about Islamic fundamentalism, but also regards problems that can be particularly notices in Central and Eastern Europe, such as hate speech, xenophobia or nationalism. It is, therefore, crucial to be able to react at an early stage of symptoms of an individual's radicalisation. This, in turn, entails the need to properly identify the problem and understand the mechanism of a specific form of radicalisation.

The creation of a comprehensive and complete picture of the current situation prevailing in Central and Eastern Europe has been possible, by an invitation to a joint discussion representatives of: 1) the strategic European body (European Commission) responsible for shaping policies in the area of preventing radicalisation; 2) key networks gathering policymakers and practitioners translating European policy language into national practical solutions (RAN and EFUS), as well as 3) non-governmental organization supporting the adaptation of practical activities undertaken to prevent radicalisation to the reality of Central and Eastern Europe (Institute of Social Safety, Poland).

### Key debates on current trends on radicalisation

Dividing the discussion conducted as part of the above-mentioned expert panel into two main areas allows for the identification of key observations regarding the trends in

radicalisation currently occurring in Central and Eastern Europe, and at the same time for the formulation of recommendations for creating further policy in preventing and combating radicalisation.

Starting from today's most commonly observed forms of radicalisation, including changes in trends and perceptions of this threat in Europe, few interesting elements comes out. First of all, there a need to recognize the proper weight (significance) of the problem and strive to achieve a common understanding of the definition of radicalisation, with particular emphasis on far-right extremism. The most common risk factors and feeding ground for radicalisation of individuals' attitudes are listed: hate crimes, fake news, conspiracy theories related to the pandemic situation as well as 5G technology. It is also emphasized the need to pay more attention to the problem of individual radicalisation and the particular risk group created by lone actors.

An important observation concerns the inspiration of radicals by politicians. Therefore, properly identifying and understanding the mechanisms leading to radicalisation means depoliticizing and building a systemic approach to preventing and combating radicalisation.

In addition, there are currently general anti-democratic trends and sentiments in many countries in Europe and the world. Practitioners note that trends in Europe are coming from the East, therefore special attention should be paid to the need to intensify activities in Central and Eastern Europe in the area of preventing and combating radicalisation. The aforementioned anti-democratic sentiments are conducive to the development of both far right and left-wing extremism.

Furthermore, it was discussed the importance of reaching an effective approach to a systemic prevention of radicalisation. Building a systemic approach requires establishing bridges between policy makers, researchers and practitioners so that it is possible to use each other's competences. The voices of practitioners regarding the need to improve practical operation in local environments are

particularly important. However, the potential of researchers should not be ignored, but the language of science should be translated into the language of policies and strategic documents and then into practice. The private sector should also be included in this overall picture.

Additionally, it is very important to build a system based on an individual-oriented approach, paying attention to the individual causes of radicalisation. It means placing at the center of the undertaken actions a diagnosis setting the directions for building individual aid plans based on the real radicalisation causes (roots, pathways into), and at the same time enabling the involvement and use of specific competences of individual entities operating in the local community.

Finally, harnessing the potential of evidence-based programmes, practices and policies is also of key importance in this area. This means the use of actions proven by reliable scientific research confirming their effectiveness and impact. In addition, attention should be paid to the preparation and implementation of comprehensive and tailored prevention programmes.

### Policy Recommendations

It should be emphasized that all the areas discussed and described above already contain important conclusions, which should be reflected in the policies and strategies that build

the ground for the design and implementation of actions in the area of preventing and combating radicalisation. Additionally, during the discussion, it was possible to indicate specific direct recommendations for policymakers supporting practitioners in their actions are collected below:

- It is necessary to ensure that the police (and other LEA) operating in various EU Member States can collect comparable statistical data on extreme-right extremism. This will facilitate taking consistent actions both at the strategic and executive levels.
- It is strongly recommended to 'start action from people', that means looking at the problem from the so-called 'street level'. Additionally, the 'prevention is the key' slogan is still valid. In order to effectively prevent radicalisation, actions should be initiated in the non-violent phase.
- The issue of local management and strategies to bring local, regional, national and European authorities together is also extremely important. It is recommended to strengthen local democracy and civic involvement in social life. Moreover, it is crucial to ensure the social inclusion and care for the well-being of the population. This can in turn be achieved through building the professional culture, active collaboration, innovation and the use of the new technologies.

### Consulted & Recommended Sources

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