# STRATEGIC ORIENTATIONS
## ON A COORDINATED EU APPROACH TO
## PREVENTION OF RADICALISATION FOR 2024-2025

### 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 in Europe.

The Strategic Orientations for 2024-2025 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. To launch the preparations of the Strategic Orientations, the Commission applied an innovative approach gathering Member States' representatives, practitioners, and members of the Research Advisory Board ([3]) at the first Town Hall meeting held 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 conclusions of the First Annual Research Conference "Violent extremism and counter-extremism in Europe – What next?" that the Commission organised on 3 October 2023 also feed into the priorities outlined in this document.

The Strategic Orientations 2024-2025 cover a transition period in the establishment of the EU Knowledge Hub on prevention of radicalisation, which is expected to be launched in the second half of 2024. The Knowledge Hub will build on the achievements of both strands of the Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN) - RAN Practitioners and RAN Policy Support.

It should be noted that the priorities identified in these 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 the interconnections between them are such that it is difficult to regard them separately. Therefore, these Strategic Orientations should be read as a comprehensive document, which also identifies several cross-cutting mainstreaming priorities.

The detailed actions to implement the Strategic Orientations will be translated in the Global Agenda, which is the basis for RAN Practitioners and RAN Policy Support to prepare their Annual Activity plans for the first half of 2024. The Strategic Orientations should also

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([1]) Since 2022, previously the Strategic Orientations were adopted annually.

([2]) EUR-Lex - 52020DC0795 - EN - EUR-Lex (europa.eu)

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

serve as a basis to define the activities of the EU Knowledge Hub on prevention of radicalisation during the second half of 2024 and in 2025. Good coordination and synergies should be ensured with the activities of the EU Internet Forum to address violent extremist content online.

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

## II. VIOLENT EXTREMIST THREAT AND EMERGING CHALLENGES

The threat of terrorism and radicalisation in the EU remains at a similar level as compared to previous years. According to the EU Terrorism Situation & Trend Report (TE-SAT) published by Europol in June 2023 ([4]), Member States continue viewing jihadist terrorism as the most prominent threat in the EU. In parallel, some Member States face a significant threat from violent right-wing extremism. In comparison to the threat posed by jihadist terrorism and violent right-wing extremism and terrorism, the threat from left-wing and anarchist violent extremism scene is deemed relatively low but increasing in some Member States and should therefore 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 even more blurred in the future. Points of convergence have already been observed among terrorist and violent extremist actors across the entire ideological spectrum.

Furthermore, many Member States have observed potential new forms of violent extremism, such as violent anti-system/government extremism, not attributable to specific ideologies and often stemming from conspiracy narratives.

The threat posed by lone actors and small cells is prevalent in many Member States. Lone actors are expected to continue perpetrating most of the terrorist attacks in the EU. Terrorist organisations may exploit radicalisation processes in the online environment and target vulnerable individuals to influence them to commit terrorist acts. Issues related to mental health are often linked to attacks committed by lone actors.

The increasingly interwoven lines between the online and offline dimensions have become more and more difficult to delineate which has gradually made the online dimension not only a major source of threats and risks but also an essential element of prevention efforts and activities. Despite its well-known benefits, the internet is the most important channel for dissemination for terrorist propaganda and violent extremist content, which turns out to be a main source of radicalisation and inspiration for terrorist and violent attacks.

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. This impact might fuel violent extremist narratives, regardless of the propagated ideology. Other Member States have experienced disinformation campaigns regarding laws and practices of public institutions that have galvanised extremist actors and led to an increased threat level.

Some Member States are concerned by the increase in undesirable foreign influences, which aim to increase discord among population with the objective of undermining our democratic societies. In the same way, the influence of political or conservative Islamist

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([4]) https://www.europol.europa.eu/publications-events/main-reports/tesat-report

networks such as Muslim Brotherhood, Salafism, Tabligh, which might challenge EU values including its democratic principles, fundamental rights, and the rule of law must not be ignored.

The rising number of radicalised teenagers/minors is also a growing concern in many Member States. Some of these young people have been involved in attack-plotting in recent years, in particular, in relation to violent right-wing groups connected online. While minors usually get radicalised by being recruited from the outside, there is another specific group that needs particular attention, namely, children born and bred in radicalised families. Such minors have grown up in an environment of extremist ideologies since early childhood, which bears different implications as compared to those applicable to minors who radicalised elsewhere. The issue of transgenerational radicalisation in this respect needs to be further explored.

Radicalisation in prisons and the release of radicalised individuals are of particular concern for some Member States. In the coming years, a growing number of convicted terrorists or prisoners sentenced for other offences who have been radicalised in prisons are expected to be released. Their increased number as compared to previous years may pose a security threat to some Member States, which should be addressed through improved cooperation at EU level.

Foreign terrorist fighters and their family members have returned to the EU only in small numbers so far, while there is still a significant number of them remaining in the camps in northeast Syria([5]). The resocialization of the returning children with a special focus on teenagers will be a priority for some Member States in the forthcoming years. These youngsters may face challenges related to mental health issues due to trauma related disorders. This is also true for fighters returning from Ukraine who have fought on either the Ukrainian or Russian side.

## III.  THEMATIC PRIORITIES FOR 2024-2025

### 1. Addressing violent and non-violent extremist ideologies, fragmented ideologies, and conspiracy theories and narratives

The extremist landscape in Europe has become more dynamic, diverse, and complex, which makes it necessary to address emerging risks and threats while in parallel continue focusing on existing ones. Jihadism is still the most prominent terrorist threat in Europe. Threat of violent right-wing extremism is growing in many Member States and left-wing and anarchist extremisms remain a threat that should not be left underestimated. In the last years, the phenomenon of the so-called fragmented/hybrid/mixed ideologies has emerged and posed the challenge to understand the underlying reasons and how they might evolve into violence or violent extremism. In this context, new forms of extremism such as antisystem/anti-government extremism, are a raising concern in several Member States. The Project-Based Collaboration on anti-system/anti-government extremism has already taken important steps to address this common challenge which should continue.

Furthermore, challenges posed by non-violent extremism that bears links to violent extremism should be better explored, such as the influence of rigorist Islamist networks. To prevent the development of all forms of extremist ideologies into violence, it is important to improve EU's collective knowledge and to deepen research on different ideologies, the ways they feed, overlap, and fuel one another.

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([5])  There is no international obligation for States to repatriate their nationals who have fought alongside with ISIS.

Conspiracy theories and narratives deserve particular attention as they may be enabling pathways to radicalisation. Developing a sound knowledge and understanding of the variety of conspiracy theories and narratives as well as of their sources of inspiration is key to defining strategies to counter them effectively. Further research on vulnerable groups/individuals and their susceptibility would make it possible to define more structured and targeted ways to engage with these groups and individuals and to implement credible and effective counter-narratives. A powerful tool to achieve this objective is to use 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 Member States still regard as the major terrorist threat to the EU, including radical Islamist networks and their influence, and to maintain the adequate level of capabilities corresponding to the high threat level posed by this phenomenon.

- Continue addressing violent right-wing extremism, including international links.

- Continue addressing violent left-wing extremism and anarchist movements.

- Continue addressing 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 working 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 nexus between non-violent and violent manifestations of extremisms.

- Continue increasing knowledge and research on the root causes and patterns of anti-system/anti-government extremist movements, including their transnational links online and offline.

- Conduct research focusing on vulnerable groups and individuals in society that are most susceptible to be attracted and manipulated by conspiracy theories and narratives.

- Increase knowledge on factors affecting human thinking and influencing emotions supported by behavioural sciences to understand better what makes extreme ideologies attractive to some people and what makes some people more susceptible to them, including links to mental health issues.

- Explore approaches on how to identify mixed/fragmented ideologies, their triggers, similarities, and differences with other ideologies and develop effective means to tackle them.

- Continue gathering knowledge and experiences on how gender roles are used to feed different forms of extremism and how they are exploited in action, recruitment, and propaganda.

- Explore further how extremist actors' "bandwagon" on conspiracy theories and narratives to reach wider audiences for propaganda and radicalisation efforts.

- Broaden knowledge and understanding on adjacent fields that may develop into non-violent or violent extremism leading to radicalisation. Such fields may include but are not limited to hate against women, LGBTQIA+ persons, or marginalised/vulnerable groups such as migrants or other minorities, as well as extremist ideologies and actions linked to climate change implications associated with both left- and right-wing concepts.

- 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/ hybrid/ 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 on tackling non-violent and violent extremism in the context of a democratic society.


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 remains relevant.

The focus for the reference period is to be placed on the specific situation of the increased number of recently released or soon to be released radicalised individuals or such persons who were sentenced for other offences but radicalised in prison. This may pose a threat to the security of the EU and its Member States as these individuals may continue actions of proselytism outside prisons and become involved in the preparation of terrorist attacks as highlighted in the latest TE-SAT Report of June 2023. To tackle this challenge from the P/CVE angle, a comprehensive approach focused on developing targeted risk assessments and effective rehabilitation and reintegration efforts is needed. It is essential to apply tailor-made approaches aiming to tackle a variety of possible circumstances.

As a first step, it is advised that disengagement and deradicalisation actions start 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, reintegration, and release. It is important to link risk assessment with rehabilitation and reintegration measures at an early stage of imprisonment with a specific view to ensuring continuity as regards released inmates as well as outside prisons.

The main challenges under this priority would be to:

- Address radicalisation in prisons and the threat posed by released inmates.

- Ensure the continuum between deradicalisation and reintegration processes after release taking also into account mental health aspects.

*Guidelines for the activities:*

- Update and share comprehensive knowledge on threats to security posed by radicalised individuals released from prison, taking into consideration the work

carried out on this topic at the Terrorist Working Party in the Council of the EU launched under the Spanish Presidency of the Council of the EU.

- Develop uniform risk assessment tools, to the extent possible, given the variety of circumstances across Member States, and provide support in implementing and evaluating them.

- Develop and test new tools for rehabilitation, reintegration, and disengagement and provide support and training to the probation services to implement them.

- Promote a continuum between risk assessment and deradicalisation/ reintegration measures, inside and outside of prison.

- Create a holistic cognitive behaviour approach to case management including vulnerability assessment and sentence planning tools.

- Increase knowledge on gender sensitive approaches in prisons and support the development of programmes targeted at radicalised women.

- Explore the role that former perpetrators of terrorist crimes who have repented may play in preventing or addressing radicalisation in prisons balancing the potential risks associated with it.

- Continue ensuring specific training for the professionals on the ground working on rehabilitation as an integral element of the entire process prison-release-rehabilitation-reintegration.

## 3. New technologies and online dimension

The use of technology and the internet – including social media platforms, instant messaging applications, gaming, and gaming adjacent platforms, the misuse of algorithmic recommender systems and terrorist operated websites – continue playing a crucial role in the radicalisation and recruitment process of individuals and in spreading propaganda material across the entire ideological spectrum. Geopolitical uncertainties combined with the impact of isolation resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic increased the vulnerability of minors and youth increasing the risk of radicalisation online.

Violent extremists and terrorists effectively exploit new technologies. Challenges and opportunities related to Artificial Intelligence (AI) or decentralisation on the Internet, in relation to prevention of radicalisation should be further and better explored.

Anticipating and preventing the misuse of new technologies require constant assessment of the threat landscape and adaptable responses to be one step ahead. 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 addressing the challenges posed by the misuse of the internet by violent extremists and terrorists.

Considering the rise of hybrid ideologies and borderline content, it is increasingly difficult to draw clear boundaries between extremism, violent extremism, and terrorism.

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 2021, the efforts of this voluntary public-private partnership are complemented by the EU Regulation addressing the dissemination of terrorist content online (the TCO Regulation) ([6]). It establishes a legislative framework obliging tech companies to remove terrorist content

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([6]) https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32021R0784

within one hour after receiving a removal order from a national competent authority while protecting fundamental rights. In addition, the Digital Services Act ([7]) will have a considerable impact on content moderation of illegal content online, the risk assessment done by online services and strengthening 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 internet, new technologies and artificial intelligence by violent extremists and terrorists.
- Continue collaboration, in the context of the EU Internet Forum, with online platforms to reduce the availability of terrorist and violent extremist content online.

*Guidelines for the activities:*

- Continue cooperation with the private sector and regularly update Member States, in particular in the context of the EU Internet Forum, on content moderation in response to new trends, including fragmented eco-systems, borderline content, gender aspects, mixed ideologies and financing activities by violent extremists.

- Increase knowledge on how Artificial Intelligence (AI) could be effectively used in the prevention of radicalisation and deepen knowledge on how violent 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 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. This should focus on the modus operandi by malicious actors, including exploitation of emotional and identity development of vulnerable users, as well as technical aspects.

- Enhance cooperation with infrastructure providers to prevent the exploitation and misuse of websites in the context of the EU Internet Forum.

- Increase knowledge and develop tools on how online content and behaviour can support threat assessments on radicalisation and predict violent behaviour.

- Increase understanding and, when necessary, support Member States in developing adequate policies and practices to address the impact of super-spreaders taking also into account concerns linked to radicalisation of young people, including children.

- Increase knowledge of the interconnection between the online and offline dimension in radicalisation processes based on the previous work of the RAN.

- 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).

- Increase knowledge and possibilities for practitioners, including those from law enforcement authorities and social workers, to operate online and design online interventions to prevent persons from radicalising online.

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([7]) https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32022R2065

## 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. Dynamics at local level can vary significantly but often local actors need support to deal with challenges posed by radicalisation processes. Engaging with local practitioners should be encouraged and they should be supported in increasing their skills and capacities ([8]). Collaboration between national and local level is essential as confirmed by the work ([9]) of the Project Based Collaboration on national support to local level (2019-2022).

The whole of society approach, collaboration, and coordination between local, regional, and national level as well as involvement of civil society and private sector 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 would allow 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.

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.

Strategic communication at local level is also key. Creation of local multi-professional structures should be encouraged to improve cooperation on local level and 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 prevent radicalisation in a changing violent and non-violent extremist landscape.

- Support creating multi-professional networks at local level and establishing better links between local and national approaches.

*Guidelines for the activities:*

- Support Member States in developing policies and practices to strengthen cooperation and coordination between local and national levels.

- 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 the role of families in the transfer of extremist ideologies, emotional implications, media, and digital literacy. Develop practices and toolkits for actors at local level to address radicalisation and polarisation on the ground.

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([8]) in regular cooperation with Member States' authorities if applicable in line with the national organisation of the counter-radicalisation policy.

([9]) Final report Guidelines on the setting up of multidisciplinary PCVE local groups.

- Enhance the link with education at local level to address early signals of radicalisation in young people/ minors.

- Identify and develop fora and methods for raising awareness and engagement among relevant adults (e.g., parents, educators, youth workers, etc.) regarding online activities of minors.

- Collect policies and practices on how to improve exchanges between security and local actors and 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 government, industry, and other members of civil society.

- Update the Community Policing and Prevention of Radicalisation (CoPPRa) [10] including an evaluation of the implementation of its first phase.

- Involve victims of terrorism in the work on prevention of radicalisation in an early stage, in particular, in schools and education programmes.


## 5. Lone actors and mental health issues

Lone actors and small cells with no clear affiliation to terrorist groups pose a significant threat to most Member States. Their actions have been on the rise in the last years. They act seemingly alone and unattached but may often serve 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 young people and even children has increased alarmingly [11]. Minors, who are specifically vulnerable to external influences, have become a particular target for recruitment by violent extremists and terrorist actors online. 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, and possible links with small cells as well as the motivations and triggers behind their actions with a special focus on mental health issues.

- Prevent radicalisation of children and young people.

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[10] https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/networks/radicalisation-awareness-network-ran/collection-inspiring-practices/ran-practices/coppra_en

[11] TE-SAT EU Terrorism situation and trend report 2023

*Guidelines for the activities:*

- Collect policies and practices on how to improve cooperation between security and healthcare actors, including legislative aspects where relevant, with a view to better addressing the response to lone actors with mental health issues.

- Deepen research and increase knowledge and awareness on how to better detect early signs of alarming behaviour and actions online and offline as regards lone actors including children/ minors.

- Develop specific measures to prevent radicalisation among children and young people, including through education, culture, arts, and sports, targeting specifically young people at-risk or disadvantaged ones and provide training programmes for youth workers for online P/CVE interventions.

- Increase knowledge on and improve understanding of mental health issues and other vulnerabilities in the context of radicalisation and address the emotional and social aspects of radicalisation.

- Increase knowledge and research on how to correctly recognise the nexus between terrorism, violent extremism, and organised crime, and share policies and practices to tackle it.

- Develop age- and gender-specific approaches to prevent radicalisation among all age groups.

### 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 these conflicts in the context of prevention of radicalisation. The permanence of children and teenagers with EU nationality in the camps in northeast Syria represent a breeding ground for radicalisation and resentment against their home countries that needs to be duly considered. Challenges related to returning FTFs from Syria and Iraq are still on the rise in the Western Balkan countries, with regard to prosecution, reintegration and rehabilitation, 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 either the Russian or the Ukrainian forces in the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine has remained low. It is, however, important to follow-up on their impact on violent extremist networks and activities in the EU and to apply best practices and lessons learned from the returnees from other conflicts.

The main challenges under this priority would be to:

- Provided that Member States decide to repatriate their FTF nationals, 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 in the society.

- Support Member States, with respect to their national competences, in assessing and mitigating the possible threat posed by individuals returning from the war in Ukraine.

- Support Member States, with respect to their national competences, in sharing best practices to monitor individuals returning from the war in Ukraine, with a

view to their possible role as catalysers and recruiters within violent extremist groups and reduce the threat they might potentially pose.

*Guidelines for the activities:*

- Provide support to implement measures to rehabilitate and reintegrate returnees from Syria and Iraq with a focus on women, teenagers, and children.

- Increase knowledge on and awareness of the returning volunteers from Ukraine and their impact on the extremist networks in the EU drawing on experiences from earlier conflicts.

- Support 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.


## 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 on. 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 has positive effects for the security of the EU and its Member States. Cooperation with priority third countries, in particular, in the Western Balkans and MENA regions as well as with the USA, the UK and Norway, should continue especially in view of identifying common challenges and exchange best practices to tackle them.

While the impact of the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine on radicalisation 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 sentiments.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is fueling tensions among the population of EU countries. Antisemitism and threats against Jewish communities, their schools and synagogues have increased, and large-scale protests are feeding polarization and grievances. Online propaganda, disinformation and hate speech reinforce the vicious circle of hatred and extremism.  Addressing these challenges is crucial to prevent radicalisation processes.

Sahel and West Africa remain a matter of concern. The activities of the Wagner group 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.

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 both at the national level and through cooperation at the EU level. These 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, led by France and the Netherlands, 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:

- Cooperate with third countries to prevent radicalisation effectively inside and outside the EU.

- Prevent undesirable foreign influence targeting EU Member States and enhance Member States' resilience against these malign foreign influences.

- Address and mitigate the adverse effects and potential repercussions resulting from the situation in the Middle East.

*Guidelines for the activities:*

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

- Increase knowledge on how 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 from the developments in the Middle East.

- Raise awareness on undesirable foreign influences among all Member States and further develop and disseminate 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.

## IV. CROSS-CUTTING/MAINSTREAMING PRIORITIES:

### 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 learned 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 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) crisis by violent extremist actors. Effectiveness of alternative and counter narratives and P/CVE offline interventions will be studied.

## 2. Evaluation

Evaluation of actions and interventions is essential for improving public policies. Strategies, practices, and interventions for the prevention of radicalisation are relatively recent, but they offer the necessary perspective to allow an evaluation process. It is essential that evaluation methods be a transparent and integral part of exchanges in this area to enable all stakeholders to improve the effectiveness of the available tools ($^{12}$), methods, and approaches for practitioners and policy makers and promote the development of new ones.

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($^{12}$) EU-funded Indeed project aims to use evidence-based approaches to strengthen fist-line practitioners' and policymakers' knowledge, capacities and skills for designing, planning, implementing and evaluating P/CVE and deradicalisation initiatives. The results of this project will be accessible in the Indeed multilingual toolkit for practitioners and policy makers.