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Open Minds Report

A transnational research analysis about the scope and varieties of radicalization in Europe and the consequences of extremist tendencies amongst young people

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Introduction

Open Minds is a transnational project, which seeks to investigate and fight the phenomenon of radicalization, as well as to understand the modern tendencies of extremism and radicalization which flows on social media and how this impacts the society, especially how it impacts young people. This report is the first intellectual output of the project and will focus on the collection and analysis of online and physical data on social exclusion and radicalization. The relevant sub-communal socio-economic data in the report is obtained from individual national statistical offices and relevant

stakeholders, as well as a data-harvesting process across all countries based on well-described hashtags.

The report is based on seven national reports, fieldworks and data collections from the partners of the participating countries Belgium, Bulgaria, Greece, Denmark, Cyprus, Italy and Slovenia.

Additionally, it gives an overview of the scope of radicalized environments that exist in the participating countries as well as how political history, flow of refugees, wealth, education etc. affect each country's variety and scope of radicalized environments and extremist acts. It also provides a deeper look into where these environments are located. Presently we are experiencing extremist ideologies spreading, which calls for action to develop effective prevention policies and intervention scenarios supporting social inclusion and cohesive societies. It is especially relevant to focus on psychological and social mechanisms of alienation, radicalization and de-radicalization of young people in European urban contexts. This is what the Open Minds project seeks to support and why this report is relevant for the future work of the project.

Methodology

Before starting their desk research, most project partners contacted local experts with knowledge about radicalism and political and religious movements in their countries and/or organisations responsible for preventing and fighting radicalization. The aim of this was to be more qualified in finding the right sources for the desk research, but it also gave the partners the opportunity to map entities that can offer support, expertise, and data for the following tasks in the project. The desk research was carried out studying relevant literature on the topic and searching online for different projects and organizations that are focusing on radicalization.

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The following research analysis explored the visibility and impact of the specific hashtag-marked social media messages across gender and age groups, suggested specifically by per each partner country, depending on its radicalization/polarization situations. The methodology was therefore applied via social media reach for Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Denmark, Greece, Italy and Slovenia. For the harvesting of radicalized/polarized social media data, the harvesting tool 'Social searcher' was used. After the collection of all posts, a list was made with the relevant hashtags and 3 posts were chosen from each hashtag. An analysis was made, explaining why this list of hashtags was suitable to describe the phenomena of radicalization. Then, a spatial analysis was made in order to explore the trends and socio-economic drivers of radicalization/polarization and the impact of various measures of social exclusion on radicalization across gender and age groups in an extremely disaggregated manner across urban areas within selected project countries.

A questionnaire was prepared to allow the partners to conduct the field research. A psychologist was hired in order to help compile the list of questions about perceived social exclusion, socio-economic status, inter-group experiences, and demographics, which is perceived as explanatory angles for polarized/radicalized sentiments. The project partnership decided to extend the survey and to ask specific questions to educators that could be in contact with youth at risk. The data collection survey was conducted promoting a questionnaire to young people of different gender, socio-economic, political- and educational backgrounds. The results were collected and analyzed based on the answers.

Finally, the results from all the above-mentioned activities were integrated in this synthesis report on social exclusion and radicalization.

Terms and definitions

Both Belgium, Bulgaria, Greece, Italy, Slovenia and Denmark contribute with various aspects of the terms radicalization and extremism. Some understandings are very similar but many also have various inputs, beneficial to get a wide and well-defined understanding of both terms.

Social Exclusion

A relevant aspect to investigate is the socio-economic spheres that surround radicalized people. Often radicalization is related to some kind of social exclusion. This concept has complex and multidimensional causes and consequences, creating deep and long-lasting problems for individual families, for the economy, and for society as a whole. The European Commission has originally defined social exclusion as the result of 'mechanisms whereby individuals and groups are excluded from taking part in the social exchanges, from the component practices and rights of social integration and of identity.'[1] Social exclusion goes beyond participation in working life; it is felt and shown in the fields of housing, education, health and access to services.

Extremism

The understandings of the word extremism are similar in most of the countries, but while some countries have official definitions of the term, others have not been able to find a general explanation but have investigated research and found the same characteristics as the following paragraph will elaborate.

In the action plan of 2016 from the Danish National Center for Prevention of Extremism, extremism is defined the following way: "Extremism denotes persons or groups that are seeking to act and legitimize violence and other illegal actions, with the reference of societal conditions they are unsatisfied with"[2]. Environments where people are exposed to extremism in some forms are often characterized as spheres, where there is a lack of respect for other people's rights and freedom and for institutions and processes in the society they live within. Additionally, these environments tend to have simplified conceptions of the world and pictures of enemies, where certain groups or societal conditions are perceived as threatening. Hypervisibility on the contradictions between an "us" and "them" is also a feature of how extremism is recognized. Extremism in new-age history is seen as ideologies and acts that are trying to deliberately undermine the constitutional and therefore the social order, resulting in violent acts[3]. In the Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia, article 63 states "Any incitement to national, racial, religious, or other discrimination, and the inflaming of national, racial, religious, or other hatred and intolerance are unconstitutional. Any incitement to violence and war is unconstitutional."[4].

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[1] https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/da/node/52272

[2] https://stopekstremisme.dk/

[3] T. Vonta, Committee of inquiry of the National assembly for the assessment of extremist groups activity, 2013

[4] Prohibition of Incitement to Discrimination and Intolerance and Prohibition of Incitement to Violence and War

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It is important to highlight that extremism can also occur as the result of crises, where people desperately want a change.

Radicalization

Radicalization is a process of adopting extreme opinions, views, beliefs and ideologies, to the extent of fierce rejection of all alternatives. However, even though there are groups or individuals who are praising violence, they will not necessarily act on their encouragement. These are common characteristics in both Greece, Denmark, Belgium, Cyprus, Slovenia, Bulgaria and Italy. Radicalization is a dynamic and multifaceted phenomenon. It manifests itself as a result, firstly of the interaction between people who are vulnerable or prone to radical ideas, and secondly of the existence of a favorable environment that can create opportunities for organization and participation in extremist groups. According to the action plan of Denmark from 2016 made by the National Center for Prevention of Extremism, radicalization is "[…] a shorter or longer process, where a person finds the interest in extremist viewpoints and/or joins an extremist environment and legitimize its actions according to extremist ideology". Within a generic scope, radicalization refers to the process during which individuals adopt radical perceptions of the social, political and religious status quo. In research and academia, the term is more and more avoided and is defined in a more dynamic way, as the paths that lead in and out of radicalization. It is commonly stated that these paths are influenced by both a societal-, group-, and individual level (Ibid). The Italian Parliament defines radicalization as "the phenomenon of those persons who, even without any stable link with terrorist groups, uphold ideologies of jihadist origin, inspired by the use of violence and terrorism, even by Internet and social media"[5] So, the bill places the focus exclusively on the threat of jihadist extremism **"**missing out completely the opportunity to combat all forms of political and ideological radicalization already spreading in Italy and Europe"[6].

Radicalized environments and their characteristics

Throughout the reports about the countries Greece, Denmark, Slovenia, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Belgium and Italy, there is a lot in common considering the description of the radicalized environments that is present in each national context. The most relevant and current forms of extremism and radicalized environments are religious radicalization, far right radicalization and far left radicalization. During the COVID pandemic, some countries experienced new political extremist environments that included nationalism and traditionalism influenced by the lock-downs and other consequences of the pandemic. This included the widespread QAnon movement.

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[5] https://www.iai.it/en/pubblicazioni/italys-draft-law-prevention-radicalization-missed-opportunity#_ftn12
[6] https://www.iai.it/en/news/italys-fight-against-radicalization

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Also hooliganism and sport fanatics connected with political parties is mentioned in several national contexts including Greece, Cyprus, Slovenia etc. An important note is that each country has witnessed different historical political movements, wars, crises etc. which influence the current political life. An example is Bulgaria, where the distinction between right and left-wing political parties and movements has been shaped by the country's recent history of totalitarian state socialism. After the peaceful change of the former regime in 1989 the notions of left and right-wing politics were inversed. In contrast to trends in Western Europe, and similarly to other Central and Eastern European countries, the right symbolized revolutionary change, democratic values, human and civil rights and liberties, and to an extent, the protection of the national interest, while the left stood for conservatism, totalitarianism, the preservation of the status-quo and Russian domination.

Characteristics of a potentially radicalized person

Socio-economic status must be said to have an influence on the risk of being radicalized. The lower socio-economic class a person is a part of and resides within, the more the person risks being radicalized. This is of course a huge generalization, but it is a tendency we cannot overlook throughout all the countries, which have contributed to this report. However, it is important to state that you can be highly educated, have a good job - and become radicalized as well. An important fact mentioned in several national contexts is that the people acting on their radicalization often are considered 'lone wolves' and often are not acting in huge groupings at a time. In general, youth is reported to be more vulnerable to extremism and radicalization. Social transitions of adolescence focus on identity, independence, gender roles, moral code and values. The development of mental processes and personal qualities enable adolescents to reflect on perspectives of life and to create a certain relationship with their social environment. Specifically, for the case of far-right extremism, it is often about young people from the lower socio-economic classes and coming from areas that are more economically vulnerable or have suffered from recent crises in Europe. Moreover, social exclusion as well as the lack of professional prospects due to the high rates of youth unemployment are two common characteristics among radicalized young people[7]. The most common individual factors are social marginalization, limited cognitive abilities, exasperated sense of justice and morality, superficial knowledge of the belonging in faith/ideology. Those characteristics, added to the typical ones of teenagers, can create a fertile field for triggers, whether traumas or meetings with charismatic leaders[8]. Additionally, those who lack freedom of expression or experience a violation of their basic human rights tend to be of potential to react extremely to such violations.

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[7] (Malkoutzis, 2011).

[8] (Margot Zanetti, 2018 Università Niccolò Cusano)

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Besides from the above-mentioned characteristics, being young, being violated of one's rights, belonging to a lower socioeconomic class, the following can be added to the list of often observed characteristics:

- impatience and/or intolerance
- character immaturity and psychological predisposition to political or religious indoctrination
- generalization of an enemy
- conspiracy beliefs.
- change in clothes, personal and visual expression, hobbies
- open sympathy for extreme environments
- withdrawal from family and friends and spending abnormal amounts of time with a new group.
- change in language, more ideologically orientated, critical towards specific groups the person normally did not have interest for, talks more about justice
- use of symbols and logos which can be associated with extremist environments
- change in use of books, websites etc.

Statistics on the scope of radicalized people

An overall comment to the question about statistics and radicalization is that there exist a huge shadow number of cases and that the recorded statistics are often based on only directly violently carried out actions that can be clearly proved e.g. with arrests or sentences. This is not representative of the number of people in the partner countries, who are being radicalized but are not yet acting on their visions. Some of the national reports have stated that it is challenging to find concrete statistics in this field, e.g. in Cyprus. It is a relevant aspect itself, that there is a lack of knowledge about the scope of the problem. This is also noteworthy, when at the same time the reported actions, which seem similar with extremist actions, actually come from the parliamentary parties. From Bulgaria there are no publicly accessible indicators or methodological tools for monitoring radicalization trends and risks, or any early-warning systems for flagging up potential radicalization signs early on. In Italy, data on radicalized people are associated specifically with

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prisons. There are 375 known radicalized people in Italian prisons, 170 are monitored closely as more dangerous or considered dangerous. Other 45 are "labelled as terrorists".[9]

OCAM (L'Organe de Coordination pour l'Analyse de la Menace is a Common Database (CDB) containing the names of all known extremists and terrorists in Belgium. This database is the instrument to share valuable information with partner services. The thousands of other far-right sympathizers, who are not included in the OCAM lists are not harmless. In a confidential note of February 2020, the OCAM mentions the great similarities between radicalization within the extreme right and that of Islamic jihadists. Similar psychological motivations, the same "them against us" sentiment, and other social events drive them to be violent.

According to the Europol TE-SAT data published in 2017, from 2012 until 2016 there were 85 arrests in total linked with violent radicalization actions/incidents in Greece. Furthermore, according to Europol's Report on Terrorism for 2018, Greece demonstrates the highest number of far-left attacks. However, we need to highlight at this point that relevant incident referring to far-right attacks are not recorded and therefore, not included within the aforementioned report.

Most Common Radicalized Environments

Extremist far-left ideologies is a political indignation of the structure of society, which is unjust to poor people, to the environment and which fosters wars and economic/capitalist world order. This ideology often has anarchistic tendencies and is very visual in statistics of political violence, as it seeks to ruin the order of society as it is and implement a fairer and more equal world order. A central far-left movement is the current climate activists, that fight for a, in their eyes, fair distribution of the use of resources. This is a reaction to recent years climate changes, which also recent reports underline e.g. the IPCC report from the UN.

A conclusion that can be made very early in this report, is that there is very little evidence or reports on far-left radicalized environments in the countries these years. This, of course, is a sign of how society is formed, and can change quickly, as it has been seen in several of the countries in recent centuries. Extreme left-wing, anarchist and eco-terrorist groups are not to be underestimated, and are active in several of the countries as well.

Right-wing extremism is a widespread phenomenon, given its resurgence in Europe, since the asylum crisis of 2015 and the terrorist attacks of 2016. This notion is recognized in several of the contributing countries. The prevalence of hate speech in the public space and especially on the internet should be considered, both in terms of its impact on the phenomenon of violent radicalization and the social dynamics on which extremists rely in their speech and recruitment. Basically, there are potentially violent neo-Nazi movements, anti-Islam

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[9] https://openmigration.org/idee/mettere-al-centro-i-diritti-per-combattere-la-radicalizzazione-in-carcere/

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activists, identity movements and paramilitary organisations present in a lot of the countries included in this report such as Italy, Belgium, Denmark.

Religious extremist ideas are mostly considered Islamism and Jihadism, which are also the most evident environments throughout all of the countries reports. Some have experienced the resurgence of political parties e.g. Hizb ut-Tahrir and some have seen a growth in people leaving to fight for the Caliphate in the Middle East, after having been radicalized in their local environments. The jihadist movement remains active, and to the problem of returnees are now added those of the care, follow-up and reintegration into society of people convicted of terrorist acts.

Distribution

In different national contexts, different distributions of the radicalized environments are recognized. Besides from the above-mentioned factors related to socio-economic status and its impact on radicalization, the following paragraph will try to elaborate on the areas where people might meet radicalized environments. By reading the national reports, a learning was that two main spheres or platforms also foster radicalized environments, which are presented in this paragraph as well. It is also noteworthy, that the distribution of radicalized environments has been harder to locate than first expected, which is a conclusion itself. These movements are not very transparent when it comes to finding their physical existence.

A common characteristic for the findings of the participating countries, is that many of the radicalized environments are found where many people from the same social class are living in the same area. An example could be that many socially vulnerable residential areas are located a bit outside of city centers and are therefore sometimes excluded in both the infrastructural planning, social mobility in schools etc. which promotes primarily one lifestyle. This could be where many refugees are located, who might practice political ideologies without much interference from the normative society. This sphere can create radicalized environments, especially for young people, who find a social circle almost exclusively in such an area. On the other hand, in areas where a lot of resources are located in the same area, the same tendency can occur, where people are not interfering with the norm in the society, but are mostly in private schools with people from the same background as themselves etc. and are prioritized a lot in local municipalities. Here extreme ideologies can also grow, as there is little understanding for the "others".

Two striking platforms, where radicalization tends to grow are found during the research phase. These two platforms are not related to geographical distributions in regions but are instead spheres where the extreme ideologies are present.

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Online platforms and social media: Online, people have the possibility to seek networks and environments they perhaps were not linked to before. Here it is possible to anonymously investigate different political or religious spheres, and perhaps get intentionally or unintentionally in contact with extremist environments where the risk of being radicalized exists. In recent years we have witnessed the growth of an embryo Italian jihadist community on the web, and in particular on some social networks. Social media are mentioned as well in several national contexts as a platform with a huge risk of getting in touch with radicalized environments. In Belgium, right-wing extremists do this mainly through encrypted software like Discord or internet forums like 4chan and 8chan. But many right-wing extremists simply post their messages on traditional social networks such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, and use more 'permissive' channels such as Vkontakte or Telegram for their discourse. Later in the report, the social media are described further, as a few hashtags have been followed and researched during some time. This creates an insight into these forums, where ideologies with extreme tendencies seem to be present.

The prisons: In the environment of a prison, it is natural to be isolated from the external world for a while. This thus creates a place, where extremist people can sometimes reach vulnerable people, while they are alone and are having a lot of time to spend. This combination has proven to be a dangerous one considering the risk of being radicalized.

Stakeholders and Best Practices

Throughout the involved partners' countries there is a wide range of organisations, institutions and activists, who are counteracting radicalization and extremism. This is beneficial as we have places to learn from and people to cooperate with. Both public and private institutions exist as well as organizations, which provide helpful research, help centers, emergency call-lines, and educational material to prevent radicalization from happening.

Examples

- The Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy (ELIAMEP): an independent, non-governmental, nonprofit think tank, established in Athens, Greece.
- The "Aarhus Model" is a Danish well-known tool, which has been copied worldwide. This regional effort began in 2007 and is today still the tool being used against radicalization, terrorism and extremism. It has also caused a decrease in reported persons, who have become radicalized or are suspected radicalized persons. The model is unique as it involves cooperation with both the police, the regional offices, the local organizations and help-centers. It also includes volunteer powers, which are also quite interesting. This model mostly includes radicalization in Islamism and Syrian Warriors. It is a model that seeks to create trust to authorities and therefore also cooperates with local mosques and other significant environments, which host these potential extremisms[10]
- KISA is a NGO focused on the fields of Migration, Asylum, Racism, Discrimination and Trafficking, and it includes awareness-raising of the Cypriot society as well as lobbying in order to influence the legal and structural framework, the policies and practices in these fields[11]
- Unite Cyprus Now is a multi-communal grassroots non-party initiative of Cypriots promoting actions in support of peace and the reunification of the island through a negotiated settlement[12]
- In 2011, the Police of Slovenia initiated the National network of specialist for disabling radicalization, also developing a training program for the "multipliers" from various work sectors, such as governmental stakeholders, NGOs, academia and university members
- In Bulgaria, The Commissions for Public Order and Safety at municipal and regional level are the main platforms for information exchange and cooperation between police, local authorities and other relevant institutions and community actors.
- RAN radicalization awareness network[13] is having more than 700 experts and field workers from the whole Europe.
- In Belgium, the Commissions for Public Order and Safety at municipal and regional level are the main platforms for information exchange and cooperation between police, local authorities and other relevant institutions and community actors. Also, a 'Radicalism Action Plan' (Plan R) was developed in 2005 and revised in 2015

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[10] https://stiften.dk/artikel/aarhus-modellen-har-det-godt-antallet-af-radikaliserings-henvendelser-er-faldet

[11] https://kisa.org.cy/

[12] https://unitecyprusnow.org/

[13] https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network_en

- Slovenia is developing holistic anti-terrorist operations via the Council for National Safety and via Interministerial team for counterterrorism, which carry out systemic approaches and solutions. Slovenia is also the initiator of the operative task force against terrorism in the West-Balkan region, consisting out of more than 50 organizations and donors within the sector.

- Radicalization is also mentioned in the Bulgarian National Strategy for the Integration of Roma (2012 – 2020). The Strategy's objectives under the fifth priority area "rule of law and non-discrimination" include: The strategy and the action plan attached to it include a wide range of measures aimed at ensuring tolerance-based multi-ethnic relations, fostering cultural pluralism, social inclusion and equality.
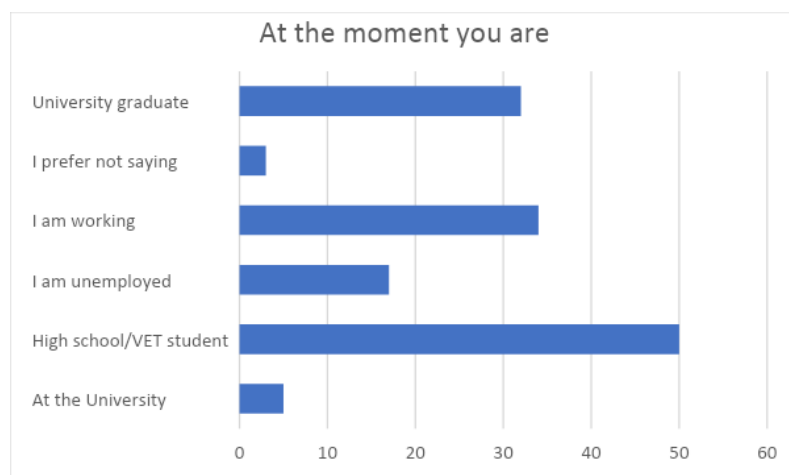
Field Research and Data Collection

The following paragraph consists of the results of the fieldwork, based on interviews and questionnaires, that have been used and analyzed in all partner countries. The profiles of the people who participated in the survey were as follows:

GENDER

68 out of 140 participants were female. 65 out of the participants were male. Seven participants preferred not to say.

PRESENT OCCUPATION

At the moment you are

University graduate	~32
I prefer not saying	~3
I am working	~34
I am unemployed	~17
High school/VET student	~50
At the University	~5

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At the time of the survey, 50 out of 141 participants attended high school and VET schools. 34 respondents were working and 32 were university graduates. Five participants were studying at a university and three respondents did not wish to say.
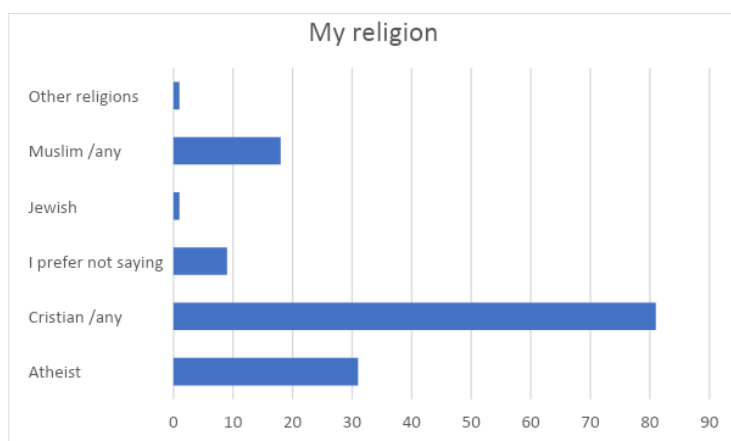
HOUSING SITUATION
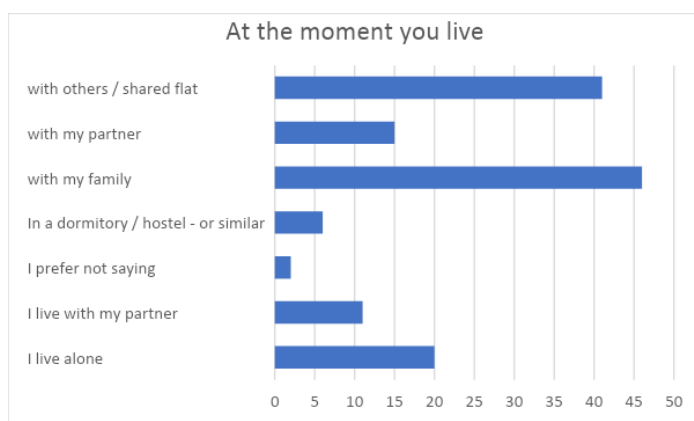
At the time of the survey, 46 out of 141 participants, lived with their own families and 41 participants lived with others in a shared accommodation. Twenty participants lived alone, eleven people with a partner, six people lived in a hostel or dormitory and two participants preferred not to say.

RESIDENTIAL AREA
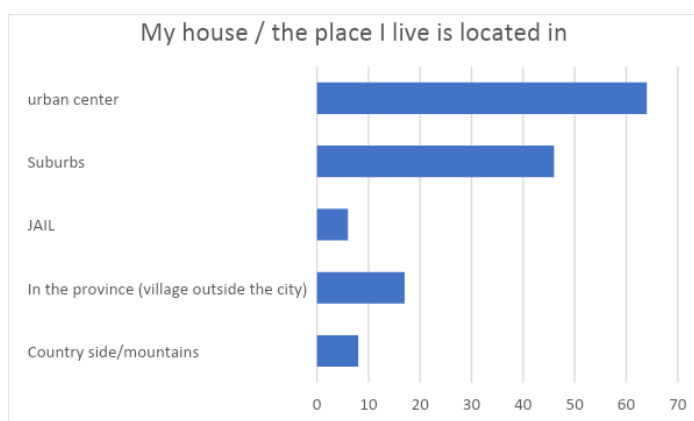
At the time of the survey, 64 out of 141 participants, lived in an accommodation in an urban central. 46 participants lived in the suburbs, seventeen people lived in the province, eight people lived in the countryside or in the mountains, and six people stayed in prison.

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RELIGION

My religion

81 out of 141 respondents claimed to belong to one of the Christian dominations, whereas 31 persons claimed to be atheists. Eighteen participants belonged to one of the Muslim faiths. One person was Jewish, one belonged to another religion and nine respondents preferred not to say.

Who were the youth workers?

PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND

Professional background / Study completed (most relevant elements)
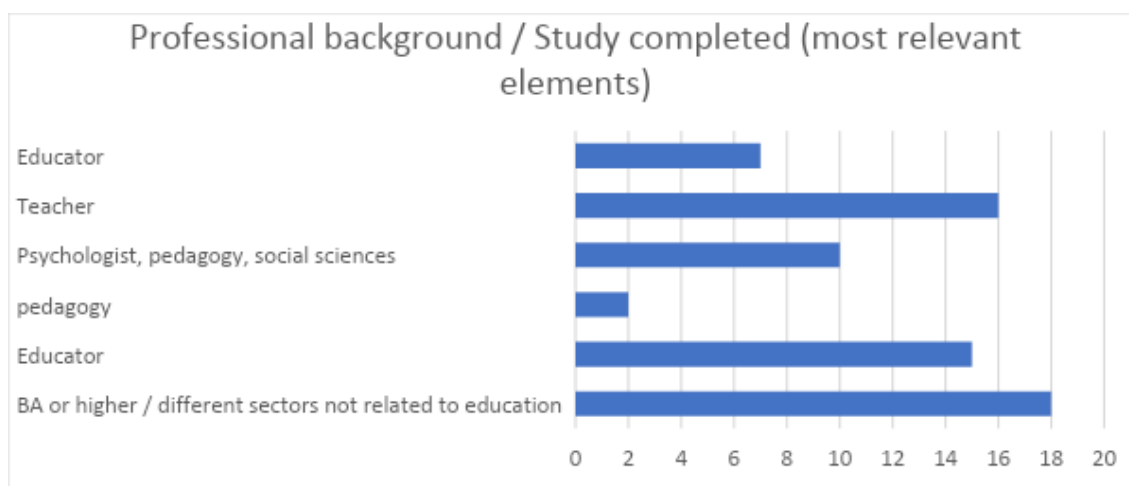
Eighteen out of 68 respondents have a bachelor's degree from a sector other than education. Sixteen respondents are qualified teachers and fifteen are different types of educators. Ten respondents work as psychologists or in the field of social sciences. Two respondents work as penologists and seven work in other educational sectors.

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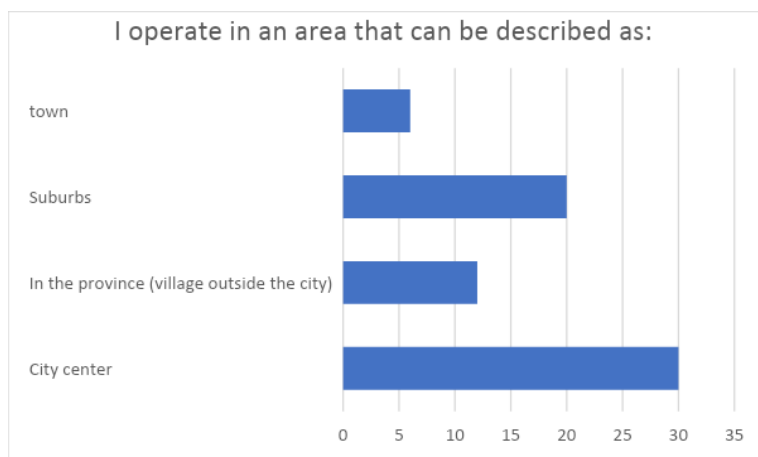
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WORKPLACE

23 out of 68 respondents work for non-profit organizations, whereas nineteen respondents work at universities. Twelve participants in the survey work for a public entity, six work in a high school and eight people work with a training company.

MAIN TASKS
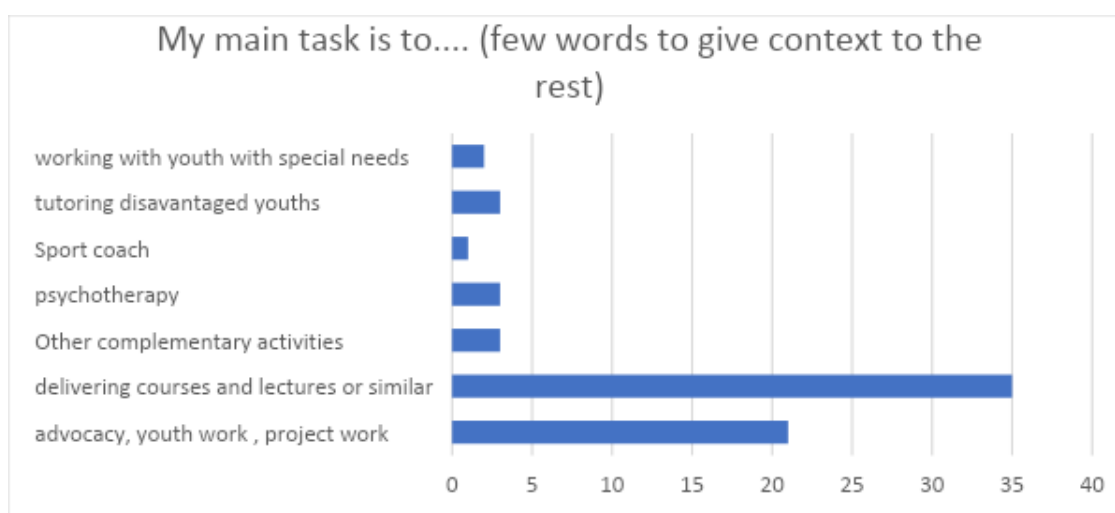
35 out of 68 respondents deliver courses or lectures and 21 respondents do advocacy, youth or project type of work. Three participants work as psychotherapists and one as a sport coach. Three people tutor disadvantaged youths and two work with youth with special needs.

RESIDENTIAL AREA

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I operate in an area that can be described as:

The questions were answered by 68 people who mostly live in city centres. 20 respondents were from the suburbs and twelve were from villages outside of the city. Finally, six people live in a town.

Definitions

According to the findings in the fieldwork, some of the youth worker respondents state that "a common characteristic of extremism and the radicalisation process to which the members of these groups are subjected in order to possibly carry out terrorist acts, is the violent adaptation of the world to the model they envision. In this perspective, the means are of little importance in the face of achieving the goal of the 'ideal society'. Society is presented as 'corrupt' or 'alienated', as 'drifting' into a way of life that runs counter to the ideals of the extremist ideology in question, and the terrorist group is presented as the 'self-appointed saviour' of a misguided world.". Another youth worker added that "a key element of embracing extremist ideas is the need for diversity as opposed to the uniformity of accepted norms and majority opinions as well as the placing of trust and responsibility in institutions and rules since they seem to have become disillusioned with their lives, society and state policies."

From the fieldwork it was found that many youth worker respondents viewed the ways of expressing one's interests and opinions such as persistence of opinions, the possession of extremist literature; strong beliefs expressed with anger and not stepping down when opposed; expressing extreme beliefs and hate towards others as well as underestimating others; showing the feeling of unfairness using inappropriate language and political incorrect statements; and displaying a sudden change in interests and in one's way of life, as possible indicators of radicalization. A youth worker saw "an experience of injustice and a feeling of being left behind" a major indicator.

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Besides the above official descriptions previously in the report, the same understanding was clear in the fieldwork where some answered that "one of the most relevant elements for young people is the access they have on internet; how easy they can be influenced through other people on the internet as they spend lots of time on their laptops and phones". This also puts emphasis on the lack of interaction with the real world and how you can feel social on social media while becoming socially excluded.

Prevention of Radicalization

One of the proven most effective tools to prevent radicalization is early knowledge about the topic. Via addressing the topic in schools, students can learn to understand and recognize radicalization, see the traps of manipulation and propaganda, and learn tools for preventing it. According to the fieldwork among youth workers, it has been very beneficial to experience how the people in the field see the solutions to the problem. Some respondents suggested creating open societies that welcome and embrace young people's participation employing a peaceful and friendly approach; offering information and positive role models and/or mentors who can serve as guides not as judges. With reference to addressing the issue of radicalization, numerous respondents added paying attention to the issue early on; collaborating with NGO's and institutions; offering education, awareness, teaching respect for different cultures, ideas, way of life, religion, beliefs, and gender equality; creating and making educational material accessible in digital formats; learning to welcome differences, expressing empathy and solidarity; increasing social control and monitoring people at risk. Most youth worker respondents put great emphasis on education and social awareness such as building diversity programs and using team building techniques; teaching and learning about different cultures and offering history lessons of different cultures. Some respondents saw providing job opportunities and making the use of sport and free-time facilities for free of charge particularly for vulnerable groups of people with less resources as the most effective tools and techniques to be used in preventing radicalization.

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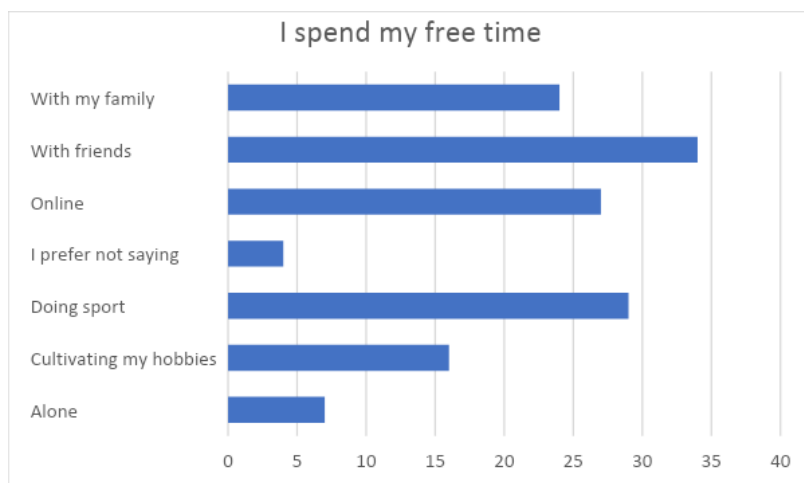
FREE TIME

Here it is noteworthy to add, that 7,8 percent of the youth respondents stated that they spend their free time alone and primarily in front of their computer. Young people like the ones who have been giving this answer, would probably benefit from a wider selection of free time activities.

Fieldwork with the youth

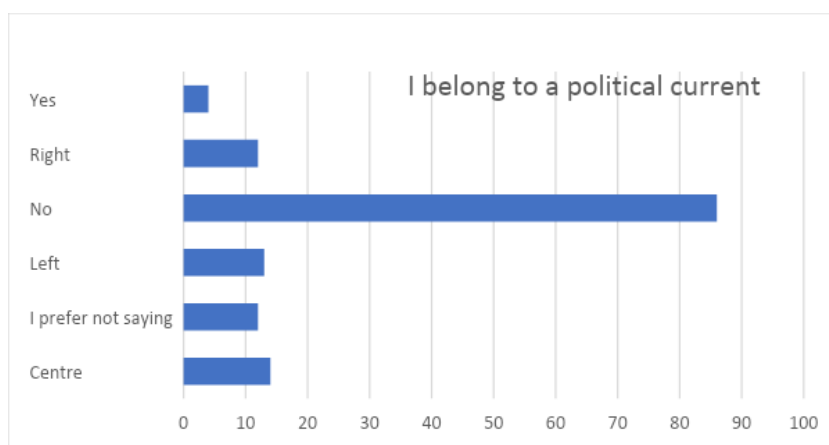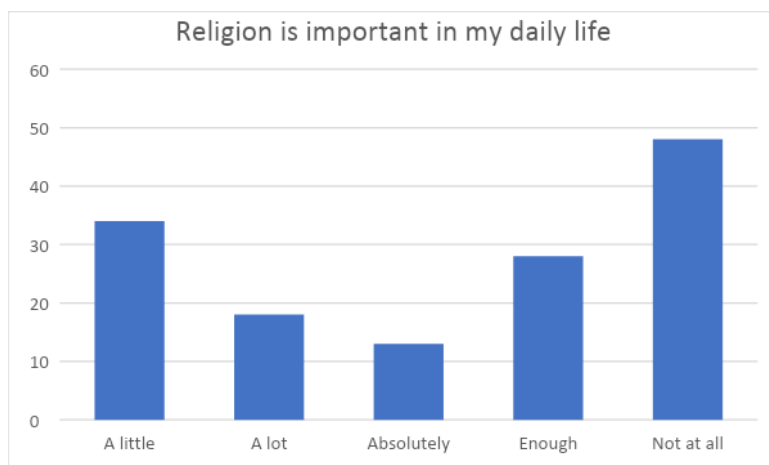In the framework of the above characteristics the fieldwork conducted are hereby analyzed.

FINANCIAL SITUATION OF PARENTS
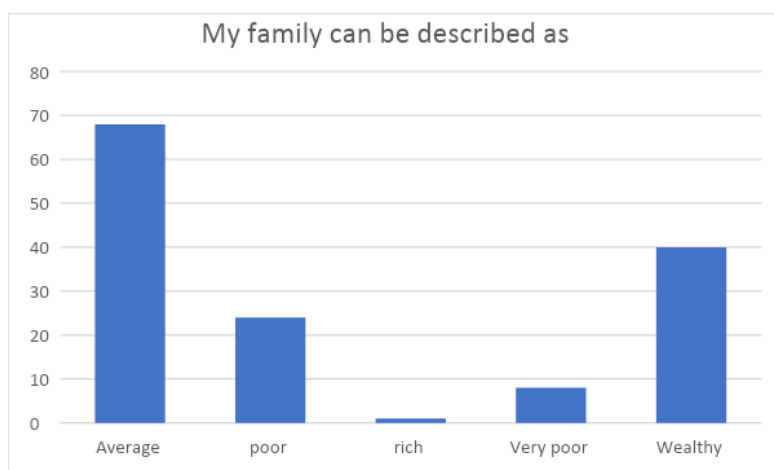
30,5 percent of the respondents claimed that their family's wealth status was poor or very poor. 28 percent claimed that their family was average, and the rest found their families a bit or very wealthy. This creates a representative picture of people from different socio-economic backgrounds.

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IDEOLOGIES

Religion is important in my daily life

I belong to a political current

20 percent of the respondents declare that religion/political beliefs is important or absolutely important in order to make the right decisions in life. 34 percent declare that religion has little to no importance when making life-decisions.

DISCRIMINATION

16 percent of the respondents states that they sometimes or often experience discrimination based on their religion, while 61 percent never or almost never experience this type of discrimination. This comes with an explanation from one of the respondents that when not being very religious, you feel less offended or targeted by criticism or propaganda.

USE OF VIOLENCE

81 percent of the respondents state that it is not acceptable to defend your religious/political beliefs with violence while 8 percent found it sometimes necessary/appropriate.

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Based on the above statistics about religion and politics, we can see that the majority are not experiencing discrimination and as well this majority are also not believing in defending their religious beliefs with violence. A smaller group experience other tendencies, and are perhaps - based on the above theory - also the ones more willing to defend themselves, if they are experiencing ongoing discrimination based on their religion.

Social Media Research

The following research analysis explores the visibility and impact of the specific hashtag-marked social media messages across gender and age groups within the scope of project partners, that suggested them specifically per each partner country, depending on their radicalization/polarization situations. The methodology was therefore applied via social media reach for Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Denmark, Greece, Italy and Slovenia. The harvesting tool used was "Social Searcher", which allows monitoring of all public social mentions in social networks and web via search for content in real-time and provides deep analytics data. The report per partner country consists of the list of identified hashtags, and the scraping results, where the project partners aimed at the interpretation of the 3 most (negatively) outstanding ones, based on the previously gathered information via desk research per partner country. This of course does not create a representative image of the social media in general, but it grants an insight of the potential extremist ideologies that could be of huge danger to the people interacting with them and later on a danger to their environment.

Having in mind how much time young people spend online, questions about this was also asked in the above mentioned fieldwork with the youth. Here, 42 percent of the respondents acknowledged that they use the web in some sort, to stay in contact with people and groups from the same political and religious background as themselves. It can be interpreted from this statistic that quite many young people, get news and insights from the same viewpoint as they hold themselves, meaning that this might not always be an objective insight. When reading the next paragraph, it is therefore important to remember that people in general might not be radicalized from one or two of the highlighted hashtags, but that these statements flow within groups that are already cultivating this ideology and that the statements might not seem that radical to them, why they come to believe that this is the truth/reality.

Belgium

The Belgian partner, Projects for Europe (PEF) chose hashtags in all languages spoken in Belgium - French, Flemisch and German.

#commentosentils (how do they dare?), #freedomconvoy, #Freedom, #freedomconvoyBelgium, #smaad (defamation), #Freedom, #Nogreenpass, #Liberté, #vrijheid (freedom) #Freiheit (freedom), #Impfpflicht (mandatory vaccination), #NoVaccinePassports, #NoVaccineMandates

All those are critical hashtag against the campaign for the COVID vaccine. We think it is very important to mention those hashtags because the anti vax campaign is very strong in Belgium and in Brussels many protests with people from many different places in Europe. The freedom convoy organized many protests in Brussels in some cases with many bad consequences for the city (destruction, crashes with the police, wounded people).

#migrant, #integration, #diversiteit (diversity), #integratie (integration), #migratie (migration)

Those hashtags underline a very important issue in Belgium. Indeed, for the far-right wing it is a very strong electoral topic, but also in the rest of the country it is a very sensible issue. First of all because migration, especially the Italian migration, after the Second World War was important for the economy of the country and there is a high level of people born from Italian migrants. Second, because in Brussels, at Park Maxilimilen, there are a lot of migrants from Africa and many other parts of the world (Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq) waiting for a lift to London or other European places to try their fortune. It's like a very huge camp inside the city, close to the shopping area and the city center. We can understand there is a very strong activism from the people, even if in an individual way organized by the social network.

Bulgaria

In Bulgaria, Horizont ProConsult organization identified and explained the following hashtags:
#протест (= "protest")

The popularity of the **hashtag #протест** (protest) has been rising in the last number of years in Bulgaria due to unstable political situation in the country and the constant changes regarding the epidemic situation. The protest movement was the culmination of long-standing grievances against endemic corruption and state capture[14]. There were 3 parliamentary elections as there was no consensus among the elected parties for organization of the parliament in 2021.

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[14] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2020%E2%80%932021_Bulgarian_protests

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#антиваксъри (= "antivaxxers")

The **hashtag #антиваксъри** was chosen due to the never stopping discussions regarding the vaccination against Covid-19 and the vaccination certificates that are used along the globe.

The movement against the vaccines was very strong in Bulgaria where less than a third of the population is vaccinated against Covid-19. Anti-vaccine protesters tried to storm the Bulgarian parliament in Jan 2021 and briefly scuffled with police officers during a massive rally against coronavirus restrictions in downtown Sofia. Over 3,000 people gathered in front of the parliament building, demanding the lifting of a mandatory health pass which they said trampled on their rights and was a back-door means of forcing people to get vaccinated. Waving national flags and flags of the ultra-nationalist Revival party, which organized the rally, they chanted "Freedom" and "Mafia" and decried all measures against the virus[15]. Except of this priory there were protest and attacks against medical personal who was vaccinating people in Varna, the third largest city in Bulgaria[16]. "*There are some percentages of people, stupid opportunists and stupidly sad freedom-loving plums! #sunrise of the day from me! # неСваваш # антиВаксъри и # антиМаскари*"

#не на радикализацията (= "no to radicalization")

Based on this hashtag we were able to see different opinions and research on the topic of radicalization. Far-right organizations in Bulgaria are diverse, from political parties to conservative organizations (Society and Values) to informal groups (Skinheads). Without following a clear ideology, they share strong nationalist sentiments based on racist, xenophobic, or homophobic ideas. Their activities range from publishing propaganda texts and organizing protest marches such as the Lukovmarsh to committing hate crimes.

Denmark

The Danish partner, SOSU Ostjylland, chose to work with right wing radicalism, which is a tendency that have experienced an increase during the last two decades in the country. It has been discovered that several small groups and political parties with an extreme right-wing ideology are in resurgence both in the big cities like Copenhagen and in smaller areas.

#DanskStolthed

This hashtag is translated as Danish Pride. A general observation about Danish Pride, is that it is more popular among the elderly people in Denmark than the in younger generations.

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[15] https://edition.cnn.com/2022/01/13/europe/bulgaria-anti-vaccine-protesters-intl/index.html
[16] https://bntnews.bg/news/antivaksari-napadnaha-medicinski-ekip-vav-varna-zdravniyat-ministar-s-ostra-reakciya-1169348news.html

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In an article from the Danish media Zetland, some research was made about nationalism in Denmark. The article is based on research which is made every 9th year and is called "The Danish Value Research". It concludes that we are living in the time of patriotism and "danishness". Even though we have become prouder of the Danish culture, which have proven to be a tendency since 1981, we are not becoming nearly as much nationalistic. This means that we are proud of our political and cultural heritage, but not necessarily that people believe Danish people as a "race" are better than other nations. In 2017 more than 55 % declares they are proud and less than 6 % are not proud to be Danish[17]. The results on the search on this hashtag shows that it has been used by lot of antivaxx movements and general corona skeptical, which in Denmark are known to be mostly right-wing movements. A noteworthy movement is the Men in Black, which is an extremely corona-critical movement. A user who has been using this hashtag is the Danish politician Rasmus Paludan, who is also the founder of the party "Stram Kurs". Rasmus himself and several party members are previously sentenced for racism, and the party today are extremely critical towards "alien cultures". Today his twitter account has been deleted, as he had too many banned posts as they were against the rules of what is allowed to post about on twitter.

#HomoLobby

During our research phase we discovered a movement called Nordfront or in English: North Front, which is a radical nationalist movement in Denmark. Their motto is "North Front - For the Freedom of the North"[18]. Besides being extremely critical towards immigrants and refugees, their ideology neglects the rights of LGBT+ people and they are ready to use extreme means in order to get rid of LGBT+ minorities' basic rights in both the public sphere, in the law and in their private lives. In articles, in tweets and on Reddit the hashtag #HomoLobby is used, as they believe the LGBT+ community are lobbying and threatening the healthy society, which North Front believes consists of a normative family, relationships and binary genders.

"*[Nordfront] Will actively fight the xenophobic homolobby, and consequently enlighten the people of what a destructive effect they have on the Nordic People[19]*"

"*HOMOLOBBY: Danish Public Television are tributing an only 12-year-old boy for wanting to be a part of an extremely sexualizing environment*" These statements are found on the Northfront website, on reddit and twitter, which means they have a wide exposure to different target groups. One of the forums on twitter where the articles with these statements are found, have a participant number of more than 280.000 people from all over Scandinavia.

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[17] https://www.zetland.dk/historie/so4E9XxL-m8qDDxJm-e0036

[18] https://www.nordfront.dk/

[19] https://www.nordfront.dk/homolobbyen-hvorfor-skal-bekaempes/

#MasseIndvandring

The word means mass immigration and has been used in terms of both politically left and right wings as well as in more objective fields when speaking of e.g., climate refugees. Some of the results found are that the right-wing radicals are using this term as a description of the current situation in Denmark, even though the country is taking the minimum of United Nations UNHCR refugees, and that the numbers of immigrants have not seen drastic increases for years[20]. We chose the hashtag about mass immigration as it has also been used as an equivalent to "murder of the original people". This is a way of portraying immigrants as a huge danger to the Danish society and people. This figures around Reddit, where many of the users that have used the word genocide have been blocked, but where the term mass immigration is more accepted, and is therefore used in the same sense.

Cyprus

In Cyprus, among others, the following hashtags were chosen by STANDO LTD:

The far-right political parties and groups in Cyprus (especially ELAM) believe that the possibility of an expected federation with the Turkish Cypriot community can only be considered a great national betrayal[21]. It is expected that the hashtags **#ηκυπροςειναιελληνικη** and **#enosis** are most likely used to express the dissatisfaction of the far-right members about the declined of the idea of 'enosis'.

#enosis is: "*I doubt Communist China would appreciate that statement considering that Japan can use a similar argument to justify preventing Taiwan's own enosis with China*"[22]. The post is accompanied by an article from a Russian blog with title: fact is that the Turkish Army had to protect the Turkish Minority against Greek atrocities[23]. The article tries to justify Russia's decision to invade Crimea in order to achieve country's annexation from Ukraine[24]. The user on the other hand explains that China wouldn't be happy with this statement, because can be used by Japan to prevent Taiwan's enosis with the first[25]. The post is focusing on three international issues which at first, they seem similar, but overall, they are completely different from each other. The post can be found on twitter by a male user with around 250 followers and moderate activity to the medium since 2014. His posts are focused on Cyprus defence and external policies, using a far-right language.

We also chose the hashtags **#anarxia** which is translated as 'anarchy' and express a small part of Cypriot left. Even though anarchy it is usually considered as extremist left, Cypriots public opinion have a softer approach

20 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hJUnZbrPckg

21 https://elamcy.com/geadis-geadi-apokalypseis-poioi-einai-oi-prodotes-kai-poioi-oi-ethnarches-omilia-20-iouliou-2015/

22 https://twitter.com/BrianHu10

23 https://ddr-aussenstelle-tel-aviv.blogspot.com/2022/01/turkish-invasion-of-cyprus-divided.html?spref=tw

24 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Annexation_of_Crimea_by_the_Russian_Federation

25 https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-59900139

on what it actually is[26]. In a way, some describe anarchy as the refusal to follow the laws and measures of the government, having complete free will and acting without worrying about the consequences of their actions[27]. Cypriots often connects anarchy with atheism, anti-nationalists and anti-democratic left movements, while far–right parties believe that antifascists are also anarchist. A second post for hashtag **#anarxia** is: "*Anarchy = Freedom*"[28]. The post is accompanied by a photo of wall with cues that are negatively charged from far-left ideology. The target of the cues are Police (Fuck police), CIA (Fuck CIA) and World Trade Organization (Kill ΠΟΕ). The statements refer to an antisystem approach, which believes that state existence is unnecessary and need to be abolished[29]. That approach is the core of political anarchism which is extreme and can be seen as danger from democratic powers, both left and right. The verbal attack to police, CIA and World trade organization it also explained from the anti-capitalistic perspective that anarchism presents. The post can be found on Tumblr by a user focusing on graffiti. It describes its profile as "a blog devoted to anti-capitalist, anti-authoritarian and anti-colonial graffiti from around the world''. The chosen post it represents both anti-capitalist and anti-authoritarian elements which can be found both in radical left (far-left) and extremist left (anarchy).

Greece

The Greek partner INNOVATION HIVE chose the hashtag **#anti-Greek** which means the person who stands against the Greek nation or pursues a policy against Greek interests. It is a common word in the far-right extremism speech as it describes the belief that the Greek Parliament Members -especially the ones from the governing parties- cooperate with foreign interests in order to subjugate the Greek population and use Greece as their protectorate. In addition, the "Greek race" is considered a superior to all other nationalities according to the far-right radicalization. Several of conspiracy theories, which are significantly popular to the exponents of the far-right radicalization, mention that the Western world always desire to tear the Greek nation apart and change its culture[30]. The main reason is its geographical position and the benefits which will be gained with the conquering of Greek territory. Therefore, the Western World is the main and the only responsible for the issues in the economic system, political system and the productivity model of Greece.

The hashtag **#antiantifa** is chosen due to the directly connection with the opposite hashtag **#antifa**. The word antifa describes the movement's ideology which is rooted in the belief that the society has to aggressively fight

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[26] https://www.grin.com/document/505722

[27] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anarchy

[28] https://radicalgraff.tumblr.com/image/162397433457

[29] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anarchism

[30] Melios, G., (2020) Europe in Crisis: Political Trust, Corruption and Austerity, Institute for Global Prosperity, Athens, Greece

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and resist the spread of fascism. Antifa activists see fascism as the violent enactment and enforcement of biological and social inequalities between people and react, even, with the use of violence against the supporters of the Nazism. Most Antifa adherents today come from the anarchist movement or from the far Left. The opponents of the antifa, the Anti-antifa movement contend that the antifascists and their acts of violence serve to normalize violence more broadly and strongly believe that there are commonalities of the extremism of both Right and Left. The "theory of the two extremes" argues that the extreme Left, and the extreme Right side of the political spectrum are identical, as they are common violent expressions of a totalitarian conception of the world and society, although they have different signs, conflicting beliefs and ideological origins[31]. The second post about the hashtag **#anti-antifa** is an article on the blogspot "hellas-antifa". In the article "*Common Fascist Strategy*" the author analyses that the similarities between the two extremes are endless. He believes that their actions in the field of terrorism are also common. He uses an example about how the Nazi sympathizers discourse is so similar to that of the anarcho-fascists (the use of the word anarcho-fascists emphasizes that anarchy is equally fascist) as they write exactly the same slogans on the walls. In his text are inserted two images with the slogan "*The state is the only terrorist*", which is written by both fascist groups and anarchist groups. In addition, the author believes that the use of this simple statement – the state terrorizes us - the two extremists beat the dissidents, incite to murder, break, desecrate and burn anything that does not serve their ideology. The references of the "theory of the two extremes" in the article are obviously visible. Unfortunately, according to studies the belief of the two same extremes and the overcoming of the left-right divide, rather than helping to establish a peaceful society, paves the way for the development of right populist movements[32].

The hashtag **#traitors** is chosen due to its frequently use by extremists. Often, the politicians and their voters are labelled traitors by their political opponents and the right-wing forces. The far-right perception is that there is only one nationally appropriate policy and anyone different policy is treason. Over the past decade Greek citizens' confidence in different political institutions, politicians and political parties declined sharply due to their ineffectiveness find solutions in the socio-economic issues. Furthermore, the financial crisis uncovered a fomenting democratic deficit which led to the rise of the extreme political polarization, populism and far-right/ far-left radicalization. The austerities measures were characterized as antidemocratic, against the Greek nation and were the main causes of the protest vote rising[33]. The second post which is related to the hashtag **#traitors** is "*Why do we no longer decorate the squares at Christmas with mangers? Are we afraid that illegal immigrants will be misunderstood? We will not adapt. They should accept and adopt our manners and customs. #traitors*" The relationship between the anti-democratic values and the lack of trust in the political system can be explained by the fact that the far-right people believe that the politicians who represent the institutions are

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[31] https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/can-europe-make-it/far-right-in-greece-and-theory-of-two-extremes-0/

[32] https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/can-europe-make-it/far-right-in-greece-and-theory-of-two-extremes-0/

[33] Melios, G., (2020) Europe in Crisis: Political Trust, Corruption and Austerity, Institute for Global Prosperity, Athens, Greece

traitors of the Greek nation and their decisions serve foreign interest. Moreover, the far-right belief is that the refugees will change our culture and we have to resist achieving our "racial purity". The post is written on Twitter by a young woman with over than 1000 followers and active presentence in the platform. Her posts are related to autarchic, nationalism, xenophobia, and hate speech against refugee.

#anti-Greek and #traitor example "*The Treaty of Prespa was the main reason that Syriza loose the elections due to the punitive votes. This agreement reveals that Tsipras (former Prime Minister of Greece) is An Anti-Greek and a traitor*". The Treaty was signed between Greece and the Republic of Macedonia in 2018, resolving a long-standing dispute between the two. In addition, one of the obligations of the treaty was that the name of Republic of Macedonia will be changed to Republic of North Macedonia. The establishment of the Macedonia's name by the neighboring country led to a significant political polarization and a nationalism/populism nexus.

Italy

#fascistlove #instaduce #instafascio #duxmealux #disperatoamore #sonofascista #casapound #direzionerivoluzione2021 #forzanuovaorgoglionazionale #forzanuova #forzanuovaroma #italia #neofascisti #fascisti #forzanuovaitalia #destra #destraitaliana #estremadestra #leggescelba

These hashtags, chosen by the Italian partner FRAMEWORK are used directly by the extreme right party to promote the violence and renew the memory of the fascism. It is not easy to find evidence of their activity because a lot of profile are hidden.

"*..I would like to make a shooting in the school*" #sonofascista

"*..A hundred people, lined up in rows of four and strictly without mask, as per script respond to the cry "comrades" with a stretched arm in that Roman greeting unequivocally fascist. All while among the protesters waving a flag of casapound and on the walls of the street Celtic crosses and swastikas cover the walls. This year, too, the Roman extreme right is meeting to commemorate .... three young people of the Youth Front killed on 7 January 1978 in Rome. Impressive deployment of law enforcement to avoid incidents of violence as happened on several occasions in the past*"

- **#novax and #nogreenpass**

"*Those who wished death to the #Novax and #nogreenpass, today they speak of respect for the freedom of the Ukrainian people*"

"*Common factor: the #Novax doing as terrorists*"

"Insults, threats, swearing, shoving, beating. Today's squares in Milan and Turin have shown the precise face of #Novax and #NoGreenPass: not people who express opinions, but violent criminals who with ignorance want to kill the country."

"I propose a collection to pay the Novax for Netflix subscriptions for when from 5 August they will be under house arrest closed like rats"

In conclusion, we agree with what the ADL's Center on Extremism (COE)[34] researchers found regarding the accounts sharing white supremacist content. They were searching through Instagram for terms related to the white supremacist and neo-Nazi movements. Some of these terms were searchable as hashtags, which have the potential to expose users to extremist posts from a multitude of accounts. COE began with a single search for accelerationist content and followed the path to extremist posts that are exposing Instagram users to potentially dangerous and radicalizing content. Using keyword searches, COE researchers found hundreds of Instagram accounts sharing white supremacist content. Starting with a keyword related to a certain branch of white supremacy brought up extremist accounts that may act as a gateway into the larger extremist community on Instagram and beyond.

Slovenia

The Slovenian partner, MIITR chose the following hashtags:
#dolzvlado (down with the government); #protivladi (against the government); #janša
Those hashtags are somehow related, and they started to appear in relation to the recent protests (2019, 2020, 2021) against the Slovenian government with J. Janša as the prime minister due to the overall discontent with the current political and moreover social and economic situation within the country. Therefore, in the protest crowds of around 10.000 people, there were not only "anarchists", but students and workers, concerned about their future[35]. Protests had mixed messages from environmental action to covid pandemics (vaccinated vs. unvaccinated) to overall dissatisfaction with the prime minister and its measurements.

Slovenian Prime Minister is known for his provocative tweets. He is a far-right individual with strong presence in Twitter – having 97.000 followers. He uses this social media as a way of communicating his thoughts and beliefs. As he is a public persona, here are some of his inappropriate tweets:

"Well, Mark, @MinPres, don't waste time with ambassadors and media freedom in Slovenia. Together with @SophieintVeld, protect your journalists from being killed on the streets." In this case, he made a claim in a matter of European Parliament investigation on Slovenian media freedom that was also under Janša's tweet

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[34] https://www.adl.org/blog/instagram-hosting-white-supremacist-accelerationist-content
[35] https://necenzurirano.si/clanek/mnenja/vstaje-20-zacetek-konca-janseve-vlade-776958

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mission. However, Prime Minister of Netherlands tweeted back: "*Tasteless tweet by Janez Janša (@JJansaSDS) about MEPs. I condemn it in the strongest possible terms. The government just conveyed this same sentiment to the Slovenian ambassador in The Hague*"[36].

"*On some Facebook page of a public house offers cheap services from retired prostitutes Evgenia C. and Mojca P. Š.*" The tweet was posted by Janša and directed to the two reporters of a national television[37]. The court later on sentenced him to the 3-month probation period for defamations towards the reporters. However, the court process faced many delays.

#čefurji

Čefurji represents a word with a pejorative connotation that denotes the inhabitants of Slovenia who originate from other countries of the former Yugoslavia or are descendants of such immigrants. Some Slovenians are still expressing their negative opinions towards them, even though the immigrations happened some decades ago due to the wars in Yugoslavia. However, nowadays the term is used in a negative connotation in everyday mentions/slang to describe someone/anyone in bad manner as well, highlighting the social exclusion and hatred.

"*Slovenia is here! But has anyone discovered that all "dirty" words have č, š, ž, and ć inside? These are not Slovene words and I have been trying to stop using them for a long time. Sometimes I get carried away, but I try. Otherwise, try and say "dirty" words to yourself: Čefur, Šiptar, Golaž, Črnec, Črnuh, Žid, Šupak (asshole in Slovenian) and so on. DON'T USE THESE LETTERS!!!!! Sorry for the outrage but it really pissed me off to see how many non-Slovenians are everywhere. I've been banned from a few forums for this so please don't ban me here.*" The post is from reddit and shows the clear negativity and hate towards the non-Slovenians.

In conclusion, regarding the Slovenian harvesting and analysis of the data results, we experienced some linguistic problems. Although the hashtags chosen were applicable to the Slovenian digital environment, many former Yugoslavian countries use the same or very similar expressions. Therefore, sometimes our search was mixed with Croatian, Serbian, Bosnian language, making it harder for the analysis in Slovenian-related context. However, in general, we did not come across heavily radicalized social media content. A few possible reasons are that the chosen hashtag keywords were maybe too specific, or to the fact that Slovenia is a country of 2 million people, where overall digital trolling is happening on the news pages in a form of comments under selected articles about the politics for example, as individuals express their (unsuitable) opinions. With that being highlighted, we need to keep analyzing the social media contents and research the impacts on the viewers and users in order to prevent the formation of unified radicalized groups and overall, the process of

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36 https://www.zurnal24.si/slovenija/janez-jansa-se-je-brez-kancka-diplomacije-znesel-nad-glavne-evropske-politike-374810
37 https://www.slovenskenovice.si/kronika/doma/premier-na-sodiscu-jansev-tvit-je-zaljiv/

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radicalization in individuals when using social networks – application of the netiquette and social inclusion principles.

Conclusion

The overall aim of this report is to give the partners from Belgium, Bulgaria, Greece, Denmark, Italy, Cyprus and Slovenia a common understanding of the scope and types of radicalization that currently exist in their countries. It must be said that through the national contributions to this report, this aim has been fulfilled to a great extent, even though there is still a lot to investigate. One of the key findings has been that some types of radicalization are the most common ones witnessed, namely; far-right extremist, far-left extremism and religious extremism. A huge overrepresentation on far-right extremism is found in the reports, which is a fact that will be further investigated during the coming activities of the project. An interesting facet is that the public and/or parliamentary institutions of some countries have a hypervisibel attention to some parts of the radicalized environments that exist, for example focusing exclusively on jihadist movements. In this way, other forms of radicalization can easily be neglected. This is relevant to have in mind when we investigate further in the Open Minds project, as the social media might be influenced by this and will only speak of religious radicalization as specific radicalization and not far-right radical ideas. Another highlighted example is how focusing on only one aspect of extremism - e.g. far-left extremism - inverts the image on how the radicalization situation really is in a country, while they are not recording far right attacks. This is part of neglecting the problem, which is why it is important to create awareness of this e.g. through media, social media or projects like Open Minds.

The survey also revealed an experience of injustice and a feeling of left behind can major indicators or causes for radicalization.

Some of the findings during the fieldwork have been, that by creating surfaces where young people can meet, discuss and try reverse role-play, young people will be able to understand better the consequences of their actions. Additionally, ensuring that educators understand what radicalization is and so they can become aware of the behaviours that suggest that a young person is leaning toward radicalization or extremism by offering case studies as reference. It is also suggested to approach the topic without a sense of right or wrong in order to avoid generating attitudes that are more hostile particularly towards authorities.

One of the main findings is the effect of social media. It hardly comes as a chock, that social media has a huge influence on young people's access to news articles, political opinions, and way of life in general. In the research on social media, performed by the project partners with a special attention to the nationally used

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hashtags to track the expressions of radicalized, extreme or polarized opinions, partners were able to collect some common conclusions via their national reports:

- Most partners acquired results, **linked to the far-right extremism that seem to be spreading or is already strongly present** (Bulgaria, Denmark, Cyprus, Greece).
- Language used in the identified posts can be understood as **harsh, inappropriate, primitive and with violence-prone tones. However, such messages or comments are easy to understand and even to relate in regard to attract other like-minded followers.**
- Radicalized posts in the social media environment seem to have a **reach possibility up to 3.000 followers per post of the individual authors/profiles**, which is not a negligible audience for such content. However, we did not identify any bigger groups/organizations as they are most likely banned from the social media or exist as close groups with limited access.
- The selected and analyzed **harvested data show no specific demographic category identified, therefore it is difficult to create a method that is universally applicable to all users of social networks** to limit the radical language on the internet.

In conclusion, social media still seems to be unregulated enough to allow the extremist, polarized or radicalized content to appear and exist. Meanwhile, it is accessible for everyone (with exception of some potentially closed social groups on such networks that we were unable to reach) and pose a threat of increasing such behaviors among the most vulnerable and unexperienced social media users, youth.

However, in the process of this spatial analysis, partners have also detected, that there is a lot of attention given to these environments, which means that many of the statements found during the harvesting of the data, were already blocked by the time the report was to be written. It might be of positive impact, that these extremist environments are not allowed to spread their verbally violent ideas freely, but it does not counteract the problem, by deleting the posts only. Therefore, it must be underlined, that the need of being able to think critically of what you are exposed to online, is extremely important. The relevance of the coming project activities seems very clear in that context, via awareness raising and promotion of social inclusion as a main objective of the project Open Minds.

Recommendations

Based on the common knowledge the Open Minds partnership has gained through their project activities, the partner organisations have formulated these recommendations addressing decision makers, educators, social media responsible and the public in general:

- Everywhere in our society and in our communities (living areas, schools, associations, clubs etc.) must be much, much more aware of avoiding that young people feel overlooked, disrespected and excluded and withdraw from the community.

- Make sure that young people are supported in understating how the psychological attach / tactics used in the process pushing them to be radical work

- It would be effective for people from a relatively young age to be informed about all events (e.g. outbreaks of violence at political events, destruction of public property, etc.) with radical background and also the dangers, the impact on their lives and the meaning of radicalization. For this reason, a relevant course could be included in the national formal curriculum, which will analyze every extreme point of view of a political party. In addition, it would be good to include educational material regarding the social media influence on young people's radicalization and to inform them about the risks of groups and social media accounts with relevant content as the free access that they provide makes them an easy and simultaneously a dangerous source of information.

- Present the topic with non-formal type of education in order to reach an agreement for the definitions of the issue and have educators who are aware of the dangers of polarization and experienced in such discussions

- Provide non-formal courses/counseling for young people about dangers of radicalization content on social media in relation to their personal characteristics, lifestyle and identity (lack of social inclusion, intolerance, low self-esteem, personal / health issues, strong religious or political beliefs, group effect, ...)

- To work more in partnerships and coordinate exitprograms and educational material between different institutions e.g. the police, the schools, the sports clubs, the NGO's, the religious institutions etc. in order to find and support as many young people as possible in their local environments.

Literature

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- (Margot Zanetti, 2018 Università Niccolò Cusano)

- Albert Černigoj (author of the article: "*Preventing of radicalisation in Republic of Slovenia*

- Interministerial team for counterterrorism (preparing Strategy for prevention of terrorism and violent extremism)

- Situation Assessment Tool (SAT) validation study (ELIAMEP)

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- Draft Law No. 2883: Misure per la prevenzione della radicalizzazione e dell'estremismo violento di matrice jihadista (Measures for the Prevention of Jihadist Radicalization and Violent Extremism), http://www.senato.it/leg/17/BGT/Schede/Ddliter/48213.htm.

- Dialogkorpset, som indtil udgangen af 2020 var hjemmehørende under SIRI. Indsatsen rettede sig imod forebyggelse af æresrelaterede konflikter og negativ social kontrol

- Dossier Sulla Comunità Islamica Italiana: Indice di Radicalizzazione

- Meningsdannernetværket, som er hjemmehørende under SIRI og retter sig imod forebyggelse af æresrelaterede konflikter og negativ social kontrol.

- Anagnostou & Skleparis, ELIAMEP 2015, 2017

- Soltar, 2002

- IARS, 2019

- Dialogbaseret workshop om ekstremisme og diskrimination, som er hjemmehørende under Aarhus Kommune og retter sig imod forebyggelse af radikalisering og diskrimination

- T. Vonta, Committee of inquiry of the National assembly for the assessment of extremist groups activity, 2013

- Prohibition of Incitement to Discrimination and Intolerance and Prohibition of Incitement to Violence and War

Links

- https://www.ispionline.it/en/pubblicazione/jihadist-radicalization-italian-prisons-primer-22401
- https://openmigration.org/idee/mettere-al-centro-i-diritti-per-combattere-la-radicalizzazione-in-carcere/
- https://www.eliamep.gr/en/
- https://www.iai.it/en/pubblicazioni/italys-draft-law-prevention-radicalization-missed-opportunity
- https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network_en
- https://www.europol.europa.eu/tesat/2017/
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- https://www.iai.it/en/news/italys-fight-against-radicalization
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- https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/18335330.2020.1775276?journalCode=rpic20
- Amal Hayat http://www.amal.dk/fakta-om-radikalisering-ekstremisme-og-terror/ https://uim.dk/publikationer/undersogelse-af-tre-indsatser-over-for-negativ-social-kontrol-samt-radikalisering
- https://stopekstremisme.dk/ekstremisme

Additionally, there is some EU funded projects that offer toolkits or information on radicalization

- http://www.dare-h2020.org/

- https://yeip.org/

- https://trivalent-project.eu/relevant-projects/

- https://www.precobias.eu

- https://www.extremelyeunited.eu/

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