

## EU prevention strategies

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# D4.2

## Working paper on the implementation of the EU's policies



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## Introduction

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This working paper builds on earlier research in which we mapped and analysed the toolbox of the European Union (EU) and a handful of European countries by providing a comprehensive overview of existing measures aimed at counter-terrorism (CT) and preventing violent extremism (PVE) within and outside the EU.<sup>1</sup> It listed the institutional set-up, the decision-making processes, and co-ordinating practices at both the EU and state levels. In addition to an analysis of CT and PVE strategies at the level of EU institutions, the toolbox of four EU member states (Germany, France, Ireland, Spain) and one former member state (UK) was unpacked because of their particular experiences with and competences in the area of prevention of violent extremism.

Overall, our research found that the PVE agenda is quite a recent phenomenon in most member states and principally aims at preventing violent Islamist extremism through community engagement. The UK has been a pioneer in developing a ‘prevent’ pillar as part of its 2003 CT strategy and has since then actively contributed to the development of an EU-level PVE framework. This EU framework has in turn pushed other member states, such as Ireland and Spain, to develop their own national PVE strategies in recent years. While Germany has also over the past decade made significant strides in preventing involvement in extremism and has brought its national practices to the EU level, France has generally favoured a more securitized than preventive approach.

The present working paper takes the research one step further by looking more closely at the implementation of adopted PVE measures and practices in the EU and the above-mentioned key states, both domestically as well as vis-à-vis the Western Balkans and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. As such, we present a more evaluative overview geared towards identifying best practices and lessons learned in this field. The paper not only focuses on how policy is implemented and followed up, but also assesses the EU’s experiences in co-operating with member states and vice versa. In doing so, the research tries to take on board key recent developments, in particular in France and at the EU level, in response to a new series of terrorist attacks that took place in Paris, Nice, and Vienna between the end of October and mid-November 2020. The research builds on a set of in-depth interviews with PVE officials and practitioners within the EU and national administrations.<sup>2</sup>

## Domestic snapshots: EU-level and in-country implementation mechanism

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### *European Union*

Violent extremism is not a new phenomenon and terrorism has a long history in Europe often linked to separatist movements, anarchism, and far-right and far-left extremism; however, the trends, means, and patterns of radicalization have evolved rapidly since the Arab uprisings flared a decade ago. Home-grown (lone) actors and (returning) foreign terrorist fighters raise security issues and specific challenges for preventive work, while the internet and social

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<sup>1</sup> See Steven Blockmans et al., ‘Working paper on EU’s policies and instruments for PVE’, PREVEX Working Paper, D4.2, April 2020, <https://www.prevex-balkan-mena.eu/eu-prevention-strategies/>.

<sup>2</sup> See the Annex for the full list of interviews.



media give extremist and terrorist groups and their sympathizers new opportunities for spreading their propaganda, mobilization, and communication.

The EU is often put under a spotlight after terrorist attacks are committed. EU institutions and agencies are called upon by member states or feel the need to show ‘value’ in responding to such acts of violent extremism. The EU has dynamically acquired experience in anti-radicalization policy and has adopted a great deal of counter-terrorism legislation over the last two decades. The entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty in 2009 consolidated the EU’s competence in this field. Full respect of fundamental rights has been at the heart of its work. Over recent years it has become increasingly clear that today’s security challenges – whether it is terrorism, organized crime, cyber attacks, disinformation, or other evolving cyber-enabled threats – are shared threats.

In the wake of terror attacks in Autumn 2020, European Council President Charles Michel and Commission President Ursula von der Leyen in several speeches highlighted the sanctity of freedom and freedom of religion and explained that without security those values cannot be protected. Flanked by President Emmanuel Macron and Chancellor Sebastian Kurz, President Michel highlighted how the priority is security but that at the same it is crucial to replace the circle of hate and mistrust with dialogue, understanding, and trust.<sup>3</sup> His PVE recipe is one of engendering European values, in particular among the youth and migrant populations, combined with ‘a fight against hate’. Michel suggested incorporating these principles into the Islam training by setting up one or more educational and training institutions for training imams. This proposal raised concerns with the European Parliament and governments of the Netherlands, Sweden, Spain, Italy, and Luxembourg, since the idea only seems to take Islam into consideration as the objective of counter-terrorism. As a result, the declaration has been changed to also include the growing threat posed by far-right groupings.

Commission President von der Leyen urged implementation on three levels: prevention, protection of the external borders, and action.<sup>4</sup> On 9 December 2020 the Commission presented a new European agenda on combating terrorism,<sup>5</sup> which focuses on strengthening the co-operation between security services, giving border guards the modern technology they need, stepping up EU efforts to prevent radicalization, and better protecting public spaces. Backed up by new guidelines on cyber security and the digital services act

<sup>3</sup> European Council, ‘Remarks by President Charles Michel after the video conference on Europe’s response to the terrorist threat’, 10 November 2020, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2020/11/10/intervention-du-president-charles-michel-a-l-issue-de-la-videoconference-sur-la-reponse-europeenne-a-la-menace-terroriste/>; ‘European Council, ‘A word from President Michel’, 12 November 2020, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/da/european-council/president/news/2020/11/12/20201112-pec-newsletter-4/>.

<sup>4</sup> European Commission, ‘Statement by President von der Leyen at the joint press conference with Chancellor Kurz, Chancellor Merkel, President Macron, and President Michel, following the videoconference on the fight against terrorism’, Brussels, 10 November 2020, [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/statement\\_20\\_2072](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/statement_20_2072).

<sup>5</sup> European Commission, ‘A Counter-Terrorism Agenda for the EU: Anticipate, Prevent, Protect, Respond’, COM(2020) 795 final, 9 December 2020, [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/pdf/09122020\\_communication\\_commission\\_european\\_parliament\\_the\\_council\\_eu\\_agenda\\_counter\\_terrorism\\_po-2020-9031\\_com-2020\\_795\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/pdf/09122020_communication_commission_european_parliament_the_council_eu_agenda_counter_terrorism_po-2020-9031_com-2020_795_en.pdf).



package of 15 December 2020,<sup>6</sup> the innovations to the EU's CT/PVE approach can be characterized by the following:

- Tackling root causes by investing in socio-economic advancement opportunities, inclusion, and commonality to create prospects for the future. A new European action plan for integration and inclusion of 24 November 2020 is underpinned by an agreement in the Council among EU member states that there is a need to improve social cohesion in Europe, that 'integration is a two-way street', and that the effort should come from the migrants as well as support from the EU.
- The development and strengthening of the European network of experts in the field dealing with preventing radicalization (5,000 experienced members – teachers and police officers, social workers, and physicians).
- The recognition that the internet is a (COVID-accelerated) source of radicalization, where it is crucial to take down the terrorist online content as soon as possible and make the (gaming) platforms (in practice US big tech companies) more accountable.
- Gaps in the Schengen Information System (SIS) need to be addressed beyond the package adopted on 9 December 2020, as well as the implementation of the 2017 directive on the acquisition and possession of weapons. From January 2021 onwards, the new European Border and Coast Guard will be working at the external borders, with updated databases, making it easier to register entries and exits of third-country nationals with visas, and those who can enter the area without a visa through the European Travel Information and Authorization System (ETIAS). As part of the internal Schengen security goal, it is crucial to strengthen the institutional capacity of systems devised to identify and track people considered at risk of radicalization; this can be done by strengthening Europol (the EU agency for cross-border police cooperation), finalizing European legislation on access to digital evidence, and enabling access to encrypted data and metadata. At the end of November 2020 the first Schengen Forum took place to assess strengths and weaknesses. A new Schengen strategy will be presented by March 2021. Part of it will be to strengthen the European Dactyloscopy (EURODAC, the EU fingerprint database) as well as Europol, by increasing their competences and accessibility to information.

After the recent attacks a few member states have already made progress, fostering cooperation and exchange of information. Entities financing terrorism are much better tracked, the acquisition of firearms is better regulated, and tools to prevent the admission of dangerous individuals inside the EU have been implemented on the border.

### *France*

The terror attacks in Paris and Nice pushed the French government to systematize and make more explicit its policy towards radicalization. The conceptual premise is that the source of the problem is a religious radicalization among Muslims that entails two connected

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<sup>6</sup> European Commission, 'Proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on a single market for digital services (Digital Services Act) and amending Directive 2000/31/EC', COM 2020/825, Brussels, 15 December 2020, [https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/europe-fit-digital-age/digital-services-act-ensuring-safe-and-accountable-online-environment\\_en#documents](https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/europe-fit-digital-age/digital-services-act-ensuring-safe-and-accountable-online-environment_en#documents).



phenomena: (1) the ‘separatism’ of entire segments of the Muslim population, who abide by tenets of sharia for their everyday life in the destitute neighbourhoods; and (2) the choice of violence and terrorism by a part of the youth groomed in this religious environment. Consequently, the objective of the government is to fight ‘Islamist separatism’.<sup>7</sup> In essence, violent radicalization is seen as the tip of the iceberg of a more profound societal phenomenon. The idea is that by countering religious radicalization one could undermine the ‘Islamist radical ideology’ that is motivating the terrorists. The policy of countering radicalization is consequently deployed on two levels:

- Security: spotting the early signs of radicalization among individuals, which are usually defined as a display of public devotion (praying), proselytism, and/or call for jihad.
- Prevention: enforcing ‘the values of the republic’ identified as ‘values of *laïcité*’ (secularism), first through the educational system, and second among Muslim believers in general.

Since the fall of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS, aka Daesh), the phenomenon is perceived as homegrown. Consequently, government interest in fighting terrorism in the Middle East has decreased. Nevertheless, although there is no apparent connection between the anti-jihad war waged by the French army in Mali and radicalization in France (no second generation migrants from the Sahel area have been until now involved in terrorist attacks in France), the government is calling for more support from European countries to fight against jihadi movements in the Sahel.

The two levels (security and prevention) are managed by state institutions: the DGSI (*Direction Générale de la Sécurité intérieure*) for security, and the CIPDR (*Comité interministériel de prévention de la délinquance et de la radicalisation*) for prevention. The DGSI depends of the Ministry of Interior: it works both as an intelligence service of counter-terrorism and as judicial police. It collects information either directly or through the other administrative services that are required to report all significant individual cases. The CIPDR is under the supervision of the Prime Minister and the Ministry of Interior. In every department it is represented by a CPRAF (*Cellules départementales de suivi pour la prévention de la radicalisation et l'accompagnement des familles* – the departmental cells tasked with the prevention of radicalization and follow-up with families). It is in charge of ‘expertise, training and spreading good practices’ and of producing a counter-narrative to check not only radicalization, but also Islamist separatism.

Its field of intervention includes all administrative services, provincial administration, public services, educational system, hospitals, and associations benefiting from state subsidies (the defence forces and the penitentiary system have their own practices of de-radicalization and started to implement them earlier). With the exception of the associations, each of these institutions is appointed a ‘*réfèrent-laïcité*’ – usually one member of the staff with special

<sup>7</sup> See the speech by President Emmanuel Macron, ‘Fight against separatism – the Republic in action’, Les Mureaux, 2 October 2020, <https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/coming-to-france/france-facts/secularism-and-religious-freedom-in-france-63815/article/fight-against-separatism-the-republic-in-action-speech-by-emmanuel-macron>; Emmanuel Macron, ‘Letter: France is against “Islamist separatism” – never Islam’, *Financial Times*, 4 November 2020, <https://www.ft.com/content/8e459097-4b9a-4e04-a344-4262488e7754>.



training – who is in charge of advising their colleagues to deal with cases of ‘breach of the tenets of *laïcité*’ and to report to the police cases that might become a security issue.

Among the measures put in place by the CIPDR and CPRAF it is too early to make an assessment. It would nevertheless appear that there are great variations at the local level. Many administrations (schools, public services) used to choose until recently to deal internally with the tensions, but since the assassination of schoolteacher Samuel Paty in October 2020, they are requested by law to report to the police possible cases of radicalization. They have since tended to call the police whatever the level of threat (for example, in Albertville on 6 November 2020, four teenage school children spent a day in police custody for ‘apology of terrorism’). A consequence is that the police services might be overwhelmed by denunciations at the expense of efficiency.

The army is the first state institution to have addressed, after 9/11, the issue of radicalization of young Muslims. The reason is obvious: 10% of the rank and file soldiers declare Islam as their religion (the army is the only French institution to register religion), and the forces are engaged mainly in Muslim countries (Afghanistan, Syria, Mali). Besides the usual vetting by military intelligence before enlistment, the army wished to check any possible future radicalization. The Chief of Staff decided in 2002 to set up a ‘Muslim Chaplaincy’, consisting of around 36 Muslim chaplains, with the rank of officer.

The chaplains follow the troops on the field. Besides performing the purely religious devotional practices (prayers), they are encouraged to discuss with Muslim servicemen who may have reservations about their duty in confronting ‘Islamic fighters’. Since they entered service (2005), no act of sabotage, desertion in the battlefield, or internal terrorism has been reported, although some servicemen had been discharged for suspicion of radicalization. The programme is rightly seen as a success story, although it is little publicized because, by intervening directly in the setting up of religious practices (including a military pilgrimage to Mecca), it does not follow the patterns of *laïcité*.

Prisons have played a big role in the radicalization of young Muslims and converts during the last 25 years, but the decision to launch an internal programme of de-radicalization was taken only in 2016. As of 2020, there are around 500 inmates jailed for terrorism-related activities, and the same number of inmates jailed for ordinary crimes but who are suspected of ‘Islamist radicalization’ during their time in prison. Each inmate of these two categories is subject to a compulsory evaluation by a multi-disciplinary team of professionals that might include a Muslim chaplain (who is not a permanent employee but is paid on a service contract). If the assessment of the evaluation is positive and if the inmate volunteers, they follow a six-month individual ‘training’ session. If the inmate is considered as not open to de-radicalization or refuses to participate, they are put under a special security screening routine, outside any de-radicalization programme.

Among the measures that are in the course of being implemented, the priority is the educational system. A ‘*laïcité* charter’ (*Charte de la laïcité*) published by the Ministry of Education since 2013 is posted on the notice board of each school and must be signed by parents and schoolchildren over the age of majority. It bans any reference to religion at school, and while condoning freedom of expression, it forbids the use of religious arguments to contest any kind of teaching (from biology to co-ed sports). As with a number of other



institutions, ‘*référents laïcité*’ are appointed to help teachers deal with the issue and to report breaches with infringements of ‘*laïques* [secular] norms and values’ – a notion that is not precisely defined. Any open sign of religious belief is forbidden, and any mention during the class of a religious norm (for instance rejecting in the name of the Koran the theory of evolution or feminism) that could contradict the secular teaching is to be countered and could result in disciplinary action.

Moreover, the government has announced an extension of compulsory teaching of *laïcité*. However, there is still uncertainty on how the ‘*valeurs de la laïcité*’ (values of secularism) will be given a more precise content, as schoolbooks are not yet ready.

In a more general perspective, the government has announced its decision to ban home-schooling in order to oblige all school-children to be educated in a *laïque* environment, while private schools will be more closely monitored (especially the religious schools, which in France are mainly Catholic and Jewish). This indicates that the government is targeting all religions and not just Islam.

In the longer term, the government pledged to encourage moderate Islam versus radical Islam by setting up a training centre or curriculum for imams. The problem is that the Constitution prohibits the state to interfere with religious teaching. The existing agreements with Muslim countries (Algeria, Morocco, and Turkey) that are sending and paying imams to assist their diaspora will be rescinded. Arabic will be taught at school as with other foreign languages, but without reference to the Koran or Islam. The CIPDR is tasked with elaborating a ‘non-confessional religious counter-narrative with an enlightened narrative of Islam through contents promoting women’s rights, adhesion to republican values and critical knowledge as embodied by diverse figures of past Islamic history’.<sup>8</sup>

Customs that are not necessarily Islamist but are usually associated, rightly or wrongly, with Muslims (such as informal polygamy or requiring a certificate of virginity before a marriage) will be criminalized.

By way of conclusion, the government policy raises two issues:

- With the exception of the army and to a lesser extent in prisons, religion is seen as the problem, not as a part of the solution. Secularism is not just neutrality: it is defined explicitly as a value system. Such a policy raises many questions: does it impinge on religious freedom (which is not only a freedom of belief but also a freedom of practicing)? Does it impinge on freedom of expression? Or simply does it work? And could values be implemented through compulsory teaching?
- It is a purely top-down authoritarian approach: it does not take into account the everyday practices of mainstream Muslims nor request participation from the existing local imams and members of Muslim associations.

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<sup>8</sup> Translated from the CIPDR website: ‘*un contre-discours religieux non confessant avec un discours éclairé de l’islam par des contenus promouvant les droits des femmes, l’attachement aux valeurs républicaines et le savoir critique tel qu’il a pu être incarné par diverses figures de l’histoire islamique*’. CIPDR, ‘Le secrétariat général du comité interministériel de prévention de la délinquance et de la radicalisation (SG-CIPDR)’, accessed 28 December 2020, <https://www.cipdr.gouv.fr/le-cipdr/>.



## Germany

The number of German youths undergoing radicalization has risen sharply over the past years. This includes both religiously inspired radicalization, as well as right-wing extremism. Despite the main differences between these two forms of radicalization, Islamophobia and Islamic radicalization are mutually reinforcing processes. The German Federal Government has responded to both threats and has taken several legislative, organizational, and social policy measures to counter it.

Over the past two decades, Germany has seen the development of a wide variety of prevention models and projects involving both state institutions and civil society. On the federal level, the Federal Ministry of the Interior, Construction and Homeland (BMI), and the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ) published in 2016 a joint paper entitled ‘Federal Government Strategy for Prevention of Extremism and Promotion of Democracy’ (*Strategie der Bundesregierung zur Extremismusprävention und Demokratieförderung*). The strategy is based on a systematic, strong networking of the various players at federal, regional, and local authority level and in civil society and their co-ordinated co-operation across the board.

In addition to the state response, German civil society has been also active in the field of PVE. The Federal Government works with almost 700 civil society organizations and subsidy recipients throughout Germany on the prevention of extremism and the promotion of democracy and diversity. This broad collaboration with civil society is unique in Europe. Examples of civil society agents engaged in PVE projects are Violence Prevention Network (VPN) in Bavaria and Hessen; VAJA and its project ‘Kitab’ in Bremen; Zentrum Demokratische Kultur and its initiative ‘Hayat’ in Berlin; and Ambulante Maßnahmen Altona and the Pestalozzi Foundation with their common project ‘Legato’ in Hamburg.<sup>9</sup> The relationship between these civil society actors and the security agencies vary from one state to another. In some cases, the centres work closely together with security agencies; in other cases there is a strict separation between the two groups.

One distinct feature of the preventative landscape in Germany is its federal system. Germany has a federal government but is at the same time divided into 16 states, each of them having their own prime ministers, as well as their own ministries for the interior or for social affairs. Within this federal structure, the main actors involved in the PVE landscape are: the BMI; the BMFSFJ; and the state-level ministries of interior as well as those of social affairs in addition to civil society groups in the different states.

PVE activities include various approaches going from prisons to schools. An example of a prison related project aimed at prevention is ‘PräJus’ (Prevention in the field of judiciary) in Hamburg. The project focuses on the training of prison staff, with the long-term aim of empowering employees to recognize radicalization and develop and implement appropriate responses. There are also projects designed for teachers like ‘Salam-Online’ by the Centre for Islamic Theology (ZIT) at the Wilhelms-University in Münster, which provides guidelines for

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<sup>9</sup> Benham T. Said and Hazim Fouad, ‘Countering Islamist radicalisation in Germany: A guide to Germany’s growing prevention infrastructure’, International Centre for Counter-Terrorism, The Hague, September 2018, 6, <https://icct.nl/publication/countering-islamist-radicalization-in-germany-a-guide-to-germanys-growing-prevention-infrastructure/>.



teachers to counter online hate speech. Another example is Ufuq, which is an association that provides pedagogical assistance on various issues in the broader context of migration, Islam and extremism.

The implementation processes of these PVE policies and initiatives have both strengths and weaknesses. First, federalism is both a boon and a disadvantage of the German PVE structure. The federal system allocates responsibility for running PVE activities to local state authorities. Local actors are often better equipped than central authorities in dealing with this phenomenon: they are familiar with their local environment, they can easily identify their allies, build trust with targeted individuals, and then endeavour to dissuade them from violence. However, the federal structure can also obstruct information sharing between different actors operating in PVE initiatives. This can often be the case when a suspect travels from one state to another. The security apparatus will not necessarily send all the documents it holds on the suspect to the recipient state. Furthermore, local civil society groups are not usually permitted to continue operating with the individual in a different state. This means that, even if information is indeed shared regarding the suspect, a new local group would have to start from scratch to build trust with the individual. This set of circumstances creates the potential for complications and breaches within the PVE procedures.<sup>10</sup>

Second, the co-operation between state institutions and civil society is also simultaneously an asset and a weakness. An important strength of the German model is the role of civil society in the process of preventing violent radicalization. Co-operation between state institutions and civil society has been very efficient. As one interviewer acknowledges, ‘I know of many cases of individuals who wanted to travel to fight in Syria, and after several meetings with civil society practitioners, they gave up on this idea’.<sup>11</sup> Civil society actors can gain the trust of these individuals easier than state institutions, as they are often perceived as more legitimate. However, Germany needs to create national standards for the work of counselling centres run by non-governmental organizations. These standards must indicate how cases are to be shared with security agencies without violating data protection laws, but also relate to other questions, like how and in which cases persons should be referred to the centres. In many situations a radicalized person or his or her family, when seeking advice, cannot always be sure whether information will be passed to security agencies or kept confidential within the advisory service. These rules need to be clear and transparent.

As for the German contribution to PVE efforts outside its borders, the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit* (GIZ) is engaged in PVE initiatives in Tunisia and Jordan. In Tunisia, GIZ is working on a project on the prevention of violence and radicalization in the Tunisian penitentiary system. The project started in 2018 and will last until 2021. The project helps improve conditions in selected prisons and juvenile detention centres and reintegrates former prisoners. It supports the Tunisian Ministry of Justice and the Directorate General of Prisons and Re-education (DGPR), partly by delivering technical and organizational advisory services, as well as providing support in the field of infrastructure and equipment. In Jordan, GIZ was the implementing partner of the EU project ‘Technical assistance to support the Government of Jordan’s effort to prevent violent extremism’. It

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<sup>10</sup> Interview R.

<sup>11</sup> Idem.



lasted from 2016 to 2018. The project offered Jordanian stakeholders the technical assistance for preparing and running a specialized rehabilitation centre that work with juvenile offenders with a radicalised background.

In other MENA countries, such as Egypt, GIZ has been more careful as the political context makes the implementation of PVE initiatives politically sensitive.

In Iraq, Germany co-chairs the Stabilisation Working Group of the Global Coalition against Daesh together with the United Arab Emirates and the United States (US). Stabilization efforts focus mainly on helping the Government of Iraq prepare the way for reconstruction in the liberated territories, including restoring power grids and repairing water and sewage pipes, as well as rehabilitating roads and bridges. Other areas of activity include promoting employment, building up the local government, and financing reconciliation projects.

As for the Western Balkans, German authorities are following the processes of violent radicalization, in particular in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo. The authorities have found that the highest numbers of Islamic extremists heading to Iraq and Syria were traveling from Salafi villages in Bosnia-Herzegovina. GIZ has not been involved in PVE initiatives in the Western Balkans; however it has been engaged in other initiatives that are likely related to PVE such as preventing illicit flows of money.<sup>12</sup>

### *Spain*

Due to its experience with the separatist group Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA), Spanish jurisprudence, bureaucracy, and police forces have a long tradition of dealing with terrorist acts. However, this experience would prove not to be fully adequate for dealing with a different kind of terrorism. Spain suffered one of the worst terrorist attacks in 2004 in Madrid, when Islamist militants linked to al-Qaeda killed 193 people and left more than 1,800 injured in bombings on the city's railway system. Attacks in Barcelona in 2017 left 16 people killed and over 100 people wounded. Overall, most cases of Islamist radicalization in Spain have taken place in the two biggest cities and in specific regions of the country, including Ceuta and Melilla (two Spanish-controlled enclaves in Morocco). While before 2013 90% of radicalized jihadists were foreigners from Morocco, Pakistan, or Algeria, after 2013 the number of Spanish nationals – and thus home-grown terrorism – increased significantly to 40%.<sup>13</sup>

In the implementation of its February 2019 National Counter-Terrorism Strategy (NCTS), Spain has strengthened its legal framework to directly address the flow of foreign fighters to conflict zones like Syria and Iraq; enabled the government, and its special Prosecutor for Terrorism, to more aggressively prosecute suspected jihadists not already associated with criminal organizations; and prevent online recruitment. Focused on 'Preventing, Protecting, Persecuting and Preparing a response', the NCTS guides the Spanish government in the identification of extremists and the disruption of terrorist plots while

<sup>12</sup> Interview Q.

<sup>13</sup> Fernando Reinares and Carola García-Calvo, 'Spain's shifting approach to Jihadism post-3/11', in *De-Radicalization in the Mediterranean*, ed., Lorenzo Vidino (Milano: Ledizioni, 2018), 36.



protecting potential targets.<sup>14</sup> The strategy seeks to identify at-risk individuals and communities in order to deal with the root causes of radicalization and reduce the vulnerability of potentially sensitive targets of terrorism and violent extremism. The ‘persecuting’ section defines the strategic lines of action for identifying and investigating terrorists and violent extremists to prevent the planning and execution of their actions, while also taking action against their support, logistics, and finance networks and making sure they are brought to justice. The ‘preparing a response’ section refers to minimizing the impact of terrorist activities, guaranteeing maximum support for the victims, repairing the damage caused and restoring normality by carrying out actions and plans for a swift recovery, and extracting the lessons learned in order to prepare future responses.

The Spanish government recognizes that development of these four areas will require the implementation of national strategic plans in such specific areas as the fight against violent radicalization and the financing of terrorism, counter-terrorism prevention and protection, and strengthened control of explosive precursors.<sup>15</sup> Work is underway in each of these areas, even if implementation is slow.<sup>16</sup>

These measures centre on five guiding principles:

- Values of an open society: a plural society, with respect for rights and the principles of the rule of law.
- Transparency: easily understandable policies that are known by citizens.
- Unity and co-ordination: a multi-agency approach, involving all affected ministries, the general public and public-private partnerships.
- Adequacy of resources: the use of existing instruments and means.
- Evaluation, audit, and control: of means and actions, prioritizing viability and sustainability.<sup>17</sup>

The most concrete outcome of these actions is the project ‘Stop Radicalisms’, which invites Spanish citizens or residents to contact the authorities via phone or online to help detect and neutralize cases of violent radicalization in the country.<sup>18</sup> It is managed by the Centre for Intelligence against Terrorism and Organized Crime within the Ministry of Interior. In addition, two programmes are directed at the prevention of radicalization in prisons, one at the national level and one in Catalonia.

Civil society organizations are also working on prevention, sometimes hand in hand with the government. Their activities include awareness rising about radicalization (e.g. in schools) and support for victims of terrorism. One key initiative is the ‘*Somos Más, contra el*

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<sup>14</sup> La Moncloa, ‘Government of Spain publishes National Counter-terrorism Strategy for first time’, 26 February 2019.

<sup>15</sup> Interview G.

<sup>16</sup> Interview E.

<sup>17</sup> Ministerio del Interior, ‘Plan estratégico nacional de lucha contra la radicalización violenta (PEN-LCRV)’, 2015.

<sup>18</sup> Maria Lozano Alia, ‘The Spanish approach to preventing and fighting violent radicalisation’, *European Eye on Radicalisation*, 18 December 2018, <https://eeradicalization.com/the-spanish-approach-to-preventing-and-fighting-violent-radicalization/>.



*odio y el radicalismo*’ (We are More, against hatred and radicalism) initiative, which is a co-operation between different ministries, civil society organizations, and YouTube.<sup>19</sup>

In terms of international co-operation, Morocco is Spain’s ally of first strategic resort to prevent radicalization and to counter terrorism. The publication of a joint plan is pending and likely to be published in the beginning of 2021. Morocco–Spain CT co-operation (especially intelligence sharing and joint operation) is widely perceived to be strong, whereas bilateral PVE co-operation is less so due to the absence of a joint framework. This is where, at the local level, NGOs on both sides of the Strait of Gibraltar step in to create joint activities, for instance to strengthen the role and education of women. Morocco co-operates with many EU member states on imams training (Belgium, Netherlands, Italy) but Spain is not part of those. Madrid is not open to this kind of collaboration and doesn’t believe that a national training programme for imams is a good PVE solution.<sup>20</sup>

### *Ireland*

Violent extremism in Ireland is mainly associated with the Troubles of the late 1900s. Since the turn of the millennium, however, there has not been a large-scale terror attack. Ireland still experienced a rise of Islamist and right-wing extremism in 2019, which included the arrest of five people on the suspicion of ‘jihadi terrorism’.<sup>21</sup> Lately, concerns have risen regarding Brexit and the possible border between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. The insecurity surrounding Brexit led to an increase in attacks in 2019.<sup>22</sup>

Despite their past experience with violent extremism, the Irish government devote relatively limited attention to legislation concerning national and international violent extremism. In fact, there is no national policy for PVE or CVE, although there are legal instruments.<sup>23</sup> The Department of Justice is currently developing a strategy related to the prevention of violent extremism in Ireland. However, according to one of the interviewees, there is a strong scepticism in Ireland when it comes to how to think about such prevention mechanisms. This is part of the legacy of the Troubles.<sup>24</sup> Internationally, Irish co-ordination regarding prevention of violent extremism is limited to information sharing.<sup>25</sup>

Most of Irish legislation concerned with violent attacks is to be found in The Offences against the State Acts 1939–1998. Although the Act was initially introduced to counter threats made by the IRA, it also includes a large range of terrorist offences, both domestic and international.<sup>26</sup> Additionally, the 2005 Criminal Justice (Terrorist Offences) Act covers legislation on acts and support acts of violent extremism internationally. The Act regulated Ireland’s compliance with international conventions, such as the Council of the EU’s

<sup>19</sup> Somos Más, ‘Quiénes somos?’, accessed 27 April 2020, <http://www.somos-mas.es/quienes-somos/>.

<sup>20</sup> Interview E.

<sup>21</sup> Counter-Extremism Project, ‘Ireland: Extremism and counter-extremism’ accessed 28 December 2020, 1, <https://www.counterextremism.com/countries/ireland>.

<sup>22</sup> Counter-Extremism Project, ‘Ireland’, 1.

<sup>23</sup> Interview D.

<sup>24</sup> Interview D.

<sup>25</sup> Interview D.

<sup>26</sup> Irish Department of Justice, ‘Terrorism’, accessed 28 December 2020, <http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/terrorism>.



Framework Decision on Combating Terrorism (2008/101/JHA).<sup>27</sup> A 2015 amendment to this Act formally criminalized the recruitment and training for terrorism, as well as public provocation to commit a terrorist offence.<sup>28</sup> It also recognizes that terrorist-related offences also can be committed online.<sup>29</sup> These are measures taken directly from the EU Framework Decision.<sup>30</sup> Additionally, the Criminal Justice (Offences Relating to Information Systems) Act 2017 ‘gave effect to an EU directive on attacks against information systems, an instrument which served to harmonise our EU laws on cybercrime and present a united front to counter its transnational dimension’.<sup>31</sup> Through the passing of this Act, Ireland harmonized its national laws with EU laws. The Act also implements important parts of the Council of Europe Convention on Cybercrime, often referred to as the Budapest Convention.<sup>32</sup>

Despite considering violent Republicanism to be the greatest threat facing Ireland, most of the Irish PVE efforts are directed towards tackling ideology-based radicalization. In order to combat ideology-based radicalization, the Irish government has implemented the National Action Plan against Racism (NPAR) and the Migrant Integration Strategy (MIS), which both aim to increase integration and accommodate cultural diversity. Additionally, in an effort to control the persistent attacks occurring in Northern Ireland by paramilitary Republican groups, the Cross Border Policing Strategy promotes a framework for co-operation between the Garda, the Irish national police force, and the Police Service in Northern Ireland (PSNI). The framework includes cross-border operations, community relations, intelligence sharing, and joint training and personnel exchanges.<sup>33</sup>

The Irish approach to preventing violent extremism ‘combines preventive measures and capacity to prosecute terrorist-related behaviour’.<sup>34</sup> The focus of the government is broad, recognizing that the response to terrorism must be as multidimensional and complex as the threat of terrorism itself. Irish Minister for Justice and Equality Mr Charlie Flanagan stated that ‘the vital work carried out by our policing and security authorities must be complemented by strong, long-term measures to avoid an environment conducive to the social exclusion and polarisation that might lead to radicalisation and violent extremism’.<sup>35</sup> This includes an

<sup>27</sup> Council of Europe, ‘Ireland’, country profiles on counter-terrorist capacity, April 2007, <https://www.legislationline.org/download/id/3130/file/CODEXTER%20Profiles%202007%20Ireland.pdf>.

<sup>28</sup> Irish Department of Foreign Affairs, ‘Minister Flanagan addresses Seanad on Ireland’s response to ISIS Threat’, 11 June 2015, <https://www.dfa.ie/news-and-media/press-releases/press-release-archive/2015/june/irelands-response-to-isis-threat/>.

<sup>29</sup> United States Department of State, ‘Country reports on terrorism 2016 – Ireland’, 19 July 2017, <https://www.refworld.org/docid/5981e438c.html>.

<sup>30</sup> European Council, ‘Council framework decision 2008/919/JHA of 28 November 2008 amending framework decision 2002/475/JHA on combating terrorism’, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32008F0919>.

<sup>31</sup> Irish Department of Justice, ‘Opening address by the Minister for Justice and Equality Mr Charlie Flanagan TD at the 46<sup>th</sup> INTERPOL European Regional Conference’, 16 May 2018, <https://www.gov.ie/en/speech/d42ee8-opening-address-by-the-minister-for-justice-and-equality-mr-charlie-/>.

<sup>32</sup> Irish Department of Justice, ‘Opening address’.

<sup>33</sup> An Garda Síochána, ‘Cross border policing strategy, 2016’, accessed 28 December 2020, <https://www.drugsandalcohol.ie/27925/1/cross-border-policing-strategy-2016.pdf>.

<sup>34</sup> Irish Department of Foreign Affairs, ‘Minister Flanagan addresses Seanad on Ireland’s response to ISIS threat’, 11 June 2015, <https://www.dfa.ie/news-and-media/press-releases/press-release-archive/2015/june/irelands-response-to-isis-threat/>.

<sup>35</sup> Irish Department of Justice, ‘Opening address’.



increased focus on the way terrorist groups utilize the internet to radicalize, recruit, and communicate terrorist activities. As a result, Irish legislators passed the Criminal Justice (Offences Relating to Information Systems) Act 2017, which handles attacks on information systems and interference with data. The Irish government has also put effort into improving its measures to prevent money laundering and terrorist-financing measures.<sup>36</sup> In 2017, for instance, Irish authorities uncovered an ISIS money laundering scheme in Ireland, as well as disrupted a suspected ISIS cell in western Ireland.<sup>37</sup>

The Irish prevention mechanisms to prevent violent extremism are enforced by the Irish police force, making it a top-down process. The Garda Síochána (Garda), Ireland's National Police and Security Service, is the main body responsible for carrying out the Irish government's counter-terrorism legislation. The level of co-ordination and co-operation within the Garda is extensive and effective. The Garda is responsible for monitoring the movements and activities of known or suspected supporters of extremism, while also keeping tabs on the international threat from terrorism, adjusting preventive measures in order to counteract this threat. The sub-unit National Crime and Security Intelligence is responsible for analysing and identifying potential threats to the state from terrorists and organized gangs.<sup>38</sup> While such centralization of counter-terrorism could make it more effective, it also means that Ireland does not have an external intelligence capacity. There are some calls to address this issue, while others recognize that Ireland is too small to have multiple branches.<sup>39</sup>

Although Ireland has yet to experience a large-scale Islamist terrorist attack, the Irish government has in recent years devoted more time and resources towards preventing violent Islamist extremism. There has been a special focus on returning Irish foreign fighters, as they could pose a domestic threat. An estimated 30 to 50 Irish citizens travelled to the Middle East between 2011 and 2016 – considering Ireland's Muslim population, this is one of the highest numbers in Europe.<sup>40</sup> According to the International Centre for Counter-Terrorism, however, Ireland is not considered as a focus country in regard to foreign fighters.<sup>41</sup> There remains an additional number of Islamic State supporters within Irish borders, using Ireland 'not only as a recruiting centre, but as a logistical hub',<sup>42</sup> providing financial support to jihadists and working to recruit more foreign fighters. There has also been reason to believe that Ireland is being used as a temporary stop for jihadists travelling to Turkey.<sup>43</sup>

In an attempt to counter the growing threat of terrorism, Ireland has broadened its legislation regarding international terrorism. Section 5 of the 2005 Act states that 'a terrorist

<sup>36</sup> The Financial Action Task Force (FATF), 'Anti-money laundering and counter-terrorist financing measures: Ireland', Mutual Evaluation Report, Paris, September 2017, <https://www.fatf-gafi.org/media/fatf/documents/reports/mer4/MER-Ireland-2017.pdf>.

<sup>37</sup> Counter-Extremism Project, 'Ireland'.

<sup>38</sup> An Garda Síochána, 'Garda national crime and security intelligence service', accessed 28 December 2020, <https://www.garda.ie/en/about-us/our-departments/garda-national-crime-security-intelligence-service/garda-national-crime-security-intelligence-service.html>.

<sup>39</sup> Interview D.

<sup>40</sup> Counter-Extremism Project, 'Ireland'.

<sup>41</sup> Bérénice Boutin et al., 'The foreign fighters phenomenon in the European Union: Profiles, threats & policies', ICCT Research Paper, April 2016, 3, <https://doi.org/10.19165/2016.1.02>.

<sup>42</sup> James Brandon, 'Ireland's foreign fighters', *Terrorism Monitor* 14, no. 1 (2016), <https://jamestown.org/program/irelands-foreign-fighters/>.

<sup>43</sup> Brandon, 'Ireland's foreign fighters'.



group that engages in, promotes, encourages or advocates the commission, in or outside the State, of a terrorist activity is an unlawful organisation within the meaning and for the purposes of the 1939–1998 Acts'.<sup>44</sup> This means that international terrorist groups will be affected by the Offences against the State Acts. While there have been critiques regarding Ireland's ability to deal with the increased terrorist threat, the Irish government seems confident that their experience with Irish republican militancy has provided Irish security services with a competent and skilled counter-terrorism wing.<sup>45</sup> However, there is a question of the transferability of this expertise, as the terrorism threat Ireland faces today is comparatively different from the one Ireland experienced during the Troubles.

The Garda also co-operate closely with the communities of Ireland and operate a community relations programme.<sup>46</sup> In a statement to the United Nations, Irish Officials stated that the Garda considers 'direct community engagement as the key to countering radicalisations',<sup>47</sup> underlining the need to counter radicalization at the grassroots level. The Gardai National Diversity and Integration Unit (previously known as the Garda Racial, Intercultural and Diversity Office) is responsible for this engagement with minority communities, and a network of Garda Ethnic Liaison Officers spans the entire country.<sup>48</sup> These officers have constant communication and contact with their local communities, and may as such 'become privy to information that assists in preventing individuals from becoming radicalised'.<sup>49</sup> The Garda's involvement with communities is seen as an essential part of Ireland's preventive measures, and the aim of this close co-operation is that the communities consider themselves as a valued part of society, rather than a subject of attention because they might pose a terrorist threat. Such an aspect of policing is considered 'key in ensuring Ireland protects itself from the negative effects of radicalisations and the possibility of home-grown terrorist threats'.<sup>50</sup> To further promote integration, the Irish government is now in the process of drawing up a new Action Plan Against Racism.<sup>51</sup>

One of the most successful practices of the Irish approach to community engagement – the Transformative Dialogue Circles – has been showcased by the Radicalization Awareness Network (RAN) as a useful practice. The Dialogue Circles facilitate discussions between people, giving them an opportunity to reflect and share their own experiences. The people involved can be young people at risk of involvement in violent extremism or ex-paramilitary

<sup>44</sup> Irish Department of Justice, 'Terrorism'.

<sup>45</sup> Brandon, 'Ireland's foreign fighters'.

<sup>46</sup> Irish Department of Foreign Affairs, 'Minister Flanagan addresses Seanad'.

<sup>47</sup> UN, 'Statement by Ireland', 1, <https://www.un.org/counterterrorism/ctitf/sites/www.un.org.counterterrorism.ctitf/files/S4-Ireland.pdf>.

<sup>48</sup> UN, 'Statement by Ireland'; An Garda Síochána, 'Garda national diversity and integration unit', accessed 28 December 2020, <https://www.garda.ie/en/crime-prevention/community-engagement/community-engagement-offices/garda-national-diversity-integration-unit/>.

<sup>49</sup> Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN), 'Preventing radicalisation to terrorism and violent extremism', RAN Collection – Approaches and Practices, 2015, 102. <http://www.interior.gob.es/documents/642012/5179146/RAN+Collection+-+Preventing+Radicalisation+to+Terrorism+and+Violent+Extremism.pdf/12527573-50b0-4126-aa68-5ddcbcd01ca5>.

<sup>50</sup> UN, 'Statement by Ireland', 1.

<sup>51</sup> Irish Department of Justice, 'Action Plan Against Racism for Ireland to be drawn up by new independent Anti-Racism Committee', 19 June 2020, <https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/6bedb-action-plan-against-racism-for-ireland-to-be-drawn-up-by-new-independent-anti-racism-committee/>.



members. It is a process that ‘helps to prevent young people engaging with extreme groups who use violence and also allows former combatants to define a better sense of integration and usefulness within communities’.<sup>52</sup>

The Irish Government has recently put emphasis on how to handle hate crimes, as part of their commitment to enhance integration and community cohesion. The An Garda Síochána Diversity and Integration Strategy 2019–2021 places a strong emphasis on human rights. Together with the Irish Human Rights and Equality Act 2014, they provide a framework for the Irish police, committing the Garda ‘to building our human rights capacity and progressing our internal and external diversity and inclusion initiatives’.<sup>53</sup> The Diversity and Integration Strategy put forth a working definition of hate crime, showcasing the Garda’s intention of working to combat discrimination and promote equality.

The Irish Passenger Information Unit (IPIU) was established in 2018 as a unit of the Department of Justice and Equality. The goal of the unit is to protect Irish borders, through the collection and processing of Passenger Name Record (PNR) data for use by Irish authorities and Europol. PNR refers to information regarding passengers entering Ireland from inside or outside the European Union, with the purpose of ‘the prevention, detection, investigation and prosecution of terrorism and serious crime’.<sup>54</sup>

As Ireland is yet to experience a large-scale Islamist terrorist attack, it will be hard to measure the readiness of Irish police and the effectiveness of the measures taken to prevent violent extremism. This understanding seems to be mirrored by the Irish government. A report completed by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) on anti-money laundering and counter-terrorist financing measures in Ireland stated that ‘Irish authorities are experienced in dealing with domestic terrorism issues and have also shown an understanding of international TF [terrorist financing] issues. However, even with this experience and strong interagency mechanisms, Ireland has had no prosecutions or convictions for TF’.<sup>55</sup> The question then becomes why Ireland enjoys such a low threat level regarding Islamist terrorism. According to one of the interviewees, part of the reason for this is that the majority of the Muslim population is very well integrated into the Irish community, which generally has a very healthy scepticism of the notion of terrorism.

### *United Kingdom*

The UK has a long history with violent extremism. As of December 2020, the UK rates the threat to the UK from terrorism as severe, meaning an attack is highly likely.<sup>56</sup> While historically the primary terrorist threat in the UK came from Northern Ireland, concerns regarding right-wing and Islamist extremism have been persistent in the UK for years, and it has increased substantially in the last decades. In 2014, Theresa May, then working as Home Secretary, revealed that 40 terror plots against Britain had been foiled since 2005. In 2018,

<sup>52</sup> Irish Department of Justice, ‘Action Plan Against Racism’, 114.

<sup>53</sup> An Garda Síochána, ‘Diversity and integration strategy 2019–2021’, accessed 28 December 2020, 4, <https://www.garda.ie/en/crime-prevention/community-engagement/community-engagement-offices/garda-national-diversity-integration-unit/diversity-and-integration-strategy-2019-2021-english-v1-1.pdf>.

<sup>54</sup> Irish Department of Justice, ‘Irish passenger information unit’, accessed 28 December 2020, <https://www.irishimmigration.ie/irish-passenger-information-unit/>.

<sup>55</sup> FATF, ‘Anti-money laundering’, 4.

<sup>56</sup> Security Service (MI5), ‘Threat levels’, accessed 28 December 2020, <https://www.mi5.gov.uk/threat-levels>.



Islamist terrorism was identified as the principal terrorist threat to the UK.<sup>57</sup> Daesh and al-Qaeda were highlighted as the greatest threats. However, the British Home Office acknowledges the danger represented by lone actors, as three of the five attacks that were carried out in the UK in 2017 were committed by a single perpetrator.<sup>58</sup> Of the 60 experienced attacks in the UK in 2018, an estimated 56 were committed by dissident Republican groups in Northern Ireland.<sup>59</sup> Their activity increased in 2019.<sup>60</sup> The UK has simultaneously experienced an upswing in police recorded hate crime in recent years. It is worth noting, however, that this could be because of changes in crime recording, as the Crime Survey for England and Wales reports a 38% fall in hate crime between the surveys of 2007/08 and 2008/09, compared to the surveys of 2017/18, 2018/19, and 2019/20.<sup>61</sup>

The UK's legal framework for preventing radicalization and violent extremism is extensive. The Terrorism Act 2000 was the first of a series of Terrorism Acts enacted by the British Parliament. The 2015 Counter-Terrorism and Security Act covers terrorism prevention and investigation measures, as well as how to prevent people being drawn into terrorism and support potentially vulnerable individuals. A new Act was enacted as late as 2019, the Counter-Terrorism and Border Security Act, which enables peoples at ports and borders to be questioned for national security. In The 2004 Children Act, radicalization is defined as abuse or exploitation of children.<sup>62</sup>

The British Counter-Terrorism Strategy (CONTEST), enacted in 2003, aims 'to reduce the risk to the UK and our interests overseas from terrorism, so that people can go about their lives freely and with confidence'.<sup>63</sup> The aim of the strategy has been to work around four objectives: pursue, prevent, protect, and prepare.<sup>64</sup> Parts of the strategy have been considered to be intrusive,<sup>65</sup> this is particularly the case with regards to the legal duty to report, which requires schools, health and social workers to notify the police and share information about individuals at risk of radicalization or those already radicalized. Local authorities, schools, health and social workers, and prisons and probationary bodies also have a responsibility to support such individuals.

<sup>57</sup> Home Office, 'CONTEST: The United Kingdom's strategy for countering terrorism', CM 9608, June 2018, 68,

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/716907/140618\\_CCS207\\_CCS0218929798-1\\_CONTEST\\_3.0\\_WEB.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/716907/140618_CCS207_CCS0218929798-1_CONTEST_3.0_WEB.pdf).

<sup>58</sup> Home Office, 'CONTEST', CM 9608, 17–19.

<sup>59</sup> Europol, 'European Union terrorism situation and trend report 2019 (TE-SAT)', June 2019, 12, <https://www.europol.europa.eu/activities-services/main-reports/terrorism-situation-and-trend-report-2019-te-sat>.

<sup>60</sup> Europol, 'European Union terrorism', 126.

<sup>61</sup> Home Office, 'Hate crime, England and Wales, 2019/20', October 2020, 1, [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/925968/hate-crime-1920-hosb2920.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/925968/hate-crime-1920-hosb2920.pdf).

<sup>62</sup> British Department for Education, 'Working together to safeguard children 2018', July 2018, 8, [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/779401/Working\\_Together\\_to\\_Safeguard\\_Children.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/779401/Working_Together_to_Safeguard_Children.pdf).

<sup>63</sup> Home Office, 'CONTEST: The United Kingdom's strategy for countering terrorism', CM 8123, July 2011, 6, [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/97995/strategy-contest.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97995/strategy-contest.pdf).

<sup>64</sup> Home Office, 'CONTEST', CM 8123, 10.

<sup>65</sup> Interview A.



Three government bodies are responsible for enforcing British measures against violent extremism. Britain's national domestic intelligence agency, the Security Service (MI5), is tasked with protecting the nation against threats to national security. The Office for Security and Counter-Terrorism (OSCT) is responsible for co-ordinating the government's response to a terror attack. Finally, the British police enforce counter-terrorism laws.<sup>66</sup> MI5 is also responsible for monitoring and rating the threat level of international terrorism. The threat level is based on intelligence and decided by an MI5 sub-group – the Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre (JTAC). It is reviewed every six months.<sup>67</sup>

By 2016, an estimated 850 British citizens had left the UK to fight for jihadist organizations in the Middle East.<sup>68</sup> Potentially the most controversial part of UK legislation is the possibility to withdraw travel documents, such as passports, from citizens suspected of terrorist activities. The Counter-Terrorism and Security Bill 2015 gives the UK government the jurisdiction to temporarily exclude British citizens from the nation. It also gives them the opportunity of revoking nationality, even if this would leave individuals stateless.<sup>69</sup> The greatest issue with this approach is that it does not remove the terrorist threat, as it shifts the responsibility of these individuals to other states.

CONTEST is the UK's comprehensive strategy aimed at preventing domestic violent extremism. An update of the strategy in 2018 found the approach of the four P's – prevent, pursue, protect, and prepare – to be well organized and extensive. The strategy is developed and implemented by the Home Office, and it is funded by the government. It is overseen by The National Security Council (NCS), chaired by the Prime Minister. The NCS monitors the progress of the strategy and reviews the impact of the counter-terrorism work that has been done. The Home Secretary is responsible for co-ordinating the British Government's counter-terrorism response, which includes MI5, the National Crime Agency, as well as the police services of England and Wales. The Foreign Secretary is responsible for UK foreign policy and overseas activity. This includes the international elements of CONTEST, the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS), and the Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ).<sup>70</sup>

The 'Prevent' branch of the strategy is central to the UK's approach to preventing radicalization. It is an 'early intervention programme, mobilized locally by a range of partners, which protects individuals targeted by terrorist influences by providing local, multi-agency safeguarding support'.<sup>71</sup> The aim of the strategy is to address the causes of radicalization and counter the ideological challenge posed by terrorism, support vulnerable individuals at risk of being radicalized through early intervention, and help those already

<sup>66</sup> UK Government, 'Terrorism and national emergencies', accessed 28 December 2020, <https://www.gov.uk/terrorism-national-emergency/counterterrorism>.

<sup>67</sup> Counter-Extremism Project, 'United Kingdom: Extremism and counter-extremism', accessed 28 December 2020, 1, [https://www.counterextremism.com/sites/default/files/country\\_pdf/GB-12112020.pdf](https://www.counterextremism.com/sites/default/files/country_pdf/GB-12112020.pdf).

<sup>68</sup> Counter-Extremism Project, 'United Kingdom', 2.

<sup>69</sup> European Parliament, 'Foreign fighters: Member states' responses and EU action in an international context', Briefing, February 2015, 8, <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/EPRS/EPRS-Briefing-548980-Foreign-fighters-FINAL.pdf>.

<sup>70</sup> Home Office, 'CONTEST', CM 9608, 83.

<sup>71</sup> Home Office, 'Prevent: Public knowledge and interactions', 28 October 2020, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prevent-public-knowledge-and-interactions>.



radicalized to disengage and blend back into society.<sup>72</sup> While Prevent is a strategy to combat all forms of terrorism, the majority of resources and focus goes towards the threat from Islamist extremism.<sup>73</sup> The focus is on the frontline workers of Britain, such as schools, hospitals, and public sector institutions.<sup>74</sup> While the implementation of Prevent in essence is a top-down process, as it is owned and funded by the government, there have been criticisms that the strategy is not integrated well enough with British communities.<sup>75</sup> Additionally, there is a problem of funding, as the communities are responsible for demonstrating success in their work in order to receive more money from the government. This makes it hard to properly measure the preventive measures, and funding could instead be given to institutions or organizations where the effects of preventive operations are easier to calculate.<sup>76</sup> It also means that the professional capacity of the practitioners might not be fully utilized.<sup>77</sup>

Part of the Prevent strategy is a programme called Channel, which works in the pre-criminal space and aims to intervene before extreme radicalization occurs.<sup>78</sup> The programme is tasked with identifying individuals at risk of being radicalized, assess the risk, and provide the best response to support those individuals.<sup>79</sup> There has been a decrease in referrals to Channel in 2020. Most likely the cause is the COVID-19 pandemic, which has affected people's social life, making it harder for people to recognize potentially threatening or worrying behaviour. This fact, coupled with the fact that extremists have used the crisis to recruit new individuals, engage in disinformation, and sow division, has created propitious conditions for increased radicalization.<sup>80</sup>

During 2016, the National Counter Security Office launched Project Griffin. In 2020 it was re-named ACT Awareness, as part of the Action Counters Terrorism (ACT) banner.<sup>81</sup> The aim of the project is to reach the broader community, and 'guide individuals on what to do if they find themselves involved in a terrorist incident or events that led up to a planned attack'.<sup>82</sup> Such incidents include bomb threats, drones, and how to respond to attacks by

<sup>72</sup> Home Office, 'Channel duty guidance: Protecting people vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism', Statutory guidance for Channel panel members and partners of local panels, 2020, 5, [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/928326/6.6271\\_HO\\_HMG\\_Channel\\_Duty\\_Guidance\\_v13\\_WEB\\_English.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/928326/6.6271_HO_HMG_Channel_Duty_Guidance_v13_WEB_English.pdf).

<sup>73</sup> Home Office, 'Prevent strategy', CM 8092, June 2011, 6, [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/97976/prevent-strategy-review.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97976/prevent-strategy-review.pdf).

<sup>74</sup> Simon Hooper, 'EU embraces UK counter-extremism policies despite human rights concerns', *Middle East Eye*, May 2017, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/eu-embraces-uk-counter-extremism-policies-despite-human-rights-concerns>.

<sup>75</sup> Interview B.

<sup>76</sup> Interview C.

<sup>77</sup> Interview B.

<sup>78</sup> Interview C.

<sup>79</sup> Home Office, 'Channel duty guidance', 7.

<sup>80</sup> Commission for Countering Extremism, 'COVID-19: How hateful extremists are exploiting the pandemic', July 2020, 6, [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/906724/CCE\\_Briefing\\_Note\\_001.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/906724/CCE_Briefing_Note_001.pdf).

<sup>81</sup> National Counter Terrorism Security Office, 'Project Griffin', 1 March 2016, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/project-griffin/project-griffin>.

<sup>82</sup> National Counter Terrorism Security Office, 'Project Griffin'.



individuals carrying firearms or other weapons. The project also aims to provide people with tools on how to recognize and report suspicious activity.

## Co-ordination between the supranational and domestic levels

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Co-operation between European countries and with the supranational EU institutions is an essential part of the Union's CT and PVE strategies. As it appears on France's CIPDR website: 'The CIPDR also supports and participates in European networks to share best practices among Member States. It represents and negotiates for France in European bodies such as the High-Level Commission Expert Group on Radicalisation of the European Commission's Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs and the EU Internet Forum'.<sup>83</sup> In the aftermath of the Madrid bombings, Spain took a leading role in European and international counter-terrorism efforts,<sup>84</sup> alongside France and the UK.

At the state level, the main gap within the EU ambition in formulating a common strategy to counter violent extremism resides in the lack of an efficient and rapid exchange of data and information among the member states. This is mainly due to conflicts of interests among the different national security agencies as well as different rules governing the issue of sharing private information in the different member states. After the fall 2020 attacks in Paris and Nice, Germany and France have called for closer EU co-operation in the fight against terrorism. In their joint declaration both countries insisted on tackling the continuing threat posed by terrorism and extremist outbursts in close co-operation with the member states of the Council of the European Union. From her side, German Chancellor Angela Merkel said Europe needed to urgently make reforms to the open-border Schengen area in light of recent terrorist attacks, arguing that it's necessary to know who comes in and who leaves the Schengen area.<sup>85</sup>

At the civil society level, many NGOs are part of RAN, which connects frontline practitioners from across Europe with one another, and with academics and policymakers, to exchange knowledge, first-hand experiences, and approaches to preventing and countering violent extremism in all its forms. This co-operation with the EU on both the state and civil society also has its strengths and weaknesses. One big problem with RAN activities is with the length and language of its publications. Many people involved in PVE initiatives read only their national languages. They do not have access to RAN publications in English or find it too long. While Ireland has a lot of experience when it comes to domestic terrorism, this has not necessarily been shared at the international level. Part of the reason for this limited information sharing is a sense of the Troubles as being different than other forms of violent extremism.<sup>86</sup> Another problem is the funding cuts.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> <https://www.cipdr.gouv.fr>.

<sup>84</sup> Interview F.

<sup>85</sup> Thomas Escritt and Matthieu Protard, 'France, Germany push for tighter EU borders after attacks', *Reuters*, 10 November 2020, <https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-europe-security/france-germany-push-for-tighter-eu-borders-after-attacks-idUKKBN27Q24P>.

<sup>86</sup> Interview D.

<sup>87</sup> According to one interviewee (Interview R), a German NGO had planned to apply for EU funding, but then realized that the funding is so little and decided it's not worth it.



Over the past several years, Germany has made significant progress towards developing a nuanced, multi-agency approach to preventing radicalization and extremism. However, there is still more work to be done. On the state level, Germany needs to ensure better national co-ordination, including regular exchanges of information and expertise between the actors involved to reduce the possibility of lost information and pointless repetition of work. On the civil society level, the country needs also to develop transparent regulations for the work of counselling centres, critical evaluation, as well as a public communication strategy co-ordinated on a national level, in order to strengthen trust between PVE practitioners and the ‘radicalized’ persons and their families.

But besides exchanges of views between experts, the real issue is to find a common conceptual approach. President Macron, while acknowledging the solidarity shown by EU countries after the wave of terrorist attacks in autumn 2020, complained that *laïcité* is not understood by many partners.<sup>88</sup> There is certainly differences among EU countries regarding the space and role of religions, as shown by the controversy around the cartoons depicting the Prophet Muhammad: while EU countries agree on supporting freedom of expression, there are divergent views on the need to constrain the different faith communities to accept a ‘right to blasphemy’. Nevertheless, following the attack in Vienna in October 2020, the Austrian Prime Minister named the source of the threat as ‘political Islam’, mirroring the term of ‘Islamist separatism’ used by President Macron.

Since 2004, Spain has been a member of an informal working group on jihadism known as the ‘5+5’. This unofficial network consists of defence ministers from Spain, Portugal, France, Italy, Malta, Mauritania, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and Libya. The group exchanges information on threats posed by Islamic extremism and foreign fighters in the region. The Spanish Civil Guard also utilizes Europol information to combat terrorism and organized crime.<sup>89</sup> Spain continues to assist the EU to co-ordinate the Joint Action Days under the umbrella of the European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats (EMPACT), which have resulted in several arrests and investigations.<sup>90</sup>

Like most other EU member states, Ireland enjoys constructive co-operation and contribution with several international partners, most notably the EU, through institutions such as the Counter Terrorism Coordinator, the European Counter-Terrorism Centre at Europol, the Counter-Terrorism Fusion Centre at Interpol, and the internal and external-facing counter-terrorism working groups.<sup>91</sup> Much of the co-operation is based on the sharing of information and intelligence. For instance, the Garda National Crime and Security Intelligence Service is responsible for encompassing the Schengen Information System (SIS), a sharing system for information and co-ordination of activities between EU member states.<sup>92</sup> It seems like the Irish co-operation and co-ordination with the EU will increase after Brexit.<sup>93</sup>

<sup>88</sup> Macron, ‘Letter’.

<sup>89</sup> Europol, ‘European Union terrorism’.

<sup>90</sup> Interview G.

<sup>91</sup> UN, ‘Statement by Ireland’.

<sup>92</sup> An Garda Síochána, ‘Garda national crime and security intelligence service’, accessed 28 December 2020, <https://www.garda.ie/en/about-us/our-departments/garda-national-crime-security-intelligence-service1/garda-national-crime-security-intelligence-service.html>.

<sup>93</sup> Interview D.



Ireland has worked in close co-operation with Britain in order to secure their common borders. This work has included the sharing of biometric and biographic information. Additionally, related to the IPIU, it was established as part of the Irish implementation of the EU Directive on the processing of PNR data. The EU's PNR Regulations 2018 covers the exchange of PNR data with other member states of the EU. It states that the IPIU shall transfer the full data to another member state or to Europol 'where there are reasonable grounds for believing that transmitting the full data is necessary for the purpose of preventing, investigating or prosecuting terrorist offences or serious crime'.<sup>94</sup>

The UK government acknowledges the importance of multilateral organizations, especially the UN and the EU, in their work to combat violent extremism. While there are limits to what Britain has the authority to do internationally in the preventive space, it engages in preventive measures overseas through funding. The UK is also part of RAN,<sup>95</sup> and has played a leading role with regards to Europol, which is tasked with co-ordinating member states' police primarily on cyber-crime and counter-terrorism, among others.<sup>96</sup> In 2017, former Europol chief Rob Wainwright referred to the Prevent strategy as a 'best practice model in Europe' when it comes to handling extremism. As a result, the Home Office communications unit was tasked to lead an EU-wide counter-extremism campaign. Part of this task was the running of a European strategic communications network, which was established to tackle the threat of online radicalization. In this network, the UK was to provide support and consult with other member states, based on their experience with the Prevent programme.<sup>97</sup> This occurred despite critique from the Council of Europe's human rights commissioner, who claimed that Prevent was 'discriminatory against Muslims and potentially undermines free speech, civil liberties and even counter-terrorism efforts'.<sup>98</sup> As in Prevent, the focus of the EU is on the frontline workers – schools, hospitals, healthcare- and social workers, and prison units.<sup>99</sup>

The Research, Information and Communications Unit (RICU) was established by the UK Office of Security and Counter-Terrorism in the Home Office in 2007 as a domestic counter-terrorism communications unit.<sup>100</sup> Its aim was to 'coordinate Government communications about the terrorist threat and our response to it and to facilitate and generate challenge to terrorist ideology'.<sup>101</sup> After RICU had developed a campaign aimed at preventing people from travelling to Syria, the EU took an interest in the unit. This interest has involved into an international team, based in Belgium and working with the Belgium interior ministry,

<sup>94</sup> Irish Statute Book, 'European Union (Passenger Name Record Data) Regulations 2018', S.I No. 177 of 2018, 7–9, <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2018/si/177/made/en/pdf>.

<sup>95</sup> Hooper, 'EU embraces UK'.

<sup>96</sup> Interview C. Lately, the UK has placed a lot of emphasis on the terrorist use of the internet, working together with other international partners in order to put pressure on tech organizations to take down or stop terrorist content from coming up.

<sup>97</sup> Interview C.

<sup>98</sup> Interview C.

<sup>99</sup> Interview C.

<sup>100</sup> Interview C.

<sup>101</sup> Home Office, 'Prevent strategy', 47–48.



which works on developing joint programmes with countries overseas and how to link up with third countries.<sup>102</sup>

The main question regarding international co-operation in Britain is how Brexit will affect the UK's counter-terrorism commitments after the expiry of the transition period on 31 December 2020. While the UK certainly has contributed to the information- and intelligence-sharing networks of the EU, the British government still continues to view the US as its closest ally when it comes to counter-terrorism.<sup>103</sup> The UK is deeply rooted in the Five Eyes community, an intelligence alliance consisting of Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the US, in addition to the UK.<sup>104</sup> The aim of the alliance is, among others, to compare best practice, encourage transparency, and discuss points of interest and concern.<sup>105</sup> The historical ties between these countries are tight. However, there is limited information available to the public, making the extensiveness of the alliance hard to determine.<sup>106</sup> While there is uncertainty regarding how the UK will continue to work with the EU regarding counter-terrorism and the prevention of violent extremism, it would be in the UK's best interests to keep the bonds that have developed over the decades. At the end of the transition period, the UK will have to be prepared to lose a number of internal security measures, such as the European Arrest Warrant, a tool which lets an EU member state force the repatriation of a suspected or convicted individual taking cover in another member state.<sup>107</sup> Additionally, the UK cannot be a full member of Europol, although they can still enjoy close co-operation. Neither will the UK be given access to databases such as the SIS.<sup>108</sup> However, depending on which deals the UK will be able to negotiate in the future, they might come to an agreement with the EU and with member states that will ensure that both the UK and the EU will continue to be able to enjoy sharing information.<sup>109</sup>

## Lessons learned and best practices

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The findings presented above lead to the observation that besides the co-operation between security services, which is satisfactory,<sup>110</sup> there is still a lack of a common European policy across much of the PVE board; this is primarily because there is no real consensus about the roots of radicalization. While rhetorical sensitivities about separating Islamist separatism from

<sup>102</sup> Interview C.

<sup>103</sup> Home Office, 'CONTEST', CM 8123, 110.

<sup>104</sup> The National Counterintelligence and Security Center, 'Five Eyes Intelligence Oversight and Review Council (FIORC)', accessed 28 December 2020, <https://www.dni.gov/index.php/ncsc-how-we-work/217-about/organization/icig-pages/2660-icig-fiorc>.

<sup>105</sup> Five Eyes Intelligence Oversight and Review Council, 'Charter of the Five Eyes Intelligence Oversight and Review Council', 2017, 1, <https://www.dni.gov/files/ICIG/Documents/Partnerships/FIORC/Signed%20FIORC%20Charter%20with%20Line.pdf>.

<sup>106</sup> Interview B.

<sup>107</sup> Charlotte Glaser and Kevin Roberts, 'European Union: UK–EU extradition arrangements post Brexit', 31 August 2020, <https://www.mondaq.com/uk/human-rights/980570/ukeu-extradition-arrangements-post-brexit>.

<sup>108</sup> Chris Morris, 'Brexit: Will the UK and the EU co-operate on security?', *BBC News*, 20 October 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/54613967>.

<sup>109</sup> Interview C.

<sup>110</sup> Interviews H–P.



other strands of violent extremism are prevalent in political discourse around much of Europe, there is a growing practice that points to religion being the major issue, both as a factor of radicalization or as a factor of de-radicalization.

The place of religion and the conception of what is the scope of religious freedom (and, by contrast, of freedom of expression) may vary from one European state to another, but this very diversity could be an opportunity to open spaces for Islamic theology research and teaching institutions, on the model of the existing Christian faculties of theology. Countries where it is legally possible to set up such institutions could open their ranks to students from all EU countries, with courses in different languages. In fact, the EU might be well advised to co-operate with the Faculty of Theology of Sarajevo – an independent faculty (founded by the Austro-Hungarian emperor Franz Joseph) that is not under the control of foreign states and has a tradition of functioning in a secular context – to set up a curriculum for European imams. The French institution of Muslim military chaplaincy might also be a model for other European defence forces who enlist Muslim recruits.

Ireland operates with a single police and security service ‘and the authorities have demonstrated successes utilising security and operational intelligence to disrupt terrorist activities’.<sup>111</sup> In a statement to the UN, Irish officials stated that ‘our model has been cited as an instance of best international practice’.<sup>112</sup> In spite of this, Ireland has been criticized for being unprepared in the face of a terror attack. Some have gone so far as to call Ireland ‘the weakest link’ when it comes to counter-terrorism, while others have said that ‘the “inaction” of Ireland’s government puts both Ireland and the European Union at risk’<sup>113</sup>. Members of the Garda have themselves expressed concern over their training and lack of equipment.<sup>114</sup> Overall, existing Irish PVE-measures are focused on how to handle domestic terrorism, making it difficult to assess Irish competence in handling jihadists and other forms of Irish extremism, and uploading best practices to the EU level.<sup>115</sup>

Highly centralized countries like France and Spain have their own strengths in organizing CT and PVE strategies. But like Ireland they have proven unable to prevent new, high-profile attacks. Overall, they have probably also done a lesser job at improving social cohesion.<sup>116</sup> The delegation of tasks and responsibilities to local authorities does not go fast and far in these member states. In Spain, ‘Local Groups to fight against violent radicalisation’ (GL-LCRV) consist of local police delegates, regional police, city hall officials, members of the judiciary, experts from the penitentiary, and representatives from schools and social entities, but all more or less strictly co-ordinated via an inter-ministerial administrative structure.<sup>117</sup>

<sup>111</sup> FATF, ‘Anti-money laundering’, 8.

<sup>112</sup> UN, ‘Statement by Ireland’, 1.

<sup>113</sup> Counter-Extremism Project, ‘Ireland’.

<sup>114</sup> Counter-Extremism Project, ‘Ireland’. Given that the Garda is responsible for counter-terrorism and intelligence, it is vital that this service is capable of effectively dealing with the terrorist threat, both domestic and international.

<sup>115</sup> Ireland has received praise for their Ethnic Liaison Officers, and it has been considered easily transferrable to any jurisdiction in Europe. RAN, ‘Preventing Radicalisation’, 102.

<sup>116</sup> Interview E.

<sup>117</sup> Reinares and García-Calvo, ‘Spain’s shifting approach’, 51–52.



Seen from a systemic perspective, the federal model of Germany offers lessons that can be more readily applied to the EU in rolling out CT and PVE strategies. After all, each of the *Länder* (states) have their own governmental structures – their own prime ministers, their own ministries for the interior or for social affairs, their own criminal investigation offices and constitutional protection agencies. There is no formal national strategy that prescribes the uniform implementation of specific policies across all the different parts of the union. Instead, the central authorities offer a common framework of guidelines, which the states should observe when they are designing their own strategies. A permanent exchange of ideas and good practices between the hub and the spokes of government promotes the implementation of a unique prevention architecture that the EU could learn from.

- **Establishing a common anti-terrorism database**

Germany has developed a joint anti-terrorism database, which enables state authorities to assess what terrorism-related information has been passed on to other authorities, thereby allowing a systemised view of the chain of information-sharing.<sup>118</sup> Such a framework would be equally feasible at the EU level. There must be a means that ensures information sharing among the different national security services in the EU in a reliable and quickly manner. To achieve this goal, the EU needs a rigorous registration process at the border and an efficient common information system, including the development of common databases and greater information exchange. As previously noted, work in this field is ongoing.

- **Including social work and family support in PVE initiatives**

While prevention work in Germany was initially pushed mainly by police and intelligence authorities, the balance has tipped during the last few years in favour of a multi-agency approach. Moreover, the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs has begun to provide generous funding for prevention-related projects, including the establishment and funding of many local counselling centres. Family members and acquaintances are encouraged to call a helpline if they have concerns about a person suspected of radicalization, or are in danger of being radicalized. One important lesson from the German experience is that effective measures against radicalization must not solely rely on police and intelligence work, but also need to include a strong social work and family support strategy. In terms of programming of (multi-)annual budgets, the European Commission could reinforce its co-operation with member states to align priorities in tackling the root causes of violent extremism and offer social care and other forms of assistance, for instance to facilitate the re-integration of former foreign fighters from Iraq and Syria, as well as Western Balkan countries.

- **Engaging with religious communities**

To tackle the phenomenon of ‘Islamist separatism’, engaging in a trusting dialogue with Muslim organizations is indispensable for preventing radicalization processes. This requires joint efforts by the political leadership, Islamic religious communities, and civil society. Many

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<sup>118</sup> Philipp Grüll, ‘France and Germany demand closer EU cooperation in fight against terrorism’, *EURACTIV.de*, 4 November 2020, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/justice-home-affairs/news/france-and-germany-demand-closer-eu-cooperation-in-fight-against-terrorism/>.



people of the German Muslim community play an integral part in different prevention initiatives. An interesting example can be found with YUMA (Young, Muslim, Active), which is a project to empower young Muslims by giving them opportunities to discuss social and political issues, like diversity and migration, in an effort to increase participation of Muslims in society and politics.<sup>119</sup> Furthermore, Muslim social workers are active employees of many counselling centres. Social cohesion is quickly becoming a buzz-phrase in the European Commission's 'two-way street integration'. It is by learning from member state experiences that the EU can improve its track record in providing transnational support to extrapolate best practices like those established in Germany.

- [Establishing a platform to share good practices and blending with locally orientated approaches](#)

To co-ordinate the efforts of the individual agencies and to provide a platform through which intelligence can be shared, the Joint Counter-Terrorism Centre (GTAZ) was set up in Germany in 2004. GTAZ is not an autonomous authority but a joint co-operation and communication platform used by 40 internal security agencies. GTAZ's working group 'Prevention and De-radicalisation' serves as a platform for the exchange of best practices. Many ideas that were discussed within the working group have been implemented, which shows the effectiveness of this institution and the authorities participating in it. There would be barely any federal or state funding for prevention and counselling offices without the advice given by the working group. The German experience has also shown that to address the local environment leading to radicalization, one needs to involve local actors who are familiar with this environment. The main challenge is the co-ordination of all these local efforts and projects and to ensure that relevant information and experience is shared within the prevention community and to identify blind spots of prevention work. Similarly, agencies like Europol and the office of the EU counter-terrorism co-ordinator could benefit from the upstream dynamic generated by learning lessons shared through anti-radicalization networks like RAN. Such positive feedback loops could help to improve traditional top-down and break siloed approaches.

While there is reason to hope for improvement, one should nevertheless apply caution to the positive impact of these and other (co-ordination) mechanisms. After all, there is still a lack of concrete evidence about what actual measures work and which don't in terms of devising prevention strategies in general. A recent extensive literature review on P/CVE interventions in Europe showed that, at the time of writing, there was no evidence-based interventions that tackled the prevention of the intention of committing acts of violent extremism.<sup>120</sup>

<sup>119</sup> Said and Fouad, 'Countering Islamist radicalisation', 8.

<sup>120</sup> Isabella Pistone et al., 'A scoping review of interventions for preventing and countering violent extremism: Current status and implications for future research', *Journal of Deradicalization*, no. 19 (2019): 22, <https://journals.sfu.ca/jd/index.php/jd/article/view/213>.



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## Annex: List of interviews

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- Interview A. University of Oslo, 3 November 2020.
- Interview B. University of St. Andrews, 12 November 2020.
- Interview C. UK Office for Security and Counter-Terrorism, 11 December 2020.
- Interview D. University of Cork, 17 December 2020.
- Interview E. Elcano Royal Institute, 25 November 2020.
- Interview F. European Parliament, LIBE committee, 28 October 2020.
- Interview G. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Spain, DG for International Cooperation against Terrorism, Drugs and Organized Crime, 11 December 2020.
- Interview H. European Commission, FPI.2 – Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP), 10 November 2020.
- Interview I. European External Action Service, Syria desk, 26 October 2020.
- Interview J. European External Action Service, SECDEFPOL 3, 12 October 2020.
- Interview K. European External Action Service, EU Delegation to Bosnia and Herzegovina, 16 October 2020.
- Interview L. European Commission, DG Development Cooperation, B5 – Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism Programmes, 1 October 2020.
- Interview M. European Commission, Foreign Policy Instruments Service, 18 November 2020.
- Interview N. European Commission, DG NEAR, D.5 – Western Balkans Regional Cooperation and Programmes, Sector Rule of Law, Security, Migration and Reconciliation, 20 October 2020.
- Interview O. European Commission, DG HOME, Prevention of Radicalisation, Unit D.3 (Western Balkans), 21 October 2020.
- Interview P. European Commission, DG HOME, Prevention of Radicalisation, Unit D.3 (MENA), 21 October 2020.
- Interview Q. Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), 1 December 2020.
- Interview R. Researcher/practitioner from Germany, 17 November 2020.

