

Special Report

## **Tackling radicalisation that leads to terrorism: the Commission addressed the needs of Member States, but with some shortfalls in coordination and evaluation**

(pursuant to Article 287(4), second subparagraph, TFEU)



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The ECA's special reports set out the results of its audits of EU policies and programmes, or of management-related topics from specific budgetary areas. The ECA selects and designs these audit tasks to be of maximum impact by considering the risks to performance or compliance, the level of income or spending involved, forthcoming developments and political and public interest.

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## **GLOSSARY**

<b>Counter-Terrorism Coordinator</b>	Coordinates the work of the Council of the EU in combating terrorism and ensures that the EU plays an active role in the fight against terrorism
<b>EU Internet Forum</b>	Commission initiative to involve internet companies in countering terrorist propaganda
<b>EU Internet Referral Unit (IRU)</b>	The EU IRU at Europol aims to counter online radicalisation and recruitment efforts by flagging online terrorist content and alerting service providers that host it
<b>Eurojust</b>	The EU's agency for supporting and strengthening coordination and cooperation between Member States in investigating and prosecuting serious cross-border organised crime and terrorism
<b>European Strategic Communications Network</b>	Network of EU Member States' experts for sharing good practice on strategic communications
<b>Europol</b>	The EU's agency for law enforcement cooperation which aims to support Member States in preventing and combating all forms of serious international organised crime and terrorism
<b>IMPACT</b>	Project that aimed to develop a toolkit to evaluate initiatives tackling radicalisation
<b>Internal Security Fund – Police</b>	The Police component of the Internal Security Fund (2014-2020) helps to ensure a high level of security in the EU. It finances actions managed directly by the Commission and actions managed by Member States through national programmes
<b>Radicalisation</b>	The phenomenon of people embracing extremist ideologies and behaviours which could lead to acts of terrorism
<b>Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN)</b>	EU wide network that connects practitioners for the purpose of exchanging ideas, knowledge and experiences on preventing and countering radicalisation leading to violent extremism and terrorism
<b>Reintegration</b>	A process which aims to help former terrorists re-enter society
<b>STRESAVIORA</b>	Project to promote inclusive and resilient societies
<b>Terrorist propaganda</b>	Propagation of a particular extremist worldview that leads individuals to consider and justify violence
<b>VOX-Pol</b>	Project that aims to network research activities on online extremism with a view to producing better-informed policy agendas at national, European and international levels

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

I. European Union (EU) Member States are responsible for national security, including the fight against terrorism. They are in charge of designing and implementing measures at national level that aim to tackle radicalisation, i.e. the phenomenon of people embracing extremist ideologies and behaviours which could lead them to commit acts of terrorism. As radicalisation is caused by several factors, a wide range of preventive actions are generally deployed to address the problem. The Commission's role is to support Member States in their efforts and help to ensure that good practices are exchanged. To do so, the Commission draws on an increasingly wide range of EU funds.

II. Our audit examined whether the Commission manages this cross-cutting support well. In particular, we assessed whether:

- (a) the Commission provides Member States with relevant support;
- (b) the actions financed by the different EU funds are coordinated to make the most of any synergies;
- (c) the Commission has put in place a framework to assess the effectiveness and value for money of its support.

III. Overall, we found that the Commission addressed the needs of Member States, but there were some shortfalls in coordination and evaluation.

IV. The Commission promoted cooperation between Member States through relevant initiatives such as the Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN), the EU Internet Forum and the European Strategic Communications Network.

V. The Commission coordinated its cross-cutting support, for example, by means of consultation between directorates-general when approving work programmes. This has resulted in synergies between its actions. However, despite recent improvements, there is still scope to improve the coordination of Commission actions. For example, the Commission's overview of EU-funded actions in this area does not include those managed by Member States, which would be useful to make the most of potential synergies. We also

found that the RAN, one of the Commission's main initiatives, was not used to its full potential to disseminate the results of successful EU-funded projects.

VI. The Commission has not sufficiently developed its framework for assessing whether its support is effective and offers value for money. For example, it has not broken down the overall policy objectives into more specific and measurable objectives, and the funds that the Commission has used are not accompanied by indicators and targets designed to measure success in addressing radicalisation.

VII. Moreover, the achievements of specific actions are often measured in terms of amount of activity rather than effectiveness. As a result, there is a risk that useful lessons might not be disseminated or taken into account when the Commission designs actions or develops its policy further.

VIII. On the basis of its findings, the ECA recommends that the Commission should:

- (a) improve the framework for overall coordination of actions addressing radicalisation;
- (b) increase practical support to practitioners and policymakers in Member States; and
- (c) improve the framework for assessing results.

## **INTRODUCTION**

### ***The EU supports Member States in their efforts to combat terrorism***

1. Member States are responsible for their national security<sup>1</sup>. They have developed different approaches to counter-terrorism according to their evaluation of the risks. The EU's role is to endeavour to ensure a high level of security<sup>2</sup> by facilitating exchanges of information, operational cooperation and sharing of knowledge and experiences. In 2005, the Council adopted an EU counter-terrorism strategy organised around four pillars<sup>3</sup>:

- (a) **Prevention:** to tackle the causes of radicalisation and recruitment into terrorism.
- (b) **Protection:** to protect citizens and infrastructure through better security for borders, transport and critical infrastructure.
- (c) **Pursuit:** to pursue and investigate terrorists by impeding planning, travel and communications, disrupting support networks, cutting off funding and access to attack materials, and bringing terrorists to justice.
- (d) **Response:** to manage and minimise the consequences of a terrorist attack.

2. The 2015 European Agenda on Security<sup>4</sup> set out how the EU could support Member States in countering terrorism. It focused on the prevention of radicalisation and the threat posed by foreign terrorist fighters (those returning to Europe after having joined terrorist groups in conflict zones). It emphasised the need to protect citizens and critical infrastructure better, and to address the fight against terrorism outside the EU. It underlined

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<sup>1</sup> Article 4.2 of the Treaty on European Union states that national security remains the sole responsibility of each Member State.

<sup>2</sup> Article 67 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union states that the Union shall endeavour to ensure a high level of security. Articles 82 to 89 provide for police and judicial cooperation.

<sup>3</sup> The European Union Counter-Terrorism Strategy, 30 November 2005, 14469/4/05, adopted on 15 December 2005.

<sup>4</sup> COM(2015) 185 final of 28 April 2015 "The European Agenda on Security".

the importance of penalising terrorists and their backers, and of cutting their access to funds, firearms and explosives. It also highlighted the need for better exchanges of information in order to track those engaged in terrorist activities.

3. Various EU institutions and bodies are involved in EU counter-terrorism. Through its communications, the Commission contributes to the EU strategy adopted by the Council in the form of Council conclusions. It also initiates legislative acts on combating terrorism for negotiation and adoption by the European Parliament and the Council<sup>5</sup>. It is responsible for the sound financial management of EU funds and for coordinating its various directorates-general and monitoring its agencies in providing support for Member States. The Commissioner for the Security Union works under the guidance of the First Vice-President and supports the work of the Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship in ensuring the Commission's security response to terrorism. The role of the Council's Counter-Terrorism Coordinator is to follow up the overall implementation of the EU's counter-terrorism strategy and to ensure the EU plays an active role in the fight against terrorism.

***The Commission deploys a wide range of actions to help Member States address radicalisation***

4. Addressing radicalisation is a key component of the fight against terrorism. The majority of suspects involved in the recent terrorist attacks in Europe were European citizens who had been radicalised<sup>6</sup>. In its Communications on supporting Member States in addressing radicalisation that leads to terrorism<sup>7</sup>, the Commission takes the view that radicalisation is usually the result of a combination of factors. The latest Commission Communication

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<sup>5</sup> For example, Directive (EU) 2017/541 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 March 2017 on combating terrorism (OJ L 88, 31.3.2017, p. 6).

<sup>6</sup> A European Agenda on Security. State of Play: June 2017.

<sup>7</sup> COM(2005) 313 final of 21 September 2005 "Terrorist recruitment: addressing the factors contributing to violent radicalisation"; COM(2013) 941 final of 15 January 2014 "Preventing radicalisation to terrorism and violent extremism: strengthening the EU's response"; and COM(2016) 379 final of 14 June 2016 "Supporting the prevention of radicalisation leading to violent extremism".



describes a web of social “push” factors (e.g. marginalisation and exclusion) and ideological “pull” factors (e.g. abuse of religious narratives by recruiters to justify acts of violence).

5. The Commission takes the view that supporting Member States in their fight against radicalisation is a multi-faceted and complex challenge which can only be met through a combination of actions across several policy areas and by bringing together stakeholders at local, regional, national and European levels<sup>8</sup>. These actions are financed by various funds such as the Internal Security Fund, the Horizon 2020 Programme, The Justice Programme, Erasmus+ and the European Social Fund (ESF). None of these funds has addressing radicalisation as a specific objective. The Commission’s diverse actions are managed by eight of its directorates-general, Europol, Eurojust and the Member States (see [\*\*\*Annex\*\*\*](#)). The Commission’s approach to supporting Member States in addressing radicalisation is shown in [\*\*\*Figure 1\*\*\*](#).

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<sup>8</sup> This approach is reinforced by the 2010 Internal Security Strategy and the 2015 European Agenda on Security.

**Figure 1 - How the Commission supports Member States in addressing radicalisation**



Source: ECA

6. Horizon 2020 provides research grants for developing knowledge of radicalisation. Research topics include contemporary radicalisation trends and the development of a comprehensive approach to violent radicalisation. Good practices are exchanged through initiatives such as the Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN) (see [Box 1](#)).

### **Box 1 - Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN)**

The RAN was established in 2011. It connects practitioners around Europe, such as psychologists, teachers, social workers, police, prison and probation officers, who work directly with those vulnerable to radicalisation, and with those who have already been radicalised. It aims to help and empower front-line practitioners (rather than policymakers and academics) in countering radicalisation or reintegrating violent extremists by:

- promoting exchanges of experience, e.g. at meetings and conferences;
- encouraging the use of relevant practical tools;
- disseminating information and expertise.

The RAN Centre of Excellence provides coordination and support for the RAN. It uses its expertise to guide the nine RAN Working Groups (thematic groups in which practitioners meet to exchange ideas, knowledge and experiences), offer tailor-made support (e.g. workshops and training courses) to individual countries, and disseminate knowledge and practices. The Centre is managed by a contractor and financed by an “Internal Security Fund – Police” contract totalling €25 million for the 2015-2019 period.

7. Online terrorist propaganda is countered, for example, through the EU Internet Referral Unit (EU IRU) based in Europol, the EU Internet Forum and the European Strategic Communications Network (see **Box 2**).

### **Box 2 - Countering terrorist propaganda**

#### **EU Internet Referral Unit (EU IRU)**

The EU IRU was set up on 1 July 2015 and is located within the European Counter Terrorism Centre (ECTC) at Europol. It has a budget of €4.5 million for 2017.

The EU IRU aims to counter online radicalisation and recruitment by terrorists by flagging online terrorist content and alerting the service providers that host it, such as YouTube (Google), Microsoft, Facebook and Twitter, by means of an assessment, that will enable them to decide whether to remove such content. In agreement with Member States, it focuses on Islamist terrorist propaganda, which cuts across borders.

The EU IRU also provides expertise on internet based communication to support Member States' investigations and provides strategic analysis to identify terrorist threats.

#### **EU Internet Forum**

In December 2015 the Commission launched the EU Internet Forum financed by the "Internal Security Fund – Police". By means of meetings and conferences, the Forum brings together governments, Europol, internet companies, the Counter-Terrorism Coordinator, the European Strategic Communications Network and the RAN. It has two objectives:

- to reduce accessibility to terrorist content online;
- to empower civil-society partners to increase the volume of effective alternative narratives online.

#### **European Strategic Communications Network**

The European Strategic Communications Network is a network where EU Member States' experts share good practices on strategic communications. Its advisory team provides governments with advice on developing a communication strategy and producing counter-narrative campaigns<sup>9</sup>. The "Internal Security Fund - Police" provided grants of €2.2 million to finance their activities for the period from January 2015 to September 2017.

8. Inclusive and resilient societies are promoted by means of projects financed by the "Internal Security Fund – Police" such as STRESAVIORA (see **Box 3**). In addition, projects financed by Erasmus+ and the European Social Fund also aim to strengthen resilience and reach out to disadvantaged communities. Although their objectives are much broader and are not specifically designed to address radicalisation, they indirectly help to prevent it.

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<sup>9</sup> The European Strategic Communications Network evolved from the Syria Strategic Communications Advisory Team (SSCAT).

**Box 3 - STRESAVIORA**

**STRESAVIORA I** involved researchers who identified the need for young people to become more resilient, express their own opinions, engage in debate, and stand up for themselves. It included those in their direct social environment (e.g. parents, teachers and police officers) whose awareness needed to be raised.

**STRESAVIORA II** aims to implement the tools for increasing resilience that were developed during the first phase of the project in two cities in each of five EU countries (Belgium, France, Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden). The project concerns all types of radicalisation (not just Islamist), and so could be extended to other parts of Europe with different needs. The project receives funding of €0.7 million from the “Internal Security Fund – Police”.

9. The Commission supports Member States in identifying and dealing with radicalised people by facilitating exchanges of information between Member States’ law enforcement authorities (e.g. through the Schengen Information System). It also supports the development of exit strategies to help people disengage from radicalised environments and re-integrate into society by means of rehabilitation and de-radicalisation projects funded by the Justice Programme.

10. Radicalisation in countries outside Europe is addressed both by dedicated counter-terrorism measures and mainstreaming in other measures. This includes programmes financed by the European Development Funds, Erasmus+, the European Neighbourhood Instrument and the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace.

**AUDIT SCOPE AND APPROACH*****Audit scope***

11. We examined whether the Commission appropriately managed its support for Member States in addressing radicalisation leading to terrorism. The aim was to answer the following questions:

(a) Does the Commission provide Member States with relevant support?

In order to answer this question, we assessed whether the Commission’s policy objectives and actions were designed in such a way as to reflect Member States’ needs.

- (b) Are the actions financed by the different EU funds coordinated to make the most of any synergies?

In order to answer this question, we assessed whether the Commission had the necessary procedures for coordinating its support.

- (c) Has the Commission put in place a framework to assess the effectiveness and value for money of its support?

In order to answer this question, we examined whether the Commission had set up the necessary framework of indicators and reports to assess whether its policy is effective and offers value for money. We also examined whether assessments of individual actions measured not only activity, but also effectiveness.

12. Our focus was mainly on the period from 2014 onwards, to coincide with the start of the 2014-2020 funding periods for the Commission's funds and programmes.

13. We focused mainly on the management of actions within the EU whose primary purpose was to prevent and counter radicalisation, but we also took into account actions which pursue broader objectives, such as the social inclusion of disadvantaged groups. We did not examine information systems (e.g. the Schengen Information System) for exchanging information between Member States on details of radicalised individuals.

### ***Audit approach***

14. Our audit fieldwork was carried out from November 2016 to March 2017. We based our observations on the following sources of evidence:

- (a) a review of documentation on policies, procedures and actions relating to support for Member States in addressing radicalisation;
- (b) interviews with Commission directorates-general that manage EU funds and tools for addressing radicalisation, as well as with the RAN Centre of Excellence, the EU IRU at Europol, and the International Centre for Counter-Terrorism (an organisation which promotes the sharing of knowledge and ideas on counter-terrorism);

- (c) a survey we sent out to counter-terrorist focal points in all the Member States' Permanent Representations to the EU. 15 out of 28 counter-terrorist focal points completed the survey, i.e. a response rate of 54 %. The survey included questions on the relevance, added value and challenges of the support given to Member States;
- (d) visits to national authorities in Belgium and France in order to assess the relevance and added value of the support they receive.

## **OBSERVATIONS**

### ***Support is relevant and well designed***

15. We examined the Commission's policy framework in order to assess whether it addressed Member States' needs, and whether there were any gaps. We also examined whether actions were designed in such a way as to bring benefits to Member States from acting at European level.

### **The Commission addressed the needs of Member States, with few exceptions**

16. Member States' policymakers can inform the Commission about the areas where they need support in addressing radicalisation. This is done through various meetings, networks and documents (e.g. the Council Working Group on Terrorism, the network of prevent policymakers launched in February 2017 and Council Conclusions), or as part of the approval of work programmes for EU funds. We found that when the Commission drafted its policy framework to address radicalisation, it took account of the needs expressed by Member States' policymakers (see **Box 4**).

#### **Box 4 - Examples where the Commission took account of the needs expressed by Member States**

In November 2015, the Member States' Ministers for Justice and Home Affairs used the Conclusions of the Council of the European Union to highlight the need for the Commission to support Member States in addressing radicalisation in prisons. In response, the 2016 "Communication on supporting the prevention of radicalisation leading to violent extremism" included a focus on radicalisation in prisons.

Following the terrorist attacks in Paris and Denmark in early 2015, in March 2015 EU Education Ministers issued the Paris Declaration on promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education. In line with this Declaration, the 2016 “Communication on supporting the prevention of radicalisation leading to violent extremism” placed greater emphasis on tackling social exclusion.

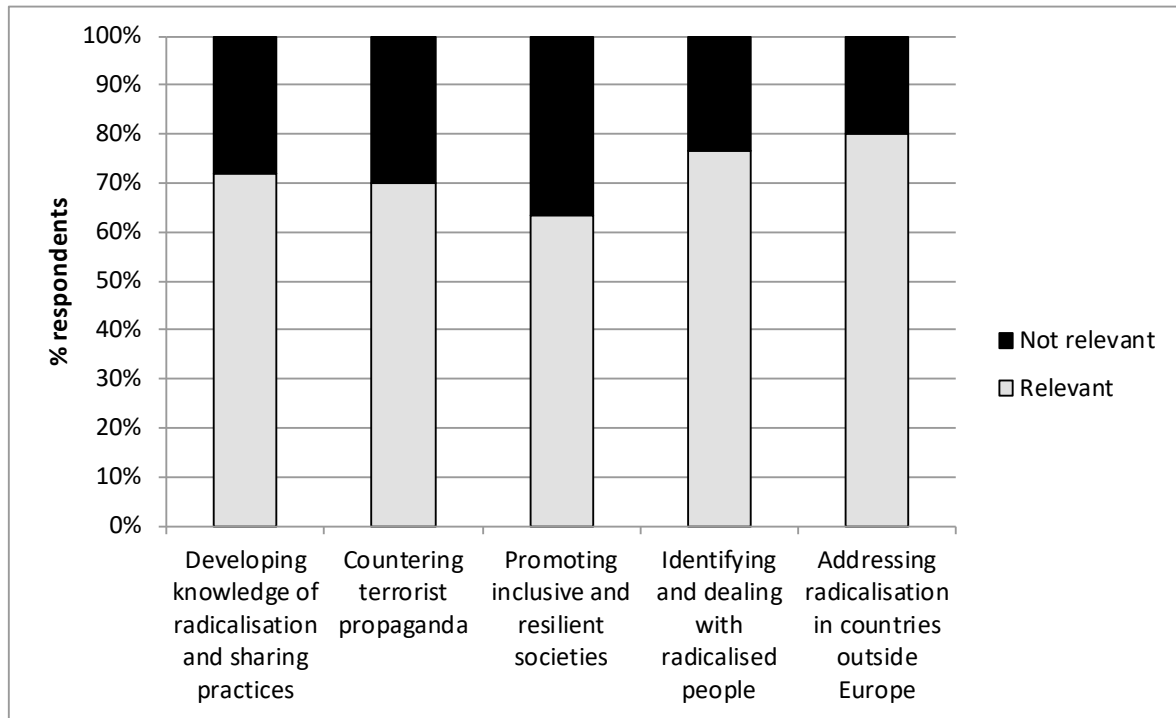
17. Just as Member States’ needs have changed in response to the changing threat situation, so has the Commission’s support. In modifying its support, the Commission takes account of the work of European bodies such as Europol which provides it with information on the threat situation in Member States (see **Box 5**).

**Box 5 - The Commission’s support changes in response to the threat situation**

In response to recent terrorist attacks in Europe and Europol’s analysis, the 2016 “Communication on supporting the prevention of radicalisation leading to violent extremism” highlighted the threat posed by returning foreign terrorist fighters (those who leave their home in the EU and travel to other countries, e.g. the conflict zones in Syria and Iraq, to take part in terrorist fighting or training). It reinforced support for developing exit strategies to help individuals to disengage from radicalised environments and reintegrate into society.

18. As the Commission takes account of the needs expressed by Member States, the policy framework focuses support for Member States on relevant areas. Our survey confirmed that most respondents felt the Commission’s support for Member States in the various areas was relevant (see **Figure 2**). The percentage varied between 64 % and 80 %, depending on the area. The **Annex** shows how the Commission not only targeted relevant areas in its policy framework, but also applied the various EU funds to carry out actions which actually address those areas in practice.



**Figure 2 - Relevance of the Commission support**

Source: Audit survey of Member States' Permanent Representations to the EU.

19. However, there were exceptions where needs were not sufficiently addressed:

- (a) The Belgian authorities informed us that the issue of mainstream media (television, radio and the press) was insufficiently addressed in the policy framework. They considered it important to include this issue in the policy framework in order to facilitate reflection on the media's role not only in encouraging people to leave Europe to fight in Syria but also in contributing to polarisation in society, which could create tensions leading to radicalisation.
- (b) The need to develop exit strategies (see **Box 5**) was not sufficiently addressed in practice. In 2014, the Commission launched a call for proposals for projects to be financed by the "Internal Security Fund – Police". This call aimed to address two priorities: preventing radicalisation and developing exit strategies. However, only projects addressing the first objective of preventing radicalisation were funded because they received a higher ranking. The 2015 and 2016 annual work programmes for the

“Internal Security Fund – Police” included no further calls for proposals to develop programmes on exit strategies.

**Support is designed to bring benefits to Member States from acting at European level**

20. The Commission not only targets relevant areas, but also makes use of EU funds and tools to deliver concrete support for Member States which is designed to bring benefits from acting at European level. Examples of this support include the RAN (see **Box 1**), the EU Internet Forum, the European Strategic Communications Network and the EU IRU at Europol (see **Box 2**). These initiatives, which specifically target radicalisation, promote cooperation between Member States and would not be implemented at all - or not as efficiently - by Member States acting individually.

21. The “Internal Security Fund – Police” national programmes managed by Member States are also designed to bring benefits from acting at European level by raising national standards to reduce disparities and by stimulating synergies between Member States. 18 Member States included specific actions to tackle radicalisation in their national programmes. Belgium, for example, financed projects to increase radicalisation awareness in prisons, support a network for assisting vulnerable families, and fund mobile multi-disciplinary teams to analyse the needs of local authorities and propose local strategies.

***The Commission fosters synergies, but coordination could be improved***

22. The Commission is increasingly active in supporting Member States in addressing radicalisation. 14 out of the 15 respondents to our survey (see **paragraph 14**) felt that the Commission was more active now than five years ago. The variety of the Commission’s actions, which involve different funds managed by eight directorates-general, and which are spread across different policy areas (see **paragraph 5**), requires effective coordination. We therefore examined whether the Commission coordinates its actions in such a way as to maximise synergies. We reviewed the procedures for consulting the various directorates-general before EU funding is granted. We also reviewed the main actions financed by different EU funds in order to identify synergies, and examined whether the Commission has the comprehensive overview of all its counter-radicalisation actions which is needed to make

the most of potential synergies. In particular, we checked whether the Commission made full use of the RAN, for example to disseminate the results of EU-funded actions.

### **The Commission fosters synergies**

23. The **Annex** shows different Commission actions can address similar issues. Since the Commission is increasingly active in this area, there are opportunities for synergies, particularly where actions intersect. Examples of this are:

- (a) “Internal Security Fund – Police” funds provided to Member States for training teachers could address similar issues to Erasmus+ projects;
- (b) projects funded by the Justice Programme to train and raise awareness of prison staff could address similar issues to Erasmus+ or “Internal Security Fund – Police” projects.

24. The Commission has a number of procedures to facilitate coordination, the aim being to maximise synergies and avoid duplication of support (see **Box 6**).

#### **Box 6 - Examples of Commission procedures to facilitate coordination**

Through the process referred to as **inter-service consultation**, various directorates-general work together to approve annual work programmes which set out the actions planned for EU funds. Some annual work programmes require projects to complement other actions. For example:

- the 2016 annual work programme for the Justice Programme required actions to ensure consistency, complementarity and synergies with actions supported by other EU funds, including the “Internal Security Fund – Police”, Erasmus+ and Horizon 2020;
- the 2016 annual work programme for “Internal Security Fund – Police” actions managed centrally by the Commission required projects to ensure complementarity with Europol activities.

**Calls for proposals** (the procedure for inviting applications for project funding) may require applicants to show that they will not duplicate existing initiatives. For example, the 2014 “Internal Security Fund – Police” call for proposals on preventing radicalisation required applicants to demonstrate that proposals do not duplicate existing work, projects and initiatives, including the activities of the RAN.

25. We examined actions in different areas financed by different funds. We found that Commission coordination has resulted in synergies between its actions. The RAN, for example, is used to disseminate the results of other EU-funded projects (see **Box 7**). Further examples are given in **Figure 3**. This shows several actions funded by three EU funds and demonstrates that synergies exist both within and between funds. For example, the Commission used the 7th Framework Programme (the research programme which preceded Horizon 2020) to fund the IMPACT<sup>10</sup> research project which developed tools for evaluating radicalisation actions. These tools were used by the STRESAVIORA project funded by the “Internal Security Fund – Police.” This project was then scaled up and disseminated by a project financed by Erasmus+.

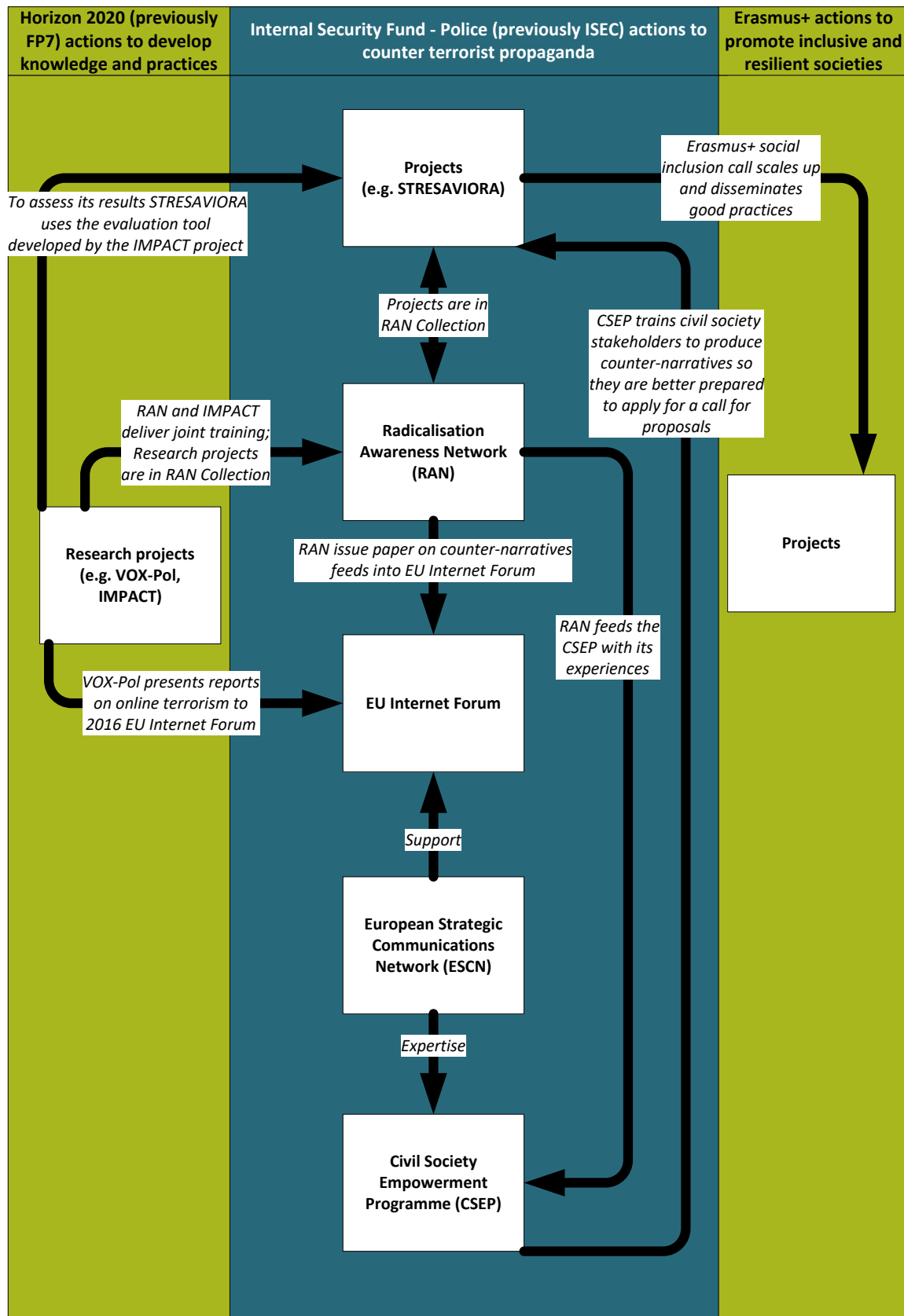
**Box 7 - The RAN Collection - an example of synergy between EU-funded projects**

The RAN Collection of Approaches and Practices, which has been regularly updated since 2014, contains details of radicalisation projects based in the EU which are transferable to other contexts. The projects have been presented in a RAN Working Group meeting for peer review and approved by the RAN Steering Committee. There are 108 practices in the RAN Collection, including 16 EU-funded projects.

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<sup>10</sup> IMPACT Europe (Innovative Method and Procedure to Assess Counter-violent-radicalisation Techniques in Europe) aimed to develop a toolkit to evaluate initiatives tackling radicalisation.

**Figure 3 - Examples of synergies between Commission actions addressing radicalisation**



Source: ECA.

### **There are some coordination shortfalls**

26. Although the Commission is able to identify and exploit many connections between actions, there are shortfalls in overall coordination:

- (a) Different directorates-general are responsible for planning for and reporting on different EU funds (see **Annex**). For example, DG Education and Culture is responsible for coordinating projects financed by Erasmus+, and DG Justice and Consumers is responsible for coordinating projects financed by the Justice Programme. DG Migration and Home Affairs is the lead directorate-general for developing the Commission's policy framework and monitoring its implementation<sup>11</sup>. However, until 2017 there was no framework for coordinating all EU actions addressing radicalisation in order to identify potential synergies between funds.
- (b) It was only in 2017 that DG Migration and Home Affairs carried out a mapping of EU-funded projects addressing radicalisation. This meant that until then the Commission did not have a consolidated list of counter-radicalisation actions financed by the different EU funds. Even then, this mapping process was limited to actions managed centrally by the Commission and did not include those managed by Member States in their national programmes.

27. Interviews with the EU IRU at Europol and the European Strategic Communications Network identified opportunities for better coordination between EU-funded actions:

- (a) Europol suggested that there was an opportunity for greater synergy by coordinating the timing and content of counter-narrative campaigns with the removal of terrorist material from the internet;
- (b) the European Strategic Communications Network suggested it would benefit from access to Europol's analysis of trends in terrorist propaganda (to the extent this is

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<sup>11</sup> For example, by means of monthly reports since October 2016 on progress towards an effective and genuine Security Union, and through the July 2017 Comprehensive Assessment of EU Security Policy.

permitted under the Administrative Agreement between the Commission and Europol), and also from greater involvement in VOX-Pol<sup>12</sup>, an EU-funded research project. This information would enable it to provide governments with better advice on developing communication strategies and producing counter-narrative campaigns.

### **The RAN is not used to its full potential**

28. Although the RAN brings useful benefits from acting at European level, we found that this added value is not maximised in practice<sup>13</sup>:

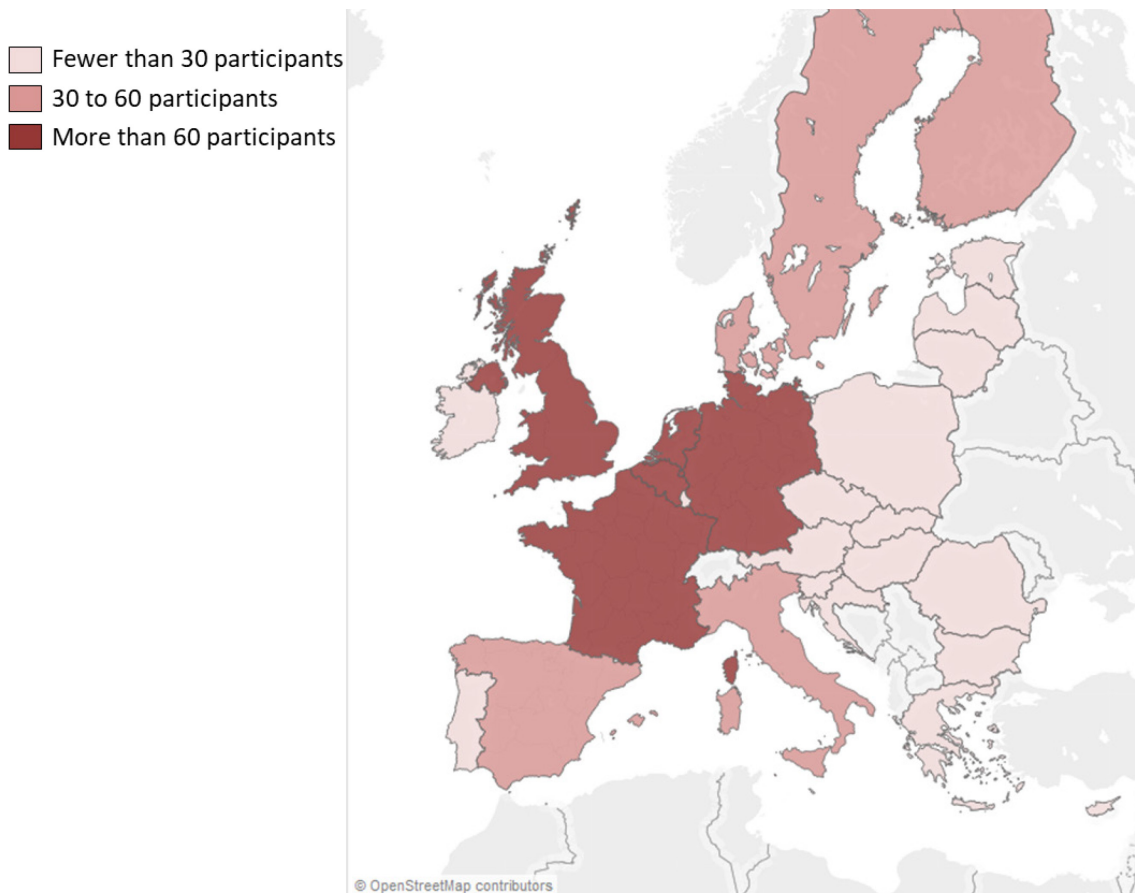
- (a) The RAN could produce more practical outputs, for example by analysing practices in Member States (e.g. by means of more on-site visits) and drawing up a detailed comparative inventory of the approaches implemented in each Member State. The 2014 “Communication on preventing radicalisation to terrorism” refers to the RAN Collection - first published in 2014 - as a repository of best practices. However, the introduction to the RAN Collection states that the practices included are only meant to be informative and inspiring. Also, we found that entries in the RAN Collection do not have sufficient information on how the project was financed to allow interested parties to identify potential sources of EU funding for the types of project they are considering.
- (b) The Commission has not analysed the reasons why the RAN is used less by some countries than by others (see **Figure 4**). This difference in use may be explained by different countries’ perceptions of terrorism as a threat, the RAN’s focus on particular types of terrorism, its bottom-up approach (i.e. keeping policy makers informed of practitioners’ perspectives) or its use of English as the main language during meetings. No record is kept of changes over time in participation rates by different Member States.

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<sup>12</sup> The VOX-Pol project aims to network research activities on online extremism in order to result in better-informed policy agendas at national, European and international levels.

<sup>13</sup> This is corroborated by our survey. 8 out of 13 (62 %) survey respondents who expressed an opinion felt that the RAN approach could add more value.

**Figure 4 - RAN Working Group participants since October 2015**



Source: ECA, based on Commission data.

- (c) The Commission tries to increase awareness of EU-funded projects by encouraging project participants to disseminate results through a RAN Working Group. For example, out of 20 ISEC-funded projects<sup>14</sup> which have ended since 2011 (when the RAN was set up), and which the Commission assessed as good, very good or excellent, it proposed dissemination through the RAN for 16 of them. However, we found that for over half of these projects this did not happen in practice. At the time of our audit only 7 of these projects (44 %) had actually been presented to a RAN Working Group, workshop or conference.

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<sup>14</sup> ISEC (Prevention and Fight against Crime) was part of the “Securing and Safeguarding Liberties” Framework Programme (2007-2013) which preceded the “Internal Security Fund - Police” (2014-2020).



- (d) The Belgian authorities informed us that practitioners from small organisations on the ground without links to government (e.g. networks of local groups of foreign fighters' mothers) are not sufficiently involved in the RAN to ensure a genuine bottom-up approach.
- (e) The RAN aims to improve bottom-up communication from practitioners to policymakers. However, less than half of respondents to a survey of RAN practitioners carried out by the RAN itself in 2016 felt that the RAN had helped them to influence policymakers. In addition, four respondents to our survey suggested that the link between the RAN and policymakers could be strengthened, for example by formal exchanges of approaches and ideas. It can take too long for needs identified at practitioner level to find their way into the Commission's policy framework. For example, the issue of radicalisation in prisons has been discussed since 2011 at practitioner level (e.g. prison and probation staff, teachers and social workers) by the RAN Prison and Probation Working Group. However, it was not until 2015 that the Commission identified specific actions financed by the Justice Programme to address this issue.

***The Commission's framework for assessing results is insufficiently developed***

29. We examined whether the Commission has performance indicators for assessing the effectiveness of its overall support and whether realistic targets were set. We examined whether indicators measure not only activity, but also real progress achieved towards the overall objective of helping Member States address radicalisation that leads to terrorism. At the level of individual actions, we examined whether the Commission assesses the effectiveness of its support in order to find out what works and where, and what does not work and why. The Commission needs this information to be able to:

- (a) respond to requests from the European Parliament to evaluate the EU's strategy for combating radicalisation and recruitment to terrorist groups<sup>15</sup>;
- (b) improve and adjust its policy and support continuously in response to changes in the threat situation and users' needs;
- (c) disseminate and scale up examples of successful projects to maximise synergies (and avoid disseminating ineffective or counter-productive project results);
- (d) demonstrate to citizens that the initiatives are likely to be effective.

**The Commission does not evaluate its overall success in achieving policy goals**

30. We found that the Commission had not sufficiently developed its framework for assessing whether its policy for supporting Member States in addressing radicalisation is effective and offers value for money. For example, the Commission has not:

- (a) broken down the overall objectives of its counter-radicalisation policy into more specific and measurable objectives;
- (b) established appropriate indicators and targets for EU funds used, in order to measure performance in addressing radicalisation;
- (c) provided a comprehensive overview of EU-financed counter-radicalisation actions (see **paragraph 26**);
- (d) fully set out the cost of addressing radicalisation. The 2014 "Communication on preventing radicalisation to terrorism" included no information on amounts of funding. The Commission explained that actions would be implemented using existing resources, but did not specify which ones. The 2016 "Communication on supporting the prevention of radicalisation leading to violent extremism" provided some information about

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<sup>15</sup> See, for example, the European Parliament resolution of 25 November 2015 on the prevention of radicalisation and recruitment of European citizens by terrorist organisations.

funding and costs, as did the July 2017 “Comprehensive Assessment of EU Security Policy”<sup>16</sup>. However:

- (i) some actions, such as the projects financed by the “Internal Security Fund – Police”, are omitted;
- (ii) some actions are not costed, notably the EU IRU, the EU Internet Forum, the Civil Society Empowerment Programme and the European Strategic Communications Network;
- (iii) funding information for the various actions covers different periods;
- (iv) no distinction is made between the costs of actions which are specifically designed to address radicalisation (e.g. the €25 million for the RAN Centre of Excellence) and those which are not, but which nevertheless help to prevent it (e.g. the €25.6 billion from the European Social Fund to foster the social inclusion of disadvantaged groups).

31. As a result, there is no overall report covering the cost and achievements of EU-financed counter-radicalisation actions. Instead, the issues are covered in various reports which describe what has been done rather than measuring success in achieving policy goals (see **Box 8**).

**Box 8 - Examples of reports which describe what has been done rather than measure success in achieving policy goals**

The final implementation report on the EU Internal Security Strategy 2010-2014 described what had been done to support Member States in addressing radicalisation, but did not assess effectiveness<sup>17</sup>:

- the establishment of the RAN in September 2011;
- the adoption of the January 2014 “Communication on preventing radicalisation to terrorism”;

<sup>16</sup> SWD(2017) 278 of 26 July 2017 “Comprehensive Assessment of EU Security Policy”.

<sup>17</sup> COM(2014) 365 final of 20 June 2014 “The final implementation report of the EU Internal Security Strategy 2010-2014”.

- the publication of the RAN Collection.

In DG Migration and Home Affairs' 2016 annual activity report, the performance tables on the "Internal Security Fund – Police" contain information on the number of counter-narratives produced.

The EU IRU reports periodically on the amount of terrorist content removed from the internet.

### **The Commission cannot demonstrate how effective its individual actions actually are**

32. More activity does not necessarily mean greater effectiveness. We found that assessments of Commission actions to help Member States address radicalisation often measure achievements in terms of amount of activity (e.g. the number of meetings held or documents produced) rather than effectiveness (e.g. the knowledge acquired by RAN participants, how they applied it, and its impact on their job). The recent "Comprehensive Assessment of EU Security Policy" also highlighted the need to evaluate the results and effectiveness of actions which aim to prevent terrorism. Consequently, as the following paragraphs show, the Commission cannot demonstrate how effective EU-funded counter-radicalisation actions actually are.

33. Evaluations are planned for projects funded by the "Internal Security Fund – Police". However, projects often lack effectiveness indicators. For example, out of the five successful project proposals in response to the 2014 call for proposals on radicalisation (see [paragraph 19\(b\)](#)), the Commission considered that three of these<sup>18</sup> had scarce, vague or basic evaluation and monitoring strategies, and lacked indicators for measuring how effective projects actually were.

34. For ISEC (the fund which preceded the "Internal Security Fund – Police"), the Commission reviewed the final report<sup>19</sup> for each project and described the results achieved in terms of concrete outputs. It also assessed the quality of results, i.e. whether they were useful and transferable, and whether and how they should be disseminated. However, these

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<sup>18</sup> FIRST LINE, LIAISE II and SAFFRON.

<sup>19</sup> Narrative and financial report on project activities and achievements, produced at the end of a project by the recipient of EU funding.

reviews did not provide an evidence-based evaluation of project impacts. In the absence of effectiveness indicators actually built into a project, they recorded the reviewer's judgement of how effective it was likely to be.

35. The EU IRU at Europol flags online terrorist content and refers it to the service providers that host it so that they can remove it. Performance is measured in terms of the amount and proportion of referred content which is removed by service providers (see **Figure 5**). These statistics have the following limitations:

- (a) They do not show how much content was removed solely as a result of the EU IRU's actions. Indeed, the EU IRU may ask internet companies to remove terrorist propaganda which has also been flagged by Member States<sup>20</sup>. When the EU IRU examines propaganda in non-EU languages (e.g. Arabic, Russian or Turkish) which national Internet Referral Units examine less, the risk is lower. The EU IRU does not have information on how much terrorist content has been removed by internet companies at its request alone, without also having been flagged by national IRUs, civil society or the internet companies themselves. Internet companies do not provide feedback on why content has been removed.
- (b) They do not demonstrate effectiveness in terms of the amount of terrorist propaganda that remains on the internet. The 10 survey respondents who expressed an opinion felt that one challenge faced by the EU IRU is that the removed propaganda is simply re-uploaded or moved to other platforms (known as the "whack-a-mole" effect). At the December 2016 EU Internet Forum (see **Box 2**), key internet companies presented an initiative to help prevent propaganda being re-uploaded. The French authorities we met stressed the need to demonstrate the effectiveness of this mechanism. They also highlighted the challenge of finding the right balance between making terrorist propaganda less accessible on the internet and pushing terrorists to use more complex and clandestine messaging systems, which could make investigations more difficult.

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<sup>20</sup> The UK Counter-Terrorism Internet Referral Unit refers approximately 100 000 items per year.

- (c) They do not measure response speed, e.g. the time the EU IRU takes to identify suspicious content once it has been uploaded and the time internet companies take to remove such content once they have been notified of it.

**Figure 5 - EU IRU statistics**

	<b>1 July 2015 to 1 July 2016</b>	<b>1 July 2016 to 1 June 2017</b>
Proposals for referral	9 787	20 174
Content removed by service providers	8 949	16 143
<b>Success rate</b>	<b>91.4 %</b>	<b>80.0 %</b>

Source: Europol - EU IRU Year One Report and Europol data.

36. DG Migration and Home Affairs sets detailed quantified targets for the RAN in the annual activity plan, and reviews progress in quarterly and annual progress reports. However, these plans and reports only list activities, e.g. numbers of meetings, participants, ex-ante papers, study visits, seminars, conferences, newsletters, training courses, workshops, policy papers and issue papers. The Commission has not asked the RAN Centre of Excellence for information to monitor its effectiveness, e.g. participant satisfaction, the knowledge and contacts acquired, how these were used and disseminated within Member States, and their impact on the job or on the organisation's results (e.g. whether training actually helped the police to recognise radicalised individuals and mitigate the risk they posed). On its own initiative, the RAN Centre of Excellence has, however, carried out surveys which provide some indication of how useful its products are. For example, one survey in August 2016 found that nearly 90 % of participants at RAN events felt that their attendance would have a positive impact on their daily work.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

37. Member States are responsible for their national security, including fighting terrorism. The EU also has a role in ensuring a high level of security by facilitating exchanges of information, operational cooperation and sharing of knowledge and experiences. In 2005, the EU set out its counter-terrorism strategy, organised around four pillars. The first pillar

aims to prevent people turning to terrorism by tackling the causes of radicalisation and recruitment. As radicalisation is caused by several factors, a wide range of actions are deployed to address the problem. The Commission therefore draws on an increasingly wide range of existing EU funds to support Member States.

38. Our audit examined whether the Commission appropriately managed its support for Member States in addressing radicalisation leading to terrorism. Overall, we found that the Commission addressed the needs of Member States, but there were some shortfalls in coordination and evaluation.

39. The Commission promoted cooperation between Member States through relevant initiatives such as the Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN), the EU Internet Forum and the European Strategic Communications Network (see [paragraphs 15 to 21](#)).

40. The Commission coordinated its cross-cutting support, for example, by means of consultation between directorates-general when approving work programmes. This has resulted in synergies between its actions. However, despite recent improvements, there is still scope to improve the coordination of Commission actions. For example, the Commission's overview of EU-funded actions in this area does not include those managed by Member States, which would be useful to make the most of potential synergies. We also found that the RAN, one of the Commission's main initiatives, was not used to its full potential to disseminate the results of successful EU-funded projects (see [paragraphs 22 to 28](#)).

#### **Recommendation 1 - Improve the framework for overall coordination of actions addressing radicalisation**

The Commission should improve the framework for overall coordination of EU-funded actions to support Member States in addressing radicalisation. In particular the Commission should:

- (a) include the major EU-funded actions managed by Member States in the list of EU-funded radicalisation actions. The Commission should regularly update this list with a

view to maximising synergies especially where different funds and tools intersect. The list should be available to project applicants;

- (b) make the most of potential synergies between Commission actions by formalising the requirement to use the RAN to disseminate the results of successful EU-funded projects.

Timeframe: June 2019.

### **Recommendation 2 - Increase practical support to practitioners and policymakers in Member States**

The Commission should:

- (a) improve communication from practitioners to policymakers through a regular and structured exchange of approaches and ideas;
- (b) analyse participation by Member States' practitioners in the RAN, with a particular focus on whether less active countries should be more involved;
- (c) analyse the involvement of practitioners within the RAN ensuring that different types of stakeholders are adequately represented, including networks of organisations on the ground, without links with government, in order to enhance the bottom-up approach;
- (d) support managers of counter-radicalisation projects in assessing the effectiveness and transferability of practices, and increase the relevance of the RAN Collection by including more information on the effectiveness of practices and the context in which they can be transferred;
- (e) include in the RAN Collection a clear explanation of how actions are financed with EU funds.

Timeframe: June 2019.



41. The Commission has not sufficiently developed its framework for assessing whether its support is effective and offers value for money. For example, it has not broken down the overall policy objectives into more specific and measurable objectives, and the funds that the Commission has used to address radicalisation are not accompanied by indicators and targets designed to measure success in pursuit of this goal (see **paragraphs 29 to 31**).

42. Moreover, the achievements of specific actions are often measured in terms of amount of activity rather than effectiveness. As a result, there is a risk that useful lessons might not be disseminated or taken into account when the Commission designs actions or develops its policy further (see **paragraphs 32 to 36**).

### **Recommendation 3 – Improve the framework for assessing results**

The Commission should evaluate its success in achieving its policy goals and ensure that EU-funded actions can provide evidence of how effective they actually are. In particular the Commission should:

- (a) carry out the necessary consultation and research in order to identify objectives and indicators for evaluating its success and value for money in achieving its policy goals in helping Member States to address radicalisation. It should then report regularly on the overall progress made towards achieving the objectives of its counter-radicalisation policy, including the EU funds involved;
- (b) request the RAN Centre of Excellence to provide more detailed reports on its effectiveness, e.g. participant satisfaction, the knowledge and contacts acquired, how these were used, and their impact on the job or on the organisation's results;
- (c) oversee through the EU Internet Forum:
  - cooperation between the EU IRU and national IRUs in ensuring complementarity and avoiding unnecessary duplication in referring terrorist content to IT companies;
  - the extent to which removing terrorist propaganda has an impact on its prevalence on the internet;

- the speed of removal of content referred by the EU IRU;

(d) ensure project applicants demonstrate how they will measure the effectiveness of their projects.

Timeframe: June 2019.

This Report was adopted by Chamber V, headed by Mr Lazaros S. LAZAROU, Member of the Court of Auditors, in Luxembourg at its meeting of 20 March 2018.

*For the Court of Auditors*

Klaus-Heiner LEHNE

*President*

**ANNEX****Examples of EU-funded actions addressing radicalisation**

Action	Objective in addressing radicalisation	Funding	Management
Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN)	Provide support for Member States in designing and implementing effective prevention work, providing guidelines and handbooks for establishing multi-agency structures, creating a platform for exchanging experiences and practices, and through further mapping of research on radicalisation	Internal Security Fund-Police	DG HOME
Research grants	Bridge the gap between academia and security practitioners in the field of radicalisation to strengthen the capacity of Member States to fine-tune existing policy approaches and develop new policies and practices (Research topics: develop a comprehensive approach to violent radicalisation and contemporary radicalisation trends)	Horizon 2020 programme	DG HOME DG RTD
Security projects under direct and shared management	Develop tools of outreach, engagement and assistance to local actors and families to prevent radicalisation	Internal Security Fund-Police	DG HOME

**Countering terrorist propaganda**

Action	Objective in addressing radicalisation	Funding	Management
EU Internet Referral Unit (EU IRU)	Countering online terrorist propaganda	Europol	Europol
EU Internet Forum	Commission initiative to involve internet companies in countering terrorist propaganda	Internal Security Fund	DG HOME
European Strategic Communications Network	Provide Member States, civil society and EU institutions with expertise in developing policy frameworks, communication campaigns or individual initiatives. Provide a network for sharing and exchanging best practice, and practical support and counselling to help develop effective counter-narratives	Internal Security Fund	DG HOME
Security projects under direct and shared management	Address the issue of online content which can lead to radicalisation	Internal Security Fund-Police	DG HOME

**Promoting inclusive and resilient societies**

Action	Objective in addressing radicalisation	Funding	Management
Transnational partnerships	Develop innovative policy approaches and practices prioritising social inclusion, promotion of common values and intercultural understanding	Erasmus+	DG EAC
Support for policy reform	Scale up and disseminate innovative good practices falling within the scope of the Paris Declaration		
European Voluntary Service	Promote fundamental values and reach out to disadvantaged people and communities		
Youth workers	Develop a toolkit of best practices on how to: - help young people increase their democratic resilience, become media-literate and think critically; - teach young people to resolve conflicts and respect the views of others; - spot risks of marginalisation or identify vulnerable groups		
eTwinning	Connect teachers and classrooms across Europe through the eTwinning internet platform to identify best practices in addressing diversity in the classroom and passing on common values to pupils, and spotting risks of marginalisation or identifying vulnerable groups	European Social Fund	DG EMPL DG REGIO
Support for national schemes and small local projects	Foster the social inclusion of disadvantaged groups, e.g. through tailor-made training programmes and social support schemes Help schools address the issue of early school-leaving and increase access to quality education for all		
Employment and social innovation projects	Fund innovative projects on the ground, fostering social inclusion	Programme for Employment and Social Innovation	DG EMPL
Projects on rights, equality and citizenship	Create better understanding between communities, including religious communities, to prevent and combat racism and xenophobia through interreligious and intercultural activities	Rights, Equality and Citizenship programme	DG JUST
Security projects under direct and shared management	Raise awareness of and train first-line practitioners to recognise and respond to the process of radicalisation of would be foreign fighters	Internal Security Fund-Police	DG HOME

**Identifying and dealing with radicalised people**

Action	Objective in addressing radicalisation	Funding	Management
Rehabilitation and de-radicalisation programmes	Rehabilitation and de-radicalisation inside and outside prisons, risk-assessment tools and training of professionals	Justice Programme	DG JUST
Training of prison and probation staff	Involve the European Confederation for Probation and the European Organisation of Prison and Correctional Services in specific training of prison and probation staff		

**Address radicalisation in countries outside Europe**

Action	Objective in addressing radicalisation	Funding	Management
Counter-terrorism measures	Provide third countries with dedicated counter-terrorism support	European Development Funds and the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace European Neighbourhood Instrument	DG DEVCO DG NEAR
Factoring in the anti-radicalisation dimension	Mainstream anti-radicalisation issues in various types of support for third countries	European Development Funds and the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace European Neighbourhood Instrument	DG DEVCO DG NEAR
eTwinning Plus	Extend the eTwinning platform to selected countries of the European Neighbourhood, especially those facing problems with violent radicalisation and where intercultural dialogue is most needed	Erasmus+	DG EAC

**Source:** ECA based on Commission Communications on supporting the prevention of radicalisation leading to violent extremism.

# **REPLIES OF THE COMMISSION TO THE SPECIAL REPORT OF THE EUROPEAN COURT OF AUDITORS**

## **"TACKLING RADICALISATION THAT LEADS TO TERRORISM: THE COMMISSION ADDRESSED THE NEEDS OF MEMBER STATES, BUT WITH SOME SHORTFALLS IN COORDINATION AND EVALUATION"**

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

V. Since 2017, the Commission has improved its overview of EU funded actions and is able to identify synergies between different funds and actions in particular within the framework of the Security Union Task Force and its dedicated subgroup on radicalisation.

VI. The objectives of the Commission's policy on preventing and countering radicalisation are set out in the relevant policy documents. These are necessarily of a more general nature with more concrete objectives being set out under the relevant initiatives.

VII. The Commission underlines that individual projects and initiatives are evaluated and their achievements are recorded. This feeds into the general evaluation of funds and programmes. However, the Commission recognises that the longer term impact of these actions is not measured in a systematic way.

### **INTRODUCTION**

6. The development of knowledge on radicalisation is not only done through projects funded under Horizon 2020, but also done through other EU funds and in particular the Internal Security Fund Police (ISF-P) including the Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN) which is also tasked to share and establish good practices.

8. Projects funded under the European Social Fund aim *inter alia* to strengthen resilience more broadly but can also specifically address radicalisation (e.g. the project BAANA).

9. Exit strategies in the broader sense as well as rehabilitation and de-radicalisation projects are not only funded under the Justice programme but can be also funded by ISF-P as it is currently the case with the general call on radicalisation launched in November 2017.

### **OBSERVATIONS**

#### **Box 5**

While the Commission indeed adapts its policy response to an evolving threat picture, the Commission's work in the area of prevention of radicalisation is following long term as well as short term objectives. In this sense, many of the work streams address all forms of radicalisation.

19.

(a) The topic of media and communication has been addressed in different ways: it was included in the 2005 Commission Communication (chapter 2.1 Broadcast Media); this topic (including in particular the issue of polarisation) was also discussed in the framework of the RAN as well as ESCN (European Strategic Communications Network), and the Commission has given priority to this topic in the recent 2017 call for proposals (ISF-2017-AG-RAD).

Furthermore, the matter was raised in the High Level Commission Expert Group on Radicalisation (HLCEG-R) recommending in its December 2017 interim report for Member States (with the support of the Commission) to examine whether existing tools are sufficient to effectively prevent the spread of violent extremist propaganda via traditional media.

(b) The Commission has put in place the necessary measures to address the needs to develop exit strategies. Already in the past, the Commission has funded major exit programs under ISEC (Programme Prevention and Fight against Crime), the funding of the European Network of De-radicalisation (ENoD) in 2012-2013 being the most important example. In addition, following the

adoption of the 2014 Communication on Radicalisation, the Commission invited Member States to include the development of exit strategies as funding priority under their National Programmes. Exit programmes remain a priority and have been included in a call for proposals opened in November 2017<sup>1</sup>.

#### Box 6

In addition to the procedures and mechanisms to facilitate coordination between different funds and initiatives mentioned by the Court of Auditors, coordination also takes place at the broader policy level in particular since 2017 through the Security Union Task Force as well as more specifically the subgroup on radicalisation.

26. The Commission considers that, while a single document increases transparency, even without a consolidated list of EU funded counter radicalisation actions the relevant Commission's services coordinated actions through existing procedures.

In 2017 the Commission set up the Security Union Task Force and its subgroup on radicalisation in order to improve coordination of EU actions addressing radicalisation and to identify synergies between different funds and actions.

27. The suggested opportunity for greater synergy between removal of content and counter narrative campaigns has never been submitted to the Commission or the EU Internet Forum, which pursues both objectives and would therefore have been the appropriate forum. Therefore the Commission does not consider that there has been a lack of coordination on the part of the Commission.

In particular through the encounters under the EU Internet Forum or in the context of the ECTC (European Counter Terrorism Centre) Advisory Group of Europol established in October 2016 and in which VoxPol and ESCN participate, the Commission and Europol, respectively have facilitated closer engagement and coordination between EU funded actions.

28.

(a) RAN has already produced a large number of practical outputs in the form of inter alia handbooks and trainings (e.g. training programmes for Europe's police officers, Manifesto for education, Manual on Foreign Terrorist Fighters returnees to name but a few).

The RAN Collection's primary purpose is to inspire other practitioners and the RAN Collection would not seem to be the place where practitioners would search for funding opportunities. The information about project funding is available in other contexts.

(b) The Commission is aware of the reasons that explain the difference in participation of stakeholders from individual Member States. In addition to the reasons mentioned by the ECA, it should be kept in mind that it is normal that practitioners from countries that faced higher terrorist threats or with more advanced prevent approaches and practices as well as expertise in place are more represented than others. The Commission continues to consider important to discuss with Member States their priorities, needs and challenges. Since 2017 this is done in particular through the HLCEG-R. Its interim report issued in November 2017 already provided useful steer for activities to be organised by the RAN and ESCN in the course of 2018.

The RAN keeps, monitors and updates the list of participants which provides an overview of practitioners per Member State. Based on the list the RAN and the Commission can see how the participation by practitioners from a particular Member States evolves.

(d) The RAN includes already a large number of organisations on the ground with no links to governments in addition to a large number of other relevant first line practitioners. The Commission considers that insights and experience of these practitioners is fed into the policy debate which ensures a bottom up approach.

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<sup>1</sup> Call [2017-ISFP-AG-RAD](#)

(e) Exchanges between practitioners and policy makers take place in different ways: There were a number of events where findings and recommendations from practitioners were shared with policy makers (e.g. the RAN High Level Conference in November 2016 or the RAN Conference on returnees in June 2017). The Commission considers that the RAN Conference on returnees, together with the handbook and the follow up workshops on the same matter with Member States representatives are having a significant impact on the development of policies in this area at EU but more importantly at the level of Member States.

The Commission is also engaged with Member States to determine where Member States see scope for further support through the RAN or otherwise. The HLCEG-R set up in July 2017 is an advisory group which helps the Commission identify such needs and formulate appropriate responses. The recommendations of the interim report of the HLCEG-R of November 2017, when relevant to RAN, are reflected in its Annual Activity Plan for 2018. In this way the Commission ensures that the RAN's added value is maximised in practice offering services that address priorities and challenges identified by Member States.

The issue of radicalisation in prisons became a political priority in line with increased awareness among the relevant stakeholders in the prison and probation field. Organisations such as the Council of Europe, EuroPris and CEP (Confederation of European Probation) started becoming actively involved with this issue only in the course of 2015 when the Commission identified actions to be financed by the Justice Programme.

29. The Commission considers that it is indeed important to possess sufficient information about progress and effectiveness of its actions overall support. The Commission carries out systematic mid-term and ex-post evaluations for EU funds. At mid-term, the outcomes of evaluations support the steering of the funds, allowing adapting the funds to a changing context in the boundaries of the legal basis. Ex-post, the outcomes of evaluations feed the policy development. However, given that the threat picture and Member States' needs can change quickly swift policy responses are required without in depth evaluations of previous actions necessarily being available at that moment.

Furthermore, its overall support was reviewed in the comprehensive assessment of security policies published in July 2017 with which the Commission responded to the request by the European Parliament.

30.

(a) The objectives of the Commission's policy on preventing and countering radicalisation are set out in the relevant policy documents. These are necessarily of a more general nature with more concrete objectives being set out under the relevant initiatives.

(b) Even if EU funds used do not have specific indicators and targets relating to radicalisation, the effectiveness and value for money of projects addressing radicalisation are evaluated through programme and specific indicators that reflect the scope and goals of the different funding programmes/funds. Such evaluation is carried out systematically under each fund. For instance programmes such as Erasmus+ supporting quality inclusive education and the promotion of common values, are measured for their effectiveness through programme and sector-specific objectives and indicators. Costing estimates are usually related to such broader, education-related objectives rather than to radicalisation as such given their indirect contribution to preventing radicalisation.

(c) A comprehensive overview of all counter-radicalisation actions, with the exception of EU actions managed by the Member States, was provided in the framework of the July 2017 comprehensive assessment of EU security policy providing information about funds and costs (see reply to paragraph 26).

(d) It would be extremely challenging to fully set out the costs of addressing radicalisation, in particular for actions pursuing multiple purposes and for actions having different timelines. The

Commission points out that policy documents such as the different Communications on radicalisation shall not include specific and exhaustive references to the financial means made available for certain actions. Commission Communications are not the documents in which specific financial engagements are recorded or announced.

32. Measuring the effectiveness of preventive actions is intrinsically difficult and requires close cooperation between the Commission, Member States, individual stakeholders and researchers. It is a gradual process with evaluation techniques being progressively explored and applied. As pointed out in the Commission's comprehensive assessment of security policies, there is a need to better evaluate results and effectiveness and for the Commission to continue to explore ways to better demonstrate effectiveness of its actions.

The Commission considers that the appraisal of the performance of the RAN CoE goes beyond a mere listing of events and activities but contains an evaluation of each task, as the RAN Annual progress report for 2016 (APR 2016) clearly demonstrates.

33. The selection process under EU funding instruments includes an assessment of the robustness of the evaluation and monitoring strategy proposed by the applicants and is part of the analysis of the strength and weaknesses of the different projects. This assessment is shared with the applicants in order to encourage them to improve their project's construction. It also feeds into the Commission's monitoring strategy of the project when it is ongoing. However, the quality of the evaluation and monitoring strategy embedded in a project is not the only element to decide for its selection. Indeed, projects are firstly selected based on their relevance to the policy objective set in the calls for proposals and their EU added value (e.g. whether they involve or impact on several Member States).

In addition, the absence of effectiveness indicators does not imply that the effectiveness cannot be assessed, since projects are required to provide a detailed narrative report which allows the Commission to assess whether the project made an effective contribution to the achievement of the policy goal.

34. Payments for EU co-funded projects are based on whether the project was implemented in compliance with its initial objectives.

As part of this final assessment, the Commission evaluates a number of elements, including quality, usefulness and transferability of the results.

Evaluations of individual projects feed then in the general evaluation of the financial programme, which is carried out with the help of external evaluators.

For example, the ISEC programme overall, the individual calls and the project results are generally very positively perceived by Member States and stakeholders as stated in the ex-post evaluation of "Prevention and fight against crime" 2007-2013 Programme ISEC.

Finally, the evaluations are complemented by other tools through which the Commission strengthens the evidence base for individual interventions. For instance through the tools developed by the EU funded project IMPACT, project managers are helped to carry out better evaluations of the effectiveness of their actions. Furthermore, for instance for specific EU funded projects (such as those to be funded under the Civil Society Empowerment Programme) the Commission foresees an ex-post evaluation of the programme given the innovative nature of alternative and counter narratives. And as part of the follow up on the interim report of the HLCEG-R, the Commission will explore together with Member States how to better evaluate relevant programmes and interventions.

35. The Commission has, along with Europol, been requesting data on the removal of terrorist content from the internet companies with only limited feedback. Furthermore, the Internet Referral Management Application which Europol has developed will help ensure co-ordination with Member States, thereby reducing the likelihood of duplication. With regard to addressing the

whack-a-mole effect, the Commission hopes that the Database of Hashes, developed by the companies themselves, will help prevent the re-uploading of terrorist content and its dissemination. In that respect, under the Forum, Europol has offered its support in ensuring the optimisation of this tool.

The EU IRU (Internet Referral Unit) has a so-called de-confliction procedure in place to ensure that Member States have a say in what content is referred by the EU IRU to companies, thus avoiding any negative effects of referrals and subsequent removals which could jeopardise investigations. Furthermore, the EU IRU is focusing on online propaganda which the terrorists want to use to attract as many followers as possible. The one-to-one clandestine communication tends to happen later in the process. If these prevention methods are to be fully effective, it could actually decrease the burden on operational partners in the longer term, as there would be fewer investigations.

The above actions are in line with the EU Internet Forum Action Plan agreed in July 2017; the actions also include reporting arrangements based on a number of indicators. The Commission's recommendation on illegal content online builds on the progress under the EU Internet Forum and establishes reporting arrangements.

36. The Commission has tasked the RAN Center of Excellence (RAN CoE) to report on the effectiveness of its actions. Under the framework contract, the RAN CoE is asked to report in its Quarterly Progress Reports and in particular the Annual Progress Reports (APR) on how its actions contribute to achieving policy objectives pursued. From 2017, the APR therefore contains under each task such an evaluation. These reports do not list “only activities”. In addition, the RAN carries out surveys (even if not in a systematic manner) in particular in relation to some (key) events.

Furthermore, the Commission assesses together with the members of the RAN CoE Steering Committee progress, challenges and scope for improvement based on an evaluation of the work of the RAN CoE (e.g. in terms of outreach to the relevant stakeholders, scope for improving dissemination and transferability of learnings). These Steering Committee meetings take place on a quarterly basis.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

40. Since 2017, within the framework of the Security Union Task Force and its dedicated subgroup on radicalisation, the Commission has improved its overview of EU funded actions and is able to identify synergies between different funds and actions.

### **Recommendation 1**

The Commission accepts recommendation 1. A first overview of funding possibilities and projects has been established as part of the work of the Security Union Task Force subgroup on radicalisation and is used by the services to identify synergies and pool relevant knowledge and experiences.

### **Recommendation 2**

The Commission accepts recommendation 2. The Commission would like to highlight that a closer engagement with Member States is one of the findings of the HLCEG-R, which is already being followed up with concrete steps (e.g. policy and practice events between policymakers and practitioners already scheduled in 2018).

41. The objectives of the Commission's policy on preventing and countering radicalisation are set out in the relevant policy documents. These are necessarily of a more general nature with more concrete objectives being set out under the relevant initiatives.

Please see Commission replies to paragraphs 29 and 30.

42. The Commission underlines that individual projects and initiatives are evaluated and their achievements are recorded. This feeds into the general evaluation of the funds and programmes.



However, the Commission recognises that the longer term impact of these actions is not measured in a systematic way.

Please see Commission replies to paragraphs 32 to 36.

### **Recommendation 3**

The Commission accepts recommendation 3.

<b>Event</b>	<b>Date</b>
Adoption of Audit Planning Memorandum (APM) / Start of audit	25.10.2016
Official sending of draft report to Commission (or other auditee)	8.2.2018
Adoption of the final report after the adversarial procedure	20.3.2018
Commission's (or other auditee's) official replies received in all languages	25.4.2018

Radicalisation is the phenomenon of people embracing ideas which could lead them to commit acts of terrorism. The Commission supports Member States in their efforts to tackle radicalisation, for example through the exchange of good practices. In doing so it draws on a wide range of EU funds. We examined whether the Commission managed its support well. We found that the Commission addressed the needs of Member States and promoted cooperation through relevant initiatives such as the Radicalisation Awareness Network. However, there were some shortfalls in the Commission's overall coordination of actions addressing radicalisation and in its framework for evaluating the effectiveness of its support. We therefore make a number of recommendations to improve the Commission's coordination so that it can make the most of potential synergies, and to improve the framework for assessing results.



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