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## Preface

Dear readers,

Welcome to the tenth newsletter of the FP6-project on Transnational Terrorism, Security and the Rule of Law (TTSRL). The full text of the nine previous newsletters and a selection of research and policy papers can be found on our website <http://www.transnationalterrorism.eu>

In this newsletter, we present the next set of results, focusing on the research findings of Deliverable 7 (Workpackage 4), entitled: "Radicalisation, Recruitment and the EU counter-radicalization Strategy". This newsletter contains the major conclusions of the report, the [full version](#) of which can be found [on our website](#). Policy recommendations will be published in the forthcoming policy brief.

In light of the success of the TTSRL-consortium's previous newsletters, we also hope to provide you with a comprehensive overview of the main body of research carried out. We look forward to receiving your comments and would like to discuss our findings with you at our TTSRL conference in Brussels, which will be held in February 2009.

On behalf of the entire TTSRL-consortium,

**Jorgen Staun**

PhD, Researcher TTSRL





## Summary of Deliverable 7

The full text of this deliverable, including literature annotations and sources is available on the TTSRL-website or by [clicking here](#).

### Part I

Radicalisation is a complex phenomenon with similarly complex causes. In order to understand what makes (often young and sometimes well-integrated) Muslims in Europe radicalise we need to acknowledge that no single causal factor suffices on its own in explaining radicalisation. Rather, what we are facing is that individuals involved in violent radicalisation leading to terrorism come from a range of different social, cultural, religious, educational and professional backgrounds and enter into different paths of radicalisation according to their specific background and personal history: who they meet at what point in time, how they interact with the group of people they most often radicalise with, etc. Furthermore, each individual is motivated by specific combinations of reasons for entering violent radicalization, as well as the triggers and catalysts they have been exposed to.

The case studies analyzed in the deliverable indicated that in neither of the selected cases, one causal factor 'dominated' the radicalisation process. Rather, a specific combination of factors appears to have been crucial determinants of the readiness for radicalisation. In addition to causes like political factors, network dynamics and social identification issues, each individual experienced trigger events that could have accelerated the process. Whether it included the death of a relative, imprisonment or confrontation with provocative footage or literature, the mixture of causal factors was diverse and unique for each individual.

Thus, we suggest that radicalisation is prompted by a combination of social and individual causal factors. In other words, dynamics in which the individual is involved prominently affect the radicalisation process. This implies that in addition to personal characteristics, the individual's (perceived) position in relation to relevant others affect his/her behaviour.

We conclude that academics as well as policy makers have focused too strongly on finding the causes of radicalisation in externalities like political and economic conditions. Indeed, external factors like Middle Eastern conflicts and





poor integration of Muslim communities in Europe appear to serve as significant inspirations for many radicalised Muslims. However, the radicalising effects of external factors should not be overestimated. Only in a complex, cross-level and cross-dimensional interaction can causal factors lead to radicalisation. We argue that external factors shape and constrain the individual's environment but do not have a direct effect on his or her behaviour.

The complexity and uniqueness of causal factors signal that it is hard to define social groups that are vulnerable to radicalisation. The proportion of potentially radical individuals is so small and diverse, that it is hard if not impossible to categorise them into groups with specified social boundaries. Furthermore, research with the intention of profiling specific "ideal types" of individuals, who are more susceptible to enter into violent radicalisation seems futile.

However, certain common traits and patterns for people who get involved in violent radicalisation are discernable. These traits and patterns also herald the possibility of identifying counter-measures:

1) Processes of radicalisation are social processes which are inherently individual in nature and depend on the specific background, situation and personal characteristics of the person involved. Their complex and multidimensional nature demand scientific research that investigates the underlying mechanisms leading to individual radicalisation and radical behaviour. The central question is : *under what conditions can individuals become willing to change their attitudes and behaviour to the extent that violent radicalisation is the outcome?* This research would require that the individual and his or her social environment be the central focus of analysis.

2) Social identification with allegedly harmed groups is an important indicator of vulnerability to radicalisation. The degree to which people identify with a relevant social group determines the extent to which they are affected by political, economic, and cultural circumstances. As such, any threat to a group with which an individual strongly identifies can increase radicalisation tendencies. For example, observing an Afghan Muslim in absolute deprivation is not very likely to lead to radicalisation of





a non-Muslim European, however a similar observation can be a very provocative experience for a European Muslim who strongly identifies with Afghan Muslims. In other words: it is the perception rather than the objective situation that is relevant in the emergence of radicalisation. In order to gain further insight in the relationship between direct and indirect causes of radicalisation it is essential to map the complex interactions between causal factors at different levels and dimensions. Thus, we point to the necessity of empirical research that investigates the role social identification plays in the emergence of radicalisation.

3) Two frequently mentioned causes of radicalisation are western foreign policies in the Middle East and the poor integration of Muslims in European societies. First, we hypothesise that the relationship between western foreign policies and radicalisation is moderated by social identification and that the stronger people identify with the relevant social group, the stronger the radicalising effect of western intervention in conflicts involving Muslims will be. Second, we hypothesise that the fact that Muslim communities are poorly integrated in European societies can lead to individual feelings of social exclusion and rejection, and that in turn, these feelings can contribute to radicalisation.

Thus, young second generation European nationals, who are Muslim and who can be classified as identity seeking and as high-identifiers with the perception of Muslims around the world being humiliated, who are poorly integrated and politically, socially and culturally marginalised would, as individuals, have a higher than normal incentive to be drawn towards radical Islamism.

Research should determine how these factors relate to other causal factors and via which mechanisms they lead to radicalisation. Scientific testing of these and similar hypotheses would probably reveal that the most important causes of radicalisation are to be found closer to the individual and his direct environment than is often thought. If we want to thoroughly understand why a very small proportion of young, western Muslims turn to radicalism we should pay close attention to what inspires and motivates them.





## Part II

Through analysis of the most relevant EU documents, the second part of the deliverable sought to determine the design of EU policies as they concern countering the causes of radicalisation. Based on the findings in the first part of the deliverable and the content of the EU's Counter Terrorism Strategy and the European Union Strategy for Combating Radicalisation and Recruitment to Terrorism, the analysis provided insight into how the contributing factors to radicalisation are addressed by the EU. Additionally, the UK and Amsterdam approaches to countering radicalisation at the national and local level illustrated the practical measures and efforts used to deal with the phenomenon.

Looking closely at the EU policies designed to curb radicalisation, we see that the Commission focuses strongly on causal factors which may contribute to radicalisation at the external level. Less attention is paid to setting out measures that address causal factors at the social level, and almost no mention is made of tackling causes of radicalisation at the individual level in EU policy papers. Thus, we argue that causes for radicalisation that can be found in the direct environment of the individual deserve further awareness when shaping EU policies.

Furthermore, the EU strategy for countering radicalisation should be considered as part of its overall counterterrorism strategy. However, after assessing the EU measures, it is clear that the Union's efforts are aimed more at addressing external factors of radicalisation rather than dealing with the individual causes that lead people to feel attracted to radical ideologies in the first place. For instance, although disrupting radical networks is important in preventing the emergence of new recruits to terrorism, without addressing the direct causes for radicalisation new networks will continue to form.

Given the multilateral character of the European Union and the fact that the responsibility for countering radicalisation lies with the individual Member States, a lack of instruments might prevent the EU from effectively addressing social and individual factors that lead to radicalisation. Despite difficulties in coordination, the EU strategies nonetheless provide a valuable framework that individual Member States can use in shaping counter-radicalisation policies at the national level.





Reflecting EU's four-pronged strategy, preventing radicalisation is one of the four objectives in the British Home Office Strategy. Focusing on the prevention of radicalisation involves a number of steps and specific measures including challenging the ideology of violent extremism, addressing radicalisation in prisons, working with education institutions, and tackling the use of the internet to radicalise and groom young people.

Thus, the UK strives to persuade young Muslims that they can be Muslim and British, and that Islam is not regarded with hostility. Furthermore, encouragement of moderate Muslim opinion is of top priority for the UK, reflecting the considerations that 1) the developments within Islam are believed to contribute to radical Islamism and 2) that radicalisation of Muslims is partly the result of conflicts between moderate and radical movements within Islam.

Tackling not only the types of causes, but also the catalysts of recruitment and trigger events, the UK authorities are laying the foundation for effectively dealing with the threat of radicalisation for youngsters. Encouraging positive network dynamics by promoting dialogue and moderate Muslim opinion, the UK places great importance on understanding the perceptions of Muslim communities and the changes within them. On the other hand, the UK has downplayed the importance of causes at the individual level.

The Netherlands has through its Wij Amsterdammers approach developed a two-fold strategy to counter radicalisation: 1) a hard and repressive approach is employed against 'doers', that is, extremists who are suspected to have a willingness to use violence in trying to achieve their ideological goals; 2) a soft power approach aimed at the 'thinkers', that is, individuals that do not want to employ violent tactics (yet), but do radicalise in the sense that they are increasingly following radical ideologies; 3) a preventive approach is intended to eliminate the breeding grounds for radicalisation. This includes measures aimed at increasing resistance against radical thoughts among individuals that might be sensitive to these ideas.

As is the case with the UK, however, the broad and often general policies fail to take into account the possible causes of radicalisation at the individual level, namely the psychological characteristics and personal experiences, which, according to this deliverable, is among the downplayed approaches to tackle radicalisation. While it is the aim of the Amsterdam approach to eliminate





breeding grounds for radicalisation, the measures continue to emphasise external and social levels as the main areas in which progress can be achieved.

## Upcoming Events

- **TTSRL's final conference** (Brussels, 5-6 February 2009). On 5 and 6 February, after all deliverables have been finished and published on the TTSRL-website, TTSRL will organize a final conference to present the most important and thought-provoking research results to an audience of researchers, policy makers and practitioners. Be sure to regularly check out the [TTSRL-website](#) and keep an eye on the TTSRL-newsletters, or [contact us](#) for more information about the program, registration and the speakers.
- Counter Terror Expo (February, 10-11, 2009, London, United Kingdom)  
<http://www.counterterrorexp.com/>
- Border Security 2009 (4th to 5th March 2009, Warsaw, Poland)  
<http://www.smi-online.co.uk/events/execbrief.asp?is=1&ref=3036&eb=#3118>
- Anti-Money Laundering and Counter-Terrorism Financing Conference 2009 (April, 1-2, 2009, Sydney, Australia)  
[http://www.aic.gov.au/conferences/2009-anti-money\\_laundering/index.html](http://www.aic.gov.au/conferences/2009-anti-money_laundering/index.html)
- IEEE International Conference on Intelligence and Security Informatics (ISI-2009) (June 8-11, 2009, Dallas, Texas, United States of America)  
<http://www.isiconference.org/2009/cfp.html>





## Reading Corner

In this edition of the newsletter we'd like to draw the reader's attention to the following studies which have been carried out on the topic of radicalisation by prominent institutes and researchers in the field.



### **Studies into violent radicalisation: the beliefs ideologies and narratives In-country report: Germany** (February 2008)

A study carried out by Dr Hayrettin Aydin of the Muslim Academy of Germany on behalf of the Change Institute for the European Commission (Directorate General Justice, Freedom and Security).

### **Studies on Violent Radicalisation: the beliefs ideologies and narratives In-Country Report: Denmark** (February 2008)

A study carried out by Dr Asad Ahmad of the Danish Centre for Conflict Resolution on behalf of The Change Institute for the European Commission (Directorate General Justice, Freedom and Security).

### **Studies on Violent Radicalisation: the beliefs ideologies and narratives In-country report: France** (February 2008)

A study by Dr Jacques Barou (Researcher, Pacte, CNRS, Grenoble II University) Dr Nathalie Kakpo (Associated researcher, CSU, CNRS, Paris) on behalf of the Change Institute for the European Commission (Directorate General Justice, Freedom and Security)



University of London

### **Recruitment and Mobilisation for the Islamist Militant Movement in Europe** (December 2007)

A study carried out by King's College London for the European Commission (Directorate General Justice, Freedom and Security).

