

MANUAL TEACHERS & YOUTH WORKERS

Radicalisation and how it's relevant to you

A MANUAL FOR TEACHERS AND YOUTH WORKERS

This manual includes information about signs that a young person may be radicalising, some tips about how you can make contact with them to discuss this sensitive issue, and how you might think about working together with other professionals like law enforcement and social services. It has been produced by TERRA, a European wide network-based learning program. This advice is part of a complete toolkit, created for local and national governments, and for front liners coming into professional contact with vulnerable individuals or groups who may be at risk of radicalising.

CONTENTS

1	AIMS AND BACKGROUND: DEALING WITH RADICALISATION	8
2	WHY YOU?	8
3	WHAT COULD BE YOUR ROLE?	9
4	RISKS AND RESILIENCE	10
5	DEALING WITH YOUNGSTERS DEVELOPING SYMPATHY FOR RADICAL IDEAS	11
6	WHAT IF THEY REALLY JOIN A RADICAL GROUP?	13
7	IF THEY INTEGRATE INTO THE RADICAL GROUP	15
8	IF THEY TURN INTO HARD CORE RADICALS	16

1 AIMS AND BACKGROUND: DEALING WITH RADICALISATION

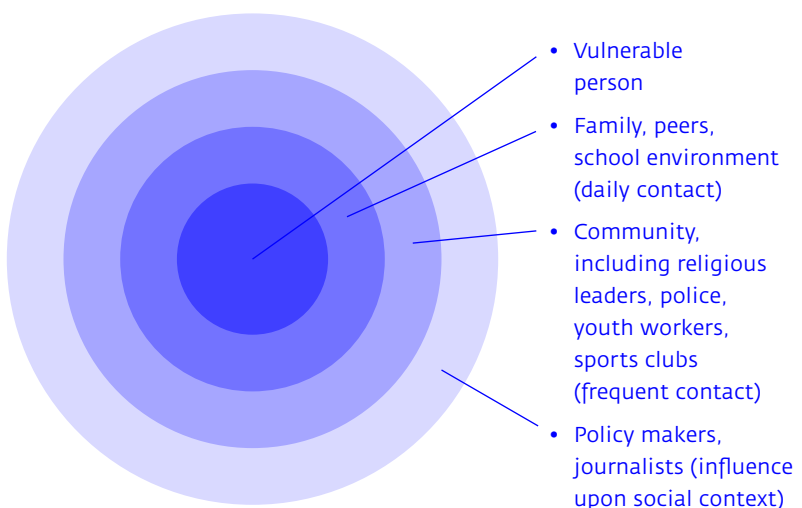
This manual is about radicalisation, and has been written for secondary school teachers, and other professionals who come into frequent contact with young people.

We hope that, when you have read it, you might:

- Be more aware of the possibility that someone within your target group is at risk of radicalising;
- Know what some of the causes of this process might be;
- Know what some of the possible signs of this process are;
- Be aware of the other professional groups which could be involved in influencing this process towards a positive outcome, and providing support both for you and for the person you have concerns about;
- Feel empowered to take action by making contact with those groups and by approaching the person you feel may be vulnerable.

2 WHY YOU?

A young person who is seeking their identity can be greatly influenced by the people they have around them. As someone working regularly with this group in a professional capacity, your job puts you in a perfect position to notice radicalisation. You might see changes in their behaviour, appearance or interactions with you or with their peer group. Here is how we have visualised the context of a young person who may be at risk of radicalising:



Every circle has its own type of contact with and influence on the vulnerable person involved. Changes in behaviour, peer group or ideology are more obvious to people in the innermost circle than the outermost. A young person's parents, for example, are able to see that their son has made drastic changes to his appearance and has gradually gathered a new set of friends, leaving behind his old peer group. A police officer, who is seeing the boy for the first time will not be able to see how much he has changed within the last year – and this process is crucial. That's why it's so important to realise that in order to really grasp what might be going on, contact, communication and transparency between and within the respective circles is vital.

WHY YOUNG PEOPLE?

Although in theory anyone could potentially radicalise, research shows that some groups are more vulnerable than others. Most terrorists (though not exclusively) are young and male, usually between the teenage years and the mid twenties. Terrorist activity can be an attractive testing ground for young men seeking their identity, with a possibility of thrills and fame adding to its allure. Also, a search for identity plays a role in the development of every adolescent. Radical groups can offer a pre-packaged identity to their recruits, with implicit guidance on how to behave and dress.

The fact that adolescents and young people seem to be more prone to radicalising than other age groups means that professionals working in schools, higher education, correctional institutions and social work are uniquely placed to observe and help them within the context of a familiar and pre-existing structure.

3 WHAT COULD BE YOUR ROLE?

In your profession, you fall within the innermost or second ring, very close to the person who may be at risk. You see them interact and observe them growing and gradually forming ideas and beliefs about their position in society, their own personal identity, and selecting social groups to become members of. You may be a person that they might turn to if they are in trouble, or experiencing problems during this process of forming an identity which we know as growing up. You can support them in forming a positive identity, by emphasising their talents and stimulating them to develop their skills.

We don't want to suggest that you have to become an expert on terrorism – but you are already an expert on the young people within your target group, and through that expertise you may be able to play a vital role. Making contact with other professionals who are active in the field of radicalisation, such as police or social workers, and, if possible, the child's family, can help you to tell the difference between changes which do present a cause for concern and need further attention, and those which do not. The decision to make contact with a person who you are concerned about does not need to be taken alone and should be made, where possible, with the support of other professionals.

WHAT WE DON'T SEE AS YOUR ROLE

It is very important to underline that there is no checklist of "symptoms" which, if all the boxes are ticked, definitively say that someone is radicalising. It's also vital to understand that if someone is in the process of radicalising, their sense of identity and belonging can be very fragile, and contacting them in a very direct or a negative way can make the problem worse.

*I had this extreme hate to society,
I was raised with violence and violence was
the way that I used to solve my problems.*

WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR

Although no checklist of "symptoms" of radicalisation exists, there are some signs which might indicate that a radicalisation process is underway.

A radicalisation process can go very fast, taking place in a matter of weeks, or be a gradual development spread over years, or anything in between. Some people may display all the of characteristics below, others just a few of them. It's important to remember that one of these characteristics alone is not really a cause for concern, unless its really new and different from normal behaviour. A combination of these characteristics should raise some alarm bells, though.

So many young people are ill-equipped for this individualistic world. They seek fixed boundaries and often found these in extremist groups. Her they find a community with either adults or peers who seem to know so much about life, or religion, and on whom they can place all responsibility. Whether this group is White Pride, the left wing activist environment or an extremist religious movement might not make too much of a difference – the boundaries are still fixed.

(Contact person, outreach social street worker. Preventing extremism, a Danish Handbook Series, 14 cases on Handling Radicalisation, The Danish Ministry of Social Affairs and Integration, Copenhagen 2011 page 13)

4 RISKS AND RESILIENCE

This chapter points out some background factors which may increase the risk that someone may explore the path of radicalisation. We would like to emphasize that these background factors don't automatically direct someone in a dangerous direction. A quest for identity, for example, is quite normal at a certain age. It's nevertheless important to be aware of those factors. It will help you to take a more focused approach to building resilience and offering protective factors.

A VULNERABLE INDIVIDUAL MIGHT BE:

- Searching for an identity. Although all teenagers are to some degree undergoing this process, those who feel a lack of belonging may be especially vulnerable. Radical groups, which deliver clear rules on how to behave and dress, and even what kind of music to listen to, can be very attractive to a young person who is seeking a way to belong.
- Connected to someone within a radical group. If a sibling, parent or close friend is known to be a member of a radical group, the influence on the individual within your group will be much stronger. It is always important to be aware that this person runs a higher risk of becoming radicalised.
- Experiencing discrimination, real or perceived. If a young person has experienced racism or seen that another ethnic, religious or political group has received preferential treatment, they are likely to feel resentful. If no legitimate solution for this state of affairs is provided, this person may feel drawn to a radical group, in the hope that a solution can be found through that channel instead.
- Introverted, lacking in friends, and the victims of bullying. Adolescents who are socially isolated may seek out the comfort and protection of a group identity.

FIND THIS VIDEO ON
TerRaToolkit.eu

THOMAS RUNGE
FORMER RIGHT WING RADICAL
TATTOO ARTIST, DK

DO

- Provide support in forming a stronger positive identity. Show an interest in hobbies and talents of the individual. Sporting, artistic or musical talents can all provide a positive identity, and a potential social group. Actively support development of these talents where you can, for example by suggesting membership of a sporting group, creating contact with a role model, or simply showing an interest.
- Make yourself available for support and advice.
- Be aware that a young person who has social or familial connections to a radical group runs a higher risk of radicalising themselves. Be extra alert to their development. Where possible, discuss their family or social situation with them; provide support and a place where they can share their experiences. See their experience as an area of expertise, consult with them about it. Where possible, discuss this case with other professionals indicated by TERRA's community approach framework – social workers, other youth workers and law enforcement personnel may be especially relevant.
- Respond proactively to any reports of racism or discrimination. First, explore the experience with the person reporting it. Is it genuine, or has the person mistakenly attributed a negative experience to racism, when in fact simply circumstances were against them? In this case, pointing out that the difference between real and experienced discrimination is vital. Again, discuss these cases with other members of the community approach framework.
- In cases in which you agree that discrimination has taken place, make it clear to the person reporting it that legitimate means to redressing the balance are available, and make sure that these are followed through. People who have experienced discrimination sometimes have the tendency to feel that the negative emotions expressed by the person who discriminated against them are common to their entire social group. Ensure that you underline that the discrimination they have experienced does not in any way represent a general social view, but is the action and opinion of only one individual. Ensure that they feel supported and listened to.

5 DEALING WITH YOUNGSTERS DEVELOPING SYMPATHY FOR RADICAL IDEAS

A first step on the path of radicalisation is often caused by feelings of frustration. Someone feels that the actual social group (friends, community, ethnic or religious group) is not effective in fighting against the discrimination which they feel they are experiencing, and they start to explore other options to fight injustice. This implies moving away from the mainstream, looking for groups which do provide a feeling that action to address discrimination or deprivation is being taken. They are open for radical ideas.

Without any support from family members or professionals, this process could move towards a search for answers.

A VULNERABLE INDIVIDUAL MAY, AT THIS POINT:

- Display a tendency to attribute a lack of success in fulfilling goals or ambitions not to circumstances or personal failure, but to discrimination. For example, within a group of secondary school students, all are instructed to find a work experience placement. If one of the group is unsuccessful in

Their version of religion was used for me to isolate myself and to become part of their political agenda.

finding a placement, he may feel that this is not due to a lack of qualifications or a shortage of places, but to his ethnic, religious, or socio-economic background. This may result in particular emotions, like anger, fear, contempt, and disgust, coming more strongly to the surface. They might talk about these feelings, but they may not, so be aware that because they are not spoken about does not mean they are not there.

- Display a loss of sense of legitimacy in authority (school, police, government, etc.) Again, they may or may not talk about these feelings.
- Display a heightened awareness of group identities – for example using an “us” versus “them” terminology – and develop a sense of competition between groups. They might or might not talk about these feelings.
- Be especially receptive to external influences and ideas from new people or groups who share the individual’s negative experience of the wider society. Other individuals who share a sense of being disadvantaged can provide a reasoning to explain this sense of disadvantage, and a strategy to fight against it, will be especially attractive. You may be able to see some changes in the individual’s peer group already starting to take place.
- Seek a group which provides a very clear identity. You may already see some changes in the individual’s appearance, but only once membership to the group has been confirmed will this become very obvious.
- Sense that the new group is effective in addressing the perceived unfairness of society, while the old friendship or social group was not.

DO

- As far as possible, keep communication open and tolerant. The processes described here are mainly psychological ones, not yet really translated into action. Unless an open dialogue is maintained, even if you see the person on a regular – even daily – basis, you may not be aware that the seeds of a radicalisation process have been sown. Not all of the emotions mentioned in the section above are easily talked about – good communication can make this more possible. Your support and help at this moment could be crucial in preventing a further deterioration.
- If you feel that an individual is attributing a lack of success to discrimination while no actual discrimination has taken place, it is vital that you challenge and question the perception of discrimination. Supporting attempts to improve the situation, for example, in the case given above, by actively helping the student to find a work experience place with another employer can be crucial in reaffirming a positive sense of identity and place in society.
- Connecting the vulnerable person with role models from within their own group can be a very positive step. This can challenge the idea that a lack of success can be attributed to discrimination against that group.
- Challenge a sense of “us versus them” and a lack of legitimacy of authority with counter narratives, for example exploring the common ground between different groups, and stressing the positive aspects of the group which the individual feels is experiencing discrimination. Teaching critical thinking on these issues may give the vulnerable person tools with which to analyse radical narratives that they may be exposed to, especially on the internet.
- Remain aware that the radicalisation process might simply stop by itself.

FIND THIS VIDEO ON
TerRaToolkit.eu

YASMIN MULBOCUS
FORMER EXTREMIST
UNDERGRADUATE CRIMINOLOGY STUDENT
PROJECT INITIATOR, WEST LONDON INITIATIVE, UK

DON'T

- Make the individual feel as though they have been singled out for special, negative attention.

The violence I'd been subjected to, the police discrimination, a greater awareness of foreign conflicts such as Bosnia, all this undoubtedly made me highly receptive to the Islamist message. I was desperately looking for answers.

(M. Nawaz, Radical 2012:78)

6 WHAT IF THEY REALLY JOIN A RADICAL GROUP?

The person may come into contact with groups who are actively seeking new recruits. At this point in the process the demand – for a group which provides a clear identity and a means through which to address the perceived unfairness of society: is met with supply – groups actively recruiting. This may be very visible in the form of new faces in the community, or new groups hanging around schools or youth clubs. At this point in the process, the individual is keen to draw attention to their membership of the group, and to take on the clear identity it offers, so the change often comes more to the surface. You may observe for example:

- Change in appearance. This might include adopting a certain style of dress, growing a beard, or indeed shaving off all hair, displaying flags or stickers, getting tattoos proclaiming affiliation to the group. Using vocabulary typical to the group is also common, for example names for certain ethnic or religious groups.
- Change in identity, even in name.
- Change in behaviour. In an attempt to gain or affirm membership of the group to other group members and to peer groups, family and friends, changes in behaviour such as giving up drinking and smoking, and changing diet, skipping classes or taking part in political events like demonstrations may be noticeable. They may be very expressive in support of the ideology of the group, and even challenge non-members who do not conform to the behaviour suggested by the group.
- Change in peer group. Individuals who have become involved with a radical group tend to withdraw from their previous social and leisure activities, becoming increasingly involved in activities connected with the group. This may include forming a new group of friends and associates.
- Clear vocal definition of own group as opposed to other groups. Threatening behaviour towards other groups.
- An increased sense of anger at society, and less participation in it. While this view may not be vocalised, most individuals at this point will share their views, partly to affirm their group membership and possibly with an indirect goal of finding new recruits.
- Decline in performance at school. This can indicate that the attention of the individual is focussed elsewhere, perhaps on active membership of the group. It can also accelerate a radicalisation process, because if an individual is judged only on academic performance, they can feel less and less at home in the school environment, and be less inclined to attend. The radical group can then provide an attractive alternative activity.

The youth have to be guided in the right direction by somebody who can be a role model, who has been in the same situation and can address it in the right manner.

I joined the left wing movement because I wanted to stand up for all the groups which the right wing were repressing. Somehow then it felt like if I didn't do that, the right wing would take over the whole country – and what would those groups do then? Who would stand up for them if I did not?

(Former member of an extreme left wing group)

DO

- Remain aware that changes – even fairly small changes – in appearance and in peer group, could have a deeper significance than a normal adolescent search for identity. If you do observe these, seek to discuss them with the individual, so that communication about their process remains open.
- If you notice that an individual seems to be breaking off contact with their normal peer group, see what you can do to re-establish or support the connection.
- Bring the individual into contact with other groups which provide a clear identity and deal with the sense of disadvantage in a positive way, for example, a sports club, voluntary organisation, community group or (non-violent) religious organisations. Show an interest in the talents and hobbies of the individual, and provide support where possible.
- Address any problems at school like not getting grades which are as good as they used to be, or skipping school, actively. Remember that there could be a link with radicalisation. It's also important to remember that too much focus on poor or worsening academic performance might discourage the student and send them towards the radical group in search of understanding and support – so make sure that your attention is also broader, asking about what the student enjoys and feels they are best at.
- Raise awareness amongst youngsters of the tactics which may be used by radical groups in a recruitment attempt, especially the use of biased and emotive narratives.
- Involve law enforcement, social workers, other youth workers and religious leaders in addressing groups which may be attempting to find new recruits by targeting a school or youth club.

DON'T

- Make the individual feel as though they are being singled out for special attention. Their sense of identity at this point may be extremely fragile, and a feeling of threat to it may serve only to alienate them yet further from what they already perceive as a hostile society.
- Intervene single handedly. Doing so may make the problem worse. Consult with other professionals, judge the degree to which you ought to be concerned, and act accordingly.

FIND THIS VIDEO ON
TerRaToolkit.eu

SØREN LERCHE
FORMER LEFT WING RADICAL
EXIT MANAGER AT FRYSHUSET, DK

7 IF THEY INTEGRATE INTO THE RADICAL GROUP

Once a group has been selected, the individual tends to feel a strong desire to confirm their membership of it. Most of the indicators mentioned will show themselves more outspokenly, like change in clothing style, using aliases, strong us-and-them terminology, or different word choice.

OTHER NOTICEABLE CHANGES THAT MAY POINT TO MEMBERSHIP OF AN EXTREMIST GROUP:

- A sense that violence as a means of addressing unfairness within society is legitimate. Again, most individuals at this point in the process are fairly vocal in their views.
- Forcing group rules on others, or challenging non-members who do not behave conform to the behaviour suggested by the group.
- Participation in closed meetings.
- Possession of propaganda material.
- Become more extreme in expressions of hate about those who do not share their views.
- Threaten other group members who try to leave the group.
- Being less present and visible at school or in other organised activities as a result of now extreme connection with the radical group.

DO

- Take these signals seriously.
- Try to prevent the individual from becoming increasingly isolated. Maintain communication as much as possible.
- Where possible, discuss these changes with the vulnerable person's family and peer group. They may now be better positioned to maintain open communication with this person, and challenge the choices they are making.
- Try to re-establish contact with the old group of friends.
- Refer to the individual's identity before they began a radicalisation process, so that this remains relevant, and the option of returning to it and re-embracing it remains possible.
- Discuss the costs of membership of the group.
- Involve law enforcement officers, other youth workers and social workers in sharing your concerns about the vulnerable individual.
- Make sure that law enforcement personnel are aware of your concerns. It is at this point that genuinely dangerous and violent activities may begin.
- As much as you can, ensure that contact with the vulnerable person is not lost as a result of their reduced presence at school, or participation in other activities.
- Remain aware that the radicalisation process might simply stop by itself.

8 IF THEY TURN INTO HARD CORE RADICALS

Once integrated, the individual may become more and more convinced of the legitimacy of the thoughts and actions of the radical group. They are now very sensitive to indoctrination and will become more and more obsessive about the goals of the group and preparation for (violent) action. At this point, their activities may take place outside your view. As a teacher or youth worker, your only role now can be to communicate your concerns and observations to law enforcement personnel. **The radical person may:**

- Abandon a more extreme "look" in an attempt to blend in with peers, so as to escape the notice of law enforcement personnel and other professional groups;
- Recruit and train new members of the group;
- Make actual preparations for an attack, gathering supplies, carrying out reconnaissance;
- Produce written or video material about his or her intentions.

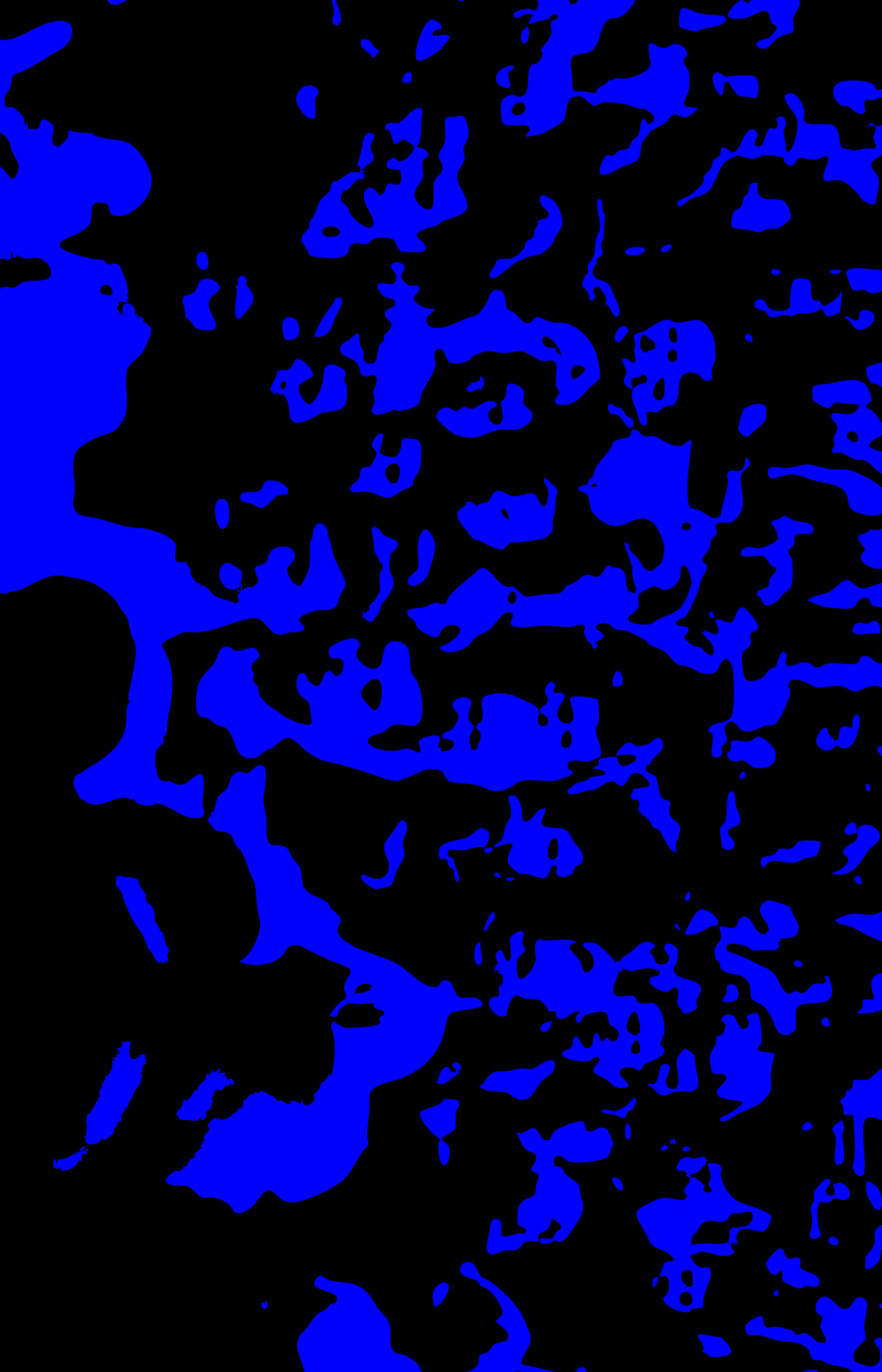
DO

- Make sure that law enforcement personnel are aware of your concerns. It is at this point that genuinely dangerous and violent activities may begin, so it's really crucial to inform the police.

DON'T

- Assume that abandoning of the "look" associated with the group necessarily means that the person is taking a distance from the group and reintegrating. This may in fact be true – but quite the opposite might be happening, too.

This manual was designed to help you to recognise and address radicalisation within the group you come into professional contact with. If you would like more information about this project, or further resources, please visit our website www.terra-net.eu



The material you can find in this Toolkit and online on www.terratookit.eu has been designed for professionals who come into contact through their work with a population which may be vulnerable to radicalisation. It explains why this subject may be of relevance to you, how you might notice if this issue was developing, and what you can do about it. Manuals which contain a fuller picture of this problem and an approach to solving it, and short fact sheets, can both be downloaded from the website free of charge.



partner in

