

# POLICY ADVICE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

## Radicalisation and De-radicalisation in Europe

### RESEARCH BASED POLICY ADVICE FOR NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS

*This document has been written for policy makers, and suggests tackling the problem of radicalisation at local level, through a community approach. It contains guidance on how to implement such an approach, the professionals who can best be included in it, and what it hopes to achieve. Further it gives advice on how national policy can support this.*

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## 1 AIMS AND BACKGROUND: DEALING WITH RADICALISATION

Radicalisation can lead to terrorism, and radical groups within a society can prove divisive, creating social fissures which in turn can fuel new radicalisation processes. In order to improve both social cohesion and, crucially, basic security, it is vital that European governments are fully aware of the causes and processes of radicalisation, and take a far reaching, holistic approach towards tackling it.

This document has been produced with one goal in mind: to guide you in implementing and sustaining such an approach. It provides advice on how you can support front line workers who can identify and prevent radicalisation, and in supporting the de-radicalisation of those who wish to leave an extremist organisation behind. If properly implemented, these initiatives can enhance security.

It has been produced on the basis of state of the art research, and consultations with the experts who can offer the most detailed and intimate knowledge of the processes of radicalisation and de-radicalisation – those who have been the victims of terrorism, and those who have been terrorists themselves, and who have undergone a de-radicalisation process. Leading academic experts have also been consulted.

It aims to reach above the level of party politics, and to contribute instead to a cross party agenda of enhancing national and European security and promoting social cohesion.

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## 2 RADICALISATION; THE COMMUNITY APPROACH

We propose a structure which allows and facilitates a clear flow of information between a broad cross section of professional and social layers. In order to monitor both the individual trajectory of vulnerable people who may be radicalising and trends in radicalisation at local and national level, we suggest the implementation of a community approach.

**Within a community approach, various front line professionals per city council area are invited to come together to discuss:**

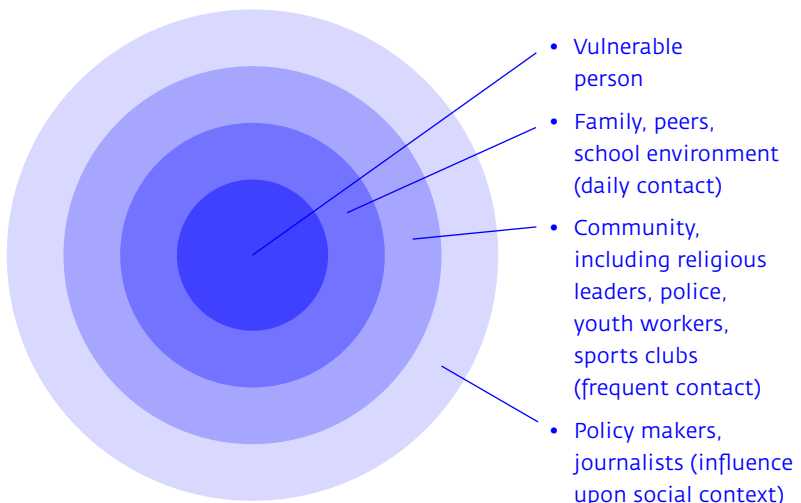
- Individual cases which may be a cause for concern;
- How the family of this individual can best be supported;
- Social groups which may be potentially vulnerable to radicalisation;
- Radical elements in the area, for example a recruiter or criminal group who may be connected to radical ideology;
- Incidents of racism, discrimination or targeted violence which nourish grievances within a community and can feed radicalisation;
- Reintegration of former radicals;
- Awareness raising and the use of victim narratives in education, as a means of prevention.

Existing networks, for example those already in place to address youth criminality or troubled neighbourhoods, can be used to implement this approach, or new networks can be set up.

Meetings should be held on a regular basis, and emphasis should be laid on the sharing of concerns regarding an individual or group, and supporting those in close contact with that individual, and on monitoring trends per area.

## PROFESSIONALS WHO CAN USEFULLY BE INCLUDED IN A COMMUNITY APPROACH NETWORK

In the approach which we suggest, representatives from each ring are given a time and space in which they can come together. They are provided with awareness raising and informative material about radicalisation (for example, the other documents which make up the TERRA tool kit).



Each ring within this circle model has a different kind of contact with the vulnerable person. Changes in behaviour, peer group or ideology are more obvious to family members or professionals 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 a new set of friends. 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 change 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.

The scientific literature about radicalisation has a lot to offer when it comes to suggestions about who to invite. An approach which includes a broad spectrum of professionals is recognised as highly valuable (Schmid 2013). Police officers, especially community officers, play an obvious role. In some regions, police personnel with a special responsibility for counterterrorism are already appointed. Other law enforcement personnel, for example prison warders and parole officers, could also usefully be included, as prisons can be an incubation point for radicalisation (Neumann and Rogers 2007).

TERRA focusses its attention on young people. Research shows that young males between the ages of 15 and 25 are the demographic group most likely to radicalise (Silke 2008 and Christmann 2012). Teachers and other youth workers, such as social workers, professionals involved in addressing youth unemployment or school dropout rates, those working at youth clubs, social centres or sports clubs may all be interesting for a community based approach. As a search for identity and citizenship is also proven to be crucial in a radicalisation process (de Wolf and Doosje 2010, de Koster and Houtman 2008, Moghaddam 2005) teachers of certain subjects, such as history, mother tongue and foreign language, comparative religion and personal and social education or any other subject dealing with citizenship can be especially relevant (Staub 2007).

*We need to be aware of the language that somebody uses when talking about non-negotiable ideas.*

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While political groups play a significant role in radicalisation in Europe, religious extremism must also be taken into account. As a result, religious leaders can very usefully be included in this community network.

Smaller scale initiatives which can also play an active role may also exist in some areas. Examples of these may include organisations based around demographic groups or active groups already involved in anti-violence or anti-racism campaigns.

## THE ROLE OF NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

While the main responsibility of organising this community based approach will lie at local government level, support at national level is crucial. While one such network in one city council area may make a difference to the residents of that area, implementation of these networks at national level could result in a significant improvement to national security. The use of existing networks to implement this approach cut the costs of it to a minimum, but general support from national government, and recognition at that level of the vital role that local governments are playing, is fundamental to the success of such an approach.

National government must co-ordinate counter-extremism policy across government departments. Although policies may be specific to justice, community or education departments, and delivery of projects may be the responsibility of local government, clarity and consistency across all government departments will prevent confusion and improve effectiveness.

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## 3 CONSTRUCTING COUNTER NARRATIVE

So far, this document has dealt with radicalisation on individual and group level, showing how the people surrounding the radicalising individual can be supported. But a recent trend in the scientific literature suggests that radicalisation can take place on state actor levels as well (Schmid 2013, Bellamy 2013). Specifically, this theory suggests that state actors can also radicalise, authorising renditions, for example, or colluding in the use of torture as part of counter terrorism – in short, acting outside the law and breaking the moral code which prohibits causing or authorising bodily harm to civilians. While we cannot go so far as to say that torture causes terrorism, it certainly fans the flames which set terrorism alight, and an increase in the use of torture by a regime can often be seen to be concurrent with an increase in terrorist attacks in the region, and the number of fatalities they cause (Bellamy 2013).

Into the same category, we may place the use of counter terrorism strategies which explicitly single out specific ethnic groups (Bux 2007). Not only recent literature, but also recent news reports illustrate that these are not only ineffective, they also work against community cohesion, and can serve to make one ethnic group feel discriminated against, and to criminalise the image of that ethnic group in the minds of their white counterparts.

Extremist narratives not only rely on an ideology that politically exploits religion, they also manipulate grievances. Improving the compatibility between counter-terrorism legislation and human rights will prevent the undermining of vital counter-extremism work, as national governments can maintain the moral high ground that extremists try to seize from them. Improving communication channels between state and society will also clarify government policy and undermine the extremist exploitation of grievances for the purposes of radicalisation and recruitment.

FIND THIS VIDEO ON  
**TerRaToolkit.eu**

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The fact that radical groups use narratives to recruit new members is well documented and well known (for example Bailey and Grimalia 2006, De Koster and Houtman 2008, Schmid NCTB 2010 Nawaz 2012). It is crucial for extremist groups to be able to back up their messages with (carefully selected) facts. In supporting morally dubious counterterrorism practises, Western governments not only contribute to extreme narratives, they undermine the credibility of their own (de Graaf NCTB 2010).

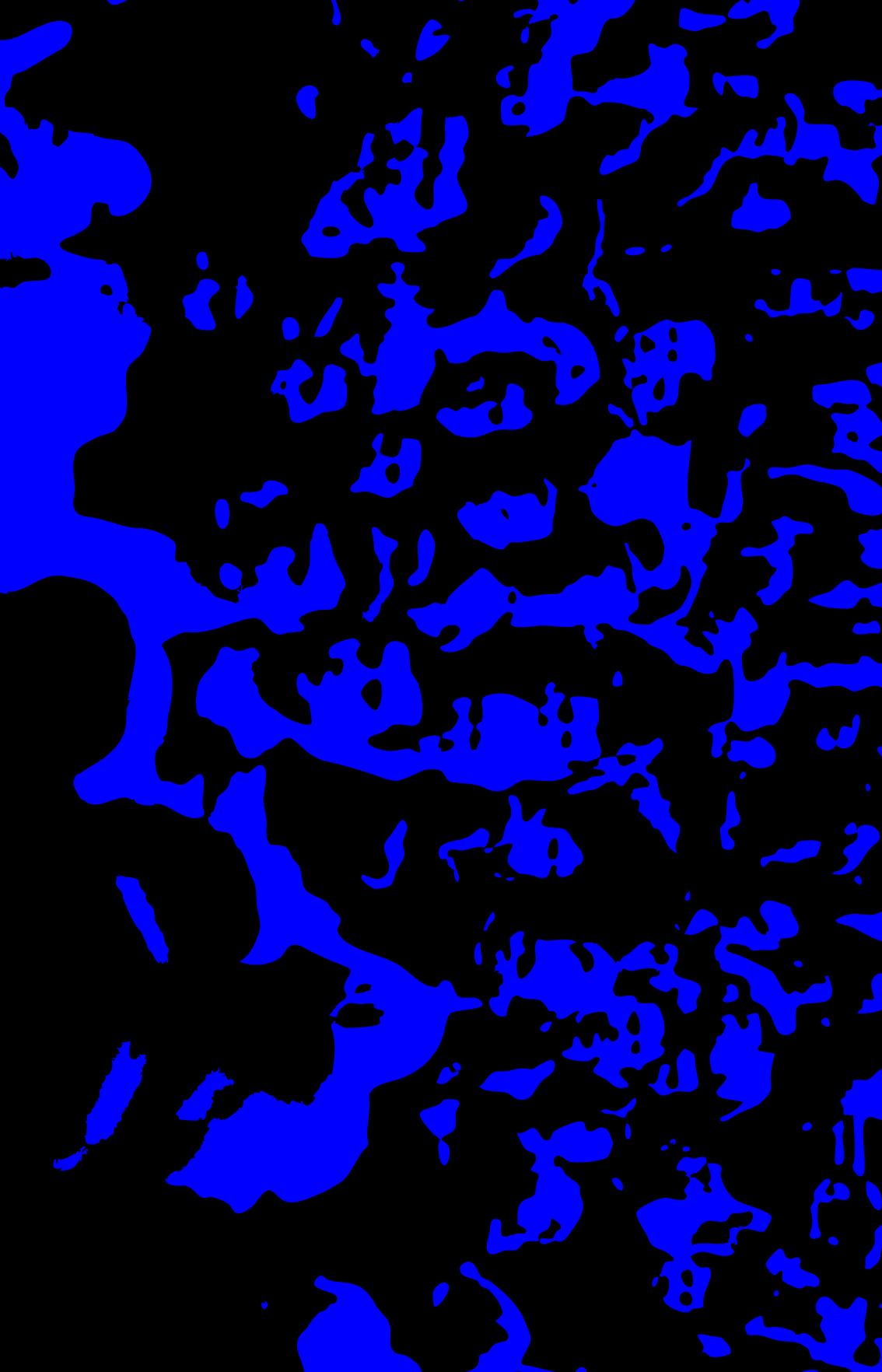
Some very clear policy advice can be derived from this research at the level of how you present your own position:

- Do not support the use of torture or rendition, and be public in your rejection of these practices.
- Do not implement counterterrorism measures which inhibit or discriminate against elements of your own communities.
- Clarify laws on foreign fighters.
- Be clear in communications regarding foreign policy.
- Regulate and communicate clearly about the behaviour of security/surveillance services (including data communications).
- Be aware that in some European countries, a lack of trust in authorities, in particular law enforcement services, can have a direct influence on radicalisation, feeding the narratives of extreme groups. Issues such as profiling, institutional racism, and discrimination should be investigated thoroughly and communicated clearly and honestly to the general public.

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## 4 DE-RADICALISATION AND COMMUNITY COHESION

Literature shows that many factors can form the turning point in an individual's decision to take a distance from the extreme group which they used to belong to. Of these reasons, the most commonly occurring are beyond the control of policy makers: A change in personal circumstances, or disillusionment with the leadership of the radical group (Alonso 2011, Nawaz 2012, Reinares 2011). However, the same literature shows that one particular approach can be of crucial importance for successful reintegration. Using former ETA terrorists as an example, Alonso (2011) shows that while making any political concessions to the terrorist group is inadvisable, personal support is crucial to ensuring that each individual has the opportunity to enable them to begin a new life, free from violence. These can include reintegration activities, change in identity, and witness protection schemes, if they choose to inform on their previous colleagues. Personal gains such as reduced jail sentences, and support in building up a new life, were found to have been very effective.



The material you can find in this Toolkit and online on [www.terratookit.eu](http://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.

