

Preventing radicalisation in the EU

The tragic attacks of 13 November in Paris have again painfully demonstrated the immediate security threat deriving from radicalisation, recruitment of EU citizens by terrorist organisations and 'foreign fighters'. The competence for national security lies with the Member States, but the cross-border nature of these complex threats requires a coordinated response at EU level.

Background

Radicalisation, [defined](#) by the European Commission as the phenomenon of people embracing opinions, views and ideas which could lead to terrorism, is a serious threat to internal security in EU Member States. According to [Commissioner Dimitris Avramopoulos](#), it takes extremists no more than 6 to 8 weeks to attract radicalised individuals to their cause. The European Parliament [estimates](#) that around 5 000 Europeans have joined terrorist organisations, mostly ISIL/Da'esh and Jahbat al-Nusra.

In early 2015, Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) Ministers responded to the *Charlie Hebdo* attacks by adopting the [Riga Joint Statement](#), which led the European Council to set a [strategic agenda](#) based on three strands for immediate response: security of citizens, preventing radicalisation and safeguarding values, and cooperating with international partners. At the [JHA Council in October 2015](#), Ministers were briefed by the Presidency and the EU Counter-Terrorism Coordinator on the implementation of anti-terrorism measures, including in the fields of information exchange and prevention of radicalisation on the internet.

The first high-level [conference on the criminal justice response to radicalisation](#) in October 2015 recognised radicalisation online and in prisons as a point of concern. In October 2015, the EU [signed](#) the 2005 Council of Europe [Convention](#) and its 2015 [Additional Protocol](#) on the prevention of terrorism. The Protocol calls for the criminalisation of travelling for terrorist purposes, the financing and organisation of such travel, thus implementing the [UN Security Council Resolution on foreign terrorist fighters](#) (2178(2014)).

On 28 April 2015, the European Commission presented its '[European Agenda on Security](#)', which includes the following measures already [under way](#): 1) an EU Internet Forum to be launched on 2 December 2015; 2) an EU Internet Referral Unit within Europol, launched on 1 July 2015; 3) a reinforcement of the Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN) created in 2011, not least through the creation of the new RAN Centre of Excellence; and 4) the progressive setting up of a European Counter-Terrorism Centre within Europol, to step up the support provided at EU level for Member States.

European Parliament resolution on prevention of radicalisation

On 19 October 2015, the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs adopted an [own-initiative report](#) on the prevention of radicalisation and recruitment of European citizens by terrorist organisations. This is scheduled to be discussed in plenary in November 2015.

The rapporteur, Rachida Dati (EPP, France) [referred](#) to 'hotbeds' of radicalised Europeans who can travel freely across the Union in the borderless Schengen area, calling for a 'truly European response' to this common threat. The report points to the need to close terrorist-funding channels by improving transparency on external financial flows, and acknowledges that radicalisation is a global phenomenon requiring a response at international, not only local or European level.

The report advocates using preventive rather than reactive measures. Education, including on religious issues, could be enhanced to foster critical thinking. The significant role of the internet is addressed by urging service providers to fulfil their legal responsibility to prevent online distribution of illicit messages. Ultimately, the report recalls that 'the security of European citizens is not incompatible with guaranteeing their freedoms', insisting on the respect of fundamental rights in all EU measures.