



18.6.2018

WORKING DOCUMENT

on ECA Special Report 13/2018 (Discharge 2017): Tackling radicalisation that leads to terrorism: the Commission addressed the needs of Member States, but with some shortfalls in coordination and evaluation

Committee on Budgetary Control

Rapporteur: Dennis de Jong

Introduction

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.

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.

The ECA audit examined whether the Commission manages this cross-cutting support well.

In particular, the Court assessed whether:

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

ECA findings

The ECA arrived at the conclusion that:

- overall, the Commission addressed the needs of Member States, but there were some shortfalls in coordination and evaluation;
- the Commission coordinated its cross-cutting support, for example, by means of consultation between directorates-general when approving work programmes. 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;
- the Commission has not sufficiently developed its framework for assessing whether its support is effective and offers value for money;
- the achievements of specific actions are often measured in terms of amount of activity rather than effectiveness.

ECA recommendations

In light of its findings the ECA formulated the following recommendations:

1. Improve the framework for overall coordination of actions 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 Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN) to disseminate the results of successful EU-funded projects.
2. Increase practical support to practitioners and policymakers in Member States. In particular, 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.
3. Improve the framework for assessing results. 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:
 - i) cooperation between the EU Internet Referral Unit (IRU) and national IRUs in ensuring complementarity and avoiding unnecessary duplication in referring terrorist content to IT companies;
 - ii) the extent to which removing terrorist propaganda has an impact on its prevalence on the internet;
 - iii) 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.

Replies from the Commission:

The Commission accepts all recommendations.

With regard to Recommendation 1, the Commission observes that 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.

With regard to Recommendation 2, the Commission highlights that a closer engagement with Member States is one of the findings of the High Level Commission Expert Group on Radicalisation (HLCEG-R), which is already followed up with concrete steps (e.g. policy and practice events between policymakers and practitioners already scheduled in 2018). More generally, in respect of Recommendation 2, the Commission underlines that individual projects and initiatives are evaluated and their achievements are recorded. The Commission recognises that the longer term impact of these actions is not measured in a systematic way.

Recommendations by the rapporteur for possible inclusion in the 2017 Commission discharge report

[The European Parliament:]

1. Welcomes the Court's Special Report on Tackling radicalisation that leads to terrorism, endorses its recommendations and sets out its observations and recommendations below;
2. Calls on the Commission to examine how the management of the actions addressing radicalisation can be simplified, for example by reducing the number of funds on which these actions rely, or by concentrating management which is currently done by eight of its directorates-general, as well as by Europol, Eurojust and Member States, with a view to improve coordination and efficiency;
3. Recognises that performance based budgeting may be a particular challenge in the case of actions aimed at preventing radicalisation, but emphasises that indicators related to, for example, the number of experts participating in meetings, are not sufficient in themselves to measure performance; calls upon the Commission to examine, in particular, why participation levels in its activities vary considerably between Member States and to concentrate on those activities that are relevant for most Member States;
4. Calls on the Commission to keep Parliament informed about the follow up on the interim report of the HLCEG-R, where it concerns the discussions with Member States on how to better evaluate relevant programmes and interventions;
5. Recognises that preventing radicalisation often requires in-depth knowledge of the situation at local, i.e. neighbourhood levels, and that this type of information cannot be generalised, as each neighbourhood may have its own challenges and opportunities; points in this regard to the important role of local educational institutions, local social and charitable organisations and local authorities, including police officers assigned to a specific neighbourhood; calls on the Commission and Member States to bear this in mind, when exchanging best practices and to avoid stereotyping or generalisations;
6. Emphasises that the efficiency and effectiveness of the Commission's activities with respect to helping Member States in preventing radicalisation are likely to be highest, when they are referring to cross-border cases, in particular, when it concerns information provided through the Internet; supports the de-confliction procedure of the EU IRU and the decision to focus the EU IRU on online propaganda which terrorists

use to attract as many followers as possible; calls upon the Commission to improve its methods for measuring the effectiveness of the EU IRU by examining how much terrorist content has been removed by internet companies at EU IRU's request alone, without also having been flagged by national IRUs, civil society or the internet companies themselves, as well as by developing methods to demonstrate effectiveness in terms of the amount of terrorist propaganda that remains available on the internet, for example because the removed propaganda is simply re-uploaded or moved to other platforms.