INSTITUTE *for* STRATEGIC DIALOGUE

POLICY BRIEFING:

COUNTERING FAR-RIGHT EXTREMISM

Vidhya Ramalingam

With the financial support from the Prevention of and Fight against Crime Programme of the European Union European Commission - Directorate-General Home Affairs

About this paper

This paper has been prepared by the Institute for Strategic Dialogue as a background briefing for the European Policy Planners' Network on Countering Polarisation and Radicalisation (PPN). It aims to provide an overview of recent developments in far-right extremism across Europe, highlight case studies of projects seeking to combat this threat, and offer practical lessons learned for policy makers and frontline workers.

About the author

Vidhya Ramalingam leads ISD's programme of work on far-right extremism and integration and diversity. In addition to this project aiming to enhance European cooperation in tackling far-right extremism, she runs a cross-European study of what works in integration policy and practice. Her recent publications include Integration: What works? and Far-Right Extremism: Trends and Methods for Response and Prevention. Her work on far-right extremism has been featured in the Guardian, Huffington Post, the New Statesman, and international press. Vidhya holds an MPhil in Migration Studies from the University of Oxford, and a BA in Anthropology and Inequality Studies from Cornell University

Cover photo

The cover image on this report was uploaded to Flicker on November 11, 2013 by Andrew Johnson, accessible here: http://www.flickr.com/photos/71015487@N03/10817653973/

© Institute for Strategic Dialogue, 2014.
This material is offered free of charge for personal and non-commercial use, provided the source is acknowledged. For commercial or any other use, prior written permission must be obtained from the Institute for Strategic Dialogue. In no case may this material be altered, sold or rented. The Institute for Strategic Dialogue does not generally take positions on policy issues. The views expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the organisation. This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the authors, and the European Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

Defining the problem

Far-right extremism is a diverse phenomenon. It is composed of movements and parties with different ideological tendencies, mobilising against different conceptions of 'the enemy', and using different methods to achieve their goals. For some, this involves the use of violence. A key challenge facing many European countries is one of definition. Across Europe, there is no consensus on what constitutes far-right extremism, and security agencies record violence from the extreme right in different ways. This has inhibited our ability to assess threat levels and compare trends across countries. Meanwhile, the media and public debate on the threat posed by the 'rise of the far right' remains confused in many ways.

Only through a proper understanding of both violent and non-violent far-right movements and parties can policy makers work out where the problem lies, and therefore what to do about it. In other words, should we draw the line at the use of violence, or the spreading of intolerance? Are we concerned about the proliferation of radical right ideologies and narratives in mainstream politics and their impact on wider community relations, or about the potential for violence? And in terms of responses, can we separate the two?

To set the context for these questions, the section below describes the spectrum of far-right extremism in Europe.

POLITICAL PARTIES

There is some confusion over the nature of radical right parties and how they relate to extra-parliamentary movements, as well as the incidents of intolerance and violence that have occurred across Europe in recent years. Despite historical and contextual differences between these various parties, they tend to share an agenda of radical change to national policies on themes reaching across immigration, religion and national culture. In many European countries, the radical changes these political parties seek are grounded in a critique of liberal democracy, rather than outright opposition to it. It is important to note that many radical right political parties are non-violent and operate within the rules of democracy; most actively seek to disassociate themselves from historical or perceived ties to their extreme and violent counterparts.

However, the relationship between illegal, antidemocratic and violent manifestations of the extreme right and radical right parties is complex and varies across Europe. Parties like the Danish People's Party (*Dansk Folkeparti*) can claim no connection to illegal far-right actors. It began as an anti-tax protest party, but experienced divisions throughout the 1980s and increasingly came to focus on themes of immigration and national identity. However, parties like Flemish Interest (*Vlaams Belang*) in Belgium originated from Flemish Block (*Vlaams Blok*), a militant far-right

secessionist party founded in 1978, which adopted a new name and re-organised itself after a 2004 trial which condemned the party for racism. And in Germany, the government has spent a decade debating the case for banning the National Democratic Party (*Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands – Die Volksunion*, NPD), which was established in 1964 out of an alliance of various far-right groupings including overt neo-Nazis. This ongoing case hinges on the fact that the NPD is un-constitutional, particularly given its affinity with historical Nazism and potential links with the National Socialist Underground (*Nationalsozialistischer Untergrund*, NSU) and other violent cases.

The relationship between the electoral success of these parties and violence is not straightforward. In the Netherlands, the success of the Party for Freedom (*Partij voor de Vrijheid*) and the polarising effect it has on society has not translated into heightened levels of extreme far-right activity. On the contrary, extremist nationalist and neo-Nazi movements have declined in size and intensity of activities. Some experts believe that successful radical right parties channel much of the frustrations of violent or extremist movements into the democratic system.[1] Another argument sometimes made is that as radical right opinions become mainstreamed, extremist elements lose their counter-cultural appeal.

Meanwhile, far-right political parties continue to deny any relationship with perpetrators of violence and hate crime. In 2006, a young member of a family of known Flemish Block militants who shot a child and two women from ethnic minority backgrounds was motivated by racist beliefs; however, Flemish Interest denied any direct or indirect connection to the shootings.[2] In the UK, though most radical right political parties profess to be non-violent, the most prominent cases of convicted far-right extremist perpetrators have been linked in various ways to far-right parties. This includes former British National Party (BNP) member David Copeland, the 'London nail-bomber,' and former BNP candidate Robert Cottage, who was arrested in 2006 for stockpiling weapons.

HATE SPEECH AND INTOLERANCE

The role of hate speech or violent discourse in propagating violence is similarly complex. In November 2012, two Members of Parliament for the anti-immigrant radical right party the Sweden Democrats (*Sverigedemokraterna*) were forced to step down after several scandals involving racist abuse. Later that month, a Hungarian Jobbik (*Jobbik Magyarországért Mozgalom*) MP called for a list to be drawn up of Jewish politicians and members of

[1] Minkenberg, M. (2003) "The West European radical right as a collective actor: modelling the impact of cultural and structural variables on party formation and movement mobilization." Comparative European Politics, 1(2): 149-70.

[2] Swyngedouw, M. (2009) "Country Report Belgium." In Bertelsmann Stiftung (ed.) *Strategies for Combating Right-Wing Extremism in Europe*. Gütersloh, Germany.

government who pose a 'national security risk'. In Finland, a True Finns (*Perussuomalaiset*) parliamentarian was sentenced under hate speech laws and declared guilty of breaching religious peace, due to statements where he connected Islam with paedophilia.[3] In Norway, Anders Behring Breivik legitimated his acts of violence with an amalgam of statements pulled from far-right politicians, as well as prominent anti-Islam activists. We clearly need a better understanding of whether and how rhetoric serves as an enabler for far-right violence, and what the implications are for those developing policy responses.

One major challenge in this domain is the fact that far-right extremist attitudes are far from confined to the margins of society, but can increasingly be found in the mainstream. One study from 2006 to 2010, commissioned by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, found that far-right extremist views were widespread in Germany, among all social strata, regions and age groups.[4] The study examined six themes: attitudes towards dictatorship, national chauvinism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, social Darwinism and Nazism.[5] The study warned that far-right extremism is not simply a youth problem, and that young people do not make up the largest group of far-right extremists. These attitudes are found in people with low self-esteem, a mistrustful attitude, and those who are disaffected with politics. Other research has reinforced the fact that far-right extremist activists are in many cases 'perfectly normal people,' who are 'socially integrated, connected in one way or another to mainstream groups and ideas'.[6]

EXTRA-PARLIAMENTARY MOVEMENTS

Concerns have emerged recently about far-right movements seeking to mobilise public support or affect change through extra-parliamentary and sometimes violent methods. Some of these movements are derived from or directly inspired by fascist and Nazi histories. They include the pan-European Blood and Honour group; the British group Combat 18 and its splinter group the Racial Volunteer Force; the Danish National Socialist Movement (*Danmarks Nationalsocialistiske Bevægelse*); the former French *Elsass Korps* in Alsace (which dissolved in 2005); as well as a group of movements that have recently shaken Germany, including the neo-Nazi group *Kameradschaft Aachener Land* and the NSU.

Other forms of extra-parliamentary movements have emerged in recent years, distancing themselves from the overt racism and neo-Nazism of the 'old' extreme right, and instead operating on opposition to what they perceive to be the 'Islamization' of European countries. The English Defence

[3] Jungar, A. (2012) "Finland," in Ramalingam, V., Glennie, A., S. Feve (eds.) *Preventing and Countering Far-Right Extremism: European Cooperation. Country Reports*. Institute for Strategic Dialogue. London, UK.

[4] Decker et al. (2010) *Die Mitte In Der Krise*. Friedrich Ebert Stiftung. Germany.

[5] For more information (in English), see: http://www.goethe.de/ins/gb/lp/prj/mtg/typ/rec/en9340047.htm

[6] Klandermans, B. & N. Mayer. (2005) *Through the Magnifying Glass: Extreme Right Activists in Europe*. Routledge.

League (EDL) in the UK has been at the forefront of this scene, along with a string of movements under the 'Stop the Islamization of Europe' umbrella. Although these groups do not tend to advocate violence, they have organised provocative rallies and promoted confrontation with opponents, which has often ended in conflict and arrests.

The extra-parliamentary scene is constantly shifting and in some countries these movements only pose a marginal threat, as they struggle with organisational capacity and internal divisions. In other countries, extra-parliamentary movements can be directly linked to increased incidences of violence. For example, the Swedish Resistance Movement (*Svenska Motståndsrörelsen*) today accounts for most of the hate crime connected to organised groups in Sweden.[7]

HATE CRIME AND RACIST VIOLENCE

Statistics on hate crime and racist violence are not a clear indication of the strength of far-right sentiment in a country. Some experts have drawn a line between racist violence and hate crime (said to be driven by a broader need to demonstrate power against a particular group, or motivated by bias toward a group based on particular characteristics, such as race, religion, or sexual orientation) and far-right extremist violence (considered to be to driven by an ideological worldview).[8] There has also been some evidence to suggest that perpetrators of hate crime may be more motivated by 'thrill-seeking,' opportunistic or criminal motivations rather than ideological factors.[9] However, the reality is we know very little about the distinctions between hate crime and far-right extremist violence, and what might motivate an individual to move from engaging in 'sporadic acts of violence' to terrorist activity.[10]

In many countries, it is also hard to assess whether racially-motivated crimes and their perpetrators are linked to extremist organisations. For example, in Sweden, no more than between 1 per cent (in 2010) and 4 per cent (2008) of reported hate crimes can be linked directly to any extreme right group.[11]

The question therefore remains as to what elements of extreme right environments governments should be most concerned about. The answer will undoubtedly vary across Europe, as will the most appropriate response mechanisms.

[7] Jupskås, A. R. (2012) "Sweden," in Ramalingam, V., Glennie, A., S. Feve (eds.) *Preventing and Countering Far-Right Extremism: European Cooperation. Country Reports*. Institute for Strategic Dialogue. London, UK.

[8] Heitmeyer, W. (2005) 'Right-wing extremist violend,' in *International Handbook of Violence Research*.

[9] Goodwin, M. (2012) 'Right-wing Extremist Violence: Causes and Consequences,' in Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ed.) *The Radical Right: Violent and Non-Violent Movements in Europe*.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Jupskås, A. R. (2012) "Sweden," in Ramalingam, V., Glennie, A., S. Feve (eds.) *Preventing and Countering Far-Right Extremism: European Cooperation. Country Reports*. Institute for Strategic Dialogue. London, UK.

THE NATURE OF THE THREAT

Europol's most recent EU Terrorism Situation and Trend report notes that the threat of violent far-right extremism has 'reached new levels in Europe and should not be underestimated', defining far-right terrorist groups as those that 'seek to change the entire political, social and economic system on an extremist right-wing model'.[12] Based on this definition, Europol argues that the threat of terrorism is most likely to emanate from lone actors, but that organised underground groups also have the capability and intention to carry out attacks.

There have been several cases of planned and foiled violent attacks by far-right actors across Europe over the last decade, including:

- In 2006, 17 members of the movement Blood, Soil, Honour and Loyalty were charged in Belgium with planning terror attacks against the National Bank and plotting an 'army-led coup' to create a fascist Flemish state.[13] That same year, a follower of this movement, Hans van Themsche, killed two people in a racially-motivated shooting spree in Antwerp.

- In 2007, a former electoral candidate for the BNP in the UK was imprisoned for stockpiling chemical explosives due to his fears about 'the evils of uncontrolled immigration.'

- In 2009 in Germany, the young neo-Nazi group *Autonome Nationalisten* attacked a group of far-left protesters and police, setting cars on fire and injuring dozens.

- In 2010, three members of the violent banned neo-Nazi group Nomad 88 in France went on a shooting spree to 'purge' the suburbs of immigrants, and were sentenced to prison in 2010. Nine other members of the group were also sentenced for offences including arms possession.

- In July 2011, a man named Anders Behring Breivik detonated a bomb in Oslo and carried out a shooting attack on the island of Utøya, killing a total of 77 people.

- In November 2011, an arson attack, classified by Europol as a 'right-wing terror attack' was carried out in Terrassa (Spain) on the facilities of a publishing company and an anti-capitalist cooperative society, with no casualties.[14]

[12] Europol. (2012) *TE-SAT 2012 EU Terrorism Situation and Trend Report*. European Police Office.

[13] For more information (in English), see: http://www.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,2085728_2085727_2085704,00.html

[14] Europol. (2012) *TE-SAT 2012 EU Terrorism Situation and Trend Report*. European Police Office.

- In 2011, five people were arrested in Germany for involvement in far-right terrorism, and all arrests were linked to the far-right extremist terror group NSU, which carried out politically-motivated murders between 2001 and 2007.

- In 2011, two Senegalese street vendors were murdered in Italy by a member of the far-right group *Casa Pound*.

Large-scale attacks or foiled attempts remain rare, but deserve serious attention. For example, in November 2012, Polish authorities arrested a radical nationalist plotting a bomb-attack on Polish parliament, who was apparently inspired by Anders Breivik. Although these cases are often treated as one-off attacks, some experts believe it is a myth that most far-right terrorism is the action of isolated individuals. A recent report on so-called 'lone wolves' notes that those involved in apparent one-person actions have in most cases had long-standing involvement with organised extremist groups.[15]

Beyond organised violence and terrorism, there have been heightened levels of other forms of activity from violent far-right extremist groups in Europe recently, notably xenophobic violent offences and far-right parades or marches. Violent attacks, however, tend to be the result of accidental encounters or reciprocal provocation in most cases, rather than planned attacks by these groups.[16]

Europol confirms that many members of the extreme right-wing scene have access to or harbour ambitions to acquire weapons, ammunition, or explosives.[17] Though most groups with a far-right orientation do not openly endorse violence, there is reason to be concerned about the articulation of narratives that can legitimate the act of violence under certain conditions. Recent research has drawn out the 'motivational vocabularies' that inspire far-right commitment, and that tend to amplify feelings of threat, urgency and survivalism: a struggle for racial and cultural survival.[18]

It is important not to overstate or exaggerate this threat. In countries like Norway, far-right violence and hate crimes have decreased since the mid-1990s.[19] The Defence League model has largely failed to catch on in Scandinavia, with fewer than 15 or so activists showing up to these marches. According to the Dutch intelligence service, the AIVD, there are no more than 300 active followers of 'right-wing extremism and the extreme right' in the

[15] Gable, G. & Jackson, P. (2011) *Lone wolves: myth or reality?* Searchlight. UK.

[16] Europol. (2012) *TE-SAT 2012 EU Terrorism Situation and Trend Report*. European Police Office.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Goodwin, M. (2012) "United Kingdom," in Ramalingam, V., Glennie, A., S. Feve (eds.) *Preventing and Countering Far-Right Extremism: European Cooperation. Country Reports*. Institute for Strategic Dialogue. London, UK.
[19] Jupskås, A.R. (2012) "Norway," in Ramalingam, V., Glennie, A., S. Feve (eds.) *Preventing and Countering Far-Right Extremism: European Cooperation. Country Reports*. Institute for Strategic Dialogue. London, UK.

Netherlands.[20] The relatively weak threat from far-right extremism in some countries, particularly relative to other forms of extremism, is often attributed to their inability to form a coherent social movement, a lack of public support, and the effects of law enforcement or legal restrictions.

However, other countries have recorded higher numbers of far-right extremist supporters in recent years. In France, a 2005 report of the *Renseignements Généraux* (the former intelligence service of the French police) estimated that there were between 2,500 and 3,500 far-right activists in France, divided into five sub-families: skinheads (1,000 to 1,500), identity movements (700 to 800), ultra-nationalists (120 to 320), neo-Nazis (170) and politically-motivated soccer hooligans (figure not given).[21] In Germany, the Federal German Intelligence (*Verfassungsschutz*) estimated the number of far-right extremists to be 25,000, including 5,600 neo-Nazis.[22]

RACIST VIOLENCE AND HATE CRIME

Racist violence has been on the rise in several countries, such as Denmark, where the available statistics show a significant increase in criminal acts inspired by extremist ideologies throughout 2009 and 2010 (306 and 334 acts respectively) compared to 2008 (175 acts).[23] Racism against minorities remains the largest number of those incidents that could be specified. A Dutch sociologist, Ineke van der Valk, documented 117 attacks on Dutch mosques from 2005 to 2010. However, other experts estimate this number is much higher, suggesting that there may be five attacks on mosques each month in the Netherlands.[24]

States differ in the data they record and publish on bias motivations, which results in gaps in data collection, and means that official data collection mechanisms on hate crime across Europe may fail to capture the real situation on the ground. The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights has classified official data collection mechanisms pertaining to hate crime, and placed them into three categories, based on scope and transparency: limited data; good data; and comprehensive data (see Table 1).

However, it remains difficult to link racially-motivated crime to organised movements. The EU-Midis European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey (2012) uses data from in-depth interviews with 23,500 ethnic minorities and immigrants, providing an alternative and comprehensive evidence base on victimisation of minorities. Interestingly,

[20] Witte, R. (2012) "The Netherlands," in Ramalingam, V., Glennie, A., S. Feve (eds.) *Preventing and Countering Far-Right Extremism: European Cooperation. Country Reports*. Institute for Strategic Dialogue. London, UK.

[21] Camus, J. (2009) "Country Report France." In Bertelsmann Stiftung (ed.) *Strategies for Combating Right-Wing Extremism in Europe*. Gütersloh, Germany.

[22] For more information, see: http://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/jahresbericht-2010-verfassungsschutz-warnt-vor-getarnten-neonazis-a-771647.html

[23] Meret, S. (2012) "The Netherlands," in Ramalingam, V., Glennie, A., S. Feve (eds.) *Preventing and Countering Far-Right Extremism: European Cooperation. Country Reports*. Institute for Strategic Dialogue. London, UK.

[24] Kundnani, A. (2012) *Blind Spot? Security Narratives and Far-Right Violence in Europe*. ICCT Research Paper, June 2012.

though many respondents noted that racist or religiously offensive language was used in assaults or threats, the victims identified the perpetrators as someone they knew or recognised, rather than members of far-right extremist gangs.

According to this survey, the ten most targeted groups for crime with a perceived 'racist motive' are: Roma in the Czech Republic; Somalis in Finland; Somalis in Denmark; Africans in Malta; Roma in Greece; Roma in Poland; Sub-Saharan Africans in Ireland, North Africans in Italy, Roma in Hungary; and Roma in the Slovak Republic.

In many countries, anti-Muslim violence in particular has been on the rise. One report places an estimate of between 100 and 200 hate crimes per year against mosques, Islamic institutions and Muslim organisations in the UK since 9/11 as 'not unreasonable and probably highly conservative'.[25]

[25] Lambert. R and J. Githens-Mazer. (2010) Islamophobia and Anti-Muslim Hate Crime: UK Case Studies 2010. European Muslim Research Centre, University of Exeter, UK.

Table 1: Classification of official data collection mechanisms pertaining to hate crime, by EU member state

Limited data	Good data	Comprehensive data
Few incidents and a narrow range of bias motivations are recorded *Data are not usually published*	*A range of bias motivations are recorded* *Data are generally published*	*A range of bias motivations, types of crimes and characteristics of incidents are recorded* *Data are always published*
Bulgaria Cyprus Estonia Greece Hungary Ireland Italy Latvia Luxembourg Malta Portugal Slovenia Spain Romania*	Austria Belgium Czech Republic Denmark France Germany Lithuania Poland Slovakia	Finland Netherlands Sweden United Kingdom

Notes: *No evidence on hate crime data collection was found for Romania
Information as of September 2012.

Source: European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2012). *Making hate crime visible in the European Union: acknowledging victims' rights*. Vienna, Austria.

Recent trends

We are seeing a number of new trends emerge across Europe in respect to far-right extremist groups and movements. This section gives a brief overview of these.

USE OF THE INTERNET AND SOCIAL MEDIA

The Internet serves different functions for far-right extremist groups, which frequently communicate and operate through social media, semi-public and password-protected forums. Spaces such as '*Stormfront*', founded by a former Ku Klux Klan leader in the 1990s, or the password-protected forum www.legion88.com, have served as means of communication, recruitment, mobilisation and propaganda over the last decade. In more recent years, the far right's use of social media has expanded. The extreme right capitalises on relationship-building mechanisms online, and the emergence of new social media and other such tools has become far more important than static websites, particularly to build a sense of comradeship as well as ownership over the movement.

There are several trends which can be noted regarding extreme right-wing use of the Internet, including that extreme right websites have become more sophisticated, and are often hosted outside their target jurisdictions to avoid legal sanctions. Rather than mirroring established media news outlets to gain credibility, extreme right websites heavily target youth, reflecting a young lifestyle and employing recognisable styles, slogans, and symbols.

In Scandinavia in particular, the Internet is where the far right has flourished in recent years. Norway has been an important base for the spreading of far-right propaganda online, including for example by the anti-Islam blogger "Fjordman", who has become a globally respected voice in far-right extremist milieus.[26]

PROFESSIONALISATION AND MERCHANDISING

Increased use of the Internet has been accompanied by a significant professionalisation of these movements in terms of communications strategies, branding and merchandising. The websites they operate are becoming increasingly slick, which is helping them to gain credibility and appeal to wider audiences, and generate new and major sources of funding.

It has also been critical for the flourishing of White Power merchandising, with neo-Nazi paraphernalia and far-right Internet shops on the rise. This is not a new trend, as profits from White Power music, concerts and related merchandise enabled parties like the National Front in Britain to pursue traditional political activities in the 1970s.[27] However, the advent of

[26] Jupskås, A.R. (2012) "Norway," in Ramalingam, V., Glennie, A., S. Feve (eds.) *Preventing and Countering Far-Right Extremism: European Cooperation. Country Reports*. Institute for Strategic Dialogue. London, UK.

[27] Corte, U and B. Edwards. (2008) "White Power music and the mobilization of racist social movements," Music & Arts in Action, 1:1, June 2008.

the Internet has vastly expanded the market niche and profitability of White Power music, and has made it an important source of international income for extreme right movements. In 2011, Swedish authorities reported that the White Power Music movement is strong and active on a number of levels, and often ties extreme right groups together across national borders.[28] This was exemplified by a recent international meeting called 'White Christmas', organised by Portuguese far-right movements on the outskirts of Lisbon in December 2011, in an attempt to gain strength via the international far-right music scene.[29]

NEW FORMS OF MOBILISATION

Recent years have seen new forms of both online and offline mobilisation by these movements. The EDL provides the best example of the growing trend of grass-roots street protest movements, defined not by rigid membership structures but by a fluid 'march and grow' strategy. The EDL emerged in Luton in the spring of 2009 from a series of loosely defined movements. It operates outside of the political system, deploying mass mobilisation, or the threat of mobilisation, as its major means of influence. Ranging from lower-level violence to professedly 'peaceful' marches and protests, these activities serve to polarise communities and generate fear and tension, often resulting in 'copy-cat' threats or violence, even from counter-movements. The EDL has furthermore spawned a number of attempted spin-off movements across Europe, namely in Scandinavia, including the Danish Defence League, the Swedish Defence League, and the Finnish Defence League, most of whom have been unable to galvanise the support of more than a handful of supporters on various demonstrations.

Another perhaps more menacing example is 'the Immortals' neo-Nazi group in Germany, which has no central leadership, and organises exclusively through Twitter and other social media to stage unregistered rallies, wearing black clothing and white face masks. It uses YouTube to disseminate footage of the gatherings, and the movement and its methods have been transported to countries like Sweden.

TRANSNATIONAL NETWORKS

Groups like the aforementioned EDL are starting to present themselves as part of a growing transnational movement, building on the success of counter-Jihad equivalents initiated in the United States and attempting to capitalise on the anti-Islam 'hook'. For example, the EDL crossed national borders in attempts to initiate a pan-European anti-Islam movement in May 2012, taking to the streets with Danish and other counterparts in Aarhus, Denmark. In August 2012, there was another attempt by the EDL to launch a Worldwide Counter-Jihad Alliance in Stockholm, which brought together prominent Islamophobic figures like Pamela Gellar and Robert Spencer from the United

[28] Europol. (2012) *TE-SAT 2012 EU Terrorism Situation and Trend Report*. European Police Office
[29] Europol. (2012) *TE-SAT 2012 EU Terrorism Situation and Trend Report*. European Police Office

States, as well as the leader of Stop the Islamization of Europe, Anders Gravers. According to a report, 190 groups have been identified globally as promoting anti-Islam agendas, and they are increasingly forging alliances and strengthening their capacities.[30] A strategy of international mobilisation allows them to present themselves as part of a more respectable and increasingly mainstreamed school of ideology and action.

European states thus need a better understanding of the evolving nature of far-right extremism, and require flexible responses to adequately address this phenomenon.

Preventing and Countering Far-Right Extremism

This paper sets out four types of responses that have typically been deployed in tackling far-right extremism. These have been applied in different ways, and prioritised differently across Europe.

UPSTREAM PREVENTATIVE MEASURES

European states have implemented a range of upstream measures to prevent radicalisation and extremism by reducing vulnerability among specific groups and increasing community resilience. These measures often have long-term aims of promoting a democratic culture, tolerance, and improved opportunities and life chances. Preventative measures taken by states include the development of school curricula on racism, anti-Semitism and Islamophobia; intercultural and inter-religious learning; and citizenship, identity, democracy and tolerance education.

The target groups for upstream preventative work range from at-risk young people through to core occupational groups coming into contact with potential far-right extremists. Specific measures taken include the development of courses and trainings for elected officials, police officers, lawyers, prison and probation officers, and for future school teachers.

Training programmes to inform these relevant stakeholders about far-right extremism—and sensitise them to it—have been implemented to varying degrees across Europe, but in order to have a longer-term effect they may need to be implemented systematically and regularly. For example, increasing the number of police officers with an immigrant background can be a valuable way of building a resilient police force.

Projects within this category also target wider communities, aiming to build a strong civil society. This includes grassroots integration and inclusion initiatives, and measures to enhance educational attainment and opportunities, provide stronger role models, promote democratic consciousness and political participation, and mobilise communities against the far right, racism, and racist violence.

REACTIVE MEASURES AND RESPONSE MECHANISMS

[30] Lowles, N. (2012) The 'Counter-Jihad' movement: The global trend feeding anti-Muslim hatred. Hope not Hate, UK.

Existing activity by far-right extremist groups and individuals requires a series of response mechanisms. These include actions taken by local authorities to police marches. Enlisting community volunteers has been particularly helpful in the UK, where during EDL marches the local council in Luton deployed 100 volunteers to serve as community mediators, helping to disseminate information, pick up on and respond to community concerns in real time, and quash rumours before they could spread. Some countries have implemented diversionary activities for young people on days when far-right marches and demonstrations are scheduled, as well as alternative platforms for dialogue and discussion on related issues.

In the case of violent or threatening behaviour from the far right, key response measures include the systematic recording of hate crimes and the provision of support for victims, including compensation and rehabilitation. Such provisions can help to strengthen victims, demonstrate the gravity of the act, and raise awareness about the problem of far-right extremism. Making cases more visible to the public, and ensuring that far-right behaviour is seen as a pertinent public safety threat, can help communities contribute to solving the problem. Reactive measures furthermore include implementing more severe penalties and ensuring that there is more systematic punishment for hate crimes.

REPRESSION

Some countries have taken a more repressive approach to the far right, aiming to prohibit these movements or parties from organising and disseminating their propaganda. Such measures include the banning of publications, pictures or any material with racist or xenophobic content, both offline and online. It also includes prohibiting public incitement to violence or hatred, and materials that condone genocide and crimes against humanity or promote Holocaust denial. Some countries have removed state support for far-right organisations, or implemented legislation that allows the state to deny access to or ban one from working in the civil service if affiliated with far-right militants.

Banning organisations outright, banning any public activity organised by particular groups, or criminalising the reconstruction of a prohibited party, has also been tried by some European countries. In France, local or state authorities can ban any public activity organised by a group on the ground that it is a 'threat to public order', a measure which has been taken against events such as skinhead concerts.

This approach has seen varied outcomes across Europe. In Germany, repression has not led to a reduction of far-right extremism. Rather, there has been a stronger European and international alignment of the extreme right, including

relocation of some activities abroad.[31] Repressive measures also tend to be circumvented by far-right groups, through changing organisation names, or forming new organisations entirely. This is particularly relevant in the online sphere, where far-right groups tend to move to foreign-based hosts when legal action against them is threatened in any particular country. In France, a lengthy court case led to Yahoo agreeing to take technical steps in 2006 so that the sale of Nazi paraphernalia through its auction pages would be impossible from France. However, the impact of this ruling was negligible, as far-right groups simply migrated to foreign servers to merchandise.

More encouragingly, banning EDL marches in certain boroughs in the UK has seen many positive outcomes. Local authorities and the Metropolitan Police have lobbied for Home Secretary Theresa May to ban EDL marches on numerous occasions in various parts of London. Most recently, a ban in October 2012 prevented all marches in Waltham Forest, Islington, Tower Hamlets and Newham for 30 days. These bans have saved local authority resources in terms of policing costs, while also sparing local communities the anxiety, fear and conflict caused by EDL marches.

[31] Schellenberg, B. (2009) "Country Report Germany." In Bertelsmann Stiftung (ed.) *Strategies for Combating Right-Wing Extremism in Europe*. Gütersloh, Germany.

INTERVENTION

Intervention is a key way of approaching this threat, although it is often left out of national strategies and action plans against violent far-right extremism. Intervention includes de-radicalisation programmes that generally aim to re-integrate individuals that have become radicalised back into society, or at least to dissuade them from violence. These programmes also aim to reverse the radicalisation process for those partly or already radicalised, and may be distinguished from disengagement activities, which aim to help individuals leave violent movements. De-radicalisation seeks to change views, while disengagement aims to alter behaviour. This work is often carried out by front-line workers, including former far-right extremists. In some countries, like Sweden, this work is actively supported and promoted by the government.

Intervention measures include social and economic assistance for individuals so they have a means of supporting themselves in the absence of their former radicalised network or group, as well as social and economic support for the individual's 'receiving group' (their family and social network). It may involve psychological support and counselling, mentoring and role modelling, and religious or ideological counselling.

Intervention also includes attempts to engage directly with potential offenders to deter them from carrying out particular actions. For example, this method has been tested in

Germany by Soko Rex, which communicated directly with potential offenders before far-right events to highlight to them the consequences of additional criminal offences. Engagement and communication directly with movements has been tested by some civil society organisations, namely Exit Germany, which develops creative ways to interact with German far-right groups so that individuals in these movements are given the support they need to leave.

Institute for Strategic Dialogue
48 Charles Street, London W1J 5EN
T: +44 (0)20 7493 9333
info@strategicdialogue.org

INSTITUTE *for* STRATEGIC DIALOGUE