



WHITE PAPER

on Radicalisation into Extremism and Terrorism

VORTEX Doctoral Network Practical Recommendations

INTRODUCTION

Radicalisation into extremism and terrorism continues to be a threat to open democratic societies, and “a real and present danger”¹ for the European Union. As a process, radicalisation occurs on both cognitive and behavioural levels in a complex dynamic; it is reinforced by offline and online support communities, and it tends to impact individuals and groups with pronounced psychological need for significance². Radicalisation is also an interactive process. There are plenty of co-escalation dynamics with other radicalised groups, as well as with those who aim to intervene in radicalisation processes. For instance, right-wing extremists have frequently exploited fears of perceived Islamisation and alleged loss of national identity. Islamists, likewise, have exploited fear among European Muslims of corrupting European societies³. Moreover, radicalisation processes within Europe are also intimately affected by external processes, such as the activities of the American alt-right, Russia, and Islamist groups like ISIS. Lastly, radicalisation tends to grow in socially disadvantaged areas and areas of limited statehood.

Equally pertinent is the political, legal, and social response to these developments. Policies against terrorism have seen the adoption of sometimes draconian anti-terror laws undermining human rights (particularly but not only outside Europe) and giving extraordinary surveillance rights to intelligence agencies. At the same time, countering terrorism also generated a plurality of innovative prevention measures by civil society organisations, state entities or both. There is a fine line between effective countermeasures and the infringement of human rights and rule of law. These various and interlinked processes threaten to undermine normative milestone achievements, arrangements, and agreements of the EU, the international community, and global society. Understanding and explaining them is thus an important task, which requires multidisciplinary research and collaboration between basic research and practice.

¹ European Commission. 2020. A Counter-Terrorism Agenda for the EU: Anticipate, Prevent, Protect, Respond (COM 795 final)

² Kruglanski, A.W., Bélanger, J. J. & Gunaratna, R. (2019). Three Pillars of Radicalisation, Needs, Narratives, and Networks. Oxford U.P., p. 42

³ Europol. (2021). European Union Terrorist Situation and Trend Report, p. 37.



Over the years, a range of research centres, governmental agencies, academic journals, and departments devoted to the research on terrorism and radicalisation have been established. In particular, since 9/11, radicalisation has received increasing attention. Regrettably, in research, as well as in public debate, radicalisation has still most commonly been presumed to be a unidirectional process, leading individuals, after being ideologically convinced, to endorse and employ violence. Moreover, research on radicalisation is currently trapped between securitisation approaches, and socio-cultural, cognitive, and contextual explanations.

Thus, radicalisation is seen as either 1) a security challenge caused by individuals or risk groups (with the aim to find short-term solutions primarily in the form of symptomatic treatment, or punitive action); or 2) a process conditioned by deeper social, economic, and cultural structures that are far more complex to address, since they relate to the long-term impacts of failed integration and lack of social cohesion. Moreover, until recently, the lion's share of policies and studies – and certainly public discourse – has focused on Islamist terror attacks and much research has employed the concept of radicalisation primarily to explain the habits and actions of predominantly young male second or third generation Muslims in Europe⁴. This came at the expense of other secular and religious extremisms, of which radicalisation into right-wing extremism poses probably the greatest threat to democracies.

Considering this scenario, the present White Paper provides stakeholders with refined, policy-relevant, and evidence-based insights and assists in the design of appropriate countermeasures programmes. Our aim is to bridge the persistent gap between academic research on radicalisation and the practical, operational needs of those responsible for preventing and countering violent extremism. Drawing on the multidisciplinary expertise of the VORTEX doctoral network, this paper translates current research findings - spanning the cognitive, social and contextual dimensions of radicalisation discussed above - into concrete, actionable guidance. Rather than treating P/CVE as a single, undifferentiated field, we recognise that different actors face different constraints, mandates and time horizons, and that recommendations are only useful insofar as they are tailored accordingly.

This paper therefore does not attempt to offer a single unified theory of radicalisation or a one-size-fits-all policy solution; instead, it distills insights from the doctoral candidates' research into a set of precise, implementable recommendations addressed to the specific actors best placed to enact them.

⁴ Schmid, A.P. 2013. Radicalisation, De-Radicalisation, Counter-Radicalisation: A Conceptual Discussion and Literature Review, ICCT Research Paper, p. 4



To accomplish that, this document is organised into four blocks, separated by target-audience:

- 1) EU institutions (the European Commission and Parliament),
- 2) national governments,
- 3) civil society and practitioners, and
- 4) researchers and the broader scientific community.

Each block is further divided into three types of recommendations, differentiated by their implementation horizon - immediate, mid-term and long-term - allowing readers to distinguish between measures that can be adopted with existing resources and mandates, and those that require longer-term structural, legislative or institutional change. Taken together these blocks and tiers are intended to give each audience a clear, navigable entry point into the paper's findings, without requiring engagement with the full body of underlying research.

However, it is worth noting that the four blocks, though presented separately, are interdependent. Recommendations addressed to one audience often presuppose action by another. Readers of this White Paper are encouraged to begin with the block more closely addressed to them, but the recommendations are best understood as an interlocking set, and several of them will not work in isolation.



BLOCK 1

TO THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION AND PARLIAMENT

In this block, we discuss recommendations targeted at EU institutions (the European Commission and Parliament).

1.1 Immediate Implementation

- A. The absence of shared concepts, categories and comparable data on types of violent extremism, including radicalisation and terrorism, is one of the most sustained concerns at European institutional level. Terms such as ‘radicalisation’ are often ill- or undefined, causing confusion in the problem definition⁵, which has had damaging effects on specific communities⁶ (especially Muslim communities).

Recommendation: Create a Horizon Europe (Pillar 2) call funding a pan-European project on harmonising these concepts and categories, around types of violent extremism beyond the often-used tripartite framework of far-right, far-left, and radical Islamism, as well as the phenomena of radicalisation and terrorism.

- B. Much of the data on radicalisation is gathered by the police and intelligence services. These institutions keep them as secret files which are often hard for academics to access.

Recommendation: Create special ‘research passes’ or authorisations that allow easier access for researchers to sensitive or private data. This would allow for better quality research and faster output generation, ensuring that research is up-to-date and can keep up with sociopolitical changes.

1.2 Mid-term Implementation

- A. EU institutions should strengthen existing gender-sensitive P/CVE guidance by including indicators for identifying when everyday gender discourse becomes part of extremist community-building. These indicators should help clarify when narratives about family, masculinity, femininity, modesty, motherhood, fatherhood or moral order become connected to broader extremist claims about threat, decline, enemies, hierarchy, exclusion and belonging. This would complement existing

⁵ Sedgwick, M. (2010). The Concept of Radicalization as a Source of Confusion. *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 22(4), 479–494. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2010.491009>

⁶ Kundnani, A. (2012). Radicalisation: the journey of a concept. *Race & Class*, 54(2), 3-25. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0306396812454984>



approaches to radicalisation prevention by addressing narratives that may not be illegal or overtly violent in isolation, but can still contribute to the cohesion and appeal of extremist online environments. Safeguards should be included to avoid treating conservative, traditional or religious gender views as extremist in themselves.

Recommendation: Strengthen EU prevention guidance on gender roles and family narratives in extremist environments.

- B. Far-right groups are increasingly using martial arts for recruitment, and masculinist health influencers are playing a prominent role in ideological mainstreaming and promoting alternative worldviews. There thus exists a potential for P/CVE measures that utilise strategic communications with young boys and men through health and fitness, focusing on nurturing positive character and skills development.

Recommendation: Support EU-funded programs and initiatives utilising combat sports and physical culture as a potential tool for P/CVE.

- C. In many countries, P/CVE structures have been funded and created following specific events or attacks. Yet, often, when the threat becomes less present, these structures get dismantled or replaced by new structures with a completely different approach.

Recommendation: Favour long-term funding and institutionalisation of structures (which also limits class and gender inequalities) and condition this funding on regular evaluations of the P/CVE structure - both by actors in and outside of it.

- D. Extremism, radicalisation and our knowledge of them evolve continuously, and practitioners must keep pace - currently, above all, in digital and gaming spaces. The binding constraint, however, is rarely naming these needs but rather being able to act on them: scarce information on new online phenomena, technical equipment that often cannot be applied for and funding logics that penalise failure and so discourage experimentation. Meeting these needs depends on enabling conditions beyond the individual organisation.

Recommendation: Given the transnational character of online spaces, funders and policymakers at EU and international level should provide for the necessary technical equipment, foster a funding culture that permits experimentation and treats a documented "this did not work" as valuable knowledge rather than grounds for withdrawing support, and build low-threshold knowledge resources and cross-border coordination rather than leaving these to nationally-scoped efforts⁷.

⁷ Schlegel, L., & Jaskowski, J. (2025, January 29). Scouting uneven terrain: Challenges for prevention and counter-extremism practitioners in digital gaming spaces. GNET. <https://gnet-research.org/2025/01/29/scouting-uneven-terrain-challenges-for-prevention-and-counter-extremism-practitioners-in-digital-gaming-spaces/>



- E. Most threat assessments tend to fix a radical group's ideological profile at the moment of designation, and that profile persists in policy documents long after the organisation has changed. Designations of Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham, for example, stood for years and were then withdrawn by the United States and the United Nations within months of each other in 2025. Reversals at that speed indicate the underlying assessments were not being revalidated on any regular basis.

Recommendation: Review a group's ideology regularly rather than judging it once, since groups keep evolving.

1.3 Long-term Implementation

- A. Evidence-informed prevention depends on practitioners and researchers being able to access the field's accumulated knowledge base. However, we are currently experiencing a shutdown of knowledge access (e.g. RAN CIP and publications and the EC Research Library on Radicalisation). These sources are now archived which reduces transparency and restricts the open circulation of knowledge on which evidence-informed prevention depends.

Recommendation: Restore open public access to the EU Knowledge Hub knowledge base, reopening its repository of practices, publications and research resources for unrestricted use by practitioners and researchers.

- B. Threat and risk assessment, together with secondary prevention directed at people who already show signs of a harmful trajectory, falls awkwardly between two professional fields. Law enforcement holds the mandate and the tools for accessing threats but operates within a security realm. Social work and civil society hold crucial prevention mandates and skills where security can work counter-efficiently. At European level there is currently no standing body that brings these competences together on equal terms.

Recommendation: Establish a standing European Task Force on Risk Management and Secondary Prevention composed of 50% social work and 50% enforcement, so that threat assessment expertise and social work expertise are structurally balanced, rather than one being subordinated to the other.

- C. Assessment of armed groups is weighted toward doctrine and violence, treating ideology as an important source of a group's standing with the population it controls. Where such groups hold territory, authority comes substantially from administration: courts, services, taxation and the predictability these produce relative to the alternatives. Assessments that read legitimacy only from doctrinal output misjudge both a group's durability and the leverage external actors hold.

Recommendation: Take into account that armed groups can build legitimacy by governing and providing services, not only through ideology.



BLOCK 2

TO NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS

In this block, we discuss recommendations targeted at national governments.

2.1 Immediate Implementation

- A. Effective prevention requires not only identifying emerging trends, but systematically assessing whether interventions work. Yet, in most countries, evaluation remains ad hoc, project-based and weakly connected to strategic decision-making. Short-term funding cycles compound this problem; lessons from effective interventions are routinely lost when project cycles end, leaving programmes unable to learn and adapt over time.

Recommendation: Embed research and evaluation as strategic functions. National governments should treat evaluation as a continuous and integral component of P/CVE - systematically linked to decision-making and funded independently of individual programme cycles. Longer funding cycles, dedicated resources for practice-oriented evaluation and structured feedback loops between policy, research and practice are preconditions for a learning-capable prevention system.

- B. Far-right extremist groups frequently make use of gyms, sports clubs and other spaces related to physical culture for recruiting.

Recommendation: Training programmes directed at professionals of the physical exercise field should be implemented, so that they are made aware of iconography, symbols and other indicators of the presence of far-right extremist recruiters.

- C. While political structures vary from a country to another, it is often assumed that law making is the prerogative of politicians, who ‘know’ what is best for the nation. Similarly, when these politicians call on academics for advice, they often rely on a small body of individuals that have been in place for many years but are not necessarily the most specialised on the specific topic.

Recommendation: Increase the diversity of voices before law making, bringing in more researchers, especially early-career researchers.



2.2 Mid-term Implementation

- A. Gendered narratives support radicalising worldviews. Narratives about masculinity, femininity, family roles and gender relations can be used to define identities, reinforce perceptions of threat and belonging, strengthen group boundaries and legitimise particular social or political orders. These dynamics should be taken into account when analysing both the content and appeal of radicalising narratives. The key concern is when such narratives become linked to exclusion, out-group hostility, rigid hierarchy or broader extremist interpretations of society.

Recommendation: Train frontline practitioners, including educators, youth workers, social workers, community practitioners and local prevention teams, to recognise how gendered narratives can provide structure, identity, recognition and belonging. Training should go beyond identifying explicit misogyny or anti-feminist rhetoric and help practitioners understand how gendered narratives can become part of a radicalising worldview. It should avoid pathologising conservative, traditional or religious communities and focus instead on the connection between gendered narratives, out-group hostility, rigid hierarchy and exclusionary community-building.

- B. Since radicalisation takes place inside processes of communication, accessible educational programs need to be developed to help citizens understand such issues.

Recommendation: Provide compulsory training in media literacy and critical theory. Critical theory is a philosophical perspective centered on analyzing systemic power relations in society, arguing that knowledge, truth, and social structures are fundamentally shaped by power dynamics between dominant and oppressed groups. Thus, in the same way that we already have fire-safety in the workplace, compulsory training in media literacy and critical theory need to be provided for workers of all levels and fields. This includes integrating critical media literacy into school curricula, workplace training and lifelong learning initiatives.

- C. Over the past decades, most European countries have developed national strategies to respond to violent extremism, enabling a wide range of actors - from law enforcement to civil society organisations - to engage in prevention. These strategies have been repeatedly adapted to address emerging challenges. In recent years, for example, particular attention has been paid to youth radicalisation. While this focus reflects genuine concerns, it has produced an imbalance in the target groups of prevention efforts. When prevention efforts are geared towards youth only, they fall short when it comes to conspiracy-driven milieus such as QAnon, *Querdenken*, or the Reich Citizens, whose adherents are predominantly adults ranging from their thirties to their fifties⁸.

⁸ Holnburger, J., Goedeke Tort, M., & Lamberty, P. (2022). Q vadis? Zur Verbreitung von QAnon im deutschsprachigen Raum. CeMAS; Nachtwey, O., Frei, N., & Schäfer, R.. Politische Soziologie der Corona-Proteste. SocArXiv; For. Psych. Psych. Krim. 15, 255–273.



Recommendation: Strengthen holistic and evidence-informed prevention frameworks. In other words, national governments should base their strategic decisions on regular threat assessments and on existing knowledge derived from research and practice. In this way, new developments can be taken into account without restricting the focus so narrowly that other developments are overlooked. Systematically identifying emerging developments and persistent gaps, and translating these into evidence-informed responses developed in close cooperation with researchers and practitioners, should be the task of national knowledge hubs. As several European countries have already demonstrated, these represent a valuable pooling of diverse expertise. A designated representative of the hub at the EUKH could serve as a link to EU debates and promote the exchange of knowledge across Europe.

- D. While whole-of-society approaches have gained in popularity, putting them into practice and facilitating cooperation among multiple actors often remain challenges. On the one hand, some local actors, such as schools, employment services or health authorities, regularly encounter individuals at risk yet lack procedural guidance or resources on how to act. The result is uncertainty, inconsistent practice and preventable inaction. On the other hand, similar uncertainty arises from legal ambiguities about information sharing with other authorities.

Recommendation 1: Clarify roles and increase know-how. National governments should provide clearer guidance on roles and possible courses of action for everyone involved in a ‘whole-of-society’ P/CVE approach in ways that preserve their autonomy and community trust. This requires investment in training, resources and context-sensitive guidance that enables appropriate responses.

Recommendation 2: Review legal frameworks for cross-sector cooperation. Governments should review and clarify legal frameworks - particularly those governing confidentiality and information sharing - through a participatory process. The goal is to reduce legal uncertainty and enable responsible cooperation across sectors without compromising the trust relationships on which effective prevention depends.

- E. Radical group statements are commonly read as self-contained expressions of belief. In practice they are produced in a competitive field: they answer rival factions, respond to external clerical critics and are timed to negotiations or offensives. Read alone, a shift in language looks like ideological evolution; read against what rivals published the same month, it often turns out to be positioning.

Recommendation: Read a group’s messaging alongside its rivals and current events, not on its own. For each significant statement, monitoring should record what rivals and clerical critics were saying at the time, and what had just happened on the ground. A position taken under pressure and dropped when the pressure lifts is positioning; one held at cost to the group's own base is revision.



2.3 Long-term Implementation

- A. Recent years have seen increased efforts to promote anti-racist messaging in sports, such as the ‘show racism the red card’ campaign in football. Similar measures are needed in combat sports, which are often used by far-right groups to recruit members and spread propaganda.

Recommendation: Combat sports and fitness initiatives should be promoted to encourage more culturally diverse and inclusive visions of nationalism or anti-racist messaging.

- B. Technology has always impacted broader society. This is particularly the case with the rapid development of AI which beyond its technical possibilities, raises broader questions around what is desirable for society.

Recommendation: Create deep links with large AI companies to co-create rules and decide on a societal and political level how to deal with this new technology.

- C. Data in radicalisation studies and radicalisation prevention is scattered and unreliable.

Recommendation: Develop national and public demographic data institutes, as well as comparative apps for data, policy reports and media information, to enable people to easily compare sources of information.

- D. Disengagement from extremist groups and activities may be sudden, but deradicalisation and reorientation of worldviews and behaviour usually take more time. The outcomes of the process may, for different individuals (or groups), represent various degrees of change. Some abandon their old views and behaviours completely - managing to reintegrate into mainstream society and embracing democratic values. For others, it is a partial change: moderating their militant views and methods. It may be challenging to assess whether the change is deep and genuine or superficial and tactical.

Recommendation: Judge disengagement from patterns over time, not from a single rebrand or softened statement.



BLOCK 3

TO CIVIL SOCIETY / PRACTITIONERS

In this block, we discuss recommendations targeted at civil society and practitioners.

3.1 Immediate Implementation

- A. Radical groups seeking international acceptance invest heavily in an outward-facing register: press offices, foreign-language spokespeople and public guarantees to minorities. This frequently coexists with a separate internal register, in the local language and directed at the group's own base, in which earlier commitments are restated. Practitioners who see only the outward-facing material have no criteria for deciding whether a claim of moderation is genuine.

Recommendation: Give practitioners a short set of criteria for testing claims of moderation, comparing what a group says to foreign audiences with what it says to its own base in the same period.

- B. Narratives about gender may give simple explanations for personal and social problems, including loneliness, failed relationships, family conflict, loss of status or anxiety about social change. There is thus a need to address the grievances and needs that these narratives claim to solve. Practitioners should respond not only to what gendered narratives attack, but also to what they appear to offer.

Recommendation: Create safe spaces where people can discuss masculinity, femininity, relationships, family, dignity and social change without being drawn into rigid us vs. them narratives. This can include peer discussion spaces, mentoring and family support work

- C. The use of statistics or academic work in public discussions, be it political debates or journalistic articles, is widespread. Yet, these sources are often presented as all equivalent and trustworthy, leaving it unclear where the data is coming from and who produced and funded it.

Recommendation: Make it compulsory to disclose in political/journalistic debate where your data comes from but also who funded it.



- D. Networks for exchanging innovative ideas, insights from research and practice, and challenges exist in different forms across countries. Some contexts rely on scattered and informal networks, while others have more established structures for cooperation and knowledge exchange. More formalised national knowledge hubs have the potential to enhance the visibility and legitimacy of prevention work and strengthen links between practitioners and researchers.

Recommendation: Strengthen the prevention field by actively participating in and contributing insights to networks that connect practice with research.

3.2 Mid-term Implementation

- A. The monitoring of transnational extremist content in Europe relies heavily on machine translation, treated as adequate because it renders a text's propositional content. What it does not render is register, genre and specialised doctrinal vocabulary, which is precisely where position-taking occurs. Organisations can therefore monitor a corpus for years without being able to detect that anything has changed.

Recommendation: Support training in the original language of the groups being monitored, where key signals are easily missed.

- B. The role of masculinity in radicalisation has received increased attention in academia, but this is yet to translate into the practitioner space.

Recommendation: Provide more training and promote awareness on the role of masculinity in radicalisation.

- C. With the growth of diverse journalistic sources, online disinformation or political oriented readings, it is not always easy for the public to get a clear view of a particular event. Moreover, cross-referencing sources and fact-checking require skills and time that many populations do not possess.

Recommendation: Develop apps for comparing political information.

- D. As both the phenomena of extremism and radicalisation and our knowledge about them continue to evolve, practitioners are under pressure to adapt flexibly to such changes. Currently, there is a particular need to develop programs for digital spaces and for older people⁹.

Recommendation: Encourage continuous internal reflection processes and evaluation to facilitate the identification and documentation of emerging needs - such as prevention measures in digital spaces and for older people - and, where capacity allows, help clarify what works, for whom and under which conditions.

⁹ Zeiger, S., & Gyte, J. (2020). *Prevention of radicalization on social media and the internet*. International Centre for Counter-Terrorism (ICCT).



- E. Judgements about whether a radical group has moderated rest mainly on the material it produces for outside audiences: interviews with foreign media, guarantees to minorities and assurances about pluralism. That material can be revised without anything changing in what the group tells its own base. Who it treats as an enemy and who it is willing to work with is harder to revise, because the group's own supporters have been mobilised around those categories.

Recommendation: Train practitioners to assess change from how a group defines its enemies and permitted allies, rather than from its outward-facing statements.

3.3 Long-term Implementation

- A. Attention to armed groups is oriented toward external threats: attacks abroad, foreign recruitment and transnational networks. Once a group holds territory, it is relevant to see how it treats the population it claims to represent; how it justifies coercing civilians, detaining critics,, and suppressing rivals. Those justifications are made to people the group depends on, which is why they are harder to abandon than anything it says to outside audiences.

Recommendation: Focus monitoring on how groups justify violence against their own people and how they justify holding power.

- B. Hyper-partisanship has reduced complex political issues into a strict us vs. them binary, effectively eliminating room for nuance or moderate voices. This oversimplified framing fuels societal division and prevents communities from addressing multifaceted challenges with equally dynamic solutions.

Recommendation: Encourage more diversified understandings of political positions.

- C. Beyond the content of prevention programmes, prevention work can involve open-educative, targeted and regulatory measures. Regardless of initial intentions, practices can shift over the course of implementation or experience external pressure, contributing to different and, often counterproductive, effects.

Recommendation: Supervision and local multi-agency workshops (e.g., ‘Walk a Mile - A practice-rooted guide to P/CVE collaboration & casework’) should support practitioners to explore their prevention role, professional capacities and the personal and contextual factors that shape use of prevention measures in everyday practice.

- D. Some far-right groups and movements have realised that traditional extremist language may be stigmatising and offputting to large parts of the public. They therefore dress up their messages and views in more acceptable language: speaking about ‘ethnicity’ instead of ‘race’, and ‘remigration’ rather than ‘mass deportations’.

Recommendation: Assess whether a group's core beliefs have actually changed, not just its name or rhetoric.



BLOCK 4

TO RESEARCHERS

In this block, we discuss recommendations targeted at academic professionals, researchers, scholars, and scientists.

4.1 Immediate Implementation

- A. Research on armed Islamist groups tends to focus on either conduct or statements, rather than both. Both are important sources, however, and they uncover different aspects: what a group does shows what it will bear the cost of and what its leadership argues shows how it reasons about that conduct.

Recommendation: Read what leaders say and what the group does together, since each is evidence about something the other does not show.

- B. Research is usually presented through academic articles which are not necessarily easy to access nor comprehend for non-academic readers. Official reports often confine their output to one very lengthy explanation at the end of the project, making it both delayed and time-consuming to get the results.

Recommendation: Conceive of research projects in tripartite timelines levels of output. After one month of the project, researchers present a literature review; after six months or a year, their first results; and after three to five years, their final results. Each report should take three forms: a condensed single page for higher administrations, a three-page version for professionals with more time and a full twenty-page version for those who have the capacity to go in-depth.

4.2 Mid-term Implementation

- A. Findings on prevention and on armed group behaviour are often generated from single cases, and the particularities of a case can be absorbed into a claim about the phenomenon more readily than intended. Without comparison it is difficult to establish which mechanisms are portable and which depend on state capacity, wartime conditions or external patrons. The result is a field with many well-documented cases and a thinner basis for cumulative knowledge.

Recommendation: Test whether findings from one case hold in others through comparative research. Comparative methodologies should be used to study preventive practices and measures implemented in different contexts. Similarities and differences should be used to test hypotheses, build theory and evaluate effectiveness of practices. Contextual factors may affect outcomes.



- B. Researchers should examine when ordinary gender-related content becomes part of extremist narratives by focusing on concrete links between gender discourse and claims about threat, hierarchy, exclusion or dehumanisation. Future work could map recurring narratives about family breakdown, male authority, female virtue, modesty, motherhood, fatherhood, sexuality and moral decline across platforms, languages and ideological milieus. It could also examine how users interpret these narratives, including whether they experience them as guidance, belonging, grievance validation or justification for exclusion. A stronger evidence base would help avoid both underestimating gendered pathways into extremist environments and over-securitising conservative, traditional or religious gender views.

Recommendation: Build evidence on how gender discourse becomes linked to extremist threat narratives.

- C. A number of individuals who present positive role models also exist online and have gained recent traction. Focusing on these figures and engaging in research related to public perceptions of particular online content creators could prove beneficial for developing actionable insights that could inform civil society actors.

Recommendation: Research should be conducted on the reception of positive role-model masculinity influencers.

- D. Being an academic is conceptualised as one job. Yet, in reality, it encompasses very different prerogatives such as researching, teaching, managing and translating one's work to a bigger crowd. For the latter, academics are not always well-trained, meaning that the outreach of their work mostly depends on personal dispositions and preferences rather than scientific interest.

Recommendation: Appoint 'research to practice' fellows who are trained in translating academic research into policy-recommendations (see e.g. CREST) **for each research centre.** These individuals would be responsible for communicating the recent findings of the centre to the political and practitioner spheres as well as to the media.

4.3 Long-term Implementation

- A. Doctrinal change among armed groups happens incrementally, and is visible only across an extended series of texts. Standard research project cycles of two to three years capture a group at a moment rather than a trajectory. The questions with the longest policy horizon are the ones the funding structure is least able to support.

Recommendation: Support long-term research on how these groups justify violence and governance, on horizons that track change across a group's lifespan rather than a project cycle.



CONCLUSION

The recommendations gathered here were developed independently, by researchers working on different movements, in different disciplines and with different empirical material. They are addressed to four audiences whose mandates, resources, and time horizons have little in common. With that in mind, it is striking how far they converge. Across the four blocks, the same set of concerns recur, and this convergence is what we would like to emphasise: the obstacles to evidence-based P/CVE in Europe are as much structural as they are conceptual. The following overarching recommendations run across all blocks:

- 1. Treat assessments as revisable judgements rather than settled facts.**

Whether the object of assessment is a designated armed group, a domestic movement or an individual leaving an extremist milieu, we see the same error recurring: a judgement formed at one moment is recorded, and then persists in policy documents, designations and case files long after what it described as changed. The recommendations proposed here are consistent across audiences. We suggest that EU institutions revalidate ideological profiles on a regular basis rather than just at the point of designation; that national governments read a group's messaging against what its rivals are saying and what has taken place on the ground; that practitioners compare what a group says to foreign audiences with what it says to its own base, and to consider how it defines its enemies and permitted allies rather than its outward-facing assurances; and that researchers read statements and conduct together, since each is evidence about something the other does not show. In every case the principle is the same: change can only be established from patterns over time, rather than from a rebrand, softened statement or shift in vocabulary.

- 2. Build the shared knowledge base that the P/CVE field still lacks.**

Core concepts and categories are not harmonised across EU member states and much of the relevant data sits in police and intelligence files that researchers cannot access. Some of the repositories that once contained vital practice knowledge have been archived. National data on radicalisation is scattered and of uneven reliability, and comparative work establishing which findings travel between contexts remains rare. We therefore suggest that each block contribute to a common knowledge infrastructure rather than to its own holdings: we need conceptual harmonisation, workable research access and restored open publication at the EU level; national knowledge hubs and public data institutes with a route into European debate; active practitioner participation in the networks that connect research and practice; and research designs that test findings across cases instead of accumulating well-documented single ones.



3. Fund and organise for continuity.

P/CVE structures are often built after attacks and dismantled when public and political attention shifts elsewhere. Evaluation is often commissioned project-by-project, so that what a programme learned can disappear when its funding cycle ends. Doctrinal change in radical groups unfolds over horizons far longer than a standard grant. We, therefore, suggest that long-term funding conditioned on regular evaluation is needed; evaluation should be resourced independently of individual programme cycles, continuous internal reporting should take the place of terminal reporting and research horizons should follow radical groups across their lifespans. Furthermore, a funding culture that penalises failure discourages exactly the experimentation that fast-moving digital environments demand. A documented account of what has not worked is a (relevant) finding, and should be treated as such.

4. Assign the tasks of knowledge-transfer and translation between research, policy and practice to professionals who will prioritise it.

Across the four blocks, we see that the gap between what is known and what is done will not be closed by goodwill alone, and that it requires dedicated roles and structures. We suggest that research centres appoint and train research-to-practice fellows, and that researchers deliver findings in stages during a project and at several lengths, rather than in a single report - like this one - at its end. We also suggest that national governments widen the range of academic voices consulted before legislation, including early-career researchers working on narrow and current questions. At EU level, a standing body that puts social work and law enforcement expertise on equal terms would give risk management and secondary prevention the institutional home they currently lack. And whole-of-society approaches will function only where roles, and the legal frameworks governing information-sharing between sectors, have been clarified for everyone involved.

5. Widen the analytical frame without widening the security net.

In every block, we suggest that the field's categories be extended: beyond the familiar tripartite division of far right, far left and radical Islamism; beyond young men, when the empirical age profile of milieus such as QAnon, *Querdenken* and the Reich Citizens is markedly older; beyond doctrine, to the administrative authority that armed groups derive from governing; and beyond single cases. Gendered narratives about family, masculinity, femininity and moral order appear in all four blocks as an under-examined pathway into extremist community-building. These recommendations also carry a shared safeguard, however, Conservative, traditional or religious views on gender, family and morality are not extremist in themselves, and P/CVE work that treats them as such risks forfeiting the community trust on which it depends. Extending analytical attention and extending the reach of security measures are not synonymous.