

Researching on radicalisation and violent extremism in times of COVID-19

Friday, 27th November 2020

In times when uncertainty is the norm and social distance is more a rule for survival than for etiquette, inter-disciplinary, cross-regional and collaborative research projects are more at a stake than ever. Adaptation to such complex times is an essential measure to mitigate the risk of setting a research isolated from the scholar, practitioner and policy-maker circles not directly involved in CONNEKT. Therefore, what was initially conceived as an Academic Seminar to discuss CONNEKT's theoretical and conceptual framework has evolved into a unique opportunity to share with external actors, experts, community-led practitioners and policy-makers our main concerns regarding the gaps in researching radicalisation and violent extremism.

Parallel sessions will provide a space for discussion within the frame of each level of analysis (macro, meso and micro). Each group will discuss seven pre-determined drivers of radicalisation and violent extremism in MENA and Balkans and include the impact of COVID-19. Is the pandemics a new emerging driver or does it intensify or interact with other socio-economic, religious or technological drivers? Furthermore, how can empirical research be impacted by COVID-19 circumstances and how to adapt methodologies to the new setting? The guided discussion will serve to prepare the ground for the next research stages.

Finally, a joint session involving particularly policy-makers and other institutional representatives that constitute potential targets of CONNEKT's research results will discuss expectations, needs and applications of CONNEKT's research engaging them into providing a particular EU perspective.



AGENDA

9.30h - 9.45h

OPENING SESSION

Josep Ferré, CONNEKT's Project Coordinator; Director General, European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed)

Corinne Torrekens, Professor of Political Science, ULB

9.45h - 11.00h

PARALLEL SESSIONS

S1 - Macro research on radicalisation and violent extremism drivers

Coordinator

Damir Kapidzic, University of Sarajevo (WP4 leader)

In the group of macro-level determinants, CONNEKT will analyse those factors that can initiate or advance the process of radicalisation which follow a top-down relationship, such as the effect of religious views and institutions, digitalisation, socio-economic deprivation and youth unemployment, territorial inequalities, transnational dynamics, socio-political demands against the prevailing principles, lack of educational and leisure opportunities, etc. Due to the economic and societal anxiety resulting from the pandemic the relevance of these drivers is expected to raise importantly.

Participants

Hilary Pilkington, Project Coordinator, H2020 DARE

Selma Zekovic, National Chief of P/CVERLT, OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina

Valery Perry, Senior Associate, Democratization Policy Council (DPC)

Youssef Tobi, International Relations Specialist, Policy Center for the New South, Morocco

S2 - Meso research on radicalisation and violent extremism drivers

Coordinator

Tasnim Chirchi, Director, Jasmine Foundation for Research and Communication

The analysis at the meso level deepens into secondary socialisation mechanisms which relate to the wider social milieu which can be supportive in the radicalisation process. In this environment the individual finds support for her or his ideas and a relationship is formed with this new reference group. Communities are argued to be able to play a unique role in tackling the grievances that may give rise to radicalisation. This level of analysis will both explore relations at a social group level and potentialities of prevention at a community level.

Participants

Luca Gervasoni, Codirector of NOVACT and member of the Observatory to Prevent Extremist Violence (OPEV)



Moussa Bourekba, Researcher, CIDOB; Adjunct Professor in International Relations at Ramon Llull University (URL)

Karin Göldner-Ebenthal, Project Manager of H2020 PAVE

Asya Metodieva, Researcher, Institute of International Relations, Prague

S3 - Micro research on radicalisation and violent extremism drivers

Coordinator

Khalid Mouna, Moulay Ismail University (WP6 leader)

Individual identity-related factors cannot be underestimated in the understanding of radicalisation processes. The existing literature has identified relevant variables in person's psychology and personality that might be inherent to the individual or the result of specific events. Measures such as lockdowns, social distancing, and mobility restrictions, have resulted in increasing the isolation of populations, who might be more exposed than ever to threatening massive fluxes of information. Apart from the obvious psychological impact of COVID-19, we should recall that the word radical encompasses the idea of a willingness to return to "roots". In that sense, the rejection of the dominant societal model, including the mutation of representations of the world and of oneself, can be harsher in this time of uncertainty.

Participants

Driss Yazami, Former Director, National Human Rights Council, Morocco

Nacer Djabi, Professor of Sociology, University of Algiers II

Najet Araari, Sociologist and activist in civil society

Morten Bøås, Research Professor, Norwegian Institute of International Affairs; Principal Investigator H2020 PREVEX

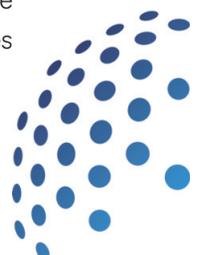
Tanja Dramac Jiries, Senior Program Officer for Europe, National Endowment for Democracy (NED)

S4 - Approaching prevention from a local perspective

Coordinators

Lurdes Vidal and **Jordi Moreras**, CONNEKT Scientific Coordinators

Prevention cannot be solely understood as the addition of initiatives to avoid a series of dynamics that destabilise the social order. It should also be conceived as a perspective from which to review those aspects that favour social polarisation, which is the justifying basis for the processes of radicalisation and violent extremism. The main setting for the development of prevention initiatives is the local one, since social life is articulated in the community context, and it is where these interventions materialise, involving institutions and social groups. Exchanges on best practices and practical experiences will be essential to build prevention on solid grounds.



Participants

Sissel Haugdal Jore, Associate Professor University of Stavanger

Jesper Holme Hansen, Department for Children and Youth, Municipality of Aarhus;
Ministry of Education, Denmark

José Antonio García-Calvillo, Technical Advisor, L'Hospitalet del Llobregat city council

Rasha Nagem, Project Manager H2020 PRACTICIES

Dilwar Hussain, Research Consultant, Centre for Trust, Peace and Social Relations,
University of Coventry

11.00h - 11.15h

Coffee-break

11.15h - 12.30h

POLICY ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

How can CONNEKT serve EU's challenges concerning P/CVE?

Coordinator

Corinne Torrekens, Université Libre de Bruxelles (WP3 leader)

The transnational nature of radical movements and violent extremist groups cannot be addressed from a uniquely European or even less a Western European approach. The dynamics of migrations, diasporas, and constant flux of people in the move poses a challenge on understanding new relational modes and fluxes that security and countering radicalisation practitioners have to address. How can research be useful to respond to the needs and concerns of policy-makers at an EU level?

Participants

Pascal Odul, Programme Manager, Regional Programmes Neighbourhood South, DG
NEAR, European Commission

Thomas Renard, Senior Research Fellow, Egmont Institute

Michaël Privot, Director, European Network Against Racism (ENAR)

Sergio Bianchi, General Manager, International Agenfor

