

A closer look at the Counter-radicalisation landscape

As part of the EU funded CHAMPIONS project, a survey of over 30 collaborative networks addressing radicalisation was conducted. The results enable a clearer understanding of the work and focus of these networks.

Inter-Institutional cooperation is seen as vital in the fight against radicalisation and extremism. A similar approach is taken by the, EU funded, CHAMPIONS project, which aims to establish permanent offline working groups made up from First line practitioners from different disciplines to jointly develop effective detection and response solutions to counter polarisation, build resilience and protect vulnerable groups in their local communities.

To further this goal, the CHAMPIONS project has mapped and analysed over 30 collaborative networks dedicated to the struggle against radicalisation and extremism. Its findings enable us to gain a deeper understanding of the work and focus of these diverse networks.

Focus of the networks

The analysis first focused on types of radicalism addressed by the existing networks. The analysis revealed several clusters of networks, which had focused their work on a specific or related subfield of the phenomena. Nevertheless, networks dealing with all forms of radicalism still dominated the landscape, but differentiated different phenomenon internally. The second biggest cluster, were networks dedicated to address right-wing extremism as well as networks focused on Jihadism and violent Salafism. The topics of Racism and Homophobia received the least amount of attention by the surveyed networks.

Activities

These topics were mainly addressed by prevention work. Indeed, 55% of the networks place their sole topical focus on prevention. This appears to have come at the cost of de-radicalisation centred networks, as networks solely focused on deradicalization only made up 6%. To achieve their diverse goals, the networks dominantly relied on training and capacity building activities, related to the shared prevention focus. However, likely linked to the lack of attention paid to de-radicalisation, only 6% of the networks focused on social work, with for instance persons having travelled to Syria.

Geographic Focus

These activities were mainly conducted on a regional and national level. As such, only 19% of the networks focused their activities on a local dimension, while the international arena was almost entirely neglected. This lack of international focus, may also be due to the way these networks are organised. As such, 77% are offline networks, while only 19% relied on a hybrid version of online and offline activity. Networks organised exclusively online were almost entirely absent.



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Hence, the CHAMPIONS study shows that cooperation mainly occurs offline, hindering the reach of these networks. The result is a neglect of the international level, as regional and national networks dominate the landscape. Further, the study highlighted a focus on prevention work at the expense of de-radicalisation approaches. As such, training and capacity building activities are the main mechanism to achieve this. The result is a lack of social work, which may be caused by the lack of cooperation on a local level.

