



Remarks by Commissioners Navracsics and Avramopoulos at the press conference on the prevention of radicalisation leading to violent extremism

Brussels, 14 June 2016

Commissioner Navracsics

Good afternoon,

The recent terrorist attacks in Europe have made painfully clear that our shared values and our very way of life are under attack. Under attack from young people who have been raised in our societies and taught in our schools.

There are clearly failures here that we have to address. This needs to happen above all at the local level. But violent radicalisation is a challenge many Member States share, and it therefore pays off to work together. Today, Commissioner Dimitris Avramopoulos and I are pleased to present to you how we want to support Member States in doing this.

Violent radicalisation is a complex phenomenon. That is why the response needs to be multi-faceted. We need to ensure that we stop people, especially young people, from developing violent and extremist attitudes in the first place. This means promoting freedom, democracy, human dignity and respect. And it means reaching out to all young people, enabling them to find jobs and their place in society. A critical mind and a compass of values are strong assets to guide them through life.

The Communication that the Commission has just adopted on preventing violent extremism includes actions in a range of policy areas: from boosting research to help us better understand radicalisation, to tackling it on the internet and in prisons, to how we can strengthen cooperation with third countries facing similar challenges.

Education, whether inside or outside the classroom, is at the heart of this. It is not the only solution. But there is no solution without education. Teachers and youth workers are vital in transmitting our shared values and building relationships that help young people become engaged citizens. We will therefore for example set up a network to enable visits from local role models – entrepreneurs, sportspeople, as well as formerly radicalised people – to schools, youth centres or sports clubs.

We also want to support those working in prisons so they have the knowledge and skills to deal with radicalisation. This will mean helping them share ideas and success stories. We will also bolster efforts to reintegrate detainees by increasing support to education and training programmes in prisons, as well as to reintegration schemes.

Like us, many of our global partners are confronted with violent radicalisation and the task of building cohesive societies. We will work with them more closely and strengthen initiatives designed to identify drivers of extremism and promote community dialogue, for example, through the EU's development policy. We will also step up support to civil society under the European Neighbourhood Policy.

Direct contacts between people are crucial in developing mutual respect and intercultural understanding. eTwinning, the world's biggest teachers' network, enables its 300,000 members across the EU to run joint projects and link pupils from different countries and backgrounds. We will extend eTwinning further to selected Neighbourhood countries to expand this dialogue.

We will also set up Erasmus+ Virtual Exchanges between young people from inside and outside the EU. Our aim is to bring 200,000 of them together through these structured online discussions by 2020.

Erasmus+ is only one of the EU funding programmes we are already using to support anti-radicalisation efforts by targeting support at projects promoting our shared values and inclusion. We are also going to mobilise Horizon2020, for example, to support research into violent radicalisation that will allow us to develop further tools to tackle this phenomenon.

Together with all my fellow Commissioners involved, I stand ready to support Member States and our partners outside the EU – through coordination, financial support and targeted action at EU level. We have no more time to lose. Thank you.

Commissioner Avramopoulos

Thank you Tibor,

The most recent and horrendous attacks in Orlando, but also in France last night, remind us that terrorism is global, and yet extremely local, as the majority of the perpetrators are our own citizens.

Born and raised on our territories, educated in our schools, now radicalised and turning against their own fellow citizens, turning against our values, giving in to propaganda of hate, inspired by an ideology of destruction.

The fact that these Europeans were radicalised to violent extremism, on our soil, says something about the social fabric of our societies, and the need to strengthen its resilience.

As Tibor already explained, such efforts start primarily at the local level, involving teachers as much as youth counsellors and police officers.

Our response to fighting radicalisation and recruitment to terrorism needs to be holistic. And the EU level can support Member States in these efforts.

We have several operational as well as security tools at hand. While prevention and avoiding that people become radicalised in the first place is our priority, in parallel our core security approach needs to be reinforced, with enhanced information sharing on suspected individuals.

Those returning to Europe from conflict areas are a particular concern and that is why we will propose a review of the Schengen Information System, and why we have proposed systematic checks at the external borders for everyone entering and exiting, whether they are EU or non-EU citizens.

Then there is the internet: our most important battleground to counter radicalisation. That is where our youth is exposed to the poison of terrorist content and recruitment.

The recent attack in Orlando perfectly demonstrates this: the perpetrator was strongly radicalised, on his own, purely by using the internet. This is precisely why we launched the EU Internet Forum in December 2015.

We brought together Ministers, Europol and the CEOs of major internet companies. We agreed on a concrete voluntary partnership to refer content from the Member States to Europol's Internet Referral Unit – and from there to the companies for immediate deletion.

We are now taking this one step further through a Joint Referral Mechanism developed with internet companies, to create a database of deleted terrorist content.

Alongside this mechanism, we are also intensifying work with civil society, to empower them to offer effective counter-narrative campaigns online through the Civil Society Empowerment Programme.

In addition, we will continue our support to the so-called Strategic Communication Advisory Team, to help Member States build their own anti-radicalisation communication campaigns.

Finally, a lot of these elements come together at the local but at the same time European interconnected level through the Radicalisation Awareness Network Centre of Excellence, where expertise of local practitioners is connected to each other.

Through this network of networks, more than 2.400 local practitioners from all over Europe are working together and learning from each other on addressing the root causes of radicalisation.

We committed a budget of €25 million for the next 4 years to help the Radicalisation Awareness Network fulfil its mission. Over €314 million is available for anti-radicalisation projects for the period 2014-2020. Money has been already allocated and projects are ongoing in different Member States.

The activities of the Radicalisation Awareness Network are also expanding outside the Union to priority third-countries in the Middle East, North Africa and the Western Balkans. A first mission took place already in Turkey, with positive feedback for future work.

Ladies and gentlemen, tackling radicalisation is not an easy or straightforward job. Solutions will not come magically from Brussels, but we also don't need to work in silos at local or national level.

That is why we are supporting Member States in all the relevant policy areas, ranging from education, employment, to youth work, the judiciary and penitentiary systems, involving all the relevant stakeholders and government levels.

Resilience against radicalisation will come through a combination of these actions and partners.

From our side, today we make clear that we are here to help and support in every way we can.

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