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From:	Presidency
To:	Delegations
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Subject:	High Level Commission Expert Group on Radicalisation - final report: Follow up and work ahead

Background

Addressing radicalisation is a key element of countering terrorism.

Taking into consideration the threat picture and a Member State request at the Justice and Home Affairs Council in March 2017 for more commitment from the EU on radicalisation by bringing together existing initiatives to obtain a better coordination, and the comprehensive assessment of EU security policies¹, the Commission set up a High-Level Expert Group on Radicalisation (HLCEG-R) in July 2017², mandated to offer advice on:

¹ See the Commission's "Ninth progress report towards an effective and genuine Security Union", which sets out the conclusions the Commission draws from the comprehensive assessment of the Union's action in the area of internal security; 11550/17 (Commission (2017) 407 final).

² Commission Decision of 27 July 2017 on setting up the High-Level Commission Expert Group on radicalisation (C(2017) 5149 final)

- 1) cooperation and collaboration among the different stakeholders, in particular the Member States;
- 2) the further development of EU prevent policies, including by elaborating a set of principles and recommendations for the implementation of targeted and effective measures to prevent and counter radicalisation at both EU and national level, and
- 3) future more structured cooperation mechanisms at Union level.

The HLCEG-R was composed of Member States' competent authorities, relevant agencies, the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the EU Counter-Terrorism Coordinator as well as a number of observers: the Secretariats of the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE) and the Special Committee on Terrorism (TERR) from the European Parliament, the Committee of the Regions, the Economic and Social Committee. The Commission was represented by several Directorates-General, the group being chaired by the Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs ("DG HOME"). In addition, the Radicalisation Awareness Network Centre of Excellence (RAN CoE), funded by the Internal Security Fund, was a member of the group, and the European Strategic Communications Network (ESCN) participated as external expert.

The interim report of the Group was presented during the Justice and Home Affairs Council meeting held on 7 December 2017 where the ministers welcomed the preliminary findings and encouraged the group to continue the further work on the identified priority areas and the coordination mechanism.

After nine months' work the group delivered its final report³ on 18 May 2018 thereby completing its mandate. It was presented to the JHA-Council of 5 June 2018, as well as to the Terrorism Working Party on 11 June 2018. It will be further discussed under the Austrian Presidency.

³ 8951/18

Recommendations of the final report

The report recognises the added value and achievements of existing EU initiatives and networks such as the EU Internet Forum, RAN or the ESCN. It advocates maintaining a bottom-up approach based on exchanges of good practices, networking and empowerment of first line practitioners while enhancing Member States involvement, and calls for a further strengthening of these initiatives while creating closer links between the relevant stakeholders including in particular practitioners, policy makers and researchers. In its Fifteenth Progress Report towards an effective and genuine Security Union⁴, the Commission welcomes the group's report.

The identified priority areas for which the report sets out recommendations for further action, are the following:

- radicalisation in prisons;
- communication and online propaganda;
- ideology and polarisation;
- sharing of knowledge about radicalisation phenomena and radicalisation pathways;
- local and multi-agency approaches;
- education and social inclusion;
- groups which require particular attention (in particular as regards the children returning from conflict zones or raised in a radicalised environment); and
- the external dimension.

⁴ 10206/18 (COM(2018) 470 final)

Additionally, the report contains recommendations on 1) cooperation mechanisms, 2) proposals for implementation, and 3) sets out the next steps, as follows:

The group favours a gradual approach for an enhanced cooperation mechanisms at EU level, which would include a significant strengthening of existing networks, enhanced coordination at EU level of existing networks and initiatives and a steering body.

The group proposes to set up an EU cooperation mechanism/structure composed of:

- a steering board chaired by the Commission with members from the Member States and the EU Counter-Terrorism Coordinator and the European External Action Service as observers, and
- a support and coordination structure within the Commission supported by seconded national experts (SNEs) from the Member States.

The steering board would advise the Commission on strategic priorities for "EU prevent work" and adopt annual strategic orientations for EU prevent work. The support and coordination structure within the Commission shall act as a secretariat to the steering board and as a coordination and knowledge hub, mainly by stimulating increased exchanges and collaboration between the different stakeholders, networks and initiatives, streamlining available resources at EU level, and function as a point of contact for internal and external stakeholders.

Given the multidimensional nature of radicalisation, the EU response should be multi-faceted, crossing many different policy areas.

The group recommends an evaluation of the progress made under the proposed EU cooperation mechanism in the course of 2019, notably against shared objectives and possible benchmarks, and the results of this evaluation should be presented at the Justice and Home Affairs Council in December 2019.

Next steps

As an immediate step to follow up the recommendations of the Expert Group, the Commission will adopt a Decision to set up the steering board.

The Commission will be gradually setting up a coordination and support structure.

Through letters to the Permanent Representations, the Commission has invited the Member States to contribute with cost-free secondments to the support and coordination structure within the Commission.

The Commission will also revive the network of national prevent policy makers before October 2018 to facilitate further exchanges among Member States and to discuss concrete follow-up actions.

It is suggested in the report (Annex, page 24) that "*The Commission could regularly report to the Terrorism Working Party (TWP) and other relevant Council Working Groups and the European Parliament on the annual strategy document and progress report*".

Questions to delegations

Against this background and the fifth policy recommendation in the EU threat assessment in the field of counter-terrorism⁵, delegations are invited to share their views on the following questions:

1. Does the report of the HLCEG-R provide, in your view, a good basis for further EU work in the area of preventing and countering radicalisation?
 2. How do you see the role of the Council working parties [in furthering the implementation of the report]? Are there ways in which the existing Council structures/working parties could support the suggested EU cooperation mechanism and further work on the priority areas?
 3. How do you consider contributing to the thematic priorities and the future coordination mechanism?
 4. On the future evaluation to be conducted next year: Which elements should be taken into account?
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⁵ ST 7879/2/18 REV2 "*Taking into consideration the growing threat from home-grown terrorists, to explore further how to prevent radicalisation and violent extremism, focusing on priority areas identified by the High Level Commission Expert Group on Radicalisation (HLCEG-R), inter alia asylum centres, prisons, educational institutions and structures, worship places, assessing the impact of EU policies and guidelines in this area. Building upon the future recommendations of the final Report of the HLCEG-R, a discussion in the JHA Council could give guidance to translate these recommendations into operational measures and structures which better involve Member States in order to effectively address their needs and priorities. The network of national prevent policy makers could be instrumental in taking forward the implementation of such measures*".