

Government responses to far-right extremism: Learning from 10 European states*

Vidhya Ramalingam¹

**This article is an abridged version of an ISD policy report [‘Old Threat, New Approach: Tackling the Far Right Across Europe’](#)*

Introduction

Europe has been confronted repeatedly with the grim reality of right-wing extremism over the past several years. In October 2013, Ukrainian born terrorist Pavlo Lapshyn was convicted for racially-motivated murder and for plotting a campaign of terror against mosques in the UK. In August 2012, far right terrorist Anders Behring Breivik was convicted for the murder of 77 people in twin terrorist attacks on Norwegian government buildings and on the island of Utøya, the deadliest attack in Western Europe since the 2004 bombings in Madrid.

While such high-profile and high impact events hit the headlines, the bulk of the threat posed by the far right is felt through smaller-scale localised harassment, intimidation and bullying by extremists targeting minority communities. A campaign of harassment and violence against asylum seekers, ethnic and sexual minorities has presented itself in various forms across Europe. In the past five years, Hungary and Sweden were both hit by a string of serial killings of Roma and people of immigrant background.

The problem of far-right extremism has been a persistent one, and exists in every European country to varying degrees. Far right extremist groups have tended to be less well organised than other extremist movements. Where the far right has been better organised, marches and demonstrations have been featured in headlines, from English Defence League

¹ Vidhya Ramalingam is a Project Coordinator at the Institute for Strategic Dialogue

demonstrations to the November 11th march on Polish Independence Day. Community organisations representing victim communities, including Muslims in the UK and LGBT communities in Poland, shared stories of fear and intimidation by far right activists, from smashed office windows to personal threats. The impacts of these demonstrations on communities cannot be ignored.

It is a challenging problem to deal with, not least because it is intertwined with public and political debates on immigration and integration, national identity, and national security. Far right extremists may even be riding on narratives that are actually accepted by large sections of the mainstream population, or ideologies advocated by mainstream politicians. Far-right extremism is often reactionary, playing off current affairs and traumatic events to mobilise supporters around hateful messages. One need not look further than the dramatic rise in online support (from approximately 25,000 supporters to over 100,000 within days) for the English Defence League in the days immediately following the murder of Lee Rigby in Woolwich in London in 2013.² Governments and communities need to be front footed and anticipatory with responses to far-right extremism.

While there has been considerable attention devoted to the growing threat posed by the far right, this has mostly been nationally specific. To date, there has been extensive research on the problem but very little on the response. This article presents initial findings from a two-year research project, carried out by the Institute for Strategic Dialogue and the Swedish Ministry of Justice, which aims to address both these shortcomings by documenting policy responses to the far right in 10 European countries: the UK, Sweden, the Netherlands, Norway, Finland, Denmark, Germany, Poland, Hungary and the Slovak Republic. It involved interviews with over 100 inspirational individuals, from those writing National Action Plans to counter extremism to frontline professionals carrying out one-on-one interventions with far right supporters.

² Ramalingam, Vidhya and Ross Frenett. (2013) 'Woolwich Attack: Should we expect a violent response?' Huffington Post. 25, May 2013.

This article sets out the current state of government responses to far-right extremism, setting out four structures of government policy on this issue: general crime prevention and social policy approach; a securitised approach; a social-integration linked approach; and multi-agent and multi-level approach. Within these structures, there are a number of methods which broadly fall into seven categories: legal and repressive measures; public order management; prevention; deterrence; exit programmes; information and public communications; and training and capacity building. It discusses the importance and limitations of these approaches, and how they are applied to varying degrees across the 10 countries surveyed.

It also highlights the challenges that have hampered the development and implementation of sound responses to the far right across these countries. These include: definitions; poor data; lack of awareness by first-line responders and the general public; the impact of public debates on immigration and national identity on the problem and on our ability to tackle it; lack of cooperation and understanding where responsibility lies; securitisation of the issue; balancing democratic values and regulation; and that responses are out of touch with modern developments. Though this article recognises the challenges facing European governments in dealing with far-right extremism, the far right has been persistent and flexible, and can have a potentially high impact. Governments need to put aside political differences and demonstrate a clear commitment to tackling this issue.

General differences in approaches to far-right extremism

Government responses to the threat from far-right extremism vary across Europe. Events like the 22 July attacks on Oslo and Utøya and the discovery of the National Socialist Underground (NSU) in Germany certainly pushed most European governments to increase monitoring and evaluation of the threat. In some countries, local domestic cases have pushed politicians to devote new attention to this issue. For example, a string of racist attacks in Bialystok in eastern Poland caused the Mayor and Minister of the Interior both to

speak out.³ Some countries, like Norway, have re-assessed but do not deem the threat to be more than low, but persistent.⁴ Countries, such as the UK, see it as important but a lower order magnitude to Islamist violent extremism.

Many states are only recently transitioning from the assumption that far-right extremism is not a serious problem or that it is just a normal male youth issue. Some places remain in denial of the problem. Where local authorities refuse to accept there is a problem, there is often little that national governments can do to persuade them to act. Government officials in Finland and the Netherlands have experienced difficulties in persuading local authorities to take advantage of the support provided nationally, and in Hungary, there is currently no government department or ministry which holds responsibility for the issue of far-right extremism.⁵

The international nature of far right groups has led some countries to work closely with other governments to share data and develop solutions, like the solid cooperation among the Nordic countries, the Slovak and Czech governments, and among the Dutch, Belgian and German police. However, practitioners noted that this international context has also allowed national governments to avoid responsibility by placing the blame on other countries, as has occurred in the past with Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Hungary.⁶

Policy on far-right extremism has to be seen through the context of general policy on extremism and terrorism. National action plans and strategies on countering extremism have been put in place in the Nordic countries and the UK. In 2006, Slovakia developed its first Concept for Combating Extremism, and a second in 2011; this is largely implemented by the police – one of the few countries in Central and Eastern Europe to develop a coordinated framework on these issues.

³ Interview, Poland (October 2013).

⁴ Interview, Norway (April 2013).

⁵ Interviews, Finland (April 2013), Netherlands (June 2013).

⁶ Interviews, Hungary (September 2013), Slovakia (September 2013).

Within national action plans, the emphasis placed on far-right extremism varies. The latest assessment by the Slovak Ministry of Interior confirm that in 2013, crimes labelled as 'extremist crimes' were mostly related to far-right extremism, and thus the Concept for Combating Extremism focuses largely on the far right. The Danish Ministry of Social Affairs, Children and Integration prefers not to distinguish between different forms of extremism in its approach to tackling extremism, but rather to focus holistically on the prevention of anti-democratic and violent extremist groups in general. This is underpinned by the idea that extremisms of different forms are fuelled by the same underlying social issues and root causes, and thus can be addressed by holistic measures.⁷

Some governments make a distinction between responses that are local and national. For example, the Finnish Ministry of Interior's main focus is local, responsible for tackling social problems at the level of the individual and community, while the Finnish Security Intelligence Service (SUPO) leads on national security, where the greatest threat comes from Islamist extremism. The UK's approach on far-right extremism is delivered largely through the Department for Communities and Local Government with the explicit aim of empowering local authorities.

Some countries split responsibilities for different elements of the problem across corresponding government departments and agencies. For example, the Dutch General Intelligence and Security Service's threat assessments incorporate antidemocratic movements, while the Danish Security and Intelligence Service's threat assessment only deals with violent groups and not antidemocratic movements, which is the remit of the Ministry of Social Affairs, Children and Integration. The UK Department for Communities and Local Government deals with far-right extremism as it impacts community relations, while the Home Office is responsible for managing far right terrorism.

⁷ Interviews, Denmark (April 2013)

Taking into account these differences in approaches, there are four broad structures through which far-right extremism is dealt with by the European governments:

General crime prevention and social policy approach

Countries like Denmark have built their extremism work into their general crime prevention structures, with a focus on preventing risk behaviours across different forms of extremism. Its policy is delivered through the Ministry of Social Affairs, Children and Integration, which policy makers noted makes it easier to access and use the social system, social means, social language and social legislation.⁸ In Finland, where the last decade has seen the development of a broad crime prevention policy, the National Action Plan for Preventing Violent Extremism explicitly aims to expand the traditional criminal policy perspective to include extremism.⁹ As in Denmark, Finnish officials noted that this approach is based on the recognition that those vulnerable to right-wing extremist ideologies are often vulnerable to other socially deviant behaviours, like petty criminality and domestic violence.¹⁰

There are challenges associated with seeing extremism as a social policy issue. Danish officials noted that it has taken years to integrate extremism into the existing crime prevention structure, and there has been resistance from social workers who are hesitant to 'diagnose' extremism in the clients they work with. They are also reluctant to elevate extremism when they see it as a small problem in comparison to the wider and deeper social challenges experienced.¹¹ However, the benefits of this approach are that preventative measures are not siloed. Instead, they build on existing frameworks and social structures, engaging with those actors already coming in contact with vulnerable individuals.

⁸ Interviews, Denmark (April 2013)

⁹ Ministry of Interior, Finland. (2012) 'Towards a Cohesive Society: Action Plan to Prevent Violent Extremism.' Helsinki 2012. 33/2012. Available online: http://www.intermin.fi/download/36330_332012.pdf?240e405ca3b4d088.

¹⁰ Interviews, Finland (April 2013)

¹¹ Interviews, Denmark (April 2013)

Securitised approach

In Hungary, far-right extremism and terrorism is managed entirely by the police and the Counter Terrorism Centre (TEK), which was founded in 2010. In Slovakia, until recently, the Slovak Police were responsible for coordinating and implementing the National Concept Framework for Combating Extremism. Following changes in ministry structures in 2012, the Ministry of Interior is now responsible for policy and coordination. However, although this approach has been implemented by the police, the main goal of the framework is the elimination of the root causes of far-right extremism, working in cooperation with the Ministries of the Interior, Defence, Justice, Foreign Affairs, European Matters, Culture, Education, Social Matters and the General Prosecution of the Slovak Republic. The Ministry of Interior is also in the process of setting up a Committee on Prevention and Eradication of Racism, Xenophobia and Anti-Semitism and other forms of intolerance to act as an advisory body engaging with national and local government, NGOs and experts. Slovakia, like several other countries in this study, is in the process of moving from a securitised approach to a more holistic one.¹²

The challenge with a securitised approach is that the issue is seen exclusively through a security lens, and can contribute to a sense of mistrust and suspicion between social services, civil society and security services. This approach often results in under-funding of broader preventative measures that tackle root causes.

Social-integration linked approach

In Germany, local government actors responsible for integration issues, like the Commissioner for Integration and Migration of the city of Berlin, are also responsible for work to tackle far-right extremism. In Denmark, the Ministry of Social Affairs, Children and Integration handles issues related to extremism as well as integration policy. The UK is

¹² Interviews, Slovakia (September 2013)

unique in that tackling far-right extremism has been built into the national integration approach. The 2012 publication 'Creating the Conditions for Integration' by the UK Department for Communities and Local Government includes 'tackling extremism and intolerance' as one of five key factors listed as contributing to integration, with a particular focus on far-right extremists.¹³

One of the key benefits of linking integration strategies with the fight against far-right extremism is that it can widen the concept of integration beyond one for ethnic minority communities to one for a society resilient to extremism and intolerance. In many ways, the prevention of far-right extremism is about ensuring members of the 'majority' community are achieving on integration outcomes. Danish officials have also noted that the title change in 2011 from the 'Ministry of Refugee, Immigration and Integration Affairs' to the 'Ministry of Social Affairs, Children and Integration' has made it easier to explain to the general public that this Ministry does not only target militant Islamism or extremism related to integration of ethnic minorities, as some had previously assumed, but all forms of extremism as a social problem.¹⁴

Multi-agent and multi-level approach

Countries like Germany have adopted a multi-agent and multi-level approach. The Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution is broadly responsible for legal and repressive measures, while the Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth is responsible for funding preventative measures and the Federal Agency for Civic Education carries out a range of measures to strengthen democracy and resilience against extremism.

¹³ Department for Communities and Local Government. (2012) 'Creating the conditions for integration.' February 2012. Available online: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/7504/2092103.pdf.

¹⁴ Interviews, Denmark (April 2013)

There are good reasons for this disaggregation of control and responsibilities, including the complex relationship between the federal and länder levels, and the size and scale of the problem of far-right extremism in Germany's many states. But this approach is hampered by the significant challenges of coordination and information sharing across ministries and regions. Germany has recently come under scrutiny for oversights and lack of data sharing and communications in the build up to the NSU discovery and trial.¹⁵

Main areas of policy

Within these various government structures, there has been a range of policy approaches that have been taken across Europe.

Legal and repressive measures

Legal frameworks form the bedrock to any government approach to far-right extremism. Many experts attribute the minimal presence of far-right extremist groups in places like Norway and the Netherlands to the legal barriers they face, often accompanied by strong social norms denouncing involvement.¹⁶ Some countries like the UK have been historically strong on anti-discrimination measures and are much newer to targeted legal frameworks on extremism. Others, like Germany, have strong legal frameworks on extremism, but are historically weak on anti-discrimination.¹⁷ In many countries, there has been a history of what some have termed 'legal fetishism'; a tendency to manage the problem exclusively

¹⁵ Interviews, Germany (April 2013)

¹⁶ See country reports on the Netherlands and Norway in *Preventing and Countering Far Right Extremism: European Cooperation, Country Reports*. Institute for Strategic Dialogue and Swedish Ministry of Justice, London, UK.

¹⁷ Schellenberg, B. (2009) "Country Report Germany." In Bertelsmann Stiftung (ed.) *Strategies for Combating Right-Wing Extremism in Europe*. Gütersloh, Germany.

through frequent adjustments to the penal code.¹⁸ In countries like Finland and Slovakia, there has been a conscious shift away from this approach.

The law can also be used to impose mechanisms of control that help to minimise social, economic and logistical disruption. Repressing far-right activities or demonstrations has often been made easier by provisions granting legal powers to police. For example, in the UK according to Public Order Act of 1986 police can impose limitations on the route of a march or the location or duration of a rally in order to prevent riots or other serious public disorder, damage to property, or serious disruption to the life of the community.¹⁹

Legal provisions to ban far right groups and associations exist in different forms across Europe. Article 13 of the Polish Constitution prohibits organisations whose programmes are based on Nazism or fascism, and whose activities sanction racial or national hatred. However, this provision has rarely been used in practice, even in relation to the most extreme groups, with only one organisation having been banned in 2009.²⁰ In Germany, a multitude of associations and labels have been banned on the basis of extensive legislation against right-wing extremism, though there are great legal hurdles to outlaw political parties.²¹

There are limits to the power of repressive measures, and some research suggests that repression on far right structures in Germany led to groups becoming increasingly autonomous, organised around the concepts of 'comradships' and 'coalitions for action,' much looser associations than might be restricted under the law. It has been argued that this

¹⁸ Interviews, Hungary (September 2013), Slovakia (September 2013).

¹⁹ Public Order Act 1986 is available online: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1986/64>. For more information on this Act in practice, also see Manchester City Council, Report to Communities Scrutiny Committee, 11 December 2013.

http://www.manchester.gov.uk/download/meetings/id/16106/6_demonstrations_and_policy_communities_scrutiny_report.

²⁰ Interviews, Poland (October 2013). Read Article 13 in The Constitution of the Republic of Poland here: <http://www.sejm.gov.pl/prawo/konst/angielski/konse.htm>.

²¹ Schellenberg, B. (2009) "Country Report Germany." In Bertelsmann Stiftung (ed.) Strategies for Combating Right-Wing Extremism in Europe. Gütersloh, Germany.

has not led to a reduction in the far right scene but has rather promoted stronger European and international alignment, and even relocation of some activities abroad.²² Likewise, in 2006 Slovak authorities banned the party Slovak Togetherness, which contributed to the disappearance of the group for several years, but it resurfaced in 2008 through a Supreme Court overruling with a new look and a new agenda, focused on an anti-Roma platform more so than the anti-Semitic one of the past.²³

A legal framework is also only as good as its enforcement. Practitioners across Europe have noted the challenge of ensuring that police enforce the law and prosecutors follow through. Despite the limitations of using law and repression as a solitary device to combat the far right, the power of existing legal frameworks cannot be understated. Law certainly has the power to shape social norms, and is thus an important first step in shaping a society resilient to far-right extremism. A strong criminal justice framework to tackle far-right extremism and hate crime can raise the confidence of affected communities, and can provide incentives for key actors to take action.

Public order management

Public order disturbances are the most common expressions of far-right extremism across Europe, ranging from lower level harassment and vandalism to high profile demonstrations. These activities can significantly undermine social cohesion and inflame community tensions. Dealing with this issue is often the responsibility of the police, but governments and communities play a key role. Good public order management can minimise the impact of protests on local communities, build trust between the police and community

²² Ibid.

²³ Interviews, Slovakia (September 2013). See also: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung. (2011) 'Right-wing Extremism in Central Europe: An Overview.' Available online: <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/id-moe/08840.pdf>. More information also available in: Danilov, Sergej and Tomas Nociar (ed.) 'Loved and Hated: Commonalities and Differences between the Slovak and Hungarian Far Right. Institute for Intercultural Dialogue. Available online: <http://www.ipmd.sk/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/loved-and-hated1.pdf>.

representatives, and provide an important platform for dialogue between all the different actors working to tackle the far right. A number of inventive methods have been developed:

Prevention

European states have implemented a range of upstream measures to prevent radicalisation and extremism by reducing vulnerability among specific groups and increasing community resilience. These measures often have long-term aims of promoting a democratic culture, tolerance, and improved opportunities and life chances. Preventative measures taken by states include the development of school curricula on racism, anti-Semitism and Islamophobia; intercultural and inter-religious learning; and citizenship, identity, democracy and tolerance education.

The target groups for preventative work often focus on youth and at-risk young people, though in some cases there are strong examples of preventative work carried out with adults. Projects within this category also target wider communities, aiming to build a strong civil society, promote democratic consciousness and political participation, provide spaces for engagement across communities, and mobilise communities against the far right, racism, and racist violence.

An important feature of prevention work is to offer alternative activities and lifestyle choices, empowering individuals to make considered choices about their future. In some countries preventative work is an important, tried-and-tested part of the strategy to tackle the far right. The Danish approach has centred largely on prevention, with three main focal points: a mentoring scheme, the use of role models and promotion of tolerance in schools, and targeting parents and parent support.²⁴ In other countries, prevention has been either limited or non-existent. It is important to note that preventative work may also be hidden in the daily activities of public institutions, and there is a wide variety of ways in which mainstream policy can impact the drivers of far-right extremism.

²⁴ Interviews, Denmark (April 2013).

Deterrence

A necessary feature of intervention work is also attempts to deter individuals from carrying out extremist actions. Deterrence is the implementation of certain measures or programmes that both increase the social and material costs of being in, or associated with an extremist group, while reducing their appeal and excitement. Measures along these lines are best carried out by community members and institutions, and can have a cumulative effect largely on individuals in the periphery of movements rather than the ideological core.²⁵

Deterrence also includes attempts to engage directly with potential offenders to deter them from carrying out particular actions. For example, this method was tested in Germany by the Special Commission on Right-wing Extremism (Soko Rex), which communicated directly with potential offenders before far-right events to highlight to them the consequences of additional criminal offences.²⁶

Exit programmes

Intervention is one of the most important and effective ways to have an impact on existing movements, although it is often left out of national strategies and action plans against violent far-right extremism. Intervention includes de-radicalisation programmes that generally aim to re-integrate individuals that have become radicalised back into society, or at least to dissuade them from violence. These programmes also aim to reverse the radicalisation process for those partly or already radicalised, and may be distinguished from disengagement activities, which aim to help individuals leave violent movements. De-radicalisation seeks to change views, while disengagement aims to alter behaviour.

²⁵ Interviews, Denmark (April 2013), Norway (April 2013)

²⁶ For more information, read the Soko Rex case study in Ramalingam, Vidhya. (2012) Policy Briefing: Countering Far Right Extremism. Institute for Strategic Dialogue. Available online: http://www.strategicdialogue.org/PPN_Working_Paper_-_Countering_Far_Right_Extremism_FINAL.pdf.

This work is often carried out by front-line workers, including former far-right extremists. In some countries, like Sweden, this work is actively supported and promoted by the government. Intervention measures include social and economic assistance for individuals so they have a means of supporting themselves in the absence of their former radicalised network or group, as well as social and economic support for the individual's 'receiving group' (their family and social network).

Engagement and communication directly with movements has been tested by some civil society organisations, namely Exit Germany, which develops creative ways to interact with German far-right groups so that individuals in these movements are aware of and given the support they need to leave. In some places, like Sweden, civil society is leading on intervention programmes, and in others, like Germany, there is a mix of government and civil society organisations carrying out this work. In Norway, preventative police are the main actors engaging in intervention regularly. Finland does not have any established Exit programmes, but the Intelligence Service does interventions, talking to particularly concerning individuals, in cooperation with local police. An NGO programme called Aggredi carries out interventions based on referrals by the police, probation services and prisons. Interestingly, Finland has initiated a pilot programme involving 'internet police officers', who maintain a visible presence in online spaces largely to offer help to young people who might seek it, but also engage in some dialogue with extremists.

Information and Public Communications

Data gathering and public communication are key features of some governments' approaches of managing far-right extremism, however it is far from ubiquitous and often governments are doing one or the other. Ensuring there is quality data to fully understand the problem of far-right extremism is the first step to shaping appropriate responses.

In some countries civil society is doing the bulk of solid monitoring work. In countries like Hungary, official data on right-wing extremist acts has been deemed by experts as 'almost

totally unreliable.²⁷ In the past some German regions have faced criticism for altering statistics on right-wing extremism, for example in 2007 and 2008, Saxony-Anhalt was accused of having changed the statistics criteria for right-wing extremists' criminal acts and not recording offenses.²⁸

Government can play a key role in active monitoring and can fill in the gaps between police, media, and civil society monitoring. In countries like Poland, monitoring far-right extremism and hate crime forms the major bulk of the Ministry of Interior's responsibility on this issue, carrying out independent monitoring of media, press, victims organisation statements, and NGOs. However, they also make good use of the NGO Never Again Association's data collected in the publication 'Brown Book,' following up on the NGO's monitoring and cross-referencing.²⁹

Some countries face more challenges than others in passing data between social services, intelligence, government and civil society. Some analysts in Finland noted that in order to better understanding of the threat, there is a need for stronger legislation to permit sharing of information between social workers or doctors and intelligence. Conversely, in countries where there are restrictions on the public availability of intelligence analyses, also in Finland, the Ministry of Interior has functioned as a mediator to pass information between intelligence and NGOs and organisations that can use it.³⁰

However, data on far-right extremism is only as useful as its public availability, and public awareness of the problem, both by the general public and key influencers, is critical. Public involvement in the monitoring process can also be valuable, surveying the opinion of members of the local community can be vital to understanding the threat of the far right and

²⁷ Kreko, Peter, (2012). 'Hungary' in Preventing and Countering Far Right Extremism: European Cooperation, Country Reports. Institute for Strategic Dialogue, London, UK.

²⁸ Schellenberg, B. (2009) "Country Report Germany." In Bertelsmann Stiftung (ed.) Strategies for Combating Right-Wing Extremism in Europe. Gütersloh, Germany.

²⁹ For Never Again Association publications, see <http://www.nigdywiecej.org/303-78>.

³⁰ Interviews, Finland (April 2013).

the particular fears and grievances of those that are affected.³¹ It can also give a voice to the victim communities who are often 'silenced'. Government and the media can play a vital role in broadcasting these voices to provide an alternative perspective to prevailing narratives.

Effective and powerful media and public communications strategies can provide the public with a deeper understanding of these issues and can empower the public to act on what they see – thereby encouraging citizen engagement to counter the far right. The Finnish Ministry of Interior has paved the way for improvements in this domain by including a comprehensive media strategy as part of its national action plan to counter extremism. An effective communications strategy is perhaps most valuable during and after traumatic incidences.

Training and Capacity Building

Experts across all countries included in this study reported a lack of awareness by relevant actors who might come into contact with vulnerable or radicalised individuals. This is in some cases as simple as knowing the symbols associated with movements, which might appear on clothing, or more complex understanding of the signs of radicalisation. This often means that they lack the capacity to identify individuals and lack a clear understanding of what to do.

Countries like Finland, the Netherlands, and Slovakia, have devised training manuals and lectures to improve police understanding of hate crime and radicalisation (in some cases these have been developed wholly by, or in partnership with NGOs). In some countries, like Poland, civil society organisations have carried out bespoke trainings for police officers. Specific measures taken include the development of courses and trainings for elected

³¹ Some civil society organisations are working to involve the public in active monitoring of the threat, including Open Republic in Poland, which works to raise public awareness of the threat and amplify cases that have not received adequate media attention. Open Republic also advocates for local leaders to act. Apabiz in Germany is creating an online mapping tool so the general public can find information on cases of right-wing extremism in their local areas, and who to contact if they are worried or see something worrying.

officials, police officers, lawyers, prosecutors, prison and probation officers, and for future school teachers. These trainings do exist across Europe, but the question is how to scale up work that tends to be done on an ad-hoc basis. Training programmes to inform these relevant stakeholders about far-right extremism—and sensitise them to it—may need to be implemented systematically and regularly in order to have a longer-term effect they may.

Some areas which require significant training and educational programmes include identifying symbols linked to far-right extremism; methods of engagement with far-right extremists; guidance on the legal framework and innovative ways to implement it; technical courses on using social media and the internet.

Challenges to Implementation

Across Europe, there are numerous good measures and positive approaches worth replication. In some countries, however, individuals within government, civil society, and the police face considerable barriers to carrying out their work and seeing results. Several challenges have hampered the development and implementation of sound responses to far-right extremism. This chapter sets out those which all 10 countries in this study are currently facing.

Definitions

In many countries, there is still no clear definition of far-right extremism. The definition of far-right extremism remains under construction in countries like Slovakia and the Netherlands. It is clear that Anders Behring Breivik's attack in Norway in 2011 had an impact on countries like the Netherlands, which are now making the transition from understanding far-right extremism in a 'classical' sense, to a broader definition which might encompass

some anti-Islam movements.³² The Dutch Ministry of Justice has invited experts and civil society to be a part of internal discussions to reshape its definition of the far right.

The term extremism itself has been controversial in Germany, given the implementation in 2011 of the *extremismusklausel* (Extremism Clause), which requires all federally-funded associations to sign a declaration of allegiance to the German constitution and accept the same definition of extremism as the domestic intelligence agency (*Verfassungsschutz*) – a definition which has been heavily disputed by civil society organisations.³³ In Slovakia the penal code defines hate crime as ‘crime with extremist intent,’ thereby conflating it with extremism. Among Slovak practitioners, there is a strong sense that crimes like defamation of race, nationality or religion, or incitement to hatred by a member of the general public are less likely to be pursued by the police and prosecutors because they don’t see these perpetrators as ‘extremists.’³⁴ There is thus a risk that ‘extremism’ is used too broadly and loses its meaning.

Many countries struggle with ill-defined penal codes on hate crime. Danish law determines hate crime to be one that is ‘motivated by prejudice and hatred based on the victim’s race, ethnicity, faith, sexual orientation or similar.’³⁵ Danish practitioners have contested the meaning of ‘sexual orientation or similar’ as too vague and left open to interpretation.³⁶ Given this vague terminology, Danish hate crime laws do not explicitly cover transgender victims of hate crime, and practitioners also noted difficulties in prosecuting anti-Muslim hate. In some cases, key victim groups are not covered under hate speech and hate crime laws. In Poland, there is no mention of gender or sexual orientation in hate crime laws, despite the fact that LGBT communities are among the most common victims of far right

³² Interviews, Netherlands (June 2013)

³³ Interviews, Germany (April 2013)

³⁴ Interviews, Slovakia (September 2013)

³⁵ Hate crime is defined in the Danish penal code in Article 81, No. 6.

³⁶ Interviews, Denmark (March 2013). It is unclear whether this definition of hate crime covers for example hate crimes against transgender individuals. See Danish Institute for Human Rights report for more information: http://www.equineteurope.org/IMG/pdf/hadforbrydelser_-_abstract.pdf.

harassment and violence.³⁷ Where effective laws do exist, they can help to create a framework within which cases can be more easily identified and data better collected.³⁸

Poor data

The threat posed by the far right is challenging to assess, particularly given that there is often more ‘talk’ than ‘do’ within these movements. There is little known on the relationship between threats and calls for violence in the online space and real-world violence. However, the harassment, intimidation, and violence towards Muslim communities that ensued after Facebook was overridden with hate speech and calls for violence in the aftermath of the murder of Lee Rigby in Woolwich, UK,³⁹ among other similar waves of violence, indicate that there are reasons to be wary.

In nearly every country there is a considerable data gap between intelligence, government, academics and civil society. This is due in part to privacy laws, but also largely due to lack of trust between these actors. Academics have also been slower to translate their research into digestible formats for policy makers and practitioners to find useful.⁴⁰

Public debates on immigration and national identity impact on the problem and on our ability to tackle it

The issue of far-right extremism is embedded in and impacted by a wider public discourse on immigration, integration, diversity and national identity. One of the major challenges to tackling the problem is how public attitudes impact the ability of state to take the problem seriously. In countries where the general public harbours xenophobic attitudes, political incentives are not always there to challenge these sentiments. Practitioners across Europe

³⁷ Interviews, Poland (October 2013)

³⁸ For guidelines, see OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR). (2009) Hate Crime Laws: A practical guide. Warsaw, Poland. Available online: <http://www.osce.org/odihr/36426?download=true>.

³⁹ Tell MAMA reported a spike in reported hate crime and hate speech against Muslims in the days following the Woolwich incident. For more details, see: <http://tellmamauk.org/woolwich-murder-200-islamophobic-incidents-since-lee-rigbys-killing/>.

⁴⁰ Interviews, Poland (October 2013), Denmark (April 2013), Finland (April 2013)

noted that the political debate on immigration and national identity often undermines the work they do. One Danish informant referred to these variables as the ‘three Ps: politicians, the public and the press,’ which can change the course of the wind at any moment.⁴¹

Attitudes within the police were identified as particularly problematic, with some concerted efforts in Poland, Sweden, and the UK to better understand police attitudes and promote acceptance of difference within forces as well as improve relations between the police and minority communities. Concerns about prosecutors with far right biases were reported by practitioners in countries like Poland, where controversy recently arose over a prosecutor ruling that graffiti depicting a Swastika on an immigrant family home was a Hindu symbol of peace, rather than an act of hate.⁴²

Policies themselves can also have an impact on the issue. Officials in Denmark noted that ‘multiculturalism’ and specific measures for ethnic minorities can feed into far-right extremist narratives of preferential treatment. Across Western Europe, the attention devoted by politicians to Islamist extremism, and the public discourse on this issue, has been used by far right anti-Islam groups as justification for their ideologies. Furthermore, in countries like Hungary, where there has been a lack of integration and community development measures for groups like the Roma, it becomes more difficult for projects seeking to bust myths or build tolerance (as Roma remain overrepresented in crime and unemployment statistics).⁴³ Incidences when ethnic minorities are involved in crime or terrorism (e.g. Islamist extremists, or perpetrators of what has been termed ‘gypsy crime’ in Hungary and Slovakia) can trigger responses from far right. The far right is adept at communicating on current affairs, which means that media reporting and government communications on these issues matter.

⁴¹ Interview, Denmark (April 2013)

⁴² Interviews, Poland (October 2013)

⁴³ Ringold, Dena, Mitchell A. Ornstein, Erika Wilkens. (2005) Roma in and Expanding Europe: Breaking the Poverty Cycle. *The World Bank*.

Lack of awareness by first-line responders and the general public

Many European countries struggle with a general lack of awareness of signs and symptoms of extremism among front-line workers. At the European level, a number of toolkits and resources designed to facilitate learning on the symptoms of extremism have been published in the past few years, like those developed by the EU-funded project Community Policing and the Prevention of Radicalisation (CoPPRa).⁴⁴ However, there was little awareness among interviewees of these resources.⁴⁵ There is good reason to believe that such tools may need to be nationally-specific to be of use, and governments like Slovakia have developed nation-wide training manuals for police.

Beyond police, there is also a lack of awareness among key influencers. These are individuals who come into daily contact with vulnerable individuals, including teachers, social workers, mental health practitioners, and others. In some countries, government officials expressed more ease working with police than with social workers, who may be hesitant to label their clients as extremists or terrorists.⁴⁶

Practitioners and officials in Finland and Poland reported that limited awareness among the general public of far-right extremism was a concern.⁴⁷ Yet others in Germany highlighted the potential dangers of raising more awareness of far-right extremism than on broader underlying issues of racism and discrimination.⁴⁸ The general public can also be a powerful force in prevention and intervention efforts, and low public awareness has hindered communities from self-regulating far-right extremism where possible.

⁴⁴ Resources from CoPPRa are available here:

<https://www.counterextremism.org/resources/details/id/117/coppra-community-policing-and-the-prevention-of-radicalisation>.

⁴⁵ Interviews, Finland (April 2013), Poland (October 2013), Slovakia (September 2013), Germany (April 2013), United Kingdom (October 2013).

⁴⁶ Interviews, Denmark (April 2013)

⁴⁷ Interviews, Finland (April 2013), Poland (October 2013).

⁴⁸ Interview, Germany (April 2013)

Working together – who does what?

Where municipalities have a high level of autonomy, there have been considerable challenges to push them to recognise the problem and devote resources to tackling far-right extremism. In some countries, officials noted that there are even challenges convincing those tasked with prevention of extremism that it is a legitimate problem. Local government has to be convinced they have something to gain from tackling a problem of far-right extremism in a community. Finnish officials noted that it can be easier for national government to impact through directives to (or work with) the police rather than local authorities.⁴⁹ However, persuading police to take on preventative work with ideological extremists can be a challenge in some contexts. This kind of preventative work is done more systematically in countries with preventative police coordinators, such as Denmark and Norway.

Even when the problem has been acknowledged, questions remain concerning who is responsible, and at which point interventions should be made by each actor. Norwegian practitioners noted that municipalities often mistakenly believe that extremist youth gangs are a responsibility solely of the police rather than local authorities. In some contexts it was noted that social workers, teachers, and other key influencers *are* aware of their responsibility to prevent extremism, but when they encounter individuals already radicalised, they lack a basic understanding of how to proceed and notify police or intelligence rather than engaging with the problem themselves and contacting police as a last resort.⁵⁰

Finally, the responsibilities and will to deal with far-right extremism often rely on one or several 'key individuals,' a contact or link within government or the police who enables cooperation. Practitioners and police noted that when a key individual leaves their role or is away from their post, coordinated efforts tend to fall apart. One Finnish practitioner noted

⁴⁹ Interview, Finland (April 2013)

⁵⁰ Interviews, Denmark (April 2013)

that it is essential that government structures to tackle far-right extremism are not ‘houses of cards, where if you remove one card the entire system collapses.’⁵¹

Securitisation of the issue

Though far-right extremism deserves to be taken seriously as a security concern, the securitisation of the problem has contributed to measures that can hurt rather than help. In countries like Sweden and Finland, where intelligence and police play a significant role in tackling the far right, some noted that communities are hesitant to speak to police, due to a lack of trust. Informants in Denmark and Finland noted that there is often reluctance from social workers, teachers, and other key influencers to share information, for fear that it could undermine their relationships if seen to collude with security services.⁵²

Additional challenges arise when government and security services engage with and get close to groups to get data. Experience from Germany shows that when the security service forms instrumental relationships with individuals in extremist groups, it can risk a situation where it becomes impossible to criminalise individuals due to the nature of these relationships.⁵³

Countries like Finland and Slovakia have made a concerted effort to move away from a securitised approach. There are, however, challenges to moving from a securitised approach to more of a balance between security and a ‘social’ approach. Social workers and municipalities must recognise and accept their own role in the process of intervention, if this transition is going to happen.

⁵¹ Interview, Finland (April 2013)

⁵² Interviews, Denmark (April 2013), Finland (April 2013)

⁵³ For more information on the debates about German Intelligence’s large network of far-right informants, see: <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/german-police-document-says-informants-fuelled-far-right-extremism-a-865461.html>.

Balancing democratic values and regulation

Managing ideological extremism of any nature comes with the inherent challenge of ensuring that democratic rights and freedom of speech are upheld. The struggle over whether or not to ban groups and associations has also been fiercely debated across and within European countries. In some cases, as in Slovakia and Germany, banning groups has appeared initially successful, but these groups have been adept at re-shaping themselves to fit within the boundaries of the penal code. The far right also has a history of using alleged 'state censorship' as a potent argument against European liberal democracy. The online space has seen more concerted efforts in recent years to take down extremist content and institute reporting mechanisms for the public to contribute to take downs. While it is important for governments to enforce the law, there are limitations to this approach due to the speed with which new content is generated by groups and individuals, and the limited capacity of law enforcement agencies and online platforms like Facebook and Twitter.

Some countries, like Denmark, have long histories of liberal approaches to publishing of far right material, and the regulation of far right propaganda has been limited. One practitioner noted that the key challenge here is finding the right balance of 'push-pull mechanisms'.⁵⁴ Governments must make it as unpleasant as possible to be in far right groups, but at the same time, they must uphold freedom of speech and also leave the back door open so individuals can find help to exit movements.

Responses are out of touch with modern developments

Banning and restricting right-wing extremist 'associations' is in many ways becoming an old fashioned method of dealing with the problem. Particularly as more people are now connecting on the internet and through social media, increasingly without formal membership or 'associations' as such, bans will have little impact.

⁵⁴ Interview, Norway (April 2013)

The struggle for governments and civil society, and indeed the police, is that many of the methods being employed are outdated and do not make good use of modern technology, pop culture, and other things appealing to young people. There have been less creative uses of technology and branding to rival the creativity of far right propaganda. Numerous practitioners also noted a lack of suitable activities for young people to do at the local level, as available activities supported by government have been outdated and unappealing to youth of today.⁵⁵

In the online space, there is also limited capacity (human resources and know-how) for authorities to intervene and act in online discussions. Police across Europe noted that often one individual will push for training in the Force and will have an impact, but systematic change has been difficult. Civil society and former extremists have experimented with online intervention in some countries, like Germany, but this is often done by individuals, and has yet to be scaled up.

Policy Recommendations

This article has set out what governments are doing to confront far-right extremism. Far-right extremism exists in low volumes in some countries, but can have a potentially high impact. There are countries facing more significant volumes of far right supporters, and given the agility of the far right, there are reasons to believe that new forms of the phenomenon may emerge in the years to come. The far right has been persistent and flexible, and tactics which appear today in Sweden and Germany today are likely to appear in the Netherlands and Slovakia tomorrow. Governments need to put aside the debates over definitions of the far right and political differences, and demonstrate a clear commitment to tackling this issue. They need to be front footed and anticipatory, rather than waiting for tensions to flare up and violence to escalate.

⁵⁵ Interview, Denmark (April 2013), Norway (April 2013)

There can be no one-size-fits-all approach to policy in response to the far right; approaches need to be determined by the nature of the threat, the existing policy and legal frameworks, the strength of grassroots anti-racist organisations, and the existence of effective partnerships between government and civil society. There are, however, a number of key policy bases that must be covered, and overall it is vital that governments have a national strategy in place, underpinned by an action plan, to make their approach explicit and coordinate the various different actors that need to be involved in the response.

This article makes 10 key recommendations for policy makers:

1. Responses to the far right need to be underpinned by a strong legal framework

A sound legal framework is the bedrock of any response to far-right extremism and laws need to be visible, consistent and be accompanied by a communications plan. Although legislation is only one part of the answer to the problem of hate crime, in combination with other tools it can be a powerful catalyst for changes in social attitudes. At a bare minimum, all countries should have a clear legal instrument on hate crime, and this should extend legal protection from hate crimes to all prerequisites of discrimination. In some countries, some of the most targeted groups are missing from the legislation. For example, Polish hate crime laws make no mention of sexual orientation and in Denmark, vague terminology has meant that laws do not explicitly cover transgender victims, and practitioners note difficulties in prosecuting anti-Muslim hate.

Hate crime laws should be evidence-based, on historical patterns of discrimination but also anticipatory about potential future victim groups.⁵⁶ To reinforce the importance of such legislation and put pressure on those national governments that are lagging behind, the EU should adopt a comprehensive framework on hate crime. Many of those interviewed as part of this study emphasised the impact that a comprehensive EU framework on hate crime

⁵⁶ This should be underpinned by more government funding for research on victim communities and their needs. For example, the UK Department for Communities and Local Government offered seed funding to the Tell MAMA (Measuring Anti-Muslim Attacks) project, which has sought to enhance the evidence base on anti-Muslim hate speech and crime in the UK through more innovative ways of reaching victim communities, like through social media.

could have on those states that are lagging behind in their development of policy and legislation.⁵⁷⁵⁸

This also means ensuring that higher penalties are applicable across all prerequisites of discrimination, not just a select few. The EU could pressure governments more to develop stronger legislation and offer protection to victims by preparing a directive on victims' rights specifically targeted to victims of hate crime.

A legal framework on hate crime needs to be underpinned by strong anti-discrimination laws. Though such frameworks should not be designed to stop extremism, the knock-on impact they can have through shaping public norms and acceptable behaviour can be beneficial.

Legal instruments are only effective if they are properly and consistently implemented. They must therefore be accompanied by awareness and capacity building activities with police coming into contact with extremists and NGOs fighting extremism and supporting victims. These trainings need to be institutionalised. These are most effective when they are developed and delivered in partnership with civil society, involve human stories and testimonials, and make good use of modern technology. For example, Lambda Warszawa in Poland creates training videos for the police on how to engage with minority communities that are particularly targeted by far right extremists.

⁵⁷ There is precedence in this regard; for example, protection against discrimination through the legal framework was strengthened in Germany in 2006 only after the implementation of EU directives. Practitioners in Hungary noted the impact that the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies had on national policy.⁵⁷ While they can assist, EU directives are not always the answer. For example, despite formal adoption of Council Framework Decision 2008/913/JHA, many countries like Germany have yet to increase penalties on the basis of racist and xenophobic motives.

⁵⁸ Interviews, Poland (October 2013), Hungary (September 2013). Adopting an EU Framework on 'right-wing extremism' will be impossible for numerous reasons, not least the struggle over definitions, and the political sway from countries with a strong far right political presence. Terminology is important here, and focusing on hate crime for an EU framework would be more feasible.

2. Public agencies and communities need to work together to deliver robust and effective public order management responses

Public order disturbances are the most common expressions of far-right extremism across Europe, ranging from lower level harassment and vandalism to high profile demonstrations. Good public order management can minimise the impact of protests on local communities, build trust between those who need to work together to tackle the far right, and reduce the daily misery experienced by those who are targeted by right wing extremists. Smart policing means strong communication with the local community to get them informed and involved in a positive way during demonstrations, and smart use of social media and technology.

Public order management should not be something done *to* communities, but *with* communities, exemplified by the Active Citizens Programme in Rochdale in the UK. Rochdale Police identified 30 individuals from across the community in order to get a cross-section of views and perspectives and then brought them together to explain legislation and tactical strategies relating to the policing of EDL demonstrations and gather community feedback. During demonstrations, each 'active citizen' was paired with a police officer or mediator to patrol the community and act as a communication link to those directly affected by the march.⁵⁹ Experience across all ten countries covered in this study shows that communities are keen to get involved in claiming back public space from extremists. For example, practitioners in Poland noted that small citizen groups have spontaneously organised to paint over hateful graffiti as soon as it appeared.⁶⁰

Police need to be made aware of how they can use the penal code effectively to engage with extremists, and what the limitations are in balancing the democratic right to protest. Police in the UK raised questions about how recent anti-social behaviour orders may be used, and whether legislation devised for an entirely different purpose can be applied to extremist ideologues in the streets. There are many examples of police using smart strategies to contain the impact of marches and demonstrations, while upholding the right to protest. For

⁵⁹ Interview, United Kingdom (April 2013)

⁶⁰ Interviews, Poland (October 2013)

example, police in Luton and Tower Hamlets have explored the limits of their powers under the Public Order Act of 1986 to impose conditions on EDL demonstrations, such as fixed start and end times or keeping them on the outskirts of high impact areas. In Hungary, a new criminal code came into effect on 1 July 2013 with a clearer definition of ‘incitement against a community.’ Security services noted that might make it easier to police events, such as Pride Parade, and prevent disorder by providing an opportunity for police officers to initiate dialogue with protesters beforehand to demonstrate the legal implications of their actions.⁶¹ Initiating dialogue and ensuring there are solid relationships between far right activists and the police have also proven to be effective in managing public disorder. The Swedish Dialogue Police aim to initiate dialogue with protesters before and during demonstrations to identify individuals within the group who may be key to preventing other individuals from using violence at events, and engage with them to control the broader group.⁶²

It is also important to have an effective media strategy for use in the aftermath of far right incidences or events that could trigger a far right backlash such as that following the killing of soldier Lee Rigby in Woolwich in 2013. The Finnish Ministry of Interior has developed a strategy as part of its National Action Plan to Prevent Extremism, the first media strategy of its kind across Europe.

National governments, municipalities, police and NGOs need to share good practice on what works in public order management responses, including both online and offline efforts. This would be done most efficiently through the EU’s Radicalisation Awareness Network, which seeks to share lessons learned among practitioners tackling radicalisation and violent extremism.

⁶¹ Interviews, Hungary (September 2013)

⁶² For more information, see:

http://polisen.se/Global/www%20och%20Intrapolis/Informationsmaterial/01%20Polisen%20nationellt/Engelskt%20informationsmaterial/Dialogue_bok100630Webb.pdf.

3. Governments need to make serious long-term investments in preventive measures

It is essential that governments invest in substantive prevention programmes to tackle the far right in both the short- and long-term. This needs to cover a number of bases.

Governments should support programmes for young people to build lasting relationships with others from diverse backgrounds. This can be done through, for example, mentoring programmes across different communities, mixed-ethnicity sports clubs or work experience initiatives, and the promotion of role models from minority communities. Positive examples of this can be found in mixed-ethnicity football matches organised by preventative police coordinators in Denmark, or an initiative to bring Mamed Khalidov, a Polish mixed martial artist of Chechen descent, to meet with Polish skinheads who admire fighters, to shake their prejudices about Chechens. Governments should also consider instituting a minimum number of hours of teaching into their national curriculums on religion and the diverse history of the community and country, as well as historical education with a focus on victims. Far-right extremism is a constantly changing phenomenon. Preventive work therefore must not just be conducted in areas with historically high levels of far right sympathies; it must also prioritise areas where there is the potential for future problems. Governments need to invest in tension monitoring and attitudinal studies to identify these places. They must also be ready to act on this data. For example, the Centre for Research on Prejudice in Poland presented to a subcommittee in the Polish parliament the results of a 2009 nationwide survey showing that the region of Bialystok had particularly high indicators of prejudice. The government failed to act, and in 2013 Bialystok flared up as the site of a series of violent attacks on minorities.⁶³

The effectiveness of preventive measures will in part depend on them utilising the right tools and methodologies: credible leaders, good stories (for example, the stories of former extremists or their victims can be especially powerful), strong messaging, use of youth culture, youth-led and designed, locally relevant and incentivised participation. For example, Exit Fryshuset in Sweden has developed a play called 'The Voice of Hate,' which brings the

⁶³ Interviews, Poland (October 2013)

personal stories former Swedish far-right extremists to young people in schools. Some organisations have experimented with developing mobile phone applications which aim to challenge racist ideologies, or targeted YouTube video campaigns strategically placed in certain online spaces.⁶⁴ For those programmes targeting adults, it is vital they are timetabled around working hours. Programmes are able to deliver at scale when they are mainstreamed into existing structures rather than ad-ons, and this is particularly important in Central and Eastern Europe, where efforts to tackle the far right are often missing from government policy.

Governments, the police and NGOs need to work together to take on the difficult conversations with the hard to reach in all communities. Unacknowledged grievances left to fester can lead to more extreme manifestations of violence, so it is essential that issues are not 'off the agenda'.

Acknowledging the problem is essential, so governments and NGOs need to continue to work to raise the public's understanding and knowledge of far-right extremism within their community and country. The public can become a powerful tool to tackle extremism if made aware of the problems.

4. Governments need to put in place national Exit programmes to help individuals to leave far right movements and groups behind

Many individuals who want to leave far right groups and movements end up trapped because they struggle to find jobs, housing and social support outside these extremist networks. Hard end interventions are vital, but rare. Governments shy away from them for many reasons, but not least because such programmes can be risky. However, evidence from countries with Exit programmes shows that they work and can also provide important

⁶⁴ All Together Now in Australia has developed Australia's first anti-racism mobile phone application, called 'Everyday Racism,' which immerses the individual in racist texts, tweets, images and videos to challenge their understandings of racism and how to react. More information available here: <http://alltogethernow.org.au/news/campaigns/everydayracism/>.

insights into far right recruitment and operating strategies that in turn informs and improves responses across the policy spectrum.

Exit programmes exist in only a minority of the countries included in this study. In some places interventions have been carried out by intelligence agencies, often through direct approach to individuals in order to engage in one-to-one dialogue. The German Ministry of Interior runs an exit programme, but it functions for very few cases of individuals seeking identity changes or protection. The NGO Exit Germany is one of the longest standing Exit programmes in Europe, and has had varying levels of support from various government departments over the years. A long-established and successful government-funded Exit programme exists in Sweden that focuses on disengagement. Such practical help with routes out of movements is vital; evidence shows that where this assistance is available it is well used.

This article advocates that all countries set up a national exit programme, or a national intervention strategy to provide a route out for those who want to leave. Ideally, this would be a loose cooperation between government agencies and civil society organisations. There is also a need for greater understanding of how interventions can be done in the online space.

5. Governments need to fund a variety of attractive deterrence activities to keep young people away from far right influences

Governments need to offer activities to divert young people from attending and participating in far right movements and activities, and also help to build a sense of purpose and self-worth. At one end of the scale, this could simply entail providing budgets to allow social workers to take vulnerable kids snowboarding or playing an extreme sport, which have proven to have a real impact in Norway. At key moments, such as during far right marches, governments need to work with 'key influencers', like parents, teachers and youth workers, to offer alternative activities that will be more attractive than taking part in the march.

6. Governments and NGOs need to work together to enhance public understanding of the threat from the far right, underpinned by clear and decisive political messages

There is a real need for political leadership on the issue of the far right. Politicians need to be more courageous about making public statements denouncing far right ideologies, intolerance, and hatred, especially – but not limited to – around traumatic incidences of hate crime or extremism. Governments need to have in place dedicated media strategies focused on responses to the far right.

Governments should carefully consider the evidence before devising communications strategies on this issue. For example, in 2007, the German Minister of Interior announced that Islamist terrorism posed the greatest threat to Germany, while the government report accompanying the speech had twice as much attention devoted to right-wing extremism.⁶⁵ In Finland, there has been a conscious decision by the Ministry of Interior to communicate that the greatest threat to security at the local level is far-right extremism. These kinds of public statements need to be normalised in order to have an impact. Practitioners supporting LGBT victims in Poland, for instance, noted the impact that political support from two Members of Parliament has had on their work, both in receiving funding as a result of the political attention received by the issue, but also in normalising support for the cause.⁶⁶

Governments, political leaders, and the police also need to be much smarter with their use of technology, and overall communications with the constituencies they serve when it comes to issues related to far-right extremism and hate crime. German officials, for example, noted a need for a website which clarifies for the public where to go for help for different issues related to far-right extremism, as lines of communication on the issue is not currently clear. Some NGOs have stepped up where governments are lacking on clear data sharing and information on far-right extremism. In Hungary, for example, the Athena Institute has developed interactive online maps tracking data on far-right extremist groups with differing

⁶⁵ Schellenberg, B. (2009) "Country Report Germany." In Bertelsmann Stiftung (ed.) *Strategies for Combating Right-Wing Extremism in Europe*. Gütersloh, Germany.

⁶⁶ Interviews, Poland (October 2013)

levels of activity.⁶⁷ The German NGO Apabiz continues to develop an online map called *Rechtes Land* for the general public to key in their postal code to see a snapshot of far-right extremist crimes and activity ongoing in their local areas, with the aim of improving public involvement in how their areas are policed.⁶⁸

7. Governments need to put in place national strategies and action plans for tackling the threat from the far right

There are many different approaches to tackling the far right across Europe, from those that are legally-led or securitised, to those that take a whole-of-government approach. What is clear, though, is that multiple departments, agencies, and actors will be involved in responses, so it is vital that governments have a national strategy and action plan to coordinate efforts.

8. The EU, governments, police and NGOs need to work together to improve and streamline data gathering on the threat from the far right

There are significant improvements required on data collecting; monitoring and measuring far-right extremism is a non-negotiable part of an effective response. A number of measures are required.

States need to make better use of existing data, and pool this data across regions. Governments need to move beyond police data, as there are numerous limitations linked to these sources, such as the tendency to rely on self-reporting by victims or poor decisions by individual police officers unable to recognise crimes as being hate-based. They also need to support research to understand how new media could support data collection, such as tracking content on Facebook and Twitter through social media analytics or using social media platforms to engage with victims to gather richer data.

⁶⁷ The Athena Institute's tools are available online here: <http://www.athenainstitute.eu/en/europe/map>.

⁶⁸ For more information on this mapping tool, see: <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/german-ngo-to-launch-interactive-map-of-neo-nazi-activity-a-880303.html>.

Governments should work to ensure more data on the problem is made publicly available, and weighty academic studies are translated into digestible formats for policy makers. Where there are concerns about extremist movements using this data for their own ends, more rigorous methods for sharing data privately between government, police, civil society, and ‘key influencers’ should be instituted. Governments are testing out new ways to engage with academic experts on far-right extremism and intolerance, for example through the secondment of academic experts to the UK Department for Communities and Local Government to facilitate ‘knowledge exchange’ on the issue of far-right extremism.⁶⁹ Finally, the EU can play a role in working to ensure that data is collected systematically by formulating reporting requirements as a part of an EU framework on hate crime.

9. Major capacity building initiatives are needed to enhance the ability of frontline workers to spot and respond to the signs of radicalisation towards the far right

The effectiveness of legal instruments and policy frameworks is limited by the capacity of frontline workers to spot the signs of radicalisation and understand how to respond. Governments can make a significant contribution by funding training and capacity building programmes for police, municipalities, teachers, NGOs, and community and youth workers. Programmes are needed to connect the right people to help municipalities recognise and solve problems. For example, the Inter-disciplinary Advisory Service for Local Action against Racism and Xenophobia in Norway was a mobile task force that could be called in by municipalities dealing with issues of right-wing extremism. A small group of experts convened a two-day seminar to map and analyse the local problem and explore what actions should be taken. These sessions involved youth workers, teachers, outreach workers, local police, and even concerned young people.

Governments can build networks to enhance problem solving over the longer-term, including through preventive efforts. For example, Denmark and Finland have action

⁶⁹ Dr. Matthew Goodwin was seconded to the Department for Communities and Local Government in 2013, and led on a series of knowledge exchange workshops aiming to connect researchers with policy makers responsible for this area of work.

networks on extremism, with the Danish model focused on connecting social workers, teachers, and police, and the Finnish networks regionally based in several cities. The Department for Communities and Local Government in the UK has funded a partnership between Luton Borough Council and Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council to map far-right extremism locally and collect best practice at the local level across the UK.

Training can also be implemented for political leaders to help them improve their response to extremist events. For example, the Dutch NCTV ran a simulation programme with mayors from several municipalities with the aim of improving capacity to recognise the problem and act on it sensibly and sensitively.⁷⁰

Governments can also use their power of convening to enhance partnership working among the key players. Long-term trusted relationships can significantly improve responses to extreme events.

10. Governments must adopt long-term funding arrangements to make responses to the far right more sustainable and effective

Finally, one of the recurring themes in this research has been the frustration with short-termism in relation to responses to the far right. Legal and policy frameworks will help to tackle this, but those working at the street level to tackle extremist groups and movements need the stability and long-term funding to be able to put in place measures to not just tackle today's problems, but prevent their recurrence in the future.

⁷⁰ Interview, Netherlands (June 2013)