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Early detection of radicalization and networking Manual for Local Authorities

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Dear reader!

With this manual, we want to share knowledge of radicalization, i.e., how to notice and prevent radicalization. In this manual, radicalization is understood as a process that results in a person assuming an extreme worldview. Radicalization, when accompanied by violence or justification of violence, is one form of risk behaviour. As with domestic violence, school bullying, and cyber-bullying, in the case of radicalization, both the victim and the perpetrator or bully must be noticed. It may be more difficult to see radicalization or the adoption of extreme principles, and their development into a threat to the society, than domestic violence or cyberbullying, because this is not a widespread problem in our society. Noticing radicalization does not require any separate action, but only a degree of awareness and attention.

Why is it necessary to talk about radicalization in Estonia? Extremism is a common problem across Europe and, as a Member State of the European Union, it is not a distant subject for Estonia. Radicalization as the adoption of an extreme worldview can lead to both the commission of a terrorist offense and the direct or indirect support of such an act. In 2016, the ruling of the Supreme Court came into force, which for the first time in Estonia convicted people for supporting terrorism. Thus, the Security Police Board (2017) has recognized that Estonia is not a land untouched by terrorism, and although terrorist attacks have not taken place in Estonia, we have to do everything to prevent such events. Prevention cannot be an effort of just one institution; it must involve the entire society. Local government officials, therefore, need to notice the signs of radicalization in existing networks, pay attention to them and contribute to its prevention.

No one is born with extreme thoughts. Formation of a person into an extremist is a process. The reasons that can lead to radicalization or other risk behaviour are different. These can be social exclusion, poor socio-economic status, value judgments, group influence, etc. Noticing and finding that police intervention is needed is not possible without networking and partner support.

The manual is intended for local government employees to give an overview of the nature of radicalization and to raise awareness of early detection and prevention of radicalization. Prevention does not mean predicting whether a person behaves violently or not; it does not mean a witch hunt. Prevention is first and foremost when an official is able to identify vulnerable people in their community who may be radicalized or prone to radicalization. This manual is a tool for officials to help them recognize these people.

The manual has been prepared in the framework of the DARRA (Detection and Response to Radicalization Appearances) project co-funded by the European Union Internal Security Fund. This handbook has been prepared by the officers of the Police and Border Guard Board in cooperation with the Estonian Academy of Security Sciences, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Association of Estonian Cities and Rural Municipalities, the Tartu City Government, the Haapsalu City Government, and a victim support worker.

Definitions

Activism - Legal activities aimed at highlighting social, political, economic or environmental changes.

Ideology - world view; a system of positions and values on politics, economics and social conditions that allows people to organize, understand and change the social and physical world.

Polarization - the widening of the differences between different groups in society, which can lead to tension and confrontation between groups on the basis of ethnic, religious, political and other characteristics.

rad@politsei.ee - e-mail address for exchanging information with experts of cultural and religious risk behaviour of the Police and Border Guard Board.

Radicalization - The process in the course of which a person embraces extreme views, perceptions, and values, begins to follow them in everyday life, and often to promote them. There is nothing bad in a radical way of thinking, but if the way of thinking becomes a way of life that goes against the rules of life in the society, accompanied by violations of law, it is a phenomenon that threatens public order and, in the worst case, national security.

Terrorism - Illegal, politically motivated violence where one asserts oneself with creating fear. § 237 of the Penal Code provides for the definition of a terrorist offense and a punishment for the commission of this act.

Incitement to hatred - activities that publicly call upon hatred, violence, or discrimination in relation to nationality, race, colour, gender, language, origin, religion, sexual orientation, political beliefs, or proprietary or social status, if this is a threat to a person's life, health or property.

Extremism - a radical disregard of social norms, practices and state laws to achieve political, religious, social or economic goals. Violent extremism is ideologically motivated violence used to achieve political goals (e.g., anti-globalization, environmentalists, and anti-weapons, anti-immigrant).

Fragmentation of society and extremism

The **Security Police Board** (2019) has defined extremism as “a radical disregard of the social norms and laws that exist in the country by individuals or groups of individuals, i.e., by organizations or groups, whose further purpose may be, among other things, to replace the current regime with the regime which is appropriate to them.” Extremism does not necessarily mean a threat to society, but forms of extremism that support violence can be a threat. The process of becoming an extreme is called radicalization.

In society, the plurality of opinions is natural. The better the freedom of opinion is protected, the freer the society is. Everyone has the right to express their views and exercise civil activism. The problem, however, is activism, which disparages certain members of society and/or incites hatred against them. **Extremism becomes a problem when illegal ways are used to achieve one's goals when such activities are supported.** Therefore, we must take seriously the views and expressions of thoughts where one or another person or group of people is wished to be influenced by violence or is outright wished to be destroyed. It is also necessary to respond when such behaviour is glorified in social media or elsewhere. The emergence of extremism can lead to the polarization of society, i.e., the widening of differences between different groups in society, which can create tension between groups and confrontation on the basis of ethnic, religious, political and other characteristics.

The following figure describes the process of radicalization. On the lower stage, there are people who feel dissatisfied with the surrounding society. It often seems to them that they have been treated unfairly and in an undignified manner. People in the next stage have begun to seek justice without using violent means; it can be called civil activism. On the third stage, there are people who seem to think that the non-violent struggle for their rights leads to the achievement of their aim.

They search for like-minded people, both online and through other channels and join a similarly minded group. People belonging in the radical group can influence each other as a fuel for further radicalization, which provokes an even deeper confrontation with society and its rules. Radicalization can lead to terrorism. (Moghaddam, (2005). It must be understood that a radical way of thinking is a lie as such and is not subject to punishment, but it needs attention.



Figure 1. Terrorism pyramid (Source: COPPRA, 2009)

Radicalization is a process in which one adopts extreme views and positions. These extreme views **may involve illegal activities** and/or supporting and justification of criminal activity (including by legal means). It may also include, for example, the dissemination of extreme propaganda. The radicalization process does not have a definite time-frame; the process can take years, but it can also escalate very quickly. We have to understand that the process may also not go through every stage of the pyramid shown in the figure.

Generalizing profiles based on stereotypical assumptions such as nationality, race, religion, gender, age, or socio-economic status are not only discriminatory but also ineffective (Maasing & Kaljula, 2017). **People should not be labelled, and the stereotypical view is certainly not effective.**

Warning signs of radicalization

Although there is no one profile of a radicalized person, experts have noted the recurrence of certain factors and dynamics. The radicalized person is characterized by disregard of generally accepted social norms and rigid adherence to his or her beliefs, which may go against both universal norms and the current legal order. Radicalization is often associated with **dissatisfaction or frustration with the surrounding society** but also with the person's **unrealistic expectations, identity conflicts**, real or imaginary **discrimination and feeling of marginalization**. Radicalization can also satisfy the need to belong to a group that is special by some characteristics, and the hunger for power, adventure, and recognition. In the case of radicalization, ideas, thoughts, and ideologies are important that explain the suffering that a person or a group of people have experienced, they label the so-called "scapegoat" and provide solutions to problems.

Radicalization is almost always a combination of behaviour and attitudes that can be manifested differently for each person. Thus, the list of warning signs of radicalization is by no means exhaustive. Some possible warning signs are listed in Table 1, but these signs or actions are also innocent, even normal in certain circumstances. So, they must always be assessed in a broader context to determine if there is any reason to report a threat. The presence of one or more warning sign(s) does not necessarily mean that a person is on the way to radicalization or is preparing a terrorist act. **It is important to notice the changes** in a person's behaviour, appearance or activity and **always evaluate them in the light of the context and environment of that person**. When you see signs or change, you need to identify the cause that caused the change. **Ask for an expert opinion and submit your question and/or information to rad@politsei.ee.**

Usually, the changes are visible to those who come into closer contact to the person who is undergoing radicalization (family, friends, school, social worker, etc.) and are aware of a person's past behaviour. To correctly interpret threat assessments, it is necessary to understand the background of the person. **When evaluating indicators, it is important to exchange information within the cooperation network (local government, school, social worker, police, family, etc.).** The following warning signs (Table 1) are divided into two categories and are based primarily on the individual's level: behavioural changes (changes in actions, appearance) and attitudes (expressing opinions, views, and attitudes). **All the signs must be evaluated as a set, and it must be remembered that all the indicators observed are not of equal importance.**

References to visual signs, such as appearance, clothing, etc., have deliberately excluded from the manual. There is nothing bad in radical views or way of thinking as long as it is not imposed on others, it does not contradict the rules of society governing in the country and as long as the self-expression does not represent a threat to public order and national security. External indicators are becoming less and less important in the Western context over time. Since criminal ideology also allows for deviations from conservative appearance, visual signs can be misread too easily (conservatism is interpreted as radicalism) or, on the contrary, too little attention is paid to them. In many countries, for example, the symbols of Nazi Germany are forbidden. In many countries, images of hammer sickle and are frowned upon, and foreign-language expressions and texts may attract attention even in situations where the reader/observer does not understand the language. Such symbols are not forbidden, but it must definitely be responded to (consult an expert, cooperation network, etc.) and immediately inform the cultural-religious behaviour experts of the Police and Border Guard Board at rad@politsei.ee.

In the changing world, there are many symbols where special knowledge is required to understand their meaning. The best overview of a person's mindset and his/her potential risk behaviour can be obtained through conversation and information exchanged with partners, supported by experts on cultural-religious risk behaviour of Police and Border Guard Board at (rad@politsei.ee).

Table 1. The manifestation of potential warning signs of radicalization

	Attention seeking behaviour related to political, religious, or community-based activity that is peaceful in nature and respects democratic values	Problematic behaviour, which manifests in increasing identification with groups or goals that lead to significant changes in a person's relationship with the surroundings	Worrying behaviour that can be associated with radicalization, including growing mistrust of the surrounding and justification of the use of violence	Alarming behaviour that manifests belonging to an extremist group and leads to seeing violence as the only legitimate solution
Changes in attitudes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No positive identity (country, nation, community, family, friends, etc.) Taking of firm positions and participation in peaceful protests There is interest in greater religious, ideological or political participation The desire to solve problems arising from social injustice is expressed 	<p>In addition to the above features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> public expression of complaints feelings of a victim, excluded Expression of conflicting views (us vs. them). single truths and paranoid views disrespect to the authorities or no recognition of the legitimacy of the authorities inciting hatred (Penal Code § 151) 	<p>In addition to the above features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> expression of hatred towards other people/groups or democratic values use of radical terminology praise for martyrdom and violence expression of support for the use of violence to achieve goals 	<p>In addition to the above features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> endorsing one's views through forums promoting extreme views or by regular viewing of and posting on websites
Changes in behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use of symbol related to visual identity Being active in social media, inviting for political or ideological changes in society 	<p>In addition to the above features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> isolation from family and/or friends; the circle of friends is changing unexpected changes in habits, including one's religious practice consistently pushing one's religious or ideological beliefs over others creating a social media account for expressing one's extreme views refusal to follow the rules of the school, workplace, or other institutions due to ideological, political, or religious reasons 	<p>In addition to the above features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> cessation of communication with family members and/or close friends to spend more time with new friends or acquaintances seeking contacts with extreme people or groups abrupt loss of interest in activities at school or at work use and/or wearing of the insignia of extremist groups committing of minor offenses to show one's disrespect for government and society 	<p>In addition to the above features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> participation in the activities of violent extremist groups recruiting other people to join the extremist group planning a trip to a conflict zone or area where violent extremist groups are active the sudden acquisition of a weapon and explosives involvement in criminal activities or problematic encounters with the police the sudden interest in government or public buildings and places (pictures, plans)
What to do? Who to inform?	<p>Pay attention to the person, communicate with a cooperation network, the person's family and acquaintances, if necessary</p>	<p>Send information to rad@politsei.ee. Exchange information with the cooperation network</p>	<p>Send information to rad@politsei.ee. Exchange information with the cooperation network</p>	<p>Notify rad@politsei.ee and Security Police Board (korrapidaja@kapo.ee)</p>

Source: COPPRA, 2009; CPRLV, 2017; by authors.

Networking to prevent radicalization

Networking can help detect risk behaviour, including manifestations of radicalization. A well-functioning network facilitates the work of all participants. Bringing together the knowledge of different players helps to detect risk factors early on to prevent radicalization. Preventing radicalization through networking requires that everyone in the network understands the nature of radicalization and the importance of sharing information. Being the first person to detect risk behaviour, a member of the network must be prepared to take responsibility and the initiative to deal with the case, involving key network members. One has to understand that in the case of early detection, it is important to be an instant messenger and not to wait for someone else to notice the problem.

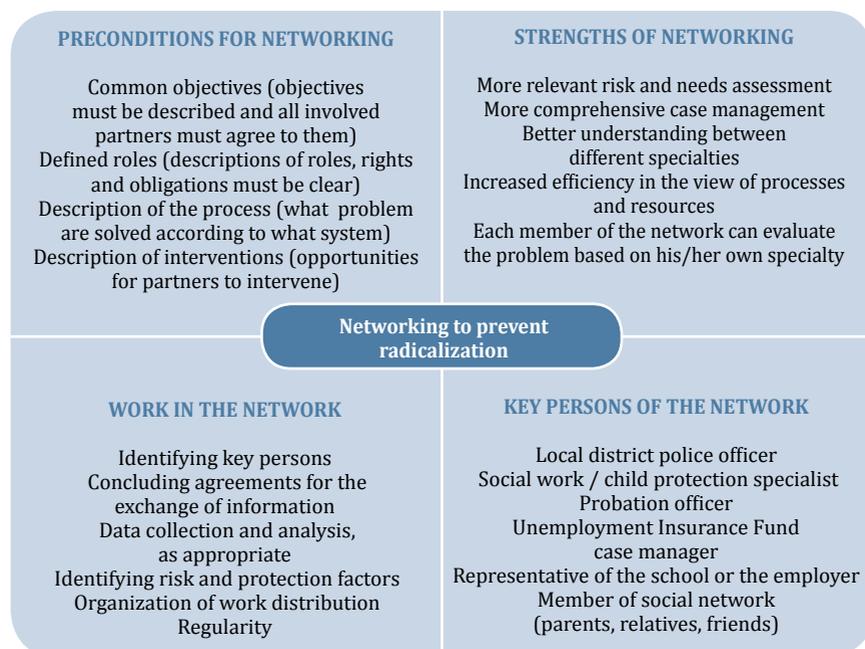


Figure 2. Networking diagram for preventing radicalization.

Source: RAN LOCAL, 2017

On forwarding information to rad@politsei.ee, it is agreed on how to further process the specific case. Network performance is ensured by clear and organized management of the process. Depending on the case, the local government or the police could take the role of the manager. It is important that both the network manager and its members bring opportunities to the network to deal with the basics of the problem and mitigate them. From the network manager, it requires the management of information, the involvement of key people and, if necessary, the ability to remain neutral. For that purpose, it is necessary to clarify the roles, rights, and obligations of the parties. For example, if there is delicate information that cannot be shared with all participants, it needs to be highlighted within the network. In many Western European countries (e.g., Belgium, the Netherlands, Denmark), it is the local government and its leader who are responsible for the security of the community. In Estonia, the responsible person has not been clearly defined. It is, therefore, necessary to clearly formulate the expectations and possibilities of the various actors and measures they can take in the process.

In order to prevent radicalization effectively and to solve cases, it is necessary to complement existing cooperation mechanisms with relevant expertise. **For this, it is not always necessary to create a new network, but the focus can be kept on the issue in the already functioning network.** At the LG level, the network has officials who have the knowledge of the necessary field, who are motivated and willing to work for a common goal and are responsible for the activities. In order for networking to work, network meetings where information is exchanged, problems are discussed, activities planned and responsibilities and deadlines are set should be organized where necessary.

In doing so, networking does not always require regular meetings, but networking can and must be done in the course of daily communication through the exchange of information between different actors. Networking meetings should be organized for sharing information and follow the action plan.

§ 14 of the Constitution provides that the guarantee of rights and freedoms is the responsibility of the legislative, executive and judicial power and local governments. § 3 of the Local Government Organization Act defines the principles of local government, which also includes **guaranteeing everyone's legal rights and freedoms** under clause 2.

Often, the work of one institution or organization is not enough to prevent and solve complex problems (such as radicalization). There is a need for cross-organizational cooperation and effective networks. In implementing this principle, the LG is also a partner **The Police and Border Guard Board**, whose role and competence are in accordance with § 2 of the Law Enforcement Act **risk prevention, risk identification, risk prevention and elimination of public order violations, which can only be done in partnership with the community.**

In addition to a local government employee, be it a child protection officer, a social worker, or a local government manager who comes into contact with members of their community when working, school staff or youth workers who are in daily contact with children can obtain information on problems disturbing the security of the community, including situations endangering the lives and health of people. The role of educational institutions in ensuring community security is significant, as students spend most of their day at school and the school staff will be the first to notice changes in the behaviour of the child. Often, a school employee and a local government official have important information about the family, which may be related to both the need for help and the signs of radicalization in the family. **Only acting together as a network and sharing information is it possible to prevent and solve problems in the community.**

Having noticed a worrying behaviour in your area, you must inform the police officer thereof who can be in the advisory role as well as intervene if necessary. **For quick information exchange, comments, questions, and concerns must be sent to rad@politsei.ee.**

This address is managed by the experts of the cultural-religious risk behaviour of the Police and Border Guard Board who are able to evaluate the information and pass it on to the police officer of the relevant region, who will provide you with advice and information. In cooperation with the police, further action can be established in cases requiring intervention.

Notification to be sent to **rad@politsei.ee** should include the following information:

- Time
- Place,
- Description of the observation/ event
- Photographic material, if available
- Your contact details.



Figure 3. Diagram of movement of information (by authors)

Radicalization is novel in Estonia and definitely needs examination, deep exploration, and additional reading. This manual brings the concept and content of radicalization closer to the people of Estonia, bringing the existence of this problem to their consciousness, and provides primary knowledge to the officials who come into contact with people in their daily work in order to be able to pay attention to the manifestations of radicalization. The most important place in this topic is noticing and responding to it, which ensures possible prevention in the early phase of radicalization.

Cases

Case 1

Location: EU Member State. General education school in a small town

Current issues are discussed in the high school civic education class. Among other things, there is discussion on a terrorist attack in France in which Charlie Hebdo's publishing house was attacked and several people were killed. One of the students approves of terrorist acts and supports the motive of the attacks. The home class teacher continues conducting the lesson, but will discuss the observation with the headmaster of the school and ask for help. The headmaster says he has other things to do than to deal with such random statements made in the classroom. The event will essentially be neglected and will no longer be addressed. In a few months' time, the same student will go to Syria to fight for ISIS.

All of this should have been noticed and partners should have been informed of such small observations. In this situation, the teacher lacked awareness of the partners. Also, the head of the educational institution was not able to properly behave or assess the risks.

An under reaction is just as dangerous as an overreaction.

Case 2

Location: Tallinn, Harju County.

A member of the allied troops, black, goes to a restaurant in the center of Tallinn, with the plan have dinner. At the door he meets a customer service person who responds to the English language question:

"Sorry, Ma'am, is the restaurant open?"

"No, I'm sorry, Sir, we have no room for you right now".

What happened?

The military man misinterpreted it and thought the emphasis was on "no room for YOU!" and contacted his Embassy with a report on racist treatment. Through diplomatic channels, it immediately made it to the police.

The police responded and will respond in the future. How? The patrol was sent to the scene and a conversation was conducted with the customer service person - the service person confirmed that everything had happened just as stated in the report. However, in her response, he did not mean anything other than "AT THE MOMENT we have no room for you", and not "at the moment we have no room FOR YOU".

Overreaction is just as dangerous as under reaction.

Additional reading

1. Criminal Policy Guidance Material:

- <http://www.kriminaalpoliitika.ee/et/juhendmaterjal-perevagivalla-vahendamiseks-ja-ennetamiseks-2011>
- <http://www.kriminaalpoliitika.ee/et/kuriteoennetus/varase-markamise-ja-sekkumise-juhis-kovidele>

2. Yearbooks of the Estonian Internal Security Service:

- <https://kapo.ee/et/content/aastaraamatu-v%C3%A4ljaandmise-traditsiooni-ajalugu-ja-eesm%C3%A4rk-0.html>

3. Activities and materials of Radicalization Awareness Network for the local network:

- https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/about-ran/ran-local_en

4. Other materials on terrorism, radicalization, polarization:

- <https://www.rand.org/topics/national-security-and-terrorism.html>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z8Vy7wxQ-ik>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=whDG-yNJEQ0>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5R3gzMONDUI>
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