Prevention of Radicalisation and Terrorism in the EU- the case of Regulation against Terrorism Content Online

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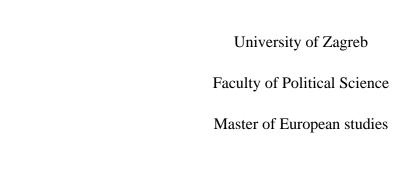
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I hereby declare that I have written my master thesis "Prevention of Radicalisation and Terrorism in the EU- The Case of Regulation Against Terrorism Content Online" that I have submitted to my supervisor, Professor Igor Vidačak, for evaluation, independently and that it is entirely in my authorship. I also declare that the paper in question has not been published or used to fulfill teaching obligations at this or any other institution of higher education and that I did not obtain ECTS credits based on it. Furthermore, I declare that I have respected the ethical rules of scientific and academic work, particularly Articles 16-19 of the Code of Ethics of the University of Zagreb.

Ivana Divjak

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1. Introduction

Research on terrorism and radicalisation has a long tradition as this field of study evolved through decades and developed simultaneously with the progress of global society. Although the whole civilized population nowadays enjoys all the benefits of globalised, democratic, opened society, on the other hand there are growing problems such as terrorism, which concerns all of us, regardless where the extremist actions take place.

These are the actions which are contrary to everything that humanity represents and this is a constant battle against all the principles and achievements of developed society. For decades, researchers are trying to find a new approach to this growing problem, especially now as technology advances together with the development of online radicalisation which rises following easier infiltration of terrorism in every segment of our society.

We live in a world of developed encrypted apps for spreading instructions virtually on how to execute atrocities all over the globe which are just one click away from happening again. Today it is not a question if terroristic attacks will happen, the questions are where and when will they happen, but the most important question here is: what can be done in order to prevent it? Recent theoretical and empirical developments have showed the willingness of the global society to put this problem to an end.

This thesis discusses the challenges of terrorism and radicalisation in light of already existing research and literature from different parts of Europe where it is commonly explored in regard to specific social, religious, ethnic, national or other groups. These topics have been on the agenda of the European Union for a long time, and various studies have already been done on the EU efforts in fighting terrorism and radicalisation (Argomaiz, 2015; Bossonog, 2014; Marcos, 2017; Kauertand, 2019). In view of various external and internal crises EU faced in past years, as well as a number of terrorist attacks on European soil, there is growing research on different aspects

of preventing terrorism and radicalisation- from challenges of fighting the financing of terrorism (Schindler, 2022) to the role of sub-national, local actors in countering radicalisation (Melhuish and Heath-Kelly, 2022). However, the research on the phenomenon of terrorist and radicalisation content online is still rather underdeveloped, especially regarding the aspects of regulatory mechanisms available in this area. The particular focus of this thesis is on the relatively new and controversial EU Regulation on preventing the dissemination of terrorist content online which entered into force in June 2022. The discussion about this regulation has opened a number of dilemmas about whether it is actually targeting the right players, and to what extent it responds to the main challenges identified so far in the EU member states?

Therefore, the main research question of this thesis is: how effective is the EU regulatory approach to preventing radicalisation and terrorism online?

In order to respond to this research question, several methods will be combined- comparative analysis, synthesis, induction and deduction of extensive data from a number of primary and secondary sources, including official documents and reports of the EU and other international actors, as well as previous research articles and publications, media coverage and documentary videos. Besides, with the aim of getting a more in-depth understanding of the root causes of terrorism and radicalisation, a semi-structured interview was conducted with an expert in this area. Finally, a case study of the EU regulation will be conducted with the aim of gaining an in-depth insight into the process of development of the act and diverging views of different stakeholders about its content and effectiveness.

After the introductory chapter presenting the main problem, research and methodological approach, the second chapter elaborates on the conceptual and theoretical framework, the next chapter brings the main definitions of terrorism and radicalization and references to previous research findings on the topic in the already existing literature.

In addition, the second chapter contains subtitles regarding freedom of expression, free speech and religion, protection of fundamental rights and the connotation between these terms and terrorism. In the third chapter, the root causes of radicalisation and terrorism are presented as well as the psychological profile of a potential terrorist. Furthermore, in the fourth chapter, social media platforms and the dissemination of terrorist content online are discussed. The fifth chapter

discusses the evolution and perspectives of the EU counter-terrorism and counter-radicalisation policy. The central part of the thesis analyses the case study of the EU's Regulation on preventing the dissemination of terrorist content online. Furthermore, this chapter contains findings of the research on the awareness of citizens in different EU Member States about this topic.

2. Terrorism and Radicalisation-conceptual and theoretical approach

2.1.Defining terrorism

Terrorism, a burden for every modern state, culture, and religion, can happen anytime to anyone, "no one is safe, exempted or protected" (Šijaković, 2003: 46). With the dissemination of fear, as the main weapon which is used by terrorists, it is easy to control people worldwide attacking the core of democratic values: dialogue, freedoms, justice, equality and security. The word terrorism has its roots in Greek *treo*, meaning terrible, to fear, to escape, and in Latin *terreo*, meaning to inspire alarm; and *oris* to inspire fear (Sroka, Garrone, Kumbrian, 2017).

First of all, it is very difficult to define the terms terrorism and radicalisation considering that these terms were constantly changing their meaning through different historical contexts. In order to begin defining and comprehending the terms of terrorism and radicalisation it is important to go back through literature from the end of the last century where exceptional attention was devoted to this topic. Going through already existing literature, a conclusion was reached that almost all the authors had difficulties agreeing on the generally accepted definition.

Schmid, as one of the most prominent researchers in the field, approaches the definition of terrorism from five angles: (I) by focusing on the history of terrorism; (II) by focusing on the psychology of 'terror' (the treat and fear factory); (III) by focusing on forms of political violence other than terrorist violence; (IV) by focusing on the terrorist act; (V) by focusing on the terrorist (Schmid, 2023). He also stresses that "terrorism refers, on the one hand, to a doctrine about the presumed effectiveness of special form or tactic of fear-generating, coercive political violence and, on the other hand, to a conspiratorial practice of calculated, demonstrative, direct violent action without legal or moral restrains, targeting mainly civilians and non-combatants, performed for its propagandistic and psychological effects on various audiences and conflict parties." (Schmidt, 2011)

According to Eric Hobsbawm, terrorism changed significantly at the end of the 20th century and what influenced this switch was firstly, an unexpected increase in violence, secondly, ever growing nationalist's ideologies, thirdly, systematic assassinations of political opponents and

lastly, large influence of democracy and globalization on terrorism. In addition, what was found interesting is situation described by Hobsbawm which led to unlimited violence: "The ideological conviction that dominates both international and internal conflicts since 1914th; the reasons of one side are completely just, and the reasons of the opponent are so terrible; to achieve victory and avoid defeat is not only legitimate but also necessary" (Hobsbawm, 2008: 123).

A significant turning point for Hobsbawm that happened in the field of terrorism is "the main invention of this period, which turned out to be unusually powerful: suicide bombings" (Hobsbawm, 2008: 126), which originated in the Iranian revolution, later spread to different terroristic groups, mainly Islamic extremists. Additionally, there are several more important points on the terrorism development timetable, such as the "revival of political assassinations" (Hobsbawm, 2008: 127), the decision to achieve the "maximum influence of the media" (Hobsbawm, 2008: 127), and the fact that at the beginning of this century political violence became "systematically global." (Hobsbawm, 2008: 127).

The most important component in defining terrorism by J.R. White is to put terrorism in a historical context, as well as a political and social context, as the meaning of terrorism is constantly changing, and evolving.

J. R. White states that the main goal of terrorism is to awaken fear within every person and to demonstrate the vulnerability of each individual, pointing out that terrorism keeps us "in the state of icy enchantment" (White, 2003: XIII).

White first writes about terrorism as nationalist warfare within the state borders, where terrorists were supported by the regime or part of the society, later he explains the evolution of terrorism, as now this is a phenomenon connected to large independent groups using violence to terrorize others in order to accomplish their final goals. J.R. White offers Jenkins' formulation of terrorism writing: "terrorism is threat or use of force aimed to achieve political changes" (White, 2003: 9).

Terrorism, by definition provided by Britannica is:" Systematic use of violence to create a general climate of fear in a population and thereby to bring about a particular political objective. It has been used throughout history by political organizations of both the left and the right, by

nationalist and ethnic groups, and by revolutionaries." (www.britannica.com) Furthermore, "technological sophistication of modern-day weapons" (www.britannica.com) led to the formation of terrorism as known nowadays.

According to Milasinovic and Milasinovic, it is important to make a difference between terrorism and guerrilla warfare, where terrorism is "a form of a violent struggle, in which violence is deliberately used against civilians in order to achieve nationalistic, socio-economic, ideological or religious goals" (Milašinović, Milašinović, 2007: 327). On the other hand, guerrilla warfare is a form of violent combat in which violence is deliberately used against military targets in order to achieve political goals (Milašinović, Milašinović, 2007: 327-329).

Although various authors gave their contribution and as a result we came into conclusion what terrorism actually is, it would be good if we took into consideration the Declaration of UN General Assembly where we could find the most comprehensive definition of terrorism as "criminal acts, including against civilians, committed with the intent to cause death or serious bodily injury, or taking of hostages, with the purpose to provoke a state of terror in the public or in a group of persons or particular persons, intimidate a population or compel a Government or an international organization to do or to abstain from doing any act".[1] Additionally, terrorism is any action that interferes with "rights to life, liberty and physical integrity"[2] and it "aims at the very destruction of human rights, democracy and the rule of law."[3]

As younger generations are witnessing more frequent terroristic attacks presently along with technological progress, social media, open society, globalised world, terrorism has never seemed closer to citizens. Moreover, the modern world with modern developed technologies brings within itself a negative byproduct which requires modern solutions. In this case, technological development led to the situation where the internet access is provided to a large number of different groups which are accessing the internet with malicious intentions in order to win over as many people as possible to fulfill their final goal. Internet is the most fertile soil for dissemination of terrorism and radicalization. In order to provide brief definition of radicalization, in further text I am using a definition given by European Commission. Namely,

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[1]Global Counter-Terrorism strategy, Office of the United Nations, High Commissioner for Human Rights, Fact Sheet No. 32: Human Rights, Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism, July 1st 2008, page 6.
[2] Ibid, page 7.
[3] Ibid

radicalization is: "a complex process in which an individual or a group embraces a radical ideology or belief that accepts uses or condones violence, including acts of terrorism, to reach a specific political or ideological purpose."[4] Furthermore, as radicalization and recruitment into terrorism also evolved though years and with the development on technologies, social media, faster communication opened a wide new battlefield which of course requires modern solutions in order to bring counter terrorism in not only offline but online battle as well.

What is the motivation standing behind this kind of violence and how different political, ideological, cultural or religious beliefs and views create divergence among people? Borum suggests that extremist ideologies lead to radicalization and ultimately to terroristic violence in a situation where they are feeling oppressed. Moreover, there are three stages of oppression given by Borum, "awareness of oppression, recognition that the oppression was 'social' and therefore not unavoidable, and realization that it was possible to act against the oppression" (Borum, 2004: 27).

How does an individual actually become a terrorist? The answers are found by Borum which states that there is usually not a conscious decision made by an individual in order to become a terrorist. Namely, "most involvement in terrorism results from gradual exposure and socialization towards extreme behavior" (Borum, 2004:24). There are many factors which influence the motive to join certain terroristic group, which are usually found in environment, individual motivation to change personal status, vulnerability, injustice and willingness to belong to a greater cause. "In radical extremist groups, any prospective terrorists find not only a sense of meaning, but also a sense of belonging, connectedness and affiliation" (Borum, 2004: 26). Borum concludes that precisely in these three factors, injustice, identity and belonging are found main reasons why someone would join a terrorist organization.

Among the authors who dealt with this topic is Alexander Lee, who engaged into investigation if poverty and lack of education have influence for individual to become a terrorist. Namely, the author finds is wrong to presume in every case that terrorists are poor and uneducated. Furthermore, Lee writes: "the empirical regularity of terrorists being wealthy and well educated has become a stylized fact that has been the basis for the construction of sophisticated theoretical

[4]https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/internal-security/counter-terrorism-and-radicalisation/prevention-radicalisation_en

accounts of terrorist recruitment" (Lee, 2011:206). On the other hand, the same author states that: "poor and poorly educated individuals are more likely to participate in terrorism, as they will often lack the connections and presentational skill that would enable them to make an impact in the conventional world and might thus see terrorism as their best way of making a contribution" (Lee, 2011: 209).

When it comes to the conceptualization of terrorism, which is surrounded by many issues, mainly regarding the definition of the term terrorism, J.P. Gibbs suggests incorporating five major conceptual questions because conceptualization goes beyond a definition of terrorism. Each of these questions introduces a new issue or problem. Gibbs finds all definitions of terrorism controversial as they define terrorism through labelling actions of terrorism through the reflection of ideological or political bias. "First, is terrorism necessarily illegal (a crime)? Second, is terrorism necessarily undertaken to realize some particular type of goal and, if so, what is it? Third, how does terrorism necessarily differ from conventional military operations in a war, a civil war, or so-called guerilla warfare? Fourth, is it necessarily the case that only opponents of the government engage in terrorism? Fifth, is terrorism necessarily a distinctive strategy in the use of violence and, if so, what is that strategy?" (Gibbs, 1989: 329) Gibbs suggests that in order to answer these questions more than a brief definition is needed. Later on, he comes to the conclusion that only subjects to which the terroristic act happened can state if this action was criminal or illegal. Another interesting controversial finding by Gibbs is the fact that he does not consider that terrorists necessarily have a goal, and he suggests that terrorists are irrational or mentally ill. Furthermore, he finds terrorism as a special strategy in violence whose essential feature is intimidation. When it comes to the theory of terrorism, it has to contain more than conceptualization that confronts issues and problems. "A definition of terrorism must promise empirical applicability and facilitate recognition of logical connections and possible empirical association" (Gibbs, 1989: 339).

2.2. Concept of radicalisation

There are different approaches to the concept of radicalisation. As pointed out by Peels, the term 'radicalisation' is relatively new and has been considered as a result of the political climate since mid 2000s, but has already entered into wide use in research on extremism, fundamentalism, conspiracism, fanaticism, terrorism, and counter-terrorism (Peels, 2023). According to Schmid, radicalisation is not necessarily a synonym for terrorism and does not, necessarily, have a negative connotation. Namely, this is a complex phenomenon influenced by combination of factors, individual, social and structural. "Existing research indicates that there are many external, social factors that can push an individual towards radicalisation and there are many internal factors that can pull him toward a terrorist group" (Schmid, 2013: 47). On the other hand, when discussing about de-radicalisation, the author states that the same applies. In order to reach de-radicalisation in is important to build trust with individuals, but also comprehend their needs and vulnerabilities. Also, one of the most important factors in de-radicalisation is offering support to individuals prone to radicalisation. Some of the most important de-radicalisation factors are: motivation to de-radicalise, rejecting violence and rigid ideology, and future non-violent goals (Schmid, 2013).

Schmid provides a comprehensive overview about radicalization, de-radicalisation and counter-radicalisation. Schmid finds the root causes in social exclusion and marginalization.

The author is looking for the roots of radicalisation beyond "micro level", wanting to explain radicalisation not only on the level of "vulnerable individuals", but also on the wider level, "meso-level of the "radical milieu" and finally on the "macro-level, the radicalisation of public opinion and party politics" (Schmid, 2013). Another influential researcher in the field of radicalisation, Walter Laqueur, argues that in "explaining the turn to extremist and terrorist violence, researchers should move away from political and structural conditions to individual psychological character traits, particularly those related to theological ideology, and thus to the temporal process of radicalisation of particular subjects" (Laqueur, 2004).

2.3.Freedom of expression, Human Rights and Terrorism

"I disapprove of what you say, but I'll defend to the death your right to say it, said Voltaire." (Aharon Barak, 1990: 4). Barak is adding, "Justice Shimon Agranat regarded freedom of expression as the heart and soul of democracy and said that it holds a place of honor in the palace of the fundamental rights of men" (Aharon Barak, 1990: 4). In order to emphasize the paramount importance of freedom of expression, Barak is stating that this is the first and vital precondition of any democratic system. There is no discussion among scholars belonging to the developed world about the importance of freedom of expression to every individual in a democratic society.

One of the basic assets of modern society is freedom of speech which together with freedom of press composes freedom of expression. The right to freedom of speech is not a modern invention. Moreover, if we go back in history we will find various bills and declarations which guarantee freedom as one of the greatest human rights, for example: the English bill of rights (1689), The French declaration of the rights of man (1789) and U.S. bill of rights (1791). Furthermore, if we take as example Article 10 of the Human Rights Act which relates to freedom of expression: *"1. Everyone has the right to freedom of expression. This right shall include freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas without interference by public authority and regardless of frontiers. This article shall not prevent States from requiring the licensing of broadcasting, television or cinema enterprises. 2. The exercise of these freedoms, since it carries with duties and responsibilities, may be subject to such formalities, conditions, restrictions or penalties as are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society, in the interest of national security, territorial disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals, for the protection of the reputation or rights of others, for preventing the disclosure of information received in confidence, or for maintaining the authority and impartiality of the judiciary"*.[5] Taking into account everything stated previously we have to ask ourselves how come we are still facing breaching of the rights even nowadays, and isn't that something we all agreed upon a long time ago, how come we are dealing with this as an up-to- date topic?

[5] Equality and Human Rights Commission: www.equalityhumanrights.com

The response to these questions is found in divergence among people and in the different aspirations of different social groups and their diverse understanding of the world, not only in the present time, but as well in the past as in the future. How did we reach this situation in which the core of democracy is being attacked? How did we come to the point where eighteen years old kills secondary school history teacher Samuel Paty for showing a caricature of the prophet Muhammad in a class on freedom of expression? What kind of perverted, deviant, abnormal sense of justice and desire for revenge drives a young adult to commit that kind of atrocity? Even though the killer has showed earlier signs of radicalization, especially posting pictures of decapitation on his Twitter account and kept communication with two jihadists from Syria prior the attack, nothing was done in order to prevent this crime. This behavior prior the terroristic attack can be seen as a threat, but some authors suggest that this is actually a call for repent and convergence to Islam, "before attacking the unbelievers it is necessary to invite them to convert to Islam, which would avoid unnecessary bloodshed" (Darko Tanasković, 2008: 152).

Samuel Huntington writes that the problem is not Islamic fundamentalism, the problem western world is facing is Islam in general as: "different civilization whose people are convinced of the superiority of their culture and who is obsessed with the inferiority of its power" (Samuel P. Huntington, 1996: 240). On the other hand, the main problem he finds for Islam is the West, a completely different civilization which strongly beliefs in its universal cultural superiority and tends to spread throughout the world. For this exact reason there will always be conflict between Islam and the West. Huntington writes: "Muslims hate and fear the power of the West and the treat it possesses to their society and beliefs; they see the western culture as materialistic, corrupt, decadent and immoral" (Samuel P. Huntington, 1996: 236). Also they see it as seductive and therefore emphasize the need to resist its influence.

As long as Islamic world sees the West as decadent, arrogant, materialistic, and repressive and the West sees Islamic world as underdeveloped, disadvantaged, primitive, situation will not change. If the both sides do not consider reorganizing their strong standing points, everything we will experience in the future will be more Islamic radicalism and proliferation of weapons and terrorism on even larger scale. But how can we establish a healthier dialog when the opposing sides cannot reach a consensus and get to the, at least, lowest level of mutual understanding?

2.4.Free speech, terrorism and religion

One of the main controversial questions appeared: does freedom of speech give us right to offend others? For this reason, Brendon O'Neill strongly vocalized that it is our "duty to offend…as offend pushes humanity forward; hence offence is a part of human progress". Consequently, "the right to offend is essential part of freedom of speech" (O'Neill, Chakrabarty, 2011). Shami Chakrabarty agrees, going even further by stating: "The right of free speech always includes the right to offend", furthermore, emphasizes that "everyone loves human rights including free speech, but they love their own rights, its other people's rights that they have a problem with" (ibid).

For the same reason Irshad Manji, critic of Islamic fundamentalism wrote in *Allah, Liberty and Love*: "Insult is the price for diversity" (Manji, 2012: 163). This Canadian writer and journalist propose a solution to the problem of the misunderstanding of Islam and the rest of the world. Namely, she invites everyone, regardless of their nationality and religious views to oppose hatred, fear and intolerance and to do it with courage, strength and universal human values. "Identity can trap you, but integrity will set you free" (Manji, 2012: 59). The main idea this Islamic reformist is suggesting is to use, instead of jihad[6], ijtihad (Islamic tradition of a different opinion), "tradition of reasoning and reinterpretation" (Manji, 2012: 12). All things considered, I strongly agree with Manji that we all need ijtihad, regardless if we are Muslims or not. This mental effort of independent reasoning means to fight to understand your own world, using your own reason, which implies liberty to ask questions, sometimes even uncomfortable ones (Manji, 2012). Only with strong, determent reform, not only of Islam but of all existing religions, we could put this problem to an end, terrorism which is closely related to religion. Elimination of the

[6] Jihad, "striving in the way of God", as a term broadly represents "an effort directed towards the establishment of a goal" (Darko Tanaskovic, 2008: 147).This term includes engaging in battle with all available means," including weapons in order to stand in the way of Allah's disbelievers who should be dealt with decisively and harshly" Ali Amir Moezzi (Darko Tanaskovic, 2008: 149). But it is important to mention that the term JIHAD, together with its narrow meaning as a warrior and military doctrine, also has a wider meaning which represents the spiritual effort of self-improvement in the path of Allah. In wider sense, jihad suggests war only sporadically and exclusively in defense (Darko Tanaskovic, 2008).

jihad movement is imperative, as this is a threat for the whole world; the battle has to be fought on many fronts (Sageman, 2004).

It is very important to talk more about the relations between Islam and Western society. A few studies have shown that when it comes to writing about Islam Western authors usually use negative narratives and connotations taking into consideration only the violent part of Islam as a religion. Usually, studies have failed to find a solution to this everlasting problem. As Samuel Huntington is writing, the causes of the constant pattern of conflict between the West and Islam originate from nature itself and the basis on which these two religions and civilizations. The main conflict, according to Huntington, was a byproduct of the difference between Muslim ideas based on Islam as a way of life on the one hand, and Christian secular ideas. Although there are similarities between these two religions, for example: "Both religions are monotheistic, who see the world through dualistic 'us vs. them' terms" (Samuel P. Huntington, 1996: 233). Along the lines of previously said, another author emphasizes the differentiation between 'us vs. them' as one of the crucial characteristics of terrorism. Namely, Šijaković writes: "Who are 'we'? Who do we belong to? Where is 'our' place? What is 'our' space? What are 'we' supposed to do? Who are 'they'? To whom do 'they' belong? Are 'they' endangering us? Are 'they' our enemies?" (Ivan Šijaković, 2003: 38). This actively demonstrates that, by Šijaković, 'we' or 'us' represents trust, approval, justification and attachment, where, on the other hand 'they' or 'them' represents rejection, repulsion, suspicion and distrust.

Although almost every researched author uses Islamic fundamentalism when it comes to explaining terrorism and its features, the author Bakir Alispahić writes that terrorism, as a historical phenomenon, has its roots in the period of time when Islam was still not a published religion, therefore, according to Alispahić there is a line between Islamic jihad and terrorism, which should not be crossed. Moreover, in this case, jihad and terrorism do not have any points of contact, and these are two different phenomena which do not overlap.

Bruce Hoffman writes that terrorism motivated by religious views is rather new news, something happening since 1980s. Namely, "in 1968, for example, none of the 11 identifiable terrorist groups active throughout the world could be classified as religious- that is, having aims and motivations reflecting a salient religious character or influence" (Hoffman, 1994: 344). The author is putting an emphasis on the fact that terrorism motivated by religion cannot be a

phenomenon reserved only for Islamic fundamentalists from the Middle East, as he portrays terrorists belonging to other religions as well: "Christian white supremacists in the United States, radical Jewish messianic terrorist movements in Israel, and radical Sihk movements in India" (Hoffman, 1994: 346). Bruce Hoffman strongly believes that religiously motivated terroristic attacks have stronger influence and response in the eyes of the public because it is in general, more dramatic and therefore creates a stronger echo.

3. Root causes of radicalisation and terrorism

For the purpose of better understanding the rationale and choice of policy instruments EU in this field, it is important to introduce and investigate root causes of radicalisation and terrorism regarding the particular reasons for triggering people to engage in the acts of terror. Root causes of radicalisation and terrorism are complex combinations of social, political, economic, and psychological factors. In order to develop effective strategies against terrorism and radicalisation it is of great importance to understand and get familiar with these causes. According to Magnus Ranstorp, these causes can be found in a complex combination of different factors: individual socio-psychological factors; social factors; political factors; ideological and religious dimensions; role of culture and identity issues; trauma and other trigger mechanisms. The author puts special emphasis on three factors which he addresses as a 'motor for radicalisation': group dynamics; radicalisers/groomers; and the role of social media (Ranstorp, 2016). Namely, the author makes a difference between push and pull factors, where push factors include: "social, political and economic grievances, a sense of injustice, and discrimination; personal crisis and tragedies; frustration; alienation; a fascination with violence; searching for answers to the meaning of life; an identity crisis; social exclusion; marginalisation; disappointment with democratic processes; polarisation, etc." (Ranstorp, 2016: 4). On the other hand, the pull factors are: "a personal quest, a sense of belonging to a cause, ideology or social network; power and control; a sense of excitement and adventure; a romanticized view of ideology and cause; the possibility of heroism, personal redemption, etc." (Ranstorp, 2016: 4).

Martha Crenshaw states that: "The first condition that can be considered a direct cause of terrorism is the existence of concrete grievances among an identifiable subgroup of a larger population, such as an ethnic minority discriminated against by the majority" (Crenshaw, 1981: 383). Through endeavors of minority to achieve equal rights enjoyed by the majority, terrorism is found as a tool in order to achieve their goal. Secondly, another condition which motivates for terroristic actions is "the lack of opportunity for political participation", where actions are completely driven by political and not social or economical reasons, all for the reason to achieve "recognition or attention" (Crenshaw, 1981: 383). On the other hand, terrorism can also be seen as a way to gain publicity for the terrorists' cause and gain support and followers.

Tore Bjorgo finds it difficult to identify one set of root causes through which we could cover different forms of terrorism because left-wing terrorists, for example, use different terrorist means than religiously motivated terrorists do, and there is no guarantee that if the root causes are identified and removed that terrorism will also end. For example, we could not remove preconditions as modernization and globalization processes or modern news media which have direct impact on the emergence of terrorism. The EU has wrongly identified the problem and its root causes and therefore has not selected adequate aims, measures and policy instruments for addressing this problem. The EU strategies should focus on promoting social inclusion, economic opportunities, and education and not focus on marginalization, polarization and distancing minority groups. Promoting good communication, interfaith dialogue and strengthening community are essential in order to resolve conflicts and prevent radicalisation and terrorism.

In this context, it is also important to consider several further questions such as, what is the average profile of new potential terrorisst, and, are there, actually, groups of social, economic, physical features which can determine whether a person will be inclined to commit atrocities in the future? In search for solutions to these interesting questions a personal interview was conducted with a psychologist Duška Šain and here are some of the answers. First of all, psychologist Šain expresses her concerns, mainly how to address this topic when many psychiatrists are not able to reach a consensus regarding this problematic issue. Namely, through existing literature, as presented and found as a support to her arguments, it is important to mention that when talking about the average profile of new potential terrorist, Šain states that it is really easy to fall under the influence of discrimination when it comes to this complex and important topic. Namely, it is easy to discriminate and say that the terrorists are as they are usually presented in media: radical, under educated, belonging to certain racial, national, religious groups. Even though the majority of international terrorists are, indeed, of Arabic, Muslim origin, we cannot ignore the immensely huge number of terrorist attacks committed by white Caucasians (Šain). On the other hand, in most research on terrorism, scholars are usually portraying terrorists as males; Šain here draws attention to gender discrimination, saying that many terrorists throughout history were females.

Further on, "people lately have the intention to fall under the influence of Baader-Meinhof phenomenon. This phenomenon represents the false impression that a certain action happens more frequently than it actually does. Through this frequency illusion we tend to notice terrorism more often as we speak about this topic more often, even in situations where general characteristics of terrorism are not applicable at all. Hence, it is important to make a distinction of what terrorism is and what it is not", Šain says. Overall, there is a big gap in existing literature where confusion was created considering that studies do not use validated psychological instruments and reliable behavioural measures which can lead to the presumption that it is not going to be possible to make a difference between terrorists and nonterrorists.

When investigating the mental framework and mentality of terrorist, Randy Borum in *Psychology of Terrorism* explains that the "general violence risk"[7] which represents the tendency of an individual to engage in any act of aggression, actually cannot be found in the mental framework of a terrorist. Furthermore, Dr. Borum states that, quite contrarily, people who carry general violence risk within them will probably never engage in terroristic actions. "Conversely, many known terrorists- including some field leaders of the 9/11 attacks- did not have a large number of key general violence risk factors, although they were actively preparing to engage in acts of terrorism" (Borum, 2004: 17).

If we are talking about levels of education that terrorists obtained prior to engaging and becoming a part of a terrorist organization, it is important to mention Victoroff and his "Mind of the terrorist". Namely, "demographic studies from the 1960s and 1970s conducted a profile of the typical terrorist as a well-educated single male in his mid-twenties from a middle class background" (Victoroff, 2005: 7). "For instance, in a 1976 study of eighteen groups, average ages of members ranged from 23.2 to 31.3. Most identified/convicted terrorist came from middle- or upper-middle-class backgrounds, and the majority had some college education (Russell and Miller 1983)" (Victoroff, 2005: 7). There is an important finding in understanding potential characteristics which one terrorist could possess, "several projects reported 'typical' psychosocial characteristics of terrorists in the 1970s and 1980s. American psychiatrist David Hubbard (1971) reported five traits of skyjackers: 1.violent, often alcoholic father; 2.deeply

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[7] Risk factors for general violence: juvenile delinquency, problematic family background, antisocial personality, prior hospital admissions, violent history, criminal history, unmarried status.

religious mother; 3.sexualy shy, timid and passive; 4.younger sisters toward whom the terrorist acted protectively; and 5.poor social achievement" (Victoroff, 2005: 9). This actively demonstrates that people are not usually educated enough about this topic and there is always place for improvement and acquiring new knowledge.

It remains an open question how did we get from this description to the one that is usually used today, as we all know how the profile of a usual suspect for terroristic attacks looks nowadays: long bearded, Middle Eastern, not educated male. The answer is simple; today we are usually facing a different type of terrorism, which falls into the scope of religious extremist terrorism, where back in the 60s or 70s social revolutionary and left-wing terrorism took place more frequently.

The 9/11 attack was a breaking point where attention majorly shifted putting focus on the psychology of Islamic fundamentalist terrorism and Muslim extremism (Victoroff, 2005).

"The conclusion has been that terrorists do not usually exhibit what we refer to as psychiatric disorder; finding no evidence of mental illness in any respondent; while terrorist groups are sometimes led by insane individuals, and while a few terrorist acts might be attributed to unequivocally insane persons, terrorists rarely meet psychiatric criteria for insanity. Rather, mostly the literature attributing clinical mental disorder to terrorists is conducted of the remorseless personality type, psychopathy or sociopahty" (Victoroff, 2005: 12).

A potential solution is provided by Victoroff, where "emphasis should be placed on early prevention, that is, on the analysis of the interaction between psychological, cultural, economic, and political factors that influence uncommitted but impressionable young people to turn to terrorism" (Victoroff, 2005: 35). According to Dr. Sabina Alispahić, clinical psychologist and psychoanalyst, when it comes to profiling terrorists it is, first of all, important to analyze and examine psychological, social and economic features, but also physical and racial features. The author is facing many methodological difficulties during the research as she finds it very difficult to collect a representative sample relevant for the study, due to the inability to interview active or passive terrorists. Furthermore, the author comes to a conclusion that:"terrorism is generally seen as a type of antisocial behavior, although, according to some authors, terrorists can be best understood if they are viewed as a group of psychopaths, the idea of 'psychopathic terrorists' is

intuitively appealing, but when the basic diagnostic criteria for psychopathy are considered, the limitations and inaccuracies of such a generalization become evident" (Alispahić, Alispahić, Kovačević, 2018: 36). When it comes to investigating mental health of people who participate in terroristic actions, illnesses that were reported are find on the autism spectrum condition, depression, personality disorder, mainly not more serious condition than previously stated (Dr Kenyon, 2021).

The biggest gap in literature considering psychological research of terrorism between 60s and 80s Alispahić found in the fact that these researches were mainly conducted on clinical speculations and there is a major lack of empirical research. Back then, terrorism was defined as a "manifestation of behavioral deviation" (Alispahić, Alispahić, Kovačević, 2018: 35). Moreover, this kind of behavior was considered to be impulsive and it had its origins in childhood. Borum goes even further and stated that back in the days was considered that violent behavior and tendency towards terrorism implies hatred towards one of the parents and also it comes as a product of early childhood abuse and neglect.

Taking everything previously stated into consideration, a conclusion is withdrawn that generally terrorists do not belong into category of mentally ill individuals: "according to Crenshaw (2000), a usual common characteristic of terrorists is their normality and Silk (1998) which states that the most serious researchers in the field of terrorism would largely agree that terrorists are essentially normal individuals" (Alispahić, Alispahić, Kovačević, 2018: 37).

4. Social media platforms and dissemination of terrorist content online

We are living in a digital era which provides a platform for people who tend to think alike to gather and share opinions regardless if they are benevolent or not. As Eurostat published on July 14th 2022, 96% of young people (aged 16-29) in EU have uninterrupted internet access in the comfort of their homes and it is up to each person individually how this benefit is going to be used. When it comes to grownups, this number is slightly smaller, 84%. Hence, the main focus of the antiterrorist intelligence should be put on identifying and prevention of terroristic actions before they occur, which is quite a different kind of operational challenge (Borum, 2004).

The main focus through the Master thesis is put on the Regulation against terrorist content online. Lately, as European Union is facing terroristic attacks more frequently, with several European counties, including France (Paris, November 2015), Germany (Hanau, February 2020), Austria (Vienna, November 2020), the need to act against terrorism significantly increased. What has been done by now in endeavours to stop, or better say, reduce the incidence of radicalization online and also, what else could be done in the future especially when it comes to educating children and teenagers about the bad impact of online platforms? Focus is going to be put on researching and analyzing the evolution and perspectives of the EU Counter-Terrorism and Counter-Radicalization policy and explaining the Regulation on dissemination of terrorist content online which emerged from it.

What is the easiest way to recruit new followers nowadays than different online platforms which represent the most fertile soil for these kinds of endeavors? This actively demonstrates that there is a connection between their cause and the recipients of these messages. "The Internet offers terrorists and extremists the capability to communicate, collaborate and convince" (Behr, Reding, Edwards, Gribbon, 2013: 3). According to this research report it is not only important to investigate online content and messaging, but also, maybe more important would be to research in which way the individual used the internet prior to a terroristic attack. It is a gap in research which is very hard to investigate due to restricted access of terrorist data, but it is crucial for the authors which collect the evidence presented on trials, registers of convicted terrorists etc.

The authors of this research report came to conclusion that there are five main roles of the internet, when it comes to the dissemination of radicalization nowadays:

"1. The internet creates more opportunities to become radicalized;

2. The internet acts as an 'echo chamber': a place where individuals find their ideas supported and echoed by other like-minded individuals;

3. The internet accelerates the process of radicalization;

4. The internet allows radicalization to occur without physical contact;

5. The internet increases the opportunity for self-radicalization" (Behr, Reding, Edwards, Gribbon, 2013: XI).

In all 15 cases that are being researched through this report the internet has found to be the main source of communication, information gathering, collecting followers for their cause and advertising their extremist beliefs. "The internet has transformed the extent to which terrorist organizations and their sympathizers can radicalize people in this country and overseas. It enables a wider range of organizations and individuals to reach a much larger audience with a broader and more dynamic series of messages and narratives. It encourages interaction and facilitates recruitment" (Behr, Reding, Edwards, Gribbon, 2013: 6). When it comes to the EU approach regarding to online radicalization, the main EU goal is to form strategies which will prevent terrorists from accessing platform in order to disturb their recruitment efforts.

The dissemination of terrorist content online nowadays happens extremely fast, due to dynamics of the informational world we live in. "The information age shows how the information revolution is altering the nature of conflict, and why is it bringing new models of warfare, terrorism, and crime to the fore, requiring analysts, advisers, policymakers, and folks on the front lines to rethink organization, doctrine, and strategy" (Arquilla, Ronfeldt, 1997: 4). Furthermore, the authors are explaining how valuable information and communicational systems are, especially today when they are transforming our society in various ways. When it comes to connection of terrorism and information in today's society Arquilla and Ronfeldt are writing about 'Netwar' which represents a new form of non-military information related conflict. 'Netwar' may occur between governments and groups or organizations involved in terroristic

acts, mass destruction and proliferation of weapons. "Most netwars will probably be non-violent, but in worst of cases one could combine the possibility into some mean low-intensity conflict scenarios. Some netwars will involve military issues, areas including nuclear proliferation, drug smuggling, and anti-terrorism because of the potential threats they pose to international order and national security interests" (Arquilla, Ronfeldt, 1997: 29). It is important to emphasize that the authors are not talking about the real war here, a war in a traditional sense, on quite contrary, 'netwar' should be used as a toolkit in order to prevent the real war.

As terrorism as a treat is involving, becoming stronger, taking different shapes and sizes, it enlarges every year spreading its word worldwide and this occurs through social media platforms as a perfect environment for terrorism dissemination. It is the fastest way for terrorists to reach potential followers, to lure them into becoming a part of their organizations and to fight for their cause.

Future research should consider the potential effects of how different social media platforms create the most fertile soil for these kinds of actions, for example, dissemination of radicalisation online.

5. Evolution and perspectives of the EU Counter-Terrorism and Counter-Radicalisation Policy

5.1. Key incentives for the EU action

Terrorism in a modern sense evolved radically throughout the years. Nowadays we are facing this phenomenon in its strongest form with the tendency to grow even stronger and more radical. In this constellation of the world it is important to find new ways of facing this threat. Terrorists are not 'amateurs' committing atrocities ad hoc, they are a part of the larger picture, organization standing behind them, teaching them how to become more and more sophisticated in their intentions. Therefore, a respond to terrorism has to be stronger than ever. "Professional terrorists are also increasing; they are becoming demonstrably more adept in their trade craft of death and

destruction; more formidable in terms of their abilities of tactical modification, adjustment and innovation; and able to operate for sustained periods of time while avoiding detection, interception and arrest or capture; these 'professional' terrorists are apparently becoming more ruthless as well" (Hoffman, 1994:351).

"I would like to highlight the common position 2001/93020 and 2001/931 PESC21. In the first one, crime of financing terrorism, refusal to shelter suspects, measures to prevent recruitment into terrorist groups and to prevent the supply of weapons are contemplated. The second position encompasses a list of persons, groups and entities involved in terrorist acts to which the measures to freeze founds and other financial assets or economic resources involved in terroristic act" (Marcos Martin, 2017: 251).

In order to get a better insight into evolution and perspectives of the EU counter-terrorism and counter-radicalization policy it is important to analyze critically EU policies, measures and strategies which are developed "in the context of the treats and challenges posed by radicalization and violent extremism; it is not possible to analyze EU steps towards a more preventive approach without considering the framework of its counterterrorism efforts" (Musolino, 2021: 2). In this process the Radicalization Awareness Network (RAN)[8] has become the main platform on which all future activities in developing awareness, knowledge and skills will be conducted; together with cooperation, sharing information within EU, training professionals, all in order to act now (Musolino, 2021). Another significant turning point in the evolution and perspectives of the EU Counter-Terrorism and Counter-Radicalization Policy happened between 2015 and 2017 because of the Syrian war and rise of ISIS. This made the EU reconsider their counter-terrorism policy one more time. Namely, a new threat was shown, large number of foreign fighters traveling all over the globe in order to take part in various terroristic attacks (Musolino, 2021). Also, according to this Musolino, year 2001 was a turnover in history which made EU concerned more than ever before, making this a crucial moment which made all Member States realize that serious counter-terrorism steps have to be taken. "The subsequent institutionalization of this cooperation (especially through the establishment of the European

[8] "RAN is a network of frontline practitioners who work daily with both those vulnerable to radicalization and those who have already been radicalized. As civil society representatives, social workers, youth workers, teachers, healthcare professionals, local authority representatives, police officers and prison officers, they are engaged in both preventing and countering violent extremism in all its forms and rehabilitating and reintegrating violent extremists. It was founded in 2011." (home-affairs.ec.europa.eu)

Arrest Warrant[9], the Counter Terrorism Coordinator[10] and the European Counter Terrorism Centre within Europol[11]) has contributed to 'routinization' of counter-terrorism practices in the European Union" (Musolino, 2021: 4).

In December 2015, after Charlie Hebdo attack happened in Paris the same year, the Commission proposed a new directive on fighting terrorism, which mainly addressed the new phenomenon of foreign fighters. In general, almost every attack on European soil was an additional incentive for the EU to design and propose new or deepen already existing methods of fighting terrorism.

Among the legislation adopted by the European Union, it is particularly important peace to mention: "Directive EU 2017/541, based on Article 83 and is considering necessity to align EU legal framework in the line with the international legal context, with United Nations Security Council Resolution 2178 (2014) and the Additional Protocol to the Council of Europe Convention on preventing terrorism" (Musolino, 2021: 21).

5.2. EU's response to terrorism: Prevention of radicalisation-online and offline and the effectiveness of the EU counter-terrorism regulation

As terrorism nowadays has become one of the biggest challenges put in front of the global society, there have been various attempts to create policies and tools which will be helpful in fighting this modern phenomenon. When it comes to EU policies and strategies, it is important to mention that not only events happening at the internal EU level encourage development and evolution of the counter-terrorism strategies, but also events happening internationally, and

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[9] "The European arrest warrant "EAW" is a simplified cross-border judicial surrender procedure for the purpose of prosecuting or executing a custodial sentence or detention order. A warrant issued by one of the EU country's territory is valid in the entire territory of the EU. The EAW has been operational since 1 January 2004". (e-justice.europa.eu)

[10] After the terrorist attack in Madrid, on March 11th 2004, EU leaders adopted a declaration on combating terrorism, which contained the establishment of the EU Counter-Terrorism Coordinator. The Coordinator is in charge for: coordination of counter-terrorism within EU, Proposing priority areas for action to the Council, improving communication between EU and third counties, has active role in fighting terrorism. (consilium.europa.eu)

[11] The terroristic attacks which happened in Europe during 2015 led to creation of security policy ECTC- European Counter Terrorism Center in January 2016. The ECTC was created by Europol in order to develop tools and address emerging counter-terrorism needs. (Europol.europa.eu)

worldwide. Moreover, if we take a look at the timeline of evolution of EU counter-terrorism we will come to conclusion that some of the most effective counter-terrorism strategies and policies were made after attacks which did not take place on European soil. Consequently, it is well known that after 9/11 policies were made by the EU which changed significantly the face of European security and its role as some of the best strategies can be found while reading American scholars, naturally, due to the fact that through the years Americans had the most experience with fighting terrorism and radicalization. "In an extraordinary meeting ten says after the 11 September 2001 attacks on the World Trade Centre and Pentagon, the European Council declared the fight against terrorism to be an EU priority objective" (Musolino, 2021: 6).

As written by Rohan Gunarata Strategic counter-terrorism is a strategy which deserves our full attention, while it is a game changer in fighting terrorism: "Over the years, governments and their partners have built a counter-terrorism toolkit. The three principal approaches that define this toolkit include, tactical counter-terrorism, operational counter-terrorism and strategic counter-terrorism" (Gunarata, 2017: 1). Further in the text, the author explains that tactical and operational counter-terrorism aim to "kill and apprehend terrorists and disrupt their operations" (Gunarata, 2017: 1), where he found strategic counter-terrorism as a game changer while its goal is to fight the threat of terrorism through the members of society, where community members have critical importance and crucial role to "build social resilience and counter extremism and rehabilitation and reintegration to de-radicalize terrorists and extremists" (Gunarata, 2017: 1).

When it comes to legal instruments developed and used by the EU in order to fight terrorism and radicalization, it is important to mention the Council Common Position of December 27th 2001, as well as the Council Framework Decision of June 13th 2002 where specific measures to fight this phenomenon are provided. "EU counter-terrorism cooperation has continued to grow, as the persistence of the terrorist threat in Europe has led to new policy initiatives. This is without doubt, the area where the role of the EU has grown most significantly in the first decade of the twenty-first century" (Kaunert, Leonard, 2019: 3). Together with EU Counter terrorism Strategy from November 30th 2005, these legal instruments have the same goal previously mentioned, which is to protect EU citizens, provide them a safe environment, to allow them to indulge in provided human rights, freedom, justice and security. "The European Union is an area of increasing openness; it is an area of increasing interdependence, allowing for free movement of

people, ideas, technology and resources. This is an environment which terrorists abuse to pursue their objectives" (Granado, 2015: 4).

As pointed out by Martin, "key priorities for the prevention are: to develop common approaches to spot and tackle problematic behavior, in particular, the misuse of Internet; to address incitement and recruitment, particularly in crucial environments, for example, places of religious training or worship; to develop a media and communication strategy in order to explain better the EU policies, to promote good governance, democracy, education and economic prosperity through community and Member States assistance programs; to develop inter-cultural dialogue within and outside the European Union" (Marcos Martin, 2017: 250).

Furthermore, there is "Check the web"[12] initiative of the Council of the EU with the assignment to monitor the internet. In annex 1 it is found: "Internet use plays a significant role for terrorist organizations. Terrorists use the Internet to radicalize, recruit and train potential terrorists and to transfer information. So-called terror manuals provide instructions on how to produce weapons, how to carry out attacks, how to take hostages and how to build bombs, among other things. In the face of the global availability of the Internet, this is especially worrying."[13] EU created the framework but it also emphasized the role of the local community as it gave authority to Member States in order to act. Member States are together with Europol actively monitoring and evaluating terrorist websites.

Several scholars have criticized effectiveness of the EU cooperation when it comes to dealing with this specific subject: "Whilst Bures (2011) has famously questioned whether the EU's counter-terrorism policy has been more than a 'paper tiger', Argomaniz (2010) has highlighted the existence of a gap between the adoption of various measures at the EU level and their implementation in practice at the national level" (Kaunert, Leonard, 2019: 4).

The effectiveness of the EU counter-terrorism online regulation is evaluated by its objectives, but also its implementation and the impact it leaves behind. How effective is the regulation is seen through its main objective, which is to fight against the dissemination of terrorist content online by creating obligations, obligatory measures, for online platforms to remove problematic content

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[12] Council of the European Union; Subject: Council Conclusions on cooperation to combat terrorists use of the Internet, 8457/3/07 REV3
[13] 8457/3/07 REV3 Annex 1, data.consilium.europa.eu

within one hour. The regulation promotes cooperation on the highest level, but also, information sharing among relevant stakeholders. Furthermore, the regulation puts responsibilities on the online platforms which are required to have terms of service, reporting mechanism, and system to handle taking down the unwanted content. The implementation of all of the above measures is very challenging and requires transparency, consistency but also includes accountability. The regulation is facing challenges which, of course, have an impact on its effectiveness. Namely, as it was already stated, issues occur when it comes to defining what terrorist content is, as this is a subjective matter. Moreover, this usually leads to problems regarding over-removal on the one hand and under-removal on the other hand. One of the most important issues here is to establish balance between what falls into the scope of freedom of expression and what is counter terrorism. Also another problem arose, that is the fact that the regulation is primarily focused on the large platforms, putting in the background smaller platforms where radicalisation and propaganda dissemination still occurs. Furthermore, there is a challenge which has to be overcome when it comes to ever-growing fast evolution of online technologies used by the terrorists which must be reached and overcome. New problems require new solutions and permanent work on finding new and better ways in overcoming this serious problem. On this path cooperation and coordination between different subjects is required, but also represents a challenge. When it comes to further research in this field, it would be important to improve already existing tools used in the combat against terrorism online. Moreover, there is always a place for improvement especially when it comes to efforts to improve cooperation, consistency in implementation and efforts to find a balance between fundamental rights and counter- terrorism. The EU regulatory approach in preventing terrorism is a large and significant step towards addressing and solving the problem of growing threat which affects the whole civilized world. I personally think that the EU still has to work on education of its citizens but also on creating awareness, as many people did not recognize the importance of this topic. Together with digital literacy promotion, creating critical thinking and media literacy in general, we could hope that this problem is going to be put behind us.

6. Case study: Regulation of the European Parliament and the Council of the EU on preventing the dissemination of terrorist content online

One of the most important roles of the European Union nowadays is providing protection and security for its citizens, internally and externally as well. Therefore, one of the tools which enable this protection is the Regulation against terrorist content online. The Regulation applies as of 7th June 2022 and represents a framework which was conducted in order to prevent the dissemination of terrorist content online. "The new legal framework aims at preventing terrorists from easily exploiting the internet to recruit, encourage attacks, provide training and glorify their crimes" (Wahl, 2021).

6.1. Process of the development of the Regulation

The process of the development of the Regulation has taken a long time, mostly due to the complexity of the topic and diverging views of various stakeholders involved in the policy-making process. In line with the 2015 European agenda on security, with the rise of radicalisation, the European Commission started creating a system for tackling terrorism online. Namely, in September 2017, the European Commission presented guidelines and main principles on "prevention, detection and removal of illegal content online, including hatred, violence and terrorist propaganda."[14] The Commission adopted a recommendation in March 2018 which included "a set of non-binding operational measures to be taken by online providers and Member States to tackle illegal content online."[15] Afterwards, a public consultation was conducted by Commission between April 30th and June 25th 2018. The European Commission presented a proposal for regulation preventing the dissemination of terrorist content online on September 12th 2018. Later on, the Justice and Home Affairs Council agreed on the negotiating position on December 6th 2018. Although the Council reached its position in a relatively short period of time, the Parliament adopted its first position in April 2019. The trilogue negotiations between

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[14] europarl.europa.eu , Preventing the dissemination of terrorist content online in 'Promoting our European Way of Life'
[15] Ibid

institutions began in the autumn 2019. Many problems were faced; the meetings were delayed several times due to different reasons. The Parliament, namely requested an opinion from the EU Fundamental Rights Agency on February 6th 2019 regarding fundamental rights implications. The controversial part and the problem which was found by FRA stated that the definition of terrorist content has to be modified, as it broadens the terms of the directive. Another issue arose, namely, on April 8th 2019 when LIBE Committee debated on the proposal and came to conclusion that there is compliance of the proposal with existing legislation on electronic commerce and audiovisual media services. After the plenary adopted the amended proposal in first reading on April 17th 2019, where amended text imposes 4% of the services providers' global turnover as a sanction in the case they fail to comply with the legislation. "There is no obligation to monitor or filter the content, even though the service providers have the obligation to withdraw the illegal content within one hour".[16] After a new series of terroristic attacks hit Europe in autumn 2020, on December 10th 2020, the Parliament and the Council reached a political agreement on the proposal and on January 11th 2021 the LIBE Committee approved the agreed text where definition of terrorist content was aligned with the Directive on combating terrorism. After the Council adopted the text on March 16th 2021, The European Parliament approved it in the plenary on April 28th 2021 European Parliament, europarl.europa.eu). The Regulation applies as of June 7th 2022 (European Parliament, Prevention the dissemination of terrorist content online).

This rather new and controversial topic is entered the public sphere and since it happened it never ceases to be a subject of a debate. As we already came to conclusion that terrorism nowadays knows no boundaries, special efforts by the EU have been made in order to try to prevent the dissemination of terrorist content online as internet is nowadays the biggest platform used by the terrorists in order to spread radicalization and recruit new followers. This international toolkit was developed through special joint cooperation of all Member States as in this case the local contribution at the lowest level is of great importance. The main task is to remove terrorist content which is found online within one hour after a removal order is received. It is important to mention that the Regulation works in order to respect Human rights in general, to protect freedom of expression together with all fundamental freedoms and values proclaimed

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[16] Ibid

by the democratic society. The realization that battle against terrorism cannot be held only in offline world and the fact that modern times require modern solutions led to joint endeavors of all Member States and brought EU into action of fighting terrorism online as well. Along with technological development the other, dark side of humanity is also developing, constantly trying to find new ways in order to reach their goals.

6.2. Main elements of the Regulation and mechanisms of implementation

The main elements of the Regulation are:

"1.Obligation for Hosting Service providers (HSPs) to remove terrorist content online within one hour after receiving a removal order from a competent national authority of an EU Member State;

2. Limited scrutiny of cross-border removal orders by the competent authority of the Member State where the HSP has its main establishment or where its legal representative resides;

3. Obligation for platforms to take proactive measures when they are exposed to terrorist content;

4. Inclusion of several safeguards to ensure respect with fundamental rights, in particular freedom of expression and the right to information;

5.Obligation for Member States to sanction platforms for non-compliance with the obligations under the regulation" (Thomas Wahl, 2022, eucrim.eu).

When inappropriate or illegal content reaches the internet, regardless in what way or form, through videos or images, audio recordings, posts on social media, content available to the users is inspected for irregularities. When terrorist content is detected, regardless of its subject matter and purpose, if for example, the individual is glorifying terroristic acts or is spreading instructions how to commit acts of terror, or in any other way contributes to terroristic offences, a removal order is to follow. Furthermore, all online platforms have one hour to act and to take down all the inappropriate and endangering content. Of course, this process does not go so easy

in reality due to the fact that, even when reported, problematic content can still be found online and find its way to the recipient of information. It is also important to mention that there are penalties, sanctions of non-compliance, which can be up to 4% of the platforms' turnover (home-affairs.ec.europa.eu). As the Executive Director of Tech against Terrorism, Adam Hadley stated, the situation when reported content is still not taken down is happening due to "cross jurisdictional ambiguity and inertia". Furthermore, "as a result, many of these sites receive millions of views". Hadley stated that, at the moment it is impossible to remove terrorist operated websites, "even when there is a clear evidence of designated terrorist organizations paying for these services". Consequently, Hadley encourages the Member States to "consider improving international mechanisms to disrupt terrorism operated websites by agreeing guidelines on how to have these sites taken down whilst ensuring that there are appropriate protections in place to avoid the abuse of infrastructure level takedowns".[17]

Once when the problematic subject is removed in one of the Member States there is a possibility of EU wide removal order, a situation in which MS issues a removal order applying to all existing platforms on the EU soil. When it comes to removal orders, it is important to mention that they have to be justified; containing all the detailed information explaining why is the content undesirable. There is also a developed and well structured cooperation with third world countries and the rest of the world in order to act together in this ever-growing problem.

In order to implement the Regulation, taking terrorist content off the web within an hour the EU developed radicalization awareness method consisting of academics, social worker, educators working together for the mutual cause, preventing radicalization online. EU is on a serious mission and works hard in order to put this problem behind them, although it was never possible to eradicate radicalization nor it will ever be possible in the future. This does not mean that the EU is going to give up, on contrary, it will continue working on this problem, constantly striving to find new solutions to the problem. Through the implementation of Regulation much more has been achieves, primarily when it comes to working together with international organizations and partner countries (UN office Counter terrorism for example), improved aviation and rail security,

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[17] Terrorist Operated Websites: Why UN Member States' Must Act Urgently, 20th June 2023, YouTube

as well as stronger maritime security is achieved. Also, through denying and disabling terroristic actions, better information flow is achieved (SIS Schengen Information System[18]).

It is also important to mention that there are exemptions which apply on content regarding educational, artistic, and journalistic or media reporting context in research purposes. Regardless of this fact, some would think that the Regulation does not go together with freedom of expression and is jeopardizing it. This problem arose in the process of making the regulation, for example when on March 25th 2021 over 60 civil society organisations urged MEPs to vote against the Regulation for the reason that Regulation "still contains dangerous measures that will ultimately weaken the protection of fundamental rights in the EU. It also has the potential to set a dangerous precedent for online content regulation worldwide" (Wahl, 2021).

6.3. Lack of citizen awareness as obstacle to effective implementation of the Regulation

As a part of researching and developing this Master's thesis a questionnaire was conducted and carried out in September 2022. The questionnaire was applied on adults (29-47 year olds) living in different EU Member States, predominantly: Austria, Belgium, Croatia, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Slovenia and Spain. Out of 493 potential participants who received the questionnaire, only 46 responded. The respondents mainly have higher education, university diplomas, master's degrees or even doctoral degrees in different fields of science. The main goal was to conduct a research and show how much are the citizens of EU familiar with the terms of terrorism and radicalization, how do they see the current security situation on the European soil, do they feel safe in their country of residence and are they familiar with the Regulation.

An interesting piece of information that stood out was the fact that some of the respondents were active participants of a terrorist attack which took place in Vienna, Austria on November 2nd 2020.

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[18] "Since March 2021, countries have shared search 'matches' in SIS alerts related to terrorist offences with Europol. Europol exchanges supplementary information with countries on SIS alerts related to terrorist offences." (home-affairs.ec.europa.eu)

The obtained results did not meet initial expectations, as they showed great lack of interest of participants in this very important topic. Namely, it was very difficult to collect a relevant sample for the research and the respondents were not familiar enough with the topic. They have demonstrated that they do posses some knowledge about terrorism and radicalization in general, but their knowledge was superficial and based on prejudices and they would usually fall into the trap of discrimination; as they are understanding terrorism only in the context of Islamic fundamentalism. It was interesting to come to know that almost no one felt safe in their country of residence and that they were expecting to hear the news that another attack took place somewhere near them. Even though the Regulation is relatively new, it was surprising to witness that people are generally not familiar with One hour rule. Furthermore, some of the participants have expressed their concern that the Regulation could fall into the scope of internet censorship. They are against internet censorship, but a certain control of the internet usage must exist for the benefit and protection of all users. Mainly, the respondents did not come in contact with radicalization online, or they were not able to recognize it at the time and never came into a situation to report certain irregularities.

The question arises: is the EU doing enough when it comes to educating its citizens about its important directives, regulations, resolutions and decisions? How can an average person living in the EU understand the processes happening around them, when educated people do not even posses the basic knowledge on European Union policy? The research conducted for this thesis shows that the Member States should work harder on education of their citizens in order to obtain better results through cooperation of Member States and the citizens for the common good of everyone.

7. Conclusion

 Dissemination of terrorist content online is nowadays one of the biggest challenges the EU is facing therefore the EU counter-terrorism regulation is of great importance in the efforts to effectively prevent, detect, investigate and prosecute terroristic acts. As one of the four pillars of the EU counter-terrorism strategy is prevention; this has become one of the most important aspects of the EU combat against terrorism and radicalization while ensuring security and respecting fundamental human rights as an imperative.

The main conclusion that can be withdrawn from everything researched and stated previously is the fact that, while the EU regulatory approach in preventing radicalisation online has been a great and positive step, its effectiveness is still an ongoing process. Through the process of establishing regulation as a legal framework, promoting cooperation and encouraging proactive measures the EU is on the right path to reach the goal which is the reduction of dissemination of extremist content online. Of course, many challenges, obstacles and limitations remain which, hopefully, are going to be overcome through continuous evaluation of the regulation and improved approaches to this topic.

The EU regulatory approach in preventing terrorism is a large and significant step towards addressing and solving the problem of growing threat which affects the whole civilized world. Although the regulatory approach improved cooperation between different subjects in mutual combat against terrorism dissemination, its effectiveness is still facing challenges and is a subject of constant debate which has to strive for improvement.

Future research should consider the potential aspects which are going to contribute to effectiveness of the EU regulatory approach in the fight against terrorism through regularly evaluating the regulation as it is important to establish the impact and outcomes which are products of regulation. Also, each Member State should continue working together in finding new strategies to improve regulatory and future legislative frameworks.

The dialogue with former, active terrorists or the ones who are at risk for becoming one should be continued as well as rehabilitation programs for individuals involved in terroristic acts.

Moreover, it is important to establish how effective is reintegration of former terrorists into society or a new approach should be presented.

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