Risks

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Threat assessment: Although the threat level of terrorism in Europe remains high, in Estonia the risk stemming from the spread of violent extremist ideologies remains low. Compared with the previous assessment, the threat evaluation has not changed.

Any form of violent extremism, regardless of its ideological source, could pose a potential threat to national security. Although violent right-wing extremists with ambitions of violence have been identified in Estonia – and in January 2025 the first-ever conviction was handed down against three minors belonging to the far-right FKD group – proportionally, the greatest terrorist threat still originates from extremism driven by Islamist ideology. From a broader international perspective, one cannot ignore the regime across Estonia's eastern border, which has been designated as terrorist by both the Riigikogu and the European Union.

People in Estonia who are directly influenced by the Kremlin's hostile propaganda are mostly elderly, and their numbers are declining. The majority of Estonia's Russian-speaking population prefers Estonia's and the West's information and value space to autocratic Russia's. The Kremlin's street-level political support in Estonia is in decline due to sanctions and activists relocating to Russia. For this reason, the Kremlin has been seeking to sustain its divisive policies and shrinking influence by more actively inviting young people from neighbouring countries – whom it deems more easily persuaded – to events in Russia. Since June 2024, the EU's 14th sanctions package against Russia has been in force, which, among other measures, has sanctioned the organisation of the children's camp Artek.

The ideology of Islamist terrorist organisations has not changed over the past decades, nor is it likely to. Their objective remains to replace democratic, universal human rights-based societal structures with ones founded on Islamist religious rules. While Estonia's Muslim community has generally been peaceful, there are signs of radicalisation among its members because of external influences, such as exposure to terrorist propaganda. An important event in this context was the armed conflict between the Palestinian terrorist organisation Hamas and Israel in October 2023, which fuelled a rise in antisemitic sentiment across Europe, including Estonia.

Terrorist propaganda is primarily directed at minors, as they are a vulnerable and high-risk target group. Extremist movements and terrorist organisations exploit young people's digital awareness, their high level of trust in social media, and the user-friendliness of social media applications (including closed communication groups). Young people may lack the background knowledge and critical thinking skills to recognise propaganda, which is increasingly produced with the help of artificial intelligence. As heavy consumers of social media, they are desensitised to violence, and their first encounter with extremist propaganda may not spark immediate interest, but algorithms ensure that the viewed content is shown

repeatedly. Influential spokespersons with large followings play an important role. Such spokespersons use public channels to define the “correct and permitted” connections between Islam and secular life, as well as the behaviour of the “true believer” or “true warrior.” This kind of messaging pushes audiences towards supporting extremist views of society.

THREATS

- Illegal transit of combat weapons into Europe poses a threat, where they may fall into the hands of criminal networks and extremists.

- The development of artificial intelligence is changing the threat landscape. New tools make it possible to deliver fluent hate messages in Estonian and constantly improving AI applications make hate content appear increasingly convincing. For this reason, source-checking measures in media organisations, as well as media literacy in society, are becoming ever more critical in preventing hostile information from taking hold in Estonia.

- Another threat is the dissemination of terrorist propaganda on public social media. While this is prohibited under the EU regulation aimed at curbing the spread of terrorist online content, the circulation of such content within closed social media applications and chat groups remains outside the regulation’s scope.

- Foreign fighters travelling to conflict zones have used Estonia as a transit country, either on their way to the conflict area or returning to Europe. Belarus’s hybrid attack through migration and the mass immigration resulting from the war in Ukraine have increased the need to prevent dangerous individuals from entering at the state border and to strengthen border protection.

ACTIONS

- Because of the propaganda activities of hostile states and the spread of violent extremism, Estonia must pay closer attention to what occurs on social media platforms (including in closed groups). Although the threat of terrorism remains low in Estonia, even a single attack would be one too many.

- A key factor in preventing violent extremism and mitigating threats is social cohesion and a sense of belonging within society. As a result of Russia’s war of aggression, economic downturn, and the rising cost of energy and food, the risk of radicalisation among Islamist, right-wing, and left-wing extremists in Estonia may increase. Extremist views do not emerge overnight; timely detection of radicalisation, as well as the prevention and interruption of related risk behaviour, is only possible through nationwide cooperation.

- It is vital to train frontline officials and professionals who work directly with citizens (in law

- enforcement, corrections, integration, education, and social sectors), as well as the wider public, to recognise signs of radicalisation. Therefore, it is essential to continuously develop the relevant capacities of law enforcement and supervisory authorities, and in cooperation with the relevant ministries, agencies, and the private sector, to promote online safety.

- Within the framework of its radicalisation prevention action plan, Estonia is creating an intervention model to support individuals in moving away from extremism and towards deradicalisation. One of the objectives of this action plan, spearheaded by the Ministry of the Interior, is to prepare training materials and guidelines to help, for example, people working with young people to detect extremism, but also to prevent it through their everyday work.

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