Statewatch

Intensive surveillance of "violent radicalisation" extended to embrace suspected "radicals" from across the political spectrum

Targets include:
"Extreme right/left, Islamist, nationalist, anti-globalisation etc"

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A plan to place suspected "radicals" under surveillance slipped unreported through the Council of the European Union at the end of April. On Monday 26 April 2010 the General Affairs Council of the Council of the European Union "nodded" through without debate Council Conclusions [1] *"on the use of a standardised, multidimensional semi-structured instrument for collecting data and information on the processes of radicalisation in the EU."* [2]

An "instrument" is to be set up to prevent people turning to terrorism through "radicalisation". Firstly by analysing the "various environments" where "radicalisation" occurs, then secondly by introducing "systematic ways" of exchanging information on individuals or groups who use hate speech or incite terrorism.

Information is to be exchanged on radical leaders who promote terrorism and their movements tracked with a view to "interrupt radicalisation processes in progress or to raise alerts in relation to them" ("alerts" could trigger action, such as questioning, placing under surveillance, detention etc).

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1 Council "Conclusions" are policy-making decisions. "Conclusions" (and Recommendations) agreed by the Council are known as "soft law" and are not binding on Member States. However, as formally agreed policies they are used (and legitimated) as the basis for cooperation and new practices in the Member States. They are adopted without any input from national or European parliaments.

2 It had been intended that these Conclusions would be adopted by the Justice and Home Affairs Council on 21 April 2010 but they were adopted three days later at the General Affairs Council: http://www.statewatch.org/news/2010/apr/eu-council-info-gathering-uardicalisation-8570-10.pdf

While Europol is asked to *"generate lists of those involved in radicalising/recruiting or transmitting radicalising messages and to take appropriate steps"*.

On the face of it these plans to tackle terrorism seem a logical step for the EU to take. That is until the detailed document on which is behind the Conclusions – which is secret – is examined.

The document which the Council Conclusions are based is entitled: "Instrument for compiling data and information on violent radicalisation processes" (EU doc no: 7984/10 ADD 1).[3] For a new EU instrument to tackle those who promote terrorism it is strange to find only one reference to terrorism. It is also odd that the terminology used flips between referring to "violent radicalisation" and "radicalisation" as if they are the same.

Moreover, the target for this new "instrument" is clearly not people or groups who have or are planning to commit terrorist acts nor those inciting terrorism, because both can be tackled under the criminal law (arrest, charge, sentence etc).

So what is the scope of the new instrument?

Annex 1 (p6) opens with:

> *"Description of ideology directly supporting violence*
> *1. Spectrum in which the ideology is situated?"*

The scope/targets are defined in Footnote 1 as:

> ***"Extreme right/left, Islamist, nationalist, anti-globalisation etc."***

So the "instrument" is not primarily about people or groups intending to commit terrorist acts. But rather directed at people and groups who hold radical views described as those propagating "RM" (radical messages). This definition could include, for example, those who support liberation struggles in other countries.

But who is on the "extreme left"? Will the national police, security and intelligence agencies across the EU define the "extreme left"?

"Islamist"? This term could cover Islamists with no intention of carrying out violent acts and others who may seek to encourage others to violent acts (in which case they come under the criminal law). Again EU agencies will presumably construct their own definitions.

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[3] http://www.statewatch.org/news/2010/apr/eu-council-rad-instrument-7984-add1-10.pdf

"Nationalist"? There are lots of different "nationalist" groups many of whom hold moderate and "radical" views on seeking to establish rights for their nation. Equally many liberation struggles could be defined as "nationalist".

"anti-globalisation etc" seems to be a general "catch-all" covering just about every group that is opposed to the status quo.

Who is going to be using this "instrument" placing a very wide spectrum of people and groups under surveillance? EU police forces, security and intelligence agencies plus "EU institutions and agencies" (eg: SITCEN Europol are mentioned).

How are these bodies and agencies going to compile and use the information gathered? The aim is to exchange information and increase the quantity "obtained by other, non-specific means or instruments" (by any means possible?). Apart from providing analyses (termed **"ISSUES"**) the information gathered would result in assessments and "tactical operational... decision-making" (a security euphemism for targeting, undermining or destabilising). The individual or groups on which the information is to be gathered and exchanged are called **"AGENTS"** and:

> *"data assessment will therefore automatically be built into tactical operational decision-making, with the measures and steps considered appropriate here being taken."*

The information, or rather intelligence, to be gathered will be drawn from 70 questions to be completed, covering ideologies, dissemination channels, factors influencing behaviour and impact of RMs. Within the "semi-structured data compilation approach" each agency or body will be able to add their own categories or definitions.

The 70 questions will presumably be based on intelligence-gathering of personal data (from state and commercial sources) and surveillance (eg: examining the content of e-mails) and be interpreted and passed on by police and security agents in each country or EU body. To which will be added suspicions or suppositions and second-hand information (eg: hearsay). Moreover, the interpretation of this information/"intelligence" will vary greatly from state to state in the EU – and vary according to the political presumptions in each state as to which individuals or groups to target.

Some of the questions are bizarre and others demonstrate just how intrusive it will be for those that fall into the state's "web of suspicion".

Under ideologies it is asked:

> *"Are any of these RMs (radical messages) also supported by other ideologies or movements that do not support violence?"*
>
> *"Is there a prior relationship between the agents? Schoolmates, neighbours, friends, relatives, shared time in prison, etc."*

The intelligence that is to be gathered and exchanged on AGENTs covers:

> *"Administrative position? Original nationality, acquired nationality, illegal resident, temporary residence, work permit, study permit, etc."*

> *"Economic situation?   Unemployed, deterioration in economic position, loss of scholarship or financial assistance, etc.*

> *"Relevant psychological traits? Psychological disorders, charismatic personality, weak personality, etc."*

> *"Level of direct personal support? Family, civil status (single, married, widowed, divorced, separated), children, friends."*

> *Relationship with the various institutions/government bodies at State level, regional level and local level?: Social services, educational establishments, security services (immigration, police, prisons, intelligence, etc.), other."*

> *"Social environment in which VR (violent radicalisation) occurs? Family home, friends, Internet, educational centre, religious or prayer centre, prison, workplace, leisure centre, etc."*

> *"How does the person consider or interpret the relationship between that collective identity and other agents, and the social, cultural, religious, political or economic situation? Terrorist groups exaggerate situations of injustice, inequality, oppression, etc".*

Under the final heading, "Description of behavioural impacts and changes", it is asked what should have been the essential, first question:

> *"Has the person made oral comments on: intention of taking part in violent action?"*

But then this is not the purpose of the "instrument" because it is also asked:

> *"Has the person made oral comments on: other issues, mainly of a political nature, using arguments based on RMs?"*

No-one should be under any illusions as to the intent and enormity of this plan. Another earlier, and also secret document (5692/1/10 REV 1) explicitly states that the purpose of the instrument is:

> *"purely operational"*

with all the agencies across the EU free to amend or adjust the 70 questions in order to "optimise the results".

Each agency in every state will be free to work to their own definitions and assumptions on individuals and groups and freely circulate these around the EU. What is being planned is a large-scale, automated, risk profiling system to target so-called "agents" of "radicalisation".

There are millions of people in the EU with "radical" ideas (in the eyes of the state) who may easily, in their own terms, use arguments which are also used by so-called RMs without any intention whatsoever of using or encouraging violence.

Furthermore this initiative comes on top of plans under the Stockholm Programme to create an EU-wide database on political activists (protestors) under the guise of tackling "violent troublemakers".[4]

Under both plans any and all "radicals" could be targeted and everyday political life could become contaminated by unseen and unaccountable suspicions manufactured by agencies of the state. Open, legitimate political discussion and activity could be yet another casualty of the "war on terrorism".

Sources

1. Council Conclusions:
http://www.statewatch.org/news/2010/apr/eu-council-info-gathering-uardicalisation-8570-10.pdf

2. Instrument for compiling data and information on violent radicalisation processes (EU doc no: 7984/10 ADD 1):
http://www.statewatch.org/news/2010/apr/eu-council-rad-instrument-7984-add1-10.pdf

3. Protests in the EU: "Troublemakers" and "travelling violent offenders [undefined] to be recorded on database and targeted:
http://www.statewatch.org/analyses/no-93-troublemakers-apr-10.pdf

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4 See: http://www.statewatch.org/analyses/no-93-troublemakers-apr-10.pdf