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Actors and Sites for Knowledge Production on Radicalisation in Europe and Beyond

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This article aims at reviewing and mapping the actors and sites involved in knowledge production on radicalisation, focusing on the EU context. We did so by collecting information on EU-funded research projects, which cover subjects of radicalisation and violent extremism, and are sponsored through either the Seventh Framework Programme or Horizon 2020; and analysing them from the point of view of the actors involved in the project implementation. Complementarily, we have focused on the actors involved in the design of the calls for project proposals and the strategic documents framing and embedding them. By premising on the assumption that experts' knowledge and scientific knowledge are sources of leverage and contention in security-related policy areas, we intend to have a well-rounded grasp of the actors that are involved in the production and utilisation of such knowledge in policy-making, their organisation, their gate-keeping capacity and the instruments at their disposal.

1. Introduction

Following the terrorist attacks in Madrid (2004) and London (2005), the EU agenda on counter-radicalisation has become substantial and ambitious. 'Hard measures' traditionally based on surveillance and coercion have been complemented by 'softer' measures involving, amongst others, university professors and researchers that are now expected to identify, detect, predict and prevent radicalisation. Consistent with this dual approach, the turn to counter-radicalisation has led the EU to call for research and expertise to be deployed in an advisory role to support the Commission's strategy-making. This has resulted over the last ten years in a multiplication of expert networks and forums, along with the publication of papers and reports at EU level; the key actors emerging from this process, that is, the ones producing knowledge on terrorism, radicalisation and violent extremism, represent a mix of traditional security practitioners, academics, research officers affiliated to private think-tanks, civil society organisations or companies, as well as officials from the state security bureaucracies. However, as we will show in this article, at EU level, their representation is uneven and unbalanced.

Drawing on the sociological literature on expertise which anchors the emergence of a field of expertise to the process of institutionalisation and recognisable forms of organisation - usually departments or professional bodies - we intend to unpack and unravel the processes, actors, sites and types of knowledge about radicalisation that informs, at European level, the development of schemes, actions, policies and practices to prevent and/or counter it. We do so by interpreting 'project consortia', that is, groups of partners sharing tasks and responsibilities of collaborative research under the FP7 and Horizon 2020 frameworks, as sites of knowledge production.

The dialectics between knowledge and policy in the context of European governance makes our investigation particularly relevant: on the one hand, EU policy-making circles have

inaugurated their own course to define contentious and yet ubiquitous notions of radicalism, radicalisation, counter-radicalisation and de-radicalisation. On the other hand, critical scholars have started to question the usage of 'radicalisation' as a governance technology "that is mobilised through particular threat representations, knowledge practices, training programmes and strategies for intervention" (De Goede and Simon 2012, 315). More broadly, clefts between scholars, professionals, experts, and members of various epistemic communities are emerging along different lines. Not only do they revolve around the 'fundamentals', but also the types of knowledge production sites and actors, their proximity to policy-making environments, their funding sources, and their implicit or explicit role in shaping new governance technologies through scholarly discourses on radicalisation. Experts' knowledge and scientific knowledge are indeed sources of leverage and contention in security-related policy areas; accordingly, our article stems from a growing interest in understanding which actors are involved in the production and utilisation of such knowledge in policy-making, their organisation, their gate-keeping capacity and the instruments at their disposal.

Against that background, the article aims at reviewing and mapping the actors and sites involved in knowledge production on radicalisation and counter-radicalization, focusing on the EU context. In doing so, we build on previous studies on terrorism expertise, which have cast light on financial dependence as a key aspect for understanding the intellectual contours and commitments in the field of terrorism studies (Bueger 2014; Dunlop 2011; Stampnitzky 2011). These studies have been organised and sponsored by the state and have often been "explicitly oriented toward developing practical techniques of control. […] the state has been not just the primary sponsor of knowledge production, but also the primary consumer of research." (Stampnitzky 2011, 7)

According to our original research plan, we would have mapped out the project consortia that saw their research proposals on radicalisation and violent extremism funded through the

Seventh Framework Programme (FP7) and the Horizon 2020 Programme. We indeed aimed at identifying the experts that were part of these consortia and interviewing them with the objective of identifying their role and capturing their understanding and conceptualisation(s) about radicalisation and violent extremism. However, few researchers involved in these projects were keen to participate; furthermore, the full versions of the research proposals submitted to the European Commission (through the Participant Portal / Funding & Tenders Portal) are not publicly accessible - not even after the project has been admitted to funding, inaugurated and implemented. Thus, we turned instead to the process of call design and policy formulation of the above-mentioned frameworks of research. In doing that, we premised on the assumption that the research proposals funded by the European Commission seem to be drafted in response / in reaction to calls prioritising - *upstream* of the selection procedures - research themes, focuses, attitudes. Firstly, we collected information on EU-funded research projects, covering subjects of extremism and radicalisation, and sponsored through either the Seventh Framework Programme or Horizon 2020; we analysed them from the point of view of the actors involved rather than the research contents. Secondly, we focused on the actors involved in the design of the above-mentioned calls and the strategic documents framing and embedding them.

Our investigation aims to contribute to a broader scholarship interested in the role of expert knowledge in the processes of institutionalisation and legitimation in public policy-making; and to further lay the grounds for studying more broadly: the social construction of policy problems and responses, both portrayed as 'transnational' and 'global; the narratives of 'evidence-based policymaking'; and the transnationalisation of knowledge networks.

The article is structured as follows: in the second section we analyse and highlight the genealogy, challenges and criticality of the concept of and studies on radicalisation, building on the scholarly discussion on the process of knowledge production in terrorism studies. In

the third section, we turn to EU radicalisation strategies and policies by analysing post 9/11 EU de-radicalisation initiatives and networks, in particular the Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN). In the fourth and fifth sections, we focus on the knowledge production stemming from EU funded research on radicalisation. And finally, we draw some conclusions and identify those areas and issues that require further research.

2. Studies on Terrorism and Radicalisation and Processes of Knowledge Production

Above and beyond the fields of radicalisation studies and terrorism studies, knowledge produced in the framework of independent projects is reportedly considered as having legitimacy and authority; however politically-neutral, normatively-free and objective research has been revealed as a chimeric objective. Current processes of knowledge production are moulded by different factors across disciplinary boundaries: constellations of knowledge producers include academics, experts, consultants each one with his or her own status and affiliation, agenda, performances, routines and practices, and at the same time conveying the interests, strategies and preferences of their home institution. In other words, those constellations are being shaped by "broader dominant structures of their times, both material and ideological" (de Guevara and Kosti 2017, 4), structures that manifest themselves in many ways. On the one hand, waves of reforms inspired by the principles of new public management approach in the higher education sector, have resulted in a redefinition of the role of universities in society (O'Reily and Reed 2010). On the other, research in the social sciences - increasingly delegitimised in public discourses (Bérubé and Ruth 2016; Thornton 2015) - is marked by four main overlapping developments, i.e. its securitisation, riskification, bureaucratisation, judicialisation (Russo and Strazzari 2019). Furthermore, the imperative of having impact and policy relevance, as well as the need, expectation and ability to attract research funding, are re-contouring the knowledge production domains by affecting the

employability and career trajectories of knowledge agents. Research projects are increasingly framed according to templates demanding the researchers' engagement with 'stakeholders', e.g. policy-makers and practitioners. In the case of research in the social sciences, calls for generating 'applied science' might lead to inhibiting its emancipatory potential: the involvement of state agents, officials, representatives of international organisations, whose political agendas and positions are less and less prone to contestation and resistance, seems to contradict the tenets of critical epistemologies. Along similar lines, calls for policy-relevant research have re-directed researchers' interests to the 'here and now', cornering comprehensive intellectual endeavours aiming to appreciate the social and historical context surrounding phenomena studied 'on the spot': whereas the autonomy of researchers and the diversity of research horizons result in being weakened, problem-solving approaches gain traction. All the above seems to trigger vicious circles in which knowledge producers are pushed to assemble legitimising narratives about a policy. Researchers, specialists and knowledge professionals indeed see their expert authority increased by three factors: 1. their ability to be considered 'advisers' and to publicly accomplish their duty to make their expertise available to policy-makers; 2. their capacity to access reportedly confidential information; 3. their aptitude to influence important decisions, "elevating their versions of problems and solutions to a status of dominance" (de Guevara and Kosti 2017, 6). Conversely, the appeal to experts is used not only to design a policy but also to make it legitimate and accepted, paving the way to 'propagandist' interpretations on transnational expert groups, in other words, the argument that experts advertise rather than advise governments, primarily serving as a mouthpiece of governing elites (Burnett and Whyte 2005; Mueller 2006); whereas critical epistemologies would assign to experts the role of watchdogs.

However, these studies acknowledge little independent agency to these experts and overlook the possibly multiple positions that they might undertake (Ragazzi 2013). By contrast, an

alternative interpretation of expertise can be anchored to Peter Haas' definition of "epistemic community", thereby seeing experts as a homogeneous and independent body of knowledge and strategy (Haas 1992, 3).[1] The epistemic communities thesis emphasises the role of values and social norms and the agency of the experts is recognised as potentially serving a pro-active knowledge-based network to advance policy options (Cross 2011).

If we take a closer look at knowledge production in the field of security studies, and more specifically in terrorism studies, researchers' interlocution is further problematised as it is not limited to policy-makers in general but in particular to those contributing to the establishment of global regimes of prohibition and surveillance. (Critical) security academics and security experts indeed find themselves juggling the balls of producing knowledge for the security bureaucracies, contributing to counter-hegemonic security expertise and responding to the calls on how to create and disseminate security knowledge more responsibly (Berling and Bueger 2015).

As early as 1989, Herman and O'Sullivan argued about the existence of a 'terrorism industry' formed by experts and funded and organized by the state and other political elites and interest groups/lobbies. In the post-9/11 context, Critical Terrorism Studies have then problematised the 'perils' of academics reproducing state discourses on political violence and legitimising counter-terrorism regimes (Jackson 2007). In a critical perspective, what distinguished traditional studies on terrorism was the replacement of the values of legitimacy and authority derived from research independence with the credit, credibility, popularity and prestige of those academics gaining access to power through advising governments. Jackson too (2015,

[1] Haas has defined an epistemic community as "a network of professionals with recognised expertise and competence in a particular domain and an authoritative claim to policy relevant knowledge within that domain or issue area." (1992: 3) Members of an epistemic community share four properties: principled beliefs about the right course of social and political action; causal beliefs about social and political phenomena; notions of validity about accepted and neutral knowledge; a common policy enterprise (Cross 2011).

2016), indeed, considered 'mainstream' terrorism expertise as an industry, again sponsored by the state in its pursuit of assistance and complicity in regulating and managing the society.

This argument was later nuanced by other authors: Stampnitzky (2011), for example, considered terrorism studies a space of knowledge production interacting with the state as well as other social fields. Terrorism expertise is availed by a multiplicity of audiences, i.e., academia, the state, the public, while terrorism experts have little control "over [..] the boundaries of the field […,] the production and certification of experts […, the] regulation of who may become an expert" (Stampnitzky 2013: 194-195). The proximity of research agents *vis-à-vis* centres of power thus needs to be put under scrutiny and integrated as one amongst other variables, and be possibly considered in its contribution to dynamics of institutionalization and professionalization of the field.

Similar to terrorism studies and unlike other fields of study, radicalization research is characterised by the ambivalent role of governments and government agencies as funders, producers and consumers of academic research on radicalization (Neumann and Kleinmann 2013). Furthermore, radicalization studies shares similar definitional problems with terrorism scholarship. Moreover, research on radicalization suffers some of the same flaws and criticalities of terrorism studies such as overreliance on government money, the elusive nature of the research subject and the lack of a unified research agenda and field (Neumann and Kleinmann 2013, 360).

According to Neumann and Kleinmann, the surge of interest and academic research on radicalization should be understood as a product of the 9/11 attacks and the 'Global War on Terror' (2013, 363). However, it is with the Madrid and London bombings, respectively in 2004 and 2005, that the concept gained traction (Heath-Kelly 2012; Kundnani 2012). Against that background, scholarly work on radicalisation started proliferating, premising on the assumption that it is by and large a "psychological or theological process by which Muslims

move towards extremist views" (Kundnani 2012, 7), and thus focusing on Islamist extremism and jihadist extremism (Schmid 2013). The more the field of radicalisation studies has been widening, the more the terms 'radicalisation', 'extremism', 'violent extremism' and 'terrorism' are being interchangeably used (Kundnani and Hayes 2018, 4). Beside a narrow one-sidedness in the literature, radicalisation, de-radicalisation and counter-radicalisation are indeed over-exploited and over-exposed buzzwords, while little questioning and little consensus exist over what exactly radicalisation is (Schmid 2013, iv).

In parallel to the abovementioned dynamics, and in reaction to them, critical scholars have started questioning the problematic design and implementation of counter-radicalisation and CVE strategies (Githens-Mazer and Lambert 2010; Heath-Kelly 2012; Heath-Kelly, Jarvis and Baker-Beall 2014; Kundnani 2012; Martin 2014), and starting from there, reflecting on the flaws in conventional radicalization research that may inform policies and schemes of interventions.

Current counter-radicalisation programmes and approaches indeed premise on the assumption that radicalisation is an individual phenomenon, thus explaining violent militancy as solely ideological and at the same time neglecting broader political factors (Kundnani 2012, 9). Such micro-level and person-centred approach seems to be exactly derived from and supported by studies drawing on small samples and few cases to compare and generalise (Schmid 2013, iv). On the basis of these problematic sources of knowledge, technical and psychological methods to counter radicalisation are planned, allegedly driving the construction of "suspect communities," possibly hampering social cohesion and inclusiveness, weakening social relationships based on trust in social spheres such as education and health services, and ultimately introducing "a logic of surveillance in the whole social body" (Ragazzi 2016, 3; Novelli 2017; Kundnani 2012). In other words, "radicalization has become a tool of power

exercised by the state and non-Muslim communities against, and to control, Muslim communities in the twenty-first century" (Githens-Mazer and Lambert 2010, 901).

Our article builds upon and aims to expand the above-mentioned critical scholarship on the relationship between the production of radicalization knowledge and security (practices) (Heath-Kelly 2012). The sources of ambivalence in counter-/de-radicalisation interventions on the one hand, and the shortcomings which emerge in the scholarly debates on radicalisation on the other, seem to reflect one another. To what extent are the respective policy and academic fields mutually constituted?

Furthermore, drawing on the assumption that the concept of 'radicalisation' enables the performance of counter-terrorism governance, we believe that dual focus on the agents and the sites of knowledge production might advance a critical research agenda on radicalisation. In this regard, a different way to look at expertise and expert groups is by looking at the process and politics of radicalisation knowledge production as a heterogeneous, relational and dialectical field whose concepts and knowledge are being produced, negotiated, mediated between the European Commission's appointed experts and comitology groups that set the agenda and the priorities, and design the calls on the one hand, and on the other, project consortia which produce further research on the basis of such calls. In this regard, it is important to analyse the positions that project consortia occupy in the field of counter-radicalisation as this has implications for the knowledge produced and the type of security logic that is being defined as legitimate (Bigo 2011; Berling 2013).

All in all, in the context of neoliberal processes of knowledge production, it is not only the proximity to governmental milieu and the affiliation with the private security industry to validate the credibility and authority of the experts. A further element may be factored in, that is, the ability to attract grants and funds, and the capacity to take part in transnational expert

networks. These are the conceptual coordinates where we locate our empirical investigation, in the next two sections.

3. Radicalisation in EU Strategies, Policies and Networks

The emergence and the consolidation of an EU-specific counter-terrorism strategy has contributed to EU's international actorness (Brattberg and Rhinard 2012); such leadership has been even more visible if one considers that, if compared to other international actors, the EU was the first to elaborate a structured action to prevent and contrast radicalisation and violent extremism. This record was favoured by the early initiatives of, respectively, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, first actors in the European context to use and give impulse to the meaning-making of the term 'radicalisation' (2002-2003). In the wake of these drives, as early as 2005, the EU equipped itself with a countering violent extremism (CVE) strategy, subsequently revised in 2009 and 2014 (European Commission 2005; Council of the European Union 2005; Council of the European Union 2009; Council of the European Union 2014), that was informed by an understanding of radicalisation as a process through which vulnerable Muslims are exposed to the influence of figures inciting against them against the West (Kundnani and Hayes 2018, 20-21).

According to Baker-Beall (2016), EU's counter-terrorism discourse unfolds at particular sites "where knowledge about terrorism […] is (re)articulated, (re)produced and (re)enforced", (Baker-Beall 2016, 47); in the last two decades it can be divided into three phases, each featuring specific storylines, frames and narratives (Baker-Beall 2016, 69, 75, 78). Even though notions of counter-radicalisation predate it, the third phase he identifies (2011-2015) includes the reference to counter-radicalisation policies as part and parcel of EU's counter-terrorism and it may be in that context that some of the core EU assumptions around 'radicalisation and recruitment' were redefined, bringing about a shift from the prevention of

radicalisation and recruitment of Islamic terrorist groups to the fight against all ideological and political forms of violent extremism and radicalisation (Baker-Beall 2016). While the key concepts of radicalisation and extremism were neither consensually nor univocally defined at EU level and across EU Member States, EU's counter-radicalisation discourse has implied the gradual co-optation of so-called 'front-line professionals', including practitioners, experts, specialists and academics (Baker-Beall 2016).

3.1 The EU's Networked Expertise

For the EU to address the challenge of radicalisation, the provision of financial support for research projects and initiatives seems to be crucial. A wide gamut of funding instruments has been deployed to implement the two Communications (European Commission 2014, 2016) in which the Commission outlined actions and ways for sustaining the relevant stakeholders in Member States.[2]

In particular, in its 2016 Communication, the Commission identified, among the areas of the EU's action to support Member States in the prevention of radicalisation, the need for "boosting research, evidence building, monitoring and networks by producing concrete tools and policy analysis to better understand the process of radicalisation, to be directly usable by Member States' security practitioners and policymakers." (Bordin et al 2019, 63)

This line of action has been recently restated in the new counter-terrorism agenda (European Commission 2020), which values the role of EU-funded security research for reinforcing early detection capacity. While contouring a key contribution from Europol, called to assist the Commission in identifying key research themes, the 2020 Communication also refers to the Research Programme Horizon Europe and to the fact that research will be further

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[2] https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/counter-terrorism/funding-research-projects-radicalisation_en, (last accessed 24 January 2021).

integrated within the security policy cycle to ensure an even more impact-oriented output, responding to the identified law enforcement needs.

All the above has been epitomised by the keynote speech of Sir Julian King on the occasion of the opening conference of the Jean Monnet Network on EU Counter-Terrorism (EUCTER), in December 2020: the former Commissioner for the Security Union under the Juncker Commission (2016-2019) indeed stated that, all in all, one of the features of EU counter-terrorism is that the EU creates knowledge hubs and networks of experts and practitioners.

As a matter of fact, over the last fifteen years, several expert networks have explicitly dealt with the issue of radicalisation in the European Union. *In primis*, the European Commission's Expert Group on Violent Radicalisation (ECEGVR), established in 2006 and mandated to identify gaps and ways forward in the European research on radicalisation. The group was composed of academics from EU member states and served as a policy adviser group (Coolsaet 2010). The Policy Planners' Network on countering Polarisation and Counter-Radicalisation (PPN) was an initiative launched by the UK and the Netherlands in 2008, and was an informal platform made up of several member states, mainly composed of ministry-related personnel. Around the same period, the European Commission commissioned four reports on radicalisation by expert groups: two reports to the think-tank Change Institute (CI 2008a, 2008b), one report to the Brussels-based think-tank Centre for European Integration Strategies (CEIS 2008) and the last one to the International Centre for the Study of radicalisation and Political Violence (ICSR), based at the University College London (ICSR 2008). While expert groups were established and their reports commissioned around 2008, EU documents had already defined the terms of the threat and the existence of radicalisation including the factors leading to it in 2004 and 2005 (Ragazzi 2013).

Out of these groups and reports, and the most emblematic one, is the 2008 report by the European Commission's Expert Group on Violent Radicalisation for its findings and the reception by the Commission (Alonso et al. 2008). The group comprised experts with different academic backgrounds ranging from international politics, Islamic studies to deviant behaviours and was tasked to prepare a synthesis report on the existing knowledge on radicalisation. The findings confirmed that 'radicalisation' and 'violent radicalisation' originated in EU policy circles after the 2004 Madrid bombings and that they had not been widely used in the social sciences (Coolsaet 2016, 22). The group cautioned against the ambiguity of these terms, in particular the connection of radicalisation to terrorism as being confusing, given the association of radicalisation with 'radicalism', the latter being an expression of legitimate political thought (Coolsaet 2016, 22). The report proposed focusing instead on extremism, and defined violent radicalisation as socialisation to extremism, which manifests itself in terrorism. Any exclusive link with a specific religion such as Islam was rejected. The group and its findings distanced themselves from the then trend in the UK and the NL that considered ideology or religion as a primary driver for terrorism. Moreover, the efficiency of one-size-fits-all de-radicalisation programmes was questioned and problematised. The group recommended examining past and current individual and tailor-made exit strategies in Scandinavia and Germany, in particular, and it emphasised the important conceptual distinction between de-radicalisation as a cognitive process and disengagement as a behavioural process that entailed interrupting and discontinuing involvement in terrorism. For reasons not entirely clear, the EC Group on Violent Radicalisation was discontinued by the French Commissioner Jacques Barrot and the report's findings and recommendations went largely unnoticed. According to Bossong, the Commission rejected the report as it provided a critical and to some extent alternative stance to the concept of violent radicalisation (2012, 6).

The group's disruption was followed by the launch in 2011 of the *EU's Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN)*. Since then, the network has been a key component of the wider EU institutional framework on radicalisation and counter-terrorism, intended to be its grassroots arm. The EU RAN is indeed composed of "frontline or grassroots practitioners from around Europe who work daily with people who have been already radicalised, or who are vulnerable to radicalisation" by now counting around 7,000 participants (Council of the EU 2014). Among its tasks are "pooling, deepening and disseminating expertise in preventing radicalisation to terrorism and violent extremism" with the aim of providing support to Member States for designing prevention strategies (European Commission 2016b). A part of the RAN Steering Committee is reserved for the *RAN Centre of Excellence* launched in October 2015 and described as "an EU knowledge hub to consolidate expertise and foster the dissemination and exchange of experiences" and "add a new practical dimension to the cooperation between stakeholders on anti-radicalisation".[3] The RAN's operations are funded through a 25 million euro-framework contract 2014-2017 mainly run by the Dutch consulting company RadarEurope (Kundnani and Hayes 2018).

In close collaboration with RAN, the *European Expert Network on Terrorism Issues* (EENeT), whose members are also RAN members, has focused extensively on radicalisation and de-radicalisation. Whereas RAN focuses on grassroots work with radicalised individuals, EENeT focuses on new knowledge and best de-radicalisation practices. Other EU-funded networks that complement the RAN work are the EU Internet Forum and the Network of Prevent Policy Makers on Radicalisation. The latest in this range of expert groups is the High-Level Commission Expert Group on Radicalisation (HLCEG-R) established in 2017, whose goal was to increase efforts in countering radicalisation leading to violent extremism and terrorism and improve coordination between relevant stakeholders. Its Final Report was

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[3] https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network_en, (last accessed 14 February 2021).

released on 18 May 2018 and marked the accomplishment of its mandates and the creation of the EU Cooperation Mechanism. The Mechanism aims to better engage Member States to set priorities at EU level through the *Steering Board on Union Actions on Radicalisation*, and more generally to improve the collaboration between policy makers, practitioners and researchers for an evidence-based approach against radicalisation.[4] The prevention of radicalisation is also a key priority in the 2020 EU Counter-Terrorism strategy through a range of different policy instruments (European Commission 2020). In order to enhance anticipation, the strategy envisages research, as part of the future Research Programme Horizon Europe, to be further integrated in the security policy cycle for more impact-oriented output (European Commission 2020, 4). Consolidating knowledge as part of prevention, the Commission is envisaged to support the creation and consolidation of "national networks of relevant actors, including practitioners and national centres of expertise" (European Commission 2020, 9). Furthermore, the creation by the Commission of an EU Knowledge Hub on the Prevention of Radicalisation for policy makers, practitioners and researchers is envisaged to be set up (Ibid, 9). According to the strategy, "The EU Knowledge HUB would disseminate knowledge and expertise and also promote the full use of funding possibilities under the various EU programmes" (Ibid, 9).

In parallel to strengthening its in-house expertise resources, since 2015, the EU, through the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace, IcSP, has been funding 'CT MORSE' (Counter-Terrorism Monitoring, Reporting and Support Mechanism), a project implemented since 2019 by the Royal United Services Institute and in itself a knowledge production site and knowledge circulation conduit. It indeed provides a pool of experts, publications, organisation of meetings and events, coordination of capacity building initiatives and monitoring and evaluation of exercises.

[4] https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/counter-terrorism/radicalisation_en, (last accessed on 14 February 2021).

Furthermore, the EU supports the Abu-Dhabi-based Hedayah International Centre of Excellence for CVE, an international institution serving as a global hub of expertise and experience in CVE training, methods, dialogue and research (European Commission 2015[5]). Its conception dates back to 2011, during a ministerial-level launch of the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF), a multilateral platform which sees the participation of the EU and which provides a venue for counter-terrorism officials and practitioners to share experiences, expertise, strategies and capacity needs. The EU is part of Hedayah's Steering Board and funds a package of activities grouped in the programme 'STRIVE - Strengthening Resilience to Violence and Extremism' (5 million from the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace, IcSp). Among the areas of intervention, STRIVE aims at developing research resources to design evidence-based counter-radicalisation initiatives. Through STRIVE, and along with the Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD), the EU has backed the launch of the 'Counter Extremism Hub,' that is, an interactive instrument for practitioners, researchers, officials, and policymakers to showcase their relevant work, practices and knowledge, to connect to each other and facilitate discussions. Finally, the European Commission sponsored the International CVE Research Conferences (co-organised by Hedayah) in 2015, 2018 and 2019.[6]

The next section will analyse the process and politics of knowledge production through the prism of EU funded research on radicalisation, first by investigating project consortia and research projects funded under FP7 and Horizon 2020 and second by investigating the process of calls design.

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[5] That Decision paved the way to the EU's participation not only to the Hedayah Centre but also to the Valletta-based International Institute for Justice and the Rule of Law and the Geneva-based Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund.

[6] https://www.hedayahcenter.org/resources/interactive_cve_apps/annual-international-cve-research-conference/ (last accessed 24 February 2021)

4. The Politics of Knowledge Production in EU-funded Research on Radicalisation

Dalgaard-Nielsen (2010) has systematised the existing stock of empirical knowledge of radicalisation in Europe: the academic discourse on 'radicalisation' in Europe can be divided into three categories, each including scholars with a specific conceptual background and supporting a distinct type of explanation. In order to understand the process of knowledge production about radicalisation in Europe, this classification, though, needs to be complemented by accounting for the development of security research policy promoted by the EU. Against the background of increasing budget cuts at the expense of European universities, and the rise of privatised security research (a growing sector of corporate expertise in security issues) the European Union has turned out to be one of the major funding agencies for research carried out both in its Member States and in a number of third world countries.

As a matter of fact, Kundnani and Hayes (2018) estimate that between 2007 and 2020, EU expenditure on initiatives related to radicalisation has amounted to more than 400 million euros, coming from three main sources: 1) the Commission's Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs (DG Home); 2) the Commission's Service for Foreign Policy Instruments; and 3) the EU's Security Research Programme, comprising the 2007-13 Seventh Framework Programme (FP7) and the 2014-20 Horizon 2020 programme (Counter-Terrorism Coordinator 2015; Council of the European Union 2017).[7]

In particular, the Seventh Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development (2007-2013) has inaugurated a period of increasing support to research by the EU. It has been inspired by the recommendations published in 2004 in the *Group of Personalities in the field of Security Research* report, entitled *Research for a Secure Europe*,

[7] Counter-radicalisation initiatives are also being funded within the funding programmes of EU's DG for Neighbourhood and Enlargement (DG NEAR), the European Audio-visual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) and the DG for International Cooperation and Development (DEVCO).

suggesting that European security research should have been driven by the industrial development of technology. The same vision was endorsed by the European Security Research Advisory Board (established by the European Commission in 2005), which validated the advance of a private, profit-led security industry at the expense of any reflection on the societal impacts of security policies. The European Security Research Programme, thus, has resulted in marginalising Social Sciences' approaches to security.

Even before the inception of the Seventh Framework Programme, the European Commission had launched a Preparatory Action on the Enhancement of European industrial potential in the field of Security Research 2004-2006 ('PASR'), to test the feasibility of going ahead with a full European Security Research programme. PASR already enshrined similar principles of privatisation, industrialisation and commercialisation of security research and accordingly funded a number of projects that were coordinated by a restricted pool of security companies operating in the field of defence and military equipment. The projects responded to the demand of dealing with 'situation awareness', i.e. surveillance and intelligence-gathering; counter-terrorism; law enforcement coordination and cooperation; security information sharing (Jones 2017). Along similar veins, subsequent initiatives financed through the European Security Research Programme have focused on counter-terrorism, policing–and crime-fighting, with particular attention paid to instruments for identifying, tracking, scanning and detecting individuals, analytical devices for processing forensic data, as well as for the surveillance of public spaces.

Anticipating the completion of the Seventh Framework Programme, in 2011 the European Commission set up a proposal for a new funding instrument - Horizon 2020 - that was designed to move away from the hard-edged, high-tech research to rediscover the societal dimension of security research. The European Commission has actually proposed incorporating security research into a comprehensive umbrella dubbed 'Inclusive, Innovative

and Secure Societies'. However, the Commission's proposal was revised in the course of the Council and the Parliament's rounds of amendments. The theme 'Inclusive, Innovative and Secure Societies' was then parcelled out into two different strands: on the one hand, the 'Innovative, Inclusive and Reflective Societies'; on the other, 'Secure Societies - Protecting Freedom and Security of Europe and its citizens' which incorporated all security research. Horizon 2020 'Secure Societies' was conceived of in terms of "delivering the predictive, reactive and resilience-based capabilities to Europe's practitioners and society at large if adversity strikes" (European Commission 2016a, 1); knowledge produced in the framework of those projects should be at the service of "practitioners, such as law enforcement authorities or forensic institutes, as well as academia, industry and decision-makers." (European Commission 2016a, 1)

'Secure Societies' called for project proposals focusing on radicalisation and violent extremism, even though these subjects have been also covered by the theme 'Europe in a changing world – inclusive, innovative and reflective Societies'.

'Secure Societies' - Work Programmes	
2014-2015	DRS-14-2015: Critical Infrastructure Protection Topic 3: Critical Infrastructure resilience indicator - analysis and development of methods for assessing resilience DRS-20-2014: Ethical/Societal Dimension: Topic 1: Improving protection of critical infrastructures from insider threats * *insider threat* is defined as one "brought along by personnel who have undergone a violent radicalisation process". (Coordination and Support Actions) BES-12-2014: Conflict prevention and peace-building Topic 1: Enhancing the civilian conflict prevention and peace-building capabilities of the EU
2016-2017	Call "Security" - Fight against crime and Terrorism SEC-06-FCT-2016: Developing a comprehensive approach to violent radicalisation in the EU from early understanding to improving protection * "Expected Impact: As a result of this action, security policy-makers and law enforcement agencies should benefit from a full set of policy recommendations and tools aimed at improving their ability to prevent and detect radicalisation by national and local security practitioners in a timely manner, i.e. *before* individuals turn towards violent, criminal or terrorists acts [...]"
2018-2020	Fight against Crime and Terrorism SU-FCT01-2018-2019-2020: Human factors, and social, societal, and organisational aspects to solve issues in fighting against crime and terrorism Sub-topic 3: [2020] Developing comprehensive multi-disciplinary and multi-agency approaches to prevent and counter violent radicalisation and terrorism in the EU

'Inclusive, Innovative and Reflective Societies' - Work Programmes	
2016-2017	Reversing Inequalities and Promoting Fairness REV-INEQUAL-02-2016: Contemporary radicalisation trends and their implications for Europe Engaging Together Globally ENG-GLOBALLY-01-2017: Strengthening Europe's position in the global context: science diplomacy and intercultural relations Sub-topic 3: Global trends of secularisation and religious radicalisation and the role of Europe
2018-2020	Governance for the Future SU-GOVERNANCE-09-2020: Addressing radicalisation through social inclusion SU-GOVERNANCE-10-2019: Drivers and contexts of violent extremism in the broader MENA region and the Balkans SU-GOVERNANCE-11-2018: Extreme ideologies and polarisation

Table 1. H2020 Calls for project proposals touching the themes of radicalisation and violent extremism.

We have collected information on EU-funded research projects, covering subjects of extremism and radicalisation, and sponsored through either the Seventh Framework

Programme or Horizon 2020. This information is publicly available via the European Commission's repository CORDIS (Community Research and Development Information Service). We have identified 21 projects, which have been/are being developed during the years 2010-2021. Among them, 4 have been financed by the FP7 programme (among these 4, 1 pertains to the scheme Capability Project/Coordination and Support Action); whereas 17 projects have been financed by the H2020 (among these 17, 1 pertains to the instrument SME - Small and Medium-sized Enterprises and 1 to the Coordination and Support Actions).

Project	Time Frame	Project Typology	Players (Typology)					Players (Location)
			HEI	RO	PB	PP	OT	
SAFIRE	2010-2013	FP7 / Security	3	3		3	2	5 Netherlands; 2 France; Portugal; Israel; Italy; UK
PRIME	2014-2017	FP7 / Security	6					2 UK; Poland; Denmark; Israel; Netherlands
IMPACT EUROPE	2014-2017	FP7 / Security (CP/CSA)	2	4	4	4	1	5 Netherlands; 2 Italy; 2 UK; France; Poland; Belgium; Israel; Germany; Denmark
VOX-POL	2014-2018	FP7 / Security	7	2				3 UK; 2 Netherlands; Ireland; India; Germany; Hungary
TENSOR	2016-2019	H2020	3	2	5	6		5 UK; 3 Germany; 2 Greece; 2 Belgium; 2 Spain; Italy; France;
INSIKT	2017-2020	H2020 (SME)				1		Spain
PERICLES	2017-2020	H2020 (RIA)	4	3	5	2	1	3 Netherlands; 3 Ireland; 2 Germany; 2 France; 2 Spain; Greece; UK; Bosnia and Herzegovina
MINDb4ACT	2017-2020	H2020 (RIA)	5	4	5	2	2	3 Spain; 2 Italy; 2 Germany; 2 Belgium; 2 Poland; 2 UK; 2 Austria; Denmark; France; Finland
TRIVALENT	2017-2020	H2020 (RIA)	6		10	4		7 Italy; 3 Spain; 3 Poland; 2 Belgium; France; UK; Israel; Latvia, Portugal; Albania
PRACTICES	2017-2020	H2020 (RIA)	7	3	8	3	4	9 France; 4 Spain; 3 Portugal; 2 Austria; 2 Belgium; Italy; Greece; Tunisia
RED ALERT	2017-2020	H2020 (RIA)	3	1	6	5		4 UK; 3 Israel; 2 Romania; 2 Spain; 2 Hungary; Malta; (France); Moldova
DARE	2017-2021	H2020 (RIA)	14	1		1	1	3 UK; 2 Norway; 2 Germany; France; Turkey; Netherlands; Poland; Greece; Russia; Croatia; Belgium; Malta; Tunisia
GREASE	2018-2022	H2020 (RIA)	5	2		2	1	2 UK; Italy; Bulgaria; Lithuania; Germany; Morocco; Turkey; Malaysia; Australia
PROPHETS	2018-2022	H2020 (RIA)	5	2	5		2	3 Germany; 2 UK; 2 Italy; 2 Greece; Croatia; Bulgaria; Estonia; Spain; Netherlands; Belgium
BRAVE	2019-2021	H2020 (CSA)	3			1	2	Italy; UK; Belgium; Ireland; Germany; Poland; Hungary
PREVEX	2020-2022	H2020 (RIA)	6	8			1	2 Italy; Norway; Denmark; Gemany; France; Belgium; Bulgaria; Serbia; Bosnia and Herzegovina; Kosovo; Albania; Morocco; Senegal; Iraq
CONNEKT	2020-2023	H2020 (RIA)	6	3			4	2 Spain; 2 North Macedonia; Egypt; Jordan; Tunisia; Morocco; Bosnia and Herzegovina; Kosovo; Bulgaria; Belgium; Austria
PAVE	2020-2023	H2020 (RIA)	5	4		1	2	2 Germany; France; Bosnia and Herzegovina; Kosovo; Sweden; Lebanon; Greece; Spain; Tunisia; Ireland; Finland
PARTICIPATION	2020-2023	H2020 (RIA)	7	3			5	4 Italy; 2 Netherlands; Romania; Portugal; Belgium; Spain; Greece; France; UK; Ireland; Poland
D.RAD	2020-2023	H2020 (RIA)	10	6			2	2 UK; 2 Italy; Germany; Serbia; Israel; Finland; Poland; Kosovo; Georgia; France; Austria; Jordan; Iraq; Slovenia; Turkey; Bosnia and Herzegovina
DRIVE	2021-2023	H2020 (RIA)	6			1	1	4 UK; 2 Sweden; Netherlands; Denmark; Norway

Table 2. Funded projects touching upon the themes of radicalisation and violent extremism (HEI = Higher Education Institution; RO = Research Organisation; PB = Public Body; PP = Private-for-profit Entities; OT = Other)

From a rather intuitive look at the CORDIS data, it is possible to extract a number of remarks. Country-wise, it is fairly easy to identify a core group of countries whose public organisations and private firms are largely represented across the projects under consideration. With the exception of Israel, partners from third countries are limited in numbers. Similarly, actor-wise, it is possible to observe that some participants recur throughout various projects - thus it is likely that their contribution to the production of knowledge about radicalisation is relevant, in Europe and beyond, or at least that there is a consistent and long-term institutional commitment to deal with these subjects. Among them, it is worth mentioning the Hague-based TNO (Netherlands Organisation for Applied Scientific Research) (4); Leiden University (4); Paris-based Fondation pour la Recherche Strategique (3).

Furthermore, one can note the significant presence of both ‘private-for-profit entities’ and ‘public bodies’, including police and law enforcement institutions, ministries of justice and internal affairs, the most represented across the projects being the City Council of Madrid. Among the ‘private-for-profit entities’, the ‘European Organisation for Security’ demonstrates a remarkable participation (in 2 projects among the ones under consideration, plus ‘SOURCE’ - Societal Security Network of Excellence, which features research interests in counter-terrorism, extremism, radicalisation). Gathering together the main European private sector providers of security solutions and services, across 13 European countries, EOS presents itself as “the voice of the European security industry and research community.”[8] Another participant worth mentioning is the International Security and Counter-terrorism Academy, a private company which is comprised of highly trained and specialised former senior officers

[8] http://www.eos-eu.com/, (last accessed 25 February 2021)

of various Israeli security agencies. Israel is in fact the non-EU country with the highest participation rate in the research projects under consideration. Engagement with the non-governmental sector, civil society organisations, and citizens' groups seems to be limited: if one examines the residual category of 'Others', one can find a very diverse assemblage of foundations, not-for-profit organisations and forums, whose scope and range of activities is either very locally rooted and confined or transnational, being based on European/international networks (e.g., European Network Against Racism; Women Without Borders/ Sisters Against Violent Extremism; European Forum for Urban Security). One association stands out for its hybrid format: as a matter of fact, the *Centre de prévention des dérives sectaires liées à l'Islam*, is linked to the *Mission interministérielle de vigilance et de lutte contre les dérives sectaires* as well as to the *Comité Interministériel de Prévention de la Délinquance et de la Radicalisation*.

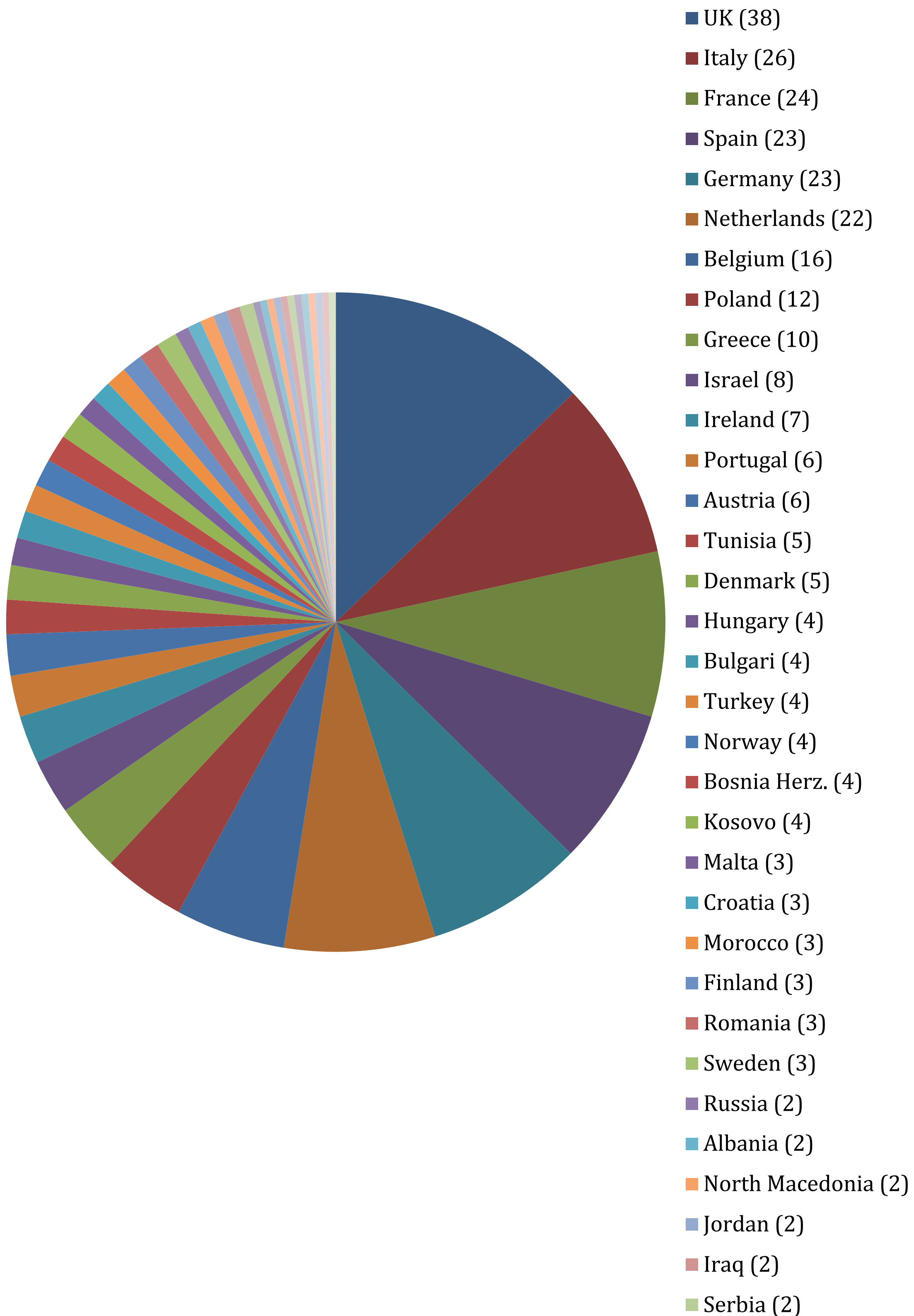
Distribution of Projects per Country
(Location of Consortium Members)
UK (38)
Italy (26)
France (24)
Spain (23)
Germany (23)
Netherlands (22)
Belgium (16)
Poland (12)
Greece (10)
Israel (8)
Ireland (7)
Portugal (6)
Austria (6)
Tunisia (5)
Denmark (5)
Hungary (4)
Bulgari (4)
Turkey (4)
Norway (4)
Bosnia Herz. (4)
Kosovo (4)
Malta (3)
Croatia (3)
Morocco (3)
Finland (3)
Romania (3)
Sweden (3)
Russia (2)
Albania (2)
North Macedonia (2)
Jordan (2)
Iraq (2)
Serbia (2)

Figure 1. Distribution of Projects per Country (Location of Consortium Members). The following countries have been represented in one project only: Latvia; India; Egypt; Lebanon; Senegal; Lithuania; Malaysia; Australia; Estonia; Moldova; Georgia; Slovenia.

5. Resorting to a Top Down Approach

As mentioned, according to our original research plans, we should have implemented a bottom up approach aimed at mapping out actors and sites involved in knowledge production and circulation on radicalisation in Europe in order to understand the meanings attached to this phenomenon and the epistemologies informing policy-making processes. The interviews we carried out led us to literally turn our investigation upside down: in this section, we premised on the assumption that the research proposals are drafted according to expectations set up in the respective calls for projects. Therefore, we looked at the calls themselves. For example, they invite 'promiscuity'[9] and suggest involving policy makers, practitioners, professionals and representatives of governmental institutions (especially law enforcement) in the projects: in that sense, they provide indications about the composition of the consortia and also the connotation of 'impact.' Furthermore, the calls themselves often urge to 'provide solutions' and require the development of toolkits, devices, instruments, products, bringing the scholarship towards advancing indicator-based interventions and technologies - as well as 'ready-to-use' lenses through which to read complex socio-political dynamics.

These calls are designed through a top-down and yet multi-layered process that includes at different stages of negotiation a specific unit of the Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, expert advisory groups (whose membership does not reflect a balance in terms of representativeness of EU MSs) and the so-called 'programme committee configurations' -

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[9] According to Jeandesboz (2015), promiscuity in the study of the EU security refers to two aspects of the research process: on the one hand, scholars interact with security actors for research purposes through site-intensive techniques of inquiry. On the other, security practitioners are increasingly involved in research endeavours fostered by EU funding of security research: those studying EU security politics more and more frequently share venues of dissemination and research activities with officials from the EU security agencies, from national security bodies or private sector experts. The financial resources committed by the EU bodies to security research also translate into calls for applied research or expertise, to the advantage of problem-solving knowledge while cornering critical work (in the Coxian sense).

each one associated to one of the societal challenges the Horizon 2020 instrument intend to tackle. These consist of representatives of EU Member States and associate countries; each delegation is made up of nominees of each competent minister at the national level. Additionally, throughout the process of call design, a myriad of stakeholders are co-opted and consulted on the occasion of dedicated events.

For the purpose of our study, we focused on Societal Challenge 6 (Europe in a changing world – inclusive, innovative and reflective societies) and Societal Challenge 7 (Secure societies –protecting freedom and security of Europe and its citizens) in the framework of which the research on radicalisation and violent extremism seems to be conducted. The composition of the respective programme-committed configurations, reveals that the one pertaining to 'Europe in a Changing World' sees most of its members representing universities, research councils, ministries (Education, Economics) and other public bodies and agencies, with the exception of one national business organisation (Germany) and one professional organisation representing a specific category interests and business (Italy). The programme committee pertaining to 'Secure Societies' (whose 'Lead DG' is the DG HOME - Migration and Home Affairs) sees instead several representatives from ministries of defense and internal affairs.

Looking at the other pair of key actors, that is, the expert advisory groups, we noticed that the advisory group 'Europe in a changing world' sees representatives affiliated with universities, consultancies and companies. The 'Protection And Security Advisory Group' sees some of its members affiliated with universities and research organisations, as well as representing the tertiary sector and non-profit organisations; with others being civil servants or envoys of their ministry of internal affairs. Finally, half of them are affiliated with consultancies or companies, in the sectors of engineering, security technologies, cybersecurity and finance.

By looking at the resulting documents framing and embedding the calls, we can trace how radicalisation is presented throughout the Work Programmes related to the two Societal Challenges 6 and 7. As per the former, these concept papers focus, on the one hand, on psychological and emotional/affective dynamics at play in radicalisation trajectories (2016-2017); and on the other hand, on the ideological dimension (the 'interplay between religion, politics and identity,' (2018-2020). Even though the 2016-2017 work programme seems to premise on the assumptions that 'grievances' could be conducive to radicalisation and that socialisation is key to understanding it, the referent object seems to be the individual. Furthermore, the 2018-2020 work programme aims at identifying and supporting *moderate* voices among religious and other communities, and developing the capacity to detect *at-risk groups* and put forward preventive measures in terms of social policies and interventions.

The focus on the individual level and on the ideological aspect of radicalisation is recalled in the work programmes referring to the Societal Challenge 7 too, together with the objective of building ready-to-use indicators for risk assessment, early detection and prevention; of developing new equipment and systems to support the security practitioners and law enforcement agencies; and to generate outputs, i.e., policy recommendations and practical solutions to be directly applied and implemented by security end-users. These lines of continuity are partially nuanced by the acknowledgement that preventing and countering radicalisation call for a "multi-agency and multi-stakeholder approach" (2018-2020); secondly, by the acknowledgement that a plurality of factors may lead to violent radicalisation: "familial, social, gender-based, socio-economical, psychological, religious, ideological, historical, cultural, political, propaganda-, social media-or internet-based" (2016-2017) - yet the role of the state and the violence of state agents, or the role of international interventions remain overlooked); and finally, by acknowledging a tradeoff between

protecting society from the violence of radicalised groups and individuals and the need "to ensure citizens' rights to free thought - even radical thought" (2016-2017).

6. Conclusions

In this article we have analysed the dialectics between knowledge, policy and security practices in the context of EU counter-radicalization governance by reviewing and mapping the actors and sites involved in the knowledge production on radicalization in Europe and beyond. A transnational field of expertise on radicalization seems to have emerged at the EU level and is crucial to understanding and unravelling a process of knowledge production that is multi-layered, complex and opaque. The EU, and more specifically the Commission, while outsourcing to project consortia and experts the production of knowledge that is functional and instrumental to security practices more broadly and counter-terrorist responses more specifically, maintains a key role throughout the process in terms of funding, setting priorities through calls' design and strategically selecting what counts as legitimate and validating knowledge and by which actors. The process is strategically selective as not all actors are evenly represented, with critical and alternative voices and narratives persistently remaining marginal or peripheral.

Several EU documents draw an explicit link between the prevention of radicalization and the research produced on the topic as well as between EU-funded research and the reinforcement of early-detection capacities and counter-terrorist responses. The latest counter-terrorism agenda puts forward a whole societal approach in the fight against terrorism by engaging "citizens, communities, faith groups, civil society, researchers, business and private partners" and by envisioning research to be further integrated within the security policy cycle to respond to law-enforcement needs (European Commission 2020, 1). Yet paying attention to security research and how it is funded is not novel (Burgess 2014) as this line of inquiry may

bring us to unveil how security is constituted both as a policy field and as a field of knowledge. Rather than studying the entanglements of security research at large, we embarked on an examination of project consortia as transnational sites of expertise on radicalisation and violent extremism. Because they assemble experts that are largely embedded in neighbouring fields logics such as that of academia, security professionals or industries, military etc., these project consortia can be considered a 'weak field' (Vauchez 2008), i.e., "a field which is completely immersed in other fields that are mapped out and constituted more firmly". (Topalov 1994, 464) At the same time, project consortia serve a function of legitimisation and validation of evidence for the radicalisation discourse and terms of reference established by the Commission.

Do project consortia amount to an epistemic community? Probably not, as they do not form a common body of knowledge and they are extremely heterogeneous. The ECEGIR expert group, whose critical stances were discarded by the Commission, was composed of the most multi-positioned group and indeed they had enough legitimacy to criticise and counter the counter-radicalisation stance of the Commission. However, the Commission rejected the report and turned to other sources of expertise as well as consolidating its own expert networks, such as RAN.

With these caveats in mind, we believe that our study sheds light on two trade-offs structuring the production of knowledge about radicalisation in the framework of the EU's research funding programmes. The first can be summarised as 'cumulative' versus 'tentacular' knowledge: whereas the reliance on a core group of consortia participants repeatedly and across different projects may contribute to the formation of credible and sound expertise, only the empowerment of 'peripheral' players in the knowledge production chain may lead to pluralistic, multi-faceted, and even counter-hegemonic understandings of radicalisation. The second trade-off, instead, is between the involvement of locally-rooted actors and

transnational or regional networks and associations: in other words, between the reach, the capacity and the infrastructure supporting the participation of a certain member in a consortium and its ability to generate context-sensitive insights.

As we have demonstrated, project consortia and the respective research proposals are contoured in response/reaction to how the European Commission frames the call, following the inputs of a number of strategic players. The question to be left open is whether the integration of 'outsiders' in the very mechanisms of design and negotiations of calls and programme priorities could inject a quid of plurality of perspectives and approaches in the field of knowledge about radicalisation and extremism, and ultimately, in security knowledge.

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