

THE EVOLUTION OF ONLINE TERRORIST PROPAGANDA

19 Apr 2018

[Press Release](#)

Europol hosted the second conference of the European Counter Terrorism Centre Advisory Group to present and discuss new strategies against online terrorist propaganda and radicalisation.



Terrorist propaganda constantly shifts on to new and diverse platforms and the quantity of information exchanged, either publicly or in private spaces, is increasing. In order to face these evolving threats, Europol hosted the second conference of the European Counter Terrorism Centre Advisory Group on 17 and 18 April 2018. During the conference several academic research papers were discussed, relevant to ECTC's complex tasks in a way that is effective and in compliance with Europol's high data protection standards. External and diversified contributions are fundamental to analysing a world-wide phenomenon as terrorist propaganda. This year's event built on the success of the first conference of the [ECTC Advisory Group in April 2017](#).

During the conference three main subjects were addressed through three different panels:

- **Terrorist propaganda and counter-messaging** looked into how terrorist propaganda by the so-called Islamic State (IS) and beyond is disseminated on the internet not only among

supporters, but also among opponents of the terrorist groups and what needs to be taken into account when trying to counter it.

- **Assessing radicalisation** explored ways and methods in detecting and evaluating signs of radicalisation to violence in individual's communication, in particular online. The goal was to retrieve relevant signs within the increasing masses of information that are publicly accessible.
- **User-generated content and polarisation** opened the view beyond terrorist groups to individuals supporting terrorism and extremist movements of different orientations.

Among the main takeaways of the conference was the fact that the amount of information exchanged online is increasing at a staggering speed. The IS in particular is radically changing at present. The group has lost most of its territory and much of its propaganda production capabilities. It has lost its capacity to entertain a stable presence on major social media platforms. This also affects its online communication strategies, its recruitment efforts and its attack planning: official IS propaganda and IS online supporters seem to be increasingly merging. Calls for lone actor attacks continue to be published by very different actors. At the same time, other terrorist groups, for example al-Qaeda, try to occupy the space left by a receding IS. As a result, it has become even more difficult to distinguish between terrorist propaganda and extremist chatter on the internet.

In this scenario, gathering mass data has proven to be difficult, expensive, not necessarily effective and highly problematic from the perspective of civil liberties and privacy rules. To conduct data collection that is both on target and limited in scope, the dynamic environment in which terrorism is developing must be accurately assessed and tools and methodologies must be devised that enable law enforcement to detect early signs while protecting the privacy of the ordinary citizen.

Read more:

Daniel Grinnell, Stuart Macdonald, David Mair & Nuria Lorenzo-Dus, "[Who disseminates Rumiyaḥ? Examining the relative influence of sympathiser and non-sympathiser Twitter users.](#)"

Nazar Akrami, Amendra Shrestha, Mathias Berggren, Lisa Kaati, Milan Obaidi and Katie Cohen, "[Assessment of Risk in Written Communication: introducing the Profile Risk Assessment Tool \(PRAT\).](#)"

Daniel López-Sánchez, Juan M. Corchado, "[Applying local image feature descriptors to aid the detection of radicalization processes in Twitter.](#)"

Alastair G. Reed & Haroro J. Ingram, "[A practical guide to the first rule of CTCVE - Do violent extremists no favours.](#)"

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