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EUROPEAN UNION
**TERRORISM
SITUATION
AND TREND
REPORT**

2023



EUROPEAN UNION TERRORISM SITUATION AND TREND REPORT 2023

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FOREWORD



Catherine De Bolle
Executive Director
of Europol

Terrorism remains a significant threat to the internal security of the European Union. Terrorists operate across borders, leveraging new technologies and modi operandi to target innocent people. EU law enforcement authorities, in particular the counter-terrorism community, remain vigilant and united in countering the threat. The EU Terrorism Situation and Trend Report (TE-SAT) 2023 contributes to this effort, by presenting prevalent terrorism trends in the EU.

Terrorism constitutes an attack on our society intending to create fear and chaos among EU citizens. In 2022, 16 terrorist attacks took place in the EU and an additional 12 attacks failed or were foiled. While the attacks directly affected seven Member States, more Member States arrested suspects in terrorism-related cases. Tragically, four people were killed in terrorist attacks in the EU, two resulting from jihadist attacks and two from a right-wing terrorist attack. We honour the memory of all those lost to terrorism in 2022 and in previous years.

Member States continue to view jihadist terrorism as the most prominent terrorist threat to the EU despite the fact that the number of jihadist attacks has decreased compared to 2021 and 2020. The threat from right-wing terrorist lone actors, radicalised online, remains significant. Left-wing and anarchist terrorists and violent extremists continue to pose a threat to public safety and security in the EU.

Additionally, the spread of propaganda online and its potential for radicalisation remains a key concern. Social isolation and the lack of a solid support system remain key vulnerabilities which terrorists take advantage of in order to propagate their messages and to recruit new followers. This is particularly worrying with the increasing number of young people, including minors, exposed to online terrorist propaganda. Furthermore, the terrorist and violent extremist environment is becoming more decentralised and volatile. Diffuse actors connect and inspire one another, uniting behind grievances beyond ideology or group affiliation. This context is ripe for self-radicalisation and for lone actors to begin engaging in attack planning, and poses significant challenges for preventing and combating terrorism and violent extremism in the EU.

The Russian war of aggression against Ukraine also brings with it potential ramifications in the terrorist and extremist environment in the EU. Europol reacted immediately to the challenges and threats posed by the war and launched a number of coordinated actions to monitor counter-terrorism developments, to support the countries directly affected and to mitigate the threats for EU's security. Initially, the war sparked reactions among violent extremist actors, especially on the right-wing spectrum. While a number of foreign fighters have joined the

battleground, terrorist or extremist affiliations remain tenuous. Disinformation and propaganda have proliferated widely with the Russian invasion, fuelling all kinds of conspiracy theories. The law enforcement community must remain alert to any groups or individuals who use the context of the war to orchestrate terror attacks in the EU.

Both law enforcement and judicial authorities in Member States have continued to invest significant efforts in preventing and combating terrorism in the EU. This is visible in the number of foiled attacks, the arrests and the high conviction rates for offences related to terrorism over the past year. The entire security ecosystem in the EU, whether operating at national or international level, continues to prioritise investigations into terrorism. I would like to commend all the women and men from law enforcement and other dedicated services who strive to prevent any future attacks.

Fighting terrorism remains a priority for Europol and for the EU. We will continue to work closely with all our partners in order to mitigate terrorist threats to the community by denying terrorists the means and limiting their space to plan, to finance and carry out attacks, by countering radicalisation and by enhancing information exchange and police cooperation. With the TE-SAT 2023, I am pleased to reemphasise our commitment to these efforts as we continue towards our joint goal of Making Europe Safer.

KEY FINDINGS



Terrorism continued to pose a serious threat to EU Member States in 2022. 28 completed, failed or foiled attacks were recorded in the EU. 16 attacks were completed, of which the majority were attributed to left-wing and anarchist terrorism (13), two to jihadist terrorism, and one to right-wing terrorism.

Four fatalities were recorded in 2022, two resulting from jihadist terrorist attacks and two from a right-wing terrorist attack. The total number of attacks increased compared to 2021 (18), but remained lower than in 2020 (56), potentially due to the varying categorisation of left-wing terrorist attacks by reporting countries over the past few years.



380 individuals were arrested by EU Member States' law enforcement authorities in 2022 for terrorism-related offences.

Most of the arrests were carried out following investigations into jihadist terrorism, in France (93), Spain (46), Germany (30) and Belgium (22).



Court proceedings in 2022 resulted in 427 convictions and acquittals for terrorist offences.

All court proceedings concerning right-wing and left-wing terrorism resulted in convictions, while the conviction rate for jihadist terrorism was 84 % and for separatist terrorism 68 %.



Most left-wing terrorist attacks were perpetrated utilising improvised incendiary devices (IIDs), fire accelerators and improvised explosive devices (IEDs).

The three fatal attacks reported in 2022 were carried out using a bladed weapon and strangulation by jihadist terrorists, and a firearm by a right-wing terrorist.



In the EU, affiliation to particular groups, such as IS and al-Qaeda, is becoming less prominent among supporters of jihadism.

In 2022, several Member States reported that jihadist suspects were collecting and disseminating propaganda material originating from both IS and al-Qaeda, including some pre-dating the separation between the two terrorist organisations.

KEY FINDINGS



Right-wing terrorists and extremists propagate a plethora of narratives, mainly online.

There is little consensus on themes and ideologies, which are always mixed and often contradictory. Contemporary offline developments that resonate with their own grievances drive the online discourse.



Police personnel were a key target of violent attacks by left-wing and anarchist extremist actors in 2022.

Violence amounted to premeditated and targeted attacks against law enforcement, both during service and off-duty, including attacks on private vehicles and homes.



The internet and technology remained pivotal enablers of propaganda, as well as radicalisation and recruitment of vulnerable individuals into terrorism and violent extremism.

In addition to social media platforms, openly available messaging applications, online forums and video gaming platforms, decentralised platforms appear to have gained popularity in terrorist and violent extremist circles, significantly undermining law enforcement monitoring and investigations.



Although rooted in different ideologies and backgrounds, terrorists and violent extremists have common interests and practices.

Examples include exploiting the same topics, using the same digital environments and adopting similar techniques for content dissemination.



The most visible reactions to the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine emerged in the first months of the war, largely in the right-wing extremist milieu, materialising in online posts and a limited number of right-wing extremist affiliates travelling to join the battlefield.

Although the interest in the war in this milieu appears to have gradually dimmed throughout the remainder of 2022, disinformation and distorted narratives related to the conflict might still fuel terrorist and violent extremist narratives, regardless of the ideology propagated.

INTRODUCTION

The European Union (EU) Terrorism Situation and Trend Report (TE-SAT) 2023 is a situational overview, presenting figures, major developments and trends in the terrorism landscape in the EU in 2022.

The report is based on qualitative and quantitative data provided by Member States on terrorist attacks, arrests and court decisions issued for terrorist offences. Additionally, Europol's partners provide valuable qualitative information and assessments that enrich the findings of the report, in order to reflect on developments beyond the EU that affect the security of the EU and its citizens. Information on convictions and acquittals for terrorist offences, as well as on amendments to national legislation on terrorism provided by Eurojust and based on data shared by Member States, complements the report.

According to EU Directive (EU) 2017/541 on combating terrorism¹, a legal framework which all Member States were obliged to transpose into their national legislation by 8 September 2018, terrorist attacks are criminal offences carried out with the purpose of intimidating a population or trying to coerce a government or international organisation, seriously destabilising or destroying the fundamental political, constitutional, economic or social structures of a country or an international organisation. The TE-SAT distinguishes between and elaborates in-depth on the following types of terrorism², based on ideological preferences: jihadist terrorism, right-wing terrorism, left-wing and anarchist terrorism, ethno-nationalist and separatist terrorism, and other types of terrorism³.

Despite varying legislation at national level, Directive (EU) 2017/541 sets out a legal framework common to all Member States, and in particular, a harmonised definition of terrorist offences. On this basis, the TE-SAT provides statistical data on terrorist attacks, arrests and convictions in Member States. On a national level, terrorism legislation varies within the limits set by this Directive, as Member States retain flexibility when legislating. The quantitative analysis presented in the TE-SAT therefore reflects Member States' definitions of terrorist offences according to national legislation, which may be broader (but not narrower) than the definitions set out in Directive (EU) 2017/541.

While the primary scope of the TE-SAT is terrorism, where relevant and available, the report presents specific violent extremist incidents, acts and activities as reported by Member States. Extremist incidents are thus not reflected in the quantitative overview of terrorist attacks but are included in the report for contextualisation and to provide a more comprehensive picture of the terrorism situation in the EU.

¹ Directive (EU) 2017/541 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 March 2017 on combating terrorism and replacing Council Framework Decision 2002/475/JHA and amending Council Decision 2005/671/JHA, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32017L0541>

² The categorisation of the different types of terrorism based on ideology, and their respective definitions, serve the needs of the TE-SAT to classify and analyse information from EU Member States' counter terrorism investigations, without having any legal or formal value.

³ Also referred to in past issues of the TE-SAT as 'single issue terrorism'.

TERRORISM IN EUROPE IN 2022: AN OVERVIEW

Terrorist attacks and arrests

**28
completed,
failed and
foiled
terrorist
attacks in
the EU
in 2022**

28 completed, failed and foiled were reported by Member States in 2022. This represented an increase compared to 2021 (18 attacks), but remained below the number of attacks reported in 2020 (56)⁴. Italy experienced the highest number of attacks (12), followed by France (6), Greece (4) and Belgium (3). Germany, Slovakia and Spain reported one attack each. Of the 28 attacks, 16 were completed.

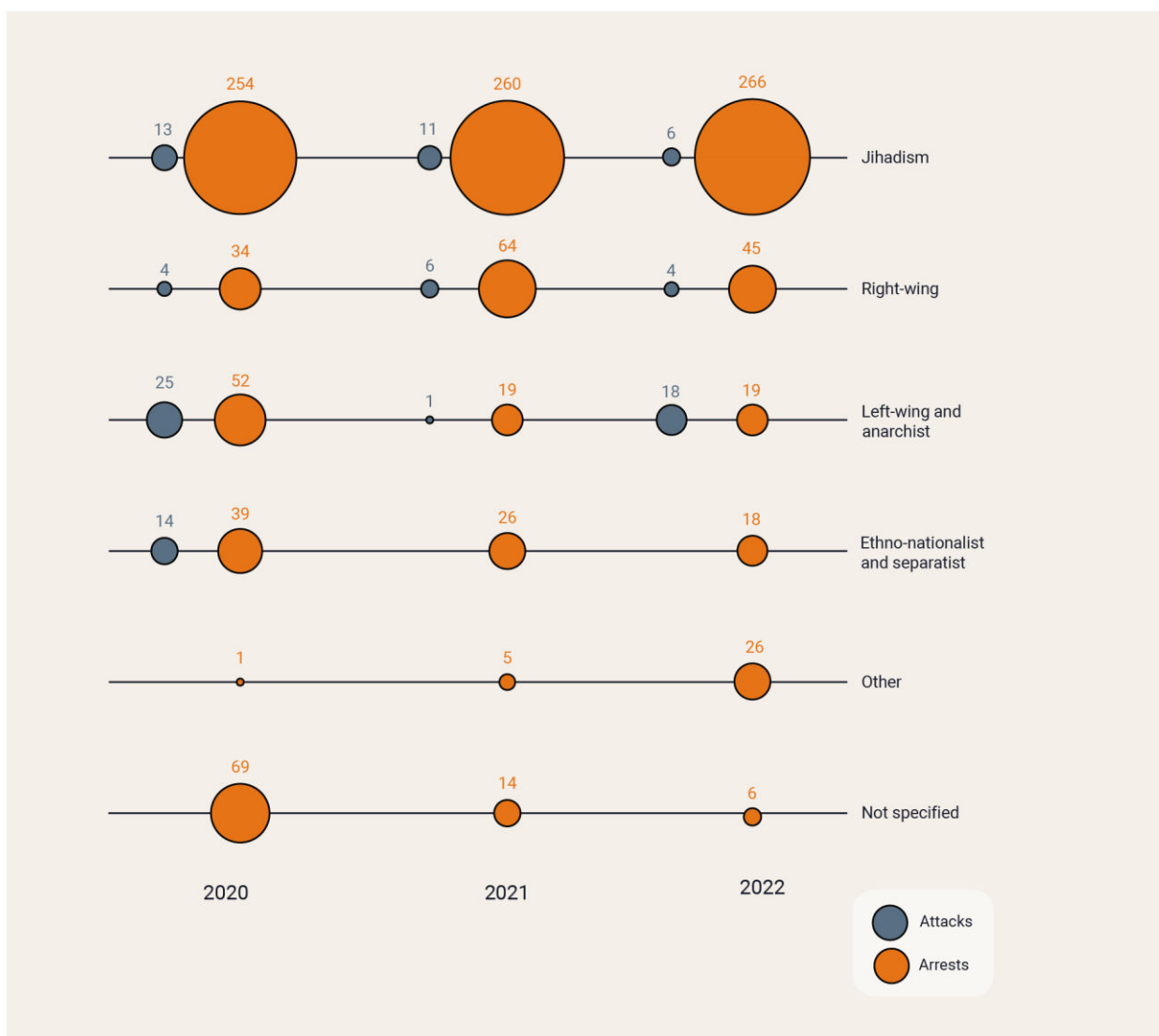
Most of the reported terrorist attacks were categorised as left-wing and anarchist terrorism (18), of which 13 were completed respectively in Italy (8), Greece (3), Belgium (1) and Spain (1). One person was injured as a result of the completed left-wing terrorist attack in Spain. Three failed left-wing terrorist attacks were reported in Italy and two were foiled, one in Greece and one in Italy. Left-wing terrorist attacks increased in 2022 compared to 2021, when only one attack was reported by a Member State. Variations in the number of terrorist attacks over the past three years are at least partially attributable to the fluctuating labelling of left-wing incidents by the reporting countries as terrorist attacks or extremist incidents.

Member States reported six jihadist terrorist attacks in 2022. Two attacks were completed, one in Belgium and one in France. Four attacks were foiled, in France (3) and Belgium (1). No failed jihadist terrorist attacks were reported by Member States in 2022. Jihadist terrorist attacks have decreased compared to 2021 (11) and 2020 (13). Two fatalities resulted from jihadist attacks carried out in Belgium (1) and France (1).

Four right-wing attacks were reported by the Member States in 2022, in line with the number of right-wing attacks in the previous years (six in 2021 and four in 2020). One attack was completed in Slovakia, leading to two casualties. Three attacks reported by Member States in 2022 were foiled, two in France and one in Germany.

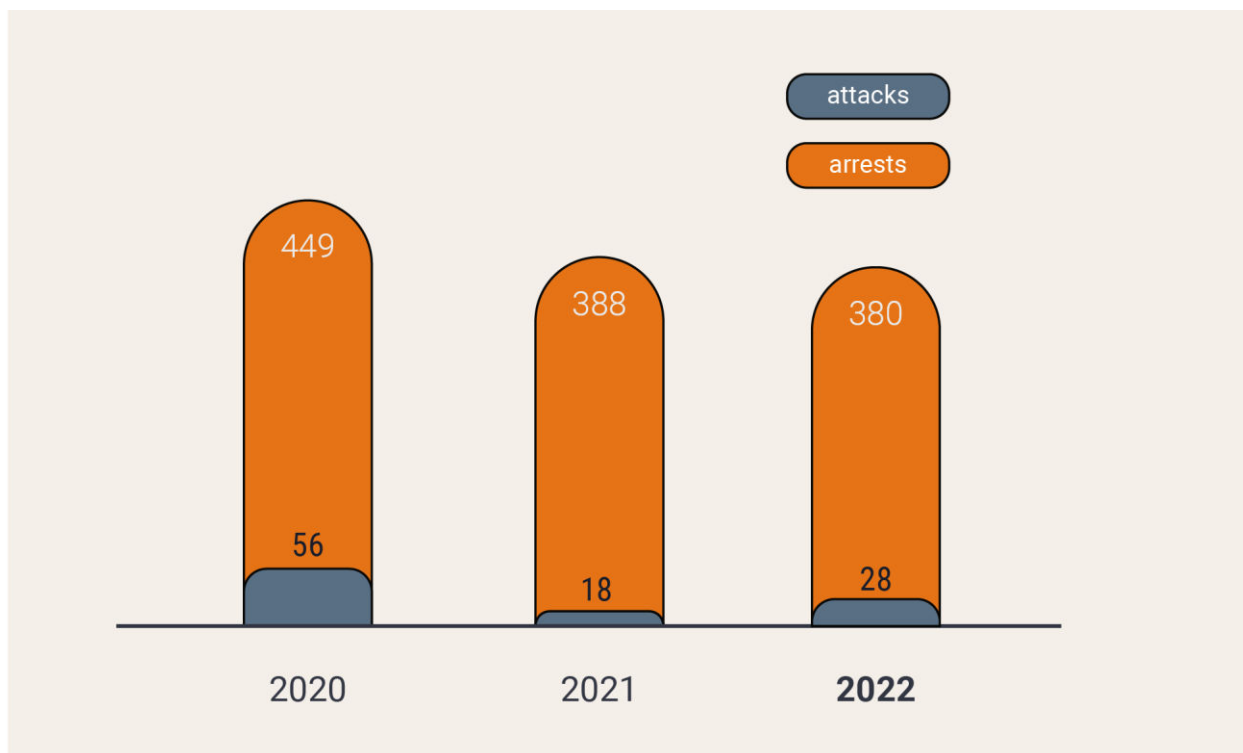
⁴ In the TE-SAT 2022, the reported number of terrorist attacks reported for 2021 was 15. However, since then, French authorities reported three additional (foiled) right-wing terrorist attacks perpetrated in 2021; Similarly, in the TE-SAT 2021, the reported number of terrorist attacks reported for 2020 was 57. However, since then, a German court has ruled that one of the incidents formerly reported as a jihadist terrorist attack was no longer considered a terrorist attack.

Terrorist attacks (completed, failed, foiled) and arrests on suspicion of terrorism in the EU per type of terrorism, 2020-2022



380 individuals were arrested in Member States in 2022 for terrorism-related offences. The number of suspects arrested in 2022 is in line with the 388 arrests in 2021 and lower than the 449 arrests reported in 2020. Of the 266 arrests for jihadist offences, most were carried out in France (93), Spain (46), Germany (30), Belgium (22), Italy (21) and the Netherlands (21). The number of arrested jihadist suspects was in line with the number reported in 2021 (260). The number of arrests for right-wing terrorism (45) decreased in 2022 (from 64 in 2021) as did the arrests for ethno-nationalist and separatist terrorism (18, down from 26 in 2021). The arrests for left-wing and anarchist terrorism (19) remained the same as in 2021 (19). The number of arrests for other types of terrorism increased in 2022 (26) compared to 2021 (5). For six arrests, the type of terrorism was not specified.

Terrorist attacks (completed, failed, foiled) and arrests on suspicion of terrorism in the EU, 2020-2022



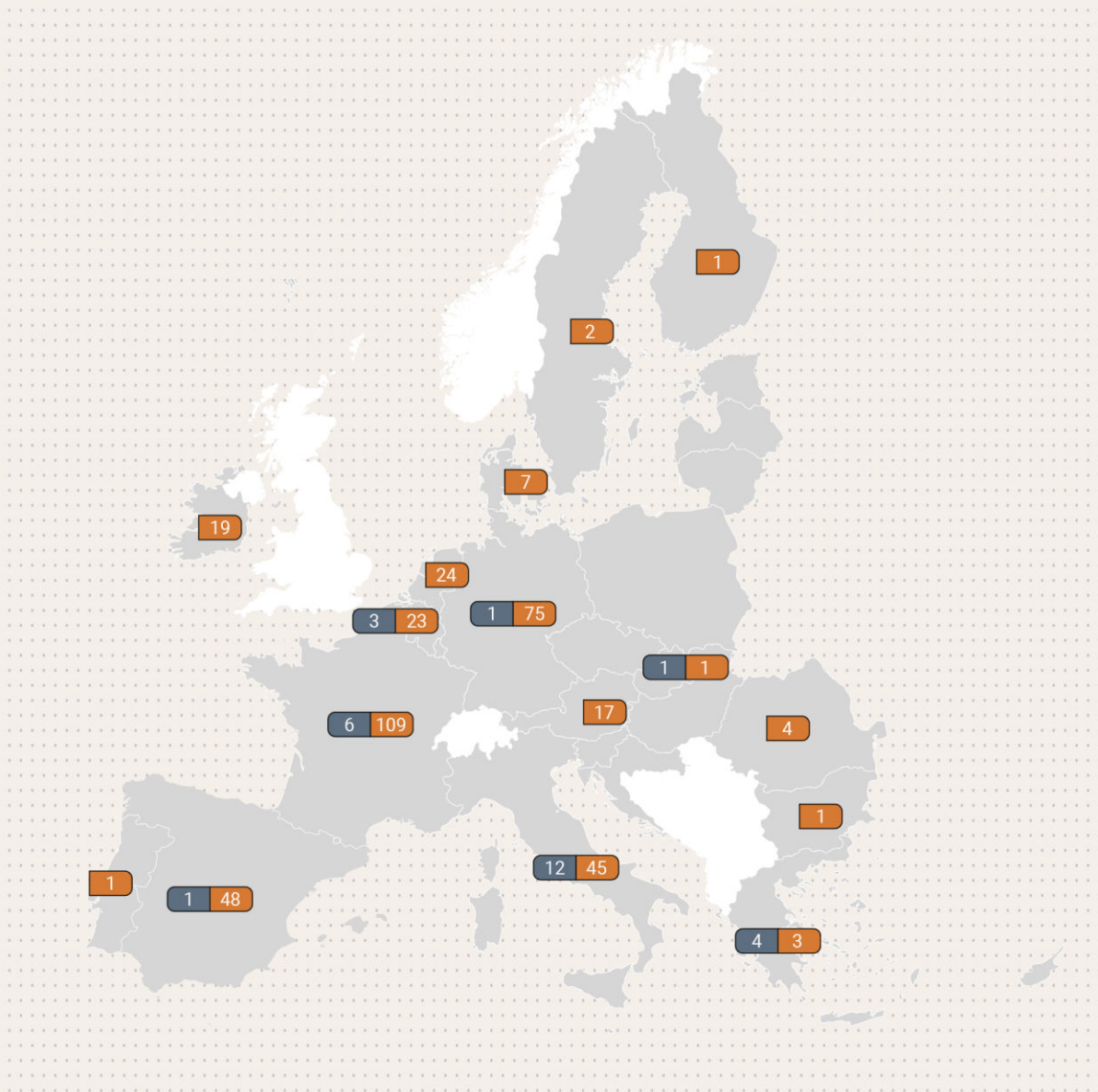
The majority of the arrested suspects were charged with membership of a terrorist organisation (95) and for planning or preparing an attack (41). Other suspects were charged for disseminating propaganda (18) and terrorism financing (14)⁵. Most arrestees were males (176). The arrestees were between 15 and 75 years old⁶.

⁵ The offence leading to an arrest has been specified for 244 arrests.

⁶ The gender has been specified for 220 suspects, and the age has been specified for 177 suspects.

Terrorist attacks (completed, failed, foiled) and arrests on suspicion of terrorism in the EU, 2022

attacks | arrests

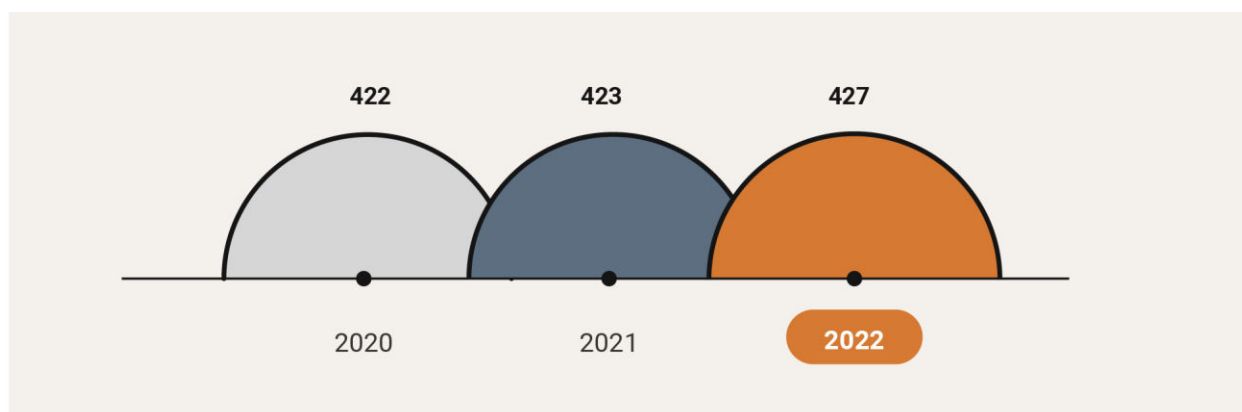


total | 28 | 380

Convictions and penalties in 2022

15 Member States shared information with Eurojust on court proceedings for terrorist offences that were concluded in 2022⁷. These concluded court proceedings resulted in 427 convictions and acquittals for terrorist offences⁸.

Number of convictions and acquittals for terrorist offences in 2020, 2021 and 2022, as reported to Eurojust



The highest number of convictions and acquittals for terrorist offences were reported by France (110), Belgium (81) and Germany (54)⁹. Some of the reported convictions and acquittals are final, while others are pending judicial remedy, as appeals have been filed by the prosecution, the defence, or both¹⁰.

Types of offences in the concluded court proceedings

Membership/participation in (the activities of), support to or collaboration with a terrorist group were the most common offences in the concluded court proceedings in Member States in 2022. In some cases, the defendants played a leading role within the terrorist group. Other offences included financing of terrorism, (self-)indoctrination, recruitment, incitement or threatening to commit terrorist acts, (preparation to commit) terrorist attacks, providing or receiving training for terrorist purposes, or glorification of terrorism. In some cases, the charges concerned attempt, aiding and abetting or complicity to commit such offences. Further to terrorist offences, defendants were also charged with firearms or explosives-related offences, core international crimes, drug offences, document forgery, violation of financial legislation,

⁷ Eurojust received contributions containing information on terrorism-related convictions and acquittals in 2022 from the following EU Member States: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, the Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Spain and Sweden. The data for France includes judgments of the Paris Criminal Court and the Paris Juvenile Court from the 1st half of 2022, and judgments of the Paris Court of Assizes. In Lithuania, the proceedings against two individuals were dismissed due to the expiration of the statute of limitations. These proceedings are not included in the number of convictions and acquittals for terrorist offences.

In one case, a judgment pronounced in 2022 was appealed and the appeal was concluded before the end of the year, Eurojust reported only on the latest/final judgment.

⁸ Please refer to the Annex for further statistical information.

⁹ The data for the previous years corresponds to the data reported in the respective TE-SAT reports.

¹⁰ Due to the specifics of reporting, some EU Member States submit information on final decisions only, while other EU Member States report also on not final decisions.

etc. A number of defendants tried in 2022 were previously convicted of terrorist or other offences in the same Member State or abroad.

Membership/participation in (the activities of) a terrorist group

In Greece, in March 2022 a Syrian national was given multiple sentences of life imprisonment after the court found him guilty of joining the self-proclaimed Islamic State (IS) terrorist organisation and assisting in four intentional homicides committed jointly with others as a terrorist act. The man participated in 'cleansing' against persons who opposed IS in various areas of Syria. He took part in armed battles and assisted in the capture, torture and killing of males of the Sheitat tribe. The court considered the act to cause serious danger to the country of Syria, with a view to seriously intimidating its population and harming the fundamental, constitutional, political and financial structures of the country.

In Austria, a Russian national was found guilty of membership of a terrorist and criminal organisation and other offences in April 2022. The man, who was imprisoned at that time, sought to recruit fellow prisoners for the IS and informed them about his willingness to join the terrorist organisation once released from prison. Together with two other prisoners, he planned to carry out a terrorist attack in Austria, similar to the one in Vienna on 2 November 2020. The court sentenced the defendant to four-and-a-half years' imprisonment.

(Preparation of) Terrorist attacks

Court proceedings concerning terrorist attacks or preparation of terrorist attacks were concluded in several Member States in 2022.

In June 2022, a French court sentenced the only surviving member of the terrorist cell that committed the deadly terrorist attacks on 13 November 2015 in Paris and Saint-Denis to life imprisonment with no possibility of parole. He was found guilty of multiple counts of murder, complicity to murder, belonging to a terrorist organisation, taking part in a conspiracy to commit murder and kidnapping as a member of a terrorist organisation. His 19 co-defendants were convicted of participating in the planning of the attacks and providing support to the terrorists to travel to Europe, acquire weapons, make suicide vests, etc. Their penalties range from 2 years' to life imprisonment.

Also in France in December 2022, eight persons were convicted for their involvement in the terrorist attack on 14 July 2016 in Nice. Two of them were found guilty of participation in a criminal conspiracy with the purpose of preparing an act of terrorism and sentenced to 18 years' imprisonment. According to the court, they knew about the radicalisation of the perpetrator of the attack and his potential to commit a terrorist act. Another co-defendant was given a 12-year prison term for providing a firearm to the perpetrator of the attack. The remaining five men were handed penalties between two and eight years' imprisonment.

In Belgium, 14 defendants were charged with directing or participating in the activities of a terrorist group, firearms- and explosives-related offences, and document forgery. They were suspected of having helped the perpetrators of the 13 November 2015 attacks in Paris and Saint-Denis, France. In June 2022, 10 of the defendants were found guilty. Penalties ranged from a three-year suspended prison sentence to community service and for some, the pronouncement of the

penalty was suspended. The remaining four defendants were acquitted by the court.

Financing of terrorism

Concluded court proceedings on financing of terrorism concerned fundraising for terrorist groups or members of such groups, including through social media, use of financial services companies and money transfer providers, as well as *hawala*.

In Italy, an Italian national was sentenced to nine years' imprisonment and a fine, after the court found him guilty of directing and financing the terrorist group *Majilis Shura Thuwar Bengasi* and of involvement in arms trafficking. The man played a leading role within the group and made two vessels available for the transport of weapons. One of them was intercepted in the framework of the EUNAVFOR MED operation Sophia in the Mediterranean Sea with large amounts of weapons and ammunition on board. The offences were committed in international waters between May and June 2017. On appeal, the man was acquitted of directing and financing the terrorist group and his penalty was reduced to five years' imprisonment and a fine. In Libya, the man was previously sentenced to life imprisonment for having committed an act to provoke a civil war and fragment national unity.

Cumulative prosecutions for terrorism and core international crimes

If allowed by national law and depending on the specific facts of the case, Member States continued to carry out cumulative prosecutions for terrorism and core international crimes. Several such prosecutions resulted in convictions in 2022.

In July 2022, a German court sentenced a defendant to 5-and-a-half years' imprisonment after it found her guilty of membership of a terrorist organisation, a war crime against property by appropriation and a number of crimes against humanity, including persecution of a group in combination with aiding and abetting genocide, enslavement, aiding and abetting rape, inflicting severe mental harm, cruel and inhuman treatment. She had travelled to Syria in 2014 to join IS. There, she married an IS fighter and together they lived in houses of ousted Raqqa residents. They also attended public punishments. After her first husband was killed, she married subsequently two other IS fighters. Together with one of her husbands, she abused an enslaved Yazidi woman, who was compelled into forced labour and also regularly raped by the defendant's husband.

Public incitement to terrorism, dissemination of terrorist content, recruitment, (self-) indoctrination, training, and glorification

Cases of public incitement to terrorism, dissemination of terrorist propaganda and other terrorist content, recruitment, (self-) indoctrination and glorification of terrorism were dealt with by courts in several Member States in 2022. Internet and/or social media were used in some cases to facilitate these activities, while in other cases the activities took place offline.

In February 2022, an Austrian court sentenced a Lebanese national, to 5 years and 9 months' imprisonment for membership of a terrorist and criminal organisation and training for the purpose of terrorism. He had voluntarily joined Hezbollah where he led a battalion, received training on how to use weapons, instructed others and recruited members for the organisation.

Convictions and acquittals

All concluded terrorism-related proceedings heard in courts in Germany, Greece, Latvia, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia and Sweden in 2022 resulted in convictions. A large majority of the reported concluded proceedings in France, Hungary and Italy also led to guilty verdicts¹¹. In some cases, defendants were acquitted of terrorist offences but found guilty of other criminal offences.

Similar to previous years, all concluded court proceedings concerning right-wing terrorism in 2022 resulted in convictions. The only reported proceeding concerning left-wing and anarchist terrorism also resulted in a conviction. Defendants charged with jihadist terrorism-related offences were convicted in 84 % of the cases, while defendants charged with separatist terrorism-related offences were convicted in 68 % of the cases.

Penalties

The average prison sentence for terrorist offences in the reported proceedings in Member States in 2022 was 7 years, which is slightly higher than in 2021 (6 years)¹². The lowest prison sentence handed down by courts in the Member States in 2022 was 35 days and the highest was life imprisonment.

A term of imprisonment of up to 5 years continued to be the most common penalty handed down following guilty verdicts for terrorist offences (62 % in 2022, compared to 65 % in 2021), while penalties of 10 or more years' imprisonment were given with 19 % of the guilty verdicts (17 % in 2021).

It should, however, be taken into consideration that the severity of the penalty in each case depends on the respective offence and specific circumstances and cannot serve a comparative purpose.

In some cases, the execution of (parts of) the penalty was suspended for a period of time or in its entirety, subject to specific probation conditions set out by the court. In other cases, the court established the guilt of the defendant but postponed the ruling on the penalty. If applicable, juvenile penalties were imposed on some defendants.

Other penalties or measures ordered together with or as an alternative to prison terms included fines, community service, psychiatric treatment, withdrawal of nationality, restrictions on exercising certain civil and political rights, expulsion from the national territory, confiscation of assets, fixed probation period upon release and involvement in a de-radicalisation programme.

¹¹ Eurojust considers it one verdict if a person is convicted of more than one terrorist offence within the same proceeding, or convicted of a terrorist offence and acquitted of another offence. If a person is acquitted of a terrorist offence and convicted of another offence, the verdict is included in the overview as acquittal of terrorism.

¹² For the purpose of calculating the average prison sentence, penalties exceeding 40 years' imprisonment and life sentences were counted as 40 years, unless the court indicated a specific number of years to be served. In the cases where the court ordered a possibility of parole after a certain number of years have been served, those years are included in the overview.

CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

The impact of the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine on terrorism and violent extremism in the EU

Since the beginning of the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine in February 2022, foreign fighters of various nationalities have joined the battleground in support of both sides involved.

As of the date of the report, there has been no confirmed information of a proscribed terrorist organisation being formally involved in the conflict. This does not exclude the presence of individuals supporting or adhering to ideologies of such groups in the battlefield in Ukraine. In November 2022, the European Parliament proposed to include several pro-Russian groups such as the Russian paramilitary organisation known as 'the Wagner Group', the 141st Special Motorised Regiment, known as the 'Kadyrovites', as well as other Russian-funded armed groups, militias and proxies, on the EU's terrorist list. However, the decision to include persons, groups or entities on the EU terrorist list can solely be made by a Member State¹³.

The war sparked reactions among violent extremist actors, especially on the right-wing spectrum, and to a lesser extent in other ideologies.

Reactions were largely seen in the online environment, and mostly in the first months of the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine. Right-wing affiliates, expressing support for either Ukraine or Russia, called for mobilisation to join the battlefield, shared information and guidance on travelling to Ukraine and organised funding campaigns. The intensity of online debates in right-wing groups gradually faded after the first months of war, and shifted back to more general topics. A number of individuals, largely associated with right-wing extremist ideologies, have travelled to Ukraine, many of them in direct response to the mobilisation calls that were heavily propagated online in the beginning of the war. However, many of them have already returned to their home countries.

While at the beginning of the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine some jihadist media outlets called for participation of jihadists in the war as a means of obtaining expertise and weapons, overall the reactions from the jihadist scene were significantly fewer and less visible than from right-wing extremist sympathisers, with messages encouraging avoidance of participation in the war. Jihadist narratives concerning the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine reinforced messaging against the Western world, for example in relation to divine punishment for its transgressions or the perceived different treatment applied to refugees from Ukraine in comparison to those from areas associated with a jihadist presence.

Left-wing extremists also showed fewer reactions in the online environment. However, topics linked to the war and its effects, such as the battle for resources, the victimisation of innocents for the benefit of a few and the profits obtained by the weapons industry, became an integral part of left-wing extremist propaganda.

¹³ European parliament News, November 2022, European Parliament declares Russia to be a state sponsor of terrorism, <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20221118IPR55707/european-parliament-declares-russia-to-be-a-state-sponsor-of-terrorism>

Weaponry and explosives

In the 28 completed, failed and foiled terrorist attacks reported by Member States in 2022, the weaponry used by the perpetrators included firearms, improvised explosive devices (IEDs), improvised incendiary devices (IIDs), fire accelerators, and bladed weapons. Of the 16 completed terrorist attacks, one was carried out by stabbing with a bladed weapon, one with a firearm, four attacks were perpetrated with IEDs, one with IIDs and eight with fire accelerators. Additionally, one attack was perpetrated with bare hands.

The use of IEDs, IIDs and fire accelerators was more prominent in the right-wing and left-wing terrorist and violent extremist circles, while bladed weapons were mainly used in the jihadist context. Firearms featured both in right-wing and jihadist foiled attacks.

The primary choice of weaponry for jihadist attacks planned or perpetrated in 2022 was bladed weapons. This is because attacks carried out with easily accessible rudimentary objects require shorter planning and the risks of detection by law enforcement are perceived as lower. In addition to bladed weapons, one of the two completed jihadist attacks was perpetrated with blunt force, by strangulation, and two of the foiled attacks were committed with weapons and explosives.

In the right-wing terrorist attacks reported in 2022, perpetrators resorted to firearms, IEDs, and bladed weapons. Although they were not used in any of the right-wing terrorist attacks in 2022, some Member States and non-EU partner countries also reported an increasing interest in 3D-printed firearms. In Slovakia and the Netherlands, individuals linked to right-wing extremist circles, one of whom was a minor, were arrested for disseminating online instructions for the homemade manufacture of automatic firearms with 3D-printable parts, as well as for the possession of 3D-printed firearms and firearm parts.

The weaponry used by perpetrators in left-wing and anarchist terrorist attacks included IEDs, IIDs, and fire accelerators.

In line with the trends observed in previous years, terrorists and violent extremists continue to disseminate online manuals and tutorials for the manufacture of homemade explosives (HMEs) and IEDs. Terrorists and violent extremists remain apt in evading restrictive measures and monitoring related to explosive precursors in the EU. For instance, a pro-IS group released a document on a cloud-based instant messaging platform, suggesting the use of alternative precursors for HMEs. The rationale was to encourage followers to bypass regulations that restrict the use of and/or trade in certain explosive precursors without raising suspicions during the acquisition process.

Although no terrorist attacks perpetrated with chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) materials were reported by Member States in 2022, propaganda material concerning the use of such materials remained available online. The use of CBRN materials remained of interest among extremists and terrorists across the ideological spectrum. One example concerns an online right-wing extremist magazine that published an article on a do-it-yourself (DIY) method to produce a radiological dispersal device, also known as a 'dirty bomb', by combining explosives and nuclear material. Although there have not been indications in this direction yet, the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine raises concerns about CBRN material from the war zone potentially being smuggled into the EU and ultimately used for terrorist purposes.

In some cases, terrorists and violent extremists have also been procuring pyrotechnic substances, potentially supplied by networks active in organised crime.

Digital and technological advancements

The use of technology and the internet – including social media platforms, instant messaging applications, online forums and video gaming platforms – continues to play a crucial role in the radicalisation and recruitment process of individuals and in spreading propaganda material, arguably across the entire ideological spectrum.

Gaming platforms, encrypted instant communication applications and decentralised technologies are exploited by terrorists and violent extremists for recruitment and dissemination of propaganda.

Openly available instant messaging applications continued to play a facilitating role in communication within terrorist and violent extremist communities. The end-to-end encryption functionalities of such applications continue to pose a challenge to law enforcement authorities in identifying and removing terrorist and violent extremist content online.

In 2022, terrorist and violent extremist groups and individuals continued to exploit gaming-adjacent platforms for recruitment purposes and propaganda dissemination. IS supporters in particular created groups on gaming communication apps, dedicated to the discussion of different topics, including media operations, translation of propaganda content and religious migration. Right-wing extremist actors exploited the gaming landscape by creating right-wing extremist utopias within popular video games, for example featuring neo-Nazi recreations, anti-Semitic and anti-lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer+ (LGBTQ+) themes. This was done mostly to appeal to a larger audience and to increase the base of young sympathisers, but also to foster a sense of community by engaging in a shared hobby.

In the past few years, jihadist and right-wing propagandists have gained a larger foothold and consolidated their presence on decentralised applications. Based on peer-to-peer (P2P) network protocols rather than centralised infrastructures, decentralised technologies constitute a serious challenge with regard to content moderation and investigative efforts.

Among the advantages of decentralised platforms are multiple options for privacy leading to near-anonymity, enhanced usability, and increased availability and retrievability of on-demand content. All these features play into the online communication and distribution strategies of both jihadist and violent right-wing propagandists. A widespread adoption of decentralised technologies by terrorist and violent extremist groups and their online supporters continues to undermine the effectiveness of existing measures to identify and remove terrorist content online due to the additional anonymity and data control layers decentralised technologies offer.

Other advanced technologies may also become increasingly visible in the weaponry used for terrorist attacks. The manufacture and use of 3D-printed weapons have already been observed, mainly in the right-wing terrorist and extremist scene.

The use of financial technologies has also had an impact on the financial activities of terrorist and violent extremist groups and will likely further transform terrorism financing.

Some terrorist elements appear to have been increasingly using virtual assets (VAs), especially cryptocurrencies, which provide higher levels of anonymity, in order to finance their terrorist activities. Some right-wing extremists have also been observed using cryptocurrencies to collect and move funds for their activities.

At the same time, technological advancements as a topic of ideology and propaganda have already been taken up in terrorist and violent extremist circles. Technophobia features as a prominent topic in the narrative of left-wing extremist groups.

The financing of terrorism

Of the 380 arrests reported by Member States in 2022, 14 concerned terrorism financing, all related to jihadist terrorism. The majority of the arrestees were part of two terrorist groups raising money to fund the activities of terrorist organisations based outside the EU (*see section on Groups and structures, chapter on Jihadist terrorism*).

Funds to finance terrorist activities across the whole ideological spectrum are attained through various ways, including legal business structures, the collection of donations, membership fees and criminal activities.

The use of legal business structures by terrorists and violent extremists to raise funds continued to be observed in 2022.

In one investigation concerning jihadist terrorism, Spanish police arrested three individuals for terrorist financing. The main suspect was allegedly using a complex network of companies with international presence to divert funds to a terrorist militant group based in Libya with links to IS.

Left-wing, anarchist, right-wing, ethno-nationalist and separatist extremists and terrorists also use legal business structures to collect and launder funds used for terrorist financing, including bars, coffee shops, gas stations, kiosks, restaurants and pubs.

The sale of merchandise, videos, publications and tickets for events (for example concerts), including on e-commerce platforms is another way to raise funds. In particular, social media platforms provide terrorists and violent extremists with low-cost advertising and sales channels for a broader target group inside and outside the scene.

Donations are an integral part of terrorist financing for all terrorist phenomena. Donations are collected in person at events (for example at affiliated concerts) and places of gathering, but also via bank transfers.

IS receives donations from family members and supporters, and the money is remitted to foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) and their families who are in Syrian prison camps.

In August 2022, an individual was convicted in the Netherlands for having collected and sent more than USD 100 000 to female IS supporters in Syria.

In another case, following the arrest of a suspect in Spain in 2020 on charges of disseminating IS propaganda online, the investigation revealed the suspect's involvement in the financing of IS operatives at the al-Hawl camp in Syria. The suspect had played three key roles: he provided his own funds using money and value transfer services and VAs, he collected funds from third parties using online payment platforms and remitted the money to the group, and he acted as a facilitator providing the necessary data, such as the identity of the beneficiary, to other individuals who wanted to send funds directly. He was convicted in 2022 for terrorism-related offences, including terrorist financing.

Although most funds collected by jihadists are directed to conflict zones, investigations also indicate that the money is used for radicalisation and recruitment efforts among the jihadist communities in the EU.

Donations are also collected under the guise of humanitarian aid by jihadist terrorists in Europe and are then mostly sent to conflict zones in countries such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia and Syria, transiting neighbouring countries, usually Türkiye and Lebanon. The *Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê* (Kurdistan Workers' Party, PKK) collects large amounts of money within the EU through their annual international fundraising campaign 'kampanya'.

Terrorist and violent extremist organisations adhering to various ideologies raise funds through membership fees or through crowdfunding campaigns, which are often advertised on social media platforms and increasingly on cloud-based mobile applications.

The first cases of non-fungible tokens (NFTs) minted¹⁴ and shared by a pro-IS sympathiser were reported in August 2022. The NFTs represented an image with the IS flag and text praising the terrorist organisation for an attack against a Taliban position, an IS fighter teaching how to make explosives, and an image condemning the smoking of cigarettes. These were published on an online NFT marketplace but were quickly removed; however, because of the immutable blockchain technologies on which NFTs are based, they cannot be eliminated from the respective blockchain¹⁵. The attempt of publishing NFTs may have been a trial to test new ways of raising funds and circulating propaganda.

Across the entire ideological spectrum, funds used to finance terrorism are also attained through criminal activities. The most commonly reported offences are drug trafficking, extortion, kidnapping, robbery, theft, human trafficking and document fraud. Economic and financial crimes are also significant sources of funds, and include tax fraud, tax evasion, social benefit fraud, and the illegal use of public funds.

The most common ways to transfer funds remain the traditional banking system, money transfer services, and informal value transfer systems (IVTS) such as *hawala*¹⁶. However, the traditional banking system is less used in the Member States where control mechanisms and risk profiling are strict or new anti-money laundering legislation has been introduced. Online payment platforms are also reported as a way of raising and transferring funds.

The ways in which jihadist terrorist organisations are moving funds is evolving however. More layers are used to cover the transactions, which are taking place globally. For instance, cryptocurrencies are paid to an account in one country where they are withdrawn, the amount is divided and sent via *hawala* to other countries and further transferred via money transfer services. When sent to conflict zones, cash is usually withdrawn from money transfer offices by money mules who deliver it to the final beneficiary.

Terrorist organisations increasingly use digital currencies and virtual assets service providers (VASPs), as these provide a higher level of anonymity for donors and recipients. However, the use of digital currencies remains marginal among the means of terrorist financing. As regards jihadism, IS and al-Qaeda and their affiliates appear to have stepped up the use of VAs, especially cryptocurrencies, for fundraising and the movement of funds in recent years, possibly as a result of an increased knowledge of VAs among members of jihadist terrorist groups. Right-wing extremists also resort to funding platforms operating with cryptocurrencies.

¹⁴ Non-fungible tokens are blockchain-based tokens that represent a unique asset. Minting an NFT means the writing of digital data into crypto collections or digital assets recorded on the blockchain.

¹⁵ INTERPOL, Innovation Snapshot, Volume 2, issue 6, November 2022.

¹⁶ Hawala – also referred to as underground banking – is an informal remittance system, which relies on networks of trusted individuals in the countries from which the funds originate and those to which the funds are to be sent, without requiring physical transfer of the funds. Hawala transactions are illegal in many, but not all, EU Member States. The informality of the system makes it attractive for the transfer of terrorist funds.

The nexus between terrorism and serious and organised crime

Links between terrorist and violent extremists and organised crime remained unstructured and opportunistic in 2022.

Investigations pointed to cooperation between actors in serious and organised crime and terrorists or violent extremists, with the former providing criminal services to the latter. Such criminal services largely refer to criminals supplying weapons and explosives or fraudulent documents that facilitate the travel of terrorists. There are signals that some EU-based individuals affiliated with terrorist groups may themselves engage in the supply of fraudulent documents to their peers and to other criminals.

Links between migrant smuggling and terrorism similarly concern the use of the migrant smuggling facilitation services by terrorists in order to travel undetected.

Other connections between organised crime and terrorism have also been noted, e.g. when terrorists acquire weapons and explosives from criminals or in cases where terrorists and criminals cooperate to perpetrate crime.

Investigations revealed the involvement of some individuals in both serious and organised crime and terrorism or violent extremism. In some cases, such links relate to suspects in organised crime who are also suspected of involvement in terrorism, to terrorist elements and violent extremists having criminal records or engaging in criminal activities. In some instances, terrorist actors were also believed to be using illicit profits generated by criminal activities to finance terrorist organisations or activities.

Convergence

In recent years, terrorists and violent extremists across the entire ideological spectrum have increasingly been sharing common elements, including similar narratives on topics considered to have a great impact for propaganda purposes, the selection of similar targets for attacks and the borrowing of tactical methods.

Anti-establishment and anti-elitism are among the stances that can resonate with terrorists and violent extremists from different backgrounds and be integrated in their narratives. Violent extremists adhering to left-wing and anarchist, and right-wing ideologies may use these topics and participate in the same protests. Conspiracy theories also seem to be increasingly filling the space between left-wing and right-wing ideologies, providing motivations for violent actions to individuals lacking clear ideological belonging.

Another shared topic among different ideologies is the opposition to technological advances. While anti-technology has been historically associated with left-wing and anarchist terrorist and violent extremist narratives, it has also attracted interest from right-wing extremist movements, especially with regard to telecommunication infrastructure. Left-wing and anarchist anti-technology narratives are part of a long-lasting mind-set preceding the 5G network, where technological advances are seen as the embodiment of capitalism and the fight against them equals the fight against the overarching state's control over citizens. Recently, right-wing extremists called for attacks against 5G infrastructure, acting upon theories describing 5G technology as detrimental to people's health and designed to control citizens.

JIHADIST TERRORISM

Key findings

- ▶ Two completed jihadist terrorist attacks, executed by lone actors, were reported in 2022, one in France and one in Belgium. Two victims died as a result of these attacks. Four jihadist attacks were foiled: three in France and one in Belgium. No failed attacks were reported.
- ▶ 266 suspects were arrested in 2022. The most common charges were membership of a terrorist organisation, production or dissemination of propaganda, planning and preparing an attack, and terrorist financing.
- ▶ The release of radicalised individuals from prisons remained a concern for Member States as they can continue actions of proselytism outside prisons and become involved in the preparation of terrorist attacks.
- ▶ In the EU, affiliation to particular groups, such as IS and al-Qaeda, is becoming less prominent among supporters of jihadism. In 2022, several Member States reported that jihadist suspects were collecting and disseminating propaganda material originating from both IS and al-Qaeda, including some pre-dating the separation between the two terrorist organisations.

JIHADIST TERRORISM DEFINED

For the TE-SAT, jihadism is defined as a violent sub-current of Salafism, a revivalist Sunni Muslim movement that rejects democracy and elected parliaments, arguing that human legislation is at variance with God's status as sole lawgiver. Jihadists aim to create an Islamic state governed exclusively by Islamic law (shari'a), as interpreted by them. Major representatives of jihadist groups are the al-Qaeda network and the self-proclaimed Islamic State (IS) terrorist group.

Contrary to other Salafist currents, jihadists legitimise the use of violence with a reference to the classical Islamic doctrines on jihad, a term which literally means 'striving' or 'exertion', but which jihadists treat as religiously sanctioned warfare.

All those opposing jihadist interpretations of Islamic law are perceived as 'enemies of Islam' and therefore considered legitimate targets. Some jihadists include Shi'a, Sufis and other Muslims in their spectrum of perceived enemies.

Jihadist terrorist attacks, arrests, convictions and penalties

Attacks

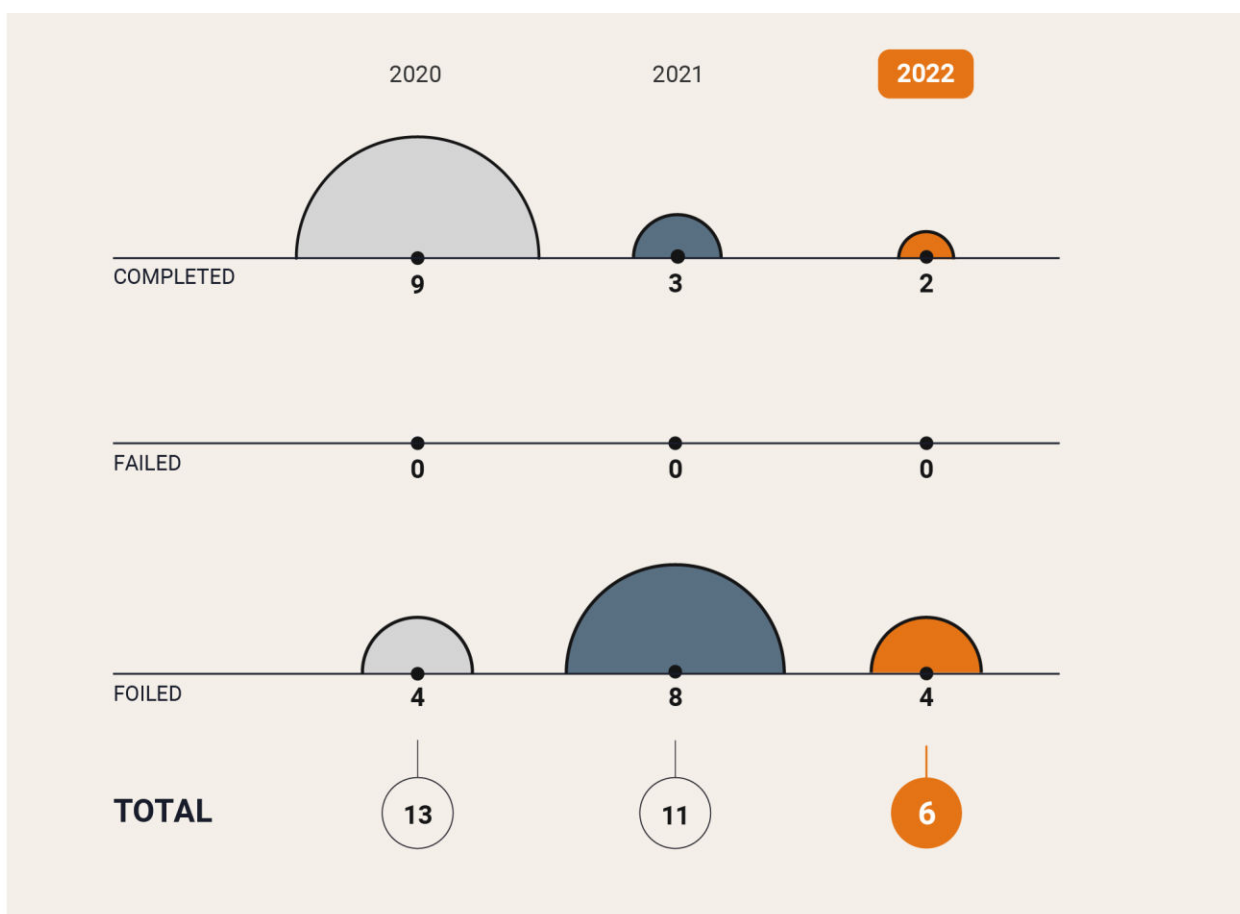
Six jihadist attacks reported in 2022 in the EU.

Two attacks were completed.

In 2022, six completed and foiled jihadist attacks were reported in the EU, while no failed attacks were reported. This number is lower than in previous years (11 in 2021 and 13 in 2020). Two completed attacks took place in Belgium and France. Two victims died as a result of the attacks, the same number as in 2021. All completed attacks were carried out by male suspects acting alone. Four attacks were foiled, of which three in France and one Belgium, in comparison to eight in 2021 and four in 2020. No organisation claimed responsibility for the completed attacks in 2022. The last attack in the EU to be claimed by a terrorist organisation was the one in Vienna, Austria, in November 2020, which was claimed by IS¹⁷.

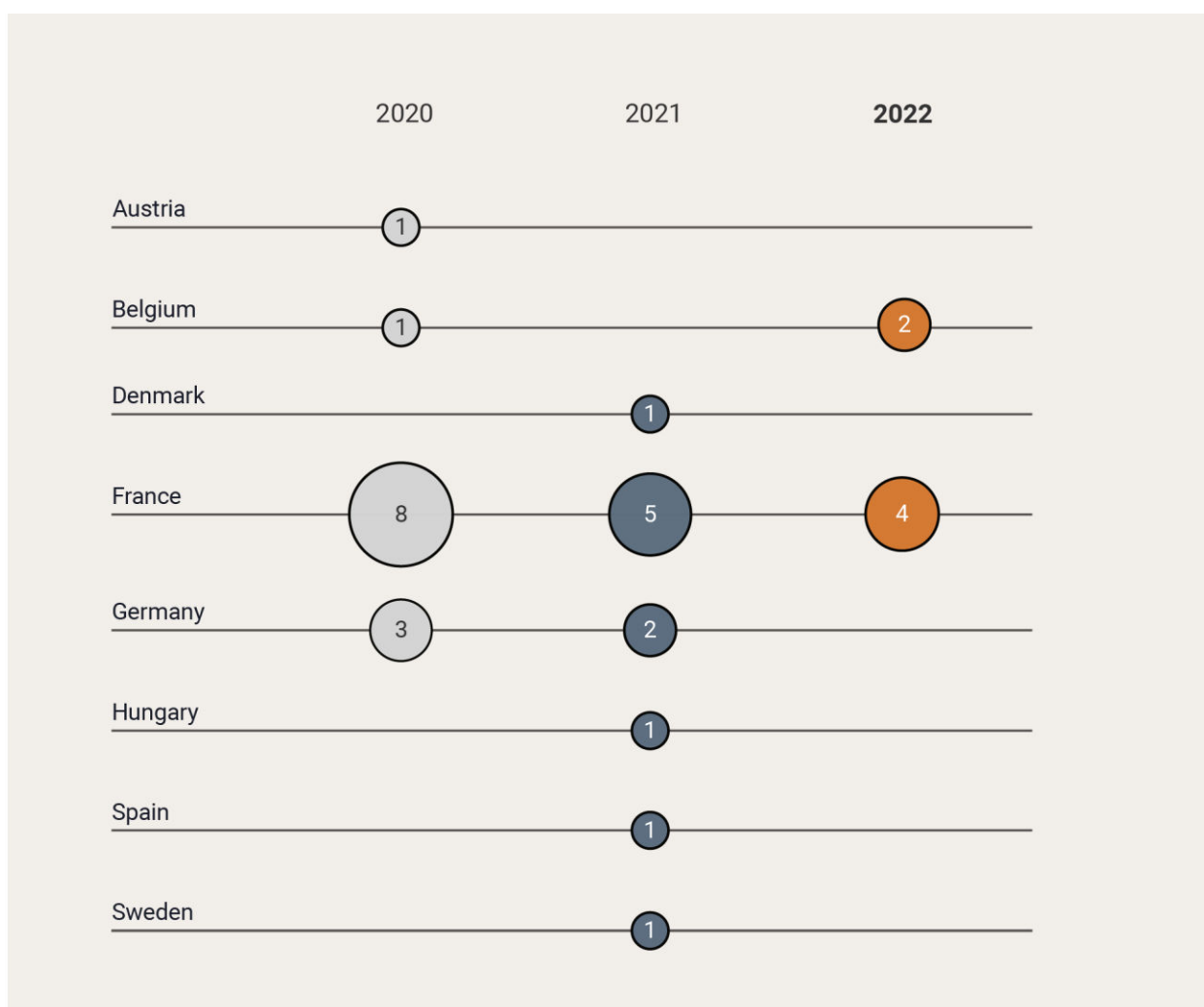
Jihadist terrorist attacks in the EU

2020–2022



¹⁷ On 2 November 2020, a 20-year-old male of Austrian and North Macedonian nationality started a shooting spree near a synagogue in central Vienna. He randomly targeted people in the street and nearby restaurants, killing two women and two men.

Jihadist terrorist attacks (completed, failed, foiled) in EU Member States, 2020–2022



Member States reported four foiled jihadist attacks in 2022. Three of these attacks were thwarted in France and one attack was foiled in Belgium.

FOILED JIHADIST ATTACKS

- A 26-year-old man was arrested on 16 March 2022 on suspicion of planning an attack against a church in Challans.
- In a second case in France, an 18-year-old man was arrested on 28 May 2022 in Valence for planning knife attacks against undetermined targets.
- In a third French case, seven individuals were arrested on 15 November 2022 in Strasbourg for planning an attack. Two suspects have been indicted. During the investigation, authorities discovered that the suspects maintained contacts with IS members and had stored instructional materials as well as a farewell letter.
- In Belgium, a 41-year-old man was arrested in Oostende on 23 August 2022 as he was trying to obtain automatic weapons in preparation of an attack during a music festival.

VIOLENT INCIDENTS PERPETRATED WITH THE MODI OPERANDI OF LONE-ACTOR TERRORIST ATTACKS

As in previous years, violent incidents were carried out in 2022 with modi operandi resembling those used in lone-actor terrorist attacks. Despite suspicions of radicalisation being raised in some cases, investigations highlighted that the violent incidents were not motivated by political or religious factors.

For example, three such incidents occurred in Germany:

In Aachen, on 13 May 2022, a 31-year-old Iraqi national attacked passengers on a regional train with a knife, injuring five people. While the attacker had previously been investigated for his possible involvement in jihadist extremism in 2017, there were no indications the attack had a terrorist motivation. The man allegedly suffered from psychological impairment at the time of the attack.

In Ansbach, on 8 September 2022, a 30-year-old Afghan national attacked with a knife several bystanders near the train station, wounding two people. After having fled the scene, the suspect was confronted by the police, attacked them and was shot dead in response. The attacker was heard calling out 'Allahu Akbar' (God is great) several times during the attack. However, no further links to jihadist terrorism were found during the investigation.

On 18 October 2022 in Ludwigshafen, a 25-year-old Somali national carried out a knife attack on the street, killing two people. The attacker cut off the arm of one of the victims and threw it onto his ex-girlfriends' balcony. Then the attacker injured another person in a store, after asking his victim whether he was German, Turkish or American. When the victim said he is German, the attacker stabbed him.

Arrests

In 2022, 266 arrests were made in the EU for suspected jihadist terrorist offences. The number of arrested suspects has slightly increased compared to the previous 2 years (260 arrests in 2021 and 254 in 2020). In the vast majority of cases, the offence leading to an arrest was membership of a terrorist organisation. Other recurrent offences were the production or dissemination of propaganda, planning and preparing an attack, and terrorist financing. These charges were commonly combined with other terrorist offences, of which dissemination of propaganda and recruitment were reported most often¹⁸.

Most of the arrests for jihadist terrorist offences took place in France, Spain, Germany, Belgium, Italy and the Netherlands. The majority of the suspects were males (73 %), with an average age of 43 years. Compared to the previous year, the average age of the suspects increased (33 years in 2021), mainly on account of the lower number of arrests in the 18-30 age category. The majority of the women were arrested after being repatriated from Syria by Member States. Most of the arrestees were EU citizens (64 %), of which the majority were suspects born in the EU. Belgian, Dutch and Spanish were the three most reported nationalities of EU citizens born in the EU. Among the arrested EU nationals born outside the EU, Morocco was the most represented country of origin. Moroccan and Pakistani nationals were the majority of non-EU citizens' arrestees¹⁹.

Arrests for planning attacks

Member States reported 12 arrests where suspects were at different stages of planning and preparing terrorist attacks. Most of the suspects arrested for planning and preparing attacks were individuals acting on their own.

Two individuals were arrested in Italy for suspicion of planning a terrorist attack and for membership of IS. The suspects, a couple, were an 18-year-old national of Kosovo²⁰ born in Italy and a 21-year-old Italian citizen of Kosovar origin. They were found in possession of precursors to produce an IED. One of the suspects was part of a group on social media where plans to execute terrorist attacks were being discussed. They planned to leave the EU towards a conflict zone in Nigeria after the perpetration of the attack with the aim of joining an IS affiliate.

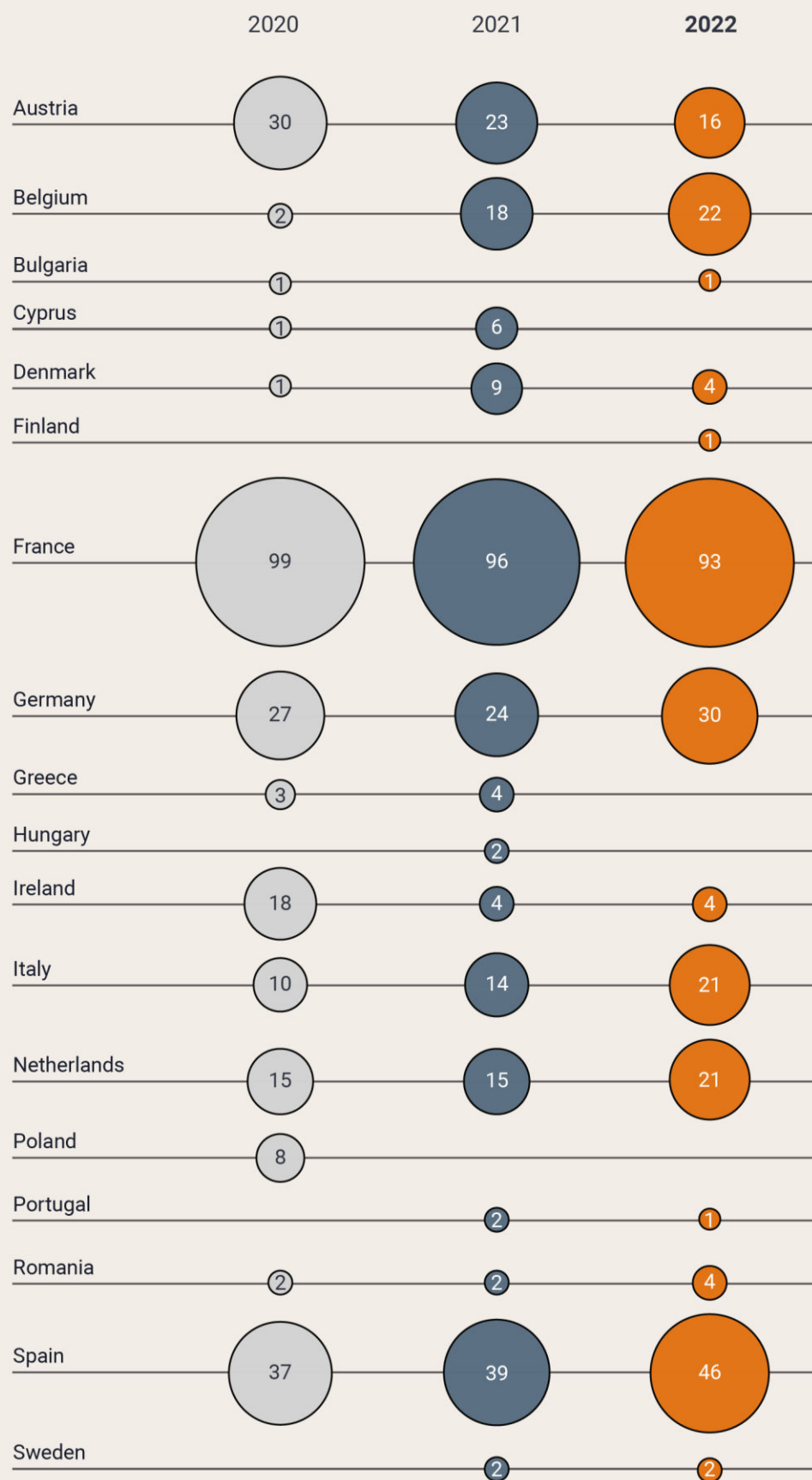
¹⁸ The offence leading to the arrest has been specified in 154 arrests.

¹⁹ The age has been specified for 117 suspects, gender for 154 suspects, citizenship for 143 suspects, and country of birth for 119 suspects.

²⁰ This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the International Court of Justice (ICJ) Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

Arrests for jihadist terrorist offences in EU Member States

2020–2022



Convictions and penalties

Similar to previous years, the largest number (348) of convictions and acquittals in the EU in 2022 concerned jihadist terrorism. The majority of these were delivered in France (100), Belgium (78) and Austria (47). In Denmark, Greece, Portugal and Romania all convictions and acquittals for terrorist offences were related to jihadist terrorism. The concluded court proceedings related mostly to terrorist groups that are or used to be active in Syria, such as IS, Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS, 'Levant liberation committee', former Jabhat al-Nusra and Jabhat Fath al-Sham), Ahrar al-Sham and Junud al-Sham. Convictions related to al-Qaeda and the Deutsche Taliban Mujahedin were also handed down.

In October 2020, six accused were found guilty of preparing a terrorist attack in the Netherlands. Five of them had been training with automatic firearms, small arms and bomb vests in a holiday cottage in the province of Limburg. In June 2022, three of the accused issued an appeal and were sentenced to prison sentences of 16 years and 6 months, 12 years and 6 months, and 5 years and 10 months respectively. They were found guilty of co-perpetration in the preparation of and training for the terrorist attack, as well as for participation in a terrorist organisation. One of the accused was additionally convicted of attempted manslaughter of several police officers. The police infiltration used in support of the investigation was challenged by the defence, but confirmed as lawful by the Court of Appeal.

Groups and structures

Jihadist milieu

The jihadist movement in the EU is fragmented. Groups coexist with individuals acting on their own or as part of fluid cells with friends and acquaintances. They are part of various national and transnational jihadist networks, both online and offline. Actors involved in the planning of attacks frequently combined preparation activities with an extensive use of jihadist online platforms. Suspects appealed to members of groups on social media platforms and instant messaging channels to pursue terrorist attacks, to pledge allegiance to terrorist organisations and, in some cases, they announced their intent to commit a terrorist attack. Affiliation to particular groups, such as IS and al-Qaeda, is becoming less prominent among supporters of jihadism. Suspects in the EU have been found to collect and disseminate propaganda material created and published by both IS and al-Qaeda in previous years. At local level, jihadist groups are progressively multi-ethnic, while links at regional level are often based on the members' common language. For example, Austria reported that jihadists often share contacts and propaganda with German-speaking peers.

In 2022, while all completed attacks were perpetrated by individuals acting alone, groups composed of several suspects were dismantled in the EU.

These loosely structured groups typically lacked formal hierarchies among the members, and were mainly involved in disseminating propaganda and financing activities for individuals or other terrorist organisations, sometimes operating outside the EU. While in the majority of cases the groups were based locally, one group had a wider geographic scope, with members living in several Member States.

EXAMPLES OF ARRESTS CONCERNING MEMBERS OF JIHADIST TERRORIST GROUPS

- ▶ Four Moroccan nationals were arrested in Spain in January 2022 for membership of a terrorist group and recruitment. The suspects disseminated IS propaganda online and organised physical meetings with the aim of recruiting followers.
- ▶ 13 Belgian nationals, suspected members of a terrorist group, were arrested in Belgium in February 2022 for their involvement in disseminating terrorist propaganda. Some of the suspects were known to the authorities from previous investigations into jihadist terrorism.
- ▶ A group of three suspects, two Libyans and one Moroccan national, were arrested in Spain in February 2022 for their involvement in financing a jihadist militia affiliated with IS in Libya.
- ▶ In March 2022, one Italian-Albanian citizen and three Albanian nationals were arrested in Italy on charges of terrorist financing. The suspects were raising funds to support the activities of a radical imam based in Albania and known for his support to jihadism.
- ▶ 14 Pakistani nationals, residing in France, Italy and Spain, were investigated by the Italian authorities for membership of a terrorist organisation. The leader of the group emerged as a direct contact of the perpetrators of the attack in Paris on 25 September 2020. The group was ideologically aligned with the Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan movement (TLP, 'At your service' movement Pakistan) and produced and disseminated propaganda aimed at inciting violence against non-Muslims. The group was also linked to the five members of another terrorist organisation tied to TLP, arrested in Spain in February 2022 on charges of spreading TLP propaganda online.
- ▶ In October 2022, a group of 11 Spanish citizens of Moroccan origin, were charged in Spain with the offences of membership of a terrorist organisation and disseminating propaganda on social media platforms, while also inciting to acts of jihad.

As in previous years, young people and minors are reported as part of jihadist terrorism-related investigations, in particular with regard to sharing propaganda, incitement to violence and planning terrorist attacks.

On 15 June 2022, a 15-year-old Moroccan national born in Spain was found in possession of IS propaganda, manuals for manufacturing explosives and instructions on how to secure communications. He was arrested on suspicion of planning an attack.

On 7 September 2022, a 17-year-old Russian national residing in Germany was arrested on suspicion of preparing an attack and disseminating IS propaganda on a Telegram channel. The suspect was also allegedly intending to depart to a conflict zone.

In the context of another investigation in Germany, a 16-year-old German-Kosovar citizen was arrested on 22 September 2022 under charges of preparing an attack and supporting IS. Influenced by an IS supporter disseminating online propaganda, the suspect planned to carry out an attack on behalf of the terrorist organisation and was trained online in the homemade production of IEDs. Fearing that his initial attack plans would be uncovered, the suspect shifted to a simpler *modus operandi* and wanted to carry out a knife attack on police officers.

In June 2022, a 16-year-old Spanish citizen was arrested in Spain on charges of self-training. The investigation determined that the suspect was radicalised online, accessing a large amount of videos and reading a variety of training manuals, and had plans to travel to a conflict zone to join a terrorist organisation. A man was arrested in Belgium in connection to this case, under suspicion of having sent propaganda material to the minor.

Prisoners and released convicts

Individuals in prisons under observation for violent extremist views or membership of a terrorist organisation included both prisoners convicted of terrorism-related offences and prisoners convicted of criminal offences who became radicalised in prison.

Apart from the radicalisation and recruitment of other prisoners, the threat of radicalised jihadists can also materialise in the form of attacks on other prisoners and prison staff.

In addition, radicalised jihadists can pose risks of violence or plan attacks after being released.

A Spanish national was arrested in Spain after being released from prison under charges of self-training. The suspect had stored propaganda materials glorifying and legitimising IS, and instructions to manufacture IEDs.

Terrorist propaganda

The dissemination of propaganda, both online and offline, was often part of investigations into jihadist terrorism in the EU in 2022, either on its own or together with other offences such as recruitment, incitement to commit terrorist acts, self-training and membership of terrorist organisations.

Italian authorities arrested a man active in disseminating propaganda online, who also shared instructions on how to carry out terrorist attacks. Two other suspects were arrested in Spain for having disseminated IS propaganda online with the aim of indoctrinating and recruiting new followers, as well as inciting acts of violence in the name of the terrorist organisation. They also organised in-person meetings to advance the radicalisation process of young recruits.

Events occurring in the Member States where jihadists are based continued to influence the actions and the discourse dominating propaganda. Accordingly, controversies surrounding perceived insults to Islam and hostility towards Muslim communities, as well as subsequent measures perceived as discriminatory, such as the prohibition of the use of the *niqab* in France, constitute motivating factors for violent acts and have been taken up in propaganda messaging.

An important topic in propaganda reflected the fate of women, in particular those still living in the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF)²¹ camps. Jihadists and sympathisers circulated calls for raising funds to support them.

A large part of the jihadist propaganda disseminated in the EU in 2022 was material produced by IS and al-Qaeda in previous years.

Jihadists often combined the consumption of IS and al-Qaeda's propaganda. Jihadists continued to seek strategies to circumvent law enforcement measures that seek to curb the dissemination of propaganda. For example, non-violent topics, such as theological debates and grievances linked to local social and political issues, were discussed on online platforms together with hyperlinks connecting users to web pages with radical jihadist content.

The overall reactions from the jihadist environment to the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine were scarce and mostly limited to messages against Western societies (see section on the impact of the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine on terrorism and extremism in the EU).

²¹ The SDF is an alliance of Arab and Kurdish militias supported by the USA and other Western countries. It is dominated by the Yekîneyên Parastina Gel (YPG, 'People's Protection Units'), which Türkiye considers an extension of the Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê (PKK, 'Kurdistan Workers' Party').

IS narratives

IS-supporting media and online spaces

IS suffered major leadership losses in 2022. It lost and promptly replaced two ‘caliphs’ within eight months, while remaining careful not to stress the importance of the person occupying the position. Even so, frequent leadership changes did not appear to erode the devotion of IS adherents.

After IS leader Abu Ibrahim al-Hashimi al-Qurashi and his official spokesman Abu Hamza al-Qurashi were killed in February 2022, IS new spokesman Abu Umar al-Muhajir declared Abu al-Hassan al-Hashimi al-Qurashi as the new leader of the group in a speech in early March 2022, sparking an online campaign entitled ‘the jihad of the believers continues’²². The campaign comprised an IS cross-province video series that showed IS militants globally as they pledged allegiance to the new leader. The IS media apparatus paid tribute to the deceased leaders with another media and military campaign under the slogan of ‘battle to avenge the two Sheikhs’ in mid-April 2022. The IS regional affiliates referenced the campaign in their claims of attacks. Abu al-Hassan al-Hashimi al-Qurashi was reportedly killed in mid-October 2022 in Syria’s Dar’a province in an operation by the Free Syrian Army²³. After declaring his successor to be Abu al-Husain al-Husaini al-Qurashi, IS boasted about publishing the news about the death of its leader before its adversaries.

In spite of leadership transitions, IS narratives remained unchanged in 2022. In its propaganda, the group’s endeavour to expand geographically and to consolidate territorial control kept a focus on Africa and posited Africa as a destination for *hijra*²⁴. Notably, an Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) video urged all Muslims, especially those living in Africa, to join the territories under its influence. The video also aimed to portray areas of Nigeria as spaces where IS may attempt to re-enact territorial governance. Releases by ISWAP showed IS’s attempts to provide governance in the areas it operates in, for instance by confiscating drugs and training children as ‘cubs of the caliphate’.

Violence against Christians featured in numerous claims by IS’s regional offshoots, especially in Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Mozambique. In January 2022, IS’s weekly newsletter *al-Naba’* published an infographic entitled ‘Bleeding of Christians’, which gave an overview of attacks against Christians over 21 days and whose title inspired an online campaign by IS-supporting media inciting further violence against Christians. Throughout the year, IS media publicised attacks on Christian villages, the burning of Christian churches and gruesome executions of Christians. An Italian nun was killed in an attack in Mozambique’s Nampula region.

Prison breaks and the freeing of imprisoned Muslims and IS members remained a priority for the IS command in 2022. It was described by IS’s spokesperson Abu Umar al-Muhajir as IS’s ‘primary goal’ (see section *Terrorist situation outside the EU*).

IS-supporting media and online spaces.

In the IS online ecosystem, still dominated by the productions of IS-supporting media, multilingual and translation outlets played a leading role in 2022.

The translation of propaganda content continued to be a backbone of IS’s communication strategy, as it allows IS to break down language barriers and reach sympathisers across the world. The Moata News Agency resumed its operations on

²² The title of the video series references an infographic appeared in *al-Naba’* issue 324, Islamic State (IS), 3.2.2022.

²³ U.S. Central Command, ‘Death of ISIS Leader’, 30.11.2022, <https://www.centcom.mil/MEDIA/PRESS-RELEASES/Press-Release-View/Article/3232259/death-of-isis-leader/>.

²⁴ Emigrating to a place or country where Islamic law is implemented.

Telegram and stepped up its productions to cover multiple languages, including Arabic, English, French, Turkish and Farsi. The IS-supporting I'lam Foundation, which manages websites on the surface web and dark web, took over a pivotal role by offering translations of IS content in multiple EU and non-EU languages. In addition to providing IS propaganda translations into English and Central Asian languages, the IS-supporting media outlet Al Azaim Media started tailoring content for audiences in Central Asia such as Dari, Pashto²⁵, Tajik and Uzbek.

Al-Qaeda's narratives

Al-Qaeda and its regional affiliates were able to send out frequent messages to their adherents in 2022. If the last couple of years were marked by speculation concerning the presumed death of al-Qaeda's nominal leader Ayman al-Zawahiri, numerous video messages by the al-Qaeda leader were released in 2022, some of them providing proof of life. However, Al-Zawahiri was killed in July 2022. At the time of writing, al-Qaeda has yet to acknowledge his death or declare a successor. After al-Zawahiri's death, al-Qaeda released a number of videos that featured the leader paying tribute to the deceased al-Qaeda regional leaders.

Propaganda by al-Qaeda's core leadership continued to criticise the United States of America (USA). Through its magazine *One Ummah*, al-Qaeda exulted about the perceived failures of the USA administration. Additionally, al-Qaeda's official media wing *al-Sahab* decried the bilateral meeting between the USA and Saudi Arabia in July 2022²⁶ during which the two countries signed partnership agreements on subjects including energy, climate, security and defence. The group posited that the meeting took place in a bid to overturn the USA's increasingly 'fragile' role in the region following its withdrawal from Afghanistan and Iraq, and how it has dealt with the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine. Arab governments, in al-Qaeda's view, fear that the USA may not deliver on its promise to protect them should their population rise against them.

Seemingly unaffected by the loss of al-Zawahiri, al-Qaeda's regional branches continued to pursue their local objectives. In 2022, Harakat al-Shabaab al-Mujahidin (HSM, 'mujahidin youth movement'), al-Qaeda's most powerful branch in East Africa, cemented its control over southern and central Somalia. The group was able to carry out large-scale attacks, each with a high death toll. Its propaganda apparatus grew in parallel with its military capabilities. In addition to the detailed reporting of military activities, propaganda by HSM's media outlets focused on underscoring the provision of public services by the group.

Al-Qaeda's branch in the Sahel region, Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM, 'Group in support of Islam and Muslims'), intensified its operations in the area, where it clashed with IS Sahel, the Malian army and the Russian paramilitary organisation known as 'the Wagner Group'. JNIM's propaganda in 2022 focused on highlighting the group's operations, which included an attack against Mali's largest military base close to the capital Bamako. Through its official media outlet *al-Zallaqa*, the group regularly released infographics listing their attacks, spoils of war and casualties. JNIM's parent faction, al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) continued to target Algeria in its productions. On the occasion of the 60th anniversary of Algeria's independence from France, AQIM called upon Muslims to use any means to overthrow the military regime in the country.

²⁵ In addition to the English language magazine *Voice of Khurasan*, Al Azaim launched magazines of the same name in Pashto and Dari.

²⁶ The White House, 'FACT SHEET: Results of Bilateral Meeting between the United States and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia', 15.7.2022, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/07/15/fact-sheet-results-of-bilateral-meeting-between-the-united-states-and-the-kingdom-of-saudi-arabia/>.

Incitement to commit attacks in western countries remained a recurrent thread in propaganda by al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). An AQAP video called upon Muslims in France, India and elsewhere to ‘storm out’ in defence of the Prophet Muhammad and kill those who mock him. AQAP decried western countries acting as colonising forces in Yemen and pillaging the country’s resources. In particular, AQAP highlighted the presence of a French oil company in Balhaf, Yemen. Ansar al-Sharia (AAS, ‘supporters of Islam Law’), which directs part of AQAP’s activity in Yemen, attempted to step up AQAP’s media strategy. In September 2022, AAS launched the media and military campaign *Siham al-Haqq* (‘Arrows of Truth’), aimed at documenting AQAP’s operational activities against the Yemeni army and the Houthi rebels.

Al-Qaeda-supporting media and online spaces

The sustained flow of official propaganda messages by the al-Qaeda network was matched by productions from its supporting media. 2022 saw a turnover of branded media outlets supportive of al-Qaeda, with new ones being introduced and replacing those that were discontinued. A case in point is the al-Nusra Foundation for Media Production, which was launched on the 21st anniversary of the 11 September 2001 attacks. Al-Nusra’s self-professed mission is to support Muslims against declared enemies worldwide and ‘disseminate the true news about the *mujahidin*’. Its visual identity and mission are similar to Thabat News Agency, a media outlet reporting on al-Qaeda and its affiliates’ battlefield activities. In 2022, the group Hurras Al-Tawheed (HAT, ‘Guardians of Monotheism’) issued a series of six magazines in English urging readers to attack the West from within, to perform *hijra* or carry out an operation in their own homeland. Regarding its affiliation, HAT stressed that it never stated to be pro-al-Qaeda, nor to be against IS. It also reproached western *mujahidin* for fighting each other instead of uniting against the ‘crusaders’. In spite of HAT’s declared ‘neutrality’, issues of their magazines were shared in online spaces linked to the al-Qaeda network and its supporters.

In addition to Telegram, the bulk of al-Qaeda supporting content was shared on the self-hosted instance of RocketChat technologies known among al-Qaeda supporters as GNews, as well as on Chirpwire, a platform whose interface is reminiscent of Twitter. In parallel, al-Qaeda’s branches appeared to step up their propaganda dissemination strategy and foster the online resilience of their productions by launching new web assets. AQAP launched a website for its official al-Malahim Media Company, which provided a large repository of official AQAP propaganda including statements by Ansar al-Sharia Correspondent, photo reports and video releases. Similarly, the file sharing website Sahel News’s main purpose was to archive propaganda material by al-Qaeda’s affiliates in the Sahel, namely AQIM and JNIM.

Cross-cutting themes in jihadist propaganda

IS labelled the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine as one of the ‘wars between crusaders’ in *al-Naba’*, predicting that more of these wars will mark the fall of ‘crusaders’. The group also deplored the involvement of Chechen militias alongside the Russians and called upon Muslims, especially those in Russia and Ukraine, to reject any call to join the military ranks of either countries. IS-supporting media also slammed western countries for appearing to condone the ‘call to arms’ for foreign fighters in Ukraine. According to IS supporters, western audiences were able to sympathise with the call to join the fight in Ukraine, as the conflict is collectively perceived as unjust. By contrast, IS’s call to join its ranks was globally condemned. IS supporters also expressed their frustration over perceived double standards in western empathy for the humanitarian plights of people, based on their race and religion. Al-Qaeda and its affiliates also adopted a narrative focused on perceived double standards and racial discrimination. In AQAP’s view, western countries opposed Russia for attacking Ukraine but did nothing to stop Russian support of the Syrian regime. It noted that

Europe welcomed Ukrainian refugees with open arms, in alleged stark contrast to the approach towards Muslim refugees. The pro-al-Qaeda media *Jaysh al-Malahim al-Elektroni* published the third issue of the Wolves of Manhattan magazine, which encouraged young Muslims to capitalise on the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine. It advised them to travel to the country in order to receive military training from the Ukrainian government as well as weapons and ammunition to be used to commit attacks in the EU and the USA.

Derogatory remarks on Islam and the Prophet Muhammad reportedly made by representatives of the Hindutva (Hindu nationalist party) in India generated an outcry within jihadist circles. Both IS and al-Qaeda affiliates incited for attacks in retaliation for the alleged blasphemies. In this context, IS praised the attack carried out by the Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP) against a Hindu temple in Kabul, Afghanistan, which left at least 50 dead and wounded.

Jihadist groups sought to capitalise on the 2022 World Cup in Qatar to advance their longstanding narratives and position themselves as beacons of the global jihadist movement. Al-Qaeda urged Muslims to shun the Qatar World Cup, describing it as the epitome of corruption and decadence of Arab rulers. While displaying a similar anti-Qatar stance, IS took the opportunity to discredit al-Qaeda's approach, by highlighting the group's lack of explicit calls for attacks against the Qatari government and military. IS called for attacks during the tournament's period, while deriding al-Qaeda for its proposed proselytisation of 'the tourists who flock to Qatar to participate in the World Cup'.

Terrorism-related travel

As in previous years, women and children were repatriated from the SDF camps in Syria by the Member States of which they are citizens. Most women were charged with the offences of membership of and participation to the activities of a terrorist organisation.

Returnees were arrested upon their arrival in the EU, after being repatriated by Member States or expelled by third countries.

In August 2022, a Moroccan foreign terrorist fighter (FTF) was arrested in Spain and another Moroccan FTF was arrested in Austria before being extradited to Spain. They had travelled together entering the EU irregularly from Türkiye, passing through Bulgaria and the Western Balkan route. One of the suspects joined Jabhat al-Nusra in 2014 and had disseminated IS propaganda on social media platforms.

While no new cases of travels to conflict zones were reported, on 4 February 2022, a German citizen was arrested in Germany for helping her partner to reach a conflict zone. She had travelled to Türkiye in July 2021 with her partner, whom she encouraged to continue travelling to Syria to join Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS, 'Levant Liberation Committee'). She provided her partner with flight tickets and money, and he subsequently joined HTS as a fighter. After her return to Germany, she provided him with additional money to enable him to continue his activities for HTS.

Travelling for terrorism purposes remained a possible threat and Member States continue to investigate violent extremists and terrorists who display the intent to leave the EU.

Terrorist situation outside the EU

In 2022, al-Qaeda and IS continued to adjust to counter terrorism operations and to survive as transnational organisations, with both groups pursuing their strategy of supporting regional affiliates. IS and al-Qaeda are expected to persist through their decentralised networks of affiliates, even if their core leadership is weakened.

The ideologies of IS and al-Qaeda endured, especially as they have found resonance by exploiting existing fissures, such as grievances around politics, economics, or ethnicity, in some of the less politically stable societies across the globe.

Despite the centralisation of some communications, affiliates of IS and al-Qaeda are predominantly local insurgencies and are rooted in local dynamics, rather than in global trends. While global terrorist organisations can provide a general set of principles, such as identifying with the idea of reviving the caliphate worldwide, the intricacies of theology are probably less relevant to these local affiliates who are fighting for more immediate objectives, such as the predominance of an ethnic group, access to resources, or protection from rivals.

Regardless of a number of calls for *hijra*, there is no obvious new hub for transnational terrorism. Notably, the majority of present-day foreign fighter movements appears to occur between neighbouring countries, often along ethnic lines, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa, where post-colonial borders cut through the traditional settlement areas of ethnic groups.

Western Balkans

No terrorist acts took place in any of the countries in the Western Balkan region in 2022. Nevertheless, the complexity of identity and religious issues, as well as socio-economic conditions and a high unemployment rate, could continue to act as push factors for radicalisation in the region.

Propaganda continues to be an enabling factor, with a number of states in the region recording an increase in the dissemination and consumption of online propaganda. No major changes were noted in terms of propaganda narratives or online dissemination channels. As in the rest of Europe, Facebook, Instagram, Telegram, Twitter and Signal continued to be the main channels for the dissemination of propaganda. Recruitment continues to take place both online and through gatherings in informal religious buildings, as well as in correctional facilities.

There are no large terrorist or violent extremist groups in the Western Balkan region. In most cases, there are only radicalised individuals or small local groups that count between 10 to 20 members. These groups are not hierarchically organised, but are led by individuals recognised by group members as religious ‘authorities’ and are linked to similar groups in the region and in Member States (including Austria, Germany, and Luxembourg). International connections are upheld through online communications.

Western Balkan countries did not register any citizens travelling to foreign battlefields²⁷. Only Albania reported that one of its nationals had travelled to fight in Ukraine.

However, a major security challenge remains the return of FTFs from Syria and Iraq to countries in the Western Balkan region. Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo are at a

²⁷ All Western Balkan countries have enacted laws criminalising the departure to foreign battlefields. The passing of these laws was mainly prompted by the war in Syria and the onset of the crisis in Ukraine in 2014.

particularly high risk due to the larger number of FTFs originating from these states. In addition, terrorists infiltrating migration routes transiting from conflict zones through Western Balkan countries to the EU also pose a potential threat.

Finally, the threat posed by released terrorist convicts²⁸ as well as that of radicalisation within prisons is also significant in the region.

MENA region

Israel

Attacks in Israel linked to IS are rare, the last being in June 2017. However, in 2022, Israel was targeted by two IS-linked attacks. On 22 March 2022, four Israeli citizens were killed in a stabbing and ramming attack by an IS sympathiser outside a shopping centre in Beersheba. On 27 March 2022, two police officers were killed and five other people injured when two gunmen opened fire in Hadera. While IS claimed responsibility for the latter attack, it only praised the one in Beersheba without claiming responsibility for it.

Syria

Syria remains divided in four main areas of influence under different actors. The northeast of the country is controlled by the USA-backed Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) while the Turkish-backed Syrian National Army (SNA) controls the northern Aleppo governorate and the Idlib enclave remains under the influence of HTS. The Syrian regime exerts control over central Syria.

In 2022, IS continued its attacks mainly in the Kurdish-held northeast and in the central desert known as the Badia region, especially against SDF forces. On 22 January, IS launched an attack against the Ghwayran prison, in the SDF-controlled city of al-Hasaka. This was IS's largest-scale attack in Syria since its military defeat there in 2019. The fight between the SDF and IS lasted over 2 weeks and resulted in more than 200 SDF fighters being killed.

A number of IS leaders and high-level operatives, including IS's two 'caliphs', were killed in Syria in 2022. Abu Ibrahim al-Hashimi al-Qurashi was killed in February 2022 in Idlib while Abu al-Hassan al-Hashimi al-Qurashi was killed in mid-October 2022 in Dar'a in southern Syria. The killing of the second IS 'caliph' in Idlib (the first being Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi in October 2019) had raised questions about Idlib's role as an operational basis for transnational jihadists. The group does not directly govern the territory, but imposes its governance project through the Syrian Salvation Government (SSG), which oversees the provision of education, health care and other services. While HTS undertakes a conservative Islamist governance and uses jihadist rhetoric, in contrast to other jihadist groups it has not prohibited girls from attending school, compelled women to veil their faces or banned mixed-gender gatherings at restaurants.

HTS continued its attempts to distance itself from transnational jihadism. It has sought to demonstrate a level of pragmatism by seeking to normalise relations with foreign governments and courting Christians in Idlib²⁹. As a result, HTS has been repeatedly accused by rival jihadists of 'losing its way'. In March 2022, HTS faced criticism for forming a football team for its fighters and for allowing men and women to mix at a commemoration marking the 11th anniversary of the Syrian uprising. In August 2022, the al-Qaeda affiliated Tanzim Hurras al-Din (THD, 'Guardians of the Religion Organisation') condemned the group for allowing the reopening of a church.

²⁸ Most repatriated FTFs in Western Balkan countries are set to be released from prison between 2023 and 2025.

²⁹ In July, HTS leader Abu Muhammad al-Jawlani reportedly visited Christian villages.

HTS has continued to constrain any group trying to undermine the ceasefire arrangements mediated or negotiated by Türkiye and Russia.

HTS has also engaged in dialogue with other armed opposition groups. In May 2022, it held talks with the Levant Front, a key faction of SNA, to coordinate logistics in northwest Syria. In a move that shook local dynamics, HTS entered Afrin – a strategic town in northwest Syria – on 13 October³⁰. This followed days of clashes with several militias in the area. HTS had intervened on behalf of some factions operating under the umbrella of the SNA against other factions also allied with the SNA³¹. A few days later, HTS reportedly retreated from the area following a Turkish ultimatum.

On 27 June, the USA reported that it had successfully targeted Abu Hamza al-Yemeni, a leader of THD, in an air strike in Idlib³². The operation was the first reported against THD since September 2021. The limited actions against THD leaders reflected the decline in the group's activities and threat level, following conflict with HTS and operation from USA-led coalition forces. It would appear that HTS has dismantled most THD³³ networks in Syria, rendering the organisation essentially ineffective.

Iraq

IS remained a threat in Iraq despite its diminished ability to launch attacks in the country. Attacks were concentrated in the same areas as in 2021, mainly the provinces of Diyala and Kirkuk. They mostly consisted of hit-and-run attacks on security checkpoints and other security infrastructure, such as police stations, gunfights with security forces, attacks on civilian infrastructures and kidnappings.

The conditions for IS's revival remained favourable in Iraq. Endemic characteristics of Iraq's socio-political landscape, including the proliferation of arms, enable the rise of organised violence, a situation of which IS may take advantage. In addition, the terrorist group continued to fuel sectarian tensions, especially in the province of Diyala, which is religiously and ethnically mixed.

Iran

On 26 October 2022, IS carried out its first attack in Iran in four years³⁴. The shooting at the Shah Cheragh shrine in Shiraz killed 15 people and injured at least 40. IS claimed responsibility for the incident in *al-Naba'* and threatened to carry out further attacks in Iran.

North Africa

Despite losing large parts of the territory under its control and many of its fighters, the Islamic State Sinai Province (IS Sinai) carried out successful attacks in Egypt against security forces and strategic targets, such as energy installations. On 30 December 2022, IS Sinai claimed responsibility for an attack on a police checkpoint in the city of Ismailia, which resulted in at least four people killed and twelve others wounded. This is the first IS attack outside the Sinai Peninsula in almost three years.

³⁰ Afrin, a Kurdish-majority city, has been under the control of the Turkish-backed armed groups since 2018.

³¹ The fighting was sparked by the assassination of a prominent Syrian opposition activist in Aleppo province. The murder, blamed on the Hamza Division, led to clashes between various SNA factions groups. SNA groups are constantly fighting each other for territory and resources.

³² Al-Yemeni's death has not been confirmed.

³³ On 30 May, the European Union Counter Terrorism Office announced the inclusion of the THD and two of its leading figures on the list of proscribed terrorist organisations. European Council, Council of the European Union, Timeline: the EU's response to terrorism', last reviewed 15.12.2022, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/fight-against-terrorism/history-fight-against-terrorism/>.

³⁴ The group's previously claimed attack in Iran occurred in Ahvaz on 22 September 2018, when gunmen fired on a military parade held to honour the army, the Basij militia, and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). Twenty-five people were killed and another seventy injured.

The Islamic State in Libya claimed responsibility for two attacks in 2022: an attack against a Libyan National Army (LNA) convoy in the southern Sabha province on 24 January 2022 and an attack against an LNA checkpoint south of Sabha on 19 April 2022. The former resulted in two deaths, and the latter caused one fatality.

Africa

Numerous African countries are dealing with some form of jihadist presence. The exit of French troops from Mali³⁵ as well as the announced withdrawal of the United Kingdom (UK) and Germany from the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali (MINUSMA)³⁶ accentuated a tense security situation.

Sahel and West Africa

JNIM expanded its operational reach beyond Mali into Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal and Togo. On 22 July 2022, JNIM attacked Mali's most important military base. JNIM claimed the attack was a reaction to the Malian government's cooperation with 'the Wagner Group'.

ISWAP appeared to be the largest and most active of the IS affiliates in Africa. In addition to its strongholds in northeast Nigeria and the Lake Chad basin, ISWAP expanded into rural areas in central and southern Nigeria. Its activity spilled over into neighbouring Cameroon, Chad and Niger. The group was also able to carry out more complex attacks against pinpoint targets, namely military vehicles and posts, and electricity lines. On 5 July 2022, for example, ISWAP engineered a major prison break near Abuja, Nigeria, resulting in the escape of at least 800 prisoners, of which a number were high-profile jihadists. ISWAP also intensified attacks against Christians³⁷.

ISWAP continued in its attempts to draw foreign fighters to its territory and compared the current situation in Africa to that in Iraq and Syria some years ago. It displayed its attempts at governance by establishing a moral police and a *zakat* (alms tax) department.

Since the formation of the Islamic State Sahel Province (IS Sahel) at the beginning of 2022, there has been an increase of IS activity in the region. The name IS Sahel was used for the first time in March 2022 to claim responsibility for an attack against a military base in northern Mali³⁸. The group predominantly operates across the tri-border area between Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso, known as Liptako-Gourma. Propaganda by IS Sahel highlighted successful operations against JNIM in the second half of 2022³⁹, as the two groups continued to vie for dominance in the region. However, JNIM dominance in Mali and its relationship with the local population challenged IS Sahel's ability to expand.

³⁵ In November 2022, France announced the end of Operation Barkhane, its anti-insurgent mission in West Africa. On 30 June 2022, the European Takuba Task Force which had been integrated into Operation Barkhane, also ended its mission in Mali.

³⁶ GOV.UK, 'Minister for the Armed Forces statement on the UN Peacekeeping Mission in Mali', 14.11.2022, <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/minister-for-the-armed-forces-statement-on-the-un-peacekeeping-mission-in-mali>; Federal Ministry of Defense/Bundesministerium der Verteidigung, 'Federal government has decided: armed forces will withdraw from Mali by May 2024/ Bundesregierung hat entschieden: Bundeswehr zieht bis Mai 2024 aus Mali ab', 23.11.2022, <https://www.bmvg.de/de/aktuelles/bundeswehr-zieht-bis-mai-2024-aus-mali-ab-5530382#:~:text=Erster%20Abschnitt%20des%20ArtikelsBundeswehr%20zieht,November%20beschlossen.>

³⁷ ISWAP is suspected of a church massacre in June 2022 that killed at least 40 people in Owo, Nigeria. However, the group did not claim responsibility for the attack.

³⁸ IS Sahel was previously known as the Islamic State Greater Sahara Province (ISGS), which between March 2019 and March 2022 was formally part of ISWAP while remaining operationally independent.

³⁹ Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED), 'Actor Profile: The Islamic State Sahel Province', 13.1.2023, <https://acleddata.com/2023/01/13/actor-profile-the-islamic-state-sahel-province/>

East Africa

HSM, an al-Qaeda Somali affiliate, continued to control vast parts of rural south-central Somalia. The group has increasingly penetrated urban areas held by the government. In addition, HSM has an extensive presence in Mogadishu where, among other operations, it carried out a 30-hour attack on the Hayat hotel in August 2022.

HSM carried out attacks on forces belonging to the African Union Transitional Mission (ATMIS)⁴⁰ as well as on Somali soldiers and government officials on a daily basis. Outside Somalia, HSM also attacked government troops in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. The group has been particularly active in northeast Kenya, claiming small-scale attacks across the border on a near-weekly basis. It has been less successful in Ethiopia where it has faced resistance since July 2022 by the Ethiopian army and by community and religious leaders in Ethiopia's Somali Region.

IS maintained a limited presence in Somalia, mainly in the Mogadishu region and in the northern region of Puntland. Its ability to act is limited by HSM's dominance.

Central and southern Africa

Islamic State Central Africa Province (ISCAP) operated mostly in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and in Mozambique. ISCAP mainly attacked militias loyal to the central government, security forces and Christians. Ahlu-Sunna wa-Jamma (ASwJ, 'Adherents to the Sunna and the community')⁴¹, previously the Mozambique faction of ISCAP, was also granted *wilaya* (province) status by IS in May 2022.

Central Asia

Afghanistan

Afghanistan has once again seen conspicuous activity by jihadist groups in terms of presence, attacks carried out and recruitment. The Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP) and al-Qaeda are both active in the country, while other foreign terrorist groups, including Jaish-e-Mohammad ('The Army of Mohammad') and Lashkar-e-Tayba ('The Army of Good'), maintained a limited presence in Afghanistan. The largest externally focused militant group is Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP, 'Taliban Movement Pakistan'), which increased its attacks against Pakistan in 2022.

Despite pledges⁴² to the contrary, there are no signs that the Taliban took steps to restrict the activities of foreign jihadist groups in Afghanistan, with the exception of the Turkistan Islamic Party (TIP), a Uyghur militant group that China blames for unrest in its western province of Xinjiang. The Taliban also continued their campaign to militarily suppress ISKP.

On 31 July 2022, Ayman al-Zawahiri, al-Qaeda's leader for over a decade, was killed in a USA drone strike in Kabul.

In 2022, ISKP increased its attacks across Afghanistan, mainly targeting Taliban leaders and supporters, as well as soft targets such as the Shia and Sikh communities. In addition to carrying out operations in the group's traditional base in Nangarhar and in Kabul, ISKP expanded its activities to Kandahar and parts of the north where it was less present before the Taliban takeover in August 2021. In its first strike on a foreign

⁴⁰ UN Security Council Resolution 2628, passed on 31 March 2022, authorised the African Union Peace and Security Council to reconfigure the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) into the African Union Transitional Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) for an initial period of 12 months.

⁴¹ Known as IS Mozambique.

⁴² As recently as 4 August 2022, following the assassination of al-Zawahiri, the Taliban released a statement reasserting the group's commitment to implementing the Doha agreement and accusing the USA of violating its terms.

diplomatic mission since the Taliban regained control, ISKP carried out a suicide bombing near the entrance of the Russian Embassy in Kabul on 5 September 2022, killing at least six people, including two embassy employees⁴³. Occasionally, ISKP executed attacks in the south and west of Afghanistan.

If the group continues to grow stronger, it is likely to expand its activities to neighbouring countries. In a number of propaganda releases in 2022, ISKP called for the expansion of IS's jihad in Asia, mentioning China, Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. In April 2022, ISKP claimed to have launched several rockets into neighbouring Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

ISKP aims to portray itself as a transregional movement. With this objective in mind, the group has taken advantage of Afghanistan's ethnicised politics. It highlighted how its own militias comprise several ethnicities, while simultaneously alleging that the Taliban oppress non-Pashtun ethnicities. ISKP also portrays itself as the only hard-line jihadist alternative to the Taliban in the hope of absorbing dissatisfied Taliban fighters and deserters from other groups.

⁴³ The Russian Foreign Ministry acknowledged that a Russian diplomat and a security expert were killed in the ISKP suicide attack.

RIGHT-WING TERRORISM

Key Findings

- ▶ In 2022, one terrorist attack was completed in Slovakia, which led to two casualties. Three attacks were foiled, two in France and one in Germany. No failed right-wing terrorist attacks were reported in 2022.
- ▶ In 2022, 45 arrests were made in 9 Member States on charges of right-wing terrorist offences.
- ▶ SIEGE and accelerationism were the prevailing ideologies in 2022, widely propagated in international online communities.
- ▶ Right-wing extremists often combine features of various ideologies, which resonate with their own worldview, without fully adhering to one particular ideology alone.
- ▶ The threat from right-wing terrorist lone actors, radicalised online, remained significant.

RIGHT-WING TERRORISM DEFINED

Right-wing terrorism refers to the use of terrorist violence by right-wing extremists. Violent right-wing extremist individuals and groups use, incite, threaten, legitimise or support violence and hatred to further their political or ideological goals. They seek to change the entire political, social and economic system into an authoritarian model and, in doing so, reject the democratic order and values as well as fundamental rights. Violent right-wing extremist ideologies are centred on exclusionary nationalism, racism, xenophobia and/or related intolerance. Examples are neo-Nazism and neo-fascism. In addition, violent right-wing extremist ideologies feed on a variety of hateful sub-cultures, commonly fighting back against diversity in society and equal rights of minorities. For example, misogyny and hostility towards LGBTQ+ communities and immigration are common attitudes among right-wing extremists. A core concept in right-wing extremism is supremacism or the idea that a certain group of people sharing a common element (nation, race, culture, etc.) is superior to all other. Seeing themselves in a supreme position, the particular group considers it to be their natural right to dominate the rest of the population.

Right-wing terrorist attacks, arrests, convictions and penalties

Attacks

Four right-wing terrorist attacks reported in the EU, in 2022. One attack was completed.

In 2022, one right-wing terrorist attack was completed in Bratislava, Slovakia. Two people were killed and one was injured as a result of this attack. Three attacks were foiled: two in France and one in Germany. Firearms and Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) were the weapons chosen for these attacks. The attacks were not perpetrated or planned by actors from the traditional right-wing terrorism spectrum, but rather by lone actors or small cells of individuals, radicalised online. In all the attacks, the perpetrators were male and between 16 and 20 years old.


Right-wing terrorist attacks

COMPLETED ATTACK

- On 12 October 2022, a 19-year-old Slovak male carried out an attack with a firearm in front of a LGBTQ+ bar in Bratislava, Slovakia. During the attack, two men were killed and one woman was wounded. The perpetrator, a lone actor, was later found dead of an apparent suicide. He radicalised himself through the internet and was not affiliated with any terrorist group. Shortly before the attack the perpetrator published a 65-pages long manifesto, titled A Call for Arms and written in English, on social media. In this manifesto, he featured, among others, anti-Semitic, anti-LGBTQ+ and white supremacist statements. Furthermore, the manifesto propagated accelerationism and violence as the only way for the white race to prevail against perceived enemies. The perpetrator also made references to other well-known right-wing terrorists, in particular to the Oslo (2011), Christchurch (2019) and Buffalo (2022) attackers and glorified them as 'saints'. Additionally, the author was inspired by the publications of Terrorgram, in particular The Hard Reset (see section on propaganda).

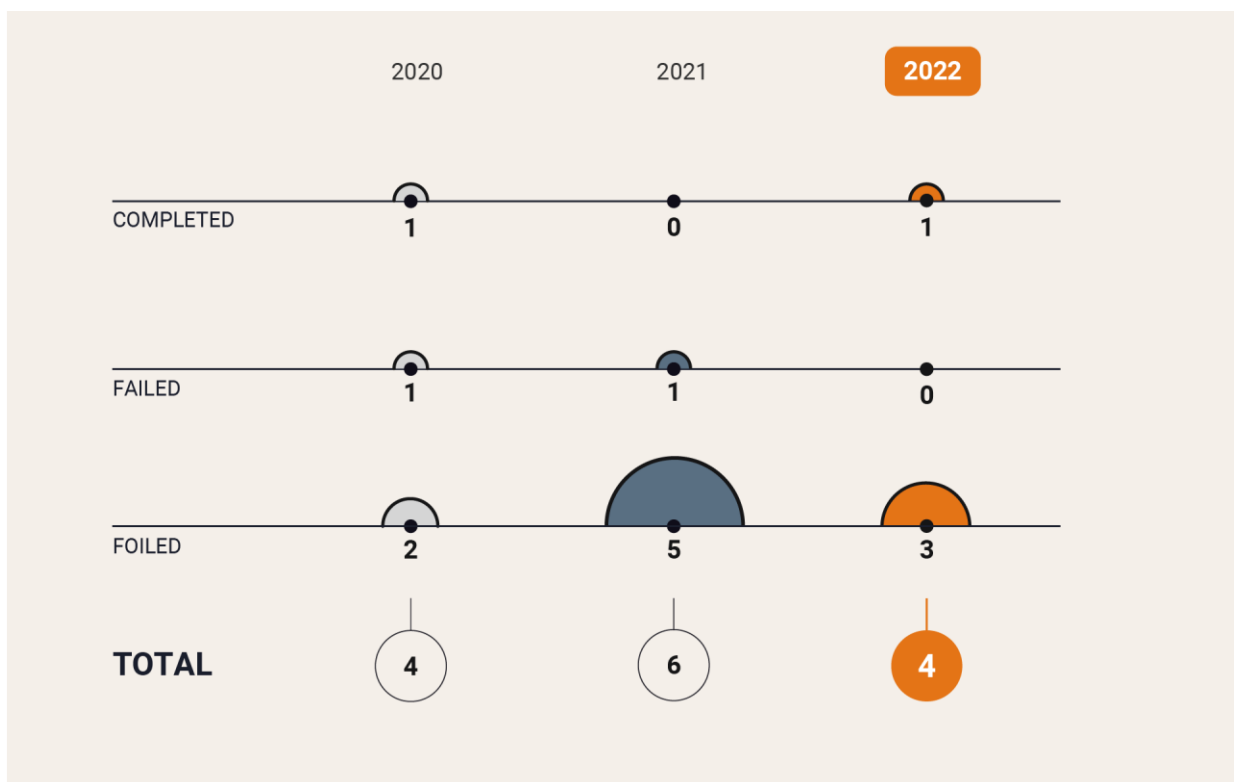
FOILED ATTACKS

- In May 2022 one right-wing terrorist attack was foiled, when German authorities arrested a 16 year-old school student with mental health issues in Essen, Germany, suspected of planning to attack a school. Weapons and explosives were found at the suspect's home. The perpetrator was motivated by right-wing extremist ideologies, including anti-Semitic and anti-Muslim sentiments.
- In May 2022, French authorities prevented one right-wing terrorist attack, when a 20 year-old male was arrested in Bourg-Saint-Andéol, France, on terrorism charges. He was suspected of preparing a right-wing terrorist attack in France, had a fascination for past right-wing terrorists and identified himself as a National Socialist. The suspect spread hateful messages against foreigners, Jews, the LGBTQ+ community, and showed resentment against women on various social media platforms. He posted several videos of himself with a Nazi flag, calling for racist and homophobic killings and was searching for weapons and even contract killers; possible targets included people who had allegedly harmed him since childhood.

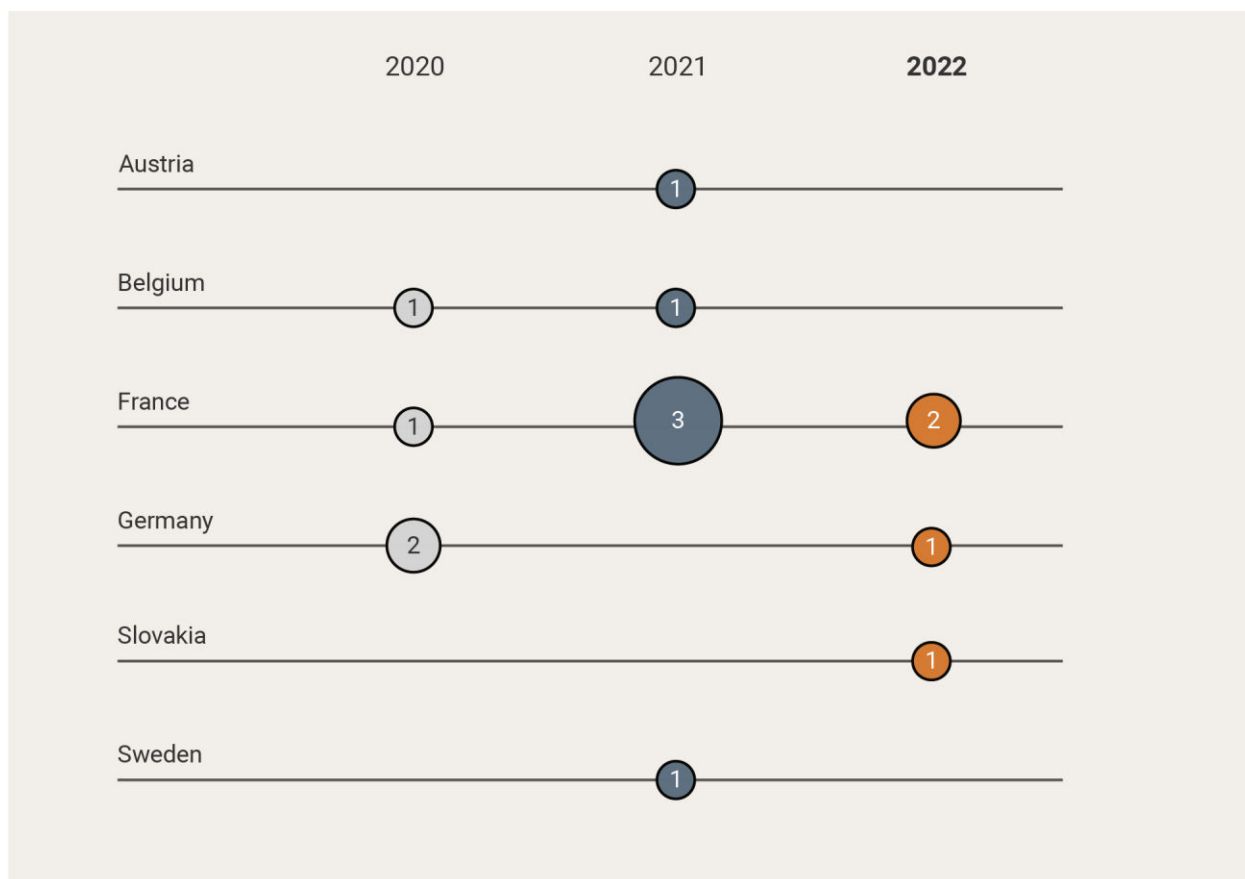
-  In September 2022, French authorities foiled another attack, when a 19 year-old man suspected of planning an attack on multiple targets, including police officers and synagogues, was arrested in Bouzonville, France. The perpetrator was very active online, showed extensive interest in mass killers and neo-Nazi, accelerationist and supremacist ideologies. He attempted to acquire automatic pistols and a bulletproof vest and researched how to manufacture explosives. He was arrested in possession of a revolver and had managed to obtain explosive precursors.

Right-wing terrorist attacks in the EU

2020-2022



Right-wing terrorist attacks (completed, failed, foiled) in EU Member States, 2020-2022



EXAMPLES OF RIGHT-WING TERRORIST ATTACKS IN EU'S NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES

In Iceland, one right-wing terrorist attack was foiled, when two males (aged 24 and 26) were arrested in September 2022. The two actors were co-workers, but were not members of any local physical right-wing extremist group. They are believed to have radicalised themselves through online groups. At the time of arrest, they were in the planning phase, which involved the observation of possible targets (believed to include members of the LGBTQ+ community, Muslims, other minority groups, sex offenders and police), weapons and ammunition gathering and weapons training. They were also trying to finance their attack through the sale of home-produced 3D-printed weapons (FGC-9), of which they already had produced a number of. One of the actors had already started drafting a manifesto.

In the UK, one right-wing terrorist attack was completed on 30 October 2022, when a male attacked an immigration centre in Dover. During the attack, a number of incendiary devices were thrown outside the premises and the man subsequently committed suicide.

Arrests

45 individuals were arrested in 9 Member States on suspicion of involvement in right-wing terrorist activities. This is a decline compared to the 64 arrests in 2021 but more than the 34 arrests made in 2020. The suspects arrested were predominately male (27) and nationals of the countries where they were arrested. The arrestees were between 15 and 75 years old⁴⁴.

The most frequent offence leading to terrorism-related arrests in 2022 was membership of a terrorist organisation, often connected to terrorism propaganda offences⁴⁵.

In May 2022, a 22-year-old Slovak male, adhering to SIEGE and accelerationist ideologies, was arrested for publicly instigating the overthrow of the political system by carrying out sabotage activities and acts of terrorism. He publicly expressed his sympathy and support for white supremacist terrorists and published instructions for the home manufacture of automatic firearms by combining 3D-printable parts and home-modified metal parts, instructions for the manufacture of explosives and mines, as well as instructions for carrying out sabotage attacks on communication, water and electricity infrastructure. He acted from locations in both Slovakia and Czechia, where he studied, using publicly accessible channels of social media outlets. The investigation revealed the transnational dimension of the suspect's network that spanned beyond the EU.

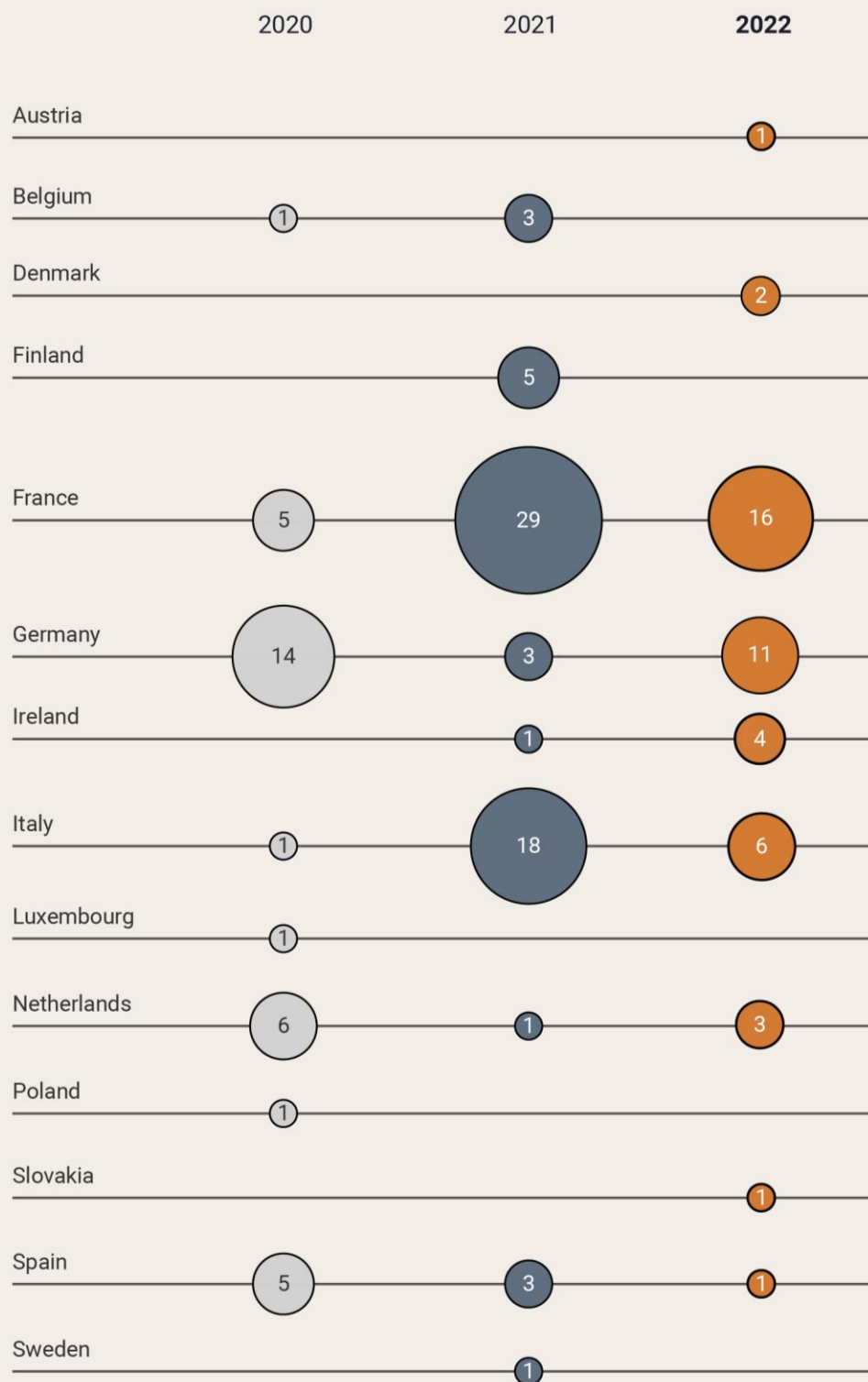
In November 2022, four men were arrested in Italy on charges of terrorism and propaganda, as well as instigation to commit crimes motivated by racial, ethnic and religious discrimination. They were accused of belonging to the neo-Nazi and supremacist group Order of Hagal, of which one of the arrestees is the founder. The group intended to organise itself as a paramilitary organisation. They were in contact with right-wing extremist groups in Ukraine and one of the individuals investigated is a Ukrainian national who went back to Ukraine before the arrests and discussed the possibility to prepare a terrorist attack in the area of Napoli, Italy.

⁴⁴ The gender has been specified for 27 suspects. The age and citizenship were specified for 28 suspects

⁴⁵ The offence leading to the arrest has been specified for 27 arrests.

Arrests for right-wing terrorist offences in Member States

2020–2022



Other terrorism-related offences leading to arrests included incitement to a terrorist crime and recruitment for terrorist purposes.

In October 2022, a 23-year-old Italian male was arrested in Italy on suspicion of recruitment for terrorism purposes and propaganda. He promoted anti-Semitic, misogynist and neo-Nazi content and declared that he wanted to defend the 'white race' by carrying out lone actor attacks in Italy. During the search of his residence, an air rifle and crossbows were seized. The arrestee had a fascination with right-wing terrorists and was a member of the USA right-wing terrorist organisation The Base. He had translated propaganda material from the group into Italian and had managed to form a cell.

In October 2022 a 15-year-old male, who sympathises with the right-wing extremist groups Feuerkrieg Division (FKD) and Atomwaffen Division (AWD), was arrested in Austria for sharing neo-Nazi propaganda online and discussing terrorist plots against asylum seeker housing facilities.

In February 2022, a 33-year-old man was arrested in the Netherlands for illegal possession and manufacturing of a firearm and incitement to hatred, discrimination and terrorist crimes. He had manufactured a functional 3D-printed semi-automatic rifle, type FGC-9⁴⁶. Ammunition for the weapon, a 3D printer and airsoft weapons were found during house searches, as well as right-wing extremist paraphernalia. He was active in several right-wing extremist social media groups.

Convictions and penalties

The increase in the number of convictions for right-wing terrorism-related offences continued in 2022 (23, compared to 15 in 2021). Cases of right-wing terrorism were adjudicated in France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands and Slovakia.

In Germany, a defendant was sentenced to 5-and-a-half years' imprisonment for preparing a serious act of violence endangering the state, weapons offences, possession of explosive substances and fraud. He had been planning to commit an attack on high-ranking German politicians, because of what he perceived as their refugee-friendly commitment. To execute his plans, he had acquired four firearms, more than 1 000 rounds of ammunition and more than 50 explosive devices, some of which he had taken from Bundeswehr stocks.

⁴⁶ The FGC-9 (Fuck Gun Control, 9-mm caliber) is a popular hybrid 3D-printed firearm, using 3D-printed parts and non-regulated metal parts.

Groups, structures and activities

Groups and structures

The right-wing extremist spectrum in the EU varies from the more traditional, hierarchically structured and locally organised groups to individuals loosely connected in international online communities.

The traditional neo-Nazi scene and its various subcultures, generally more focused on nationalist narratives and organised locally, engaged in activities such as gatherings, marches, stickering, music concerts and sports events. While they are active online, they place high value on physical meetings and group activities. These groups in general are currently not very likely to be involved in the planning and committing of terrorist acts, although it cannot be excluded.

Currently, lone actors or small leaderless cells, radicalised in transnational online communities and not belonging to any established right-wing extremist group, have the biggest potential for carrying out right-wing terrorist attacks in the EU.

This concerns predominantly young males, many of which suffer from some form of mental health condition. On these online platforms, individuals are able to communicate with like-minded persons and create a sense of belonging and comradeship. SIEGE and accelerationism remained the most popular ideologies propagated in such online networks.

Right-wing extremists within this online spectrum often create their own worldview by combining several features of various narratives which resonate with them, without fully adhering to one particular ideology alone.

Yet, these global right-wing extremist communities share the same codes and emblematic figures. In general, they all share an interest with past right-wing terrorists, such as the Oklahoma City bomber (1995), the Oslo attacker (2011), the Christchurch attacker (2019) and many more, referring to them as 'saints'. They are also frequently mentioned in manifestos of right-wing terrorists and publications of right-wing extremists.

Transnational right-wing communities place a strong emphasis on preparing for and instigating an inevitable 'race war'. Their main concern is the salvation of the 'white race' rather than national sensitivities. They see themselves not as aggressors, but as defenders of the 'white race', protecting it against the perceived invasion of immigrants and the harms of globalisation. Right-wing extremist ideologies and groups from the USA continue to represent an important influence on right-wing extremists in the EU who participate in transnational online communities. English is the main language used within these communities.

Activities

In 2022, groups associated with the traditional neo-Nazi scene and its various subcultures were more active than during the COVID-19 years of 2020 and 2021 due to the gradual lifting of related restrictive measures across the EU. Physical activities included small gatherings, demonstrations, marches, concerts, sports events and paramilitary trainings.

Demonstrations concerned various topics, including current ones of great societal interest such as the energy crisis, rising inflation and cost of living, as well as migration issues. These groups usually maintain good relations with foreign extremist organisations through the attendance of concerts, marches and demonstrations.

Examples of relevant events:

In February 2022, the 19th annual Lukov March was held in Sofia, Bulgaria. It is a mourning procession in honour of World War II General Hristo Lukov, attended by right-wing extremists from all over the EU.

Two relevant events took place in Hungary in 2022. The first was in February, entitled the Day of Honour, which was a gathering and march to commemorate a World War II battle, and was attended by approximately 500 people, including from outside of Hungary. The second was the neo-Nazi concert Brutal Hardcore Night in April, with over 700 attendees, up to 500 of whom were foreign nationals.

In June 2022, about 50 right-wing extremists gathered in a forest in the Canton of Zurich, Switzerland. The extremists were between 22 and 56 years old and came from Switzerland and Germany. Right-wing extremists from Switzerland and Germany sometimes meet in Switzerland, possibly because the right-wing extremist group Blood and Honour is forbidden in Germany and, for language reasons, Switzerland is attractive to neighbouring right-wing extremists.

In early September 2022, the Veneto Fronte Skinheads held an international three-day event called Return to Camelot in Cadidavid in Italy. The event was attended by around 1 200 people. Among other countries, attendees travelled from Austria, Bulgaria, Czechia, Germany, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Serbia and Slovenia.

In October 2022, commemorative ceremonies for the 100th anniversary of the March on Rome were held in many locations across Italy. The participants took part in the ritual of the call of the present by saluting with a stretched arm and singing some short choirs praising *il Duce* (Benito Mussolini).

In November 2022, the neo-Nazi skinhead organisation Blood & Honour - Divisão Portugal held their annual international music concert in Mindelo, Portugal, in which bands from France, Hungary and Italy performed. The event was attended by nearly 200 participants, of which only 60 were Portuguese; others travelled from France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, and the United Kingdom.

In November 2022, the right-wing extremist group Hammerskin Nation organised the Hammerfest, a musical concert, in Milan, Italy. It was attended by about 500 people, including from Finland, Germany, Hungary, the Netherlands and Switzerland.

SIEGE AND ACCELERATIONISM

SIEGE ideology is inspired by a book comprising a 563-page collection of newsletters produced by USA neo-Nazi James Mason during the 1980s. SIEGE promotes leaderless, cell-structured terrorism and a white revolution, and calls on 'true' neo-Nazis to go underground and begin a guerrilla war against 'the system'. James Mason's SIEGE refers back to Charles Manson, Adolf Hitler and prominent USA neo-Nazi William Pierce, author of *The Turner Diaries*, a novel depicting an imaginary breakdown of the political system in the USA and an allegedly ensuing 'race war'. Charles Manson's *Helter Skelter*, which describes a race war between 'blacks' and 'whites', seems to particularly resonate with some right-wing extremists.

SIEGE culture encompasses the concept of **accelerationism**: the use of violence, including acts of terrorism, to bring about a 'race war' and the fall of existing social and political systems. Accelerationism is based on the idea that Western governments are irreparably corrupt. Therefore, white supremacists must accelerate their collapse by sowing chaos and creating political tension. The preferred tactic for achieving this is violence in the form of attacks on minorities, including 'non-whites' and Jews, as a way to bring society closer to a 'race war'. The ultimate goal is to bring down the 'system', so as to pave the way for a future dominated by 'whites'. While the concept of accelerationism in the extremist right-wing scene has developed significantly over recent years, it has existed for much longer. Some of the earliest examples can be found in the Marxist idea that the intensification of an unhinged force, such as capitalism, will inevitably result in that force's own self-destruction.

Propaganda and radicalisation

In 2022, an uptick in right-wing extremist offline propaganda was observed upon the lifting of most restrictions imposed during the COVID-19 years. These activities were reflected in right-wing extremist groups' online propaganda.

Militant accelerationism gained continued to gain traction in 2022.

New accelerationist publications once again endorsed that attacks by lone actors on soft targets and large-scale attacks on vital infrastructure, such as the electricity network, telecommunications and oil transport, must contribute to the intended unleashing of a 'race war'.

Terrorgram released two pieces of propaganda in 2022: *The Hard Reset* (July) and *White Terror* (October).

The Hard Reset is a 261-page, multi-authored manifesto based on white supremacy, anti-Semitism, eco-fascism and accelerationist ideas. Together with ideological pieces, the document contains concrete recommendations on actions to take to destabilise modern societies and instructions on how to carry out acts of sabotage and terrorism.

White Terror is a 24-minute video that celebrates right-wing terrorist attacks. Notably, the collective – already active in 2021 – had in 2022 at least once clearly influenced

offline actions: the *Terrorgram* group was explicitly mentioned by the perpetrator of the Bratislava attack in his manifesto as a source of inspiration.

Anonymous but with similar aesthetics is the 14-page publication *Make It Count: A Guide for the 21st Century Accelerationist* (June) that melds ideological statements, violent narratives and instructions on how to sabotage infrastructures.

The growth of less known social media networks, together with a constantly expanding gaming industry and associated services, led to a further dissemination of right-wing extremist propaganda. At the same time, it led to further fragmentation. This trend has been nurtured by the increased use of decentralised platforms, built on blockchain technology that facilitates content backup and has shown a high degree of resilience to moderation efforts.

An Austrian neo-Nazi rapper was sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment in April 2022 (having been previously arrested in January 2021). He had produced cover-versions of popular songs featuring right-wing extremist propaganda. He reached wide publicity within the international right-wing extremist scene, when the perpetrator of the 2020 attack in Halle, Germany, played his music during the attack. His music was also sold in North America.

In February 2022, the brother of the individual mentioned above was arrested for spreading right-wing extremist propaganda. He ran a website called Juda Watch - an anti-Semitic website which was taken down in January 2020, but which has since appeared back online. The website fuels anti-Semitic stereotypes, and also names individuals as potential targets, both Jewish and non-Jewish. He was sentenced to four years, but has filed an appeal and is not yet in prison.

A very significant event that marked propaganda in the right-wing extremist sphere in 2022 was the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, particularly given that one of the justifications provided by Russia for the military offensive was the 'denazification' of Ukraine. While some sided with either fighting side, others condemned the war entirely in that it was perceived as a brothers' war and opposed any involvement of their respective countries.

There are, however, indications that the majority of the European right-wing extremists support Ukraine. Calls to join the ultra-nationalistic Ukrainian Azov battalion have been circulating in the right-wing extremist scene.

Travel to the conflict zone and/or participation in the fighting can further radicalise and possibly serve as a training ground for future attacks in the EU.

Right-wing extremists supporting either side grounded their online propaganda on the same three topics: white supremacy, (ethnic) nationalism and anti-Semitism. Pro-Ukrainian right-wing extremists argued that Russia is a multi-ethnic state and influenced by Jewish interests. Pro-Russian right-wing extremists argued that Ukraine is ruled by Jewish interests and historically belongs to Russia. As a result, the right-wing extremist online landscape has inevitably fragmented on these topics. This division of the narratives has broadened the discourse thus possibly appealing to wider audiences.

With COVID-19 measures gradually relaxing, the online propaganda of the right-wing extremist sphere veered from conspiracy theories and anti-Semitism that had skyrocketed since 2020 toward new or reinvigorated topics. 2022 bore witness to the tightening of the nexus between eco-fascism, anti-capitalism and anti-immigration sentiments both in the online and offline right-wing extremist landscape. Pivoting on arguments that could be more easily and less ideologically tied to the matters discussed by the wider public, the right-wing extremist online propaganda highlighted the importance of securing borders, reinforcing ethno-states and rethinking capitalism as an economic model.

In 2022, economic problems featured more prominently among topics discussed by right-wing extremists. The online debate on economic models, cryptocurrency, fiat money and commodity-based economy intensified, pivoting on strictly politicised and ideological arguments. Some right-wing extremist actors grounded their preference toward cryptocurrency on anti-Semitic assumptions (e.g. the world banking system is ruled by Jews). Others opposed cryptocurrencies by arguing they perpetuate capitalistic systems which they claim have brought the Western world to the brink of extinction in the first place.

LEFT-WING AND ANARCHIST TERRORISM

Key findings

- ▶ 13 left-wing and anarchist terrorist attacks were completed in the EU in 2022, of which the majority (8) were carried out in Italy. Three left-wing and anarchist terrorist attacks were carried out in Greece, one in Belgium and one in Spain. One person was injured as a result of the completed left-wing terrorist attack in Spain.
- ▶ Three left-wing and anarchist terrorist attacks failed (all three in Italy) and two were foiled (one in Italy and one in Greece).
- ▶ The number of arrests related to left-wing and anarchist terrorism in 2022 (19) is the same as in 2021 (19), but much lower than in 2020 (52). Arrests were made in Italy (12), Germany (3), Greece (3) and Belgium (1).
- ▶ Increasing levels of left-wing and anarchist extremist violence against police personnel, spontaneous but also premeditated, were observed in 2022.
- ▶ Left-wing and anarchist terrorists and violent extremists continue to pose a threat to public safety and security in the EU by damaging critical infrastructure resulting e.g. in large-scale power outages.
- ▶ Left-wing and anarchist attacks, with arson being the main modus operandi, caused considerable material damage to public and private property, amounting to millions of euro.

LEFT-WING AND ANARCHIST TERRORISM DEFINED

Left-wing terrorist groups seek to trigger a violent revolution against the political, social and economic system of a state, in order to introduce socialism and eventually establish a communist and classless society. Their ideology is often Marxist-Leninist. Examples of left-wing terrorist groups are the Italian Brigate Rosse (BR, 'Red Brigades'), the Greek Revolutionary Organisation 17 November and the German Rote Armee Fraktion (RAF, 'Red Army Faction').

Anarchist terrorism is a term used to describe violent acts committed by groups or individuals promoting the absence of authority as a societal model. Anarchists pursue a revolutionary, anti-capitalist and anti-authoritarian agenda. Examples of anarchist terrorist groups are the Italian Federazione Anarchica Informale / Fronte Rivoluzionario Internazionale (FAI/FRI, 'Informal Anarchist Federation / International Revolutionary Front') and the Greek Synomosia Pynon tis Fotias ('Conspiracy of Cells of Fire').

Left-wing and anarchist terrorist attacks, arrests, convictions and penalties

Attacks

18 left-wing and anarchist terrorist attacks reported in the EU in 2022. 13 left-wing terrorist attacks were completed.

13 left-wing and anarchist terrorist attacks were completed in the EU in 2022, with the majority of them (8) carried out in Italy. Additionally, three left-wing and anarchist terrorist attacks were carried out in Greece, one in Belgium and one in Spain. One person was injured as a result of the completed attack in Spain. The number of completed attacks reported in 2022 highlights a sharp increase from the one completed attack recorded in 2021, but less than 2020 (24 completed attacks). One reason for the increase from 2021 can potentially be found in changes in Member States' classification of attacks as terrorist versus violent extremist.

Three left-wing and anarchist terrorist attacks failed (all three in Italy) and two were foiled (one in Italy and one in Greece).

During 2022, the modi operandi used by left-wing and anarchist terrorist groups, as well as the modes of target selection, have largely remained unchanged from 2021 and 2020. The majority of terrorist attacks was carried out by terrorists adhering to anarchist ideologies.

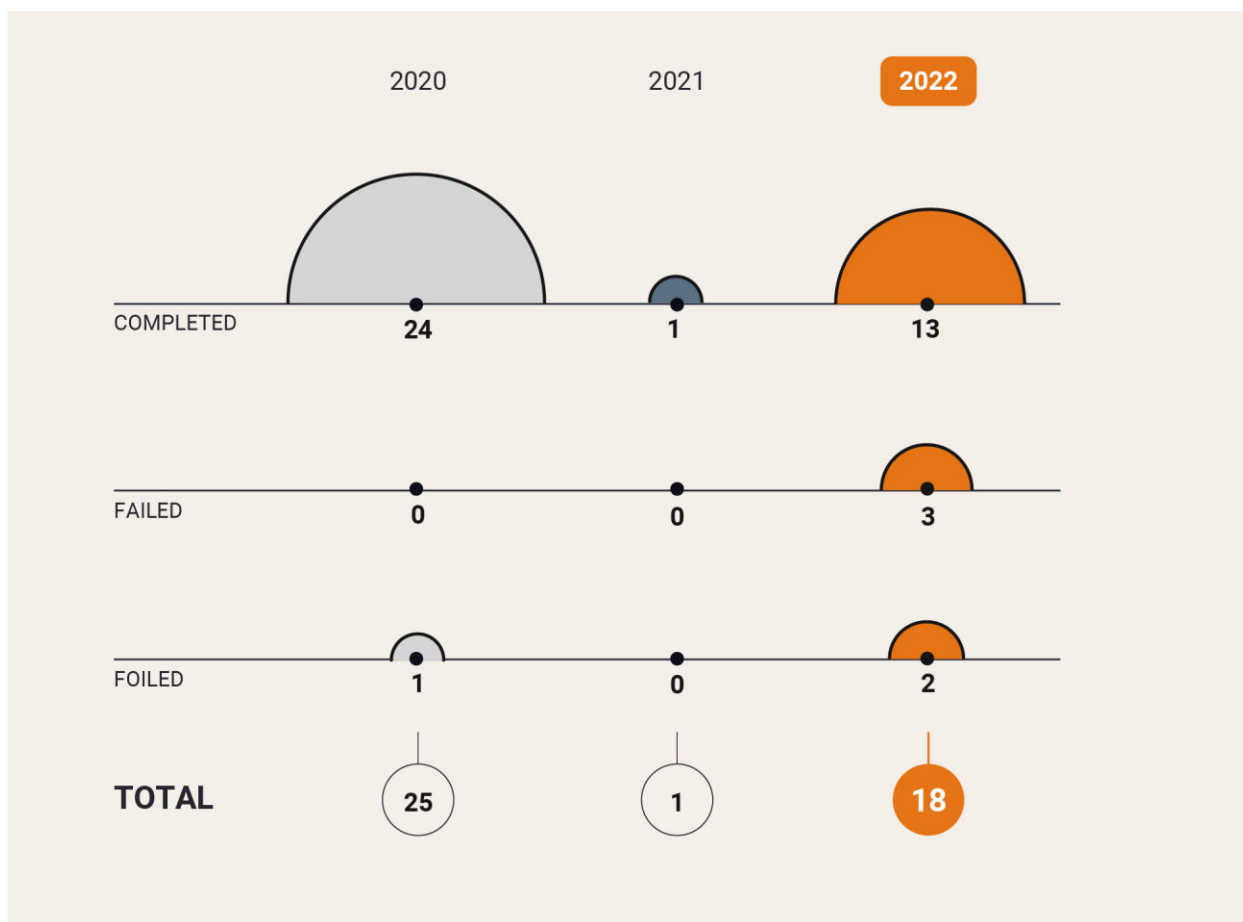
The main motivations of left-wing and anarchist terrorist attacks perpetrated in 2022 remained opposition to the state and capitalism. The targets of left-wing and anarchist terrorist attacks included critical infrastructure, such as repeaters and antennas, government institutions and private companies.

The most common modus operandi used by the left-wing and anarchist terrorists to perpetrate their attacks continues to be arson with IEDs and IIDs.

As in previous years, most left-wing and anarchist terrorist and extremist attacks and activities were connected to a specific thematic campaign. These campaigns are widely promoted through the internet (e.g. on left-wing and anarchist extremist websites and social media) and are used as justification for violent acts by extremists and terrorists globally.

Left-wing and anarchist terrorist attacks in the EU

2020-2022



Very often such campaigns revolve around demonstrating solidarity with imprisoned extremists and terrorists worldwide. A significant number of attacks in 2022 were perpetrated in solidarity with imprisoned anarchists.

On 7 July 2022, an IED that was placed at the fence of the Public Tax Office in Marousi, Greece, detonated and caused material damage. A new terrorist group named *Active in Solidarity Anarchists* claimed responsibility for the attack on an anarchist website, stating solidarity to an imprisoned Greek terrorist.

In Italy, campaigns focused on an imprisoned anarchist terrorist on hunger strike who is serving a sentence for anarchist terrorist offences. The individual was placed under strict prison regime as, while in prison, he was instigating other anarchist extremists to carry out violent attacks.

On 5 November 2022, in Trambileno, Italy, a pylon hosting the transmission and reception equipment of two telephone companies and a radio station was set on fire. Near the pylon, inscriptions attributing the arson to anarchists were found, as were fire-starting materials. On an anarchist website, the attack was claimed to have been carried out in solidarity with the abovementioned imprisoned Italian anarchist terrorist.

More generally, several campaigns focused on opposing the prison system in general and any company or institution connected with it. On 26 November 2022, an arson

attack against vehicles of a company supplying food to prisons was reported in Carasco, Italy.

Anti-capitalist ideology often materialises in attacks against private companies, banking facilities and energy infrastructure. The increasing financial hardships suffered by the lower and middle class all over the EU further fueled left-wing extremists' anti-capitalist rhetoric.

On 27 May 2022, during the night, two individuals perpetrated an arson attack at a car-sharing company in Rome, Italy, completely destroying 10 and damaging 5 more company cars, as well as damaging two privately owned cars. The attack was later claimed on an anarchist website by the group *Rebels for the extinction of the state and capital*.

On 3 August 2022, an attack failed when two rudimentary devices were found under two construction company trucks parked at a building site in Trento, Italy, where works were being carried out to upgrade the gas network. The attack was claimed on an anarchist website.

On 31 January 2022, an IED detonated at the offices of a law firm in Thessaloniki, Greece. The IED was placed at the entrance of the offices and the explosion caused damage to the building. The attack was claimed by the Organisation of Anarchic Action on an anarchist website.

Anti-technology campaigns focused on the fight against technological control supposedly exerted by governments and multinational companies through communication infrastructure. More specifically, 5G antennas, but also repeaters and the companies producing and installing them, are regularly targeted. Anti-scientific campaigns focused on slowing down the implementation of new technologies, which left-wing and anarchist extremists believe to be harmful to health and devastating to the planet.

On 10 February 2022, an arson attack was carried out against a repeater in Ischia, Italy, and on 7 September 2022 another arson attack was carried out against a 5G antenna in Imola, Italy.

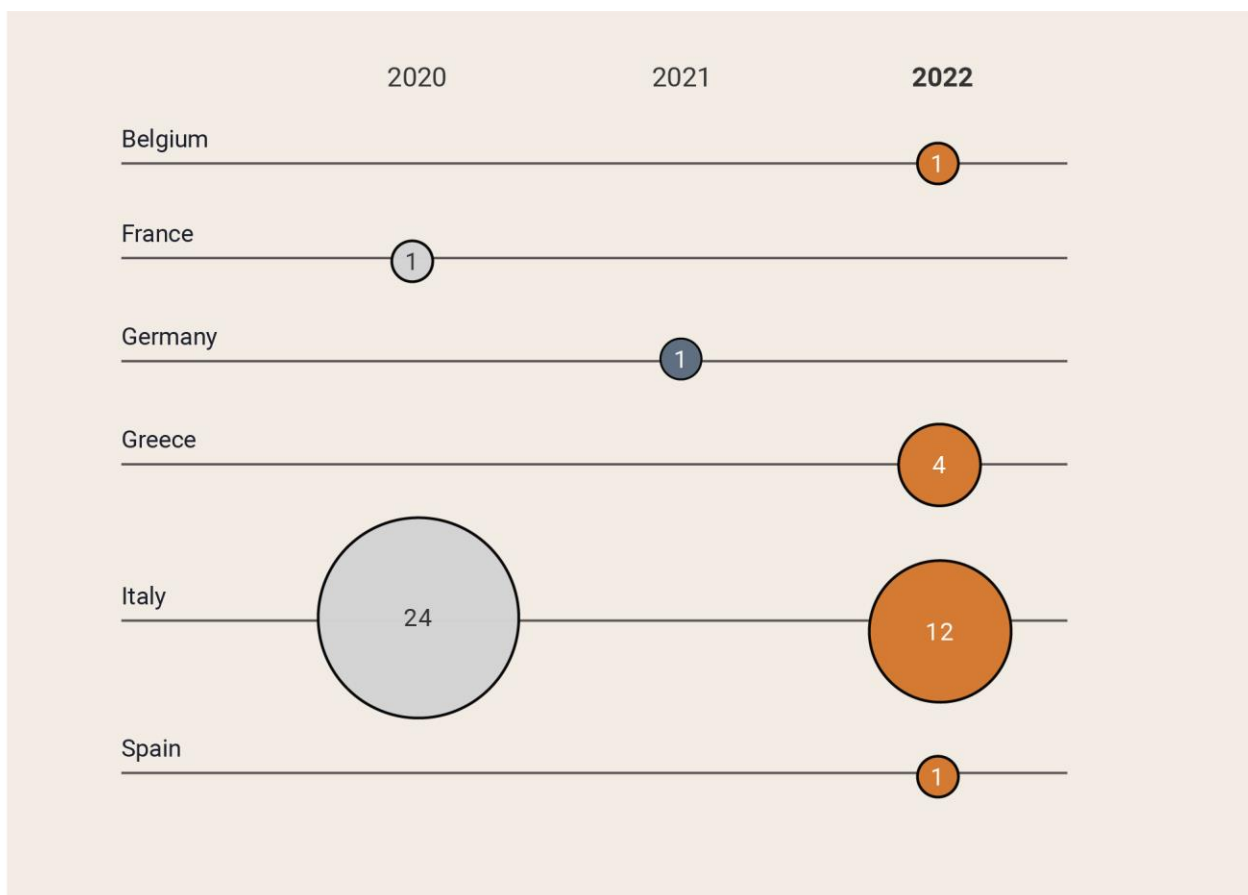
Left-wing and anarchist extremists have also long been harbouring anti-religious and anti-cleric sentiments, which they view as contradictory to their ideology.

On 8 February 2022, three Greek anarchists carried out an IED attack on a foundation for national and religious reflection in Thessaloniki, Greece. The explosion caused extensive damage to the entrance of the building. Two 34-year-old men and a 21-year-old woman were arrested for this attack and charged with participation in the anarchist extremist *Anarchic Action Organisation*. A claim of responsibility was published on an anarchist website by said organisation.

Israel remains a regular target of left-wing extremist propaganda, especially in connection with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

This was illustrated when a 31-year-old Belgian man with sympathies to the Palestinian cause carried out an attack in Oudenaarde, Belgium, on 28 August 2022. Utilising IIDs (Molotov cocktails), he set fire to two armoured military vehicles that belonged to an Israeli defence corporation and were parked in front of its offices. At the scene, a message was found, indicating the Israeli corporation as the target of the attack, as was noted before in attacks on its British branches carried out by the international action group Palestine Action.

Left-wing and anarchist terrorist attacks (completed, failed, foiled) in EU Member States, 2020-2022



While left-wing extremists mostly feature anti-Zionist positions in support of Palestinians, accusing the State of Israel of imperialism, colonialisation and repression, anti-Jewish sentiments are also frequently presented, e.g. in connection with anti-capitalist conspiracy theories. Left-wing extremists regularly engage in hate speech against Israel in demonstrations, publications and online.

The sending of letter and parcel bombs continues to be a recurring left-wing and anarchist *modus operandi*.

On 27 June 2022, one attack was foiled at the headquarters of an aerospace, defence and security company in Rome, Italy, when a postal package, addressed to the CEO, containing an explosive device was intercepted and defused. The attack was claimed by *Augusto Masetti Brigade/Informal Anarchist Federation-International Revolutionary Front* on an anarchist website. The authors of the letter expressed solidarity with a detained anarchist terrorist, blamed the company for producing weapons and technological devices, and promoted an international action campaign - including attacks - against anyone in the energy, techno-scientific or industrial sectors supposedly enriching themselves through wars.

Between 24 and 30 November 2022, six parcels containing explosives and shrapnel were sent to six locations in Spain, namely to the office of the President of the Spanish Government, the Ministry of Defence, the embassies of Ukraine and the USA, the Satellite Centre of the EU in Torrejón de Ardoz and a company in

Zaragoza. The parcel received in the Ukrainian Embassy exploded, causing injuries to one of the employees, while the rest of the parcel bombs were intercepted before exploding. The attacks are under investigation by the Central Criminal Court and, on 25 January 2023, a 74 year old Spanish citizen was arrested as the alleged perpetrator.

Arrests

In 2022, 19 arrests were carried out in connection with left-wing and anarchist terrorism in the EU. The arrestees were between 21 and 74 years old⁴⁷. The most common offence leading to arrest was membership of a terrorist organisation (8)⁴⁸.

The number of arrests related to left-wing and anarchist terrorism remained the same as in 2021 (19), but decreased compared to 2020 (52). The highest number of arrests occurred in Italy (12), followed by Germany (3), Greece (3) and Belgium (1).

Left-wing and anarchist terrorists wanted for arrest often manage to hide out in squats or other Member States for many years, due to high international connectivity within the left-wing and anarchist extremist circles.

In June 2022, an Italian anarchist was arrested in Athens, Greece, by the Hellenic Police and was subsequently extradited to Italy. The Court of Rome had issued a European arrest warrant following his sentencing to six years' imprisonment for the crimes of causing destruction and looting committed on 15 October 2011 in Rome during the so-called 'indignados' demonstration.

A 45-year-old Spanish male was arrested in Italy in February 2022 for an attack with explosives committed in Trento, Italy, in 2014.

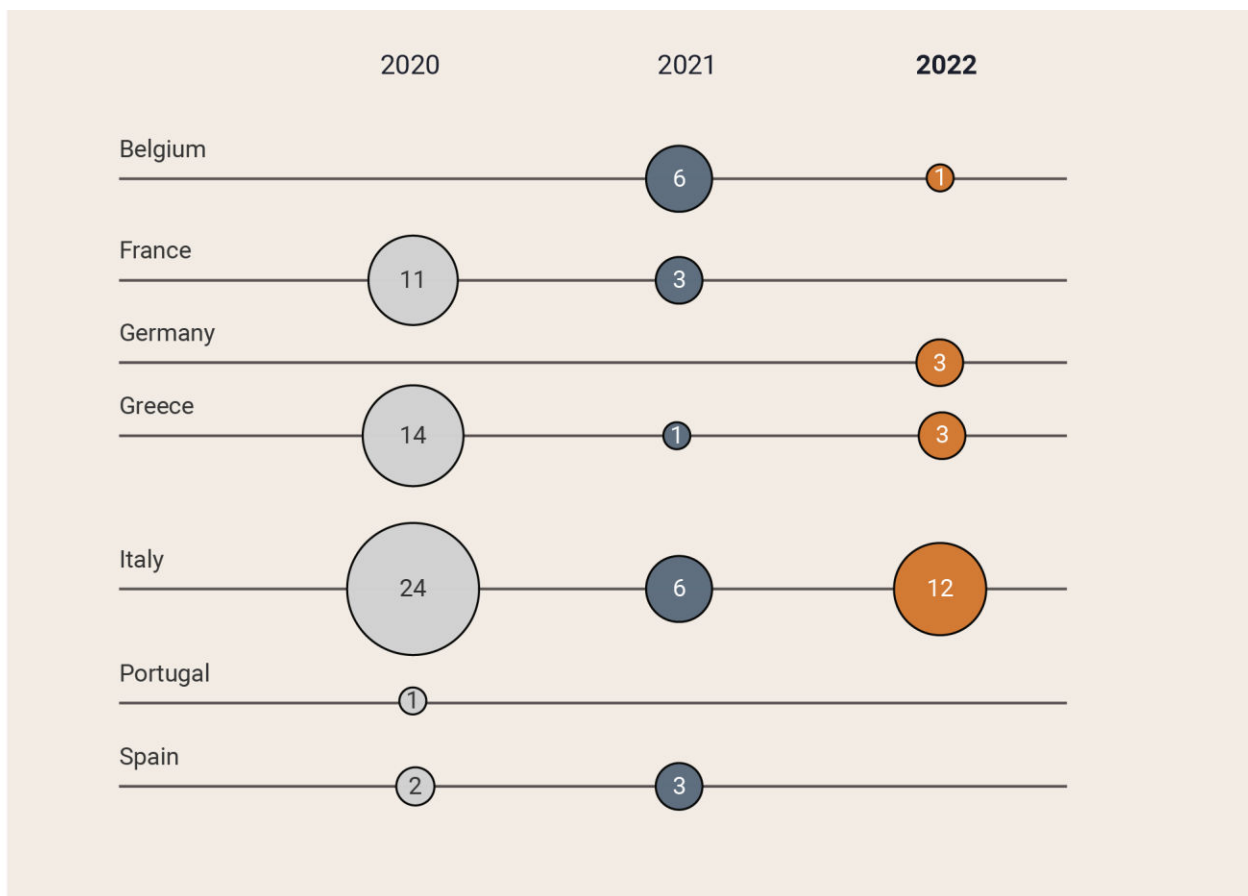
The three arrests in Germany (Bochum, Hamburg and Heidelberg) concerned three men (two Turkish nationals and one German national born in Türkiye) associated with the Turkish Marxist-Leninist terrorist organisation Devrimci Halk Kurtuluş Partisi-Cephesi (Revolutionary People's Liberation Party-Front, DHKP-C)⁴⁹.

⁴⁷ The age has been specified for 13 suspects.

⁴⁸ The offence leading to arrest was reported for all of the 19 arrests.

⁴⁹ The DHKP-C aims to overthrow the institutional system of Türkiye and install a socialist system. Despite its espousal of a left-wing (Marxist-Leninist) ideology, the German Bundeskriminalamt (BKA) classifies the organisation under the national equivalent to the category of ethno-nationalist and separatist terrorism, rather than left-wing terrorism, due to its operational focus on Türkiye. The DHKP-C uses Germany and other European countries as rear bases for financing, logistics, recruitment and propaganda purposes.

Arrests for left-wing and anarchist terrorist offences in EU Member States, 2020-2022



Convictions and penalties for left-wing and anarchist terrorism offences

Italy was the only Member State that reported concluded court proceedings relating to anarchist terrorism in 2022. It concerned the attack on the Treviso seat of the political party Lega ('the League') that took place in August 2018. In July 2022, the perpetrator of the attack, who made and placed two explosive devices on site, was sentenced to 28 years' imprisonment and ordered to pay EUR 30 000 as compensation to the political party.

Networks, activities and topics

Networks

While left-wing extremists in the EU, mostly adhering to Marxist-Leninist ideologies, rely on more structured groups with lead figures, anarchist extremists, adhering to various anarchist ideologies, lack any real structure and hierarchy.

Member States observed increased international connectivity between left-wing and anarchist terrorists and extremists.

Left-wing and anarchist extremists see themselves as part of an international movement and international contacts are a key feature of the scene. They connect through social media as well as physical attendance at various events and demonstrations. Connections within Europe are very strong, especially between neighbouring countries and where a common language is used. There are, however, also wider international contacts, mostly between Europe and South and North America, e.g. Argentina, Chile, Mexico and the USA. Campaigns launched online by left-wing and anarchist extremists in one country are often taken up in global narratives and messaging. This leads to EU left-wing and anarchist extremists claiming attacks in solidarity with causes in South America for example.

Left-wing and anarchist extremists and terrorists in the EU place high importance on the legal and financial support provided to detained 'comrades'. In Italy, fundraising activities at benefit events to cover legal expenses for left-wing and anarchist extremist prisoners have been observed.

Activities and topics

In 2022, violent left-wing and anarchist extremist activities increased in Member States, mainly due to the gradual lifting of COVID-19 restrictions imposed by governments. In 2022, there were numerous incidents employing the same *modi operandi*, having similar targets and relying on the same campaigns used as justification in the confirmed terrorist attacks, although these incidents were not classified as terrorist attacks by Member States. Left-wing and anarchist extremist violence continues to represent a threat to public security during demonstrations.

The attacks of left-wing and anarchist extremists in the EU, whether classified as terrorism or extremism, amount to considerable financial damage and can have dire consequences for whole communities, e.g. when power or internet outages follow attacks on critical infrastructure.

In April 2022, 100 000 individuals and 2 000 businesses in the Reims region in France were affected by massive internet sabotage. In the first ten months of 2022, 46 attacks targeted critical infrastructure in France.

The attacks are usually planned (identification of high-value and symbolic targets) and carefully prepared (reconnaissance, manufacturing of explosive or incendiary devices), demonstrating both their premeditated nature and the constant concern of the perpetrators to evade detection.

The number of arrests for left-wing and anarchist terrorist and extremist offences is generally not very high. Perpetrators and support networks show a high level of

security awareness, and the majority of the attacks are carried out at night. This can lead to a very high number of offences committed by individual extremists active over a number of years.

In 2022, French authorities charged an individual – an emblematic figure in the anarchist scene – with destroying private property and endangering the lives of others. The individual was responsible for arson attacks on 114 vehicles and damage to 11 buildings.

Police forces have been increasingly targeted by violence from left-wing and anarchist extremists.

There is concern among Member States regarding increased violence against police forces by left-wing and anarchist extremists during demonstrations and operations to vacate squats, as well as premeditated violence targeting off-duty police officers.

During demonstrations, black-bloc tactics⁵⁰ are being used and the levels of brutality against police officers is a cause for concern, as is the deliberate acceptance of the possibility of inflicting serious injury and even death. Left-wing and anarchist extremists regularly take part in martial arts trainings and some groups organise training camps, teaching, among others, tactics for attacks and for breaching police lines.

An ANTIFA (anti-fascist movement) training camp was held in Lower Austria in 2022. After the trial of seven left-wing extremists who were charged with bodily harm for attacking political opponents, demonstrations and a butyric acid attack on a police station in Austria followed in October 2022.

Multiple Member States reported arson attacks and damage to police vehicles perpetrated by left-wing and anarchist extremists. Outside of demonstrations, more premeditated attacks against police personnel and their private property were also noted in 2022.

In Germany, the private cars of three police personnel were burnt and surveillance footage of them and their private addresses were published online (doxing). In March 2022, an IED was set off at the entrance of an apartment complex in Melissa Attica, Greece. The claim of responsibility stated that the target was a police officer living there.

Generally, all representatives of the state are prone to becoming victims of left-wing and anarchist violence.

An attack targeting a judge at his home in Athens, Greece, was recorded in April. In another attack in Italy, a group of about 20 anarchists attacked the headquarters of the Sardinia Army Military Command with paint and flammable liquid in May.

Another area of concern are left-wing extremist attacks against (perceived) right-wing opponents. Left-wing extremists aim to deny (perceived) right-wing extremists the chance to publicly voice their opinions and often use doxing for intimidation.

In Switzerland left-wing extremists published private details (doxing) about members of the right-wing extremist group *Junge Tat* as part of an *anti-fascist campaign* on the blog *Nazifrei.ch*, sometimes followed by material damage at *Junge Tat* member's private addresses. In April 2022, clothing stores of a brand

⁵⁰ Protesters dress in all-black, hide their faces to conceal their identity and violently confront police and political opponents.

favoured by right-wing extremists were simultaneously attacked in several German cities.

Diplomatic premises of countries suspected of perceived injustices continue to be the target of left-wing and anarchist extremist attacks. Since the end of 2022, a series of attacks against several Italian embassies have occurred all over the world. The attacks are believed to be part of the campaign related to an imprisoned Italian anarchist terrorist on hunger strike⁵¹(see section on Attacks).

In December 2022, the car of an employee of the Italian embassy in Athens, Greece, was set on fire utilising IIDs (Molotov cocktails). Also in December 2022, an attack with explosive devices was carried out against the Italian embassy in La Paz, Bolivia.

The creation and use of squats, so-called free autonomous spaces, remained important for anarchist terrorists and extremists in 2022. Those spaces might serve as hide-outs as well as operations bases, and are also utilised to host left-wing and anarchist terrorists and extremists from abroad. Evacuations of those squats regularly present a challenge to law enforcement authorities, given that left-wing and anarchist terrorists and extremists do not hesitate to make use of grave violence against officials intervening.

The police in Athens, Greece, detained over 77 people during a large-scale operation at a squat in November 2022. A 27-year-old, suspected of carrying out an attack on a media group in July 2022, was arrested during the raid for forming a criminal organisation, carrying out explosions and arson attacks as well as for possession of explosives. After the suspect was arrested, left-wing and anarchist extremists climbed onto the roof and threw objects, such as stones, at police officers in order to obstruct the seizure of the vehicle of the abovementioned individual.

One possible explanation for the continuing importance of squatting to the left-wing and anarchist extremist spectrum, next to ideological reasons, can be seen in the affordable housing crisis affecting European metropolitan areas. In 2022, as in previous years, the issue was a recurring campaign topic. Left-wing and anarchist terrorists and extremists, utilising the housing crises for their cause, targeted real estate agencies, construction sites and construction companies. In The Hague, the Netherlands, short-stay apartments were vandalised and, in L'Hospitalet del Llobregat, Spain, a real estate agency was attacked with explosives.

The No Border movement within the left-wing and anarchist extremist spectrum advocates for the abolition of borders and freedom of movement worldwide. Left-wing and anarchist extremists propagate narratives in support of their own perceptions on migration. In that context, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency Frontex is seen as a stark enemy, resulting in the campaign *Abolish Frontex*.

In August 2022, an international No Border Camp was organised in Rotterdam, the Netherlands. Extremists from all over Europe came to this event which featured discussions and workshops focusing on the abolishment of Frontex.

The Russian war of aggression against Ukraine was also taken up in the narratives of left-wing and anarchist extremist campaigns in connection with general anti-militarist sentiments.

In Milano, Italy, the ATM of a bank was damaged and walls of the self-service area were smeared with the words *Warfoundary Banks*. A claim of the attack on an

⁵¹ Italian Government, Interno.gov.it, 28.01.2023, '[Cronaca. Atti vandalici contro sedi diplomatiche italiane a Barcellona e Berlino](#)'

anarchist website condemned the bank's financial activity in relation to the war and in Russia.

A small number of left-wing extremists from Italy have also travelled to the battlefield in Ukraine. In connection with the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, the long-harboured anti-NATO rhetoric has come to the forefront again. The Swedish application to join NATO has been a topic for left-wing extremist circles, as was the NATO summit in Madrid, Spain, in June 2022.

Support for the Kurdish cause and the PKK has been a long-standing issue for the left-wing extremist scene. There is not only support, but some left-wing extremists have also been training and fighting with Kurdish forces in conflict zones for years. Some Member States reported the return of FTFs from Rojava, North-East Syria, in 2022. These returnees are combat-trained and may, therefore, pose a threat to Member States. The PKK is very active in the EU, mostly using Member States as a base for administrative, recruitment and financing purposes.

Overlap between left-wing extremists and separatists was noted in the EU. One example is the often unclear delineation between left-wing extremists and separatists in the Basque region and Catalonia in Spain, particularly in terms of motivations of attacks. Another example concerns left-wing extremists in Ireland who are campaigning against perceived British, EU and American imperialism and actively target senior citizens who have previously been involved in the Republican movement for recruitment purposes.

Left-wing extremists have also been reported at various environmental demonstrations and activities in 2022. There are sympathies and some overlap between left-wing extremists and environmental activists and extremists. The two phenomena pursue partially overlapping goals and have common topics of interest; for example both see the construction of high-speed railway lines or gas pipelines as harmful to nature and representative of the capitalist state.

ETHNO-NATIONALIST AND SEPARATIST TERRORISM

ETHNO-NATIONALIST AND SEPARATIST TERRORISM – DEFINED

Ethno-nationalist and separatist terrorist groups are motivated by nationalism, ethnicity and/or religion. Separatist groups seek to carve out a state for themselves from a larger country or annex territory from one country to that of another. Left-wing or right-wing ideological elements are not uncommon in these types of groups.

Ethno-nationalist and separatist terrorist attacks, arrests, convictions and penalties

In 2022, no completed, failed or foiled attacks were perpetrated by ethno-nationalist and separatist terrorists in the EU.

18 individuals were arrested in 2022 in four Member States for involvement in ethno-nationalist and separatist activities. The most common reason for arrest was membership of a terrorist organisation (6)⁵². 11 suspects were arrested in Ireland, four in Germany, two in Italy and one in Spain. Arrests concerned men between 22 and 70 years of age. The arrestees in Ireland, Italy and Spain were all nationals of the respective countries. All the arrestees in Germany were Turkish nationals⁵³.

The arrests in Ireland were all in connection with Dissident Republican (DR) groups. The arrestees in Germany were charged with membership of a terrorist organisation, respectively the Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê (Kurdistan Workers' Party, PKK).

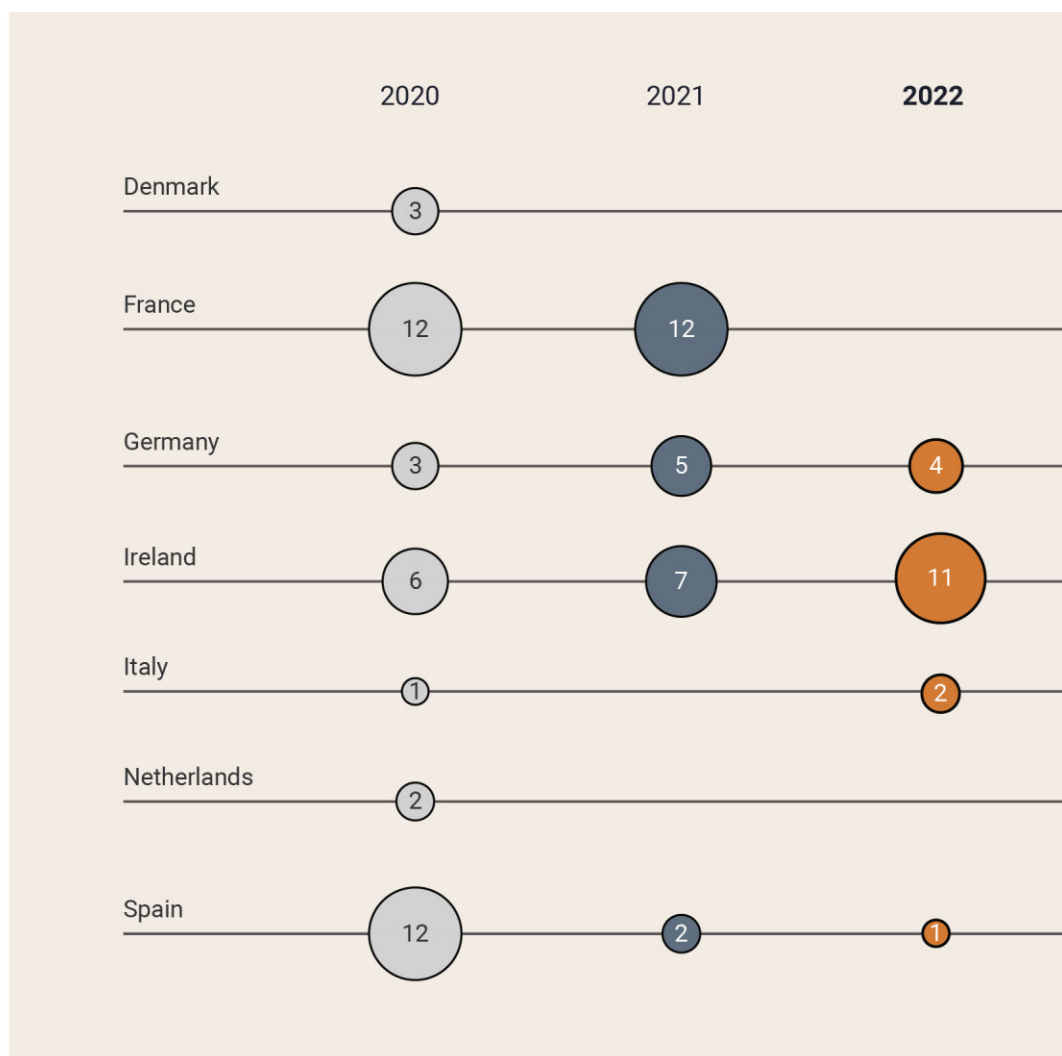
One of the arrests in Italy concerned the PKK and one was related to separatist endeavours in Southern Tyrol and on charges of possession of firearms and ammunition for terrorist purposes. The arrest in Spain concerned terrorist propaganda for Euskadi ta Askatasuna (ETA).

⁵² The offence leading to arrest has been specified for 17 arrests.

⁵³ Age, gender and citizenship has been specified for all 18 arrests.

Arrests for ethno-nationalist and separatist terrorist offences

in EU Member States , 2020-2022



Convictions and acquittals for separatist terrorism-related offences continued to be the second largest type in the Member States in 2022 (31). Such convictions and acquittals were delivered by courts in France, Germany and Spain and concerned terrorist groups, such as ETA, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), PKK and Corsican groups.

In June 2022, four men were convicted by a German court for supporting a terrorist organisation abroad. The men were given prison terms of between one year and one year and nine months for having collected donations intended for the LTTE in Sri Lanka.

In October 2022, a Spanish court sentenced an ETA member to a total of 69 years' imprisonment after it found her guilty of committing a terrorist attack and assassination. The woman activated an explosive device on 6 August 1987 that killed two police officers and injured another person. The attack was claimed by ETA in February 2004.

Groups and structures

Separatist groups in Spain

In Spain, the Catalan and Basque independence movements are currently the most active and violent within the Spanish separatist scene. Their narratives combine separatism with left-wing extremist views, focusing on messaging against the Spanish State and its institutions, as well as against wider themes such as capitalism. In addition, several small new groups have emerged in the separatist left-wing circles in Spain.

Social discontent and economic struggles are being used by these groups in their messaging against the Spanish State, and also as an opportunity to recruit from the most disadvantaged sectors of society.

Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê (PKK)

In the EU, the PKK continued to focus on its propaganda, recruitment and financing activities to support operations in Kurdish regions in Iraq, Syria and Türkiye. One arrest in Italy was carried out in connection with the PKK. Four arrests in Germany (Bremen, Kassel, Leverkusen and Nuremberg) for ethno-nationalist offences were connected to the PKK.

The continuing military conflicts between Türkiye and guerrilla units of the PKK and the concern about the health of PKK founder Abdullah Öcalan, who is detained in Türkiye, were the two main factors believed to have motivated PKK members to contribute and donate to the group.

The proceeds raised through various activities are intended to support the extensive propaganda apparatus of the PKK in the EU, provide humanitarian aid to the Kurdish regions, and finance the Kurdish militia, Yekîneyên Parastina Gel (YPG, 'People's Protection Units'), operating in Syria. Illegal sources for PKK's funding include drug trafficking and fraud carried out in the EU.

PKK members with EU citizenship or permanent residence in Member States have travelled to the conflict zones in Syria and Iraq to take part in the armed conflicts. Their travels are often facilitated by the main organisation, which also enables PKK members to return to the EU.

PKK propaganda is concentrated on lobbying for the release of the PKK leader, Abdullah Öcalan, removing the PKK from the list of terrorist organisations in the EU, and establishing a permanent and sovereign Kurdish state under PKK leadership. Several calls were made online to stop money flows to Türkiye and to boycott Turkish products and services.

The PKK within the EU maintains close links to the left-wing and anarchist extremist scene.

These connections materialise in joint participation in demonstrations, as well as in combat training of left-wing and anarchist extremists in Kurdish-populated regions of Syria by the YPG, and participation of left-wing and anarchist extremists in fighting alongside Kurdish forces.

Dissident Republican (DR) groups

The average age of the 11 arrested individuals in connection with DR groups in Ireland was 39 years and they were of Irish and UK nationality. All the arrested suspects are long standing members of DR groups.

While there have been no attacks by DR groups in the EU in 2022, there have been incidents reported in the UK.

In August 2022, the New Irish Republican Army (NIRA) claimed in a call to local media to have fired a number of shots from an automatic weapon at police in Londonderry, UK. Police were on duty at the time and were monitoring a bonfire at an annual commemoration. There were no casualties and this incident was categorised as an attempted attack (the first since April 2021) by UK authorities. A number of arrests were made after the incident.

On 17 November, police officers on mobile patrol reported that they had come under attack in Strabane, UK. Follow-up searches indicate that some form of IED had been used, initiated by using a command wire. No casualties were reported. This attack was subsequently claimed by the NIRA via local media.

On 20 November, a vehicle was hijacked by a number of armed and masked males and the driver ordered to drive to a police station in Londonderry, UK. An IED had been placed in the rear of the vehicle. It failed to function, but investigation indicates that it was a viable device.

Additionally, there have been multiple arrests made under the Terrorism Act / Justice and Security Act in 2022 in the UK.

DR groups aim to reunite Ireland with Northern Ireland and create a 32-county socialist republic in Ireland. They have a hierarchical structure, with specific roles, responsibilities and functions divided among members. DR groups have both a political wing and a militarised wing. The political wing can be viewed as a public front for the purpose of spreading propaganda, often through social media platforms. House-to-house leaflet dropping and protests are also among the channels used for the dissemination of propaganda. These groups have forged strong links to criminal organisations and are regularly engaged in criminal activities to fund their cause, e.g. through the sale of contraband/counterfeit items, the sale of drugs, extortion and smuggling. They also organise various charitable fundraisers and money collections to finance their activities. Criminals may also be in a position to provide weaponry as well as means of transportation into Northern Ireland.

The overriding motivation for DR groups in Northern Ireland is historical nationalism relating to the perceived occupation of Northern Ireland. The DR groups are involved in wider community activism to promote their ideals and garner support among the local population.

DR groups are struggling to maintain relevance as the majority of the population no longer supports the groups or their ideologies. Moreover, new groups emerging every year, with different ideological backgrounds outside the DR realm, take away from their recruitment pool.

DR groups continue to have associations with left-wing extremists and have travelled to take part in socialist / Marxist events across the EU, including Spain and Greece. They also have close links to some groups in Palestine, sharing a perceived similar struggle.

OTHER FORMS OF TERRORISM AND EXTREMISM

Reichsbürger, Selbstverwalter and Staatsverweigerer

In December 2022, 24 German nationals and one Russian national belonging to the *Reichsbürger* and *Selbstverwalter* spectrum were arrested in Germany, Austria and Italy following large-scale house searches on charges of membership of a terrorist organisation and other offences. They are suspected of having planned to replace the existing order in Germany with another form of state and government.

The association consists of a council (structured like a shadow government) and a military wing. Their plan was to overthrow the system, form an interim government and enter into negotiations with the victorious powers of World War II. The association's military wing was meant to implement the decisions made by the council and to serve as bodyguards. The association was still in the early planning phase and shares an ideology which combines features of the *Reichsbürger* spectrum, esoterism and conspiracy theories (e.g. the group believed that Germany is governed by a clandestine acting *Deep State* of secret, non-elected powers, to the detriment of the German people).

The association believes that a so-called international *Alliance* will soon exchange the highest administrative level of the state. The *Alliance* is to give them a signal to start a 48-hour operation culminating in the overthrow of the system. The group saw both real-world events (for example, the death of British Queen Elizabeth II) and presumably fictitious incidents (e.g. an alleged current invasion of Germany by Russian forces) as a signal for starting action. Therefore, the group made efforts to further prepare for *D-Day*. The arrestees range from middle-aged to senior citizens, are both male and female, and stem from middle- and upper-class backgrounds, with the leading figure being a member of an old German aristocratic family⁵⁴.

Reichsbürger (Citizens of the Reich), *Selbstverwalter* (Self-Governing Citizens) and *Staatsverweigerer* (Government Deniers, term used in Austria) movements have been an increasing phenomenon during the last few years, especially in Austria and Germany.

While those three phenomena may differ slightly in terms of ideology, at the core of all of their belief systems stands the rejection of the government and the state itself in its current form. They combine various narratives and theories from different extremist perspectives (right-wing and anarchist), as well as esoterism and conspiracy theories into their own worldview. The largest number of *Reichsbürger* and *Selbstverwalter* can be found in Germany (estimated at around 23 000 people), followed by Austria. *Reichsbürger* in Germany believe that the Federal Republic of Germany does not exist, but instead the borders of varying German empires are still in effect. *Selbstverwalter* in Germany denounce every form of government. Only a small percent (1 250) of the

⁵⁴ German Federal Prosecutor-General's Office press release, 7.12.2022, Festnahmen von 25 mutmaßlichen Mitgliedern und Unterstützern einer terroristischen Vereinigung sowie Durchsuchungsmaßnahmen in elf Bundesländern bei insgesamt 52 Beschuldigten, <https://www.generalbundesanwalt.de/SharedDocs/Pressemitteilungen/DE/2022/Pressemitteilung-vom-07-12-2022.html?nn=1397082> and The German domestic intelligence services (BfV), Exekutivmaßnahmen gegen Vereinigung aus „Reichsbürger“-Spektrum, 2023, accessed on 27.3.23, <https://www.verfassungsschutz.de/SharedDocs/hintergruende/DE/reichsbuerger-und-selbstverwalter/exekutivmassnahmen-gegen-reichsbuerger-spektrum.html>

German *Reichsbürger* are also categorised as right-wing extremists by the German authorities⁵⁵.

Environmental Extremism

In 2022, there has been a clear uptick in environmental activism noted in Member States. The line between environmental activism and environmental extremism is often a blurred one, yet some of environmental activists' narratives might have the potential to incite violence among extremists. However, environmental extremism is not a new phenomenon, as there have been periods with elevated activity in previous decades. Environmental extremists are concerned with various themes, such as climate change and earth resources.

In 2022, a large number of actions of environmental activists resulted in damage of public and private property, as well as in public order disturbance. Various actions were carried out in museums, when activists glued themselves to precious artefacts or damaged them with liquids. They blocked streets in multiple European cities dozens of times by glueing themselves to the asphalt and causing extensive traffic jams.

Additionally, bank buildings, investment offices, energy companies, public institutions and airports have been occupied by environmental activists. Attacks against highly fuel-consuming vehicles have also been noted.

Environmental activists have been arrested in some Member States in 2022 in connection with actions considered criminal acts.

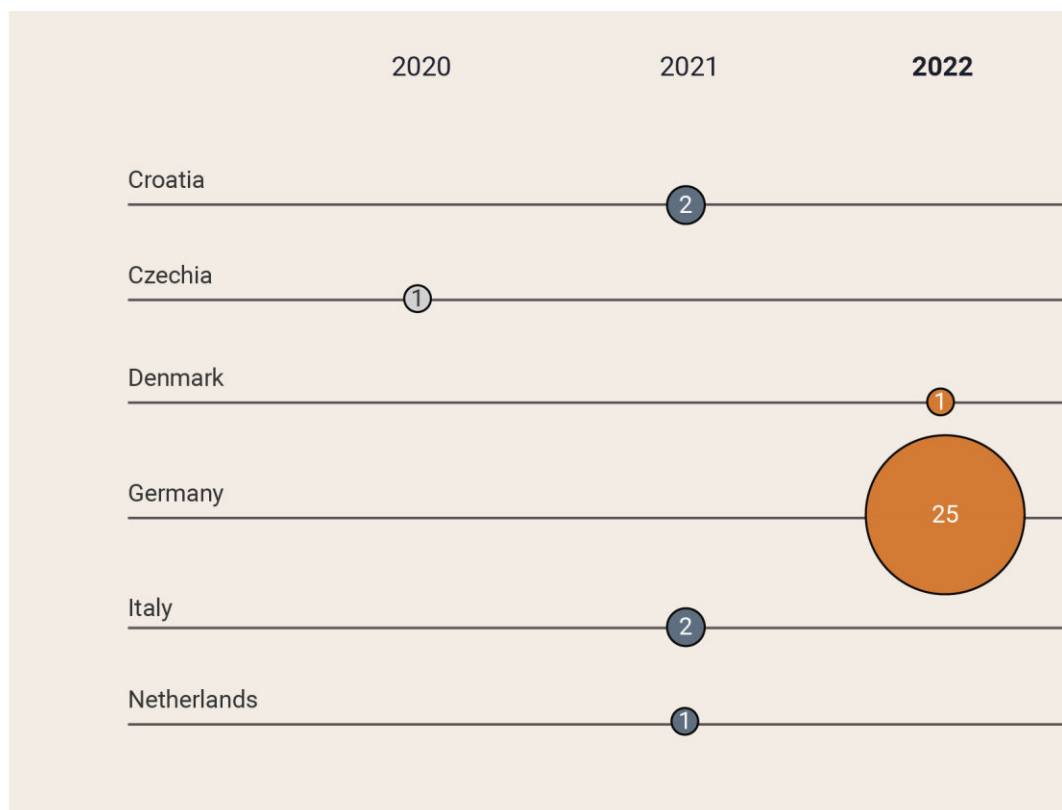
The actors and groups within the environmental extremist movement are connected globally. There is overlap with other extremism phenomena, mostly with left-wing and anarchist extremists. In Italy, a precautionary custody order was carried out in March against an anarchist extremist for association for terrorist purposes with a Mexican anti-civilisation extremist organisation.

Overlap can also be found with animal rights activists and extremists. Violent acts have been carried out in the EU against butcher's shops, hunter associations and raised hides for hunters, as well as companies perceived to exploit animals and harm the environment. Meat and dairy production and distribution centres have also been occupied in protest actions.

Some Member States fear the further radicalisation of parts of the environmental activist scene in the EU towards violent extremist and terrorist activity, possibly carried out by clandestine groups.

⁵⁵ The German domestic intelligence services (BfV), Zahlen und Fakten, 2023, accessed on 27.3.23, https://www.verfassungsschutz.de/DE/themen/reichsbuerger-und-selbstverwalter/zahlen-und-fakten/zahlen-und-fakten_node.html

Arrests for other terrorist offences, in EU Member States, 2020-2022



Convictions and penalties

On 6 December 2022, Gotland District Court rendered a judgment in a case concerning the attack against a physician, who held the position of Swedish national coordinator for psychiatry-related matters. The killing was committed at the *Almedalen* week, a prominent forum in Swedish politics. Following his arrest, the authorities discovered that the perpetrator had also been preparing the killing of a Member of the Swedish Parliament at the same event. The court held that had the attack against the Member of Parliament been carried out, this would have had great consequences for Swedish society. The aim of the accused was to instil serious fear in the Swedish population or in a part of the population. With regard to the killing of the physician, the requirements for a terrorist offence were not established. The impact of the murder was not found to have threatened the fundamental structures of society. The accused was convicted of murder, preparation of a terrorist offence and drug offences. He was sentenced to compulsory psychiatric treatment, subject to assessment by a court prior to a possible release.

OUTLOOK ON POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENTS IN TERRORISM AND VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN THE EU

The TE-SAT, as a situation and trend report, presents current developments in terrorism and violent extremism in the EU. However, an outlook for potential developments in the future terrorism landscape in the EU, based on changes in the broader EU and global context, is key for monitoring and for shaping a proactive approach to counter terrorism in the EU.

Thinning delineations between different types of terrorism

The lines between different types of terrorism, including right-wing, left-wing, anarchist, jihadist, and other ideologies, are likely to become more blurred in the future. Points of convergence have already been observed among terrorist and violent extremist actors across the whole ideological spectrum. While established groups' ideologies and long-term goals remain unchanged, they share common elements, including the use of similar narratives on topics considered of great impact for propaganda purposes, the selection of targets for attacks and the borrowing of tactics. Violent extremists and terrorists belonging to different ideologies and with various backgrounds are likely to further converge on topics of common interest, as well as on targets and tactics, posing additional challenges for monitoring, prevention and investigation.

Right-wing, left-wing and environmentally-inspired terrorism and violent extremism are expected to gain further prominence

Right-wing and left-wing terrorist activity is set to take on a more central role in EU's terrorist scenes. The current global landscape, influenced by multiple consecutive crises and ridden by uncertainty, combined with an all-round hyper connectivity, presents a fertile ground for radicalisation into terrorism and violent extremism. Accelerationism is already appealing to large audiences, and is likely to further expand with an increasing number of vulnerable individuals exposed to online propaganda.

Environmental extremism is likely to further propagate within an EU affected, directly and indirectly, by climate change. Given some already observed overlaps in narratives, environmental activists may be increasingly influenced by violent extremist messaging, particularly in the left-wing and anarchist scenes. Similarly, violent extremists may exploit and infiltrate environmental protests to enact their agendas and may recruit new followers among activists with similar environmental grievances.

Geo-political developments outside the EU

Emerging and long-lasting conflicts, be it in the EU's immediate neighbourhood or anywhere on the global theatre, will continue to impact terrorism and violent extremism in EU countries.

Terrorists will continue to exploit instability and weak governance, in some countries in Africa, the Middle East and Central Asia, and in other conflict zones, to fuel their narratives and subsequently reach out to more supporters, as well as to strengthen their capabilities. Increased operational capabilities of terrorist organisations based outside of the EU may result in increased capacity to orchestrate attacks and terrorist activities in Member States, and to recruit new followers here.

Disinformation and distorted narratives associated with the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine are likely to be used by terrorists and violent extremists to further polarise societies, and may also fuel terrorist propaganda and attract new followers. Coordinated disinformation campaigns such as the ones carried out by pro-Russian actors are expected not only to provide a large pool of divisive ideas that can be easily exploited in terrorist propaganda, but may also deliver a model for terrorist organisations aiming to improve their media strategies. As seen in past conflicts, weapons and explosives diverted from battlefields may be traded to terrorist and violent extremist actors by firearms traffickers.

The online environment and emerging technologies

The online environment acts as a key medium for terrorist propaganda, and law enforcement agencies are observing a diversification of themes in online discussions that are taken over into terrorist narratives. This further lowers the threshold for entering the world of violent extremism and terrorism, broadens the range of individuals that can easily become exposed to radicalisation, and increases the volatility and unpredictability of the violent extremist and terrorist scene. Moreover, the same online environment ensures the endurance of propaganda material, which remains accessible to potential new recruits.

Emerging online mediums, such as the metaverse, might be utilised for the dissemination of propaganda, recruitment and the coordination of terrorist and violent extremist activities. A similar development might be observed with open source decentralised platforms, as these are becoming more popular among terrorists and violent extremists.

In the future, terrorists may display increasing interest in technologically enhanced or enabled weaponry. Such weapons are expected to become more accessible, traded anonymously online or provided by criminal actors. Drones and other types of unmanned devices and vehicles would allow terrorists to perpetrate attacks remotely, magnifying the impact. Unmanned vehicles can also be customised and used in combination with various weapons, potentially including radioactive or biological material. Inspired by narratives surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic and with upcoming breakthroughs in the realm of synthetic biology and biotechnology, a shift to bio-terrorism may become more pronounced in the future.

Among many others, the Internet of Things (IoT) and artificial intelligence (AI), including in the form of deep fakes, augmented reality and conversational AI, are facets of technology that are expected to be used more often by terrorists, including those operating or planning attacks in the EU. Such tools can be used for enhancing the efficiency of propaganda and expediting radicalisation online, as well as for more practical tasks such as the remote operation of vehicles and weapons used in attacks or setting up virtual training camps, accessible to an unlimited audience worldwide.

Terrorists may increasingly use digital currencies and platforms for moving funds virtually. Already, there have been signals of NFTs being tested or used to obtain funds for terrorism financing, demonstrating that terrorists are exploring opportunities offered by digital and technological advancements. Terrorists may similarly use more sophisticated, multi-layered methods to collect, move and conceal the funds used to sustain their organisations and operations.

Coordinated cyber-attacks against targets may be employed as acts of terrorism, potentially perpetrated by cybercrime service providers on behalf of terrorist actors.

New technologies will be swiftly integrated in technophobic narratives propagated by terrorist and extremist actors and may fuel conspiracy theories.

Lone actors - acting alone but not unconnected

Lone actors are expected to continue to perpetrate most of the terrorist attacks in the EU. The range of ideas, messages and grievances that can trigger radicalisation is expected to become even broader in the background of social polarisation and recurrent economic crises. Against such backdrop and strongly enabled by the almost unconstrained access to online extremist and terrorist content, more vulnerable individuals without prior and direct affiliation to terrorism or violent extremism can be exposed to radical content and ideas. As such, the process of radicalisation itself is set to become more independent and decentralised from targeted recruitment or propaganda strategies enacted by established terrorist groups and organisations.

However, terrorist organisations may exploit the increasing fluidity of the radicalisation processes taking place especially in the online environment. As a countermeasure to deflect law enforcement investigations, terrorist networks may target vulnerable individuals and influence or manipulate them to commit terrorist acts as lone actors, seemingly alone, but in reality serving the objectives of the larger networks.

ANNEXES

Amendments to national legislation on terrorism in 2022

This annex contains information on amendments to national legislation on terrorism in 2022, as reported to Eurojust.

Austria

With the Federal Law on Counter Terrorism (Federal Law Gazette I 159/2021), several provisions of the Austrian Criminal Code were amended with the aim of improving the prevention and combating of terrorism: the implementation of judicial supervision in criminal cases involving hostility to the state and terrorism as well as genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes (§52b of the Austrian Criminal Code) entered into force on 1 January 2022 and also applies to offences committed before 1 January 2022, provided that the conditional release is pronounced after 31 December 2021.

This provision states in its essence that:

- if an offender is conditionally released from either a custodial sentence for (among others) a terrorist offence or from a preventive measure involving deprivation of liberty for (among others) a terrorist act, the court shall order judicial supervision for the duration of the probationary period insofar as the monitoring of the conduct of the offender is necessary or expedient to prevent the offender from committing further such acts,
- at specifically stated times during the judicial supervision the court shall convene a case conference by involving specifically named institutions and organisational units to assess the behaviour of the offender during judicial supervision and to determine those measures that serve to ensure compliance with instructions, as well as to deter the convicted person from committing criminal offences.

The offender may under specific circumstances be instructed to carry at all times during judicial supervision the means appropriate and technically suitable for electronic surveillance, insofar as electronic surveillance is absolutely necessary to ensure conduct in accordance with instructions and if the offender has given his consent.

Finland

The Finnish Criminal Code was amended in 2022 to include the management of matters, which are very important for the activities of a terrorist group, among the acts contributing to the activities of a terrorist group set out in Section 4 of Chapter 34a (Terrorist offences). Penalties between 4 months and 8 years' imprisonment are envisaged unless the act is punishable under other sections of this Chapter or unless an equally or more severe punishment for the act is provided elsewhere by law. Furthermore, a new Section 5e was added to Chapter 34a to criminalise public solicitation related to terrorist offences. According to the new provision, a person who, using the mass media or publicly in a crowd or in a writing or other presentation brought to public attention, solicits or incites to recruit to a terrorist group or to commit a crime punishable under this Chapter, in such a way that the solicitation or incitement is likely to lead to recruitment or to the commission of a

terrorist offence, shall be sentenced to a fine or imprisonment for a maximum of 2 years. If the solicitation or incitement leads to a crime punishable under this Chapter or to a punishable attempt to commit such a crime, the provisions of Chapter 5 on complicity in a crime shall apply. Section 5 (Financing of terrorism) and Section 5c (Travelling for the purpose of committing a terrorist offence) were also amended to include public solicitation related to terrorist offences.

Greece

Greek legislation regarding the prevention and punishment of crimes and acts of terrorism was amended in 2022 in order to criminalise any kind of instigation of terrorism and counteract online content that forms public instigation of terrorism, in accordance with Directive (EU) 2017/541 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 March 2017 on combating terrorism. More specifically, Article 187A(4) and (6) of the Greek Penal Code were amended.

Italy

A new regulation concerning the functioning of the Italian body in charge of the implementation of UN and EU sanctions (Comitato di Sicurezza Finanziaria) was adopted by virtue of Decree No 59 of 22 April 2022.

Lithuania

In October 2022, three terrorism-related articles of the Lithuanian Criminal Code were amended. Article 250 (Act of terrorism) now also penalises the infliction of physical pain for terrorist purposes. Furthermore, the hijacking of public and freight vehicles, other than aircraft, vessels or fixed platforms on the continental shelf, was included among the offences set out in Article 251. Article 252 (Hostage taking) was amended to add terrorist purposes and remove the reference to demands to an international public organisation, the State or an institution thereof to perform or abstain from performing an action.

Sweden

The former Act on Criminal Responsibility for Terrorist Offences, the Financing Act and the Recruitment Act were replaced on 1 July 2022 by a single new act, the Terrorist Offences Act (2022:666), that regulates criminal responsibility for terrorist offences, participation in a terrorist organisation, financing of terrorism, public provocation to commit a terrorist act, recruitment for terrorism, training for terrorism and travel for the purpose of terrorism. It contains definitions of ‘terrorist organisations’ and provisions on aggravating circumstances, confiscation and seizure of money.

The Terrorist Offences Act (2022:666) includes a new provision penalising a person who takes part in activities of a terrorist organisation in a way that is liable to promote, strengthen or support the terrorist organisation. A penalty of up to 4 years is envisaged for the offence. If the nature of the offence is very serious, the penalty should be imprisonment for between 2 and 8 years. When assessing whether an offence is gross, particular consideration is given to whether the perpetrator took a central role in the terrorist organisation, whether the act contributed in a substantial way to the organisation’s ability to commit terrorist offences or whether the act was

otherwise of a particularly dangerous nature. If the act means that the perpetrator led the terrorist organisation, the penalty should be imprisonment for between 2 and 15 years.

The provision also includes an exception to the effect that an act does not constitute an offence if it was justifiable in view of the circumstances. This means that certain acts that appear objectively to be participation are not punishable, e.g. certain journalistic methods (e.g. undercover journalism), situations in which there is no alternative to activities that objectively support a terrorist organisation, and health care conducted in accordance with international humanitarian law.

An expansion of criminal liability is also proposed for several other offences linked to terrorism on account of the offence of participation. It should be punishable to publicly encourage and recruit to participation and also to travel abroad with the intention of participating in a terrorist organisation. Financing of the participation in a terrorist organisation, the public encouragement of and recruitment for participation and the undertaking of a trip abroad for the purpose of participating in a terrorist organisation should also be punishable.

The provision on terrorist offences no longer contains a list of what offences can be considered terrorist offences. Instead, it should be possible to consider any offence under Swedish law a terrorist offence, provided the objective and any of the subjective criteria are met.

For some offences, the scales of penalties have become more severe. The penalty for collaboration with a terrorist organisation is imprisonment for up to 4 years. If the nature of the offence is very serious, the penalty is imprisonment for between 1 year and 6 months and 7 years. The penalty for the offences of financing of terrorism, public provocation to commit a terrorist act, recruitment for terrorism and training for terrorism is imprisonment of up to 3 years. If the nature of the offence is very serious, the penalty is imprisonment of between 1 and 6 years.

Universal jurisdiction is prescribed for all offences in the new act. All but minor terrorist offences are exempt from the statute of limitations.

Terrorist attacks in 2022

Terrorist attacks in 2022 in the EU, as reported to Europol by Member States, per type of terrorism.

MEMBER STATE	JIHADIST	RIGHT-WING	LEFT-WING AND ANARCHIST	ETHNO-NATIONALIST AND SEPARATIST	OTHER	NOT SPECIFIED	TOTAL
Belgium	2		1				3
France	4	2					6
Germany		1					1
Greece			4				4
Italy			12				12
Slovakia		1					1
Spain			1				1
TOTAL	6	4	18		0	0	28

Terrorist attacks in 2022 in the EU, as reported to Europol by Member States, per type of terrorism and type of attack (completed, failed, foiled).

CO = Completed, FA=Failed, FO = Foiled

MEMBER STATE	JIHADIST			RIGHT-WING			LEFT-WING AND ANARCHIST			ETHNO-NATIONALIST AND SEPARATIST	OTHER	NOT SPECIFIED	TOTAL
	CO	FA	FO	CO	FA	FO	CO	FA	FO				
Belgium	1		1				1					3	
France	1		3			2						6	
Germany						1						1	
Greece							3		1			4	
Italy							8	3	1			12	
Slovakia				1								1	
Spain							1					1	
TOTAL	2		4	1		3	13	3	2	0	0	28	

Arrests for terrorist offences in 2022

Arrests for terrorist offences, carried out in 2022 in the Member States, as reported to Europol.

MEMBER STATE	JIHADIST	RIGHT-WING	LEFT-WING AND ANARCHIST	ETHNO-NATIONALIST AND SEPARATIST	OTHER	NOT SPECIFIED	TOTAL
Austria	16	1					17
Belgium	22		1				23
Bulgaria	1						1
Denmark	4	2			1		7
Finland	1						1
France	93	16					109
Germany	30	11	3	4	25	2	75
Greece			3				3
Ireland	4	4		11			19
Italy	21	6	12	2		4	45
The Netherlands	21	3					24
Portugal	1						1
Romania	4						4
Slovakia		1					1
Spain	46	1		1			48
Sweden	2						2
TOTAL	266	45	19	18	26	6	380

Convictions and penalties

Concluded court proceedings (convictions and acquittals) for terrorist offences per Member State in 2020, 2021 and 2022, as reported to Eurojust⁵⁶⁵⁷.

MEMBER STATE	2020	2021	2022
Austria	20	37	48
Belgium	52	107	81
Bulgaria	2	1	
Czechia	2		
Denmark	4	5	8
Finland	2		
France	155	107	110
Germany	67	55	54
Greece	12	4	1
Hungary	4	10	26
Italy	42	10	21
Latvia		1	1
Lithuania	1		
Malta	1		
The Netherlands	20	35	26
Portugal	2		2
Romania	3		2
Slovakia			1
Spain	32	51	42
Sweden	1		4
TOTAL	422	423	427

⁵⁶ The data for the previous years corresponds to the data reported in the respective TE-SAT reports.

⁵⁷ Eurojust received contributions containing information on terrorism-related convictions and acquittals in 2022 from the following EU Member States: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, the Netherlands, Romania, Portugal, Slovakia, Spain and Sweden. The data for France includes judgments of the Paris Criminal Court and the Paris Juvenile Court from the 1st half of 2022, and judgments of the Paris Court of Assizes. In Lithuania, proceedings against two individuals were dismissed due to the expiration of the statute of limitations. These proceedings are not included in the number of convictions and acquittals for terrorist offences.

Convictions and acquittals in 2022 per Member State and type of terrorism, as reported to Eurojust.

MEMBER STATE	JIHADIST	RIGHT - WING	LEFT-WING AND ANARCHIST	ETHNO-NATIONALIST AND SEPARATIST	OTHER/NOT SPECIFIED	TOTAL
Austria	47				1	48
Belgium	78				3	81
Denmark	8					8
France	100	2		8		110
Germany	40	4		8	2	54
Greece	1					1
Hungary		14			12	26
Italy	17	1	1		2	21
Latvia					1	1
The Netherlands	23	1			2	26
Portugal	2					2
Romania	2					2
Slovakia		1				1
Spain	27			15		42
Sweden	3				1	4
TOTAL	348	23	1	31	24	427

Number of convictions and acquittals per Member State in 2022, as reported to Eurojust⁵⁸.

MEMBER STATE	CONVICTIONS	ACQUITTALS	TOTAL	ACQUITTALS IN %
Austria	33	15	48	31 %
Belgium	67	14	81	17 %
Denmark	6	2	8	25 %
France	103	7	110	6 %
Germany	54		54	0 %
Greece	1		1	0 %
Hungary	25	1	26	4 %
Italy	20	1	21	5 %
Latvia	1		1	0 %
The Netherlands	20	6	26	23 %
Portugal	2		2	0 %
Romania	2		2	0 %
Slovakia	1		1	0 %
Spain	21	21	42	50 %
Sweden	4		4	0 %

⁵⁸ The number of convictions in the Netherlands includes two cases in which the court ruled that the defendants committed the offence but were declared not punishable.

Europol counter terrorism activities

First-line investigative support: the European Counter Terrorism Centre

In support of Member States' fight against terrorism, the European Counter Terrorism Centre (ECTC) was established at Europol in early 2016, ensuring a coherent and comprehensive response to the constantly changing terrorism threat in the EU. To enhance the capabilities of the EU counter terrorism (CT) authorities, the ECTC builds on already existing tools at Europol and also develops new ones to address the emerging needs of its stakeholders. The ECTC's established counter terrorism networks also facilitate the exchange of knowledge and best practices, aiding competent authorities in their fight against terrorism.

Providing effective support to Member States' CT authorities is the main task of ECTC. In order to do so, the ECTC has developed a four-pillar approach:

- ▶ Facilitation of secure information exchange between the ECTC and competent authorities from Member States as well as Third Parties;
- ▶ Facilitation of cross-border cooperation and provision of coordination, in-house expertise as well as operational and analytical support to investigations in Member States;
- ▶ Addressing the dissemination of terrorist and violent extremist propaganda and the use of social media for radicalisation purposes;
- ▶ Central strategic support capability to identify European-wide counter terrorism implications and promote outreach with relevant partners.

Facilitation of secure information exchange between the ECTC and competent authorities from Member States and third parties

The main task of the ECTC is to facilitate counter terrorism information exchange among law enforcement authorities from all Member States as well as Third Parties.

This information exchange is facilitated via Europol's sharing platform which ensures secure transmission of the relevant information among the parties connected.

Facilitation of cross-border cooperation and provision of coordination and in-house expertise, as well as operational and analytical support to investigations in Member States

The ECTC has developed and offers custom-made support to Member States' investigations with a diverse set of services and products.

The dedicated teams of CT specialists and analysts within ECTC deliver operational analysis in support of the investigations conducted by the competent authorities of the Member States and Third Party countries, harnessing facial recognition technology and specific data analysis techniques, such as link analysis, social network analysis, geospatial analysis and timeline analysis. The ECTC also utilises the Terrorist Finance Tracking Programme (TFTP) for the broader purposes of detecting terrorism financing, tracking terrorist money flows and assisting in efforts to uncover terrorist cells.

Upon request from the competent authorities in the Member States, the ECTC can deploy a multi-disciplinary team to provide on-the-spot operational support in terrorism investigations. The deployed team of CT experts delivers tailor-made services, including criminal analysis, on-the-spot technical support (e.g. digital forensics and face recognition exploitation), chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear (CBRN) and explosives expertise, financial or open source intelligence and expertise on propaganda. ECTC experts can also be deployed during action days or in the course of major international events.

The ECTC also provides support to Member States' online investigations, in order to trigger new leads based on the information retrieved from the online communications of suspects and open sources.

The Shaping Internet Research Investigations Unified System (SIRIUS) Project

The SIRIUS project aims to address the complexity of cross-border access to electronic evidence, both from a legal and an operational point of view. With online service providers (OSPs) frequently based in non-EU jurisdictions, their fragmented policies as well as lengthy and cumbersome legal procedures to access data owned by such providers, make it harder for competent authorities in the EU to make progress in criminal investigations. To best respond to this situation, the judicial component of the project was strengthened by signing a new contribution agreement between Europol, Eurojust and the European Commission at the end of 2020, making funding available until mid-2024.

The restricted SIRIUS platform on the Europol Platform for Experts (EPE) boasts more than 7 000 members from all Member States and over 15 Third Parties with operational agreements for Europol-related activities, such as the SIRIUS Programme for OSPs, which aims to assist, on a voluntary basis, small and medium OSPs that do not have a law enforcement response policy in place. Moreover, a dedicated Open SIRIUS platform was set up on the EPE to share general and practical resources on e-evidence with OSPs. The ambition is to further solidify SIRIUS' position as an internationally acknowledged platform for knowledge and expertise sharing on digital cross-border investigations, and in particular on formal processes (i.e. mutual legal assistance (MLA) Treaties between the EU and Third Parties), voluntary cooperation (requests originating from the EU directly submitted to foreign-based OSPs) and legislative developments (i.e. EU e-evidence legislation).

CBRN-E support

In order to assist Member States in developing their capacity to prevent and respond to the threats posed by CBRN and explosives incidents, the ECTC works to promote activities, trainings, and conferences. These activities are jointly organised with national competent authorities from EU Member States and Third Parties, the European Commission, and other relevant international organisations. The team also acts as a secretariat for the European Explosives Ordnance Disposal Network (EODN).

ECTC's CBRN & Explosives Team monitors and identifies new trends and threats related to explosives and improvised explosives devices. In addition, the team conducts technical analysis on bomb-making processes and illicit use of explosives to provide operational support to ongoing investigations. In parallel, the Team aims to deliver timely and relevant expertise to Europol's partners on CBRN topics.

CT JLT

The Counter Terrorism Joint Liaison Team (CT JLT), created in 2016, comprises CT experts from Member States and Third Party countries with operational agreements and meets at the Europol premises on a weekly basis. The CT JLT facilitates engagement and cooperation on CT-related matters and reinforces the links between ECTC and the CT units in Member States and Third Parties with operational agreements. The CT JLT provides a trusted environment, in which information can be shared swiftly, securely and efficiently.

Guest Officers

Europol deploys short-term seconded national experts ('guest officers') to specific hotspots, in order to support the detection of returning FTFs or the infiltration of foreign members of terrorist organisations and other criminals into the EU.

Cooperation with EC3

Through the ECTC, CT units in Member States and Third Party countries can access the expertise of the European Cyber Crime Centre (EC3) and receive support for their investigations in cases where cybercrime and terrorism converge.

Addressing the dissemination of terrorist and violent extremist propaganda and the use of social media for radicalisation purposes

The EU Internet Referral Unit (EU IRU), as an integral part of the ECTC, coordinates EU efforts to address the dissemination of online terrorist propaganda, including through the organisation of joint Referral Action Days (RADs). The unit delivers operational support to CT cases with an online component and develops tools and techniques to identify and counter terrorist abuse of the internet. The EU IRU strategy in the field of prevention continues to focus on the close engagement with Member States and OSPs to exchange best practices and expertise, and enhance the streamlining of the referral processes. In addition, the EU IRU makes use of specialised linguistic and subject matter expertise to detect threats and claims of responsibility for attacks targeting EU and non-EU countries. The unit also collects new propaganda content for referral to OSPs with a request for voluntary review against their terms of reference. Terrorist propaganda releases are also exploited for the purpose of strategic analysis.

Furthermore, the EU IRU works in close cooperation with Member States and the European Commission for the development of the EU platform for the takedown of illegal content online (Plateforme Européenne de Retraits de Contenu Illégaux sur Internet - PERCI), the proposed technical solution to facilitate the implementation of (EU) 2021/784 regulation addressing the dissemination of terrorist content online. PERCI will coordinate the issuing of referrals and the transmission of removal orders to hosting service providers while safeguarding fundamental rights and freedoms.

Central strategic support capabilities to identify European-wide counter terrorism implications and promote outreach with relevant (international) partners

In cooperation with Europol's strategic analysis capabilities, the ECTC experts produce strategic analysis reports on all terrorism phenomena with the aim of providing an insight and a better understanding of current and emerging terrorist threats. This enables decision-making at strategic and policy level and sets the direction for tactical and operational actions.

The ECTC has established a wide network of partners to discuss new developments in terrorism and to exchange best practices in countering terrorist threats, assuring the provision of the best policy recommendations.

The ECTC also recognises that academic research on issues relevant for CT can provide important benefits for law enforcement strategies and practices. For this purpose, the ECTC maintains the ECTC Advisory Network on terrorism and propaganda, whose annual conference serves as a platform to enable direct contact and exchange between the two areas.

Methodology

The TE-SAT is a situational strategic report that describes the terrorism situation in the EU. It is, however, not a threat assessment that aims at mapping and ranking current and future threats. The TE-SAT does not seek to analyse the root causes of terrorism, neither does it attempt to assess the impact or effectiveness of CT policies and law enforcement measures taken, although it can serve to illustrate such elements.

While the primary scope of the TE-SAT focuses on terrorism, the report presents specific violent extremist acts and activities, where relevant and available and as reported by Member States, for contextualisation and to provide a more comprehensive picture of the terrorism situation. For the same purposes, Member States are also asked to report qualitative information on hateful narratives that have been observed to play a role in (inciting) terrorist violence. By means of horizontal scanning, where information available allows for such an assessment, the report also reflects on wider developments that have affected the EU terrorism landscape, or may affect it in the future.

The TE-SAT is based on quantitative and qualitative contributions provided by Member States, which are complemented by in-house data and expertise on terrorism, as well as by open source information. Based on quantitative contributions provided by Member States, the TE-SAT presents a comprehensive overview of figures related to terrorist attacks and arrests as recorded in the reporting period, which is 1 January to 31 December of the year preceding its production and dissemination. Europol's partner countries and agencies contribute to the report, providing qualitative input to complete the situational overview of the terrorism landscape in the EU. Furthermore, Eurojust complements the situational picture with additional data on convictions and penalties for terrorism and terrorism-related offences.

The TE-SAT has been produced by Europol in consultation with the TE-SAT Advisory Board, which is made up of representatives of the past, present and future Presidencies of the Council of the EU (the 'troika'), along with permanent members: representatives from France and Spain, the EU Commission (DG HOME), the EU Intelligence and Situation Centre (EU INTCEN), the EU Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation (Eurojust), the office of the EU Counter Terrorism Coordinator (EU CTC), and Europol.

The TE-SAT is presented every year in the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE) of the European Parliament. The report is also published on Europol's website to inform the wider public⁵⁹. The TE-SAT only exists as public version; no restricted version of the document is produced.

⁵⁹ Europol's 2006 proposal for the TE-SAT, which was approved by the EU Council, states that the report is 'intended to inform the European Parliament of the phenomenon of terrorism in the EU. It will also be forwarded to the Council and can be used to inform the public'. 'Europol's Proposal for the New TE-SAT', EU Council 8196/06 EUROPOL 25 ENFOPOL 25 REV2, 18.5.2006.; <https://www.europol.europa.eu/activities-services/main-reports/eu-terrorism-situation-and-trend-report>.

Types of terrorism

According to EU Directive 2017/541, terrorist attacks are criminal offences carried out with the purpose of intimidating a population or trying to coerce a government or international organisation.

The TE-SAT distinguishes between the following types of terrorism, based on ideological preferences⁶⁰:

- ▶ jihadist terrorism;
- ▶ right-wing terrorism;
- ▶ left-wing and anarchist terrorism;
- ▶ ethno-nationalist and separatist terrorism;
- ▶ other forms of terrorism.

While some groups operate off a mixture of motivating ideologies, usually one ideology or motivation dominates. Categories are not necessarily mutually exclusive.

At times, it remains challenging to attribute some incidents and arrests to a particular type of terrorism, e.g. unclaimed incidents or arrests for support activities. Such classifications might become clearer in the judicial phase, but they are beyond the scope of the TE-SAT data collection. As a result, a share of attacks and arrests may remain unattributed to specific types of terrorism and are thus categorised in the statistics as 'not specified'.

Other types of terrorism

The TE-SAT may also tackle other types of terrorism that encompass acts of terrorism motivated by ideologies that do not fall under the jihadist, right-wing, left-wing and anarchist, ethno-nationalist and separatist spectrums.

Past issues of the TE-SAT referred to 'single-issue terrorism'. Single-issue extremist and terrorist groups were described as using criminal means to change a specific policy or practice, as opposed to replacing the entire political, social and economic system in a society. The groups within this category were said to be concerned, for example, with animal rights, environmental protection or anti-abortion campaigns. Examples of groups in this category were the Earth Liberation Front (ELF) and the Animal Liberation Front (ALF). In recent years, however, Member States have contributed limited data under this category and incidents classified as single-issue terrorism were not specific enough to justify a separate category. In addition, right-wing and left-wing extremists seem to try to co-opt violent animal rights and environmental movements, which hitherto were linked to single issue extremism. Therefore, such incidents and arrests will be treated henceforth under 'other types of terrorism'.

Other types of terrorism might also include offences committed by groups like Hezbollah, which are inspired by ideologies making reference to Islam without falling under the definition of jihadism used in the TE-SAT.

⁶⁰ The categorisation of the different types of terrorism based on ideology, and their respective definitions, serve the needs of the TE-SAT to classify and analyse information from EU Member States' counter terrorism investigations, without having any legal or formal value.

Terrorism and extremism

The TE-SAT primarily focuses on presenting the situation on terrorism in the EU, for which purpose Member States are contributing quantitative information solely on terrorist attacks and arrests, as per the legislative provisions of each contributing country.

Nevertheless, in order to deliver a more comprehensive picture on terrorism in the EU, Member States and Third Party countries are also requested to contribute qualitative information not only on terrorist attacks and arrests, but also on violent extremist acts and activities, and on non-violent extremist acts and hateful narratives.

Violent extremist acts refer to activities or incidents which are not categorised as terrorist under national legislation, if such acts aim to intimidate a population or compel a government, or have the potential to seriously destabilise or destroy the fundamental political, constitutional, economic or social structures of a country.

Non-violent extremist acts, including hateful narratives, are relevant for the TE-SAT if they have the potential to incite acts of terrorism or violent extremism.

ACRONYMS

5G	Fifth generation mobile network standard
ACLED	Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project
AI	Artificial Intelligence
ALF	Animal Liberation Front
AMISOM	Africa Union Mission in Somalia
ANTIFA	Anti-fascist movement
AQAP	al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula
AQIM	al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb
AswJ	Ahlu-Sunna wal-Jama'a 'Adherents to the Sunnah and the community'
ATMIS	African Union Transitional Mission in Somalia
AWD	Atomwaffen Division 'Nuclear Weapons Division'
BKA	Bundeskriminalamt
BR	Brigate Rosse 'Red Brigades'
CBRN	Chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear
CT	Counter terrorism
CT JLT	Counter Terrorism Joint Liaison Team
DHKP-C	Devrimci Halk Kurtuluş Partisi-Cephesi 'Revolutionary People's Liberation Party-Front'
DR	Dissident Republican
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
DIY	Do-it-yourself
EC3	European Cybercrime Centre
ECTC	European Counter Terrorism Centre
EEODN	European Explosive Ordnance Disposal Network
ELF	Earth Liberation Front
EPE	Europol Platform of Experts
ETA	Euskadi ta Askatasuna 'Basque Fatherland and Liberty'
EU	European Union

EU IRU	EU Internet Referral Unit
EU PERCI	EU Platform to Combat Illicit Content Online
FAI/FRI	Federazione Anarchica Informale/Fronte Rivoluzionario Internazionale 'Informal Anarchist Federation/International Revolutionary Front'
FKD	Feuerkrieg Division 'Fire War Division'
FTF	Foreign terrorist fighter
HME	Homemade explosives
HSM	Harakat al-Shabab al-Mujahidin 'Mujahid Youth Movement', also known as al-Shabaab
HTS	Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham 'Levant Liberation Committee'
ICJ	International Court of Justice
IED	Improvised explosive device
IID	Improvised incendiary device
incel	Involuntary celibate
IoT	Internet of Things
IRGC	Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps
IS	Self-proclaimed Islamic State terrorist group also referred to as Daesh, Da'ish, ISIS or ISIL (after the Arabic name al-dawla al-Islamiyya fi al-Iraq wal-Sham, 'Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant')
ISCAP	Islamic State Central Africa Province
ISGS	Islamic State in the Greater Sahara
ISKP	Islamic State Khorasan Province
ISWAP	Islamic State West Africa Province
IVTS	Informal value transfer systems
JNIM	Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin 'Group in support of Islam and Muslims'
LGBTQ+	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer +
LNA	Libyan National Army
LTTE	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
MLA	Mutual legal assistance
MENA	Middle East and North Africa

MINUSMA	The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NFT	Non-Fungible Token
NIRA	New Irish Republican Army
OSP	Online service provider
P2P	Peer-to-peer
PKK	Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê 'Kurdistan Workers' Party'
RAD	Referral Action Days
RAF	Rote Armee Fraktion
SDF	Syrian Democratic Forces
SIRIUS	Shaping Internet Research Investigations Unified System
TE-SAT	EU Terrorism Situation and Trend Report
TFTP	Terrorist Finance Tracking Programme
THD	Tanzim Hurras al-Din 'Guardians of the Religion Organisation'
UK	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
USA	United States of America
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
VA	Virtual assests
VASP	Virtual assets service providers
YPG	Yekineyên Parastina Gel 'People's Protection Units'



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