
ReaCT2021 Report: data on terrorism in Europe

“436 terrorist attacks, including failed and foiled ones, were recorded on European soil from 2017 to 2019 (895 in the 2014-2017 period): 63% were attributed to separatist and ethno-nationalist groups: 16% to radical leftist and anarchist groups (on the increase); 2.8% to far right groups (decreasing from 2019); while 18% were jihadist.” These are some of the figures recorded in the second report of the Observatory on Radicalisation and Counter-Terrorism (React2021), presented online today - under the auspices of the Ministry of Defence - on the website and social media pages of "Formiche" journal. ReaCT Observatory, via the START InSight's database - Strategic Analysts and Research Team - has recorded and analysed all incidents connected with jihadist violence in Europe, from 2004 to date. The research and analysis effort is featured in the second edition of the Report, consisting of 13 analytical contributions, that range from the presentation of data and profiles of jihadist terrorists in Europe, to online propaganda during COVID-19 emergency, from radicalisation to foreign fighters, from right-wing extremism and its relations with Islamist extremism to links between terrorism and immigration and phenomena such as QAnon.



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[. START InSight Director, ReaCT – “The long wave of terrorism which hit Europe following the emergence of the "Islamic State" phenomenon recorded 146 jihadist attacks from 2014 to 2020: 189 terrorists took part in these attacks \(59 among them died in action\); 406 people lost their lives; 2,421 were injured.” In 2020, a total of 25 events took place in Europe compared to 19 in the previous year, with a substantial rise in the ‘emulative effect’, i.e. inspired or triggered by a main event in the previous days: “these represent 48% of the total attacks in 2020 \(up from 21% in 2019\). 2020 was characterized by a progressive decrease in structured and coordinated actions; the now prevailing individual, unorganized, often improvised and unsuccessful actions have taken over the European urban “battlefield.” **Personal data of terrorists.** 96% are male attackers , with a median age of 26, although in 2020 there were 3 events conducted by women \(12% of the total in 2020\). Cases of recidivism are on the rise: almost three out of 10 in 2020. “We saw an increase in actions carried out by terrorists already known to intelligence services: 54% of the total in 2020, as well as individuals already convicted and detained – Bertolotti pointed out -. The latter increased from 12% in 2017 to 28% in 2018 , 23% in 2019 up to 33% in 2020. “This evidence confirms the hypothesis that prisons can be conducive to radicalization.” Furthermore, the Report highlights *“the social danger of convicted individuals who do not abandon their violent intent; this evidence suggests a potential increase in terrorist actions over the coming years, concurrently with the release of currently detained terrorists.”*](#)



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. The Report shows that the so-called “functional blockade” constitutes the most significant outcome for terrorism. This, Bartolotti explained, is the one which is obtained regardless of tactical success (death or destruction of a target) by impacting security forces’ operational activities, local communities, transport, urban mobility, emergency health services, hindering everyday life directly or indirectly. “Compared to a 34% of ‘success’ obtained by terrorists from 2004 onwards, terrorism has proven its ‘effectiveness’ by causing a ‘functional blockade’ in 82% of the cases (2014-2020) and in 92% of attacks in 2020. This is an impressive result, despite the attackers’ access to limited resources.” **Online propaganda and COVID-19 emergency.**

Identifying COVID-19 as a “soldier of Allah”

is the “aggressive narrative” of Islamic State propaganda during the COVID-19 emergency. Propaganda activities online, carried out already during the attacks in Paris, Nice and Vienna, Bertolotti said, identified the Coronavirus as an “ally set out to punish the ‘infidels’, above all the military and police forces.” **Other terrorisms: far-right, extreme left and the new QAnon phenomenon.** The Report delves into the strategies typical of far-right and extreme far-left environments. “Right-wing violent extremism, a phenomenon in expansion in the West – pointed out the director of ReaCT Observatory - appears to be acquiring a transnational character and has an emerging symbiotic, mutually reinforcing interdependent relationship with Islamist extremism. This interdependence poses additional threats to European security.” A further threat to democracy is QAnon, “a conspiracy theory movement active in more than 70 countries and that presents a high risk of radicalization in Europe. It should be closely monitored because of its potential for violent actions.”

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