

UNDER EMBARGO UNTIL 12 DECEMBER 2024 – 15:00 CET



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EUROPEAN UNION
**TERRORISM
SITUATION
AND TREND
REPORT**

2024

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FOREWORD

I am pleased to introduce this year's European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report, which has been produced by Europol in close cooperation with the EU Member States and the Agency's partners in fighting terrorism across the world.

The EU continues to face a complex set of terrorist threats, comprising both internal and external vectors. In today's changing world, terrorist actors continuously evolve, adapting their narratives, outreach and activities in response to the most recent geo-political and socioeconomic developments. They target their radicalisation and recruitment efforts specifically towards the most vulnerable strata of our society. These terrorist actors turn innovations in digitalisation and technology to their advantage.

Regional crises outside the EU have a significant impact on our societies, including terrorist and violent extremist manifestations in the Member States. The terrorist attack by Hamas against Israel on 7 October 2023 and the Israeli military response in Gaza created additional ripples in all violent extremist and terrorist ideological scenes. It has provided new motivation to terrorist actors to recruit, mobilise or build up their capacities, exploiting social grievances and rekindling hateful narratives against the Western world, minorities and ethnic groups.

Combined with socioeconomic conditions, terrorists and violent extremists operate nowadays in favourable conditions to spread their propaganda, broadening their reach and access to wider segments of society. The intentional involvement of young people by terrorist groups for the production of online propaganda is an increasing concern. Young people can make full use of the functionalities of online communication to expand terrorists' outreach, avoid content moderation and evade detection.

Artificial Intelligence and other technological innovations are being swiftly integrated into the toolbox used by terrorists and violent extremists to strengthen their messages and facilitate their operations. The galloping pace of innovation is bound to be further exploited by malicious actors aiming to undermine and weaken our societies.

This multifaceted threat presents a challenge to European and global law enforcement. Europol and its partners stand resolute to continue the fight against terrorism and violent extremism, to further strengthen partnerships and explore new pathways for innovation in counterterrorism.



Catherine De Bolle
Executive Director of Europol

INTRODUCTION

The European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report (EU TE-SAT) 2024 is a situational overview, presenting figures, major developments and trends in the terrorism landscape in the EU in 2023.

The report is based on qualitative and quantitative data provided by the Member States on terrorist attacks, arrests and convictions and penalties for terrorist offences. Additionally, Europol's cooperation partners provided valuable qualitative information and assessments, to facilitate reflection on developments beyond the EU that affect the security of the Union 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, which Member States² had an obligation to transpose into their national legislation by 8 September 2018, terrorist offences are criminal acts carried out with the aim of seriously intimidating a population, unduly compelling a government or international organisation to perform or abstain from performing any act, or seriously destabilising or destroying the fundamental political, constitutional, economic or social structures of a country or an international organisation. The EU TE-SAT identifies and elaborates on various forms of terrorism motivated by specific ideologies³. These include jihadist terrorism, right-wing terrorism, left-wing and anarchist terrorism, ethno-nationalist and separatist terrorism, and other forms of terrorism.

Notwithstanding the existence of different legislative frameworks at the national level, Directive (EU) 2017/541 establishes minimum EU rules concerning the definitions of offences and related sanctions in counter-terrorism and provides a harmonised definition of terrorist offences. On this basis, the EU TE-SAT provides statistical data on terrorist attacks, arrests and convictions in Member States. At a national level, the legislation pertaining to terrorism varies within the limits set by the aforementioned Directive, as Member States are afforded a certain degree of flexibility in their legislative processes. Consequently, the quantitative analysis presented in the EU TE-SAT reflects Member States' definitions of terrorist offences according to their national legislation. It should be noted that these definitions may be broader in scope than the definitions set out in Directive (EU) 2017/541, although they cannot have a narrower scope.

While the primary scope of the EU TE-SAT is to present the situational picture on terrorism, the report also presents specific violent extremist incidents, acts, activities and developments, reported by the Member States. While the quantitative overview of terrorist attacks, arrests, convictions and penalties does not include instances of violent extremism, the latter is included in the report for contextualisation purposes and to provide a more comprehensive picture of the security threats to the Union.

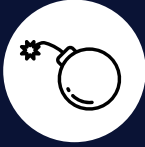
¹ Directive (EU) 2017/541 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 March 2017 on combating terrorism and replacing Council Framework Decision 2002/475/JHA and amending Council Decision 2005/671/JHA, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32017L0541>

² Not all Member States were obliged to transpose into their national legislation, Ireland and Denmark not due to respectively, Protocols 21 and 22 to the TEU and TFEU.

³ The categorisation of the different types of terrorism based on ideology, and their respective definitions, serve the needs of the EU TE-SAT to classify and analyse information from EU Member States' counter terrorism investigations, without having any legal or formal value.

KEY FINDINGS

Quantifying terrorism in the EU in 2023



A total of 120 terrorist attacks (98 completed, 9 failed and 13 foiled) were carried out in 7 EU Member States in 2023, an increase compared to previous years. The highest number of terrorist attacks were perpetrated by separatist terrorists (70, all completed), followed by left-wing and anarchist actors (32, of which 23 completed). There were 14 jihadist terrorist attacks of which 5 completed. Two right-wing terrorist attacks were foiled.



Jihadist terrorist attacks were the most lethal - resulting in six victims killed and twelve injured.



426 individuals were arrested for terrorist offences across 22 EU Member States. Most arrests were for offences related to jihadist terrorism (334), which also accounted for the overall increase in arrests compared to 2022.



Concluded court proceedings in 14 EU Member States resulted in 290 convictions and 68 acquittals for terrorist offences.

Focused insights per type of terrorism



Jihadist terrorism is a key security concern for the EU. In 2023, it had the most harmful direct impact on victims. Events both in the EU and beyond exacerbated the threat to the EU and provided a fertile ground for propaganda and radicalisation. The jihadist threat stems from a fragmented landscape of foreign terrorist groups, online networks and individual actors.



In the dynamic right-wing terrorist context, lone actors or small groups, often motivated by accelerationist ideas, pose the highest threat. Young right-wing terrorists and violent extremists are taking up a more active role as creators of propaganda, recruiters and organisers of attacks and active incitement. New right-wing violent extremist groups are emerging online and seeking to act in real life.



Left-wing and anarchist terrorist and violent extremist groups continued to coalesce around anti-state, anti-capitalism, anti-fascism, anti-racism, anti-militarism and climate-related narratives. Solidarity with imprisoned anarchists remained a strong catalyst for violent acts in a number of countries.



Ethno-nationalist and separatist terrorist groups remain active in the EU. The Fronte di Liberazione Naziunale Corsu (FLNC) and Ghjuventù clandestina Corsa (GcC) continued to perpetrate attacks in Corsica, France. The Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê (PKK), continued their fundraising, recruitment and propaganda activities in some EU Member States.

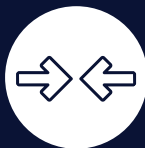


One attack categorised as other form of terrorism was foiled, and one failed. 27 arrests in the EU in 2023 pertained to other or not specified forms of terrorism, including the Reichsbürger movement with its anti-government and anti-system narratives.

Developments across the spectrum of terrorism and violent extremism in the EU



Economic, social and political developments create conditions that allow terrorist and violent extremist narratives and conspiracy theories to flourish and circulate. In today's multi-crisis world, characterised by uncertainty and volatility, more people become susceptible to adopting terrorist or violent extremist ideas, narratives or ideologies. Social media and end-to-end encrypted applications (E2EE) are misused to disseminate different narratives that often propose common objectives and antagonists.



In an already vulnerable global and regional environment, the October 2023 Hamas terrorist attack against Israel and the Israeli military response in Gaza have led to heightened societal tensions and a rise in anti-Semitic as well as anti-Muslim rhetoric. The polarising circumstances have been exploited by terrorist groups across the entire ideological spectrum to recruit new followers, spread propaganda, and inspire lone actor attacks.



In 2023, young adults as well as minors were involved in planning attacks, production of terrorist propaganda and incitement to violence. Some young individuals attracted by terrorist ideologies are engaging online and demonstrating a greater degree of ideological flexibility and willingness to resort to violence. Certain vulnerable youngsters are actively targeted for recruitment. Lone actors are not usually isolated but are often young individuals embedded in online communities that promote violence.



Terrorist and violent extremist actors have the capability to strategically integrate the most recent developments in digital technology, including artificial intelligence (AI), into their toolbox to spread propaganda, recruit, plan attacks, and evade detection by law enforcement. Large Language Models (LLMs) and deepfakes are exploited to create false identities, spread disinformation and bolster propaganda campaigns.



The intent among threat actors to acquire 3-D printed weapons has extended beyond the right-wing milieu. Individuals from a variety of ideological backgrounds are actively seeking online training material and instruction manuals that contain attack tactics and information on how to make weapons, drones, bombs or chemical weapons.

DEVELOPMENTS

Geopolitical developments in the Middle East

The 7 October 2023 terrorist attack launched by Hamas⁴ against Israel and the subsequent military response by Israel in Gaza has sparked a strong global response. The unprecedented scale of the attack against Israel and the high death toll among civilians in Gaza have provided a fertile ground for further radicalisation and a multiplication of calls for violence, recruitment and fundraising activities by terrorist groups.

The attack by Hamas was launched on the anniversary of the 1973 Yom Kippur War, and is the deadliest terrorist attack Israel has experienced on its soil since 1948.⁵ Also EU citizens were among those killed, taken hostage or missing. Hamas and its military wing Ezzedeen Al-Qassam Brigades (EQB) documented the terrorist attack on Israel and posted online videos and photos. The widespread distribution and reposting of official EQB propaganda videos and other amateur videos reached a large audience. Many jihadist groups around the globe sought to capitalise on the momentum, issuing public statements of support in the hope of attracting and mobilising followers. The crisis in Gaza also provided Hamas with funding opportunities, some of which are believed to have come from the EU. Donations were solicited through money transfer services, cryptocurrencies and Hawala networks.

The Hamas terrorist attack and Israeli military response highlighted several lines of convergence between supporters and sympathisers of the jihadist, right-wing and left-wing and anarchist terrorism and violent extremism scenes.

Online calls by jihadists to attack Jewish and Israeli interests, to avenge the death of Palestinians spread quickly. Posts by right-wing groups encouraged their supporters to join the 'holy war' to help 'annihilate the Jewish State', and some called for a 'White jihad now'. Some accelerationist channels exploited the unfolding situation in the Middle East to incite further violence, circulating IS and AQ memes and videos calling on followers to target Jewish communities around the world including in the EU. There were incitements to violence and threats against schools, synagogues, Israeli embassies, media-figures, and pro-Israel demonstrations. Tensions remain high between several communities in many Member States, with the polarisation especially reflected on social media and in a proliferation of anti-Semitic and anti-Muslim posts⁶.

In the wider regional context, concerns raised regarding a potential impact on the EU security linked to the increasingly active confrontation between Hezbollah and Israel. As the most important proxy in the Iranian affiliated network in the Middle East, the Lebanese Shia organisation appears to be recruiting proxy operatives from vulnerable segments of society and from within the organised crime milieu to pursue political objectives through violent attacks against Iran's enemies around the world, including on EU soil.

⁴Hamas is a Palestinian Sunni fundamentalist militant group designated as a terrorist organisation by the EU and the US. Since 2007, Hamas has been the de facto ruler of the Gaza Strip.

⁵United National Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), 'Hostilities in the Gaza Strip and Israel –reported impact: Day 156', 11 March 2024. Accessible at: <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/hostilities-gaza-strip-and-israel-reported-impact-day-156>

⁶Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD), 'Use of words, phrases and hashtags associated with anti-Muslim mobilisation surges amid Israel-Gaza conflict', 2 November 2023, accessible at: https://www.isdglobal.org/digital_dispatches/use-of-words-phrases-and-hashtags-associated-with-anti-muslim-mobilisation-surges-amid-israel-gaza-conflict/; ISD, '43-fold increase in anti-Muslim Youtube comments following Hamas October 7 attack', 19 December 2023, accessible at: https://www.isdglobal.org/digital_dispatches/43-fold-increase-in-anti-muslim-youtube-comments-following-hamas-october-7-attack/.

The targeting of youngsters raises concerns

In 2023, young adults and minors were involved in planning attacks, producing terrorist propaganda and inciting violence. This active involvement of young individuals in terrorism and violent extremism is a general trend across the entire ideological spectrum, and a growing concern related to their potential exploitation by terrorists.

In several investigations, some of those arrested were in contact with each other online and spent time on the same channels and messaging groups where they accessed propaganda, training material and other resources that can be used to plan and carry out an attack. Many of these (self)-radicalised individuals were not sponsored by any particular group, but were rather embedded within virtual online communities of like-minded individuals seeking to take action in real life.

Such online communities function particularly well as a breeding ground for young people's exposure to terrorism and violent extremism and their further radicalisation. Younger consumers are often attracted by the aesthetics of today's propaganda rather than its messages, which is leading to extremist views that lack clear ideological grounds, but have violence as their common denominator.

Terrorist and violent extremist groups of all ideologies strategically target young audiences. Young people are more susceptible to radicalisation, are more prone to take action and may receive lighter sentences if convicted of terrorism offences. The time between when these young individuals start consuming propaganda online and when they decide to participate in violent actions is getting shorter. Recognising that youngsters prefer short and quick information, terrorist and violent extremist groups have adapted their outreach techniques by integrating songs, images and video content.

Radicalised youngsters engaging online are also involved by terrorists and violent extremist groups in production and dissemination of propaganda material. These youngsters are able to increase their reach, avoid detection and evade content moderation, making full use of the functionalities of technology, in exchange for a sense of belonging. In the virtual environment, such individuals are more likely to have transnational contacts, which also poses additional challenges to Member States' ability to counter them.

Recurring themes

Economic, social and political developments create favourable conditions for terrorist and violent extremist narratives and conspiracy theories to flourish and spread. In this context, social media platforms and E2EE applications are misused to disseminate different narratives that often propose common objectives and antagonists. This environment makes it more likely that individuals consuming and propagating these narratives construct their own worldview using elements of different narratives and ideologies. Some of these worldviews are used to justify and promote violence.

Right-wing and jihadist discourses share common anti-LGBTQ+ and anti-government positions, as well as a desire to return to an idealised past. These common elements have been exploited by some neo-Nazi and neo-fascist accelerationist ideologues to promote the adoption of violent jihadist tactics and methods⁷, with several instances of right-wing violent extremists sympathising with or praising jihadist ideology.

The reverse dynamic has been largely absent, with rare instances of jihadists reciprocating admiration.⁸ However, the online activity of young jihadi-Salafists appears to indicate a potential further convergence, particularly around right-wing narratives that oppose progressive politics and a fascination with the extreme violence promoted by adherents of accelerationism.

In December 2023, Italian authorities placed a 22-year-old and a 20-year-old suspect in detention for incitement to commit terrorism. Law enforcement authorities identified the suspects through online monitoring, as they displayed strong signs of radicalisation and obsessively engaged in disseminating jihadist content with the purpose of proselytising. The two suspects were well integrated in several virtual communities, and they frequently posted apologetic content regarding various terrorist groups, including Al Qaeda (AQ), the Islamic State (IS) and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad. In addition to being radically anti-Shiite in nature, the content posted gradually became characterised by a peculiar form of 'ideological hybridisation', displaying a form of fascination for supremacist accelerationism.

Anti-government and anti-system narratives have been gaining momentum in some Member States and other European countries. Some of these involve the formation of movements militating for individual sovereignty or self-ownership, denying the legitimacy of authorities and governments. These narratives also often integrate conspiracy theories and disinformation or topics borrowed from other ideologies, particularly right-wing. Some of these groups accept or justify violence, while others have clearly demonstrated potential for violence or have engaged in violent activities against representatives of the state.

Links between terrorism and organised crime continued to be noted in the terrorism and violent extremism milieu, mostly as opportunistic individual connections - rather than systematic collaborations - with regards to funding, routes, weapons and services. The provision of violence-as-a-service is a threatening aspect of the potential intersection between the two environments, which concerns individual actors keen to be recruited by terrorists and organised crime networks to perform violent acts (especially targeting law enforcement, military personnel and public figures) in exchange for money.

⁷ Koch, A., Nahon, K., and Moghadam, A., 'White Jihad: How White Supremacists Adopt Jihadi Narratives, Aesthetics, and Tactics', *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 2023, p.1-25.

⁸ Argentino, M. A., Amarasingam, A., and Conley, E., "'One Struggle': Examining Narrative Syncretism between Accelerationists and Salafi Jihadists', *International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation*, 2022.

Emerging technologies

Terrorists and violent extremists remain adept at using certain technologies for communicating, networking and (re)circulating propaganda, as well as for training, procurement of logistics, financing, recruitment of new followers or fighters, incitement to violence and calls to mobilise and attack.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has also been embraced by some supporters of terrorism and violent extremism, who have integrated the use of generative AI and LLMs into their propaganda toolbox. Some right-wing actors are able to accelerate the spread of disinformation and hate speech online through the effective use of AI. Recent examples in the right-wing scene have involved AI-generated propaganda material and deepfakes⁹ containing racist or anti-Semitic messages, or attempting to bypass an AI model's ethical safeguards and spread prohibited information through coded effects applied to seemingly irrelevant content. As deepfakes can alter videos in real time¹⁰, there is a growing concern that livestreaming deepfakes could be used for terrorist purposes in the future to spread social alarm. AI has also been used to create fake identities and automated bots to manage chat groups.

Technology is also used as a countermeasure, particularly to shield communications and activities from detection. In addition to periodic device formatting, freely accessible E2EE applications, VPNs, the dark web and cryptographic applications are commonly used to enhance the privacy of communications. To attract younger audiences and counter content moderation and flagging, video content is increasingly used to spread subtle forms of propaganda, as it is easier to conceal and infiltrate in mainstream platforms than text or images. Social media algorithms continue to feed users content that is based on repeated behaviour and individual preferences, contributing to an echo chamber effect that attracts even younger consumers.

With the development of immersive technology, training camps could be offered in realistic, (re-)created virtual environments and scenarios¹¹, as in the metaverse, which has already been used by young individuals in the jihadist milieu to simulate attacks.

Investigations across Member States show a stable use of cryptocurrencies as a means of transfer for terrorism financing. However, a shift away from the use of Bitcoin towards stablecoins was observed.

⁹ Deep fakes are a form of synthetic media partially or entirely manipulated through artificial intelligence (AI) technologies and used in a malicious or disinformative manner [Nina Schick, "Introduction." Essay. In *Deepfakes: The Coming Infocalypse*, 10–11. New York, NY: Grand Central Pub, 2021]

¹⁰ "Facing Reality? Law Enforcement and the Challenge of Deepfakes." Europol Innovation Lab, 2022, accessible at https://www.europol.europa.eu/cms/sites/default/files/documents/Europol_Innovation_Lab_Facing_Reality_Law_Enforcement_And_The_Challenge_Of_Deepfakes.pdf.

¹¹ Europol (2022), *Policing in the metaverse: what law enforcement needs to know*, an observatory report from the Europol Innovation Lab, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, available at <https://www.europol.europa.eu/cms/sites/default/files/documents/Policing%20in%20the%20metaverse%20-%20what%20law%20enforcement%20needs%20to%20know.pdf>

TERRORISM IN EUROPE IN 2023: AN OVERVIEW

Terrorist attacks and arrests

120 completed, failed and foiled terrorist attacks in the EU, in 2023

98 completed attacks, 9 failed and 13 foiled

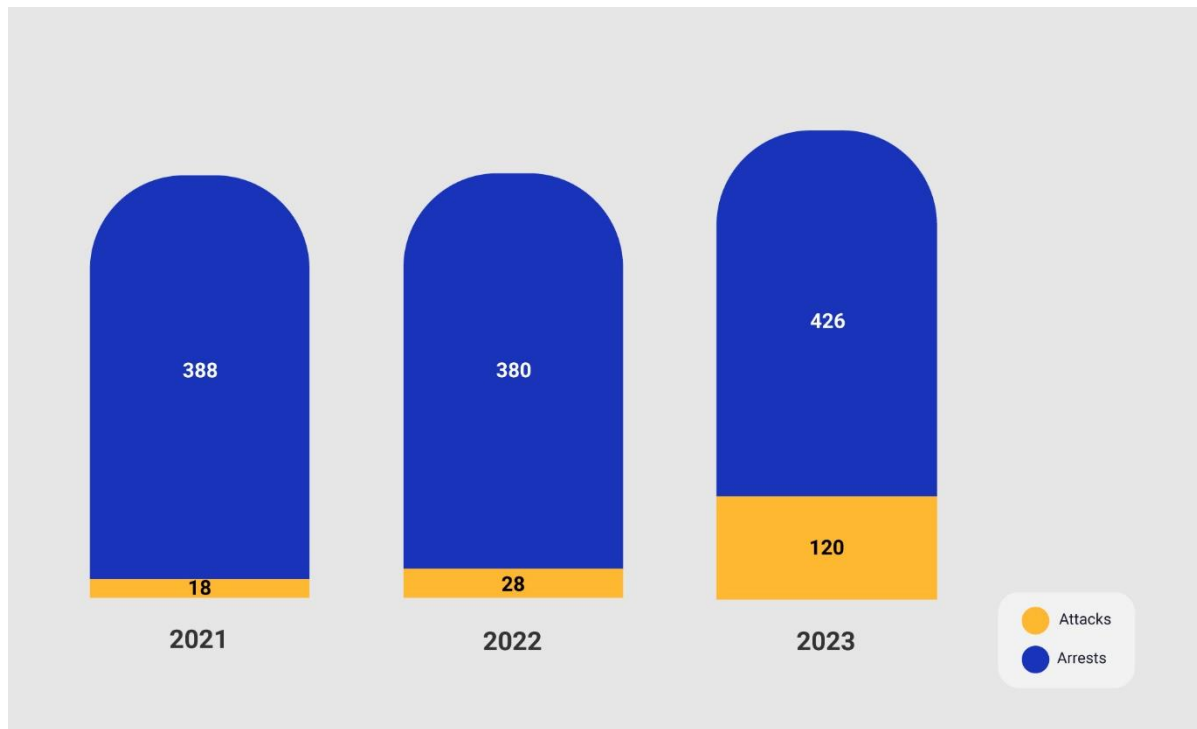
6 deaths and 12 injured as a result of the 5 completed jihadist attacks

Attacks

In 2023, 120 terrorist attacks were recorded in the EU. Of the 120 attacks, 98 were completed, 9 failed, and 13 were foiled. Most of the attacks took place in France (80) and Italy (30), followed by Germany (3), Spain (3), Belgium (2), Greece (1) and Luxembourg (1).

Terrorist attacks (completed, failed, foiled) and arrests for terrorist offences in the EU, 2021-2023

(Source: EU Member States' contributions to EU TE-SAT 2024)



This is an increase compared to 2022 (28 attacks) and 2021 (18 attacks).¹² Most of the attacks (70), all completed, were attributed to separatist terrorist groups in Corsica, France.

Thirty-two attacks were ascribed to left-wing and anarchist terrorism, 23 of which were completed, eight failed and one was foiled. Almost all the attacks took place in Italy, plus one failed attack in Greece and one foiled in Spain.

Fourteen jihadist terrorist attacks took place in the EU in 2023 (compared to six in 2022). Five were completed, two in France and one each in Belgium, Germany and Spain;

¹²France reported the 2021 and 2022 data on ethno-nationalist and separatist attacks in 2024; the data was not reflected in the TE-SAT 2022 and 2023 | 4 attacks were executed in France in 2021 and 22 in 2022.

nine were foiled. Jihadist terrorist attacks were the most lethal, with six persons killed and 12 injured.

Two right-wing attacks (foiled) were reported by Luxembourg and France, representing a drop in the number of right-wing attacks compared to the number of attacks in 2022 (4) and 2021 (6).

One plot categorised as other form of terrorism was foiled, and one attack for which the ideology was not specified, failed.

When reported¹³, most of the completed attacks targeted critical infrastructure (15), private businesses (7), civilians (4) and police officers (3). The main modi operandi¹⁴ were arson (20), bombing (8), property damage (6), stabbing (6) and shooting (5).

Terrorist attacks (completed, failed, foiled) and arrests for terrorist offences in the EU per type of terrorism, 2021-2023

(Source: EU Member States' Contributions to EU TE-SAT 2024)¹⁵



¹³ Information on the targets was provided for 45 attacks out of 120.

¹⁴ Information on the modi operandi was provided for 47 attacks out of 120.

¹⁵ France reported the 2021 and 2022 data on ethno-nationalist and separatist attacks in 2024; the data was not reflected in the TE-SAT 2022 and 2023. 4 attacks were executed in France in 2021 and 22 in 2022.

Arrests

A total of 426 persons were arrested for terrorism-related offences across 22 Member States, an increase compared to 2022 (380) and 2021 (388). More than half of the arrests took place in Spain (84), France (78), Belgium (75), and Germany (51).

Most of the arrests were for jihadist terrorism (334), with a significant increase in the numbers compared to 2022 (266). There were 26 arrests for right-wing terrorism, a decrease compared to the 45 arrests in 2022. Arrests for left-wing and anarchist terrorism (14) were slightly down in comparison to 2022 (19). For ethno-nationalist and separatist terrorism, the arrests (25) were higher compared to 2022 (18). The number of arrests linked to other types of terrorism also decreased (18) compared to 2022 (26). For nine arrests, the type of terrorism was not specified.

The three leading causes for arrest were membership of a terrorist organisation (120), followed by planning or preparing an attack (65), and financing of terrorism (42).¹⁶

Those arrested were predominantly young, male, and EU nationals. 85 % of those arrested were male (351)¹⁷, with an average age of 20 years¹⁸, while the average age of the 64 female suspects arrested was 27 years.¹⁹ 221 individuals arrested for terrorism related charges were EU nationals and 147 were non-EU citizens²⁰.

¹⁶ The primary offence leading to an arrest has been specified for 345 out of 415 arrests.

¹⁷ The gender has been specified for all 415 arrestees.

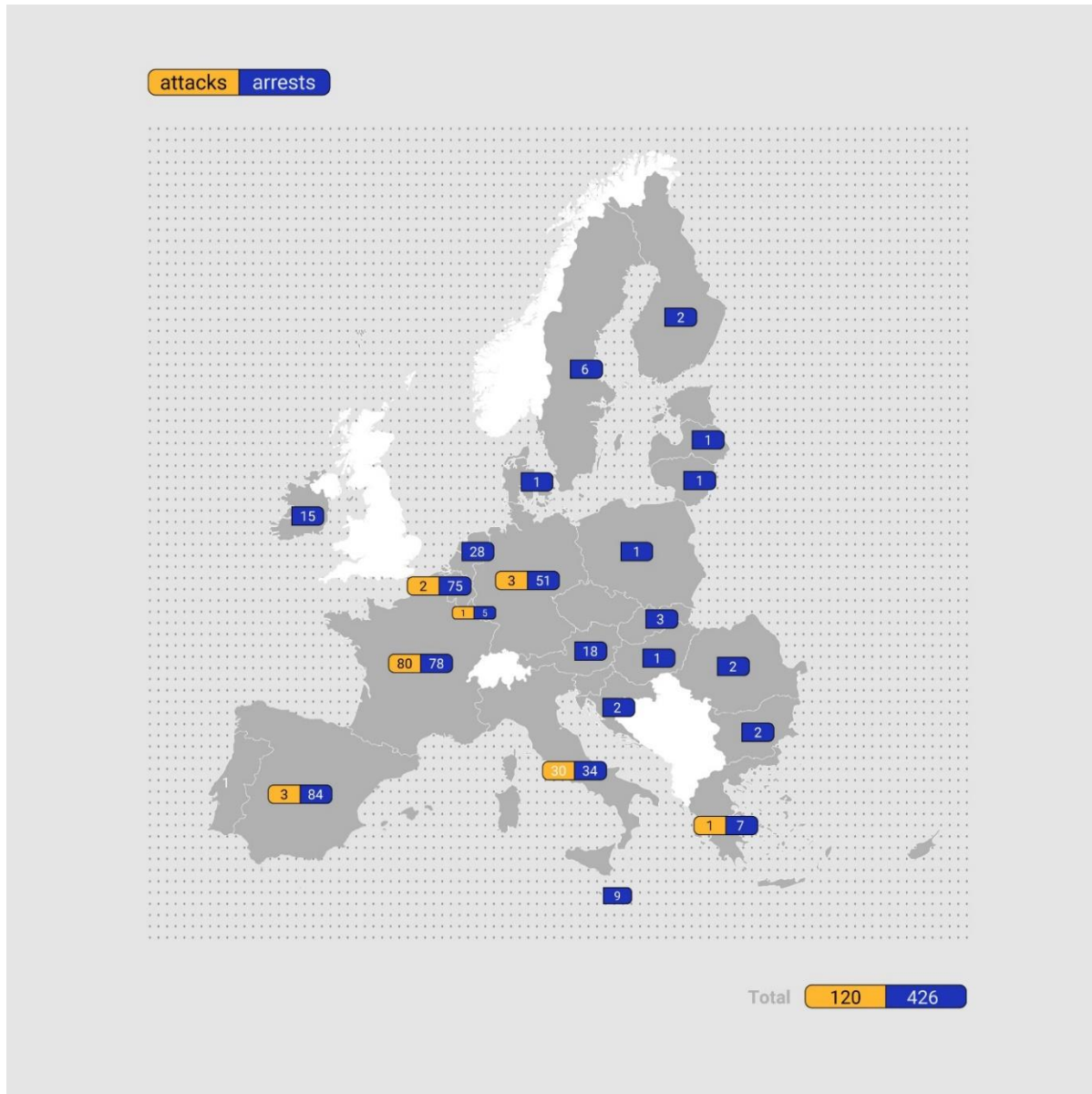
¹⁸ The age has been specified for 339 out of 351 male arrestees.

¹⁹ The age has been specified for 41 out of 64 female arrestees.

²⁰ The nationality was specified for 368 arrestees out of 415.

Terrorist attacks and arrests per Member State in 2023

(Source: Member States' contributions to EU TE-SAT 2024)

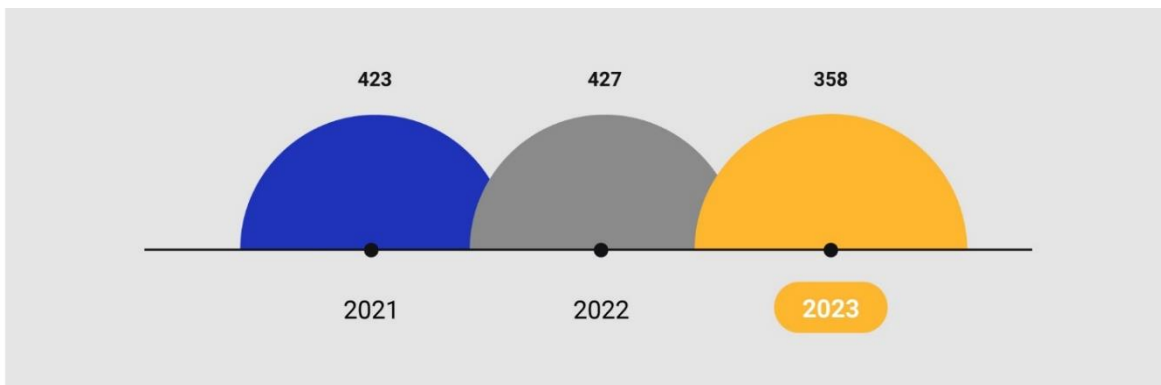


Concluded court proceedings for terrorist offences

In 2023, concluded court proceedings²² in 14 Member States resulted in 290 convictions and 68 acquittals for terrorist offences.²³

Number of convictions and acquittals for terrorist offences in 2021, 2022 and 2023

(Source: EU Member States' contributions to Eurojust)²¹



As in previous years, concluded court proceedings in France, Belgium and Germany led to the highest number of convictions and acquittals for terrorist offences (90, 67 and 63, respectively). The reported concluded court proceedings in the Member States in 2023 resulted in 265 convictions and acquittals for jihadist terrorism, making up 74 % of the total number of convictions and acquittals in 2023. 44 convictions and acquittals were reported for right-wing terrorism, 27 for ethno-nationalist and separatist terrorism, 10 for left-wing and anarchist terrorism, and 12 for other/not specified types. Some convictions and acquittals pronounced in 2023 are still pending, as appeals have been lodged by the prosecution, the defence or both.²⁴

²¹ The data for the previous years corresponds to the data reported in the respective EU TE-SAT reports.

²² All information and examples in this chapter are provided by Eurojust. Eurojust received contributions containing information on terrorism-related convictions and acquittals in 2023 from the following EU Member States: Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Romania, Spain and Sweden. In Lithuania the proceedings against two individuals were dismissed due to the expiration of the statute of limitations. This decision by the court of first instance was further upheld by the courts of appellate and cassation (final appeal) instances. These proceedings are not included in the number of convictions and acquittals for terrorist offences.

²³ Please refer to the Annex for further statistical information.

²⁴ 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. In case a judgment pronounced in 2023 was appealed and the appeal was concluded before the end of the year, Eurojust reported only on the latest/final judgment.

Convictions and acquittals in EU Member States per terrorism type (2023)

(Source: EU Member States' contributions to Eurojust)



Type of offences in the concluded court proceedings

The vast majority of concluded court proceedings for terrorist offences concerned membership of or participation in (the activities of) a terrorist group, or providing support to or collaborating with such a group. Other offences included murder in a terrorist context, financing of terrorism, recruitment, incitement or threat to commit terrorist acts, (preparation to commit) terrorist attacks, providing or receiving training for terrorist purposes, dissemination of terrorist propaganda, or glorification of terrorism. In some cases, charges for terrorist offences were pressed alongside firearms or explosives-related offences, core international crimes, document forgery, or other offences.

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

In 2023, the District Court of Rotterdam in the Netherlands convicted 10 women accused of participation in a terrorist organisation and/or of preparatory acts for the commission of terrorist offences. The women had travelled to areas previously held by the self-proclaimed terrorist organisation Islamic State (IS) and had lived there with IS fighters. They later returned to the Netherlands after staying in the Al Hol or Roj refugee camps. Some were also convicted for taking their children to a conflict zone. The sentences ranged from 18 to 36-months of imprisonment. In most cases, a part of the sentence was suspended.

(Preparation of) terrorist attacks

In Belgium, the Court of Assize of Brussels convicted eight men for their role in the March 2016 terrorist attacks in Brussels and Zaventem. As a result of the attacks, 32 victims lost their lives and hundreds were injured. Among the eight was the only surviving member of the terrorist cell that carried out the November 2015 terrorist attacks in Paris and Saint-Denis, who had previously been sentenced by a French and a Belgian court respectively to life imprisonment for his involvement in the 2015 attacks and to 20 years of imprisonment for a shootout with the Belgian police. Another man, also sentenced to life imprisonment for his role in the 2015 Paris and Saint-Denis attacks, was intended to be one of the suicide bombers at Zaventem but he decided not to detonate his vest. He was given a 30-year sentence.

Three of the convicted men, including another intended suicide bomber and the alleged mastermind of the attacks in France and Belgium, were sentenced to life imprisonment. Two other men were sentenced to 10 and 20 years in prison, respectively, while another did not receive an additional sentence to the one he had already received for terrorist offences. Two men were acquitted of the charges brought against them.

Financing of terrorism

In Germany, in December 2023, the Hamburg Higher Regional Court sentenced a man to four years and nine months of imprisonment after finding him guilty of preparation of a serious violent crime threatening the State in combination with financing of terrorism. The court heard that the man received instructions over the Internet from the ‘emir’ of an IS-linked institute on how to make explosives. The man, who collected and received funds, ordered ingredients and equipment for the explosives. His aim was to attack a Swedish church together with his brother and kill many people, in retaliation for the burning of the Quran in Sweden. None of the explosives he made worked. His brother was given a one-year suspended sentence for aiding and abetting the financing of terrorism.

Public incitement to terrorism, dissemination of terrorist content and training for terrorism

In the Netherlands, the Court of Appeal in The Hague sentenced a man to two years of imprisonment after finding him guilty of participation in a terrorist organisation, incitement to terrorism and training for terrorism. He disseminated violent, jihadist and IS material on social media channels, groups and chats. At the time of his arrest, he managed 30 Telegram channels with pro-IS content, with up to 1 024 followers.

Convictions and acquittals

In Croatia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Romania and Sweden all court proceedings related to terrorist offences resulted in convictions. Within other Member States, some of the defendants acquitted of terrorist offences were found guilty of other criminal offences, including participation in an organised crime group, weapons related offences (such as unauthorised possession of firearms), etc.²⁵

All concluded court proceedings concerning ethno-nationalist and separatist terrorism and left-wing and anarchist terrorism resulted in convictions. Defendants charged with right-wing terrorism related offences were convicted in 80 % of the cases, while defendants charged with jihadist terrorism related offences were convicted in 78 % of the cases.

Penalties

The average custodial sentence for terrorist offences in the court proceedings concluded in 2023 was six years.²⁶ The shortest prison sentence ordered by courts in the Member States in 2023 was 51 days. Several life sentences, some of which with a minimum term to be served, were given by courts in Belgium, France, Germany and Italy.

Custodial sentences of up to five years remained the most common (68 %), while sentences of 10 years or more were handed to 18 % of those convicted of terrorist offences. It should, however, be taken into consideration that the severity of the sentence in each case depended on the respective offence and the specific circumstances and cannot be compared.

In some cases, the execution of (parts of) the sentence was suspended for a certain period of time or in its entirety, subject to specific probation conditions set out by the court, and juvenile sentences were imposed on underage offenders. In other cases, the court found the defendant guilty or found that the facts were proven but postponed the ruling on the penalty or declared the offender not punishable.

In addition, or as an alternative, to imprisonment, some of those convicted were ordered to pay fines, perform community service, or undergo psychiatric treatment. In some cases, restrictions were imposed on the exercise of certain civil and political rights, or other measures were ordered, including participation in a de-radicalisation programme, a fixed probationary period after release, compensation to victims, deprivation of nationality, expulsion from the national territory, confiscation of assets, etc.

²⁵ 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.

²⁶ For the purpose of the calculation of the average prison sentence, penalties exceeding 40 years of imprisonment and life sentences were counted as 40 years, unless the court has 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.

JIHADIST TERRORISM

Key findings

- ▶ **14** jihadist terrorist attacks were carried out in Belgium, France, Germany, and Spain; five attacks were completed and nine foiled. Jihadist terrorism was the most lethal in the EU, with twelve victims injured and six killed.
 - ▶ **334** individuals who follow a jihadi-Salafist ideology or who are associated with it, were arrested for terrorism-related offences, in 19 Member States.
 - ▶ **208** individuals were convicted for jihadist terrorism offences in the EU in 2023.
- ▶ A series of Quran desecration incidents in the EU and the terrorist attack by Hamas against Israel and the military response by Israel in Gaza led to an increase in the threat posed by jihadist groups to the West and its allies, creating fertile ground for the radicalisation of individuals living in the EU. Several Member States raised their national terrorist threat-level during 2023.
 - ▶ The jihadist landscape is populated by terrorist groups, online networks and individual actors. Jihadist networks within the EU remain fragmented, generally lacking hierarchical leadership, and regional or transnational links are often based on the common origin and language of members.
 - ▶ Within the broad ecosystem of jihadist networks, terrorist cells potentially affiliated with Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP) have been identified in the EU, with transnational links to Central Asia and the Caucasus.
 - ▶ The threat from jihadism is most likely to manifest itself in the form of lone actor attacks. They are not usually isolated but are often young individuals embedded in online communities that promote violence and are involved in the production of propaganda. The lack of clear ideological convictions is an emerging trend, especially among young adults and minors. Several underage suspects have also been investigated due to their intentions to commit violent acts.

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 odds with God’s status as the sole lawgiver. Jihadists aim to create an Islamic state governed exclusively by Islamic law (shari’a), as they interpret it. Unlike other Salafist currents, jihadists legitimise the use of violence by referring to the classical Islamic doctrines on jihad, a term that literally means ‘striving’ or ‘exertion’, but which jihadists treat as religiously sanctioned warfare. All those who oppose jihadist interpretations of Islamic law are considered 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

Jihadist terrorist attacks

14 jihadist terrorist attacks in the EU in 2023

5 completed terrorist attacks, resulting in 12 injured and 6 killed

In 2023, 14 jihadist attacks took place on EU soil, of which five were completed and nine were foiled. This represents an increase compared to 2022 (6). The five completed attacks took place in France (2), Belgium (1), Germany (1), and Spain (1), resulting in twelve injured and six killed.

Lone actors continued to opt for unsophisticated plans, both financially and logistically, using easily accessible weapons to target victims in public places. All completed attacks were carried out in urban areas by male suspects acting alone. Stabbing remained the main modus operandi. The Brussels attacker used a firearm, shooting at civilian targets in the street.

Six jihadist plots in France, two in Germany and one in Belgium were foiled.

Lone actors operating in the EU have continued to pledge allegiance to IS and affiliations to the terrorist group. Of the 14 jihadist attacks (completed/foiled), four were attributed to the IS by law enforcement, but only one was officially claimed by the terrorist organisation.

Jihadist terrorist attacks in the EU (completed, failed, foiled) 2021–2023

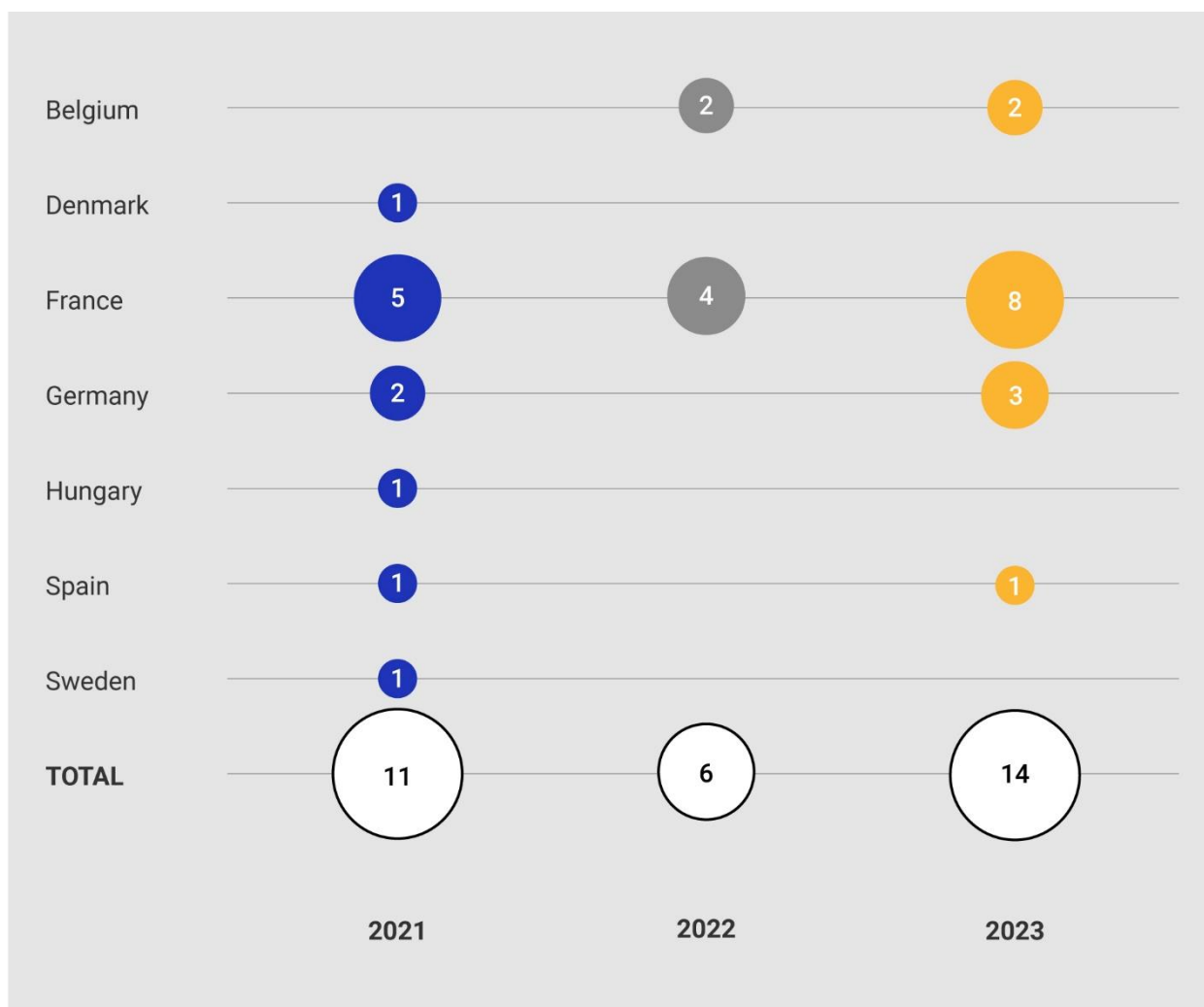
(Source: Member States' contributions to EU TE-SAT)²⁷



²⁷ The data for the previous years corresponds to the data reported in the respective EU TE-SAT reports.

Jihadist terrorist attacks (completed, failed, foiled) in EU Member States, 2021-2023

(Source: Member States' contributions to EU TE-SAT)²⁸



On 25 January 2023, in Algeciras, Spain, a lone perpetrator launched a violent attack in and around three Catholic churches, injuring two people and killing another. The 25-year-old suspect wielded a machete, targeting people for religious reasons. The attacker was arrested. During house searches, audio-visual material and publications on social networks praising IS were found.

On 9 April 2023 a self-radicalised jihadist attacker stabbed to death a 35-year-old man in **Duisburg, Germany**, and then stabbed four men in a gym on 18 April. The victims in the gym survived the stabbing, but some were critically injured. The perpetrator started showing signs of radicalisation in 2020, after consuming propaganda of the militant jihadist ideology of IS. The assailant expressed his desire to live in an Islamic 'theocracy' based on Sharia law and legitimised the killing of 'infidels' as a supposed religious duty.

On 13 October 2023 in Arras, France, a young man fatally stabbed a teacher and seriously injured two other staff members at his former high school in Arras, France. Upon the arrival of the rescue police, the assailant shouted 'Allah Akbar' several times.

On 16 October 2023 in Brussels, Belgium, a man fired multiple rounds with an assault rifle on a street in Brussels, killing two persons and injuring another. The perpetrator recorded a video announcing his attack. The perpetrator was affiliated to the IS, as he

²⁸ The data for the previous years corresponds to the data reported in the respective EU TE-SAT reports.

pledged allegiance to the terrorist organisation in a video and IS later issued a statement claiming responsibility for the attack.

On 2 December 2023 in Paris, France, a lone perpetrator killed two persons and injured one individual in a knife attack.

Arrests for jihadist terrorism related offences

Out of the 426 suspects arrested, the majority (334) were categorised as jihadist. The number of arrests for jihadist terrorism related offences has increased significantly compared to 2022 (266) and 2021 (260).

161 individuals arrested are EU nationals and 133 are non-EU.²⁹ 276 of the arrestees were male and 58 were female.

The most common offence was membership of a terrorist organisation (30 %), followed by planning or preparing an attack (14 %), and financing of terrorism (12 %). Female suspects were arrested mainly for ancillary offences (i.e. membership and financing), while men were more likely to be arrested for planning or preparing an attack³⁰.

Several arrests involved minors and young adults. Several were arrested for planning attacks and in most cases, they were active in online communities and groups, where they radicalised, communicated with peers or tried to obtain instructions or weapons.

On 17 June 2023, two minors and one 20-year-old suspect were arrested in Austria, after radicalising online and communicating about carrying out an attack on the Vienna Pride Parade. The suspects also discussed about acquiring a weapon for the attack.

On 4 May 2023, a 16-year-old suspect was arrested in Eindhoven, the Netherlands, for planning a terrorist attack via an E2EE group chat. Shortly afterwards, a 19-year-old was arrested in Deventer, in connection with the same case. The suspects were in contact with members of a network in Belgium.

Members of a transnational network potentially affiliated with the ISKP were arrested on suspicion of planning terrorist attacks in several Member States. The suspects discussed possible targets in Germany and tried to acquire weapons. In the Netherlands, a 29-year-old man and his 31-year-old wife were arrested on 6 July, on suspicion of being involved in the preparation of a terrorist offence. The man is suspected of being the leader of the ISKP affiliated network, with other members located in Germany and Belgium. In Germany, seven men, aged between 20 and 45, who were also part of the network, were arrested. All had arrived in Germany from Ukraine in early 2022.

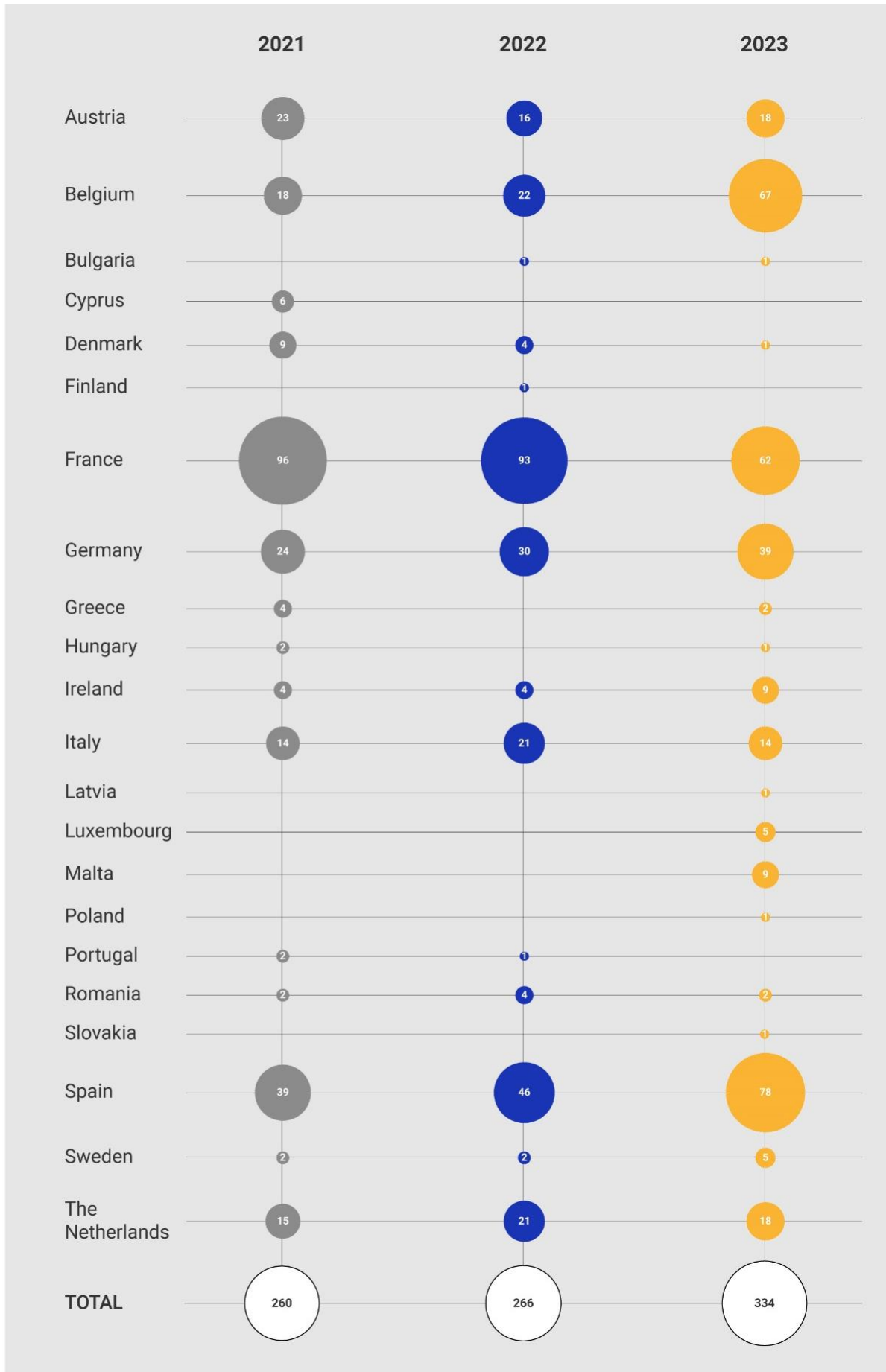
On 23 December 2023, Austrian authorities arrested several people suspected of planning a terrorist attack in Vienna on behalf of the ISKP. Another member was arrested a few days later.

²⁹ MS specified the residential status for 295 jihadist terrorism-related arrestees out of 334 in the verified quantitative contribution.

³⁰ Male: Membership (69), Planning or planning an attack (46), Financing (30); Female: Membership (33), Financing (10), Planning or preparing an attack (2).

Arrests for jihadist terrorist offences in EU Member States in 2021- 2023

(Source: Member States' contributions to EU TE-SAT)



Concluded court proceedings for jihadist terrorist offences

The majority of concluded court proceedings in 2023 were for jihadist terrorism offences, and resulted in 208 convictions and 57 acquittals, the majority of which occurred in Belgium (64), France (59), Germany (38) and Austria (37). A large proportion of the cases concerned offences linked to terrorist groups operating in Syria, such as IS, *Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham* (formerly Jabhat al-Nusra and Jabhat Fath al-Sham), *Ahrar al-Sham*, etc.

In France, a radicalised man was found guilty of taking part in a criminal conspiracy to prepare a terrorist act, complicity in murder and unlawful confinement of a minor in October 2023. He was tried for his role in the assassination of a couple of police officers at their home in 2016 in front of their child and the subsequent confinement of the child for several hours. An accomplice was found to have helped the main perpetrator plan the attack and identify the targets. Both men adhered to the IS ideology and deliberately targeted members of the police forces. The court sentenced the defendant to life imprisonment without the possibility of parole for 22 years.

Jihadist terrorism and related activities

Groups, structures and individuals

Jihadist terrorism remains a serious security concern within the EU. The jihadist milieu is populated by self-radicalised individuals and small, loose groups that coexist and are often part of wider terrorist networks across the EU. Within the EU, such loose networks generally lack hierarchical leadership and operate without the centralised command and control structures. Emerging small terrorist cells often consist of family, friends and acquaintances, who may already have links to regional and transnational jihadist networks based on common ethnicity and/or language.

Identified terrorist cells in the EU show transnational links to Central Asia and the Caucasus. The growing number of Member States' investigations that have identified links to the Islamic States Khorasan Province (ISKP) were detected, underlines the organisation's growing influence and possibly a greater potential to orchestrate coordinated terrorist attacks on EU soil.

Jihadist lone actors' attacks continue to pose a serious security threat in the EU, as they are most likely to be carried out by individuals who are not members of a terrorist organisation. These are typically followers and sympathisers inspired by the jihadi -Salafist ideology, who decide to carry out an attack without the provision of funding, weapons, or direct instructions from a terrorist organisation. Many are embedded in online communities that harbour beliefs promoting violence.³¹ Increasingly, they demonstrate ideological flexibility, by reposting online propaganda linked to both AQ and IS, with no clear or stated allegiance to either organisation. The lack of clear ideological convictions is an emerging trend, especially among young adults and minors.

Several underage suspects have been investigated for their intentions to carry out violent attacks, and in some cases some have even attempted to acquire weapons to execute their plans. Radicalisation patterns show a shorter period of time compared to the past, between the point when these young individuals start consuming terrorist propaganda online and the point when they decide to participate in a violent attack. Some of these suspects were connected and spent time on the same online channels and messaging groups where they may have been radicalised, as they could access propaganda,

³¹ Sandboe, I., J., and Obaidi, M. 'Imagined Extremist Communities: The Paradox of the Community-Driven Lone-Actor Terrorist', Perspectives on Terrorism, Volume XVII, Issue 4, Dec 2023, DOI: 10.19165/CAQH8148

instructional material and other resources that could be used to plan and carry out an attack.

Prisoners and released convicts

Correctional facilities remain conducive environments for the propagation of jihadist narratives, for radicalisation and for the creation of new cells and networks. Most EU countries maintain a ‘dispersal’ management model, whereby convicted jihadists are distributed across correctional facilities and integrated into the mainstream prison population³² and to prevent the consolidation of terrorist networks. However, incarcerated jihadists have been found to attempt to recruit other prisoners seeking a sense of belonging, exhibiting contempt for the existing social order or with links to organised crime and with a propensity for violence.

A few Member States separate prisoners convicted for terrorism by housing them in special units or separate facilities,³³ in order to minimise the risk of proselytisation and influence over inmates.

Concerns also remain about the security risks posed by terrorism-related offenders who have completed their sentences and are about to be released. Some of the individuals convicted in 2023 had already been convicted of terrorist or other offences in the past.

Activities and events

Political and social events can often spur radicalised individuals into action. The desecration of the Quran in Sweden in June and two similar events in Denmark in July and in the Netherlands in September, played a central role in jihadist narratives, with terrorist groups using these events to call for violence. In August, AQ issued an online statement calling on Muslims around the world to carry out attacks and to bomb and burn Swedish and Danish embassies. Other jihadist terrorist groups have made numerous threats against Sweden. In the Netherlands, several Quran-tearing incidents took place in public spaces throughout 2023, triggering counterdemonstrations and an online backlash from jihadist groups, calling on their followers and sympathisers to avenge these acts.

The depictions of the death and destruction in the Gaza Strip fuelled online anti-Semitic hatred and production of terrorist propaganda by Hamas, including by individuals who were already being monitored in the EU for terrorism and violent extremism. The ongoing crisis poses risks of potential radicalisation pathways towards jihadism.

Terrorism-related travel

Detention facilities in north-eastern Syria remain vulnerable to raids by IS fighters seeking to free their members.³⁴ Some fighters who have escaped or have been released from detention facilities were located in the EU in 2023.

Foreign terrorist fighters (FTF) charged with membership or participation in the activities of a terrorist organisation or war crimes have been detected entering the EU under false pretences, using fraudulent documents or claiming international protection upon false grounds. Some of the suspects arrested in the EU reportedly used the services of migrant smugglers.

³² Basra, R., & Neumann, P., ‘Prisons and Terrorism: Extremist Offender Management in 10 European Countries’, International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation (ICSR), 2020. Accessible at: https://icsr.info/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/ICSR-Report-Prisons-and-Terrorism-Extremist-Offender-Management-in-10-European-Countries_V2.pdf

³³ E.g. Netherlands, France, United Kingdom.

³⁴ IS’s most notable attempt to free its members held in SDF detention centres came in January 2022 in al-Hasaka when the group managed to free dozens of prisoners before the combined forces of the United States (US), the United Kingdom (UK), and the SDF could secure the facility.

On the reverse route, attempts by radicalised individuals from the EU to travel to conflict zones continued to decrease, although the desire to travel with the aim to join a terrorist group³⁵ to conflict regions remains a relevant topic in jihadist circles.

On 24 December 2023, a 20-year-old man was arrested in Vienna for his suspected ideological affiliation to the terrorist organisation IS, and for discussing his travel plans to Syria or other countries in Africa to engage in terrorist activities.

Due to conflict escalations and deteriorating security situations in regions in Asia, Africa and the Middle East, Jihadist terrorist groups are likely to redirect their FTF recruitment efforts to conflict areas such as Afghanistan, Somalia, the Sahel and West Africa, and Israel's neighbouring countries.

Following a message posted by Hamas military wing EAQB, on 7 October 2023, calling for solidarity and encouraging FTFs to join the fight in Gaza, possible movements of FTFs towards the region may occur.

The Al-Azaim Foundation for Media Production (Al-Azaim), which has close ties to the ISKP, has conducted the most sophisticated outreach campaign to date.³⁶ Al-Azaim's aggressive online propaganda has successfully mobilised supporters from South and Central Asia³⁷, while also targeting the Central Asian diasporas of radicals in the EU.³⁸ The proliferation of multilingual content is indicative of the terrorist group's efforts to expand its reach and attract new travellers. The deteriorating security situation in Africa, particularly in West Africa – where IS provinces are highly active – could also attract FTFs from Europe.

Propaganda

The Internet and social media remained pivotal for the dissemination of jihadist terrorist propaganda, aimed at radicalising and recruiting individuals to terrorism and violent extremism. Online forums, video gaming decentralised platforms, and the dark web were key in terrorist and violent extremist circles.

AQ and IS supporters have adopted a multiplatform approach³⁹, increasingly exploring the use of self-managed servers⁴⁰ and the dark web, to evade content moderation and ensure backup of their propaganda material after takedowns. Jihadists often explore emerging platforms that do not moderate or fact-check content, to test their suitability for spreading propaganda.

Recognising that young audiences prefer short and quick information, supportive jihadist media outlets adapted their messaging techniques, through songs, texts, and videos posted on social media. Some preachers, acting as influencers on social media,

³⁵ Which in jihadist circles is justified as a re-enactment of the emigration (hijra) by the Prophet Muhammad from pagan Mecca to the Muslim community in Medina.

³⁶ Jadoon, A., Mines, A., and Zelin, A. Y., 'The Next Afghan Jihad? Taliban Efforts to Contain ISKP', The Washington Institute, PolicyWatch 3791, 2 October 2023, accessible at: <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/next-afghan-jihad-taliban-efforts-contain-iskp>

³⁷ It is worth noting that ISKP is the only jihadist entity that has endorsed the concept of a would-be Central Asian province, known as Movarounnahr, thereby answering the call of jihadists who aim at fighting Central Asian governments directly. See: Lucas Webber, "Islamic State-Supporting Tajik Media Outlet Turns Gaze From Middle East Toward Afghanistan," Militant Wire, 23 May 2022, <https://www.militantwire.com/p/islamic-state-supporting-tajik-media>

³⁸ On 24 August 2023, the Afghanistan-based, pro-Taliban media outlet al-Mersaad Media published a video focused on Tajik members of ISKP taken prisoner in Afghanistan. The detainees claimed they were recruited by ISKP operatives on Telegram. See: Brian Carter, Kathryn Tyson, and Peter Mills, "Salafi-Jihadi Movement Weekly Update," Critical Threats Project, 31 August 2023, https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/salafi-jihadi-movement-weekly-update-august-31-2023#_ednaa343545ebbf09048710b864eab18d4b47.

³⁹ Bradley, A., and Shadnia, D., 'Examining online migration to terrorist and violent extremist-owned domains', Tech Against Terrorism, July 2022. Accessible at: https://extremism.gwu.edu/sites/g/files/zaxdzs5746/files/Examining_Online_Migration_to_Terrorist_and_Violent_Extremist-Owned_Domains_TATFinal.pdf

⁴⁰ Self-managed servers allow users to customise the server environment, with full access throughout the management of hardware and network.

deliberately target youngsters, providing a gateway to self-radicalisation, as followers then join private chat groups, where they reinforce their radical beliefs.

Minors and young adults are increasingly involved in the production of propaganda as well as editing and reposting material from media outlets of terrorist groups.

In Luxembourg, a new generation of jihadi affiliates are producing their own nasheeds⁴¹ which contain ideas about fighting the ‘kuffar’, jihad in the name of Allah, glorification of famous ideologues such as Bin Laden, and in some cases pledges of allegiance to terrorist groups. Their multilingual skills enable them to reach German-, French-, and English-speaking likeminded youngsters.

Socio-political developments in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, or the alleged oppression of Muslim populations by Western actors remained common themes of online jihadist propaganda. Following the desecration of the Quran in Sweden, Denmark and the Netherlands, AQ issued a statement calling on all Muslims to kill the perpetrators and those who helped them. The IS published their condemnation in an editorial in the al-Naba’ magazine, calling on all Muslims to retaliate.

In the last quarter of 2023, the jihadist propaganda posted online has notably increased and focused on the terrorist attack by Hamas in Israel and the military response by Israel in Gaza, taking diverse stands starting from ideological cleavages that separate jihadist organisations and Hamas. Following the 7 October attack by Hamas, all AQ branches glorified the terrorist attack and called on the Muslim community to support Hamas and the Palestinian cause. The AQIM and Jama’at Nusrat al-Islam wa al-Muslimin (JNIM) promised to join the fight when an opportunity arose. On the other hand, IS’s lukewarm response came weeks later, interpreting the crisis in Gaza as an instance of religious war between Islam and other religions. IS linked media outlets incited Muslims to target synagogues and Jewish economic interests around the world.

AQ Narratives/Media

The death of AQ’s leader, Ayman al-Zawahiri, in 2022, continued to have an impact on the organisation, particularly on the propaganda of the terrorist network and the cohesion of its various branches. Since al-Zawahiri’s death, AQ in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) has taken a more prominent role in indoctrinating mission and spreading the message of global jihad against the West, while maintaining co-leadership with AQ’s central command. AQ’s central command has only issued statements following specific events, such as the Quran desecrations in Europe, the earthquake in Türkiye and Syria and the Hamas terrorist attack on Israel. The AQ network also counts on a wide range of supportive media outlets, such as al-Nusra Foundation, which, after a period of absence on the web (July – November 2023), re-appeared online. The other AQ branches primarily used their media outlets to highlight local grievances and focused on their own regional conflicts.

IS Narratives/Media

In August 2023, the IS spokesperson issued the only official statement of the year via an audio message on the al-Furqan media outlet, announcing the new ‘caliph’, Abu Hafs al-Hashimi al-Qurashi, and asserting that the organisation would remain steadfast and continue its fight. The announcement was followed by a long series of pledges of allegiance from all IS branches. Official IS propaganda remained limited to the publication of its flagship magazine al-Naba’, claims of attacks, and statements and videos released by A’maq News Agency, repeatedly highlighting the resilience of IS fighters, military successes and terrorist attacks.

⁴¹ Nasheeds are Islamic songs that have been exploited by terrorist organisations such as AQ and IS to spread jihadist propaganda across their media outlets in support of their campaigns.

Supporting media outlets have been very active in producing propaganda, particularly al-Azaim which publishes original propaganda and reproduces content in 10 languages.⁴² al-Azaim is also active on mainstream social media and E2EE applications. Their flagship product 'Voice of Khurasan', not only disseminates IS propaganda but also has a recruitment function.

Financing

Funds used to support the operational activities of some jihadist groups and violent extremists came from fraud, theft or the sale of drugs but also from legal sources such as loans and social benefits. A significant proportion of terrorist financing came from voluntary donations by supporters and charitable collections.

In June 2023, a 55-year-old man and his 25-year-old daughter, were arrested in the Netherlands on suspicion of providing EUR 5.5 million in financial support to Hamas. Following raids on a commercial property in Rotterdam and the search of a house, authorities seized large amounts of cash and a bank account containing around EUR 750 000. Unusual transactions indicated that the two suspects were involved with a foundation believed to be operating as a front for terrorism financing. It is also suspected that the foundation replaced another organisation through which the suspects operated, and which was placed on the sanctions list for financing Hamas.

A continuous transfer of financial assets has been detected to support IS-affiliated individuals living in camps in the north-eastern Syria and facilitate the movement of FTFs in the region, with funds typically sourced from family members or diaspora communities living in the EU.

A suspect in Luxembourg used layering techniques and multiple transfer steps to collect and move funds for an FTF in Syria. The suspect collected funds via bank transfers in Luxembourg, which ultimately left the country via online money transfers. Money mules, fake online accounts, foreign bank accounts, as well as electronic wallets and cryptocurrencies were found to be involved in this illicit financial network.

High-risk regions bordering conflict zones, including countries such as Türkiye, were repeatedly used as transit points for terrorist funds.

⁴² These include Urdu, Pashto, Persian, Tajik, Uzbek, Russian, Turkish, Azerbaijani, English, Arabic.

Situation outside the EU

Destabilising security incidents around the world created opportunities for IS and AQ branches to expand and consolidate their power, to subvert Western influence and spread jihadist ideology throughout Asia, the Middle East and Africa⁴³.

Middle East

Israel – Lebanon – Syria

The Hamas terrorist attack against Israel and the military response by Israel in Gaza in October 2023 provided IS and AQ with a strengthened narrative against the West. Since then, there have been clashes between Hezbollah and Israel, and a reciprocal exchange of fire on the Syrian border that escalated with the destruction of the Iranian embassy in Damascus by an Israeli missile in 2024. Iran's retaliation by firing missiles over the Israeli territory in April 2024, a series of missile attacks launched by Hezbollah towards Israel, followed by the killing of two top leaders from Hezbollah and Hamas in July 2024 by Israel, have contributed to a further escalation of the regional crisis.

Syria/Iraq

Despite losing almost all the territory it once held in Syria and Iraq, the IS has remained capable of sporadic attacks and localised violence. It has strengthened its presence and capacity in the central desert area and maintains logistical lines of communication with cells in eastern Syria linked to the Iraqi border. The Sunni tribes, former allies of IS in eastern Syria and living in the area controlled by the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), have also rebelled against Kurdish power and responded positively to IS recruitment efforts. In north-western Syria, Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) continues to control parts of Idlib and neighbouring provinces. Despite distancing itself from its jihadi-Salafist roots, HTS continued to provide sanctuary to foreign terrorist groups.

Yemen

In Yemen, al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) continued to pose a regional threat, operating from its historic strongholds in the southern governorates of Abyan and Shabwa. The AQAP demonstrated new capabilities when it carried out at least seven attacks using armed drones⁴⁴, suggesting potential cooperation with the Houthis⁴⁵. In contrast, the IS in Yemen continued its decline, as the group lacks local leadership and suffers from internal disputes. The Houthis used unmanned aerial vehicles, small boats, and anti-ship ballistic missiles to target Israeli and Western commercial vessels transiting the Red Sea, allegedly in support to the Palestinians in Gaza. The violent Houthi attacks demonstrate the group's intention to act in concert with other members of the so-called 'Axis of Resistance' – an Iran-backed alliance of non-state armed actors opposed to Israel and the US that includes Hezbollah, Hamas, Islamic Jihad in Palestine, and Iran-backed militias in Iraq and Syria.⁴⁶

⁴³ Reporting on incidents in this chapter is updated to July 2024.

⁴⁴ These included a 12 June drone attack targeting a Shabwani Elite (UAE-trained) post. AQAP had targeted the same post in another drone attack on 16 May. A different Shabwani Elite post was targeted by a drone attack on 14 June. The only other time that AQAP had used drones in an attack was in April 2022. See: Brian Carter and Liam Karr, "Gulf of Aden Security Review – 24 May 2023," Critical Threats Project at the American Enterprise Institute, 24 May 2023, accessible at <https://www.criticalthreats.org/briefs/gulf-of-aden-security-review/gulf-of-aden-security-review-may-24-2023>; Liam Karr, "Gulf of Aden Security Review – 13 June 2023," Critical Threats Project at the American Enterprise Institute, 13 June 2023, accessible at <https://www.criticalthreats.org/briefs/gulf-of-aden-security-review/gulf-of-aden-security-review-june-13-2023>; Al Mahra Post, "Transitional Soldiers Killed in an Attack on a security Point in Shabwa," 14 June 2023, accessible at <https://almahrahpost.com/news/38195>.

⁴⁵ Historically, AQAP and the Houthis have maintained some level of pragmatic, tacit cooperation (including the Houthis providing AQAP with refuge for leaders and weapons). See: Nasr Mohsen, "Al-Qaeda brings drones into its war against southern forces: how did it happen? [AR]," alyoum8.net, 29 May 2023, <https://alyoum8.net/posts/94048>; Rueben Dass, "Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula's Drone Attacks Indicate a Strategic Shift", Lawfare, 20 August 2023, accessible at <https://www.lawfaremedia.org/article/al-qaeda-in-the-arabian-peninsula-s-drone-attacks-indicate-a-strategic-shift>

⁴⁶ International Crisis Group, 'What Next After U.S. and UK Strikes on the Houthis?', 13 January 2024, accessible at <https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/gulf-and-arabian-peninsula/yemen/what-next-after-us-and-uk-strikes-houthis>

Africa

North Africa

The persistent security vacuum in Libya remained a major source of instability in North Africa, with IS and AQ still active in the southernmost Fezzan region. The current conflict in Sudan also risks fuelling further instability in Libya. The presence of terrorist groups on Algeria's borders continued pose a threat to the country's security. Instability in the Sahel could pose security risks for Tunisia, as foiled plots demonstrate the ambitions of IS-linked groups such as the Katibat Uqba Bin Nafi and Jund Al-Khilafa (JAK), which are active in the mountainous areas along the Tunisian-Algerian border. In Egypt, IS Sinai remained active and continued to target Egyptian security forces.

Sahel and West Africa

The terrorist violence in the Sahel continued to deteriorate. The Liptako-Gourma region, which straddles Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, remained a focal point for terrorist activity, with Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wa al-Muslimeen (JNIM) and IS Sahel Province (ISSP)⁴⁷ waging a war for supremacy in the region. The deteriorating security situation throughout Mali will continue to provide opportunities for JNIM and ISSP⁴⁸. Furthermore, the withdrawal of the United Nations' Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) from northern Mali on 25 August⁴⁹ risks accelerating the spill over of violence and forced migration from Mali into the region.⁵⁰

East Africa

In Somalia, the AQ-affiliated Harakat al-Shabab al-Mujahidin (HSM) continued to demonstrate sophisticated attack capabilities. The group increased the frequency and severity of its attacks in Mogadishu and north-eastern Kenya. IS Somalia had remained the smallest of the IS branches in Africa, as its expansion has been limited by HSM. However, it has proved effective as a financial hub, with its al-Karrar office linking Afghan, African, and Yemeni branches to the 'central command' of IS in Iraq and Syria.⁵¹

Central & southern Africa

The IS operates in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) as the IS Central Africa Province (ISCAP) and in Mozambique as the IS Mozambique Province (ISMP⁵²). The Eastern DRC provinces of Ituri and North Kivu have remained the epicentres of ISCAP activities. On 15 January 2023, ISCAP carried out its deadliest bombing to date, killing at least 17 people in Kasindi (North Kivu province). ISCAP also carried out a number of cross-border attacks in western Uganda.⁵³ It is likely that the ISCAP will continue to focus its attacks on the DRC,

⁴⁷ IS Sahel Province was granted provincial status by IS in March 2022. Between March 2019 and March 2022, IS Sahel province, which was referred to as the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS), was attached to the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP).

⁴⁸ Despite the signing of the 2015 Algiers peace agreement between the CMA and the Malian government, tensions between the two continued to escalate, fracturing the forces meant to fight jihadist insurgents across the country. See: Coordination of Azawad Movements, post on X (formerly Twitter), 12 September 2023, <https://twitter.com/ci-camazawad/status/1701653679831478529> and Caleb Weiss, "Analysis: Setting the Stage for Mali's Near Future," Long War Journal, 11 September 2023, accessible at <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2023/09/analysis-setting-the-stage-for-malis-near-future.php>

⁴⁹ On 30 June, the UN Security Council terminated MINUSMA's mandate and aimed to withdraw its personnel by 31 December 2023. See: United Nations, "Security Council Terminates Mandate of United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, Unanimously Adopting Resolution 2690 (2023)", United Nations, 30 JUNE 2023, accessible at <https://press.un.org/en/2023/sc15341.doc.htm>

⁵⁰ Associated Press, "Mali's Junta Struggles to Fight Growing Violence in a Northern Region as UN Peacekeepers Withdraw," 22 September 2023, Associated Press, accessible at <https://apnews.com/article/mali-junta-rebels-jihadi-peacekeeping-coup-insecurity-ty-7af6356feec5ce409501f4c7e7dc42f8>

⁵¹ Edmund Fitton-Brown, 'Out of Africa: Financial Networks of Islamic State 2.0', RUSI, 20 March 2023, accessible at <https://www.rusi.org/explore-our-research/publications/commentary/out-africa-financial-networks-islamic-state-20>

⁵² The first statement published under the name "Islamic State Mozambique Province" was on 9 May 2022. Prior to that, claims for Mozambique had been published under "Islamic State Central Africa Province" (ISCAP).

⁵³ Ugandan authorities also accused ISCAP of carrying out a nighttime assault on a secondary school in June 2023 in the border town of Mpondwe. The attack resulted in the murder of 37 children and seven adults and was the deadliest attack in Uganda in more than a decade. ISCAP did not claim responsibility for the attack. See: Uganda: Africanews, 'UN experts say ADF financed by Islamic State group', Africanews, 19 June 2023, accessible at <https://www.africanews.com/2023/06/19/uganda-un-experts-say-adf-financed-by->

while continuing to attract FTFs and funding from the immediate region. In Mozambique, Bnomade Machude Omar, the operational commander of ISMP,⁵⁴ was killed in action by Mozambican troops in August 2023.⁵⁵

Central Asia

Afghanistan

Following the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan, senior AQ figures remained there under the Taliban's protection, and the group has even established new training camps for recruits. In 2023, ISKP claimed 20 attacks in seven Afghan provinces⁵⁶ (mainly in the northeast) and 27 in the Pakistani province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa⁵⁷. Increased Taliban operations against ISKP hideouts and successful targeting of senior ISKP commanders significantly reduced the number of attacks.⁵⁸ Central Asian militants are responsible for a significant proportion of ISKP-inspired or -directed plots and attacks in the EU, Türkiye and Iran.

islamic-state-group//; Patience Atuhaire and James Gregory, 'Uganda school attack: Dozens of pupils killed by militants linked to Islamic State group', BBC, 17 June 2023, accessible at <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-65937484>

⁵⁴ US Department of State, 'Designations of ISIS-Mozambique, JNIM, and al-Shabaab Leaders,' US Department of State, 6 August 2021, accessible at <https://www.state.gov/designations-of-isis-mozambique-jnim-and-al-shabaab-leaders/>

⁵⁵ Jose Tembe & Will Ross, 'Most wanted terrorist killed, says Mozambique', BBC, 25 August 2023, accessible at <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-66620071>

⁵⁶ 7 attacks were claimed by ISKP in Kabul province, 6 in Kunar (all after July), 2 in Badakhshan, 2 in Balkh, and 1 each in Herat, Nangarhar, and Baghlan provinces.

⁵⁷ While IS also has an IS Pakistan province, the latter does not claim attacks within the Khyber Pakhtunwa province.

⁵⁸ These included ISKP's intelligence chief, Qari Fateh, in February and ISKP's second-in-command, Shahabul Muhajir, in May. See: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2415660/iskp-second-in-command-eliminated-in-afghanistan>

RIGHT-WING TERRORISM AND VIOLENT EXTREMISM

Key findings

- ▶ **2** right-wing terrorist attacks were foiled in the EU in 2023.
 - ▶ **26** suspects were arrested in 10 MS for right-wing terrorist offences, mostly for incitement and terrorist threats, followed by participation in the activities of a terrorist organisation.
 - ▶ **35** individuals were convicted of right-wing terrorism-related offences in the EU in 2023.
- ▶ The two right-wing terrorist attacks foiled in France and Luxembourg in 2023 illustrate the threat of lone actors. Young right-wing terrorists and violent extremists are taking up a more active role as creators of propaganda, recruiters and organisers of attacks and active incitement. New right-wing violent extremist groups are emerging online and seeking to act in real life.
 - ▶ Right-wing ideological lines take inspiration from and integrate different narratives and topics. Right-wing discourses feature more prominently eco-fascism and anti-system narratives that exploit social polarisation. Anti-system narratives and militant accelerationism also seem to be gaining popularity in the right-wing terrorist and violent extremist environment and online discourses.
 - ▶ Fitness centres focusing on combat training and sports have become very popular in EU right-wing circles and can be abused as a cover for radicalisation and networking for terrorist and violent extremist purposes.

RIGHT-WING TERRORISM DEFINED

Violent right-wing actors (groups or individuals) seek to use violence to transform the entire political, social and economic system into an authoritarian model, rejecting democratic order and values and fundamental rights. Violent right-wing ideologies use narratives centred on exclusionary nationalism, racism, xenophobia and/or related intolerance. A core concept of right-wing violent extremism is supremacism or the idea that as a group of people sharing a common element (nation, race, culture, etc.), they are superior to all others and consider it to be their natural right to dominate the rest of the population. In addition, right-wing violent extremist ideologies feed on a variety of hateful sub-cultures, that often oppose diversity in society and equal rights of minorities, such as misogyny and hostility towards LGBTQ+ communities and anti-immigration attitudes.

Right-wing terrorist attacks, arrests, convictions and penalties

2 right-wing terrorist attacks foiled in the EU in 2023

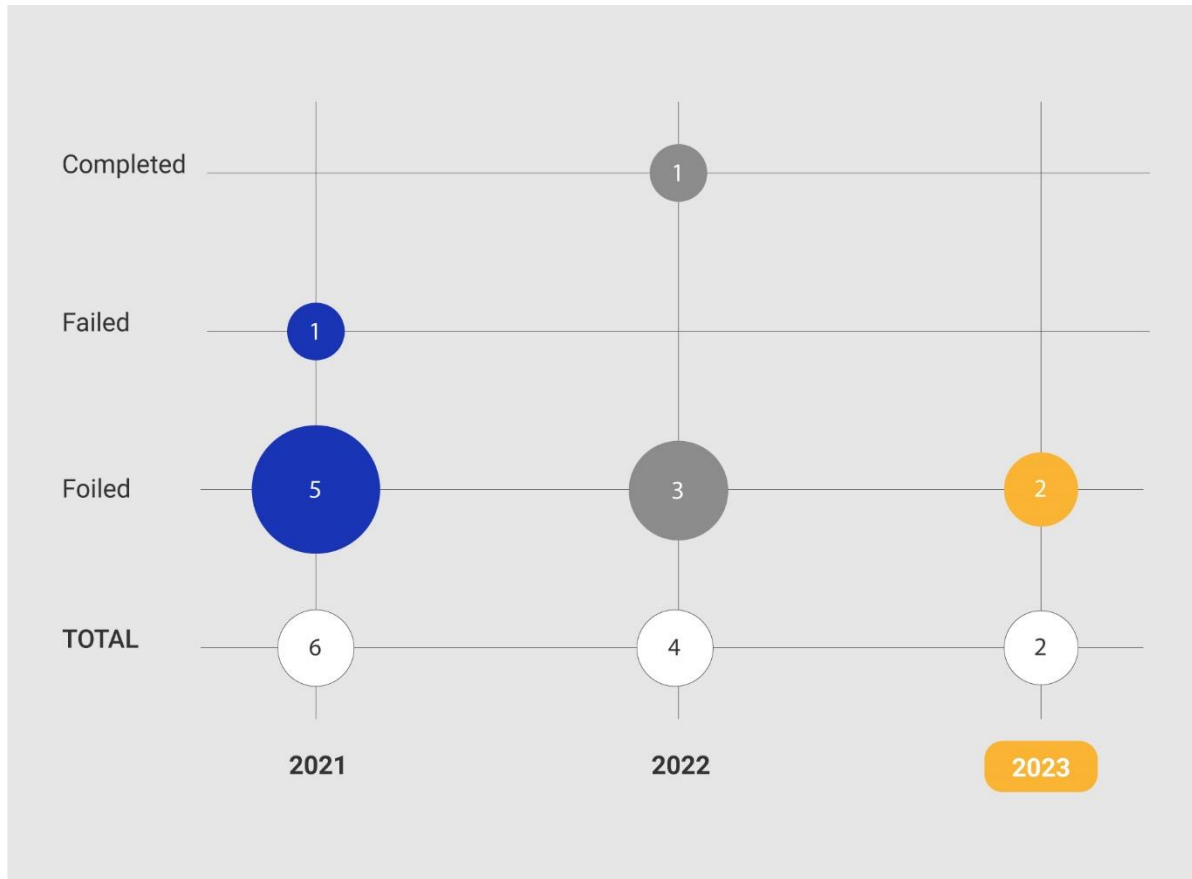
Right-wing terrorist attacks

Two right-wing terrorist attacks, one in France and one in Luxembourg, were foiled in the EU in 2023. The right-wing terrorist attack foiled in Luxembourg led to the arrest of a lone actor. In multiple online posts, the suspect expressed his will to acquire a semi-automatic assault rifle and a Glock pistol, allegedly inspired by the 'Columbine School Massacre'⁵⁹.

⁵⁹ In 1999, two students at the Columbine High School in Colorado, killed 12 students and a teacher before committing suicide. Please see Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), FBI Records: The Vault, Columbine High School, accessible at <https://vault.fbi.gov/Columbine%20High%20School%20>

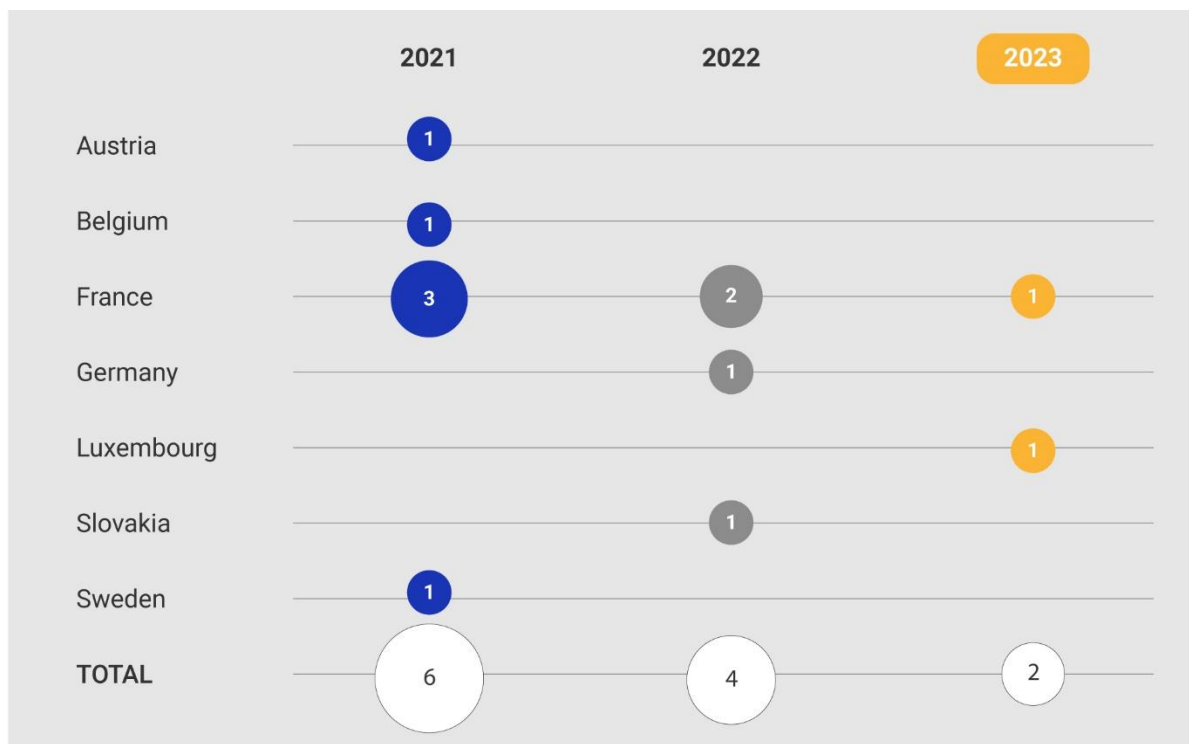
Right-wing terrorist attacks in the EU 2021-2023

(Source: Member States' contributions to EU TE-SAT)



Right-wing terrorist attacks (completed, failed, foiled) in EU Member States, 2021-2023

(Source: Member States' contributions to EU TE-SAT)



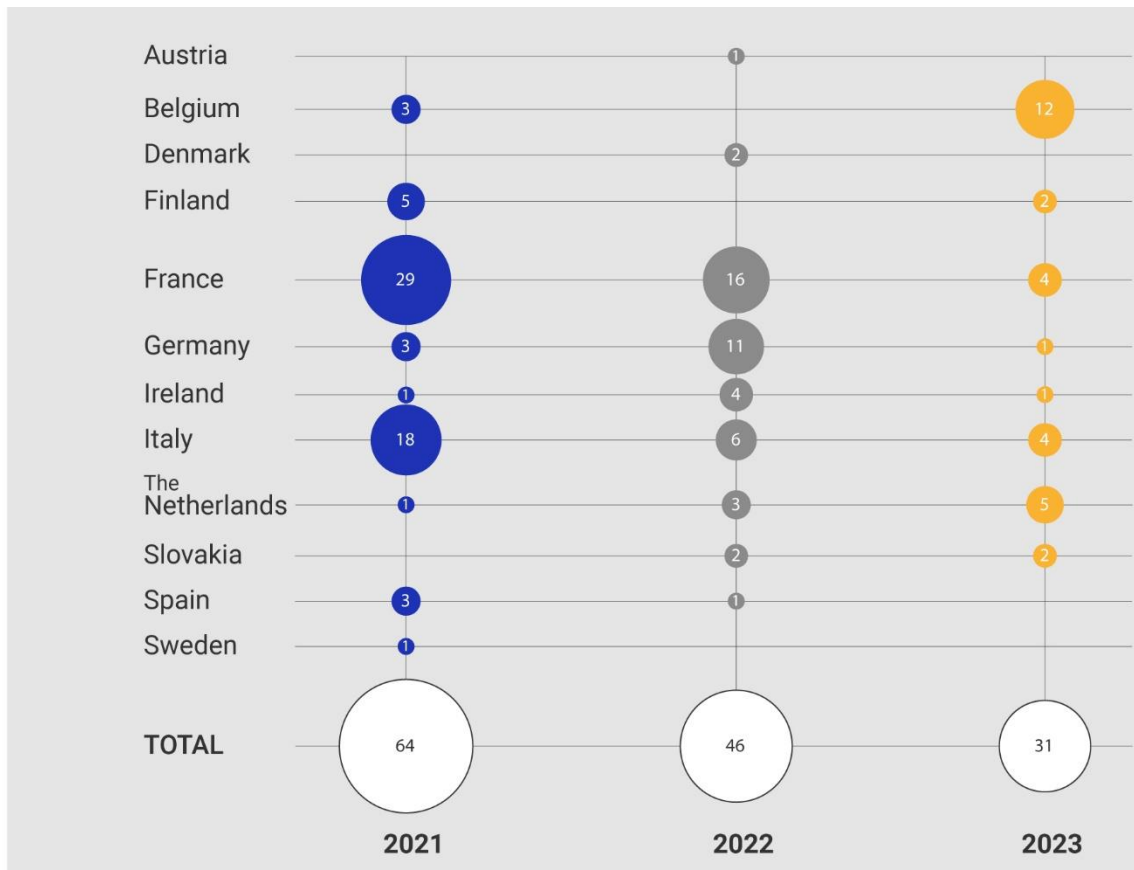
Arrests for right-wing terrorist offences

26 persons were arrested for right-wing terrorist offences, a downward trend compared to 45 arrests made in 2022 and 64 arrests in 2021.

Arrests were made in 10 Member States, with the majority in the Netherlands (5), followed by Belgium, Italy and France (4 each), Finland, Slovakia and Croatia (2 each), Germany, Lithuania and Ireland (1 each). All arrested suspects were male and, with one exception⁶⁰, had the citizenship of the country in which they were arrested.⁶¹ Their age ranged from 16 to 58 years.⁶²

Arrests for right-wing terrorist offences in EU Member States, 2021-2023

(Source: Member States' contributions to EU TE-SAT)



In most cases where the primary offence was reported⁶³, 12 suspects were arrested for incitement and threats, followed by planning or preparation of an attack (5), participation in the activities of a terrorist organisation (4), terrorist propaganda (1) and possession of facilitating items with terrorist intent (1).

In Italy, four individuals were arrested for forming a terrorist association, the Fronte Legionario Sardo/The Sardinian Legionary Front. Other charges included attempting to revive a disbanded fascist party, attempted robbery, possession of drugs, firearms and explosives, and causing damage. The right-wing group had been active since 2018 in disseminating propaganda and planning criminal activities, including attacks against citizens and representatives of local administrations.

⁶⁰ In one of the arrests reported by Belgium, the suspect was a Greek national.

⁶¹ The residential status for RW arrests was specified for 24 out of 26 arrests.

⁶² The gender has been specified for all 26 suspects. The age was specified for 22 out of 26 suspects.

⁶³ The primary offence was specified in 23 cases out of 26.

Threats or planning attacks against minorities were among the recurring offences for arrests related to right-wing terrorism.

In June 2023, an individual was arrested in Slovakia for calling for attacks against Jewish targets, black people and the LGBT+ community, and providing instructions on how to make weapons and explosives.

Right-wing terrorists typically opt for easily accessible and unsophisticated weapons, including firearms, bladed weapons, homemade explosives (including pipe bombs) and to a lesser extent incendiary devices or pyrotechnics. Firearms appear to be most popular in right-wing circles compared to other types of terrorism. In addition to illegal and apparently legal ways of acquiring firearms (i.e. obtaining legal licenses), the online environment remains a key facilitator for accessing weapons, as well as blueprints and instructions on how to build or manufacture them. The growing interest in sourcing or making 3D-printed weapons remains a key threat, as weapons or parts, printers, equipment and manuals have often been found during house searches⁶⁴. In particular, the 3D-printed FGC-9⁶⁵ semi-automatic pistol calibre carbine, which is renowned for its reliability, gained considerable popularity across the right-wing spectrum.

Five arrests were made in the Netherlands, all involving young individuals (aged between 16 and 19 years). Four of them were active online and were arrested for incitement and threats, possession of firearms and dissemination of propaganda or sharing knowledge of 3D-printed firearms, with the exception of one case where there was concrete evidence of preparation of a terrorist crime.

One person was arrested in Finland, for producing illegal 3D firearms (FGC-9) with terrorist intent, and for distributing propaganda.

Concluded court proceedings for right-wing terrorist offences

The number of persons prosecuted for right-wing terrorist offences continued to increase, resulting in 35 convictions and 9 acquittals. Right-wing terrorism cases were concluded in Belgium, Finland, France, Germany and the Netherlands.

In France, in June 2023, a juvenile criminal court found four persons guilty of participation in a criminal conspiracy to prepare an act of terrorism and sentenced them between 3 and 18 years of imprisonment. The four were members of a group of young neo-Nazis who were active online and fascinated by jihadist terrorism.

In Finland, in October 2023, four men were convicted of several offences, including aggravated firearms offences committed with terrorist intent. The four suspects made 3D weapons for themselves, and some were also found guilty of receiving terrorist training. They were sentenced to between seven months and three years and four months of imprisonment.

⁶⁴ Europol Press Release, 'Crackdown on material designed to 'educate' future terrorist. Accessible at: <https://www.europol.europa.eu/media-press/newsroom/news/crackdown-material-designed-to-%E2%80%98educate%E2%80%99-future-terrorists> ; Europol IRU RAD 18 December 2023: Press release - <https://www.europol.europa.eu/media-press/newsroom/news/crackdown-material-designed-to-%E2%80%98educate%E2%80%99-future-terrorists>

⁶⁵ FGC stands for "Fuck Gun Control"

Terrorism and violent extremism

Groups, structures and individuals

Lone actors and accelerationists remain the main threat for right-wing terrorist attacks due to their unpredictability.

The main identifiable structures include established organisations or offshoots of such groups, as well as more fluid groups and networks, largely emerging online. Traditional groups continued to focus on ultranationalist, racist, anti-Semitic and anti-Islamic themes. Some of these organisations, often with a more rigid form of organisation and structure, appear to aim for more discreet violent ideological manifestations. They organise various activities such as training camps, sports and music events, which provide opportunities for recruitment, training, radicalisation or fund raising. This approach may also reflect a strategy to broaden the scope of recruitment and radicalisation efforts.

In September 2023, German authorities banned the right-wing violent extremist organisation Artgemeinschaft, a racist, xenophobic and neo-Nazi organisation based in Germany with around 150 members. The group advocated for the preservation of the white race, and allowed members to marry only within the Nordic or Germanic 'species'. It indoctrinated its followers by distributing neo-Nazi literature, publishing books, and maintaining its own website and various social media accounts. Its potential for violence was demonstrated by the ammunition and weapons seized during country-wide searches carried out by law enforcement authorities

Long-standing right-wing terrorist and violent extremist organisations often comprise multiple affiliated groups and are internationally networked, with cells operating inside and outside the EU. Splinter groups or successors to disbanded groups regularly emerge, often changing their names.

Collectives formed online primarily focused on white supremacist, neo-Nazi, and accelerationist themes, while demonstrating flexibility to incorporate multiple ideological strains, as in the case of the Terrorgram collective⁶⁶. In this fluid environment, content that incites violence or fuels radicalisation - particularly of very young individuals - is disseminated in a decentralised manner.

Among the right-wing violent extremist and terrorist groups, the Sturmjäger Division emerged online and attracted supporters in several Member States within a few months. The group was particularly active on a popular E2EE application, which members used to contact each other, call for attacks, recruit new members and exchange information on how to make weapons. Unlike many collectives that have emerged in the online right-wing violent extremist scene in recent years, the Sturmjäger Division had clear organisational lines, with individuals taking up on specific roles.

Two high-ranking underage members of the Sturmjäger Division were arrested in Croatia for spreading violent extremist propaganda, actively recruiting new members and distributing 3D-printed weapons manuals and instructions on how to make pipe bombs and carry out attacks against members of the LGBTQ+ community, Jews, government buildings, and critical infrastructure.

⁶⁶ The Terrorgram collective is a decentralised transnational network of individuals operating mainly on social media and E2EE applications, spreading violent propaganda blending neo-fascist, eco-fascist, accelerationist, and SIEGE ideologies. The Terrorgram collective has been proscribed as a terrorist organisation by the UK Home Office on 26 April 2024, making it a criminal offence to belong to the group, or invite support for it.

Individual actors in the right-wing terrorist and violent extremist scene combine themes such as neo-Nazism, racism, anti-Semitism and anti-Islam with conspiracy theories, anti-establishment, eco-fascist, misogynist or incel rhetoric⁶⁷, among others. Their targets remain consistent with those of the broader right-wing ideology, and include primarily Jews, the LGBTQ+ community and non-white immigrant populations, as well as the authorities. Ideologies combined at individual level lead to new, unclear sets of ideas that create a breeding ground for violence.

When not structurally belonging to a particular group, right-wing violent extremists often seek out peers online and become a part of one or more online communities, where they are exposed to propaganda and are more likely to be inspired to action through calls to violence and mobilisation. Attackers are praised as ‘saints’ and the number of people killed in attacks is sometimes quoted as their ‘scores’. Carrying out attacks or acts of violence provides opportunities to be glorified online and to join or move up the ranks within certain groups.

In 2023, a person was found guilty of glorifying terrorism, and preparation of an act of terrorism via online communication, acquisition, possession and disposal of weapons, war material, ammunitions, and possession of an incendiary or explosive substance. He was sentenced to six years of imprisonment before the Court of Appeal. He had created a Telegram group that attracted more than 130 followers in about four months, where he published anti-Semitic, Nazi, racist and accelerationist propaganda. When the channel was shut down, the individual moved to another social media platform where he created a similar group. He disseminated a French version of the Militant Accelerationism handbook, as well as 19-page guide on how to join right-wing groups and take action. He encouraged readers to take up arms, to train and spread violence and chaos in the name of famous mass murderers. A large cache of weapons and ammunition was revealed during searches of his house.

Popular means of communication in the right-wing environment range from freely accessible E2EE applications, used to communicate operational or more sensitive matters, to social media and other platforms (for gaming or for content sharing), where users post more sanitised content.

Younger individuals, recruited or exposed to violent propaganda on gaming platforms and other popular online channels, join right-wing violent extremists in the EU. They share a common language and generational interests, and are often inspired by prominent figures from right-wing violent extremist groups outside the EU.

Young right-wing violent extremists have gradually expanded from classical right-wing themes towards mixed narratives that borrow populist, anti-globalisation and anti-government themes. They have a high potential for mobilisation, producing their own material, recruiting other followers and taking steps toward committing acts of violence. Young propaganda producers make full use of the functionalities of online platforms to enhance their outreach but also their resilience to detection and content moderation.

⁶⁷ Incel stands for “involuntary celibate”. The term refers to a decentralised online movement composed of men who subscribe to a misogynistic world view and rhetoric that legitimises rape and other gender-based violence.

Propaganda and radicalisation

Online right-wing propaganda was prolific and fragmented, covering a wide range of topics, taking inspiration and borrowing ideas and targets. Video content is increasingly being used to spread subtle forms of propaganda, which are easier to conceal and infiltrate in mainstream platforms than text or images.

Online users decidedly veered off from COVID-19 related topics – which have played a more central role in recent years – to focus more on violent events (e.g. terrorist attacks, school shootings, military interventions). Nevertheless, right-wing violent propaganda has continued to target Jews, Muslims and more generally non-white immigrants, the LGBTQ+ community and political opponents.

In the aftermath of the Hamas attacks on Israel and the military response of Israel in Gaza, violent right-wing extremists in the EU have shown a variety of reactions, many of which were a mixture of anti-Semitism, anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant sentiments. Many have praised the attacks as part of the Palestinian people's struggle for liberation and approved the fact that the targets were Jews. In the aftermath of the attack, anti-Semitic memes and slogans were seen spreading rapidly on right-wing extremist online channels. Other violent right-wing extremists have reiterated the perceived threat of Muslim immigration.

Playing on social discontent, anti-system narratives seem to be gaining popularity in the right-wing terrorist and violent extremist scene and discourse. Accelerationism integrates anti-system and similarly seeks to bring about the collapse of democratic and capitalist societies, by speeding up their decay.⁶⁸ This can be done both through attempts to manipulate public discourse as well as through violent means. Militant accelerationism has emerged in online communities where it has gained considerable popularity in recent years.⁶⁹ Right-wing violent extremist propaganda, supported by disinformation and conspiracy theories, is on the rise. Online propaganda relies on known conspiracy theories to undermine citizens' trust in democratic processes and democratic values. These views manifest themselves in cases of hate speech, death threats, and violent acts.

Activities and events fuelling extremism with a potential to violence

Violent extremist acts recorded in 2023 and linked to the right-wing extremist scene included damages to public and private property and attacks against individuals, including damage to polling stations or the premises of opponents, and arson attacks on refugee reception centres.

A number of physical gatherings organised by right-wing actors took place in the EU, with supporters travelling from several countries to attend these networking events. Such cross-border interaction not only reinforces the sense of a pan-European identity among these groups but also facilitates cooperation, the dissemination of propaganda and the exchange of ideas, tactics, and strategies, as well as the collection of funds from attendance fees or the sale of goods.

Prominent right-wing violent extremist groups have organised some events which have been heavily promoted in chat groups, as well as media outlets and websites. Commemorative events for historical figures, battles, attacks or other events that are considered central to the right-wing cause, allow extremists to rally around historical narratives that resonate with their ideologies. These events are often accompanied by online appeals and are key to propaganda and online communication among supporters. Some events continue to provoke reactions from opponents in the left-wing scene.

⁶⁸ CeMAS report: Militant Accelerationism, Alfred Landecker Foundation, September 2022, accessible at <https://www.alfredlandecker.org/en/article/cemas-report-militanter-akzelerationismus>

⁶⁹ Ibid.

Physical training events have been used for recruitment, networking and strengthening bonds between groups and individuals in the right-wing violent extremist scene. Members gathered to take part in joint martial arts training, as well as airsoft, war games, survival exercises or shooting and weapon handling training. The emphasis on physical training is reflected in the propaganda material, which glorifies these ideals and uses them to bring affiliates together or to recruit new followers. In this context, certain fitness centres have been openly used by right-wing affiliates as a form of meeting, training, capacity building and networking with like-minded individuals. While some avoid overt affiliation to extremist ideologies in their online instalments, they often participate in crowdfunding campaigns and publicly support personalities with links to right-wing violent extremism. Some fitness centres may also function as a catalyst between different actors at the local level, ultimately contributing to increased capacity for violence.

Several acts of Quran desecration were carried out by individuals with right-wing affiliation, provoking reactions from Muslim communities and jihadist organisations alike, and opening up potential confrontations with right-wing sympathisers.

Following a trend that had already been observed in 2022, much online content promoted in-person gatherings that took place in a number of EU countries and involved sympathisers from several Member States. The outcomes of these gatherings are also widely shared online, highlighting the growing appeal of right-wing extremism. Videos combining white supremacist symbols and messages with sports content, are regularly posted by right-wing actors on social media and receive millions of views.

Financing channels and nexus with organised crime

The methods used to fund activities and groups in the right-wing scene remained largely unchanged in 2023, and involved both online and offline channels. The investigated right-wing terrorist and violent extremist groups and actors raised funds through drug-related crimes, property crime, and weapons trafficking. A significant portion of their fundings came from donations and membership fees, music and sports events or the sale of merchandise. Goods with right-wing designs and messaging are also used as a propaganda tool and target a wider segment of sympathisers. In the online environment, payments are made through banking and other payment systems, cryptocurrencies or crowdfunding, with some indications that the latter may become more prominent. Similarly, donations and paid subscriptions to live streaming channels provide additional sources of funding.⁷⁰ The funds raised are used, among other things, to cover legal aid for members or to finance demonstrations, travel and the production of propaganda material.

In the right-wing scene, some individuals have a criminal history and are actively involved in violence, drug or weapons trafficking, while links to organised crime provide access to restricted or illicit goods. Investigations have revealed links between right-wing groups and criminal networks, as well as members of criminal networks with right-wing affiliation.

There have been cases where child sexual abuse material (CSAM) has been found on the computers of suspects under investigation in the EU for violent right-wing extremism and terrorism.

⁷⁰ CeMAS report “Where’s The Money At? Right-wing extremist fundraising over Telegram”, September 2023, accessible at <https://cemas.io/en/publications/wheres-the-money-at-right-wing-extremist-fundraising-over-telegram/>

Situation outside the EU

Right-wing violent extremists in the EU have continued to participate in transnational and transcontinental networks and ideological debates, especially in messaging and online gaming platforms and related environments where English is the *lingua franca*. As a result, violent extremist narratives originating from English-speaking countries, such as Australia, the UK and the US, seem to have a particular impact on the global right-wing discourse. Age also plays an important role, as youngsters who engage via online and gaming-adjacent platforms are more likely to have transnational contacts.

The diversity and flexibility of right-wing violent extremist stances across the world has seen, for example, right-wing extremists in the US praise the Afghan Taliban for their anti-Semitism, homophobia and severe restrictions on women's freedom⁷¹, while others have praised AQ and IS, calling for emulation of their modus operandi and propaganda. EU right-wing communities have endorsed jihadist narratives and propaganda, creating a so-called "ideological bridge" that can further extend the process of convergence among violent extremist and terrorist groups.

Violent conflicts outside the EU have been seen by some right-wing actors as opportunities to gain combat experience and enhance recruitment and mobilisation capabilities. Following Russia's aggression against Ukraine, a limited number of known right-wing actors travelled to Russia and Ukraine to take part on either side of the military confrontation. Social media have played an important role in their recruitment. While there have been no ideological attacks in the EU by returning fighters with a right-wing background, the experience gained in the conflict and their potential to inspire to violence or radicalisation substantiate the threat that these individuals may pose.

⁷¹ Geneva Sands, "White supremacist praise of the Taliban takeover concerns US officials", CNN, 1 Sep 2021, accessible at <https://edition.cnn.com/2021/09/01/politics/far-right-groups-praise-taliban-takeover/index.html>.

LEFT-WING AND ANARCHIST TERRORISM AND VIOLENT EXTREMISM

Key findings

- ▶ **32** left-wing and anarchist terrorist attacks were carried out in the EU, most of them (30) in Italy. 23 attacks were completed, 8 failed and one was foiled. No people were injured or killed.
- ▶ **14** arrests were made in connection with left-wing and anarchist terrorism, a decrease compared to 2022 (19) and 2021 (19). Arrests were made in Italy (10), Greece (2), Germany (1), and Spain (1), and most concerned offences committed before 2023.
- ▶ **10** individuals were convicted of left-wing and anarchist related terrorist offences.
- ▶ Most of the attacks carried out by left-wing and anarchist terrorists targeted property and infrastructure and were motivated by anti-state and anti-capitalist discourses.
- ▶ In the anarchist scene, the solidarity campaign with an imprisoned member of the Informal Anarchist Federation/International Revolutionary Front (IAF/FAI) in Italy seems to have attracted the most attention and motivated many of the terrorist and violent acts.

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 establish socialism and ultimately establish a communist and classless society. Their ideology is often Marxist-Leninist. Anarchist terrorism is a term used to describe acts of violence committed by groups or individuals who promote the absence of authority as a societal model. Anarchists pursue a revolutionary, anti-capitalist and anti-authoritarian agenda.

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

Left-wing and anarchist terrorist attacks

32 left-wing and anarchist terrorist attacks in the EU in 2023

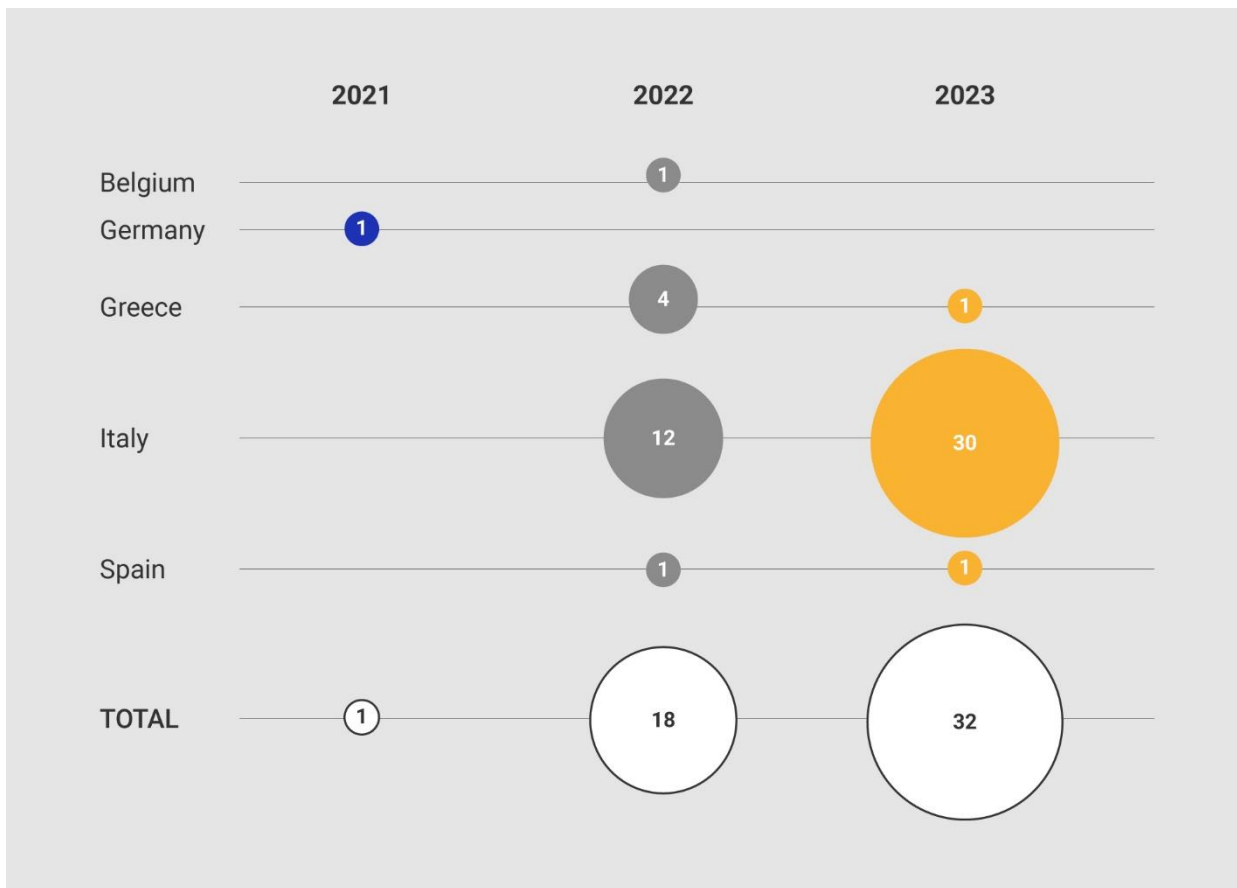
23 attacks were completed, mostly against property

In 2023, 32 left-wing attacks (completed, foiled or failed) were reported across the EU. 23 attacks were completed and 8 attacks failed. One attack was foiled.

All completed attacks were in Italy. One attack in Greece, and seven in Italy failed. One attack in Spain was foiled. No victims (injured or killed) were recorded. The increase in left-wing and anarchist terrorist attacks compared to previous years is linked to an increase in Italy.

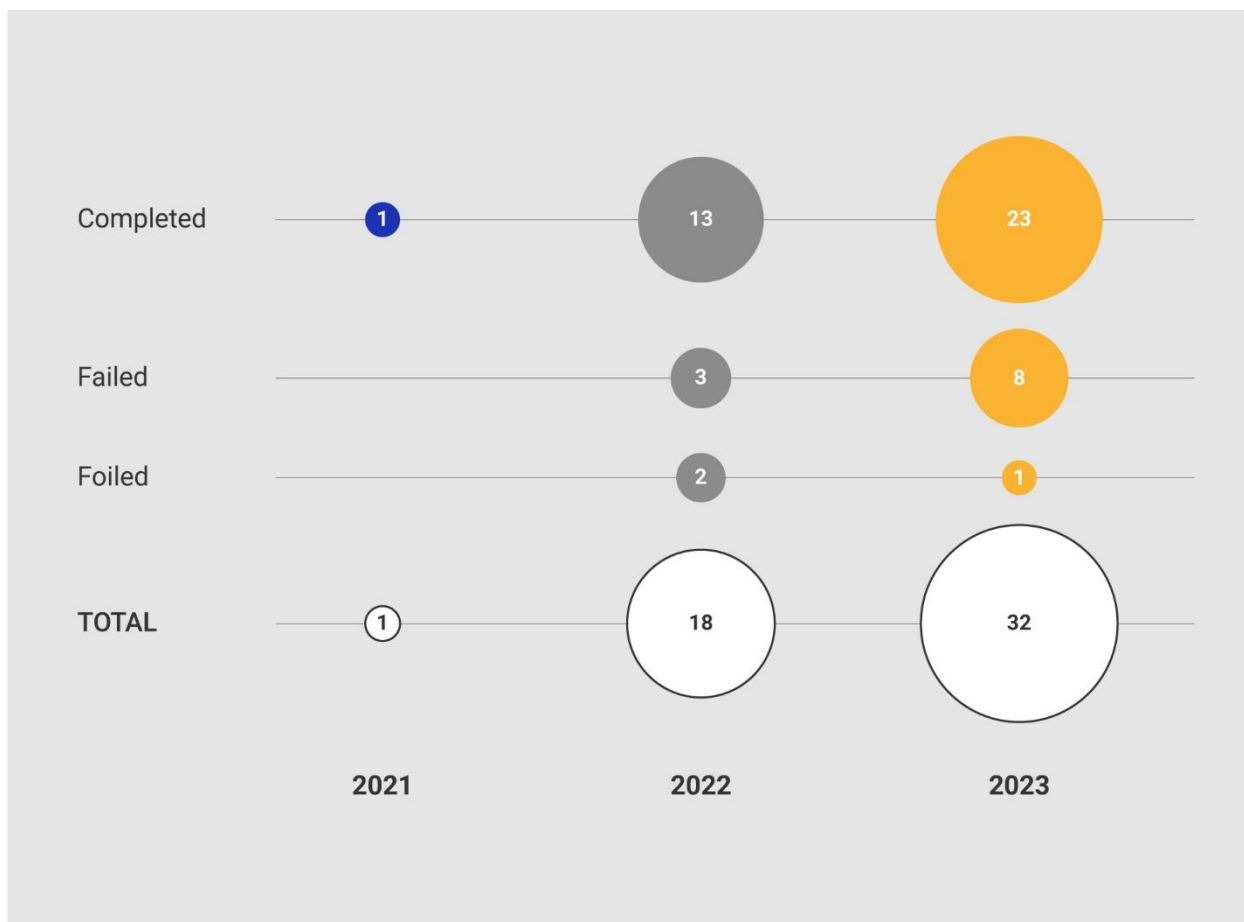
Left-wing and anarchist terrorist attacks in the EU, 2021-2023

(Source: Member States' contributions to EU TE-SAT)



Left-wing and anarchist terrorist attacks (completed, failed, foiled) in EU Member States, 2021-2023

(Source: Member States' contributions)



Most attacks (28) were claimed by left-wing and anarchist terrorist actors, while four were attributed by law enforcement agencies.

Left-wing and anarchist terrorist attacks remained consistent with the pattern of targets, modi operandi and motivations of attacks in 2022. They were carried out in the context of solidarity campaigns with an imprisoned anarchist, against representatives of the state and capitalism, and largely targeted property, including infrastructure.

According to the claims posted on various anarchist websites, many of the left wing and anarchist terrorist attacks in Italy were carried out in support of the imprisoned member of the terrorist organisation Informal Anarchist Federation/International Revolutionary Front (FAI/FRI). The attacks included throwing Molotov cocktails in a police car park, planting an improvised explosive device (IED) near a mobile phone tower and setting fire to cables and optical fibres belonging to electricity, telephone and energy companies, gas or telecommunications companies' vehicles, and police vehicles. In addition, an intimidation letter containing a calibre 22 cartridge was sent to the security manager of a company producing industrial and military equipment, signed by the Informal Anarchist Federation, in solidarity with the imprisoned Italian suspect. The anarchist attack in Spain was also claimed in support of the FAI/FRI anarchist prisoner.

Attacks on property continued to predominate. The means used to perpetrate attacks and violence were often unsophisticated, cheap and readily available, requiring a minimum of skill to manufacture or operate. Most attacks were carried out or planned to be perpetrated by arson (20), damage (6), bombing (5), and, in one case, an intimidation

letter containing a cartridge, sent to a private company. Seventeen attacks were committed or planned to be carried out using an IED or an Improvised Incendiary Device (IID), including fire accelerators, two with a bladed weapon and one with a blunt weapon. Except for one successful bomb attack in Italy, all the other attacks using explosives failed.

The targets of left-wing and anarchist terrorist and violent extremist attacks reflect the perpetrators' anti-capitalist ideology and include, for example, private companies that are perceived to control or play a key role in the economy, trade or industry. When left-wing and anarchist attacks target the police during demonstrations and protests, this is largely a consequence of their confrontational approach rather than a feature of their ideology. In one case, however, the attackers deliberately planned and targeted law enforcement officers. Left-wing and anarchist terrorists and violent extremists supporting the Kurdish cause continued to target Turkish objectives inside and outside of the EU. Anarchist terrorist actors have largely targeted entities representing or associated with state authorities, such as police, army, judiciary, prisons etc. Common targets of both left-wing and anarchist violence included multinational companies, infrastructure or LEAs.

On 25 January 2023, a parcel containing an explosive device and addressed to a prison officer was received at the headquarters of a trade union in Zaragoza, Spain. The failed attack was planned in support with the anarchist leader imprisoned in Italy.

In a failed attack in Italy in March 2023, a metal pipe filled with quarry explosives was found near the metal door of a shed in a disused mine in a rural area. The site intended for the Einstein construction project⁷². The bomb was equipped with a battery-powered detonator and timer, but failed to explode due to an alleged power failure.

On 22 April 2023, an explosion occurred at in the electrical cabinet of a company located near an Air Force barracks in Rome, Italy. The completed attack was claimed on 24 April⁷³ under the title 'bomb against a lair of the Air Force - Rome, night of 22 April 2023'. In the text, signed by Action circle '8 March', the authors specify that the attack was aimed at '100th anniversary' of the Air Force, and that it was a 'small reminder for banks, politicians, the military and scientists' found guilty of 'spreading wars and misery in the whole world' and that thus, must be eliminated.

Arrests for left-wing and anarchist terrorist offences

Fourteen arrests were made for left-wing and anarchist terrorist offences, 10 of which in Italy, two in Greece, one in Germany and one in Spain.

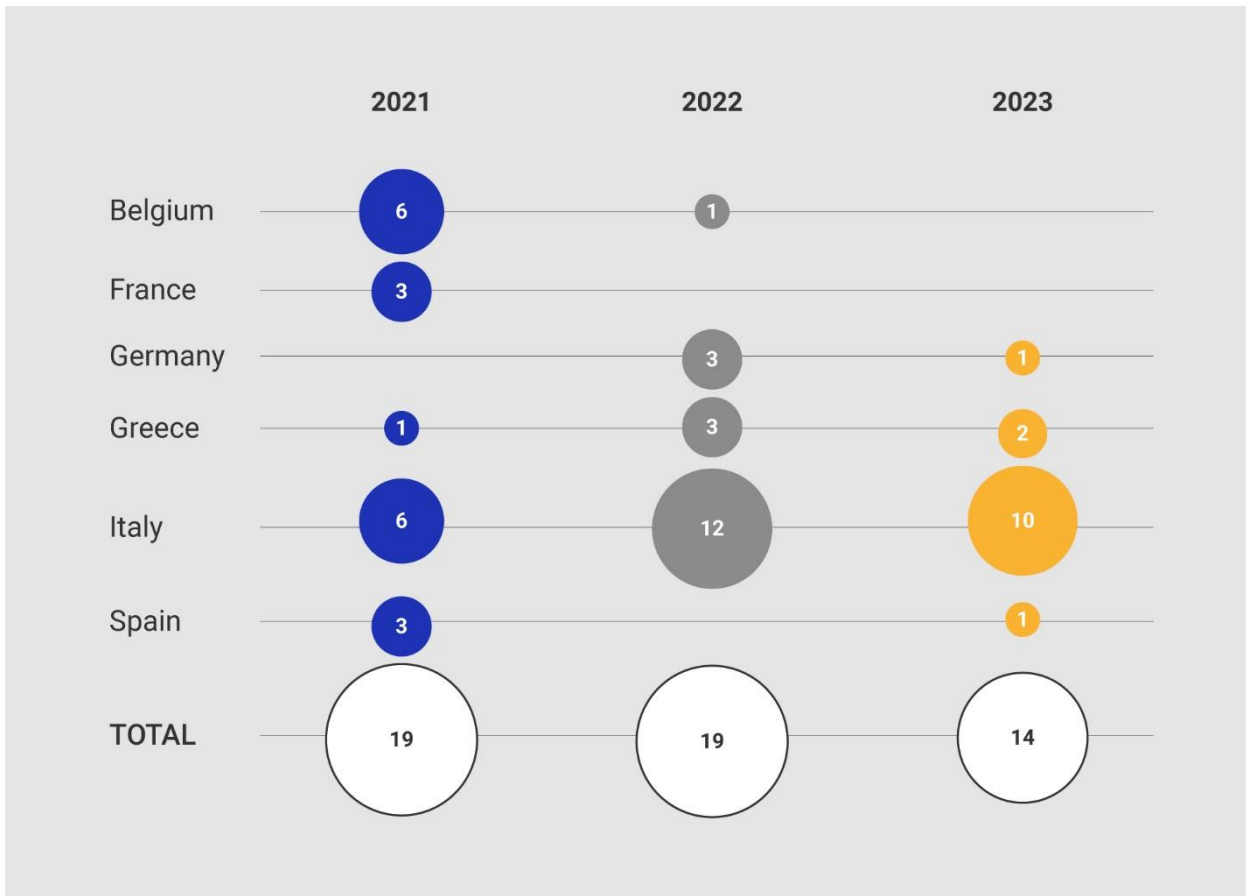
Except for one woman arrested in Italy (aged 35), all those arrested were men, aged between 27 and 75 years. In seven cases, the primary offence was membership of a terrorist organisation, followed by six offences for committing an attack.

⁷² The Einstein Telescope (ET) or Einstein Observatory, is a proposed third-generation ground-based gravitational wave detector, currently under study by some institutions in the European Union. It will be able to test Einstein's general theory of relativity in strong field conditions and realize precision gravitational wave astronomy. More information is accessible at <https://www.et-gw.eu/>

⁷³ Ilrovescio.info

Arrests for left-wing and anarchist terrorist offences in EU Member States, 2021-2023

(Source: Member States' contributions to EU TE-SAT)



Ten arrests in Italy related to anarchist terrorism. Some of these suspects were detained for offences committed before 2023.

On 28 March 2023, a provisional detention order was executed in Naples against an anarchist militant believed to be the author of the bombing of the Greek Consulate on 4 March 2021. The suspect was also accused of training for terrorist purposes, having independently acquired online instructions on the preparation or use of explosives, firearms or other weapons, harmful or dangerous chemical or bacteriological substances, as well as on techniques or methods for committing acts of violence, or sabotaging essential public services.

In October 2023, an anarchist already in prison for other offences, received a custodial order issued for the offences of bombing with the purpose of terrorism and violation of explosives legislation. The suspect is considered responsible for the attack on a police school in Brescia, in December 2015.

Four of the arrests for left-wing and anarchist terrorist offences (one in Italy, one in Germany, and two in Greece), concerned individuals affiliated with the terrorist organisation DHKP-C (The Revolutionary People's Liberation Party/Front (Devrimci Halk Kurtulus Partisi/Cephesi). Those arrested were charged with membership of a terrorist organisation, planning and preparing an attack and for financing terrorism, some of them on the basis of arrests warrants issued by Türkiye.

The Revolutionary People's Liberation Party/Front (Devrimci Halk Kurtulus Partisi-Cephesi or DHKP-C) is a militant communist group founded in 1978 as the Revolutionary Left (Devrimci Sol), and re-established as DHKP-C in 1994 after an internal dispute between two rival factions. The DKHP-C espouses Marxist-Leninist ideology and seeks to overthrow the Turkish government and rid Türkiye of 'imperialist' foreign influences, such as NATO and the US. The group has carried out attacks in Türkiye and has an active presence in several EU countries where it engages in fundraising, recruitment and propaganda to support its operations.

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Concluded court proceedings for left-wing and anarchist terrorist offences

Concluded court proceedings in relation to left-wing and anarchist terrorism resulted in 10 convictions issued in Austria, France, Germany, Greece and the Netherlands.

In Austria and France, members of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) were convicted of terrorist offences. In Austria, a person found guilty of being a member of the PFLP General Command and committing terrorist acts, including shooting at demonstrators, was sentenced in November 2023 to additional 12 years and three months in prison. He had already been convicted of terrorism by a lower court in 2018.

In France, a professor was sentenced to life imprisonment in April 2023 for the terrorist attack on a Paris synagogue on 3 October 1980. The man, who was a member of the PFLP – Special Operations, had placed an explosive device on a motorbike which he had parked in the street in front of the synagogue.

In Germany, three men and one woman were sentenced in May 2023 between two years and five months and five years and three months in prison. The court found that they were involved in the preparation and/or the execution of several attacks on persons with right-wing ideology.

Left-wing and anarchist terrorism and violent extremism

Groups, structures and individuals

Left-wing and anarchist terrorist and violent extremist movements vary in intensity and relevance across the EU. While they do not represent a significant threat in some Member States, they are particularly active in others.

The larger, more structured left-wing and anarchist terrorist organisations bring together multiple groups and individuals from different countries. Violent anarchist groups often show solidarity with counterparts in other countries (particularly along the Italy-Greece-Spain-Chile-Argentina axis) by responding to calls for mobilisation and shaping their propaganda around transnational causes.

Loose groups in the terrorist and violent extremist left-wing and anarchist scenes are often formed on an ad-hoc basis in support of a cause. Young individuals rally in varying numbers, sometimes around a smaller number of hard-core, older figures.

While there is a great deal of diversity, in some cases the structure of the groups active in the terrorist and violent extremist left-wing and anarchist scenes differs. Anarchist groups – in line with their core ideology – reject authority. This is reflected in their more horizontal organisational structures, which usually lack a line of command or leadership, relying instead on decentralised clusters and individuals linked by ideological affinity and solidarity. In the violent left-wing scene, groups are more likely to have organisational lines and a chain of command. Some show a high degree of planning and operational security, specialisation and clear roles.

Lone attackers may act in support of wider organisations or they may cluster in smaller groups, acting under an umbrella cause. Certain individuals, often from older generations, are seen as models and inspiration for the movements and are often glorified following repressive actions of the authorities against them, such as arrests or imprisonment. With the imprisonment of these figures, younger individuals are joining the militant scene, marking a generational change in the violent left-wing and anarchist milieu.

Groups and individuals in the violent extremist left-wing and anarchist milieu demonstrate considerable significant operational security and often keep their activities and planning discreet, generally preferring physical gatherings to online channels for communication and networking.

Propaganda and recruitment

Violent left-wing and anarchist propaganda continued focus on a variety of local or international social, economic and political topics. Themes include anti-NATO and anti-war stances, protests against techno-industrial domination, policies and reforms affecting certain categories of people, rising costs of living and the energy crisis, the purported rise of fascism, immigrants' and workers' rights, climate, police or judicial repression, etc. Communication and dissemination of propaganda also takes place online, through the press, websites, social media and E2EE applications. Online calls to action and promotion of offline activities can mobilise significant numbers of people from different countries. Violent left-wing and anarchist groups often claim responsibility for violent activities through statements posted online on ideologically affiliated websites.

Recruitment for acts of violence takes place offline, in squats, at demonstrations and protests, in social centres run by anarchist groups, and in some instances cases in prisons, and less often online. The targets are individuals from vulnerable backgrounds and those

with ideological preferences aligned with left-wing and anarchist messages. Young people are actively targeted for recruitment.

Funds for terrorist and violent extremist left-wing and anarchist activities are often raised through membership fees, subsidy fraud, donations and crowdfunding, including in cryptocurrencies, sales of publications and goods, charity or social events. Funds are also used to provide legal and economic support to affiliates, including during criminal proceedings and while serving prison sentences.

Training is provided through workshops and exchanges of best practices, and covers tactics or behaviour during protests and in the event of arrest. Manuals on how to make explosives and incendiary devices are disseminated online. Collaboration between left-wing violent extremists in the EU and Kurdish activists in recent years has resulted in some EU nationals travelling to Syria to join Kurdish armed organisations operating in the region. There have been very few cases of left-wing and anarchist actors travelling to the battlefield in Ukraine since February 2022.

Activities and events fuelling extremism with a potential to violence

The conflict between the violent left-wing and anarchist scenes and their violent right-wing opponents continued.

Themes of interest for violent left-wing and anarchist groups and affiliates continued to be aligned with anti-state, anti-capitalist, anti-fascist, anti-racist or anti-militarist narratives (including those related to the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine). The Hamas terrorist attack in Israel and the military response by Israel in Gaza has rekindled the support for Palestine and anti-Zionist narratives. The climate also remained of interest to the violent left-wing and anarchist milieu.

Solidarity with imprisoned anarchists remained a powerful catalyst for violent acts in several countries. A campaign in solidarity with an imprisoned member of FAI/FRI in Italy spread to several Member States – mainly in southern Europe. The solidarity campaign, which began in mid-2022 due to the conditions of his imprisonment⁷⁴ and coincided with the anarchist's hunger strike between 20 October 2022 and 19 April 2023, spread beyond Italy, and included, in addition to non-violent solidarity demonstrations, violent protests, incitement to violence, threats against State representatives, vandalism, as well as acts of sabotage, arsons and explosive attacks against public targets and private companies, particularly in the energy and telecommunications sectors. Similar campaigns took place in connection with other imprisoned anarchists in other countries, with the involvement of individuals of several nationalities, demonstrating the international dimension of anarchist movements in the EU. With the end of the hunger strike of the FAI/FRA member, the focus of the anarchist movement gradually shifted to support for the Palestinian cause in the context of the situation in Gaza.

⁷⁴ The imprisoned member was subjected to restrictive measures of the Article 41-bis of the Prison Administration Act, also known as "hard prison regime", which is a provision that allows the Minister of Justice or the Minister of the Interior to suspend certain prison regulations and impose practically a complete isolation upon a prisoner. This is a measure that is usually enforced on Italian Mafia members, aiming to them to pursue their illegal activities from inside the penitentiary facilities.

ETHNO-NATIONALIST AND SEPARATIST TERRORISM AND VIOLENT EXTREMISM

Key findings

- ▶ **70** separatist attacks (all completed) were carried out in Corsica, France.
- ▶ **25** arrests were made in the EU for ethno-nationalist and separatist terrorist offences in seven Member States.
- ▶ **27** individuals were convicted for ethno-nationalist and separatist terrorism-related offences in 2023.

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 ethno-nationalist and separatist terrorist groups.

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

Ethno-nationalist and separatist terrorist attacks

Seventy separatist attacks have been committed in the EU in 2023, all in Corsica, France. 34 of the attacks were executed during the night of 8-9 October.⁷⁵

Arrests for ethno-nationalist and separatist terrorist offences

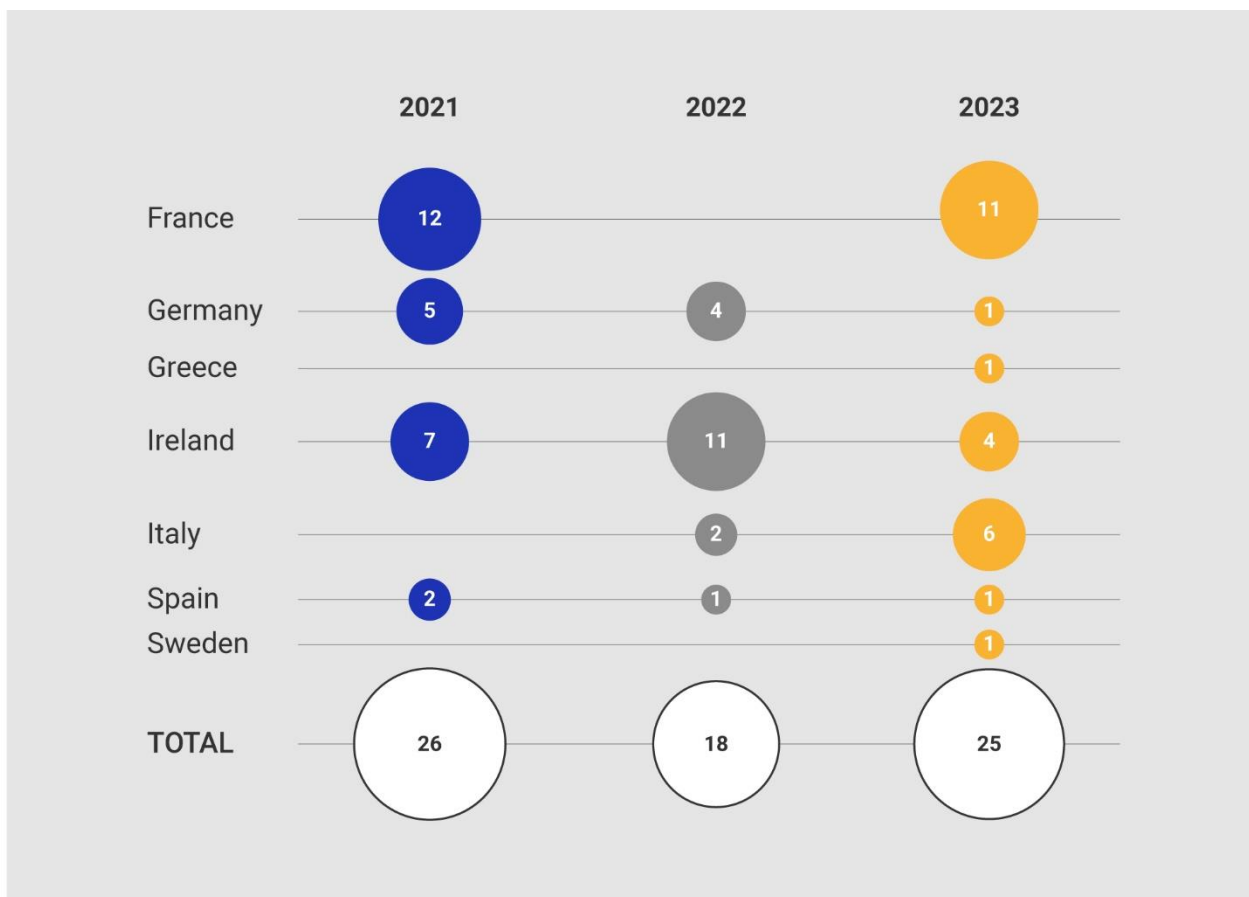
25 arrests were made in the EU for ethno-nationalist and separatist terrorist offences. The arrests concerned offences committed by individuals connected to the Fronte di Liberazione Naziunale Corsu (FLNC) and Ghjuventù clandestina Corsa (GcC) (11), Partiya

⁷⁵ France reported the 2021 and 2022 data on ethno-nationalist and separatist attacks in 2024; the data was not reflected in the TE-SAT 2022 and 2023. 4 attacks were executed in 2021 and 22 in 2022.

Karkerên Kurdistanê (PKK) (9), to Dissident Republican groups (4) and in one case, to a member of Euskadi ta Askatasuna (ETA).

Nine individuals aged between 30 and 61 years, all male, were arrested in Italy (6), Sweden (1), Germany (1), and Greece (1) for terrorist offences related to the PKK. In six cases, the individuals arrested were Turkish citizens, while three individuals with Turkish origins had EU citizenship.

Where the primary offence was reported, those arrested were charged for various offences, including membership of a terrorist organisation (10), possession of facilitating items (2), financing of terrorism (1), propaganda and recruitment for terrorist purposes



(1). Arrests in 2023 also included also individuals with key roles in the management of PKK activities in the EU.

In June 2023, a person was arrested in Germany on arrival at Frankfurt (Main) airport. The suspect had been detained in Cyprus since March 2023 on the basis of a European arrest warrant. He had been working as a full-time PKK cadre since 2018, and coordinating 'area managers', cadres and activists under his command. He also oversaw the collection of donations.

In Corsica, France, eleven individuals connected to the Fronte di Liberazione Naziunale Corsu (FLNC) and Ghjuventù clandestina Corsa (GcC) were arrested in 2023, for terrorist offences.

In 2023, four individuals connected to Dissident Republican groups were arrested in Ireland for terrorist offences.

In January 2023, two men were arrested on suspicion of membership of the IRA.

In April 2023, the authorities arrested two Irish nationals, one male and one female, for possession of explosives and membership in the INLA (Irish National Liberation Army). Both were released without charges.

Concluded court proceedings for ethno-nationalist and separatist terrorist offences

Court proceedings related to ethno-nationalist and separatist terrorism were concluded in France, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain and Sweden and resulted in 27 convictions. The majority concerned the PKK and others linked to ETA, the *Arab Struggle Movement for the Liberation of Ahwaz* (ASMLA) and Corsican groups.

In Spain, in October 2023, an ETA member was found guilty on 14 counts of attempted terrorist assassination and two counts of causing terrorist damage and sentenced to a total of 182 years of imprisonment. The man, who had previously been sentenced to five years in prison for terrorist offences in France, was convicted in connection to the July 2003 terrorist attacks on hotels in Alicante and Benidorm. As a result of the attacks, several people were injured, and considerable damage was caused.

In September 2023, a Swedish appeals court upheld the conviction of a man prosecuted on charges that included, among others, attempted financing of the PKK and attempted aggravated extortion. The man was sentenced to four and a half years in prison.

Ethno-nationalist and separatist terrorism and violent extremism

Groups and structures

Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê (PKK)

The main activities carried out by PKK members and cells in the EU continued to be fundraising, recruitment of new members and fighters, training and propaganda.

Recruitment focused both on attracting new members for the EU cells and recruiting fighters for the conflict zones. In some cases, there were indications of members of the group abducting individuals and enlisting them as fighters against their will.

Most of the funds raised for the PKK are believed to originate from apparently legitimate activities (donations, events, membership fees, sales of goods and media products etc.), as well as from criminal activities such as extortion, fraud, racketeering, money laundering or drug trafficking. The PKK carried out its regular annual fundraising campaign ‘kampanya’, raising millions of Euros across Europe. The funds are used to maintain the organisation or for other activities including propaganda, recruiting fighters and organising their travels to the conflict zones. Sources of funds to the PKK are believed to originate from criminal activities in or affecting the Members States, such as money laundering, drug trafficking or migrant smuggling, in order to finance its activities.

PKK’s propaganda continued to focus on the goal of a free, autonomous Kurdistan under the leadership of the PKK, serving both recruitment and fundraising purposes. It targets young individuals with a Kurdish background in particular, and continues to be disseminated through activists and journalists, websites, television, social media or the printed press. Some of the media outlets used by the PKK to disseminate its propaganda are based in the EU.

Dissident Republican groups

Northern Ireland related terrorism remained a key threat in Ireland. Several groupings express similar left-wing ideologies and all pursue constitutional and political change through the use of violence. Counter-terrorism law enforcement efforts continued in order to ensure that the Republic of Ireland is not used for logistical, financial or operational support for those carrying out attacks in Northern Ireland or elsewhere.

These groupings are secretive, oath-bound organisations which operate on a para-military basis. They are divided into cell structures in an effort to ensure security around their criminal activities and have a hierarchical structure with defined roles and responsibilities. They maintain engineering skills in the manufacturing of IEDs and have access to firearms and ammunition. These groupings have also used the induction and training manual previously provided to IRA members, known as the 'Green Book'. In addition to offline events, e.g. commemorations, and their own websites, Dissident Republican groups use mainstream social media, often through accounts of affiliated and non-proscribed organisations, to propagate their narratives and publicise accounts of their interactions with law enforcement. Finance is raised through ad hoc fund-raising events and criminal activities such as the smuggling of illicit goods and taxation of other criminal actors.

On 22 February 2023, an off-duty officer from the Police Service of Northern Ireland was shot by a number of armed and masked males in Omagh. The attack was later claimed by the IRA.

Corsican separatist groups

Over the years, criminal activities linked to the FLNC have diversified in order to provide new sources of income and employment to its members, for instance the practice of extortion and intimidation against individuals, traders or entrepreneurs. Members of the leadership of FLNC also practice violent acts against competitors and are involved in embezzlement schemes.

OTHER AND NOT SPECIFIED FORMS OF TERRORISM OR VIOLENT EXTREMISM

Key findings

- ▶ **2** attacks were perpetrated (one failed and one foiled), categorised as other and not specified forms of terrorism
- ▶ **27** arrests were made for terrorist offences related to other or not specified forms of terrorism in seven Member States.
- ▶ **10** individuals were convicted of terrorist offences that were categorised as other or not specified form of terrorism in 2023.

Other or not specified terrorist attacks, arrests, convictions and penalties

Other or not specified terrorist attacks

In 2023, one failed attack in Spain was categorised as a not specified form of terrorism.

On 9 November 2023, a failed attack was carried out by an unknown actor, who shot a Spanish politician in his face on a street in Madrid and caused him injuries. The act has been investigated as a terrorist attack, although its motivation has not yet been determined.

One plot categorised as another form of terrorism was foiled in France.

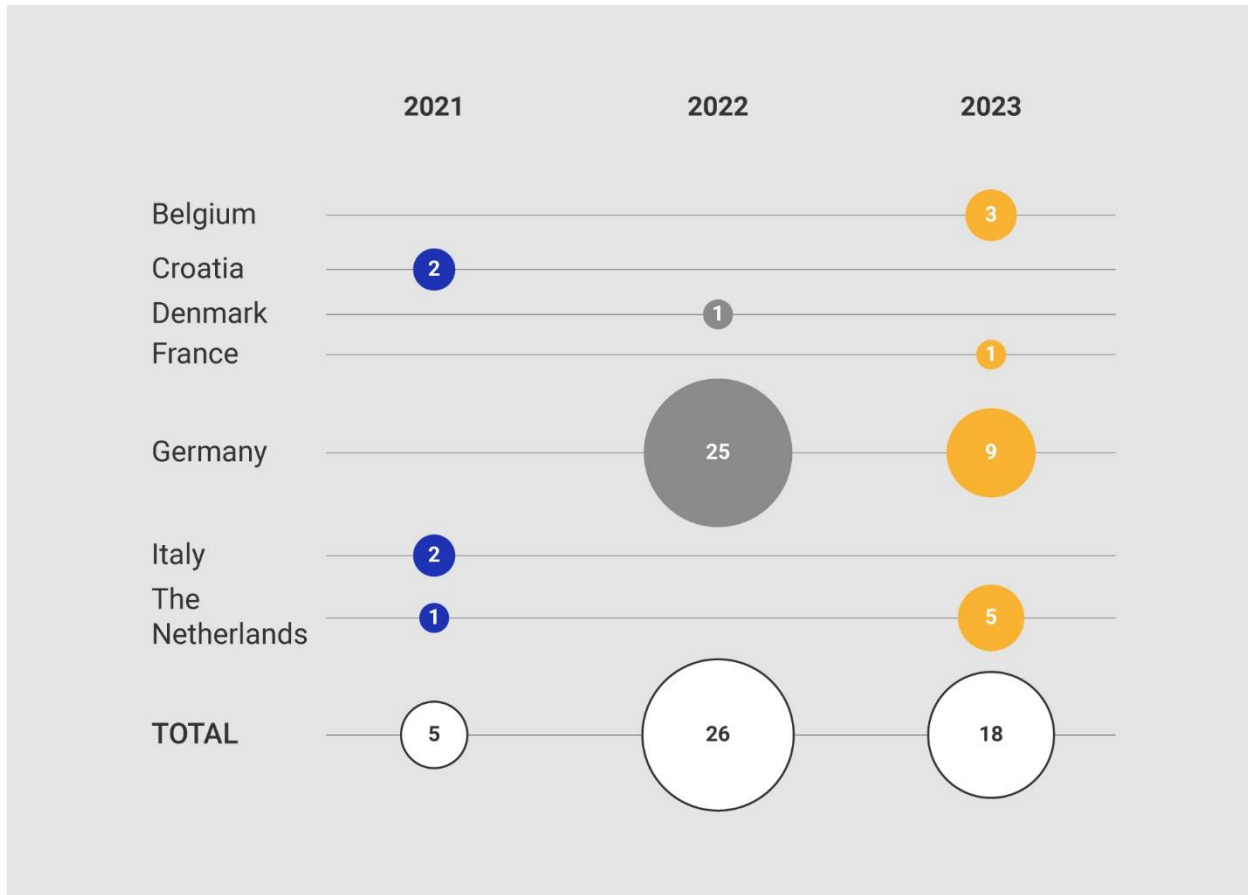
Arrests for other and not otherwise specified terrorist offences

In 2023, 18 persons were arrested for terrorist offences related to other forms of terrorism, respectively 9 in Germany, 5 in the Netherlands, 3 in Belgium and one in France. Nine individuals were arrested for not specified terrorism offences, of which four in Spain, two in Greece, and one each in Belgium, Bulgaria and Ireland.

Four people arrested in the Netherlands for other forms of terrorism were charged with incitement and threats, while one person was arrested after entering the premises of a TV station, armed with a firearm and a knife, allegedly to kill a TV presenter.

Arrests for other terrorist offences in EU Member States, 2021-2023

(Source: Member States' contributions to EU TE-SAT)



Nine arrests of members and supporters of the Reichsbürger (Citizens of the Reich) movement were made in Germany in 2023, following the investigations into the 2022 terrorist plot to overthrow the German government by causing mass electricity outages and kidnapping the German health minister⁷⁶.

In May 2023, three key individuals linked to the Reichsbürger movement were arrested, for plotting to overthrow the German government. One of the arrested suspects is believed to have made financial contributions to the movement and attended sponsor meetings as well as rallies to recruit new followers. Another male suspect reportedly assumed a leading role in the security branch of the group and was responsible for recruiting personnel and providing them with military training. Five other suspects were arrested in connection to the Reichsbürger plots in October 2023. One male suspect was believed to have been looking for high-voltage power lines to attack, in order to cause massive blackouts. A female suspect allegedly ran a chat group where information and instructions on how to make explosives were exchanged. A German police officer was shot and wounded during one of the raids in Germany. One person was arrested on suspicion of several counts of attempted murder and grievous bodily harm.

⁷⁶ Europol, 2023, EU Terrorism Situation & Trend Report (TE-SAT) 2023, accessible at <https://www.europol.europa.eu/publications-events/main-reports/tesat-report>

Some lone actors, often socially isolated and mainly active online, spread hatred against a wide range of targets and also have the potential to commit acts of violence, thus posing a threat to the society as a whole.

In September 2023, an individual was arrested and accused of broadcasting violent videos on an online channel and recruiting from among its 80 members individuals willing to participate in a violent action project against specific targets (Jewish community, LGBT, police, politics, Brussels airport). The plan of the arrested person was to commit an attack at the Gay Pride in Amsterdam on 5 August 2023. He was also reported to have distributed explosives instructions (how to make TATP) via E2EE applications. On his online channel, he said he wanted to fight "the Nazis, the communists, the socialists, the right, the left, the centre, and the white supremacists". Explosive material was found at his home.

Concluded court proceedings for other terrorist offences

In 2023, 10 convictions and 2 acquittals of terrorist offences were categorised as other or not specified form of terrorism.

ANNEXES

Amendments to national legislation on terrorism in 2023

Austria

With Federal Law Gazette I, Nr. 223/2022, the provisions on the enforcement of measures were amended. § 23 of the Austrian Penal Code now entitled “*Detention in a facility for dangerous recidivists and dangerous terrorist offenders*” and stipulates in its paragraph 1a (which entered into force on 1 March 2023), as follows:

“If a person is sentenced to at least eighteen months’ imprisonment after reaching the age of eighteen, the court shall at the same time order their detention in an institution for dangerous reoffenders,

- 1. if the conviction is exclusively or predominantly for one or more intentional criminal offences pursuant to Articles 278b to 278f,*
- 2. if he has already been sentenced once to an unconditional custodial sentence of more than one year exclusively or predominantly for acts of the kind referred to in paragraph 1, a criminal offence under Articles 75, 76, 84(4) or (5)(1) or (3), 85(2), 86(2) or 87 or for an intentional criminal offence dangerous to the public after the age of 16, and*
- 3. if it is to be feared that he will otherwise continue to commit such offences with serious consequences because of his propensity to commit offences of the kind referred to in subparagraph 1.”*

Furthermore, the Austrian Criminal Records Act was amended (entry into force 1 March 2023) and regulates in its § 2 par. 1 fig 7a that judicial supervision and directives imposed on persons convicted for terrorist association, terrorist offences, financing of terrorism or terrorist offences, for an offence under the National Socialist Prohibition Act 1947 or for anti-State association, anti-State movement or religiously motivated extremist association or for an offence under the twenty-fifth section of the Austrian Penal Code must be entered therein. Convictions for terrorist or anti-State criminal offences, genocide, crimes against humanity or war crimes, which were entered in the criminal record shall be marked separately for the purpose of providing information in accordance with § 9d, which regulates a ‘special information in terrorist and anti-state criminal cases as well as genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes’. In addition, a specific ‘criminal record certificate for terrorist and anti-state criminal cases as well as genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes’ can be obtained under certain conditions, such as that this certificate is required for the assessment of the suitability to carry out a specific professional activity within his/her area of responsibility.

With Federal Law Gazette I, No. 40/2023, § 278c of the Austrian Penal Code (‘Terrorist offences’) was amended in order to comply with Directive (EU) 2017/541 on combatting terrorism by deleting its fig. 5 ‘dangerous threat’ and amending its fig. 10 ‘an *intentional* criminal offence under Article 50 of the Weapons Act 1996, *Section 43 of the Explosives Act 2010* or Article 7 of the War Material Act’ and adding paragraph 2a ‘any person who threatens to commit one of the offences specified in subparagraph 1 (1) to (10) shall, if they commit this threat with the terrorist aptitude and intent specified in subparagraph

1, be liable to a custodial sentence of six months to five years.’ The amendments entered into force on 1 May 2023.

Bulgaria

On 6 October 2023, several amendments to the Measures Against the Financing of Terrorism Act entered into force. The amendments concern, *inter alia*, the procedure for identifying natural and legal persons, groups and organisations that meet the criteria for inclusion in the sanctions lists under the UN Security Council resolutions or EU regulations, as well as the procedure for adding or removing them from the lists. In addition, provisions have been introduced on the exchange of information among the competent national authorities, and the obligation to notify the competent authorities when freezing of funds, other financial assets or economic resources or the prohibition to provide financial services, funds and other financial assets or economic resources have been implemented. It also imposes an obligation for the monitoring of compliance on various institutions, including the Bulgarian National Bank, the Financial Supervision Commission, the National Revenue Agency, the Communications Regulation Commission and the Ministry of Interior.

Greece

Law 5067/2023 was published in the State Gazette on 20 November 2023. It implements the provisions of Regulation (EU) 2021/784 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2021 on addressing the dissemination of terrorist content online and other regulations of the Ministry of Justice, designating the competent national authorities for issuing orders for the removal of terrorist content online and for the control of cross-border removal orders for such content.

The Hellenic Telecommunications and Post Commission (E.E.T.T) was designated as the competent national authority for monitoring the implementation by hosting service providers, of specific measures to prevent and address the misuse of hosting services for the dissemination of terrorist content and for imposing administrative penalties for the infringements provided for in Regulation (EU) 2021/784. The E.E.T.T. was also entrusted with the creation and maintenance of a Registry of hosting service providers and a register of removal orders.

Competent authorities have been designated for the prosecution and adjudication of infringements of Regulation (EU) 2021/784, which, according to Article 12 of Law 5067/2023, constitute criminal offences. In accordance with Articles 14 and 15 of Law 5067/2023, for the infringements envisaged for in Article 18 of Regulation (EU) 2021/784 only administrative penalties are imposed, with the procedure for monitoring and enforcement of such penalties being laid down by E.E.T.T. As provided for in Article 12 of Law 5067/2023, an infringement of the obligation to remove or disable access to terrorist content in all Member States at the latest within one hour of receipt of the removal order provided for in Article 3(3) of Regulation (EU) 2021/784, without prejudice to paragraphs 7 and 8 of Article 3 of Regulation (EU) 2021/784, as well as the immediate breach of the obligation to provide information about terrorist content involving an imminent threat to life in accordance with Article 14(5) of Regulation (EU) 2021/784, constitute offences, punishable by a prison term of up to three years and a fine.

In addition, Articles 16 and 17 of Law 5067/2023 establish a legal protection procedure for hosting service providers and content providers subject to a removal order for terrorist

content was issued, as well as the right to appeal against decisions of the E.E.T.T. imposing administrative penalties for infringements of Regulation (EU) 2021/784 or infringements of Law 5067/2023.

In addition, Articles 18, 19 and 20 of Law 5067/2023 set out the way in which the competent national authorities, hosting service providers and the Ministry of Justice comply with the transparency and information obligations, in accordance with Articles 7, 8 and 20 of Regulation (EU) 2021/784. Finally, Article 21 of Law 5067/2023 provides that Article 36A of Law 4689/2020 on public incitement to commit a terrorist offence via the internet applies as an alternative to the procedures established by Regulation (EU) 2021/784 and Law 5067/2023.

Hungary

In 2023, Act CXI was adopted, amending Act LIII of 2017 on the Prevention and Suppression of Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing and certain provisions of Act XLI of 2021 on the control of cash entering and leaving the territory of the Union. The amendments will enter into force between 1 January and 1 July 2024. The amendments introduce the necessary provisions for the implementation of the regulations amending the EU standards on restrictive measures against Belarus in view of its involvement in the Russian aggression against Ukraine, and introduces, among other things, the concept of atypical financial restrictive measures. The change in legislation affects domestic counter-terrorism standards.

Italy

Several amendments to Italian terrorism legislation were adopted in 2023. Legislative Decree No.107 of 24 July 2023 amended the Italian law in conformity with the provisions of Regulation (EU) 2021/784 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2021 on addressing the dissemination of terrorist content online. Decree No.105 of 10 August 2023 in conjunction with Conversion Law No.137 of 9 October 2023 concerning, *inter alia*, urgent provisions on criminal and civil proceedings, address interception in criminal proceedings for certain types of crimes, including crimes committed for the purpose of terrorism. Decree No.145 of 18 October 2023, in combination with Conversion Law No.191 of 15 December 2023 concerning certain economic and fiscal measures, introduces a new Article 34-bis in Legislative Decree No.231 of 21 November 2007 providing for the establishment of centralised IT databases at self-regulatory bodies to prevent any money laundering or terrorist financing activities.

Portugal

On 16 January 2023, Law 2/2023 was published in Portugal, which introduced several amendments to counterterrorism legislation. The law amends Law 93/99, regulating the application of witness protection measures in criminal proceedings, Law 10/2001, approving the legal regime of undercover investigations for the purpose of prevention and criminal investigations, Law 5/2002, establishing measures to combat organised and economic-financial crimes, Law 52/2003, approving the law to combat terrorism, Law 49/2008, approving the Criminal Investigation Organisation Law, Law 104/2009, approving the regime for granting compensation to victims of violent crimes and domestic

violence, the Criminal Code, the Code of Criminal Procedure and Law Decree 137/2019, approving the new organisational structure of the Judicial Police.

Slovenia

On 22 February 2023, the Act amending the Criminal Code (KZ-1 J) entered into force, amending Article 108a, which regulates the travel abroad for the purpose of terrorism, and Article 109 regulating the financing of terrorist activities.

Terrorist attacks in 2023

Terrorist attacks in 2023 in the EU, as reported to Europol by Member States, per type of terrorism

COUNTRY	JIHADISM	RIGHT-WING	LEFT-WING AND ANARCHIST	ETHNO-NATIONALIST AND SEPARATIST	OTHER	TOTAL
Belgium	2					2
France	8	1		70	1	80
Germany	3					3
Greece			1			1
Italy			30			30
Luxembourg		1				1
Spain	1		1		1	3
Total per type of terrorism	14	2	32	70	2	120

Terrorist attacks in 2023 in the EU, as reported to Europol by Member States, per type of terrorism and type of attack (completed, failed, foiled)

COUNTRY/STATUS OF ATTACK	COMPLETED	FAILED	FOILED	TOTAL
Belgium	1		1	2
France	72		8	80
Germany	1		2	3
Greece		1		1
Italy	23	7		30
Luxembourg			1	1
Spain	1	1	1	3
Total per status	98	9	13	120

Arrests for terrorist offences in 2023

MEMBER STATE	JIHADISM	RIGHT-WING	LEFT-WING AND ANARCHIST	ETHNO-NATIONALIST AND SEPARATIST	OTHER	NOT SPECIFIED	TOTAL
Austria	18						18
Belgium	67	4			3	1	75
Bulgaria	1					1	2
Croatia		2					2
Denmark	1						1
Finland		2					2
France	62	4		11	1		78
Germany	39	1	1	1	9		51
Greece	2		2	1		2	7
Hungary	1						1
Ireland	9	1		4		1	15
Italy	14	4	10	6			34
Latvia	1						1
Lithuania		1					1
Luxembourg	5						5
Malta	9						9
Netherlands	18	5			5		28
Poland	1						1
Romania	2						2
Slovakia	1	2					3
Spain	78		1	1		4	84
Sweden	5			1			6
Total per type of terrorism	334	26	14	25	18	9	426

Convictions and acquittals for terrorist offences in 2023

This annex contains statistical information on the concluded court proceedings for terrorist offences, as reported by Eurojust.

Number of convictions and acquittals for terrorist offences per EU Member State in 2021, 2022⁷⁷ and 2023⁷⁸, as reported by Eurojust

MEMBER STATE	2021	2022	2023
Austria	37	48	39
Belgium	107	81	67
Bulgaria	1		
Croatia			1
Denmark	5	8	5
Finland			5
France	107	110	90
Germany	55	54	63
Greece	4	1	2
Hungary	10	26	4
Italy	10	21	5
Latvia	1	1	
Netherlands	35	26	46
Portugal		2	
Romania		2	1
Slovak republic		1	
Spain	51	42	29
Sweden		4	1
TOTAL	423	427	358

⁷⁷ The data for the previous years correspond to the data reported in the respective TE-SAT reports.

⁷⁸ Eurojust received contributions containing information on terrorism-related convictions and acquittals in 2023 from the following EU Member States: Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Romania, Spain and Sweden.

In Lithuania the proceedings against two individuals were dismissed due to the expiration of the statute of limitations. This decision by the court of first instance was further upheld by the courts of appellate and cassation (final appeal) instances. These proceedings are not included in the number of convictions and acquittals for terrorist offences.

Number of convictions and acquittals in 2023 per EU Member State and per type of terrorism, as reported by Eurojust

MEMBER STATE	Jihadist	Right wing	Ethno-nationalist and separatist	Left wing and anarchist	Other/Not specified	TOTAL
Austria	37			1	1	39
Belgium	64	3				67
Croatia					1	1
Denmark	5					5
Finland	1	4				5
France	59	17	13	1		90
Germany	38	15	4	6		63
Greece	1			1		2
Hungary					4	4
Italy	5					5
Netherlands	33	5	1	1	6	46
Romania	1					1
Spain	21		8			29
Sweden			1			1
TOTAL	265	44	27	10	12	358

Number of convictions and acquittals per EU Member State in 2023, as reported by Eurojust⁷⁹

MEMBER STATE	CONVICTIONS	ACQUITTALS	TOTAL	ACQUITTALS in %
Austria	28	11	39	28%
Belgium	53	14	67	21%
Croatia	1	0	1	0%
Denmark	4	1	5	20%
Finland	5	0	5	0%
France	73	17	90	19%
Germany	63	0	63	0%
Greece	2	0	2	0%
Hungary	4	0	4	0%
Italy	5	0	5	0%
Netherlands	28	18	46	39%
Romania	1	0	1	0%
Spain	22	7	29	24%
Sweden	1	0	1	0%

⁷⁹ The number of convictions in the Netherlands includes one case in which the court ruled that the facts were proven but the defendant was declared not punishable.

EUROPOL COUNTER-TERRORISM ACTIVITIES

The European Counter Terrorism Centre (ECTC) was established at Europol, in early 2016, to ensure a coherent and comprehensive response to the constantly changing terrorist 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 develops new ones to address the emerging needs of its stakeholders. The ECTC's established CT networks also facilitate the exchange of knowledge and best practices, thus supporting competent authorities in their fight against terrorism.

Recent and current events at a global scale have a significant impact on the CT landscape. The ECTC actively monitors these events as well as their impact on the online dimension, in order to offer solutions to the challenges that Member States face.

The ECTC's support to Member States often involves the facilitation of contacts with CT Units from non-EU countries, either in the context of the CT Joint Liaison Team or through outreach activities in countries neighbouring the EU, especially in the Western Balkans or the MENA region. In addition, the ECTC facilitates contacts with other EU JHA agencies and international organisations with a counter-terrorism mandate, as well as with private parties.

The Counter Terrorism Programme Board (CTPB), composed of representatives of the Heads of CT law enforcement agencies of the Member States and Schengen-associated countries, ensures the implementation by the ECTC of the operational activities related to the needs of the Member States.

The EU terrorism-related information hub

The main task of the ECTC is to facilitate the exchange of CT information among LEAs from all Member States and third parties. This information exchange is facilitated by Europol's Secure Information Exchange Network Application (SIENA). The exchange platform enables swift, secure and user-friendly communication and exchange of operational and strategic crime-related information and intelligence. It responds to a multi-level security requirement and is available for the exchange of information on different classification levels, with a strong focus on interoperability with other systems at Europol and other cooperating States and organisations.

The ECTC adds value to the collected information by processing and analysing it and linking it in a timely manner to other relevant information available in our databases, thus facilitating the identification of links between investigations in different Member States and enabling co-operation between the respective CT units. In addition, the ECTC provides its stakeholders with OSINT expertise in the course of their CT investigations. To this end, ECTC's specialised units can collect information in a timely manner and provide high quality intelligence and analytical support relevant to the ongoing investigations.

In addition, the ECTC can support the establishment of Operational Task Forces (OTFs). The OTFs are dedicated groups that are formed on a temporary basis with representatives from Member States' CT units and the ECTC, with a mandate to carry out a specific project or task. Through the OTFs, the ECTC coordinates intelligence and investigative efforts focused on the terrorism related activities of one or more selected high-value targets and members of their CT network.

At the forefront of law enforcement innovation and research

The ECTC has key strategic support capabilities that are able to identify European-wide CT implications and promote liaison with relevant international partners.

ECTC's expertise in all aspects of terrorism provides Member States with an insight and a better understanding of current and emerging terrorist threats, as well as an overview of the situation in areas of the world that are of interest or of concern to them. This enables decision-making at strategic and policy level and provides guidance for tactical and operational actions.

In addition, the ECTC has established a wide network of partners to discuss new developments in terrorism and to exchange best practices in countering terrorist threats, to ensure that the best policy advice is provided.

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

The ECTC's expert reports, which are available to Member States and third parties as well as to Online Service Providers (OSPs), enable them to improve their content detection, analysis and moderation of Terrorism Content Online.

In addition, the ECTC offers its support through the SIRIUS project to meet the needs of Member States' competent authorities to have access to cross-border electronic evidence. The SIRIUS project addresses the complexity of cross-border access to electronic evidence in criminal investigations. With OSPs often based in non-EU jurisdictions, with their fragmented co-operation policies and lengthy and cumbersome legal procedures for accessing data, it is challenging for EU law enforcement to make timely and efficient progress in criminal investigations. In response to this and other related challenges, SIRIUS has established itself as a central hub for knowledge sharing on cross-border access to electronic evidence in the EU. Over the past five years of operations, SIRIUS has become the go-to source of information for EU investigators seeking assistance to prepare direct data requests to foreign-based OSPs, as well as an essential reference point for EU judicial authorities seeking guidance on data acquisition methods in cross-border circumstances.

Security in partnership - bringing together relevant partners for cross-border cooperation and joint action and delivering agile, real-time operational support

The ECTC has developed and provides tailored support to Member States' investigations with a wide range of services and products.

The ECTC's dedicated teams of CT specialists and analysts deliver operational analysis in support of the investigations conducted by the competent authorities of the Member States and third parties, harnessing facial recognition technology and specific data analysis techniques, such as link analysis, social network analysis, geospatial analysis and timeline analysis. Member States are also supported in the online dimension of their investigations allowing them to generate new leads based on the information retrieved from the suspects' online communications and open sources. In addition, the ECTC uses the Terrorist Finance Tracking Programme (TFTP) for the broader purposes of detecting terrorism financing, tracing terrorist money flows and supporting efforts to uncover terrorist cells.

To enhance the ability of the Member States to mitigate and address challenges posed by CBRN and explosive incidents, the ECTC has developed a CBRN-E capability to support the

competent authorities in their relevant investigations. The CBRN & Explosives Team conducts technical analyses of bomb-making procedures and the illicit use of explosives, and is readily available to be deployed to provide on-the-spot support to ongoing investigations. The team also reports on relevant emerging trends and threats, provides Europol's partners with timely and pertinent expertise on CBRN-E issues and organises trainings and conferences. Additionally, the team acts as the secretariat for the European Explosives Ordnance Disposal Network (EODN).

At the request of the competent authorities in the Member States, the ECTC can deploy a multi-disciplinary team to provide on-site operational support in terrorism investigations. The deployed team of CT experts provides tailor-made services, including criminal analysis, on-the-spot technical support (e.g. digital forensics and facial recognition), CBRN-E expertise, financial or open-source intelligence (OSINT) and propaganda expertise. ECTC experts can also be deployed on action days or during major international events.

To facilitate timely engagement and cooperation on CT related matters, the ECTC hosts the Counter Terrorism Joint Liaison Team (CT JLT), which is composed of CT experts from the Member States and third parties with operational agreements represented at Europol's HQ. The CT JLT meets weekly at Europol's premises and provides a trusted environment where information can be shared swiftly, securely and efficiently.

The ECTC's support to its counterparts goes beyond the capabilities available within the department, as it has access to the expertise of the other Europol Operational Centres, to provide the best possible services to them in the course of their investigations.

A platform for European policing solutions

The ECTC actively addresses 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 combat the dissemination of terrorist propaganda online, including through the organisation of joint Referral Action Days (RAD). The Unit provides operational support to CT cases with an online component and develops tools and techniques to detect and deter terrorist abuse of the internet.

The EU IRU 's prevention strategy continues to focus on the close engagement with Member States and OSPs to exchange best practices and expertise, and enhance the streamlining of referral processes. In addition, the EU IRU uses specialised linguistic and subject matter expertise to detect threats and claims of responsibility for attacks against 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.

The restricted SIRIUS platform on the Europol Platform for Experts (EPE) offers its knowledge to more than 8 000 members from law enforcement and judicial communities, representing a total of 47 countries worldwide. This includes representatives from all Member States, as well as countries with operational/working agreements with Europol and international or cooperation agreements with Eurojust, forming one of the largest communities on the EPE. SIRIUS activities include guidelines and best practices on the direct engagement with more than 70 OSPs as well as legal and policy review documentation; more than 50 IT tools to support investigators; training activities and capture the flags exercises. The Project also organises international conferences and workshops to bring together public and private stakeholders handling electronic evidence.

With the adoption of the EU Electronic Evidence legislative package, SIRIUS will further solidify its position as an internationally recognised actor that looks at the future of electronic evidence and shares knowledge and expertise on digital cross-border investigations.

The EU IRU also works in close co-operation with Member States and the European Commission on the use and further development of PERCI, the technical solution to facilitate the implementation of Regulation (EU) 2021/784 on the dissemination of terrorist content online. Since its launch in July 2023, PERCI coordinates the issuance of referrals and the transmission of removal orders to hosting service providers while safeguarding fundamental rights and freedoms.

PERCI is the first cloud-based tool with privacy and security by design. It is the first web-based, collaborative tool that allows for real-time communication between users in the Member States and Europol working to combat the distribution of illegal content online.

Last but not least, in order to address current or emerging security threats, the ECTC initiates the creation of working groups comprising CT experts from Europol and the Member States. The working groups draw on the expertise of their members in order to find solutions to pressing CT-related challenges that are of interest to different EU MS.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AI	Artificial Intelligence
AQ	Al-Qaeda
AQAP	Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula
AQIM	Al-Qaeda in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb
ASMLA	Arab Struggle Movement for the Liberation of Ahwaz
CIRA	Continuity Irish Republican Army
CSAM	Child Sexual Abuse Material
CSE	Child Sexual Exploitation
CT	Counter Terrorism
CT JLT	Counter Terrorism Joint Liaison Team
CTPB	Counter Terrorism Programme Board
DHKP-C	The Revolutionary People's Liberation Party/Front (Devrimci Halk Kurtulus Partisi/Cephesi)
DR	Dissident Republicans
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
E2EE	End-to-end Encryption
EAQB	Ezzedeen Al-Qassam Brigades
ECTC	European Counter Terrorism Centre
EEODN	European Explosives Ordnance Disposal Network
EPE	Europol Platform for Experts
ETA	Euskadi ta Askatasuna
EU IRU	European Union Internet Referral Unit
FAI/FRI	Informal Anarchist Federation/ International Revolutionary Front
FLNC	Fronte di Liberazione Naziunale Corsu
FTF	Foreign Terrorist Fighters
GCC	Ghjuventù clandestina Corsa
HSM	Harakat al-Shabaab al-Mujahideen
HTS	Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham
IED	Improvised Explosive Device
IID	Improvised Incendiary Device
IRA	Irish Republican Army
IRU	Internet Referral Unit
IS	Islamic State
ISCAP	IS Central Africa Province
ISKP	Islamic State Khorasan Province
ISMP	IS Mozambique Province
ISSP	IS Sahel Province
JAK	Jund Al-Khilafa
JLT	Joint Liaison Team
JNIM	Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wa al-Muslimin
LEAs	Law Enforcement Authorities
LLM	Large Language Model

MENA	Middle East North Africa
MINUSMA	United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NIRA	New Irish Republican Army
NPO	Non-profit Organisation
OSINT	Open-source Intelligence
OSP	Online Service Providers
OTF	Operational Task Force
PKK	Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê
RAD	Referral Action Days
RIRA	Real Irish Republican Army
SDF	Syrian Democratic Forces
SIENA	Secure Information Exchange Network Application
TCO	Terrorist Content Online
TFTP	Terrorist Finance Tracking Programme
ZOG	Zionist Occupied Government