



Launch press conference

“Stop Extremism” European Citizens’ Initiative Kick Off

Berlin, July 3rd, 2017

"Stop Extremism" European Citizens' Initiative launched to effectively fight extremism across Europe

The "Stop Extremism" European Citizens' Initiative was registered with the European Commission on June 12th, 2017, launching the process of collecting votes. The Initiative's organizers now have a one-year period, ending on June 12th, 2018, in which to collect a total of one million votes from at least seven EU member states.

The purpose of the Citizens' Initiative is to secure an EU directive to close loopholes in the fight against extremism, resulting in the establishment of a mechanism to ensure effective, Europe-wide protection from extremism.

The catalog of measures that the initiative supports begins with protective measures for at-risk groups such as women and children, and extends, via improved methods to protect workers and employers, to measures to combat the financing of extremism.

The most important goals of this Citizens' Initiative are to secure sufficient votes in favor to oblige member states to implement their proposals, by:

- Using positive motivation to identify and eliminate extremism within the Single Market;
- Using transparency to ensure that financial support of extremism is clearly visible to all citizens;
- Using employment law and compensatory damages to effectively combat extremism within the Single Market.

Organizers of the Initiative

The European Citizens' Initiative – ECI was established by Seyran Ateş, Sebastian Reimer, and Efgani Dönmez.

Seyran Ates, a German lawyer and author, who is active in the fields of minority rights, anti-discrimination and human rights. She regularly comments on TV and radio on the topics of migration and Islamic reform. She attracted attention with the founding of a liberal mosque, open to all, and consequently received death threats from extremists.



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Sebastian Reimer, an Austrian lawyer, worked for the Constitutional Law Office of the Austrian Federal Chancellery before founding his own firm. He is a specialist in constitutional and public law, particularly constitutional rights and data protection.



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Efgani Dönmez, a former member of the Austrian Federal Council, is a conflict and mediation advisor and a leading light in the Austrian movement for the respect of fundamental human rights.



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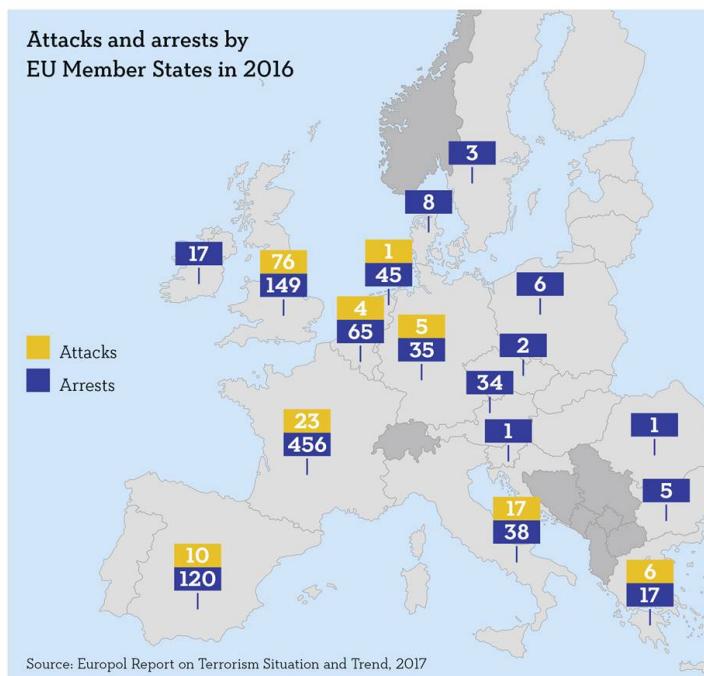
Extremism: a multi-faceted problem

Extremism is an increasing phenomenon in our societies

Extremism has many faces. Regardless of whether it takes the form of right-wing extremism, left-wing extremism, religious fundamentalism or online hate speech, there is always one common factor: it involves a rejection of our democratic social order and shows a readiness to resort to violence to achieve its goals. Extremism threatens our free, liberal societies and is on the rise in all western countries. We distinguish five different types of extremism:

- Left-wing extremism;
- Right-wing extremism;
- Religious fundamentalism;
- Online hate speech;
- Politically motivated crime committed by foreigners.

According to the current Europol Terror Report, a total of 1,002 arrests were made in Europe in connection with crimes motivated by extremism. In Europe, there were a total of 142 planned, thwarted or completed attacks motivated by extremism, with most occurring in Great Britain (76) and France (23), followed by Italy (17), Spain (10), Greece (6), Germany (5), Belgium (4) and the Netherlands (1). During this period, 47 terror attacks could not be prevented, resulting in loss of human life as well as substantial property damage. If cases that were not reported to the authorities, or not pursued by them, were taken into account, along with cases of online extremism, the number would be many times greater.



Extremism damages society on many levels

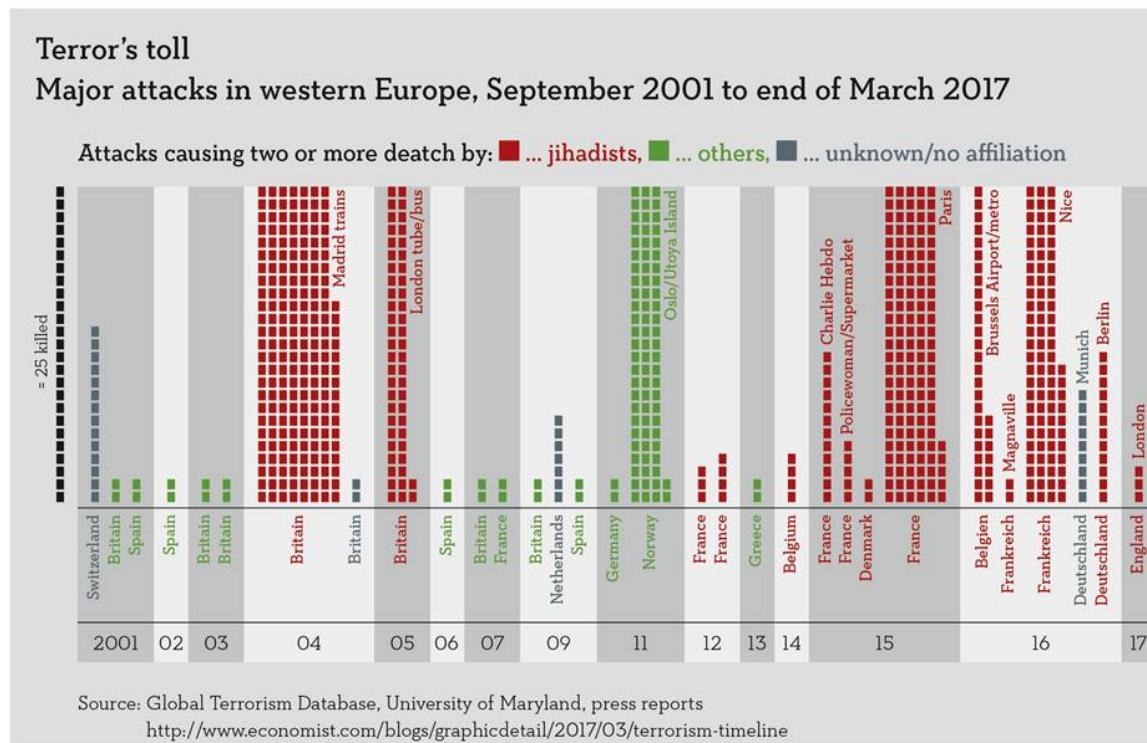
Extremism causes enormous damage to our societies. It not only polarizes society, fermenting hate between different groups, but it also manifests itself in human suffering and significant damage to the wider economy.

Terrorist activities have the most direct, visible, and serious effect on Europe, with their effect extending beyond the associated human tragedies. After an attack, many people's subjective feeling of security suffers. People behave more cautiously and travel less. Leaving aside the human tragedy, destruction, enhanced security precautions and a feeling of unease among most of the population remain. A social environment of this kind is inimical to a properly functioning economy.

Extremism, as we understand it, has additional, even more far-reaching effects. Women who cannot pursue vocational training due to the extreme views of their husbands cannot effectively take part in the labor force. In all likelihood, they will always remain recipients of transfer payments. Children with a family background of immigration, who hear from foreign-funded educational institutions that they are enemies of Europe, will be shut out from integration for a long time. Internet forums that require constant monitoring from ISPs due to anti-Semitic posts cost more to operate in terms of money and effort. There are countless examples of effects of this kind.

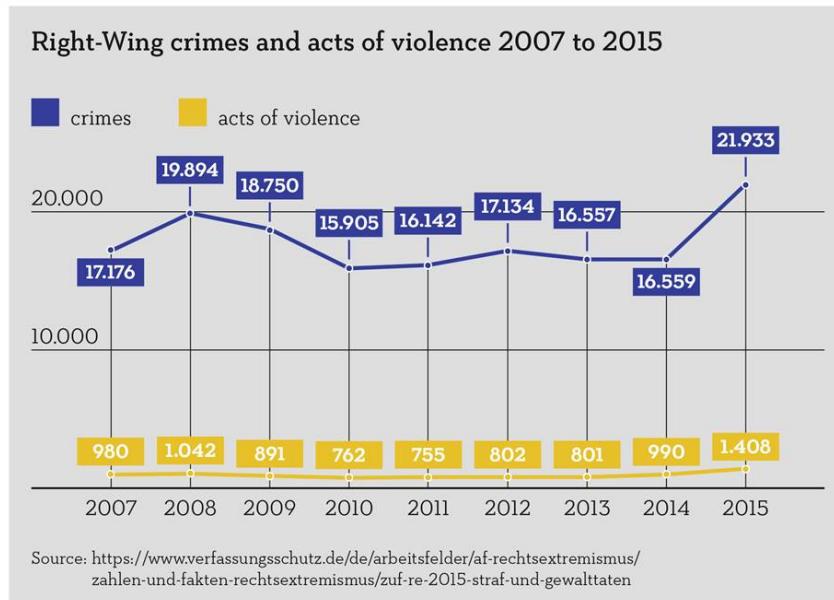
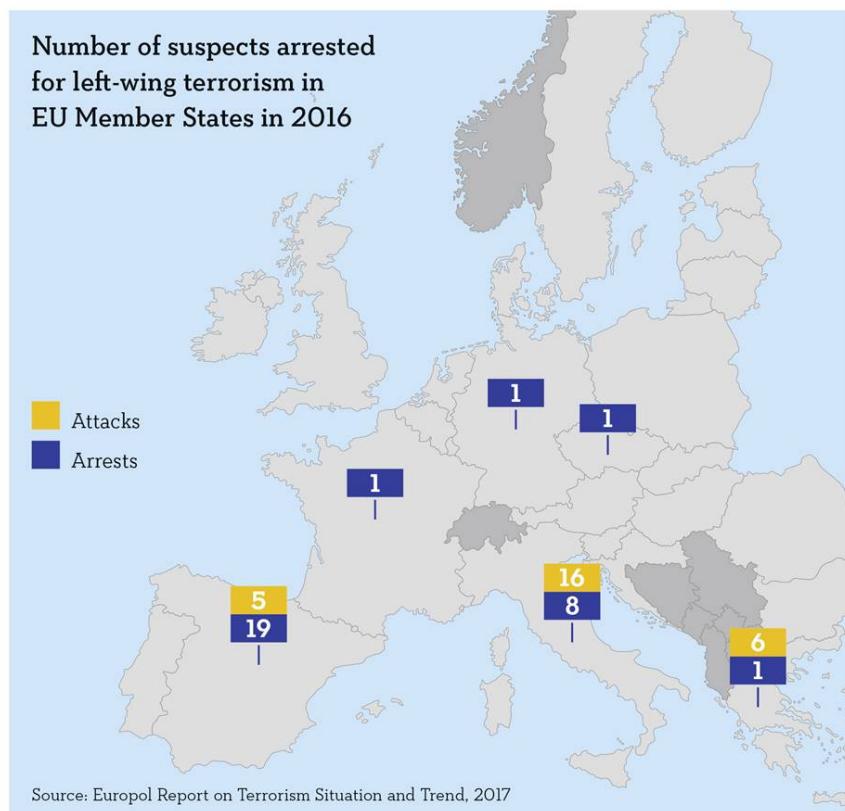
Facts, figures, and data on extremism

Many crimes motivated by extremism result in the loss of human life. According to data taken from the Global Terrorism Database, Islamism was the largest motivation behind fatal terror attacks. Although Islamic attacks cause the largest numbers of deaths in Belgium and France, the largest number of deaths due to non-Islamically motivated attacks came because of Anders Breivik's mass murder in 2011.



It is apparent that the majority of fatal attacks in recent years were Jihadist in their origin. In particular, Great Britain, France, and Germany have recently been affected by attacks of this kind.

Moreover, the official statistics depict a relentless, ongoing threat from left and right-wing extremism, sometimes with alarming increases in the number of attacks.



New phenomena, such as online hate speech, have not yet been comprehensively examined. Nevertheless, initial studies show that women, those with a migrant background and LGBTQ people are subject to attacks on a grand scale, and the police lack the capacity to take on such an enormous endeavor as pursuing the originators of hate speech.

Why is there a need for a European citizens' initiative?

All our discussions, with people from the widest variety of countries of the European Union, revealed a consistent message. There is a need to engage in joint action to take a stand against extremism. Moreover, it is not enough to address any single form of extremism, such as Islamism, but to combat extremism in all its forms.

The European Citizens' Initiative is the best tool to reach as wide an audience as possible. Our aim is to send a powerful political message with the support of a million voters. Ultimately, our core aim is to strengthen basic constitutional rights so that our children and grandchildren can continue to live in peace and prosperity. Because extremism also acts across borders, this mammoth task can only be solved by a joint effort, and European Union law is the best way to ensure both that the Single Market continues to function in future and that extremism has no opportunity to flourish.

Encouraging better protection from extremism

We have had enough of reading about extremists on a daily basis. We will no longer tolerate the creeping acceptance of terror, hate, and violence in our society. We have a proposal for how we can deal with extremism. We call for a European Anti-Extremism Directive, which should effectively protect:

- us (i.e., every person in the European Union);
- our economy; and
- young people, who are still in education in particular

from extremism. To ensure its success:

1. We can no longer afford to be ambivalent toward intolerance and hatred – which are the sources of extremism;
2. We have based our draft Directive on a stable, legal foundation, namely the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.
3. We must not be indifferent as to whether basic rights are observed!
4. We have a particular obligation to protect all people who, via their own ideas and hard work, wish to create prosperity and transform the European Single Market into the world's largest single market!
5. We seek to mitigate the negative economic, social and political consequences of extremism in the EU Member States, as peace is a prerequisite for prosperity!
6. We must ensure that the proposed measures are both effective and proportionate, which we achieve by aligning our approach with existing EU law such as the General Data Protection Regulation.

We are acutely aware that we are proposing progressive measures that will encounter widespread criticism. Nevertheless, fundamental human rights and economic prosperity cannot be taken for granted: this discussion needs to take place in a pluralistic society. We

are convinced that our measures can only be implemented in an inclusive and strong Europe.

Encouraging an expansion of the concept of “extremism”

We are calling for a consistent, Europe-wide definition of “extremism” to ensure that extremists are unable to exploit differences in definition to create loopholes. Moreover, a tougher approach needs to be taken against all kinds of extremists. Anyone who specifically and deliberately works to undermine our fundamental rights, particularly European rights, and thereby cause our society to drift apart, should be neither protected nor supported. The principles expressed in the European Treaties include the principles of [freedom of expression](#), [freedom of religion](#), and universal [dignity](#) and [equality](#). For that reason, all forces that act (more subtly, perhaps, but all the more effectively as a result) to undermine open and inclusive societies in Europe should, in future, fall within the definition of extremism.

In Europe, we have struggled to obtain our fundamental rights for centuries: it is now time for us to live up to those rights, because they are at risk and, with them, the education and prosperity of current and future generations.

Our aim is to achieve effective, legal protection from all people who are harmed as a result of extremists and extremism!

Support for Extremism

- Fundamentally opposed to the core values of the European Union
- Not only active measures, but also approval, financing, and failure to distance oneself
- A combination of the general and specific definitions (list of facts)

Measures

- European Single Market certification
- Extended obligations to declare publishers' identities
- Watchlist
- (simplified) dismissal process
- (simplified) compensatory damages
- Financial penalties
- Exchange of information between authorities

What should be done with extremists?

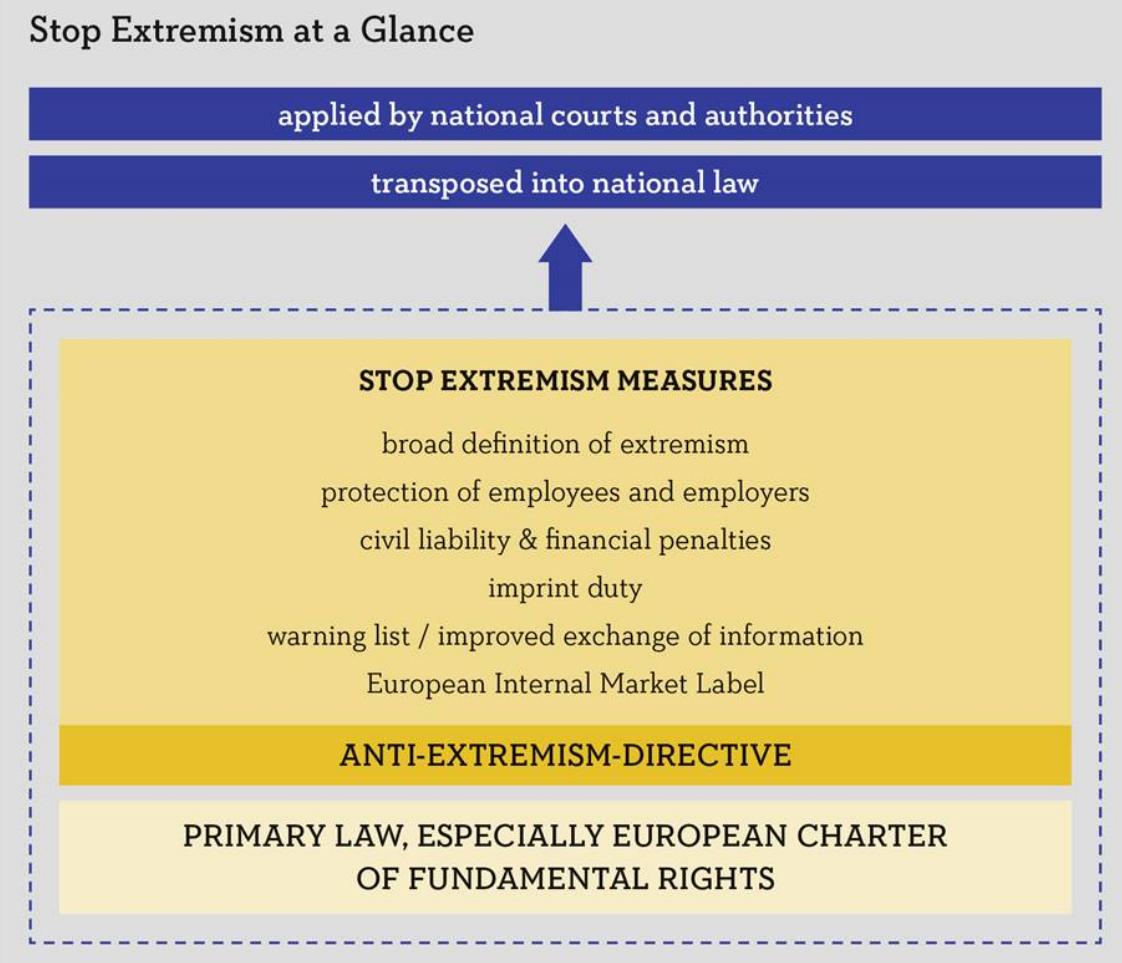
- Supporters of extremism must expect to be included on a European watchlist which should, in itself, come with extensive consequences. Firstly, the list should be published and updated by the EU authorities on a daily basis. In order to maintain the rule of law, it is planned that people will only be added to the list following due process. Moreover, supporters of extremism will be obliged to publish details of their three largest donors as well as all those who provide over €100,000 in annual funding.
- Employees of extremists will enjoy enhanced protection from dismissal and will be able to leave their employment immediately, and will benefit from a right to compensation as a result.
- The same shall apply, on a purposive basis, for the employers of extremists, who will be entitled to terminate their employment relationship with immediate effect with no obligation to pay compensation.
- A series of measures are provided for under the civil law to enable people harmed by extremists to obtain compensation for the loss and damage that they suffer. Moreover, there should be a reversed burden of proof, as in the Anti-Discrimination Directive, which should make it easier for victims to assert their claims.
- Moreover, fines should be available, in an amount equal to ten times the amount of money spent on extremist activities, or €20 million, whichever is higher.
- The authorities in EU member states should cooperate more closely in future, both with each other and with the European Commission and other bodies, to combat extremism.

We want to see an anti-extremism certification label

- There are many organizations that are keen to distance themselves from extremism in all its forms. They should be given the opportunity to obtain anti-extremism certification in their respective countries. Those who are awarded this seal of approval will receive “official” certification that they operate in line with fundamental rights and will be able to display this publicly.

We want to know who is supporting extremism

- Separately, we seek an extension of the obligation to declare the identity of the publisher of materials so that anyone who obtains information online or via the print media will know both who is behind a particular initiative and who supports that initiative. That should extend from supporters through to the ultimate economic owner, as is the case with anti-money laundering efforts. This measure should be seen as a way to combat disinformation and prevent targeted false information or “fake news” from being spread without any assumption of responsibility. Anyone who is subject to this requirement could also be included on the watchlist if they fail to meet their obligations promptly.



Some concrete examples of extremism

Anyone who incites hatred against specific groups (based on gender, sexual orientation, religion, etc.) or who encourages discrimination against or expulsion of these groups from Europe	<i>Example: a user tweets to call for the expulsion of all Jews from Europe.</i>
Anyone who rejects public institutions, their neutrality, and independence or the primacy of state law, or who calls for the outright abolition of the shared value basis	<i>Example: a group of individuals forms a "state" and asserts that they do not acknowledge the state in which they live, as it is a false construct.</i>
Anyone who prevents anyone from accessing their rights.	<i>Example: a judge appears on TV to claim that the testimony of women should be of lesser value than that of men.</i>
Anyone who calls for bodily punishment and the death penalty in particular.	<i>Example: someone argues during a TV debate that torture should be used as an effective technique, due to the high value of information gained.</i>
Anyone who expresses threats against particular groups.	<i>Example: a person threatens to assault members of a particular ethnic group if they are seen in the area again.</i>
Anyone who calls for a breach of administrative or criminal laws.	<i>Example: a member of a neo-Nazi movement encourages members of the group to show foreigners who's boss and to riot in front of a refugee center.</i>
Anyone who commits terrorist acts, or other crimes in the context of terrorism.	<i>Example: a person provides an "acquaintance" with shelter, who goes on to commit a terrorist attack.</i>
Anyone who visits another country to take part in armed conflict.	<i>Example: a young person goes to a country where there is a civil war and joins an armed militia there.</i>
Anyone who prevents another from obtaining education or training, whether in the public or private sphere.	<i>Example: children and teenagers are not allowed to pursue studies or an education.</i>
Anyone who commits a crime, such as assault, to inhibit others in their personal development or prevent them from developing their own views	<i>Example: a father rejects his son's sexual orientation and instead beats his son over a period of several years in order to force him into a heterosexual relationship.</i>
Anyone who aggressively attempts to recruit others	<i>Example: a youth worker uses threats and intimidation to encourage refugees to take part in meetings of a religious sect.</i>
Anyone who supports any of the behaviors	<i>Example: the operator of an online portal</i>

referred to above, whether through media content or communications measures, by collaborating, by exchanging information, or by failing to distance him or herself from such extremism.

Anyone who conceals payments for extremist purposes or who provides extremism with financial aid.

decides to make incitement to hatred available via the online portal.

Example: an NGO receives financing from undeclared foreign sources and thereby supports efforts to implement a theocracy.

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