

Proposal for a new observatory
"Fight against terrorism – a global approach"

SeRaT - Security and Resilience against Terrorism

1. Proposal

For several years, the EU has been the target of terrorism. [The 2016 Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign And Security Policy states that terrorism and violence plague Europe itself.](#) The latest Europol report available points out that even though the total number of incidents linked to jihadism in the EU has slightly decreased, this phenomenon remains geographically widespread. As for the threats posed by left and right extremists, this report indicates that it has recently become a major concern and it underlines the powerful dynamism of extreme right-wing extremist groups on the Internet. Online communication helps strengthen international links, to organize new events and to recruit new members. In that respect, the 2019 Christchurch mosque shootings attacks in New Zealand were broadcasted live on the Internet. This proves the Internet's importance for spreading propaganda by terrorists.

Today, more than ever, terrorism is a transnational threat. The conclusions of the EU Foreign Affairs Council of 16 June 2020 recalled that terrorism was a global phenomenon affecting several regions in particular the Western Balkans, North Africa, the Middle East, Sahel region and the Horn of Africa. The stability of these regions directly affects the security of the EU. This made clear when the civil war in Iraq and Syria ended up having repercussions on European security. First, these conflict zones have led to the emigration of "foreign fighters" from the EU. In parallel, the tail-off of the caliphate of the Islamic State (IS) raised fears of returnees. In addition, these conflict zones have generated a large-scale migration movement towards Europe resulting in heightened security risks. Furthermore, its propaganda strategy lives on. a 2019 French Senate report aptly notes on this subject that "However, if the terrorist attacks that have struck France since 2015 have taught us one thing, it is that the situation in the Near and Middle East, and in Africa, has direct consequences for the security of European countries. The idea of a "Fortress Europe" in which European countries could take refuge while remaining indifferent to the violence that afflicts their neighborhood is completely unrealistic. From this point of view, the question of European defense is not a long-term theoretical political debate "¹.

As a matter of fact, internal security and defense are closely intertwined. Terrorism can be put down as a fluid and mobile threat and to efficiently counteract, the "Counter-Terrorism Agenda for the EU" published in December 2020 strongly recommends "to redouble collective efforts, in particular to thwart the attraction of extremist ideologies and to better protect public spaces targeted by terrorists. We must also overcome the false dichotomy between the online and the offline world, harmonizing the respective security environments". Needless to say that terrorism exploits every vulnerability, whether physical (for example less defended spaces such as public spaces) and societal. It intends to fracture society and to tear it apart. As a result, it poses a

¹ https://www.senat.fr/rap/r18-626/r18-626_mono.html

deadly threat to the EU and its Member States by attacking its values and its way of life. By taking lives of European citizens and targeting its symbols, terrorist attacks pose a threat not only to Europe's peace and prosperity but also endanger democracy, the rule of law and respect for fundamental rights.

The recent attacks on European soil were carried out by individuals that operate with basic preparation, limited training, rudimentary material and readily available weapons. Some of these attacks are committed by migrants while others are committed by Europeans that were born and raised in the Member States. This homegrown terrorism stresses the importance of the ever-growing trend of indoctrination of people radicalized without ever flying to a conflict zone. Radical ideologies spread easily through digital societies. Therefore, successfully tackling terrorism involves cracking down on the extremist ideologies dissemination, to ensure a surveillance of hate messages posted on social platforms and a swift removal of such content. This content is taken down through new identification technologies and legislation that compels social media and online service providers to take the necessary steps to that end. Other measures/actions should not be neglected such as tracking of terrorist financing sources, ensuring a tightened inspection of migrants arriving on EU territory or paying attention to the radicalization process leading to violent extremism and terrorism. It also implies new protection mechanisms, whether it pertains to public spaces or critical infrastructures. Indeed sudden new forms of terrorism can emerge. This risk of attacks perpetrated by means of new technical equipment such as drones or chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear (CBRN) substances should be taken into consideration.

Dealing with a transnational, global and evolving phenomenon, requires a dynamic response that encompasses all the major relevant stakeholders. It not only involves intelligence services, law enforcement agencies and judicial authorities but also academic and private sector, in particular companies developing cutting-edge technological solutions. It also entails the participation of member states civil societies, among them non-profit organizations, religious groups, communities and diasporas. This cross-cutting action also requires the collaboration of armed forces in third-country operations as well as third-countries partnerships. As the 2020 "Counter-Terrorism Agenda for the EU" concludes, "the EU's approach to external security within the framework of the common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) will remain an essential component of EU efforts to countering terrorism and violent extremism in order to strengthen stability and protect European security interests. The [EU] will continue to play a key role in enhancing strategic and operational cooperation with third countries and international organisations, by making full use of its external tools".

Consequently, in this global approach to security, a comprehensive response includes the EU institutions, agencies and bodies. Over the past two decades, the EU fight against terrorism has evolved at fast pace. Considerable progress has been made, namely approximation of national legislations on terrorist offenses, European civil and military missions deployment in third countries, extension of agencies tasks and mandate (Europol, EU-Lisa, Frontex, etc.), setup of a dedicated network ("RAN") aimed at understanding radicalization and strengthening bonds between members of civil society and coordinating stakeholders across Member States borders, creation of financial programs devoted to research and innovation, modernization of external border management and flow control, operational cooperation enhancement aimed at reducing social and spatial vulnerabilities, creation of legal and technical tools aimed at improving fight

against terrorist propaganda. Current propositions and future projects that are already in progress attest that European action is leading the action from the forefront in relation with counterterrorism. A close and detailed analysis should be carried out accordingly in order to identify new trends and, if the opportunity arises, to allow SeRaT to deliver highly valuable contributions to the EU institutions, agencies and bodies and to all relevant national institutions.

2. Mandate

In the light of these aforementioned elements, this new SeRaT observatory is entrusted with the task of:

- Becoming an actor of the EU anti-terrorism landscape by sharing information and building a culture of multidisciplinary cooperation;
- Fostering a multi-level cooperation among all the relevant stakeholders in the field of EU fight against terrorism;
- Monitoring a strategic evolution related to political, legal and technological developments;
- Promoting studies and research whose scope needs to be defined;
- Functioning as a forum of discussion and a debate venue (e-conferences incl.) to identify new trends and new solutions;
- Ensure SeRaT to be a key-actor within the scope of its global mandate by:
 - contributing to the visibility of its action in the field of EU fight against terrorism;
 - preparing all recommendations to be presented and discussed at the yearly meetings;

If it finds matter to make proposals to the EU institutions and respective national authorities, the observatory will propose to the EURODEFENSE Council to transform itself in a European Working, with a specific mandate.

All these elements will be defined during its first member meeting, in particular about which areas should be prioritize. A work programme will be set up.