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# Preventing Radicalisation and Extremism – The Views of Police Students in Croatia<sup>1,2</sup>

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## **Purpose:**

The paper presents approaches and strategies to preventing radicalisation in Croatia, police officers training, together with a study among police officers on preventing and deterring radicalisation in Croatia. The purpose of the paper is to present the context and the state-of-the-knowledge on preventing radicalisation, and moreover to analyse the approaches, police officers perceptions and training models on a national level.

## **Design/Methods/Approach:**

A study among 108 of students of the Police College, Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Croatia, was conducted. The purpose was to analyse police officers' perceptions of the state of radicalisation in Croatia and effectiveness of multi-stakeholder and cross-sectoral approach to preventing radicalisation and violent extremism in Croatia. Another study aim was to evaluate whether, using a proposed training design, it is possible to strengthen the notion of institutional interdependence in police officers' efforts in the area of facilitating and supporting disengagement from radicalisation. A questionnaire developed in the *First Line* project dedicated to the training of various stakeholders in preventing radicalisation was used before and after the training.

## **Findings:**

The findings of our study on preventing and deterring radicalisation in Croatia show that the tackling and prevention of violent extremism and terrorism is largely seen as being top-down-oriented by the respondents, driven by the nation state and the main task of security sector agencies, namely the government, intelligence services and specialised police units. It is also important to mention that the police officers did not underestimate their own role and accountability at the local level for preventing radicalisation.

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2 This paper is an extensive and in-depth version of the contributions presented at the 12th Crisis Management Days (27-29 May 2019) in Šibenik, Croatia, and at 6th Zagreb Police College Research Days in April 2019 in Zagreb, Croatia.

**Originality/Value:**

Education and training in the area of preventing radicalisation is necessary for efficient collaboration between stakeholders. The study analysed the influence of proposed training model on practitioners' perceptions. While the participants in the study still mainly emphasize the role of security agencies, we established that appropriate training can strengthen the awareness of the interdependence of the various stakeholders engaged in these efforts. The study results are useful for police management to further strengthen the transfer of prevention strategies to local level and develop training models for various stakeholders.

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**Keywords:** radicalisation, extremism, de-radicalisation, disengagement, training, Croatia, police

**Preprečevanje radikalizacije in ekstremizma na Hrvaškem – stališča študentov Visoke policijske šole**

**Namen prispevka:**

Prispevek predstavlja pristope in strategije naslavljanja radikalizacije ter opisuje vsebino usposabljanja s področja preprečevanja radikalizacije policistov na Hrvaškem. Osrednji del prispevka predstavlja raziskava o stališčih policistov glede preprečevanja in odvratanja od radikalizacije na Hrvaškem. Namen prispevka je predstaviti aktualna znanja in pristope k preprečevanju radikalizacije ter analizirati nacionalne strategije, modele usposabljanja in stališča policistov o učinkovitosti pristopov.

**Metode:**

Raziskava je bila izvedena na vzorcu 108 študentov (policistov) Visoke policijske šole Ministrstva za notranje zadeve Republike Hrvaške, s ciljem oceniti stališča policistov o stanju radikalizacije na Hrvaškem in učinkovitosti večdeležniškega ter medsektorskega pristopa k preprečevanju radikalizacije in nasilnega ekstremizma. Z raziskavo so avtorji ugotavljali tudi, ali je s pomočjo razvitega modela za usposabljanje policistov mogoče okrepiti njihovo zaznavo medinstitucionalne soodvisnosti pri izvajanju policijskega dela na področju preprečevanja radikalizacije.

**Ugotovitve:**

Rezultati raziskave kažejo, da se po mnenju anketirancev pri preprečevanju radikalizacije na Hrvaškem spodbujajo in uporabljajo od zgoraj-navzdol usmerjeni pristopi, ki jih spodbuja država, med glavne deležnike pa umeščajo vlado in državne varnostne organizacije, še posebej obveščevalne službe in specializirane policijske enote. Na podlagi rezultatov so avtorji prispevka ugotovili, da policisti ne podcenjujejo svojega vpliva in dobro razumejo svojo vlogo pri preprečevanju radikalizacije na lokalni ravni.

**Izvirnost/pomembnost prispevka:**

Izobraževanje in usposabljanje s področja preprečevanja radikalizacije je pomemben ukrep za vzpostavljane učinkovitega sodelovanja med

različnimi deležniki. V raziskavi so avtorji analizirali tudi vpliv izdelanega modela usposabljanja na stališča policistov in ugotovili, da lahko z ustreznim usposabljanjem okrepimo njihovo razumevanje in ozaveščenost o soodvisnosti med deležniki. Rezultati raziskave so uporabni predvsem za policijski management pri nadaljnjem razvoju preventivnih strategij in modelov usposabljanj za različne deležnike ter njihovem prenosu na lokalno raven.

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**Ključne besede:** radikalizacija, ekstremizem, deradikalizacija, odvracanje, usposabljanje, Hrvaška, policija

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Radicalisation and terrorism denote a serious security challenge common to both the European Union and the Western Balkans (European Council & Council of the European Union, 2018), whereas the latter is often presented as an origin region of radicalisation and violent extremism in Europe. Thus, the international community has recognised that better inter-agency coordination and cooperation on the regional and local levels with respect to counter-radicalisation initiatives is needed. Hereinafter, this paper analyses the basic concepts and context surrounding radicalisation process, counter-radicalisation and de-radicalisation strategies with an emphasis on multi-agency and community policing approach. Furthermore, we present the approaches and strategies to preventing radicalisation in Croatia, police officers training, together with a study among police officers on preventing and deterring radicalisation in Croatia. In the final section, the results in relation to international approaches are analysed, and the effects of the training determined. The purpose of the paper is to present the context and the state-of-the-knowledge on preventing radicalisation, and to analyse the approaches, police officers perceptions and training models on a national level.

## 2 RADICALISATION AND PREVENTION STRATEGIES

Although terms like radicalisation, extremism, violent extremism and terrorism are commonly used today, they are individual phenomena that represent different and complex concepts, are supported by different processes, and characterised by a variety of factors (Lombardi, 2015). According to the European Commission's Expert Group on Violent Radicalisation (2008), *radicalism* is advocacy of, and commitment to, sweeping change and the restructuring of political and social institutions. As an ideology, radicalism challenges the legitimacy of established norms and policies, but it does not necessarily lead to violence. People are considered radicals when they adopt radical beliefs, which happens through the processes of radicalisation. The European Commission defines *radicalisation* as a complex phenomenon of individuals or groups becoming intolerant with regard to basic democratic values such as equality and diversity, as well as a rising propensity to use means of force to reach political goals that negate and/or undermine

democracy (European Commission, 2018). Radicalisation is not necessarily a threat to society, especially if not connected to violence or other unlawful acts, such as incitement to hatred. The important link here is the fusion with a certain type of ideology that inherently denies individual freedom (or equal rights) to persons not part of the radical person's in-group. Only in this combination (i.e. behaviour determined by ideology based on inequality) should we recognise a radicalisation process as a threat to society, as well as a path in need of interruption by using various, individually tailored methods (Koehler, 2015). In connection to religious beliefs, radicalism is the concept closely related to *fundamentalism*, while terrorism differs from them significantly. From a process point of view (Lombardi, 2015), fundamentalism, radicalism and terrorism are linked, with *terrorism* being the final point of violent expression; however, these phenomena are dissimilar because the first two do not necessarily imply the use of violence, while terrorism is violent by nature. In this dynamic process from radicalism to terrorism, extremism and violent extremism occur as an intermediate stage. *Extremism* is understood as a consequence of radicalism and described by Neuman (2010) as opposing a society's core values and principles. This in fact could be applied to any ideology that advocates racial or religious supremacy and/or opposes the core principles of democracy and universal human rights. Extremist groups and parties tend to be anti-constitutional, antidemocratic, anti-pluralistic, fanatical, intolerant, non-compromising, single-minded, authoritarian and adhering to an ends-justify-the-means philosophy (Schmid, 2011). Moreover, *violent extremism* is regarded as the willingness to use violence, or to support its use, to further particular beliefs of a political, social, economic or ideological nature (De Leede, Hauptfleisch, Korolkova, & Natter, 2017). Violent extremism therefore includes, but is not limited to, acts of terrorism (Nasser-Eddine, Garnham, Agostino, & Caluya, 2011).

Radicalisation is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon (Carpenter, Levitt, & Jacobson, 2009), which is always a consequence of various events and circumstances. Different factors on the individual-, group- and macro-levels push and pull a person to or from a violent extremist group (Prislan, Černigoj, & Lobnikar, 2018). Certain factors might have traction, pulling the individual down a path of violent radicalisation, while other factors might make an individual more vulnerable, pushing him or her towards violent radicalisation (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe [OSCE], 2014). Thus, the causes of radicalisation that can lead to violent extremism and terrorism can be observed and studied at three levels: macro (i.e. political system, state power and control, relations in society), mezo (i.e. community, local environment and social groups) and micro (i.e. problems with identity, failed integration, feelings of alienation, marginalization, discrimination, relative deprivation, humiliation, stigmatization and rejection) (Schmid, 2013). Despite numerous studies in the area, there is no universal theory to describe radicalisation, as some circumstances and drivers that apply to certain groups are not applicable to others (Hutson, Long & Page 2009; Lowe, 2014). Thus, the radicalisation process is very much diverse – it can be short or long, depending on how many ties to the existing order the radicalising individual has. It can have several layers and take several

forms (socio-cultural, religious or ideological, and political) (Schmid, 2011). There are also multiple paths to radicalisation and individuals can exhibit both high and low levels of education, income, religious or political knowledge (Institute for Economics & Peace, 2017). As a result, research on motivation and processes of individual (de)radicalisation is still in its infancy (Koehler, 2015), while reliable empirical information and sophisticated theories about how radicalisation occurs, to whom, when, where and why, are not yet established (Wiktorowicz, 2005). Considering this diversity, various approaches to investigating the processes and factors of radicalisation have emerged. Social perspective for example focuses, among other things, on the mechanisms that facilitate the evolution of various grievances into terrorism, passing from individual to group extremism (McCauley & Moskaleiko, 2008). Another path of the sociological research on radicalisation addresses the external conditions that can foster its occurrence. This manifests in in-depth studies of particular political and economic contexts and social classes in which extremist deviations are likely to flourish (Lowe, 2017). Trying to understand the psychological motivation of radicalised individuals is also seen as a valuable approach to uncover the root causes of violent extremism and terrorism (Moghaddam, 2005).

Current theorizing highlights the importance of situational factors as the essential drivers of radicalisation. As Schmid (2011) denotes the process often begins with a feeling of displacement (e.g. from migration), a feeling of relative deprivation (e.g. in relation to the host society) and a feeling of alienation and existential doubts. Persons deficient in material and social resources or lacking the community networks that would enable them to cope successfully with anxiety-producing situations are likely to experience increased social vulnerability (Cajner Mraović, Butorac, Lobnikar, & Žebec, 2018). In this sense, discrimination, human rights violations, relative deprivation, lack of access to education, social interactions, group dynamics and interpersonal relationships can play a significant role as pull factors (OSCE, 2014). Sageman (2008) for example also emphasizes the importance of interpersonal interactions among like-minded people as crucial for radicalisation to occur. This factor, labelled as “mobilization through networks” phenomenon involves validating and confirming one’s ideas and interpretation of events with other radicalised people (Prislán et al., 2018). Likewise, Wiktorowicz (2005) when investigating radicalisation of Muslims in Great Britain, found that the process operates through networks of radicalised friends and family members, often following personal crisis and/or feelings of alienation brought on by perceptions of discrimination. Amongst young recruiters, drop-out rates from school and unemployment were for example identified as a push factor into violent extremism (Veenkamp & Zeiger, 2015). Young individuals “at-risk” are also very susceptible for online propaganda which is still an essential tool of terrorist and extremist groups for reaching out to audience for recruitment, radicalisation and fundraising (Europol, 2018).

Radicalism and violent extremism are phenomena dealt by counter-radicalisation and de-radicalisation strategies and processes. Below we provide an illustration of their fundamentals. *Counter-radicalisation* is a prevention strategy aimed at preventing violence and radicalisation. Here, non-violence still

prevails, but there is a risk of radicalisation and violent extremism (Clutterbuck, 2015). Counter-radicalisation measures contribute to objectives relating to the fight against radicalisation and refer to proactive initiatives that are targeted towards communities to reduce the potential risk of radicalisation, such as the mass distribution of counter-extremism messages (Bertram, 2015). Further, *de-radicalisation* strategies target already radicalised individuals and groups for whom the risk for violence is thus higher. De-radicalisation may be understood as the opposite of radicalisation (Demant & de Graaf, 2010; Della Porta & LaFree, 2012); it is a process of letting go of radical thoughts. The concept of de-radicalisation can be most broadly described as the activity of encouraging individuals, already characterised by extremist beliefs or violent religious or political ideologies, to adopt more moderate, non-violent views. Koehler (2015) states that de-radicalisation denotes a process of individual or collective cognitive change from criminal, radical or extremist identities to a non-criminal or moderate psychological state. According to Rabasa, Pettyjohn, Ghez, and Boucek (2010), de-radicalisation also refers to the developing of perceptions that using violence to promote social change is unacceptable. The changes de-radicalisation aims for are within the individual's system of values and include the rejection of extremist ideology and acceptance of values that are typical of the majority (Ashour, 2009; Rabasa et al., 2010). De-radicalisation has to be differentiated from *disengagement*, which describes the mere behavioural role change (from offending to non-offending) while leaving the ideological or psychological aspect to one side (Koehler, 2015). While de-radicalisation is the process of changing individuals' beliefs, disengagement is the process of changing an individual's behaviour in order to withstand the violence and withdraw from a radical group (Rabasa et al., 2010). On this basis, we may generalise that disengagement is the first step in the process of de-radicalisation. First off, it is necessary to change the behaviour of a radicalised individual, and then the long process of changing individuals' beliefs and values takes place. Both de-radicalisation and disengagement usually involve interventions (e.g. by states, local communities) with the goal of promoting democratic values and encouraging the re-integration of radicalised individuals.

Countering radicalisation and violent extremism requires both effective criminal-justice action against those who incite others to violence and seek to recruit others, and comprehensive, multi-disciplinary efforts to address conditions that are conducive to radicalisation, violent extremism and terrorism (OSCE, 2014). Countering extremism was traditionally an exclusive task for security sector agencies, however in the light of contemporary international initiatives more preventive and soft-oriented approaches to prevention are being developed. For effective prevention, the problems of radicalisation and extremism must be understood as involving several intertwining core elements that together create virtually infinite possible ways for an individual's radicalisation (Prislan et al., 2018). Prevention programmes need to address various contributing factors, including different actors, and consider the social and cultural characteristic of local environments. In a local setting, shared responsibility, multi-agency cooperation and community-policing strategies play a pivotal role (Fleming & Wood, 2006). The police service is in fact a crucial actor in facilitating a preventive approach



at the local or regional level. The police is also the leading agent for promoting a preventive multi-agency approach and maintaining cooperation among the different stakeholders. This is particularly the case in local environments where police officers have established a vast and strong network of contacts. Besides the police, individuals and institutions from the local environment are the main source of information regarding the development of radicalisation and are therefore important for the efficient prevention of radicalisation. In general, the preventive work typically includes the following areas and sectors: children and adolescents, employment and social inclusion, equal opportunities and integration, cultural diversity, voluntary efforts, participation and affiliation, healthcare and foreign policy. Although not all violent extremists are young, preventive programmes and policies can produce significant effects by tailoring their aims and objectives particularly to young people. Namely, it is very important to include formal educational institutions, communities and families in efforts to counter extreme violence and radicalisation (Veenkamp & Zeiger, 2015). When planning individually and locally tailored prevention strategies, in addition to the abovementioned factors influencing radicalisation, particularly factors that discourage and demotivate people from radicalisation and adherence to extremist groups need to be taken into account. In summary, each case of terrorist radicalisation results from the unique intersection of an enabling environment and the personal trajectory and psychology of a given individual (OSCE, 2014). One agreed finding in most of the empirical studies into radicalisation is that where a multi-situational position exists, it results in a more politically, socially, and economically deprived landscape making it more fertile to allow a process of radicalisation into extremism (Vertigans, 2011). The counter-radicalisation strategies need to consider such diversity and inconclusive impact of drivers and motivational factors. Regardless of the fact that prevention of radicalisation is not a new concept, in recent years practitioners and international communities are dealing with the question how these strategies can be more tailored to local settings and specific characteristics of operating in local environment, where the aforementioned diversity is much more apparent. For this reason analysing local approaches and sharing experience is important for developing good practices. Accordingly, in the sections below we analysed some basic police strategies and approaches in the area of preventing radicalisation used in Croatia, which was then also a subject of our research.

### **3 THE ROLE OF POLICE IN PREVENTING RADICALISATION AND EXTREMISM IN CROATIA**

There is growing recognition that the community policing model can significantly help with the prevention of radicalisation, violent extremism and terrorism (Pickering, McCulloch, & Wright-Neville, 2008; Spalek, 2012). The typical meaning associated with community policing is policing that occurs with the active support of citizens and inspires police to engage in forms of policing that are inclusive rather than extractive (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012). Community-oriented

policing encourages cooperation between the police and the public, between the police and other stakeholders in the community, and enhances the ability to create partnerships to achieve security and quality of life. The idea of this kind of policing is difficult to grasp because it means different things to different people and, therefore, it is appropriate to explain the Croatian model of community policing.

To achieve the successful transformation of the Croatian police, the reform included several aspects that targeted all organisational levels, from individual police officers through to the organisation as a whole. It was expected that the strategy of community policing in Croatia would positively influence how the police is public perceived, make it easier to recognise the local community policing officers, and develop close relationships between citizens and the police. For Croatia this is a strategy emphasising the altered roles of police officers, the view that the police is a public service and the changing role of citizens and the local community in the creation and maintenance of safety. The beginnings of community policing in Croatia date back to 2003 when experts from the Ministry of the Interior developed and launched a new strategy for police activities. At the organisational level, two new posts were introduced, namely “contact police officer” and “police officer for prevention”. This event constituted the backbone of the uniformed police reform (Faber & Cajner Mraović, 2003). Contact police officers have a permanent patrolling area where they rely on proactive, cooperative relationships with citizens and “key persons in the community” (principals of educational institutions, business owners, responsible persons in various institutions and organisations in the area for which the contact police officer is responsible) in order to observe and resolve problems in that area. Their engagement suggests they can recognise and resolve problems not traditionally falling under police jurisdiction, but which certainly affect the security in a given area.

Further, the Croatian police were given the opportunity to initiate the establishing of coordinating bodies made up of representatives of both citizens and the police. According to the Croatian model, these co-operative bodies in the community are Prevention Councils, which are collaborative and synergistic work alliances with related and unified capabilities, expertise and resources of community-based collaborative security enhancement (Borovec, 2013). This concept is based on the Community Coalition Action Theory (Butterfoss & Kegler, 2002). In that context, police and other partners must have sufficient organisational capacity, experience, commitment, leadership and vision to form and build an effective coalition (Butterfoss & Kegler, 2009). Theory asserts that through collaborative efforts coalition partners can achieve and maintain long-term outcomes in community security better than what individual stakeholders can achieve and maintain alone (Butterfoss & Kegler, 2009). Together, they identify problems in the community and highlight priorities for their resolution (Cajner Mraović, 2009). This stresses not only the need to activate all the potential and resources of the police, but of society at large, by creating an adequate model for coordination and partnership between the police and other competent bodies, agencies and institutions, the media and individual citizens. The earliest bodies



of this kind were established in 2004, with a total of 167 being created since then. They are well experienced in the field of community prevention considering their 15 years of experience. In summary, there are many signs that community policing is present in the work of the Croatian police. These include not only the creation of new posts within the police, contact police officers, police officers for prevention and Prevention Councils in the community, but many examples of specific cooperation between the police and the public in resolving problems related to safety and the quality of life in general. This has all contributed to the development of interactive relations, more frequent contacts by citizens with the police in non-incident situations, and changing the ratio between reactive and proactive policing (Kovčo Vukadin, Borovec, & Ljubin Golub, 2013).

In the following section, we present research findings concerning Croatian police officers' perceptions of the state of radicalisation in Croatia and effectiveness of current practical approaches, with an emphasis on a multi-stakeholder and cross-sectoral approach to preventing radicalisation and violent extremism in Croatia. Another study aim was to evaluate whether, using a proposed training design, it is possible to strengthen the notion of institutional interdependence in police officers' efforts in the area of facilitating and supporting disengagement from radicalisation.

## **4 DESCRIPTION OF THE METHOD, SAMPLE, AND INSTRUMENT**

### **4.1 Sample Description**

To evaluate the effectiveness of the various institutions that are involved in preventing radicalisation leading to extremism, a study was conducted on a sample of 108 students from the Croatian Police College of the Ministry of the Interior (MoI). The data were collected during the students' courses in December 2018. Respondents who were regular students (all of them are police officers) without any work experience in the police accounted for 28.1 percent of the sample, with the rest working on the local level – police stations (66.7 percent) and regional level – police department (4.6 percent). Those respondents who were employed by the police possessed 1 to 11 years' work experience (on average 5.7 years; standard deviation 2.93).

### **4.2 Research Instrument**

We used a questionnaire developed in the *First Line*<sup>3</sup> project dedicated to the training of various stakeholders (e.g. representatives of the police, local governments, NGOs, education, and health) in the area of radicalisation and strengthening deradicalisation/disengagement processes in the Western Balkans (Prislan et al., 2018). For the purpose of the study, we adapted the questionnaire to suit the

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3 *FIRST LINE Practitioners Dealing with Radicalisation Issues – Awareness Raising and Encouraging Capacity Building in the Western Balkan Region, project No. HOME/2014/ISFP/AG/RADX/7533 (2016-2018), funded by the Internal Security Fund (ISF), European Commission.*

Croatian environment, including altering different parts of the questionnaire. The questionnaire was composed of several sets of questions. Respondents were asked to share information about the extent of their knowledge in the area of radicalisation and to assess the presence of various types of radicalisation in their local environments. Next set of items was on factors and conditions that affect the development of extremism and strengthening the radicalisation of an individual (Cronbach alpha 0.729; 13 items). Respondents also assessed the extent to which the various stakeholders are able to successfully prevent radicalisation through adequate and professional conduct (Cronbach alpha 0.898; 13 items).

Responses to all questions were provided on a five-point scale, where 1 corresponded to the lowest and 5 the highest possible degree (of occurrence or agreement).

### 4.3 Survey Implementation

For the study's purposes, we developed a training session on the prevention of radicalisation and extreme violence in Croatia. Training and education are key components of the successful realisation of all community policing activities (Zhao, Thurman, & Lovrich, 1995) because the community policing philosophy implies fundamental changes in many areas of policing. Within the framework of the bilateral Slovenia-Croatia project "*Community policing and the role of the police in preventing violent radicalisation in Slovenia and Croatia*", in December 2018 a training session on understanding and preventing radicalisation in Croatia was prepared. Preparation of the training entailed two phases; first, development of the training programme, evaluating it on a representative sample of police students, and then developing the final version of the programme for community policing officers in Croatia (to be held in the second half of 2019). The training concerned with the prevention of radicalisation and extreme violence in Croatia has four main parts:

- a. Risk and protecting factors of radicalisation and violent extremism (including definitions of radicalisation, extremism and violent extremism);
- b. The process of radicalisation;
- c. EU innovative initiatives for safe urban public places; and
- d. Police activity in the local environment to prevent radicalisation – the role of the community policing officer.

Accordingly, the training participants were briefed on the latest trends regarding terrorist attacks in Europe and the different approaches to preventing and disengaging from radicalisation. The study participants (students of the Police College, MoI of Croatia) were interviewed (a) at the start and (b) after the completion of the training to determine how such training had influenced their knowledge and attitudes concerning preventing radicalisation and violent extremism. The study's main aim was to evaluate the possibility of strengthening police officers' knowledge level and the notion of institutional interdependence in disengagement from radicalisation by using such a training design.

## 5 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results shown in Table 1 refer to the respondents' self-assessed knowledge concerning extremism, violent extremism and the radicalisation process and show that a below-average mean value was obtained at the first testing (*mean* = 2.51). This result reveals the relatively low level of the participants' knowledge about the researched phenomena. However, the post-test results conducted immediately after the students' study courses show a higher level of knowledge about extremism and radicalisation. The difference between the results of the test and the post-test is statistically significant (*t-test* = - 8.876, *p* < 1%). It may thus be concluded that the contents provided during the students' education significantly increased the participants' knowledge of the phenomena that are the subject of this research.

		<i>Mean</i>	<i>STD</i>	<i>SEM</i>	<i>t-test/p</i>
<i>How much do you think you know about extremism, violent extremism and the process of radicalisation?</i>	Before the training	2.51	.793	.077	-8.88/0.000
	After the training	3.29	.801	.077	

Legend: A scale from 1 (nothing at all) to 5 (a lot)

**Table 1:**  
Self-evaluation of knowledge level concerning extremism, violent extremism and radicalisation

We also asked the respondents "In Croatia, do we devote enough or too little attention to the occurrence of extremism and the development of radicalisation?", to which 55.6% of the students included in the training stated there is not enough training and attention to the issue, with just 10.2% assessing there is sufficient attention. Then, the study determined the respondents' general attitude to the possibility of preventing radicalisation. Prior to the training, most respondents (56.5%) had believed that radicalisation can be prevented, but a significant share of them (40.7%) also stated they did not know if anything can be done to prevent this negative phenomenon. The results obtained after completion of the training show a significant rise in the proportion of respondents who consider it is possible to prevent radicalisation (88%) and a parallel drop in the share of respondents who (9.3%) who still do not know if this is so. The share of respondents thinking it is not possible to prevent radicalisation is the same before and after the training (2.8%).

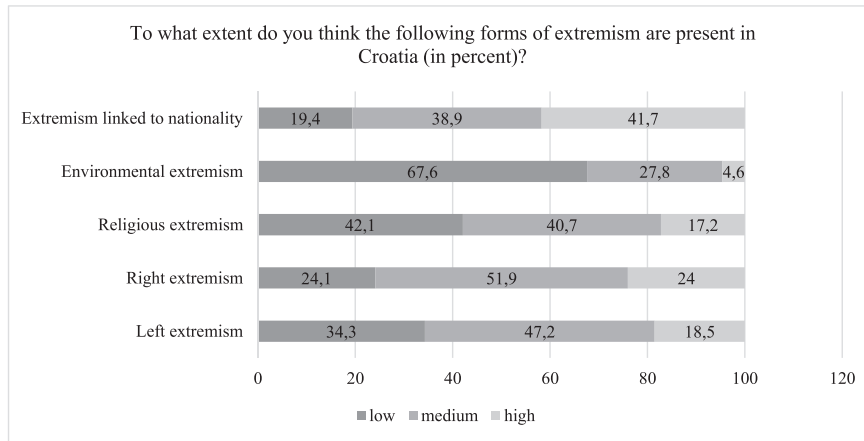
Table 2 shows the results of respondents' answers, how many different factors affect the development of extremism and the strengthening of the radicalisation of an individual.

**Table 2:**  
**Assessment**  
**of factors and**  
**conditions**  
**that affect the**  
**development of**  
**extremism and**  
**strengthening**  
**the**  
**radicalisation**  
**of an**  
**individual**

<i>On a scale from 1 to 5 indicate how much you think the following conditions or factors affect the development of extremism and strengthening the radicalisation of an individual. To answer use a scale, where 1 means that the factor in your opinion has no impact and 5 that a factor has a strong impact.</i>	before/ after the training	Mean	SD	t-test (t/p)
Injustice in the world.	before	3,34	1,01	3,40 / ,001
	after	3,02	1,10	
Financial/economic crisis.	before	3,69	,85	3,77 / ,000
	after	3,36	1,02	
Political disagreements in the world.	before	3,67	,98	not statistically significant
	after	3,59	,98	
Political disagreements in the local environment.	before	3,13	,91	not statistically significant
	after	3,31	1,10	
Religious or other ideological indoctrination of people.	before	3,65	1,06	-3,49 / ,001
	after	4,06	,82	
Promotion/fuelling of hatred by political leaders.	before	3,73	1,01	not statistically significant
	after	3,86	,93	
Propaganda by religious leaders.	before	3,64	1,03	-3,48 / ,001
	after	4,03	,89	
Individual's feeling of powerlessness.	before	2,96	1,02	not statistically significant
	after	3,11	1,09	
Individual's characteristics/personality.	before	2,93	1,03	-4,04 / ,000
	after	3,43	1,02	
Reporting of the media (newspapers, TV).	before	3,69	,87	not statistically significant
	after	3,73	,96	
Online propaganda (Internet, FB, Twitter)	before	3,80	,88	-2,27 / ,025
	after	4,03	,90	

The respondents are of the opinion that radicalisation is mostly contributed by religious or other ideological indoctrination of people, the promotion/fuelling of hatred by political leaders, online propaganda, and the propaganda by religious leaders. After the training, we observed stronger opinions of respondents that ideological and religious indoctrination, influence of online propaganda, the opinion of political leaders, and the propaganda of religious leaders contribute to radicalisation. On the other hand, after the training respondents attributed less influence to reasons such as inequity in the world and the economic crisis.

We asked the participants of the research what kind of extremist behaviour is, in their opinion, the most present in Croatia. The results are shown in Figure 1 below.



**Figure 1:**  
Perceived presence of different forms of extremism in Croatia

Respondents considered extremism linked to nationality as the most common form of extremism in Croatia, followed by right-wing extremism. Religious and leftist extremism were assessed as moderately frequent, while environmental extremism was labelled as very rare. When we more closely analysed the forms of religious extremism in Croatia, Islamic (37.0 percent) and Catholic (32.4 percent) extremism were the most frequently opinionated.

Table 3 presents the results of the respondents' assessment of the extent to which the various stakeholders are able to successfully prevent radicalisation through adequate and professional conduct. *Columns A* show the answers the participants gave prior to the training, while *columns B* presents answers to the same question after the training had been completed. The last column compares the mean values in column A and column B. A *t-test* was used to analyse statistically significant differences between the pre- and post-training responses.

**Table 3:**  
Perceived  
expected  
effectiveness  
of different  
stakeholders  
in preventing  
radicalisation

Which institutions listed below are able to effectively prevent radicalisation processes in Croatia through proper/professional conduct in their field?	A: Before training			B: After training			<i>t-test (t/p)</i>
	Mean	SD	4+5 %	Mean	SD	4+5 %	
Police officers in local environment	3.16	.99	38.9	3.80	1.15	64.9	-6.14/.000
Specialised police departments/units	3.67	.92	60.2	4.01	.88	73.1	-3.79/.000
Intelligence services	3.89	1.06	65.7	4.26	.84	80.5	-3.85/.000
State authority – the government	3.94	.99	65.7	3.89	1.01	67.6	not statistically significant
Authority in local communities – the municipality	3.17	1.08	38.3	3.79	.99	63.9	-5.92/.000
Management of foreigners (asylum seekers) accommodation centres	2.99	1.14	33.3	3.51	1.05	50.0	-5.03/.000
Social services – SWC	2.66	1.07	20.4	3.27	1.00	37.1	-5.64/.000
Healthcare services	2.33	1.01	12.0	3.02	1.07	30.6	-6.29/.000
Politicians, political parties	3.45	1.29	56.1	3.46	1.19	53.7	not statistically significant
Non-governmental organisations	2.81	1.18	29.6	3.25	1.08	42.1	-4.71/.000
Schools	3.12	1.26	39.8	3.50	1.11	50.0	-2.90/.004
Media	3.83	1.05	70.4	3.83	1.04	67.6	not statistically significant
Religious organisations	3.42	1.08	46.7	3.77	1.03	64.8	-3.15/.002

Legend: A scale from 1 to 5 where 1 means they can do nothing to prevent it, and 5 that they can do a great deal.

The degree of awareness of the interdependence of the various institutions in preventing radicalisation was statistically significantly higher after the training had been conducted. The average score (see column B) exceeds 3 on the 5-point scale, showing the tendency for a higher level of general awareness and the significance of the roles held by the majority of stakeholders for preventing radicalisation. In the respondents' opinion, before the training, state authority – the government, intelligence services, special police units, politicians and political parties – is able to prevent the radicalisation process most effectively, while healthcare professionals, social services – welfare centres, non-governmental organisations and the authorities at the Detention Centre for Foreigners can prevent radicalisation the least effectively. The results show the respondents still mainly see the prevention of radicalisation as a task of the security sector agencies and their hard security measures. Since the respondents stressed the role played by the core government institutions, one may assume the respondents continue to lack certain knowledge about the influential factors and drivers of radicalisation and violent extremism, where such drivers typically originate from the local environment, social interactions and situational circumstances. The training significantly impacted the respondents' attitudes with the *t-test* showing a statistically significant difference in 10 out of the 13 variables. Repeated interviewing shows higher mean values



for most of the variables examined. Statistically significant differences between the pre- and post-test results were not obtained for the variables of state authority – the government, politicians and political parties and the media. This means the outcome of the training was that more respondents believed that having a greater number of stakeholders can effectively help to prevent the radicalisation process. After the training, the respondents attributed greater importance to other stakeholders, along with state authority – the government, intelligence services, special police units, politicians and political parties. This underlines the importance of adopting a multi-agency approach to preventing radicalisation. The most significant changes in opinions were seen in relation to the role played by healthcare professionals, local police, local community authorities and social services. This shows that training strengthened the students’ opinion regarding the significant role of the latter stakeholders in preventing radicalisation.

In order to better understand the respondents’ attitude to the involvement of the various institutions in the preventive radicalisation programmes, we performed a factor analysis. With this analysis, we wanted to check whether the different institutions for helping individuals disengage from radicalisation can be grouped together (Table 4).

KMO: 0.86	Factors (total 66.45% of variance explained)		
	<i>Social welfare institutions</i> (30.83% variance explained)	<i>Security agencies</i> (20.85% variance explained)	<i>Government and politics</i> (14.77% variance explained)
Healthcare services	.828		
Schools	.801		
Social services – SWC	.779		
Non-governmental organisations	.730		
Media	.620		
Authority in local communities – a municipality	.566		
Religious organisations	.546		
Managements of accommodation centres	.466		
Specialised police departments/units		.836	
Police officers in the local environment		.728	
Intelligence services		.712	
State authority - the government			.821
Politicians, political parties			.802
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis; Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalisation			

**Table 4:**  
**Grouping of institutions through factor analysis**

We found that institutions for preventing and deterring radicalisation can be divided into three types. The largest group contains institutions from the wider area of social welfare, civil society, local authorities and the media, the second group consists of security agencies, and the third the government and political parties. Accordingly these groups have a different role in preventing

radicalisation, either through direct contacts with communities and individuals, or by authoritative means, policy development and supporting preventative initiatives. Preventing violent radicalisation is not simply a state-agency issue. Since complex situations are involved whereby relevant information is potentially spread through different people and organisations, and some approaches may need to rely on multiple parties, it is important that agencies cooperate well. Namely, first-line professionals encounter many people in different situations every day. During these encounters, they may see ‘signs’ or ‘indicators’ that reveal a person is being radicalised or is radicalising someone else.

When evaluating whether the respondents think that the persons/institutions on the list of various stakeholders are (not) doing enough to effectively prevent extremism/radicalisation in Croatia (Table 5), the average score is below 3 on the 5-point scale, showing the respondents’ relatively negative perception of the listed institutions’ preventive work concerning extremism and radicalisation.

Although, on average, one-third of the respondents showed a neutral attitude to this question, the respondents generally believe that politicians/political parties, the government, schools, municipalities and non-governmental organisations are paying too little attention to it. In contrast, they perceive the efforts made by the intelligence services and specialised police units are sufficient.

**Table 5:**  
**Perceived**  
**actual efficiency**  
**of different**  
**stakeholders**  
**in preventing**  
**radicalisation**

<i>Evaluate whether you think that the persons/institutions on the list below are doing enough or not enough to effectively prevent extremism/radicalisation in Croatia.</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>1+2 % -</i>	<i>3 % o</i>	<i>4+5 % +</i>
Police officers in the local environment	2.85	1.08	38.3	38.3	23.4
Specialised police departments/units	3.02	1.04	27.1	43.9	29.0
Intelligence services	3.03	1.15	32.7	32.7	34.6
State authority – the government	2.27	1.03	61.3	27.4	11.3
Authority in local communities – the municipality	2.31	.99	56.1	32.7	11.2
Management of accommodation centres	2.46	.94	50.5	38.3	11.2
Social services – SWC	2.31	.93	55.7	37.7	6.6
Healthcare services	2.42	.95	52.3	35.5	12.2
Politicians, political parties	2.13	1.00	64.5	29.0	6.5
Non-governmental organisations	2.37	.96	55.1	34.6	10.3
Schools	2.38	.92	57.0	31.8	11.2
Media	2.56	1.04	47.7	35.5	16.8
Religious organisations	2.49	1.00	52.3	32.7	15.0

Legend: A scale from 1 to 5 where 1 means they are not doing enough, and 5 that they are doing enough.

Intelligence services (34.6 percent), specialized police departments (29 percent), and police officers in the local environment (23.4 percent) were assessed as institutions that do most to prevent extremism in Croatia. On the other hand, according to the respondents, state authorities, politicians and political parties and religious organizations do the least to prevent extremism in Croatia. Although the respondents are mostly police officers (approximately 66%) working at the local level and hold relevant experience, just 23.4% of them perceive their role in prevention from radicalisation is sufficiently effective. Evidently, most

respondents are unaware that the police is in fact a crucial actor in facilitating a preventive approach and a leading agent in promoting a multi-agency approach and maintaining the cooperation of the stakeholders. As described, community policing is a policing strategy especially conceived to identify the social causes of problems and, by developing relationships with the community that will support partnerships, to prevent them from becoming criminal activities. The community policing approach enables police officers to rely on social reports (e.g. national and local social services' reports, school reports, domestic violence reports from NGOs) to monitor individual citizens who are at risk of becoming radicalised. As a result, community policing needed to develop tools to prevent all forms of radicalisation, with special attention to radicalisation leading to violent extremism.

Table 6 shows paired samples *t*-tests on the stakeholders' effectiveness in preventing extremism/radicalisation in Croatia. The differences between expected and perceived actual effectiveness were tested and are clearly statistically significant with regard to all variables as *p* is below 0.05.

		Mean of expected and perceived effectiveness	SD	<i>t</i> -test ( <i>t/p</i> )
Pair 1	Police officers in the local environment	3.80	1.15	6.98/.000
		2.85	1.08	
Pair 2	Specialised police departments/units	4.01	.88	9.15/.000
		3.02	1.04	
Pair 3	Intelligence services	4.26	.84	9.36/.000
		3.03	1.15	
Pair 4	State authority – the government	3.92	.99	13.42/.000
		2.27	1.03	
Pair 5	Authority in local communities – the municipality	3.79	.99	11.33/.000
		2.31	.99	
Pair 6	Management of accommodation centres	3.50	1.05	8.11/.000
		2.46	.94	
Pair 7	Social services – SWC	3.25	1.00	7.78/.000
		2.31	.93	
Pair 8	Healthcare services	3.01	1.07	4.93/.000
		2.42	.95	
Pair 9	Politicians, political parties	3.47	1.19	10.17/.000
		2.13	1.00	
Pair 10	Non-governmental organisations	3.25	1.08	7.33/.000
		2.38	.96	
Pair 11	Schools	3.50	1.11	8.08/.000
		2.38	.92	
Pair 12	Media	3.83	1.04	9.89/.000
		2.56	1.04	
Pair 13	Religious organisations	3.77	1.03	9.42/.000
		2.49	1.00	

**Table 6:** Paired samples *t*-tests on the stakeholders' effectiveness in preventing extremism/radicalisation in Croatia

Results show varying discrepancies in the respondents' expectations as to which institutions are able to prevent radicalisation and the actual efficiency of the work of institutions in preventing radicalisation. Institutions can be divided into

groups. The first group with the greatest discrepancy contains the government, authorities in local communities and politicians/political parties, pointing not only to the increased criticism of police officers in relation to the political elites at the state and local level, but also implying a certain mistrust in the ruling establishment. The second group shows a somewhat smaller discrepancy in the perception of the possible and genuinely efficient prevention of radicalisation and contains religious organisations, the media, specialized police units, and the intelligence services. This indirectly allows the conclusion that these institutions are almost in line with the legitimate expectations of political elites. The lowest discrepancies are observed for non-governmental organisations, social and healthcare services, and police officers in the local environment, however it is surprising that some of them have a relatively low perceived potential.

## 6 CONCLUSION

The purpose of study was to analyse the multi-agency approach to prevention in a local setting and to present how young and future police officers in Croatia perceive the importance, responsibilities and actual efficiency of the different stakeholders in preventing extremism. Accountability simply to the law enforcement institutions and to the rules and regulations of a highly centralised organisation is not enough to ensure proper prevention. Accountability also to the community with respect to their needs is of the utmost importance. Preventive measures should be adapted to the threats and risk factors identified in the local environment as well as to the needs of the recipients since they must actually benefit the people they target. With respect to the growing awareness of the multidimensional nature of radicalisation and violent extremism, the strategies in place today increasingly emphasise intervention- and prevention-oriented strategies. With the proper coordination of local and national stakeholders working in the field and with the community's involvement, the police can more efficiently identify issues of relevance to preventing and countering radicalisation and violent extremism. The fact that trends and the contemporary global and regional security situation, radicalisation and violent extremism will continue to be a persistent security threat to liberal and democratic societies makes it essential to develop carefully planned prevention strategies customised to the specific features of local and national settings.

Some risk factors of radicalisation are similar to crime and preventing it should comprise part of a local and integrated security strategy because the traditional intelligence-gathering methods alone are less effective. This indicates the need to raise awareness among law enforcement professionals of their role in the early detection of vulnerable individuals at risk of radicalisation. The overall findings of our study on preventing and deterring radicalisation in Croatia show that the tackling and prevention of violent extremism and terrorism is largely seen as being top-down-oriented by the respondents, driven by the nation state and the main task of security sector agencies, namely the government, intelligence services and specialised police units. It is also important to mention that the police officers did not recognise and underestimated their own role and accountability

at the local level for preventing radicalisation. While the participants in the study still mainly emphasize the role of security agencies, we established that with appropriate training we can strengthen the awareness of the interdependence of the various stakeholders engaged in these efforts.

In a preventive multi-stakeholder approach, the police plays a crucial role in facilitating the cooperation on a local or regional level, particularly in at-risk local settings (Prislan et al., 2018). A prevention policy should mobilise local partnerships for crime prevention and social cohesion to strengthen individual and community resilience to the risk of radicalisation. A more precise set of recommendations and guidelines for planning and modelling counter-radicalisation strategies is offered by the Prevent-Refer-Address concept [P-R-A] that uses a risk-based approach to preventing radicalisation that leads to violent extremism and terrorism. This concept suggests that the duties of partners be defined at the local and national levels and should be engaged as first-liners or their supporters in the risk-based prevent, refer and address approach. Both levels should incorporate relevant governmental and non-governmental civil society partners and experts as needed in specific cases. In discharging their duties, all of these authorities should initially demonstrate awareness and understanding of the risk of radicalisation in their area, institution or body (Kozmelj, 2018). Recommended partners of the P-R-A mechanism on the national level are the ministry of education, ministry of local government administration, ministry of internal affairs/police, ministry of culture, youth and sports, ministry of health, ministry of labour, family and social welfare, prison and probation authorities, academia, association of municipalities, selected representatives of local communities, associations of NGOs and other civil society partners, religious communities representatives, and the governmental office responsible for strategic communication.

Recommended partners of the P-R-A mechanism at the local level are a local government representative, a representative of education at the local level (teachers), centres for social affairs (social workers), psychologists, representatives of culture, youth and sports at the local level, representatives of the health sector (general practitioners), representatives of the police (community policing representatives), representatives of prison and probation authorities, academia, religious communities, NGOs, other CSO and municipality actors invited in individual cases when relevant i.e. trainers from sport clubs, parents, organisations of teachers, etc. According to the P-R-A mechanism on the national level, it is important to provide political, financial and strategic support for the work of the P-R-A mechanism at the local level (municipalities) and to support development of the P-R-A mechanism in line with national strategy objectives. Responsibilities on the national level also include coordination and communication, development of standard procedures and guidelines for the local level by sectors, drafting and amending legislative proposals/initiatives, supporting research at local levels to identify root causes, triggers and vulnerable groups, analysing feedback from the local level, monitoring, evaluating and providing the local level with important information. Other recommended tasks at the local level include screening information received directly by the P-R-A panel, assessing the nature and extent of the risks, developing an action plan in individual cases, assigning

tasks to the most competent local partners, and evaluating progress (the level of disengagement, de-radicalisation and re-integration of radicalised individuals etc.) (Kozmelj, 2018).

Prislan et al. (2018) in their analysis of radicalisation in the Western Balkans emphasise that the basis of the EU's prevention work in the area of radicalisation and violent extremism is the EU Strategy for Combating Radicalisation and Recruitment to Terrorism adopted in 2005 and revised in 2008 and in 2014 (Council of the European Union, 2014). The strategy calls for the development of: (1) awareness-raising programmes and sector-specific training modules for first-line practitioners; (2) the involvement of and drawing on resources and expertise within civil society and the private sector to build resilience; (3) the exchange of best practices and experience with a view to developing exit programmes; (4) acquiring know-how and re-integrating former terrorists; (5) steering research to understand the phenomenon of radicalisation in an ever-evolving context; (6) ensuring coordination between academics and various first-line practitioners; and (7) informing future policy decisions, including in the area of exit strategies and programmes (Council of the European Union, 2014). According to the first point of this strategy, it should be stressed that this kind of training is also necessary in Croatia, and study results show that such training does have positive effects on strengthening police officers' competencies with respect to preventing and deterring radicalisation and violent extremism.

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