



CHECKIT HE – Countering Hate and Extremism on Campus – Knowledge Innovation and Training in Higher Education

IO 8: Toolkit 6 Working against organised extremism, radicalisation and terrorism on HE campuses – Turku University of Applied Sciences, FINLAND

Overview of violent extremism in Finland

According to Ministry of the Interior in Finland (2020) there have been reports of violent extremist movements engaging in activities throughout Finland. Besides violent far-right non-parliamentary movements, also few activists on the far left, primarily anarchists and anti-fascists, are reported to be active. Nevertheless, the violent non-parliamentary extreme left's actions has become less frequent in Finland during the past few years.

The terrorist groups continue to be a threat and might have an impact on radicalization and mobilization in Finland. However, the threat of terrorism in Finland remains at the second level, or "elevated," on the four-tier scale used by the Finnish Security and Intelligence Service.

Preventive measures are needed in this work. The Ministry of the Interior routinely releases reports on the state of violent extremism that detail all active violent extremist organizations. These organizations include the violent extremes of the non-parliamentary right and left, violent extremism fueled by religion, radical alternative movements, and individuals.

Individuals can use radical ideas or ideologies to justify their violent behavior. According to Ministry they pose a threat as the potential for street violence against perceived opponents who might be chosen at random as victims. School shootings can be mentioned as an example of this kind of behavior. Radical ideas are often linked with mental health disorders and attacks carried out by individuals are often considered as acts of lone wolves. One of the shootings occurred in Seinäjoki University of Applied Sciences in 2008 when a 22-year old student shoot eleven of his fellow students and injured eleven (YLE 2008). Another example of violent act in HE campus was revealed by police in 2014. A young man was planning a gas and gunfire attack in Helsinki University campus in order to harm as many people as possible but it was prevented and the man was prosecuted. (YLE 2019.)

According to report of Poliisiammattikorkeakoulu (Finnish Police Academy) 2023 there are almost hundred organisations of professional crime in Finland and the amount has increased during recent years. Most of them are motorcycle gangs and groups that operate in drug industry and trade. In crime prevention it is important to recognize the diversity of groups in grass-root level and utilize the information networks. Criminal groups often try to recruit vulnerable young people who feel that they are not accepted in Finland f.ex. because of their ethnical background and offer them a way to succeed in life. To prevent these criminal organizations gaining ground, it is important to correct the false impression of professional crime that social media content is giving. (Jukarainen et. al. 2023.)



Extremist groups

Radical Islamist movements exist in Finland, most significantly the radical Islamist terrorism according to the Ministry of the Interior. There are considerable activities supporting terrorism occurring in Finland, and there are people and organisations who have the motivation and capacity to carry out such operations.

Also hate speech is rising as radicalization and violent extremism are flourishing. The goal of hate campaigns and online shaming is to affect society more broadly. Specifically weak people or groups are in vulnerable position.

Growing anti-Semitism is on the topic. Anti-Semitic discourse, propaganda, and the threat of violence are some the main ways that it is expressed in Finland. The Nordic Resistance Movement (Pohjoismainen vastarintaliike) is one to be mentioned in relation to anti-Semitic attacks. Nordic Resistance Movement was founded in 1997 in Sweden and banned in Finland in 2019. (Korkein oikeus 2020.) It could be described as pan-nordic neo-nazi movement.

There are also other far-right movements of which ideology is mixture of neo-nazism, Christian nationalism and white supremacy. Blue-and –Black Movement is a neo-nazist party which was founded in 2021.

Soldiers of Odin is an anti-immigrant anti-islam group which was founded in Kemi, Finland, in October of 2015. The group was established in response to the thousands of migrants who were arriving in Finland amidst the European migrant crisis and the message was to keep the real Finns safe. The group members describe themselves as Finnish affiliation of street patrol organization which has its roots in The US and European countries.(Soldiers of Odin 2023.)

Far-right groups might be quite small in Finland but their influence on politics is recognisable. During Covid -19 the groups spread Qanon conspiracy theories and gained some small amount of supporters. Parliamentary populist parties have adapted many of their ideas and they clearly oppose immigration and multiculturalism. Some of the populist party members have been known for racist writings in social media. Far-right ideas f.ex. towards refugees and minorities are often adapted to programs .

References

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