RESEARCH REPORT

- RESULTS OF THE BASELINE STUDY -

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Conducted within the project "Strengthening civil society from Bosnia and Herzegovina to recognize and monitor online threats on the social media"

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CONTENTS

1. Introduction

The EU funded project *"Strengthening civil society from Bosnia and Herzegovina to recognize and monitor online threats on the social media"* is implemented under the supervision of Hedayahby two CSOs from Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina - "Jabih u EU" and "Centre for Security Studies". The project aims to strengthen resilience to radicalization leading toviolent extremism(VE)by increasing the capacity of civil society and youth in Bosnia and Herzegovina to monitor and recognize online threats and to counter them via web platform tools.

Bosnia and Herzegovina, a country which has endured a disastrous civil war and continues toface strong ethnic tensions, is a fertile ground for the threat of radicalization leading to VE.Everyone can be exposed to radicalization, but the younger population is an especially vulnerable category. In the previous years, it was known that radicalization is occurring within family and friend circles, during social gatherings, which gradually amounted to "illegal" or "parallel" mosques, or "para-jamaats," as the official Islamic Community of BiH has labelled them.Due to the impact of internet and social media, the trend is now moving into new and less formal communities. The Internet and social media arean active vector for violent radicalization that facilitates the proliferation of radicalization trends that lead to VE in low cost, fast, decentralized, and globally connected networks.

The aim of this study was to assess the level of knowledge on VE among the (younger) population in the target areas in BiH (Sarajevo, Zenica, Bihac and Tuzla), as well as their Internet and media literacy.

2.Research Methodology

The purpose of the baseline research of the project "Strengthening civil society from Bosnia and Herzegovina to recognize and monitor online threats on the social media"was to gather information about social media contents which can be identified as sources of radicalization leading to VE in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). Additionally to the online contents, data on media habits and internet literacy of the direct beneficiaries will also be gathered.

The research approach has included three parts: desk research, a survey (500 respondents) and in-depth interviews (20 interviewees).

The desk research was conducted through analysis of existing data from open sources, focused on publically available empirical and theoretical information, as well reports on the topic of radicalization leading to VE globally and in BiH specifically. The method of qualitative data analysis was used with the purpose to in detail describe the phenomenon of radicalization leading to VE.

Within the desk research, analysed have been several social networks profiles, groups and pages containing elements of religious extremism. Most of them have an exclusive and constrained approach to religious values, which is not accepted and in accordance within the official interpretation accepted within Islamic communities. The most common key words, used by the population which is prone to a more fundamental interpretation of Islam, have been identified. In order to gain valid statistic data about the usage of the mentioned key words, "Metricom", a tool for monitoring and analysis of online communication with a focus on social media, was used. The content analysis method helped to identify what kind of messages can be found on social media, as one of the dominant media and their impact on message recipients. The purpose of content analysis was to achieve an objective and systematic description of the content, range, frequency and target groups of radical messages present within the area of social media networks.

The main result of the desk research was to identify the main triggers leading to radicalization, and following VE. The mentioned includes the identification of pull and push factors which are the main initiators of radicalization leading to VE in BiH.

The next step within the development of the baseline survey was the production of a questionnaire/survey based on the information gathered within the desk research. The questionnairewas used for asurvey of 500 respondents. The respondents were persons with residence in the target areas - Sarajevo, Zenica, Tuzla and Bihac, which are the largest cities of the four cantons in BiHfrom which the largest number of individuals went to the foreign

battlefields.Respondents have been chosen based on a random sample, in order to gain a better insight in the general public view. However, taken into consideration the target group population planned with the project, most of the respondents belongto younger age groups, which are presumed to be the most common Internet and social media users. Based on their answers, formed was a wider framework of the level of Internet and media literacy in BiH, as well as the overall awareness about the phenomena of radicalization leading to VE. The gathered data collected based on the answers of the 500 random respondents is used as a basis to form the content for further project activities which will have an impact on a significantly larger number of persons, including the directly targeted ones, but also the wider population of BiH. The questionnaire consisted of close-ended questions. For the processing and analysis of data, "SPSS Statistics", software for processing and analysis of quantitative data, was used.

Also, in order to gain a better insight into the level of knowledge on radicalization and VE influences, the method of examination through in-depth interviews was used. The technique of structured interviews was used with persons from the target groups (i.e. teachers, principals, parents, formal and informal local leaders, youth groups, CSOs, employment agencies, employers, etc.). For the processing and analysis of data, "QDA Miner", software for processing and analysis of qualitative data, was used.

3. Desk research: Radicalization leading to violent extremism

Violent extremism is the product of many different circumstances. A series of socio-economic, cultural and individual factors are necessary to develop violent extremist attitudes and acts. The past years were marked by an increase in the threat of VE and terrorism in the world, and one of the highest risk areas for terrorism is the Western Balkans region[1].

Western Balkan	Men in Syria/Iraq	Woman in Syria/Iraq	Total
Albania	96	13	109
Bosnia and Herzegovina	177	63	240
Kosovo	255	48	303
Macedonia	140	14	154
Montenegro	18	5	23
Serbia	37	12	49
Total	723	155	878

Table 1 - Number of adults from the WB area in Syria/Iraq, 2012-2017[2]

The 2019 Global Terrorism Index (GTI)[3], published annually by the Institute for Economics and Peace, proves that the impact of terrorism is still widespread. In 2018, terrorism has taken fewer lives, but its economic and social influences are still large. In the mentioned year, 71countries have suffered at least one death due to terrorism. Out of 183 ranked countries, among the countries of the region, Kosovo records the highest risk of terrorism (with an index of 79), and it is followed by BiH (with the index of 88). Most of the persons who left BiH and went to the foreign battlefields in Iraq and Syria were from the Federation of BiH(94%), most often from the regions of Tuzla, Sarajevo and Zenica.

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[1] Intelligence data from agencies in the Western Balkan region show that up to 1.075 individuals (men, women, children and the elderly) travelled to Syria and Iraq from 2012 to the end of 2016. See more: https://www.britishcouncil.me/sites/default/files/erf_report_western_balkans_2018.pdf

[2] https://www.britishcouncil.me/sites/default/files/erf_report_western_balkans_2018.pdf

[3]The Global Terrorism Index is based on data collected by The National Consortium for the Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (United States of America). The consortium database contains more than 170,000 terrorism cases from 1970 to the present and is the largest such database in the world.

Only 4% were from the RepublikaSrpska and 1% from Brcko District. Every fifth of them came from the Diaspora[4].

There are several factors contributing to the fact that BiH is a vulnerable ground for the emergence of radicalization leading to VE. Prior to the analysis of these factors, it is important to initially distinguish between the two concepts of "*radicalism*" and "*violent extremism*" which are often misused and the line between them is not always clear. There are no universally accepted definitions of terms within the academic community, but there is a universally accepted comprehension. In "Radicalization, Deradicalization, and Counter-Radicalization," Schmid offers the definition of concepts, supporting the thesis that they are not an equal concept. According to Schmid (2013), radicalization is "an individual or collective (group) process whereby, usually in a situation of political polarisation, normal practices of dialogue, compromise and tolerance between political actors and groups with diverging interests are abandoned by one or both sides in a conflict dyad in favour of a growing commitment to engage in confrontational tactics of conflict-waging. These may include:

1. the use of (non-violent) pressure and coercion,
2. various forms of political violence other than terrorism,
3. violent extremism in the form of terrorism and war crimes[5].

Schmidt's classification shows a gradation of the degree of involvement. Through the above gradation, we notice that the term "radicalization" can be understood as a process through which individuals gradually embrace extremist ideologies, which may, but may not necessarily lead to the emergence of VE and, ultimately, the commission of a terrorist act. Radicals themselves are not violent; however, they share similarities with violent extremists. Common features include support for extreme perceptions and tendencies, alienation from the state, feelings of discrimination, etc. However, radicalism does not necessarily justify violence because radicals can accept diversity and reasonable principles. Violent extremists, on the other hand, do not respect the rule of law and diversity in society and strive to create a homogeneous community based on a rigid dogmatic ideology.

According to Schmid (2013), in the context of democratic societies, (violent) extremist groups, movements and parties tend to have a political agenda consisting of the following elements:

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[4]VladoAzinović and MuhamedJusić; "The new lure of the Syrian war - The foreign fighters' Bosnian Contigent"; Sarajevo, 2016

[5] Dr Alex P. Schmid; "Radicalization, De-Radicalization, Counter-Radicalization: A Conceptual Discussion and Literature Review"; ICCT Research Paper, The Hague, March 2013

1. Anti-constitutional, anti-democratic, anti-pluralist, authoritarian,
2. Fanatical, intolerant, non-compromising, single-minded black-or-white thinkers,
3. Rejecting the rule of law while adhering to an ends-justify-means philosophy,
4. Aiming to realise their goals by any means, including, when the opportunity offers itself, the use of massive political violence against opponents[6].

Speaking about radicalization and VE, it is of utter importance to also identify the term "terroristic act". Articles 201-203 of the BiH Criminal Code define offenses related to acts of terrorism. According to Article 201 (5) of the BiH Criminal Code, a terrorist act involves the following actions:

- *Attack upon a person's life, which may cause death;*
- *Attack upon the physical integrity of a person;*
- *Unlawful confinement of, keeping confined or in some other manner depriving another of the freedom of movement, or restricting it in some way, with the aim to force him or some other person to do or to omit or to bear something (kidnapping) or taking of hostages;*
- *Causing a great damage to facility of Bosnia and Herzegovina, facility of government of another state or public facility, a transport system, an infrastructure facility, including an information system, a fixed platform located on the continental shelf, a public place or private property, likely to endanger human life or result in major economic loss;*
- *Kidnapping of aircraft, ships or other means of public or goods transport;*
- *Manufacture, possession, acquisition, transport, supply, use of or training for the use of weapons, explosives, nuclear, biological or chemical weapons or radioactive material, as well as research into, and development of, biological and chemical weapons or radioactive material;*
- *Releasing dangerous substances, or causing fire, explosion or floods the effect of which is to endanger human life;*
- *Interfering with or disrupting the supply of water, power or any other fundamental natural resource the effect of which is to endanger human life*
- *Threatening to perpetrate any of the acts referred to in items a) to h) of this paragraph;[7]*

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[6] Dr Alex P. Schmid; "Radicalization, De-Radicalization, Counter-Radicalization: A Conceptual Discussion and Literature Review"; ICCT Research Paper, The Hague, March 2013
[7] Criminal Code of Bosnia and Herzegovina, ("Official Gazette of Bosnia and Herzegovina" No. 3/03, 32/03, 37/03, 54/04, 61/04, 30/05, 53/06, 55/06, 32/07).

Acts of terrorism could be the final result of radicalization which has led to VE. It is important to establish that all manifestations of VE have commonalities, preceded by a process of radicalization. The focus of this research is the emergent forms of radicalism that lead to VE. The emergent forms can be manifested in many ways. Although the topic of the research is content on social networks that can be identified as sources of radicalization leading to VE in Bosnia and Herzegovina, it is important to address the question of what contributes to the success of influence of such sources.

There are two categories of factors that contribute to the emergence of radicalism that can lead to VE. The terms "push" and "pull" factor are accepted in the academic community. The Violent Extremism Prevention Action Plan[8], published by the UN in December 2015, defines these factors as follows:

- "Push" factors: the conditions conducive to violent extremism and the structural context from which it emerges. These include lack of socio-economic opportunities; marginalization and discrimination; mismanagement; violations of human rights and the rule of law; prolonged and unresolved conflicts; and radicalization in prisons.
- "Pull" factors: the individual motivations and processes, which play a key role in transforming ideas and grievances into violent extremist action. They includeindividual backgrounds and motivations; collective grievances and victimization, oppression, foreign influence; distortion and misuse of beliefs, political ideologies and ethnic and cultural differences; and leadership and social networks.

Push factors refer to those circumstances that are structural within society, while pull factors are personal and psychological, i.e. make individuals more vulnerable to the violent extremist behaviour.When looking at these factors in the context of Bosnia and Herzegovina, it is clear why the country can be considered a fertile ground for radicalization. In relation to push factors, there are more of them which can contribute to the process of radicalization, including economic and social factors - poverty, unemployment, the weak educational system, the fact that BiH is a post-conflict society, weak institutional capacities and lack of activities in the fight against radicalism, etc. Significant is the impact of various pull factors, ranging from a sense of belonging, the search for identity, to the perception of extremist groups as a financial solution. Problematic factors in this regard are active recruitment groups, which are very present on social networks. While external factors, personal experiences, and collective dissatisfaction can all contribute to the emergence of radicalism leading to VE, there must also be a context that provides some form of organization and direction toward these elements. Most often, such a context is created by the intervention of a "leader" or already

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[8] The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism Report of the Secretary-General, 24th December 2015

radicalized person through different networks. The activities of violent extremists are not public, they are exclusive and secretive, and as a rule, no ordinary citizen should have access to them. However, in recent years, the internet and social networks have opened the way to radicalism and VE.

In a study requested by the Danish Ministry of Justice, Precht (2007) points out that "radicalization often starts with individuals who are frustrated with their lives, society or the foreign policy of their governments"[9]. As he mentioned, a typical pattern is that these individuals meet other like-minded people, and together they go through a series of events and phases that ultimately can result in terrorism. However, only a few end up becoming terrorists. The rest stop or drop out of the radicalization process at different phases. Precht defines four phases of the radicalization process, which are Pre-radicalization, Conversion and identification, Conviction and indoctrination and Action.
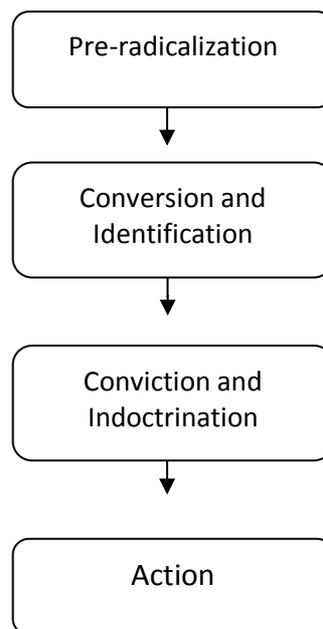
Figure 1: Precht model of a typical radicalization process

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[9] Tomas Precht, Home grown terrorism and Islamist radicalization in Europe; Danish Ministry of Justice, December 2007

Except the stages of the radicalization process, Precht also attempted to identify and analyze factors which influence the radicalization process in Europe. The report presents three categories of motivational factors for radicalization:

1. The first category is "background factors" which include personal struggles with religious identity, experience with discrimination, a lack of social integration, personal trauma, alienation etc.
2. The second category, described as "triggers", includes other individuals, such as a mentor or charismatic leader, as well as events which can cause or encourage aversion and/or activism.
3. The third category is "opportunities" which present the level of possibility and probability that an individual will be exposed to extremist ideas in his or her sphere of actions. These opportunities include both the physical and virtual space, such as the Internet, mosques, prisons, social groups/collectives etc.

Looking at the "opportunities" category, it is easy to conclude how today, the Internet could be the predominant one. Although everyday life without the Internet is unimaginable, the Internet and social networks are opening the way to radicalism and VE.

Back in 2009, a central "online manual for jihadists"[10] appeared under the pseudonym Abu Amru Al Qa'idy. This work was called the Art of Recruitment Course: a gradual, hands-on recruiting program through individual "Da'wu[11]". This guide describes the five central stages of recruitment. The target group for radicalization is clearly stated: young, non-religious Muslims with a good education (high school or university) who live far from their hometowns.

In the first phase (introduction) –"**Acquaintance and Selection"** the focus is on resisting injustice. Jihad or other religious terms need not be mentioned at this stage. The recruiting person should use commonly known information and create an initial trust base.

The second phase (approaching) –"**Building a Relationship"** contains a separate plan for the candidates, with specific media content that they should regularly consume. These contents do not yet have a violently extremist connotation, but they are focused on current events and tragedies that indicate the need for resistance. Ideally, candidates should be contacted daily to get a real-world view of their interests, hobbies, environment and daily activities. By the end of this phase, topics related to Islam should already be introduced.

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[10] "A Course in the Art of Recruiting" -Collected and Organized by Abu Amru Al Qa'idy; Revised in July 2010. See more:
https://archive.org/stream/ACourseInTheArtOfRecruiting-RevisedJuly2010/A_Course_in_the_Art_of_Recruiting_-_Revised_July2010_djvu.txt
[11]Da'wa - "call" (Arabic word); the term represents the idea of conveying the message of Islam to non-Muslims

In the third phase – "**Faith Awakening**", the recruiter should deliberately praise the positive qualities of the candidate. Positive traits must be linked to Islam and a new, true religion. Only now, in the third phase, does the recruit begin to speak with great patience about Islamic rituals and duties (for example, prayer), so that there is no distrust from the candidates. Access to the candidate's world should be gained by talking about current events in his life (for example, talking about dreams, family experiences). Also, it is already recommended at this stage to have an "offline" contact.

The fourth phase – "**Implanting the concepts**" introduces the topic of jihad[12] for the first time as an individual duty. It is emphasized at this stage that Islam stands above democracy and family and that those in the family must "hate" for God, if the family is against "true religion." Only now the full breadth of jihadist propaganda has been achieved and the candidate is presented as a foreigner who is under constant attack in his environment but who has the ability to belong to a new, loyal group.

Finally, in the fifth stage – "**Formation of a cell**", the recruiter convinces the candidate that he or she must carry out his militant jihad as duties prescribed by faith.

This online-manual presents a good introduction to the many ways how the Internet can be used for radicalization purposes. There are many examples how the Internet has provided expanded opportunities for VE groups to propagandize and recruit. The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, or ISIS[13], heavily invested in an online presence and widely uses online communities and social media.

As stated in the study: Hate Speech and Radicalisation Online - The OCCI Research Report[14] conducted by Johannes Baldauf, Julia Ebner and Jakob Guhl, it is indisputable that the ISIS has raised the use of online media for recruiting purposes to a whole new level. Much research has been done on this topic and in each of them it is concluded that ISIS knows how to produce content and use media in a strategic and technical, very professional manner. As stated in the above-mentioned study, the suspicion that ISIS has a detailed media strategy was publicly confirmed in May 2015 in a video attachment. The video, entitled Media Operative, You Are Mujahid, was produced in the northern province of ISIS Salahuddin (Salah

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[12] Jihad - "striving, struggling" (Arabic word); often translated as "holy war" and used in context of VE. However, in a religious sense, Jihad means striving for the benefit of the community or the restraint of personal sins. It can refer to internal as well as external efforts.

[13] ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria), also known as ISIL (Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant), is a Sunni jihadist group with a particularly violent ideology that calls itself a caliphate and claims religious authority over all Muslims. It was inspired by al Qaida but later publicly expelled from it.

[14] Johannes Baldauf, Julia Ebner and JakobGuhl; Hate Speech and Radicalisation Online - The OCCI Research Report, London, 2019. See more: https://www.isdglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/ISD-Hate-Speech-and-Radicalisation-Online-English-Draft-2.pdf

al Din) and impressively portrays the work of 'media warriors' as the equivalent of a physical fight. A printed version of a special media manual of the same title, published by the al-Himmah ID library, was briefly available. There are three central pillars in this media guide for ID propaganda strategy:

1. Positive and alternative narrative about ISIS;
2. Extensive refutation (counter speech) of enemy propaganda; and
3. Targeted media attacks ("media projectiles").

As a part of this strategy, media work is presented as at least equivalent to, if not even more important than, the physical fight against the infidels. As said in the strategy, the Western media are deliberately and consciously used as a weapon against the West. A core element of the ISIS media strategy is the emotional and theological underpinning of propaganda work, especially for supporters who for whatever reason have decided not to travel to Syria and Iraq or to participate in fighting and violence. The first pillar of the ISIS media strategy (positive and alternative narrative) aims to 'open the eyes' of the viewer and in particular to create pleasure and satisfaction.

Although many would say a "face-to-face" interaction is always necessary, according to research, online interaction is avery good starting point. A study [15] carried out by the International Centre for the Study of Violent Extremism (ICSVE) which was based on 220 in-depth interviews proves this fact. Data gathered from the interviews clearly shows that Internet recruitment alone is enough to introduce a vulnerable person into an extremist group. Out of the 220 respondents, 117 of them reported some element of Internet-based recruitment as part of their radicalization process. In many cases, this included watching audio/video materials produced by ISIS or other groups operating in Syria. Some of the respondents also mentioned how they have made online contact with ISIS recruiters, or facilitators who talked them into coming to Syria, or helped them plan the passage. Significant is the fact that a large part of the respondents stated how they travelled to Syria and Iraq following only online recruitment, without the face-to-face contact.

Based on the data from the interviews, researchers from ICSVE have made a comparative table with the most common influences respondents have mentioned as a factor which contributed their joining to ISIS.

Influence	Men	Women
Spouse/Partner Influence	2.2%	55.3%

[15] Anne Speckhard and Molly D. Ellenberg, ISIS in Their Own Words: Recruitment History , Motivations for Joining, Travel, Experiences in ISIS, and Disillusionment over Time — Analysis of 220 In-depth Interviews of ISIS Returnees, Defectors and Prisoners"; Journal of Strategic Security 13, no. 1 (2020) : 82-127.

Parent Influence	3.8%	15.8%
Sibling Influence	6.6%	5.3%
Extended Family Influence	9.9%	5.3%
Friend Influence	35.7%	13.2%
ISIS Recruiter Influence	25.3%	7.9%
Preacher Influence	19.8%	0%
Internet Recruiter Influence	10.5%	18.4%
Passive YouTube Influence	24.7%	13.1%
Passive Facebook Influence	11.6%	7.9%
Passive Twitter Influence	5.5%	7.9%
Passive WhatsApp Influence	1.6%	2.6%
Passive Telegram Influence	1.6%	0%
Passive Other Internet Influence	1.1%	0%
Mainstream Media Influence	19.2%	10.5%
Prison Influence	5.5%	0%

Table 2 - Influences[16]

Despite the noticeable and very interesting differences based on gender, also noticeable is that a very high percentage of respondents mentioned online sources as an influence. The fact that cannot be ignored is the commonly mentioned influence of social media networks.

In the study "Youth and Violent Extremism on Social Media: Mapping the Research"[17], the presence of VE on various social networks was analyzed. Within this work, the benefits that stem from the very nature of the Internet and social networks have been identified, within the ways in which they are used by extremist groups. It is a useful fact that social networks are a way of communication that is not tied to national jurisdictions and which is informal, open to a large group of participants, it is cheap, decentralized and anonymous, allowing cross-border networking. These channels of communication are used, inter alia, in the following ways:

- Creating an appealing, interactive, user-friendly platforms to attract younger audiences;
- Offer spaces where groups can hold secret conversations;
- Disseminate extremist, violent and criminal content which would not be well received "offline;

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[16] Anne Speckhard and Molly D. Ellenberg, ISIS in Their Own Words: Recruitment History, Motivations for Joining, Travel, Experiences in ISIS, and Disillusionment over Time — Analysis of 220 In-depth Interviews of ISIS Returnees, Defectors and Prisoners"; Journal of Strategic Security 13, no. 1 (2020) : 82-127.

[17] S. Alava, D Frau-Meigs, G Hassan, Youth and violent extremism on social media: mapping the research; UNESCO 2017. See more: https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000260382/PDF/260382eng.pdf.multi

- Identify potential participants and prove them with information about "the cause" and the groups involved in defending it;
- Massive publicity for acts of violence and enhancing a perception of strength;
- Opportunity to participate in online and offline activities;
- The ability to produce false information, taking advantage of the fact that all kinds of information on the Internet can be presented equally, which can provide an illusion of credibility and legitimacy to extremist narratives;
- Performing a radicalization process, tactical learning, exploiting confirmation bias, data collection and planning attacks;
- Establishing 24-hour intimate communication that aims to developing friendships, through networks like Twitter, Facebook, Snapchat that are heavily used for recruiting;
- One-on-one dialogue with younger people, with the aim of isolating them from society and gradually introducing them to the new "brotherhood".[18]

The way digital platforms function, and especially social media platforms, increases users' vulnerability to misinformation, and potentially, content that can lead to VE. Instead of making such content hidden and inaccessible to citizens, social media networks make it easier for all users to publicly disseminate and encounter negative content, significantly facilitating potential radicalization.

One recent example that the social media are not immune to abuse by terrorist and VE groups was the terrorist attack on the Muslim community in Christchurch in New Zealand on March 15, 2019. The attack began at the Al Noor Mosque in the suburbs of Riccarton and continued at the Linwood Islamic Center. The attacks killed 51 people and wounded 49[19]. The attacker used live streaming during the first attack via the Facebook social network. Copies of the live broadcast video have been posted on many file sharing platforms and websites, including Facebook, LiveLeak and YouTube. On Facebook alone, the video was seen 4,000 times before being removed. Fewer than 200 people had watched it live and the first user report of the video had come 12 minutes after it had ended[20].

The dissemination of such content has a negative impact on the human rights of victims as well as on global collective security. Following this incident, numerous resolutions were issued urging social networks to protect their users and their data from abuse by ending the spread of terrorist and violent extremist content. Also, a few months after the incident, namely on October 7, 2019, EU Internet Forum participants (a platform launched by the European Commission in 2015 to combat terrorist content on the Internet) committed to

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[18]S. Alava, D Frau-Meigs, G Hassan, Youth and violent extremism on social media: mapping the research; UNESCO 2017. See more:https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000260382/PDF/260382eng.pdf.multi

[19] See more:https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christchurch_mosque_shootings

[20] See more:https://www.bbc.com/news/business-47620519

adopting a crisis protocol that would respond swiftly to the spread of terrorist and violent extremist content on the Internet. The EU Crisis Protocol[21] is a voluntary mechanism to help coordinate a rapid, collective and cross-border response to the viral spread of terrorist and violent extremist content on the Internet. The Protocol outlines the procedures, roles and responsibilities of key actors as well as the tools for monitoring and exchanging critical information. Under this protocol, the rapid spread of terrorist and violently extremist content on networks is treated as a crisis.

Digital platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, or YouTube, are designed to constantly interact and attract the attention of users. Of great importance are advertisements, through which social networks constantly recommend content to users based on their personal interests.Many researches point to the fact that there is a danger of manipulation of users of social networks through these contents. First of all, the reach and speed with which content can reach an audience is incomparably greater than the reach and speed that traditional media can do.

Also, online news spreads without traditional filters or rules that regulate traditional media. Combined with algorithmic recommendations and advertisements, such content can lead to radicalization of individuals. Social media filters news and content by suggesting to the user personalized content that is relevant to that person's interest. Content like this is created based on what the user "likes", what he or she has previously searched for, or what his / her "online friends" follow, and the like. Recommendations of news and content tailored to the user's preferences can be particularly problematic if they generate more extreme content. A person who already has radical or violently extremist understandings, through the algorithms designed in this way, may come to believe that his or her understandings are accepted in a wider population. Through such a system of recommended content, such a person will be constantly exposed to violently extremist content and will be able to communicate more easily with like-minded people, which greatly facilitates the process of (self) radicalization.

When it comes to recommended content, the term "Echo Chambers"[22] is often used in the English language. This term is defined as an environment in which an individual is only confronted with beliefs or opinions that match those he or she already has, so existing attitudes are reinforced and no alternative ideas exist. The RAND research[23], which analyzed 15 cases of "online" radicalization of UK citizens, confirmed that the Internet acts as an "Echo

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[21]See more:https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-security/20191007_agenda-security-factsheet-eu-crisis-protocol_en.pdf

[22] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Echo_chamber_(media)

[23]Ines Von Behr, AnaïsReding, Charlie Edwards, Luke Gribbon, "Radicalisation in the digital era: The use of the internet in 15 cases of terrorism and extremism", RAND Europe. See more: https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR400/RR453/RAND_RR453.sum.pdf

Chamber" for extremist beliefs, in other words, the Internet offers greater opportunity to validate existing beliefs, compared to "offline" interactions. Also, the same research confirmed the assumption that the Internet increases the chances of radicalization, a result of widespread availability and the fact that it allows 24/7 connections with like-minded people around the world. For all 15 individuals surveyed, the Internet was a key source of information, communication, and propaganda for their extremist beliefs.

Speaking about the context of Bosnia and Herzegovina, insights from different studies show that various problematic content can certainly be found on social networks. Research ""Thin Ice Surfing: Youth, Media, Problematic Content"[24], conducted by Mediacentar Sarajevo, confirms that problematic content can be found on various online platforms, but examples of extreme forms of expression such as calling or justifying violence are extremely rare. The youth who participated in the focus groups as part of this research stated that problematic content is being marketed by platforms with marginal impact.

"According to both interviewees and focus group participants, the most problematic content can be found in user comments, especially on YouTube, but also in user comments on online media.[25] Some of the comments mentioned relate to *intolerant speech* in comments on the contents of the attack in Christchurch.

Within the research "Strenghtening Resilience of Youth against Radicalization in the Western Balkans; Country Report Bosnia and Herzegovina,[26] "the views of approximately 60 youth from 7 municipalities in BiH on the potential existence of radicalization in the country and its causes and consequences were analyzed. The respondents were high school seniors and first or second year undergraduate students. A large number of respondents were unable to define the term and showed a lack of understanding of the concepts related to the topic. Most of the interviewees interviewed never discussed the topic of radicalization with their friends, family or teachers. Most of the information on this topic comes from television or social media on which they are active. Respondents were aware of the existence of groups on social networks in their local environment that were suspected of promoting activities that could generally be considered "radical". However, most of them claim that they do not understand

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[24] SanelaHodžić i AnidaSokol, "Mladi, mediji, problematičnisadržaji - Surfanjepotankomledu", Mediacentar, Sarajevo, 2019. See more: ttps://media.ba/sites/default/files/mladi_mediji_problematicni_medijski_sadrzaji_web.pdf
[25] Ibid.
[26] Jasmin Hasić, Melisa M. Mehmedović, Mahir Sijamija, „Streghtening Resilience of the Youth against Radicalization in the Western Balkans; Country Report Bosnia and Herzegovina", Sarajevo, December 2019 (within the Research Study Publication „Perception about radicalization by young people in the Western Balkans")

the attractiveness of such internet content and feel that they are aware of the risk of potential interference with such activities.

In addition to youth, local experts in charge of issues related to combating violent extremism were interviewed as part of the survey. In an interview with a BiH social worker, it was pointed out that local and online media are a potentially dangerous space for radicalization. "BiH youth tend to trust the mainstream media and mainly use online portals and social networks as their main sources of information. Most of these pages publish subjective and incomplete stories, have poor or nonexistent editorial control, content is unconfirmed, and can often promote ethnic-national divisions and sometimes hate speech. As a result, young people are at risk of becoming more exposed to radical attitudes, further reinforcing their misunderstanding of political and social reality, as well as how they fit into the country's general political architecture", said one of the experts interviewed in the study.

Within the desk reserch in the activities of the project "Strengthening civil society from Bosnia and Herzegovina to recognize and monitor online threats on the social media","Metricom", a tool for monitoring and analysis of online communication, with a focus on social media, was used.With the use of "Metricom", several profiles which share content that could possible lead to VE, within the social media networks Facebook, Twitter and Youtube, were identified. It was noticeble how most of such profiles are connected to each other. They actively post content.

The most common hashtags and keywords used have beenidentified:#islamskadrzava #islamskadržava #islamskadrzavaostaje #dawlah #devla #dawla #dawlahislamiyyah #maoca #ibntejmijje.[27]Most of the profiles sharing such content on the mentioned social media are active for several years.

4. Survey

Within the activities of the project "Strengthening civil society from Bosnia and Herzegovina to recognize and monitor online threats on the social media", a questionnaire was submitted

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[27] #islamskadrzava or islamskadržava - Bosnian, meaning „islamic state"; #islamskadrzava ostaje - Bosnian, meaning #dawlah, #devla, #davla and #dawlahislamiyyah reffering to the Arabic word *da'wa* - "call" - the term represents the idea of conveying the message of Islam to non-Muslims; #maoca - a village in northeastern BiH, territorially belonging to the Srebrenik municipality, Tuzla Canton. It is a closed community allegedlly closed linked to VE, known in the local and international community for allegations of it being a potential terrorist hideout and logistical base; #ibntejmijje - Sunni Muslim scholar

to 500 respondents. The respondents are persons residing in the target areas - Sarajevo, Zenica, Tuzla and Bihac, which are the largest cities from the four BiH cantons from which the largest number of individuals went to foreign battlefields from BiH. The questionnaire contained closed-ended questions. Data processing and analysis was done with the use of "SPSS Statistics", software for processing and analysing quantitative data. The questionnaire contained 18 basic questions.

In order to gain a better insight in the media and Internet habits of the population of BiH in general, the questionnaire was conducted on respondents from various age groups. However, in accordance with the fact that the younger population was in focus, most of the respondents have been representatives of this population.

Thirty percent of the respondents belonged to the age group between 23 and 27 years (152 respondents). Following are respondents from the age group 18-22 (17%) and the respondents from the age group 28-32 (11%). Considering the gender of respondents, 255 of them have been male and 245 respondents have been female.

When asked about their ethnicity, 375 of the respondents (75%) have declared themselves as "Bosniaks", which was expected considering that all of the cities in which the survey was conducted belong to the Entity of the Federation of BiH. Considering other ethnic groups, 45 respondents declared themselves as "Croats", another 45 declared themselves as "Others", while 35 respondents declared themselves as "Serbs".

Most of the respondents had high school (51%) or university education (45%). Eleven respondents had elementary school education. Only eight respondents have answered that they do not have any education level at all.

Asked about their employment status, most of the respondents, 280 of them, answered how they are employed. Twenty-two percent of the respondents (112 persons) are students. Unemployed are 78 respondents, while 30 of the respondents are retired.

Asked whether they are parents, 72% of the respondents (362 persons) said no.

According to the results of this survey, Internet is the most popular media. When asked which media they follow the most, one of the three possible answers for 441 out of 500 respondents was - the Internet.The Internet is followed by TV - which was an option for 321 of the respondents, and the Radio, which was chosen by 130 respondents.However, the Internet is definitely the most frequently followed media.

Most followed media

- Internet
- TV
- Radio
- Daily newspapers
- Weekly newspapers/Magazines

45%
33%
13%
6%
3%
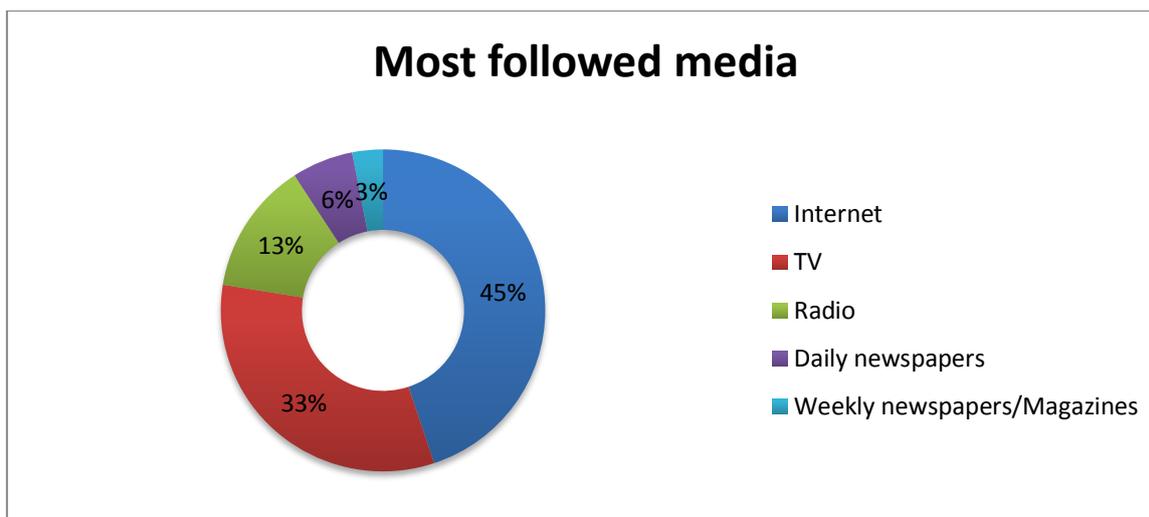
Figure 2 - Which of these media do you follow the most? (Three answers have been possible)

When asked which of the above mentioned media they trust the most, the majority of respondents again chose the Internet - 215 of them, which makes 43%. This answer was chosen by respondents from all age groups, but the age groups 18-22 (44 respondents chose the answer "Internet"), 23-27 (92 respondents chose the answer "Internet") and 28-32 (29respondents chose the answer "Internet") dominated.However, the second most often answer, chosen by 120 respondents, was that they don't trust any of the media. The answer "none" was mostly chosen by respondents from the age group 23-27.When asked how much time daily they spend on the Internet, 139 respondents (31%) answered how they daily spend between two and four hours "online". The answer "more than 4 hours" was chosen by 28% of the respondents, and 25% spend between one and two hours daily "online".Within the fourth question, respondents were asked for which activities they mostly use the Internet and had the possibility to give multiple answers.

The most common answer was "informing" - chosen 283 times, followed by "fun" - chosen 282 times. 187 respondents mostly use Internet for their work, while 160 respondents use Internet for studying.Positive and encouraging is the information that 94% of the respondents answered how they believe Internet is used for disinformation purposes. Accordingly, the majority of respondents do check the accuracy of information found online, most of them (42%) stated how they do it often.

How often do you check information found online?

Always | Often | Rarely | Never | I don't want to answer | I don't know

14%
42%
29%
9%
2% 4%
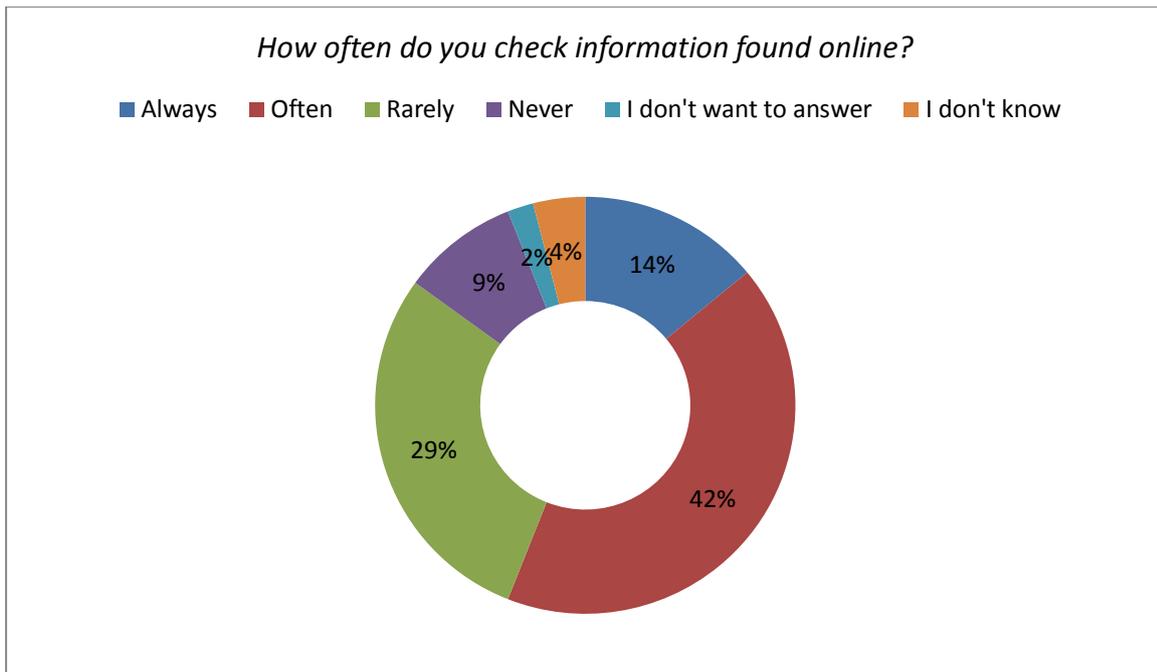
Figure 3: How often do you check the accuracy of information found on the Internet?

When asked about social media, 90% of respondents were social media users. Among the 49 users who said they do not use social media, 34 belonged to the age groups 53-60 and 60+.Based on the answers on the question which social media types they use, it can be concluded that among the 7 mentioned, "Facebook" was the most popular. A large number (412 respondents) choose "Facebook" as one of the social media they use. Also popular were "Instagram" (294 respondents use it) and "YouTube" (254 respondents use it).

Number of respondents from different age groups

18-22 | 23-27 | 28-32 | 33-37 | 38-42 | 43-47 | 48-52 | 53-60 | 60+

TikTok: 10 12 0
Snapch…: 29 41 6 1
Youtube: 51 101 26 24 12 12 12 9 6
LinkedIn: 7 30 9 9 6 5 2 2
Twitter: 12 29 8 2 4 0
Instagr…: 73 130 33 27 12 12 3
Facebo…: 71 144 52 43 27 30 23 12 10
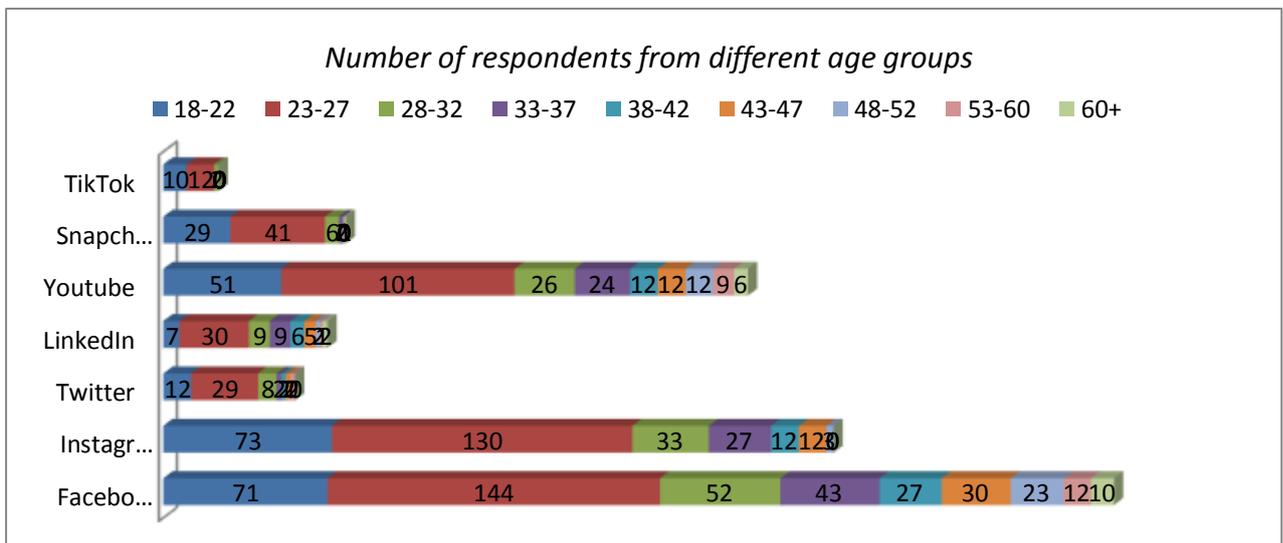
Figure 4: Number of social media users from different age groups

Asked if whether they are religious, most of the respondents (68%) said yes. Considering their knowledge of religion, most of the respondents rated it is "good" (41%), "average" (28%) and

"very good" (20%). When asked whether they use the Internet to expand their knowledge on religion, the most common answer was "rarely" (37%), followed by "never" (27%) and "often" (26%). The answer "never" was more common by the elder age groups, while "often" was more common among the younger ones. Considering the platforms they use for that purpose, the most common answers were:

1. Web pages - answer of 220 respondents
2. Audio/Video records - answer of 51 respondents;
3. Groups and pages on social media - answer of 29 respondents;
4. Online communication with others - answer of 16 respondents.

Considering the question how often they communicate with people on the Internet that you don't know personally, most respondent said "never" (47%), followed by "rarely" (30%). Out of the respondents who said "often", a total of 89 persons, almost all of belong to the younger population (age groups 18-22 and 23-27). Asked how often is religion the topic of such conversations, again, most of the respondentd, 65% of them, answered "never".

The answer "never" was followed by "rarely", which was the answer of 19% of respondents. The answer "often" was chosen by 5% of the respondents, while "always" was the answer of only 2%.

When asked whether the Internet and social media can be used for radicalization, the majority of respondents (426 of them) said "yes". While only 8 respondents gave a negative answer, 11% of them "did not know or were not sure", while 2% did not want to answer.
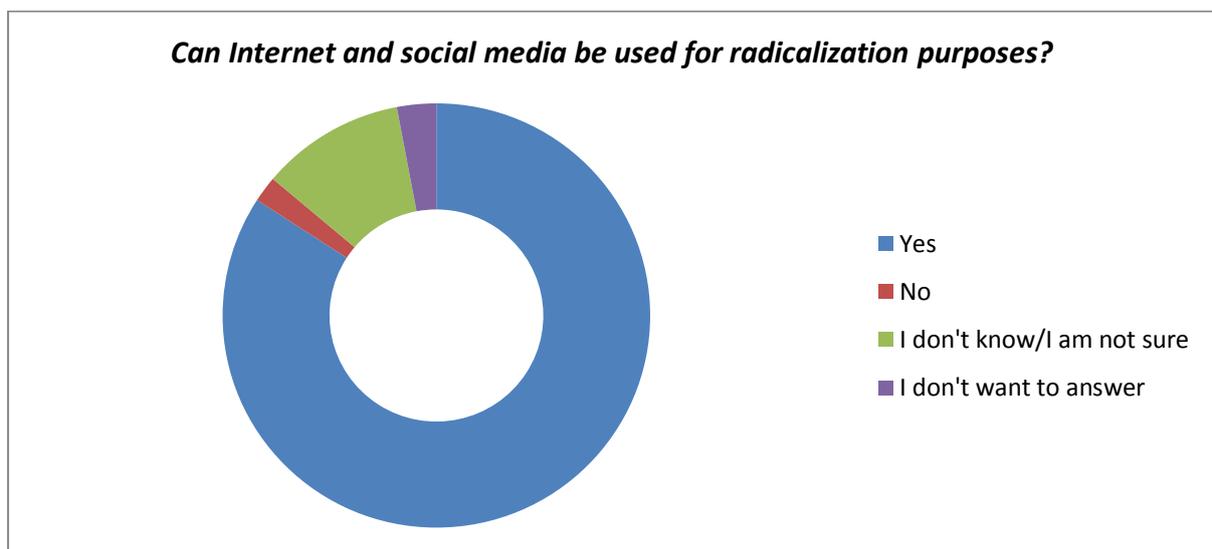

Figure 5: Do you believe that the Internet and social media can be used for radicalization purposes?

Again, when asked if they believe how they would be able to recognize content which could lead to VE, the majority of respondents (343 of them) gave a positive answer. Only 15 respondents answered "no", while 125 "did not know or were not sure", and 17 did not want to answer.
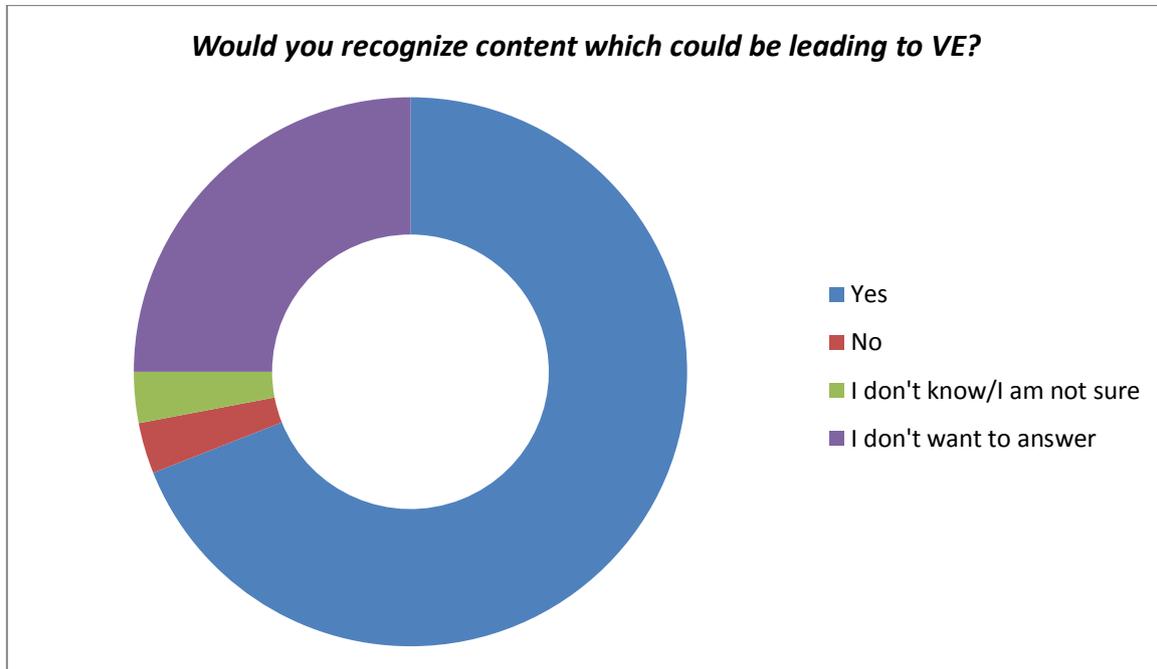
Figure 6: In your opinion, would you be able to recognize online content which could be leading to violent extremism?

An interesting fact is that, when answering the question "How often do you come across such contents?"; the majority of respondents, 36% of them, said "rarely", while 28% of respondents said "often". As the sphere where they most common come accross contents which could be leading to VE, respondents mentioned:

1. Groups and pages on social media - 28%
2. Web pages - 19%
3. Audio/video records - 15%
4. Online communication with others - 6%

Considering online commercials or suggested content that had some components which could be leading to violent extremism or redirected you to web pages with such components, the numbers of respondents who did and did not come across them are quite simmilar, as well as the number of respondents who were not sure. While 165 persons answered how they did come across the mentioned and 151 how they did not, 155 respondents did not know/were not sure. This factor in general corresponds with the number of respondents who stated how they would not recognize content leading to VE. This answer was chosen mostly by respondents belonging to the younger age groups (18-22 and 23-27).

Also, it was the most common answer to this question chosen by respondents who had the educational degree "high school".When asked how often they came across the above mentioned commericals and suggested content, the majority of respondents answered "I don't know" (25%) and "never" (23%). However, 88 persons answered "often", 73 persons answered "rarely", while 7 persons answered "always".

Asked whether they would report online content which could be leading to VE, the majority of respondents (60%), answered "yes". It is significant to emphasize that the answer of 20% of respondents was that they do not know whether they would report it. Considering the question to whom they would make the report, the answers were various. However, the answers "web platform on which the content is" (27% respondents chose it) and "police" (23% respondents chose it) have dominated.
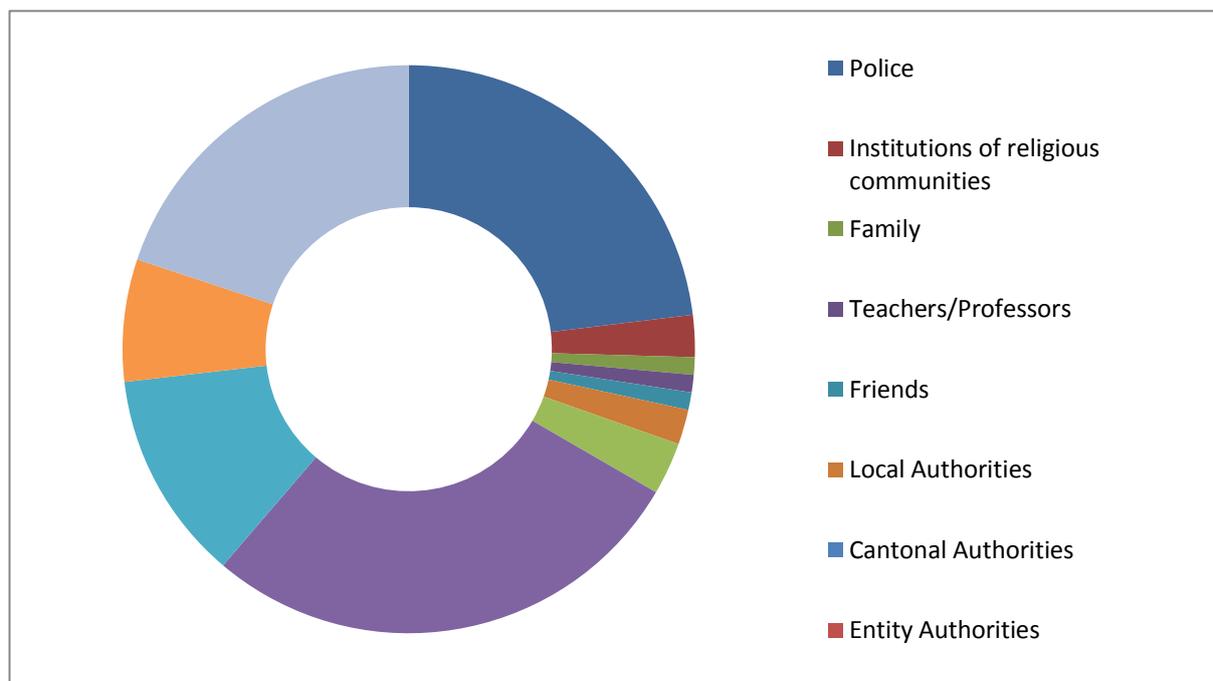
Figure 7: To whom would you report content leading to VE?

When asked where is one most likely to find online content which could be leading to VE, respondents had the possibility of multiple answers.

The most oftenly chosen answer was "groups and pages on social media", which was chosen by 55% of respondents. Considering "audio/video records", 37% of respondents perceve them as one of the possible sources of content leading to VE. Also 37% of respondents chose "web pages", while "online communication with others" was one of the answers of 23% of

respondents. Asked whether some of their social media friends/followers share, follow, and comment on online content which could be leading to VE, the majority of respondents (40%), answered "no". While 19% of respondents answered "yes", 39% of the respondents said how they don't know/are not sure.The majority of respondents, 48%, considered teenageres (12-17 years old) as the age group which is most vulnerable to radicalization on the Internet. However, 34% of the respondents considered adults (18+) the most vulnerable, while the 5% of the respondents answered children (up to 11 years old) and another 5% answered the elder (over 65 years old).

5. In-depth interviews

In order to gain a better insight in the level of knowledge of the impact of radicalization and VE, within the project "Strengthening civil society from Bosnia and Herzegovina to recognize and monitor online threats on the social media", twenty in-depth interviews have been conducted. The structured interview technique was used on the target group consisting of teachers, parents, formal and informal community leaders, youth groups, the NGO sector, employment agencies, etc. The processing software "QDA Miner" has been used to process and analyze the qualitative data. The interview was based on eight main questions, as following:

1. In your opinion, do social media and contents which a person follows have an effect on their daily life and behaviour? Why?

2. Do social media encourage people to meet and befriend?

3. How would you define violent extremism?

4. Do you believe the phenomenon of violent extremism is present in Bosnia and Herzegovina?

5. What kind of person is vulnerable to radicalization?

6. Do you believe social media are used in the process of radicalization? Have you come across social media contents which could possibly lead to violent extremism?

7. Did you (or would you) report such contents?

8. Do you believe that youth knows enough about the issue of radicalization?

5.1. *Social media*

One of the facts on which all interviewed respondents agree is that social media significantly impact a persons' daily life and the forming of public opinions. A part of the respondents, employed in educational institutions and the NGO sector agrees that today, social media are the main communication and informing mean, which creates the reality. However, respondents emphasized how the level of media and Internet literacy in Bosnia and Herzegovina is not at a satisfying level. It was emphasized how media and Internet literacy are the basis which makes citizens competent to process information found online and qualitatively research them, in order to form their opinions in a healthy way.

"One or two years ago, there were not so many users from BiH (ON SOCIAL MEDIA), but their number is getting larger every day. It is not only the younger generation, but also users from the middle age and elder persons. There is an existence of different populations in the social media space, with each of them giving their own contribution. For that reason, for me, the impact is very notable, and it has to be constantly researched successively what this means for a society."[28]

Also, all of the respondents agreed on the fact that social media create a real addiction, making modern life unimaginable without their existence. The influence of other (traditional) media is decreasing. However, a part of the respondents emphasized the fact that the level of addiction and susceptibility to influence depends only on the individuals' personality.

Many respondents pointed out the issue of highly present hate speech on social media, as well as the lack of repressive measures against it. As an example, they describedcomments on articles shared via social media, "*which offend human dignity and all that is the basis of civil society, a lack of culture, the spread of religious, inter-ethnic and other intolerance*"[29] and which often became a polygon for violent arguments with persons who have a different opinion.

Commenting on suggested commercials, ads and other online contents users face on social media, many respondents mentioned the problem of privacy interferes. The problem was described as an interference caused by artificial intelligence mechanisms and the placement of various recommended content and advertisements in accordance with their interests. Social networks create exposure to a variety of content, which is marketed to individuals

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[28]Interview with the president of NGO „KAM" Zenica, March 2020
[29]Interview with the secretary for Local Community Affairs at the Expert Service of the City Council of the City of Zenica, March 2020

without their will. "*There (ON SOCIAL MEDIA) individuals have a chance to see various contents, from different marketing advertisements to different media writings, but also to some problematic content that can have a very negative impact on people. By that content I mean various fake news, manipulations and also the spread of different ideological narratives which can ultimately provoke some radical behaviour in people[30]*"

Speaking about the opportunity to meet and befriend through social media, as expected, younger respondents have expressed more support for it. Younger respondents (mostly students) have highlighted the positive sides of this possibility, primarily due to the fact that most of them have some sort of "fear" from meeting new people or a problem with communication and expressing emotions. It is important to point out that, nevertheless, they mostly took into account the risks that this type of networking, paying special attention to the lack of control on social networks and the possibility of impersonation.

On the other hand, the opinions of older respondents have been mostly dominated by the negative aspects of this way of networking. As one of the few advantages, some of the respondents pointed out the possibility of professional networking, sharing of experiences and ideas. In general, respondents employed in the NGO sector, educational institutions, administrative bodies and others, overwhelmingly considered that social media networking is a high risk for children and/or young people, which their parents/tutors, as well as educational institutions, should particularly address . They pointed out that social networks allow virtual encounters with complete strangers, which present a risk that users are often not even aware of. Although the focus was on the younger population, respondents also did not rule out the existence of risks for adult users, who are often unaware of potential dangers, such as data theft or various frauds that often occur in the online world today.

5.2. Radicalization and violent extremism

Attempting to define the phenomenon of violent extremism, most of the respondents have used terms such as uncompromising, intrusive, violent methods, intense advocacy of certain ideas/topics, public expression of nationalism and fascism, lack of tolerance, infatuation with an idea, etc.In general, most of the respondents have connected the term "violent extremism" with "terrorism" and a use of violence to achieve religious, ideological and political goals.

In the context of BiH, most of the respondents connected the term "violent extremism" with ethnic and religious identity. Also, many respondents have pointed out the problem of an existing lack of tolerance and respect of differences today in the BiH society. The majority of

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[30]Interview with an expert for media-informatical literacy employed in the NGO sector, Sarajevo, March 2020

respondents emphasized the need for education on the phenomenon of radicalization and VE. Some have singled out youth as part of the population that is least able to grasp these terms. Also, one of the respondents pointed out the need for a manual on recognizing VE in the local community.Some respondents cited a low level of education as a factor that could contribute to an individual's susceptibility to radicalization. Certainly, a greater number of respondents characterized youth as a part of society most vulnerable to the effects of radicalization.

The process of radicalization was described by the respondents as a process of several stages, which begins with the adoption of a problematic idea. Some respondents felt that this process also included certain activities that a person must go through in order to prove their commitment to the goals. Most respondents thought that the basic indicator that a person is undergoing a process of radicalization is a sudden change in behaviour. Such a change is visible through a number of factors, but the majority of respondents pointed to the sudden advocacy and imposition of certain attitudes, and the lack of flexibility and tolerance towards different ideas. Respondents had different opinions regarding the ability to recognize the signs that an individual is undergoing a process of radicalization. Some of them found the signs clear and visible through the already mentioned behavioural changes, while others found the signs difficult to recognize. "*It's very difficult to recognize. I don't think there is any existing model for how to recognize it. Surely the person constantly and quickly changes his/her behaviour and has some radical attitudes, radical opinions about social phenomenon. So maybe we can recognize the person going through the process of radicalization, but, I say again, there is no such model based on which we can recognize it. According to some studies, some persons were never seen as radicalised, but still have committed a terrorist attack*"[31].

The vast majority of respondents believe that radicalization leading to VE is a major problem for BiH, which is not discussed enough. The reasons why BiH is a specific area for the emergence of this phenomenon are the fact that BiH is a post-conflict society, affected as well by socio-economic circumstances; poor access to education in BiH, unemployment, etc. Also, regarding the problems that BiH is confronted with and related to this phenomenon, some of the interviewees also pointed out the current problem of returnees from foreign battlefields. Many of the respondents emphasized social media as one of the main sources of radicalization leading to violent extremism in BiH. "*The main source of radicalization in BiH is certainly social networks, the internet, because people who are susceptible to such situations, in fact, have the opportunity to gather in one place, without those who do not share their*

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[31]Interview with an expert for media-informatical literacy employed in the NGO sector, Sarajevo, March 2020

ideas or their opinions and discuss the topic, give ideas, suggestions, or listen to their, let's call them leaders"[32].

Respondents stated that the number of objective media in BiH is small and that the media in general have a major impact on social awareness. Many of them have pointed out that the media and their mechanisms of reporting, in some way "dictate" whether a particular phenomenon will be socially acceptable or not; and in thatsense, their responsibility is great. As some of the key problems related to the media in BiH, the respondents pointed out the problem of sensationalist reporting, the non-professionalism of journalists, insufficient knowledge of the issues being reported, etc.

"The media is highly important in that process, whether in a positive or negative way. I believe the media could be much more involved in the process of de-radicalization and combat of extremism, especially the media which are present on social media. We are today witnessing that many media are contributing to the development of radical ideas [33] *".*

Speaking about the characteristics of a person vulnerable to being radicalized, most of the respondents pointed out two main points:

1. Age - Younger persons are more vulnerable to radicalization.
2. Low level of education/Unemployment.

The younger population is listed as a vulnerable category for a number of reasons, ranging from the current situation in BiH (unemployment, insufficient opportunities for young people), to the general characteristics that embody a younger age (curiosity, search for something new, identity, lack of sense of belonging). The particular vulnerability of young people from rural areas was also often highlighted by the respondents. Also, as an important factor contributing to an individual's vulnerability to the process of radicalization, many respondents cited the individual's family circumstances. They pointed out how children from dysfunctional families, which would be an easy target for potential radicalization, should be a concern of society and should be systematically included in positive developments.

"Young people are in search of new ideas, they are open minded and therefore vulnerable to negative influences. The current situation in BiH, which gives young people a sense of hopelessness, helplessness and inability to change anything, is a great basis for radical ideas being served on all sides. Dissatisfaction often turns into accepting any ideas that give them the opportunity to be active. Such persons are susceptible to manipulation. It would be much

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[32]Interview with a student of the Faculty of Economics - University of Sarajevo, Sarajevo, March 2020
[33]Interview with the director of the employement agency „Bolji posao", Sarajevo, April 2020

more difficult to radicalize a young person with the conditions for a good education, employment and a normal life[34]".

The poor educational system in BiH, as well as the lack of access to it, and the problem of unemployment, which is very present in our society, affect people in many ways, and one of them is that they become vulnerable to bad external influences - such as radicalization. Except the younger population, some respondents cited former drug addicts or alcohol addicts as categories vulnerable to radicalization, as well as people with certain psycho-physical disabilities who are not sufficiently accepted in the society.

When asked whether they believe that social networks are being used in the process of radicalization, all twenty respondents gave a positive answer. Social networks have been described as a space of unlimited freedom, where everyone can express their opinions. Also, in order for radicalization to occur, initial contact must be made, which social networks make much easier compared to achieving initial contact "offline". The basic problem of social networks, highlighted by the majority of respondents, is that the online sphere is a space that is not regulated enough - hate speech and inappropriate content are spread almost out of control. Also, an insufficient level of media and Internet literacy of citizens of BiH contributes to the fact that they do not recognize inappropriate content. Some of the respondents even pointed out that they encounter content that can lead to violent extremism, but that they believe that the individuals who distribute it are not even aware of it and that they simply post content without thinking about how someone else can accept it.

While some respondents noted that they did not encounter online content that could lead to VE and that such content could only be accessed by searching pages, groups or information of similar content, others said that they often came across it.

Some of the respondents stated that content that can lead to violent extremism is very common on social networks. Speaking of types of content, some of the respondents pointed out "opinions related to Islamic radicalism" but also "political radicalism, in the sense of promoting certain Nazi and fascist ideas".

Certain respondents pointed to groups on the social network "Facebook" as an online space where content leading to VE could potentially appear. As described, such groups, which may seem completely harmless, can actually be the front door to a world of online communication with like-minded people and the private sharing of various contents. Certainly, a large number of respondents pointed out that an individual who did not display an "online interest" in

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[34]Interview with the director of the employement agency „Bolji posao", Sarajevo, April 2020

content that leads to violent extremism will find it very difficult to accidentally encounter it, given the filters and recommendation algorithms used by social networks.

When it comes to reporting content that can lead to VE, it is a positive fact that almost all respondents said they would report it. However, no one answered how they actually did or would do it.

The answers were various. Some of the respondents pointed out that there is generally no awareness or habit of reporting in the BiH society, that there is an insufficient level of social responsibility.

A large number answered how they would first report inappropriate content to the administrators of the social network on which they came across it. Also, respondents generally trusted that the administrator would remove such content. If the content was highly problematic, many of them believed that reporting to the administrator was not sufficient. When it comes to BiH institutions, the vast majority of respondents were unsure of whose jurisdiction it would be to receive such applications, but most often mentioned were the Ministry of Interior/Police and Social Services. One of the respondents said he would report some extremely dangerous threat "to the life, safety and health of citizens" and that he "thinks that they would react in this regard and that this is something that concerns State Investigation and Protection Agency of BiH and the Ombudsman for the Protection of Human Rights[35]". It is also important to point out that some of the respondents stated that they did not believe that something would be done about their application.

In general, the majority of respondents believe that there is no public awareness of the reporting mechanisms in BiH.

"*I would first research if there is any particular institute that deals with this, if there is one then I would report it, since I do not know, I would probably go to the MoI immediately, I guess they would give me relevant information and where I should actually go to report it. I think that generally there is no awareness of any reporting in BiH, when it comes to corruption or violence; generally people do not report it because they think it is not their concern. Why would I do it? Because it is my social responsibility[36]*".

A number of respondents, employed in educational institutions, noted how in their previous work, it did not happen that students report to them how they came across contents which could possibly lead to violent extremism.

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[35]Interview with a student of the Faculty of Economics - University of Sarajevo, Sarajevo, March 2020
[36]Interview with an activist from the Tuzla Open Centre - marginal group, Tuzla, March 2020

Most respondents said that the phenomenon of radicalization and VE is not sufficiently discussed in the BiH society. Respondents highlighted parents, educational institutions, the NGO sector and the media as responsible for informing the younger population about this phenomenon and raising awareness.

With regard to monitoring the online activities of young people, the majority of respondents agreed that it was not possible to fully control them and that it was not possible to be a "24-hour supervisor[37]". However, they emphasized that it is possible to control these activities at least partially, but also to impose certain prohibitions that would prevent or restrict access to certain content for children. Certainly, some of the respondents pointed out that an adequate level of knowledge of the use of the internet and modern technologies by parents is necessary in order to be able to know at all the mechanisms of functioning of social networks and to control the activities of their children.

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[37]Interview with a parent, Zenica, April 2020

6. Conclusions

The aim of this study was to assess the level of knowledge on VE among the (younger) population in the target areas in BiH (Sarajevo, Zenica, Bihac and Tuzla), as well as their Internet and media literacy.

Bosnia and Herzegovina was assessed as an area prone to emergence of radicalization leading to VE. Except the number of citizens of BiH who went to the foreign battlefields, the assessment was based on the level of presence of risk factors leading to VE in BiH. In line with previous research, risk factors have been divided in two groups of triggers. The first one includes structural circumstances within the society while the second one presents personal and psychological circumstances.

The results of this study indicate a need for additional education about the phenomenon of radicalization leading to VE in BiH. There is a significant lack of overall knowledge of the roots of radicalization leading to VE, as well as the impact it might have. The youth was marked as the group of population which does not have sufficient knowledge about the phenomenon, and at the same time, is the most vulnerable to it. Building capacities among the younger population to recognize radicalization influences should be a task of the educational system as well as the NGO sector, which is a measure to prevent the spread of VE. Besides the capacities of educational institutions/NGO sector, the vulnerability of youth to radicalization and VE shall be (and is) impacted by family circumstances, their social contacts, interests, feelings of acceptance and values, and above all, the opportunities (education/work) they have. Broader changes in all of the mentioned areas are needed in order to effectively prevent and combat the influences of radicalization and VE.

One of the objectives of the project "Strengthening civil society from Bosnia and Herzegovina to recognize and monitor online threats on the social media", is to strengthen resilience of the NGO sector as well as the youth in BiH to monitor and recognize online threats leading to radicalization. This includes, first, overall awarenessrising about the phenomenon of radicalization leading to VE. The Social Media Monitoring Training Manual developed within the project will include information which defines the phenomenon of radicalization leading to VE, and factors which enable it, thus providing the ability to efficiently identify it online. Also, within the project activities, developed will be a web platform, which should providea source of information which increases the understanding of radicalization processes and extremism   behaviour.

In addition to the need of education about the phenomenon of radicalization leading to VE, the results of this study emphasize the need of education in two more areas. The first one is connected to VE, and presents the lack of knowledge on reporting mechanisms. Although results of the study show that the majority of citizens would report contents leading to VE, a very large percentage of them were not sure to whom. Also, many respondents did not believe their report would have an impact.Consideringthe lack of trust, positive examples should be promoted, stating examples in which reporting caused reactions and had a positive impact. As the report shows, more effectiveness and overall raising awareness of the seriousness of the issue of online threats, hate speech, problematic contents and responsibility is needed. Through the project activities, special attentionwill be paid to social media monitoring, helping citizens to map online threats. Also, pointed out should be solutions in the sense of reporting mechanisms, through providing information on responsible actors as well as positive examples conducted against viral extremism.

The secondestablishedneed for additional education is the need to raise the overall level of Internet/media literacy in BiH. The results of this study show that the most followed media in BiH is the Internet. Also, it is the most trusted one. Most commonly, the Internet is used for informing. A positive trend is that the results show how the majority of respondents believed that the Internet can be used for disinformation purposes, and in line, they most often do check the accuracy of information found online. The majority of respondents are social media users, especially of the social networks "Facebook", "Instagram" and "YouTube". In line with research, the social networks, with special attention to the three mentioned ones, are potential sources of content which could lead to VE. This fact additionally highlights the importance of the need for the strengthening of the level of Internet/media literacy in BiH. Results of this study show that experts also perceive it as very low, which is proven by the high presence of online hate speech and disinformation. Within the project activities, participants will learn more about the above mentioned phenomenon, but also the social media and Internet in general. They should develop capacities to recognize narratives leading to radicalization and VE, but also hate speech and misinformationpresented online. Also, as one of the results, participants will develop messages which will trigger public attention, making the wider audience question contents they consume online, raising the level of critical thinking about online contents.

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Annex: questionnaire used in the survey

Good morning/day/evening, my name is _____. I work as an interviewer for the purpose of collecting public perception research data. I would be grateful if you could answer my questions. The survey is anonymous, and all data obtained will be presented as group data and shall be used exclusively for the purposes of this project.

Survey Number:____   Date:_____   Survey   time:_____

Survey Location:_____

Interviewer:_____

SURVEY

Mark X for your answer

Gender		Age									Ethnicity				Education				Status				
M	F	18-22	23-27	28-32	33-37	38-42	43-47	48-52	53-60	60+	BOSNIAK	SERB	CROAT	OTHERS	NO	ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	HIGH SCHOOL	UNIVERSITY	EMPLOYED	UNEMPLOYED	STUDENT	RETIRED	PARENT
1	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1

PLEASE ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

Q1 Which of these media do you follow the most? (Three answers possible)

1	Internet	Weekly newspapers/Magazines	5
2	TV	None of the above	6
3	Radio	I don't want to answer	7
4	Daily newspapers	I don't know	8

Q2 Which of these media do you trust the most?

1	Internet	Weekly newspapers/Magazines	5
2	TV	None of the above	6
3	Radio	I don't want to answer	7
4	Daily newspapers	I don't know	8

Q3 How much time do you spend on the Internet?

1	Less than one hour a day	More than four hours a day	4
2	1-2 hours a day	I don't want to answer	5
3	2-4 hours a day	I don't know	6

Q4 For which of the following activities do you mostly use the Internet? (Multiple Answer Possible)

1	Work	Fun	4
2	Learning / Studying	I don't want to answer	5
3	Finding information	I don't know	6

Q5 Do you believe the Internet can be used for disinformation purposes?

1	Yes	I don't want to answer	3
2	No	I don't know	4

Q6 How often do you check the accuracy of information found on the Internet?

1	Always	Never	4
2	Often	I don't want to answer	5
3	Rarely	I don't know	6

Q7 Do you use social media?

1	Yes	I don't want to answer	3
2	No	I don't know	4

Q7a (If the answer to Q7 is YES) Which of the following types of social media do you use? (Multiple Answers Possible)

1	Facebook	Snapchat	6
2	Instagram	TikTok	7
3	Twitter	None of the mentioned	8
4	LinkedIn	I don't want to answer	9

5	Youtube	I don't know	

Q8 Are you religious?

1	Yes	I don't want to answer	3
2	No	I don't know	4

Q9 How would you rate your knowledge of religion?

1	Very poor	Very Good	5
2	Poor	I don't want to answer	6
3	Average	I don't know	7
4	Good		

Q10 How often do you use the Internet to expand your knowledge of religion?

1	Always	Never	4
2	Often	I don't want to answer	5
3	Rarely	I don't know	6

Q10a (If the answer to Q10is 1,2 or 3) Which of the following platforms do you use for this purpose?

1	Web pages	None of the mentioned	5
2	Online communication with others	I don't want to answer	6
3	Groups and pages on social media	I don't know	7
4	Audio/Video records		

Q11 How often do you communicate (private "chat", comments, etc.) with people on the Internet that you don't know personally?

1	Always	Never	4
2	Often	I don't want to answer	5
3	Rarely	I don't know	6

Q11a (If the answer to Q11 is 1,2 or 3) How often is religion the topic of such conversations?

1	Always	Never	4

2	Often	I don't want to answer	5
3	Rarely	I don't know	6

Q12 Do you believe that the Internet and social media can be used for radicalization purposes?

1	Yes	I don't want to answer	3
2	No	I don't know / I am not sure	4

Q13 In your opinion, would you be able to recognize online content which could be leading to violent extremism?

1	Yes	I don't want to answer	3
2	No	I don't know / I am not sure	4

Q13a (If the answer to Q13 is YES) How often do you come across such content?

1	Always	Never	4
2	Often	I don't want to answer	5
3	Rarely	I don't know	6

Q13b (If the answer to Q13 is YES) Where did you come across online content which could be leading to violent extremism?

1	Web pages	None of the mentioned	5
2	Online communication with others	I don't want to answer	6
3	Groups and pages on social media	I don't know	7
4	Audio/Video records		

Q14 Did you come across online commercials or suggested content that had some components which could be leading to violent extremism or redirected you to web pages with such components?

1	Yes	I don't want to answer	3
2	No	I don't know / I am not sure	4

Q14a (If the answer to Q14 is YES) How often?

1	Always	Never	4
2	Often	I don't want to answer	5
3	Rarely	I don't know	6

Q15 If you were to come across online content which could be leading to violent extremism, would you report it?

1	Yes	I don't want to answer	3
2	No	I don't know / I am not sure	4

Q15a (If the answer to Q15 is YES) To whom would you report such content?

1	Police	Entity authorities	8
2	Institutions of religious communities	State authorities	9
3	Family	The web platform on which the content is	10
4	Teachers / Professors	None of the mentioned	11
5	Friends	I don't want to answer	12
6	Local authorities	I don't know	13
7	Cantonal authorities		

Q16 In your opinion, where are you most likely to find online content which could be leading to violent extremism? (Multiple Answers Possible)

1	Web pages	None of the mentioned	5
2	Online communication with others	I don't want to answer	6
3	Groups and pages on social media	I don't know	7
4	Audio/Video records		

Q17 Do any of your social media friends / followers share, follow, and comment on online content which could be leading to violent extremism?

1	Yes	I don't want to answer	3
2	No	I don't know / I am not sure	4

Q18 In your opinion, which part of the population is most vulnerable to radicalization on the Internet?

1	Children (up to 11 years)	Elder (65+)	4
2	Teenagers (12-17 years)	I don't want to answer	5
3	Adults (18+)	I don't know	6