

# WHO ARE THE EUROPEAN JIHADIS?

Project Midterm Report



## AUTHORS

**Kacper Rekawek**, Head of Defence and Security Programme, GLOBSEC Policy Institute

**Stanislav Matějka**, Junior Research Fellow, GLOBSEC Policy Institute

**Viktor Szucs**, Project Coordinator, GLOBSEC Policy Institute

**Tomáš Beňuška**, GLOBSEC Policy Institute

**Karin Kajzarová**, GLOBSEC Policy Institute

**Jakub Rafay**, GLOBSEC Policy Institute

The following distinguished experts were consulted in the process of preparation of this report. The sole responsibility for the content of this publication lies with the authors.

**Austria:** Daniela Pisoiu, Jorg Peschak

**Belgium:** Wim Hardyns, Thom Snaphaan

**Bulgaria:** Nadya Stoyanova

**France:** Olivier de France, Damien Saverot, Pierre Colomina

**Germany:** Matenia Sirseldudi

**Greece:** Eleni Fotou

**Ireland:** Orla Lynch

**Italy:** Marco Lombardi, Giovanni Giacalone, Nicolò Spagna

**Netherlands:** Bart Schuurman, Jessica Sciarone

**Spain:** Fernando Reinares, Carola García-Calvo, Álvaro Vicente

**United Kingdom:** John Morrison, Aleksandra Łojek

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# PROJECT SUMMARY

The most well-known ISIS terrorist atrocities in Europe, including the 2015 Paris and 2016 Brussels attacks, saw individuals who in the past had been involved in organised crime and illegal trade graduate to the ranks of the world's most successful terrorist organisation. It is now widely assumed that Europe's terrorists are no longer radicals first and foremost but criminals who turned to political violence at some stage throughout their ordinary crime careers. Thus, the threat emanating from the "crime-terror nexus" hangs over Europe.

GLOBSEC, an independent, non-partisan, non-governmental organisation that aims to shape the global debate on foreign and security policy, responded to this threat by developing, with funding from the first round of the PMI Impact initiative<sup>1</sup>, a research and advocacy project aimed at addressing the "crime-terror nexus" in Europe. The project, titled *From Criminals to Terrorists and Back?*, will:

- ▶ collect, collate and analyse data on terrorism convicts from 11 EU countries with the highest number of arrests for terrorism offences (Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, the UK). The project team will investigate whether these individuals had prior criminal connections and, if so, whether a specific connection to illegal trade is a precursor to terrorism and to what extent this trade funds terrorism. In short, the study will check whether the crime-terror nexus exists and how strong it truly is.
- ▶ disseminate project findings at high-profile GLOBSEC Strategic Forums (GLOBSEC Bratislava Forum, TATRA Summit, Chateau Bela conferences) and other internationally acclaimed gatherings that attract decision-makers, experts, private sector, and law-enforcement representatives while also incorporating their expert level feedback into our work.
- ▶ help shape and strengthen European counterterrorism efforts by providing tailor-made solutions to combat the crime-terror nexus and terrorist financing via education and awareness and advocacy efforts involving decision-makers and security stakeholders in the 11 examined countries. This line of activity directly links the project to the widely acclaimed work of the GLOBSEC Intelligence Reform Initiative (GIRI), which is led by former U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security Michael Chertoff and involved in developing and promoting more effective transatlantic counterterrorism solutions.

<sup>1</sup> This publication was funded by PMI IMPACT, a grant award initiative of Philip Morris International ("PMI"). In the performance of its research, the Grantee maintained full independence from PMI. The views and opinions expressed in this document are those of the Grantee and do not necessarily reflect the views of PMI. Responsibility for the information and views expressed in this publication lies entirely with the Grantee. Neither PMI, nor any of its affiliates, or persons acting on their behalf may be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained herein.

# FROM CRIMINALS TO TERRORISTS AND BACK?

The findings of this report are based on a dataset of **225 cases** of individuals about whom the authors were able to collect open-source data between September 2017 and June 2018. Of these, **197 are jihadi terrorists** and 28, effectively comprising the project's control group, are far-left or nationalist Greek terrorists. The data collection will continue and a year from now (September 2019), the authors will unveil the final report on this GLOBSEC-led project, including more cases of jihadi and non-jihadi European terrorists.

The aforementioned **225** were arrested for terrorism offences in 2015 (and later convicted), expelled from a given country because of their alleged terrorism links, or died while executing terrorist attacks in the 11 examined EU countries—Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, the UK—i.e., those that reported more than 20 terrorism arrests to Europol that year. Moreover, around a quarter of the individuals amongst the jihadi group in the current dataset are **former foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs)**, who were arrested or expelled after returning to Europe or killed while staging terrorist attacks. Focusing on different groups of European terrorists active in what arguably could be called “**the peak year of European jihad**” gives a more comprehensive picture of the scale and particularities of the terrorist threat to Europe.

As mentioned in the project's *Kick-Off Report*,<sup>1</sup> since the beginning of the project, data collection has concentrated on terrorism arrestees as reported to Europol by the EU Member States. As the project developed, the team commenced collection of information in more categories so that the authors could provide a broader picture of “the state of European jihad.” Thus, the database of **197 individuals** includes several groups, or subsets, depending on what happened to them in 2015 (See Fig. 1). The prevailing majority of **120 individuals** were arrested and later convicted. A subset of **29 individuals** were killed by security forces or committed suicide while staging attacks. A further **20 suspects** were expelled from EU Member States, designated as a threat to national security. This approach has been most often utilised by Italy, but not exclusively. The database includes a sample of **28 suspects** who are still at large and are sought

by security authorities, **15** of which have already been convicted *in absentia*.

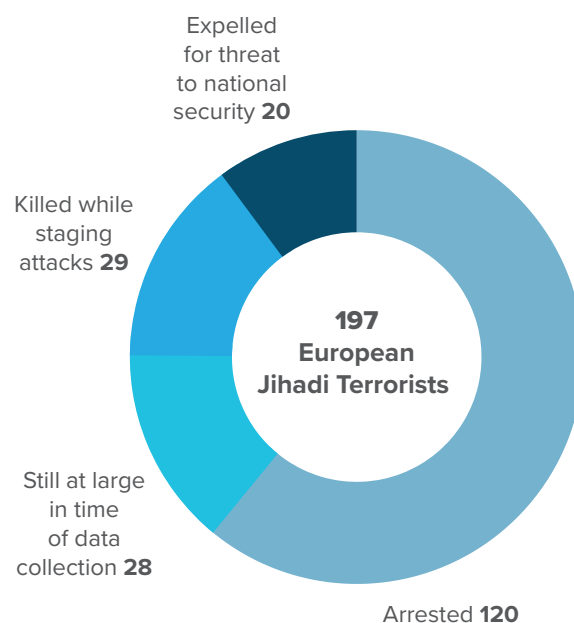


Figure 1: 197 European jihadi terrorists

The phenomenon of the crime-terror nexus, i.e., the scale of the overlap between the two milieus in Europe and the intensity of their interconnections, is at the heart of the report and all of the activities performed by GLOBSEC and its partners in the 11 EU countries within the framework of this project. However, GLOBSEC's multifaceted focus on different subsets of European terrorists and disciplined and thorough data collection allow for a broader analysis of the phenomenon of jihadi terrorism threatening Europe. Thus, **this report should also be seen as GLOBSEC's take on “the state of European jihad” and an attempt to map out its features (See Fig. 2).**

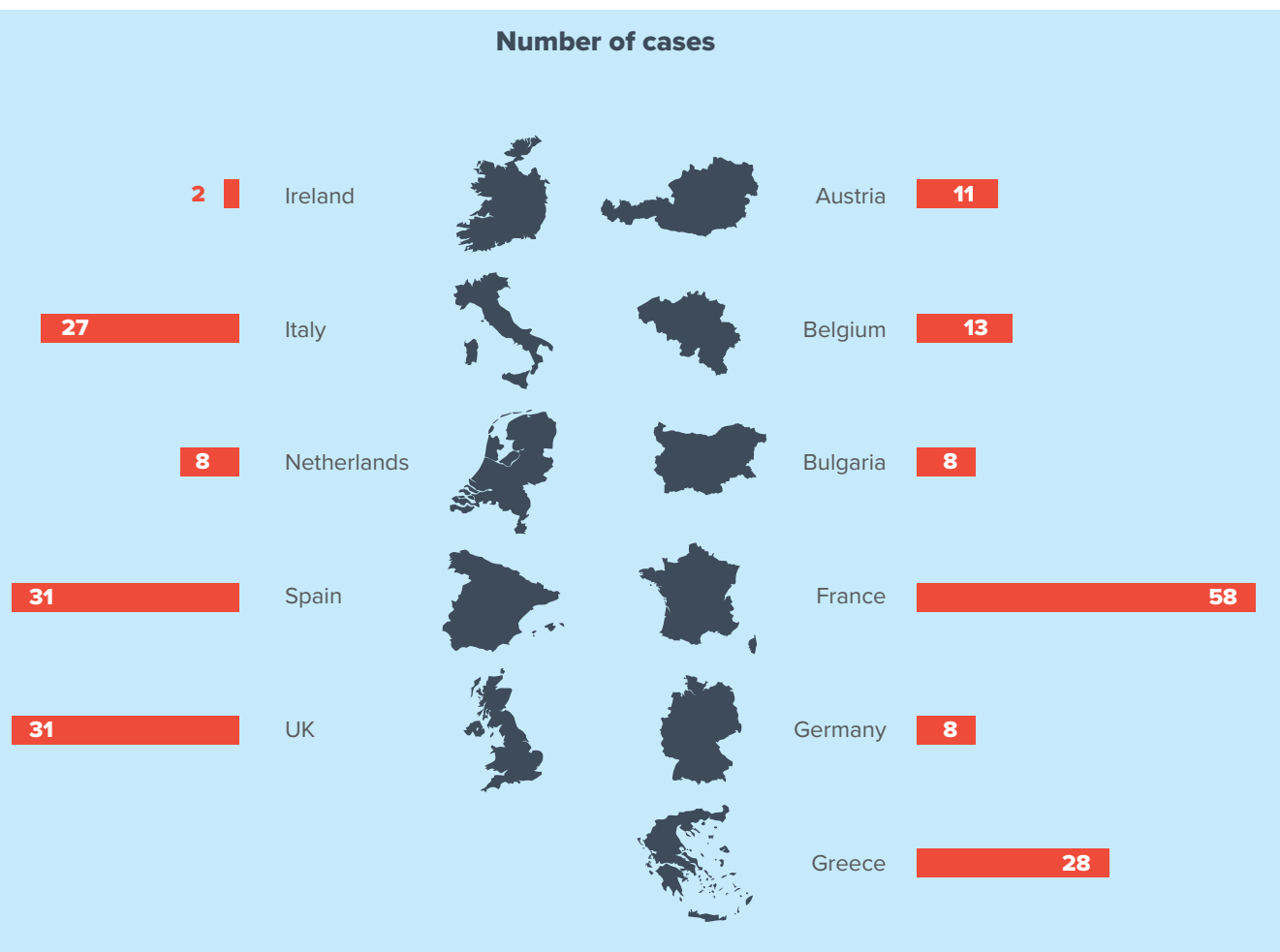


Figure 2: 2015 European terrorists in the dataset

The report takes a **bird's-eye view of the issues at hand and treats jihadi terrorism as a threat to the whole of Europe** and not just a set of particular EU Member States. The authors, therefore, stress the commonalities amongst the subjects of the report and, whenever possible and justified by the findings, also the existing divergencies. Five national 2015 terrorist subsets contribute the most to the caseload analysed in the project: the French (58 cases in the report), the UK and Spanish (each with 31), Greek (28 non-jihadi terrorist cases), and Italian (27). These five constitute 78% of the dataset, with Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Germany, Ireland, and the Netherlands contributing the remaining 22% (or 50 cases).

**To build up the dataset, the project team utilises a codebook with more than 120 variables, completed by research teams on the ground,** i.e., experienced terrorism researchers in the 11 EU countries from University College Cork (Ireland), University of East London (the UK), University of Leiden (the Netherlands), King Juan Carlos University and Real Instituto Elcano (Spain), the French Institute for International and Strategic Affairs, Catholic University of the Sacred Heart (Italy), the Center

for the Study of Democracy (Bulgaria), and others. The data used to fill out the codebooks comes from open sources but is not solely desk-based. The encrypted and anonymised codebooks are then forwarded to GLOBSEC, which manages the cross-national dataset (comprising 225 cases at the time of writing but growing weekly as new updates are coded), ensures all teams adhere to the same data-collection and primary-coding standards, acts as the final coder and reviewer, and performs the analysis leading to the publication of reports like this one. The project team previously released the project's *Kick-Off Report*, which can be found at <https://www.globsec.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Crime-Crime-Terror-Nexus-update.pdf>, and the respective research teams released *Quarterly Reports* (national reports), which can be found at <https://www.globsec.org/projects/criminals-terrorists-back/>.

# WHO ARE THE EUROPEAN JIHADIS?



## European jihad is

male.



about travelling to and returning from a foreign conflict.

young but not teenage or adolescent.



slow to mature as radicalization fueling it often takes years.

homegrown and naturalised, but also coming from outside of Europe.



a family affair + a team effort.

criminal but not "petty" criminal.



unemployed.

financed by a variety of different, and predominantly, legal means.



uneducated.



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## CRIME-TERROR NEXUS IN EUROPE

European jihad is to some extent criminal in nature, as a sizeable minority of its adherents, or **56 cases (28%) of those analysed, have a history of a previous arrest (i.e., before 2015)**. Of these, 49 were consequently charged and 43 of them were convicted of different crimes prior to 2015. As will be shown, this is considerably less by percentage than the share of former criminals amongst, e.g., national FTF contingents in Syria/Iraq. Nonetheless, almost one-third of European jihadis had had a serious run-in with the law, which supports the argument about the existence of a crime-terror nexus in Europe. They had earlier committed crimes including: (violent) robberies, burglaries and thefts (20 instances); illicit trade including drug dealing, trafficking of goods and fraud (15); violent crimes (15); and terrorism-related crimes (7).

**The European crime-terror nexus involves a higher number of hardened criminals than previously thought. It is not only “petty criminals” turning towards jihadism but more serious or effectively “gangster” in nature.** The report identifies 116 crimes committed by the 56 criminals turned terrorists. Of these, 33% of their crimes were of a less severe nature, such as theft, burglary, drug possession or dealing, speeding, or affray. The other major categories, amounting to 67% of all known crimes are, however, more serious, i.e., money laundering, violent robbery, assault, murder, acts involving weapons and explosives, or terrorism offences.

**A majority of the terrorism arrestees in the dataset will be released from prisons by 2023. An average prison sentence (excluding four cases in which the convicts were given life sentences) for 2015 terrorism crimes in the dataset is 8 year and 7 months long.** The offences of these terrorism arrestees include preparation of attacks, membership, association or conspiracy with the terrorist organisation, or an attempt to join the terrorist organisation.

**European jihad is financed by a variety of different means: legal (the largest group of known means, comprising 25% of all the cases in the dataset) such as the individual terrorist’s salary, savings, and benefits; mixed (the second-largest group,**

comprising 5% of all the cases in the dataset), which see jihadis utilising both illegal (e.g., illicit trade, drug dealing, human trafficking, robbery, and theft) and the abovementioned legal means; and, **illegal (representing 3% of all the cases in the dataset).** The authors acknowledge gaps in data related to this very issue, which necessitates further studies focused solely on the practicalities of terrorism financing.

## EUROPEAN JIHAD — DEMOGRAPHY

**European jihad is male:** 87% of the cases covered in this report are male and only 13% are female.

**European jihad is young but far from a phenomenon of teenage or adolescent rebellion, since the average age of the individuals in the 197 jihadi cases covered in this report is 30.5.** The average age for criminals turned terrorists is almost the same, at 30.9. Interestingly, female jihadis are on average older than their male counterparts (32.8 vs 29.9).

**European jihad is a three-headed hydra:** it is **homegrown**, with 101 (51% of the jihadis covered in this report) born in the EU; **naturalised or first-generation**, with 22 (11%) having acquired EU citizenship only later in life; and, **external**, with 33 (17%) having not spent their life in the EU. **Criminals turned terrorists, however, are more homegrown**, with 71% of them born in the EU and 89% possessing EU citizenship.

**European jihadis are not well educated:** only 20% have some high-school experience and just 3 completed undergraduate studies. The situation is even worse amongst the criminals turned terrorists, of whom only 8% attended high school.

As a consequence, **European jihadis are not very successful as far as their professional careers are concerned.** Of this group, 40% (78 out of 197) were unemployed at the time of their arrest, death, or expulsion. Only 28% (56 out of 197) were employed at the time of their arrest. Their jobs varied from service (21 individuals) and administrative (10) jobs to construction (7) while 15 were still enrolled as students. Again, the situation looks even bleaker for the criminals turned terrorists: 52% of this subset (29 out of 56) were unemployed at the time of their 2015



arrest, death, or expulsion, and only 18% (10 out of 56) had some form of employment.

**European jihad is a family or collegial affair**, with 26% (52 out of 197) of the individuals in the cases inducted into jihadi networks via friends or family. At the same time, the dataset shows that **friends of the European jihadis are more active radicals than the jihadis' immediate families**. In 107 cases (54%), friends were either involved in terrorism activities themselves (105 cases) or were only aware of their associates' terrorism involvement (2 cases). Simultaneously, these numbers are manifestly different for family members: in 75 cases they themselves were involved in terrorism activities but a much larger group of 22 was only aware of their associates' terrorism involvement (97 cases in total, 49% of the dataset).

## EUROPEAN JIHAD: RADICALISATION, ROLE OF PRISONS

**European jihad is a patient phenomenon, as its members undergo a long-term radicalisation process** that often takes years before staging a terrorist attack or being arrested or expelled for terrorism offences. Only in 4% (7 out of 197) of the cases studied did the authors find evidence of radicalisation beginning less than 6 months before the 2015 arrest, death, or expulsion. At the same time, in 19% of the cases, the process began five or more years before 2015.

**European jihad is about prisons**, with 54% (21 out of 39 previously incarcerated) of the criminals later turned terrorists (co-)radicalised behind bars. In all but four of these cases they were able to develop contacts with other radicalised prisoners, with half of the "(co-)radicalised in prison" subset then able to maintain this contact after leaving prison.

**European jihad and the crime-terror nexus are also marked by the tendency to avoid prisons or to keep a low profile while incarcerated**. 54% of the criminals later turned terrorists also received suspended sentences for some of their pre-2015, often non-terrorist crimes. However, this does not mean they would not serve sentences for other offences. Moreover, 18% of all the criminals later turned terrorists imprisoned at least once before 2015 were regarded as "model prisoners" and were later rewarded with early release.

## EUROPEAN JIHAD: INVOLVEMENT IN FOREIGN CONFLICTS, MILITARY EXPERIENCE

**European jihad is about fighting in foreign conflicts**, as 26% of the cases in the dataset are former FTFs who returned to Europe after a stint in a conflict zone (Syria/Iraq). Half of the FTF contingent consists of regular ISIS fighters but the rest is comprised of individuals in other positions, such as ISIS police officers, propagandists, or recruiters. Moreover, **half of the FTFs in the sample have criminal pasts**. At the same time, only 6% of the jihadis in the dataset have previous official military experience, and this is often rudimentary, e.g., the cadet corps.

## EUROPEAN JIHAD: TEAM SPORT, NOT A "LONE WOLF" EFFORT

**European jihad is a team effort**, with majority of the individuals from the dataset arrested in large counterterrorism sweeps targeting terrorism networks. It is true that a further **58 were arrested alone**, but only in 3 of those cases, data indicated the possibility that these could have been solo terrorist actors. However, further inquiries revealed connections to either radicalising agents or wider online radical communities. **Thus, European jihad is not an individual effort and more of a team sport**.

# RECOMMENDATIONS: THE CRIME-TERROR NEXUS AND THE DEVOLUTION OF COUNTERTERRORISM

1. Despite ISIS' losses in the Middle East, the threat from European jihad will not diminish in the foreseeable future, especially as **majority of individuals arrested in the peak year of jihadism in Europe (2015), and currently serving prison sentences for their offences, will have been released by 2023.** Consequently, the EU Member States will need to prepare for a terrorism threat considerably bolstered by **veteran jihadis**. Many of them will have established new connections or have enlisted new jihadi recruits while in prison. In fact, some, during their earlier incarcerations, had themselves become involved in radical networks.
2. This threat becomes more acute as **almost 30% of Europe's terrorists have previous criminal histories.** Thus, **the crime-terror nexus remains a potent and useful perspective** that European states should adopt for channelling some of their counterterrorism efforts.
3. To make the most of this perspective, **relevant security stakeholders should maintain robust communication channels. These should not only be horizontal in nature**, e.g., a civilian security service with a military security service, nor solely inter-state, e.g., a civilian security service from country A with a civilian security service from country B, **but also cross-departmental, vertical, and intra-state, as suggested in reports by the GLOBSEC Intelligence Reform Initiative (GIRI).**<sup>2</sup> That effectively means good **liaison** connections between the government, civil service, security services, military, and police force(s) (also at the local level), as the latter is often the first spotter or owner of intelligence conducive to future counterterrorism investigations.
4. In short, it is police officers who often first meet the criminals who later turn terrorist. **Countering the two-headed hydra of the crime-terror nexus necessitates giving first responders a voice and a stake in the process.** Organisational solutions to accommodate this recommendation can vary from country to country but should go beyond the most common, which bring together the relevant stakeholders at the central and not always at the local or regional levels. **This would effectively entail the devolution of European counterterrorism efforts and empowering other actors in the process.**
5. This devolution should **go beyond local security stakeholders**, i.e., the police force(s), as they are not always the first spotters or responders as far as countering terrorism is concerned. The state authorities and institutions (**education sector, health service, social services, etc.**) and other individuals (**family, friends, neighbours, colleagues, associates**) interacting with European jihadis or criminals turning terrorist are the ones who should be involved in the devolution of European counterterrorism.
6. GLOBSEC acknowledges there are **devolution-oriented counterterrorism efforts in some European countries and encourages future activities in this domain.**<sup>3</sup> It takes special note of the UK's efforts to evaluate and monitor "individuals who are vulnerable to radicalisation or who are (or have been) of interest to the police and the security and intelligence agencies [...] but who are not currently the subject of any active investigations." GLOBSEC shares the view that to successfully counter the threat emanating from such individuals, **information should be shared "more widely" and support for "more local interventions" should be prioritised.**<sup>4</sup>
7. Apart from the devolution of counterterrorism, GLOBSEC, encouraged by the positive reception of its work on the crime-terror nexus within the expert and security community,<sup>5</sup> calls on decision-makers and stakeholders to **support**

future research activities like this one. As much as GLOBSEC calls for lowering the barriers between different actors in the devolution of counterterrorism, it also favours a similar process among security stakeholders and researchers. While it may seem cliché to state that both communities can learn from one another, it is likely that a different perspective on issues of common interest can prove beneficial for the other perspective.

8. Finally, such interactions should lead to a more vibrant interest in researching not only the individuals, groups, networks or communities involved or who did “something” (i.e., evolved from crime to terror, staged terrorist attacks, travelled to a conflict zone to join a terrorist organisation, etc.) but also those who did not participate, even though in the past they had socialised or worked with some of the most well-known European terrorists and might have seemingly looked like ideal candidates for European jihadis. Knowing what made them opt for a different path is key, as it could inform any future counterterrorism activities or strategies.

# INTRODUCTION

This is the second major report produced and published by GLOBSEC within the framework of the *From Criminals to Terrorists and Back?* project. It is being published just as the project enters its second year. **The first, (*Kick-Off Report*)**, published in December 2017, served as an introductory statement and a mapping-out exercise in relation to the question of the existence of the crime-terror nexus in Europe.<sup>6</sup> **The third report**, to be published at the project's end in summer 2019, will provide the project's final take on the crime-terror nexus in Europe and "the state of European jihad." Moreover, in spring 2018, GLOBSEC published *Quarterly Reports*, which were written by members of the research teams on the ground and provided national perspectives on the issues at hand.<sup>7</sup> Ten more such reports will follow in spring 2019.

GLOBSEC provided its analysis of the issue of the crime-terror nexus, its evolution, history and theory, in the *Kick-Off Report*.<sup>8</sup> It is not the authors' intent to reproduce that previous analysis here. Their aim in this report, while acknowledging the recent expert and scholarly contributions on the issue, is to **offer granularity on the ins and outs of the crime-terror nexus, a phenomenon seemingly widely known and referenced but rarely discussed in detail using quantitative data**. What is more, the availability of these data also allows the authors to go beyond the remit of discussing results related to the crime-terror nexus and present **a wider picture of European jihadis**.

What follows are **eight chapters** in which the authors review the findings from their analysis of 197 jihadi cases while looking at: **the scale and strength of the crime-terror nexus, gender and age of the jihadis, their education and employment profiles, their fundraising activities** (thanks to which they sustain their terrorist careers), **their processes of radicalisation** (length, radicalising agent), **their homegrown/naturalised or immigrant backgrounds, their bouts of foreign fighting experience, and the extent to which they can be called solo actors**. Afterwards, **the authors look more closely at the situation in five countries whose nationals constitute 78% of all the cases in the dataset: France, UK, Spain, Italy, and Greece**. For these countries, the analysis covers 28 additional, non-jihadi cases. These national subchapters offer context to the earlier analysis of the crime-terror nexus and "the state of European jihad", which, although full of individual, anonymised examples of jihadi terrorists, is presented from an overarching,

European level. The authors are convinced that despite the national variations in jihadism, it will remain a primary threat to all European countries, necessitating collective action to defeat it. It is the authors' hope to, on one hand, inform stakeholders of the characteristics of the threat and, on the other, through the recommendations, offer actionable solutions to defeat it.

# EUROPEAN CRIMINALS TURNING TO JIHAD

The approach this report and the project employs towards analysing the crime-terror nexus phenomenon is twofold. The quantitative part consists of tracing and collecting all available records of previous arrests among the jihadis. The qualitative part aims to showcase the individual pathways from criminality to terrorism and the length as well as severity of their previous criminal experiences. Since the dataset includes individuals arrested, killed in, or expelled from 11 countries, the authors opted for the most universal tool to classify the previous crimes of the jihadis and other terrorists in the dataset, i.e., the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime's (UNODC) classification of criminal offences developed in the *International Classification of Crime for Statistical Purposes*.<sup>9</sup> This allows coding all criminal data according to one standard and provides structured answers on the criminal pasts of the cases included in the subset.

The initial results seem to validate the theories claiming that a significant number of European jihadis have been involved in some type of criminal activity before taking part in political violence. In the sample, **56, or 28% of the total**, had been arrested before their 2015 terrorism arrest, death during a terrorist attack, or expulsion for alleged terrorism association.<sup>10</sup> Throughout this report, the authors will refer to these 56 individuals as **criminals turned terrorists**.

Of the five biggest subsets in the dataset, the French one is 50% composed of former criminals, and the UK's is 32%, but the Spanish one is only 6.4% and the Italian, 7.4%. The Greek, the fifth-biggest subset, although containing no jihadi terrorists and analysed in more detail later, consists of 46% former criminals. Given the rising number of cases being coded into the dataset every month, by the project's end (summer 2019), these figures may well change, but one thing is becoming clear: **the crime-terror nexus phenomenon might be stronger in some countries than in others** (see Fig. 3 below).

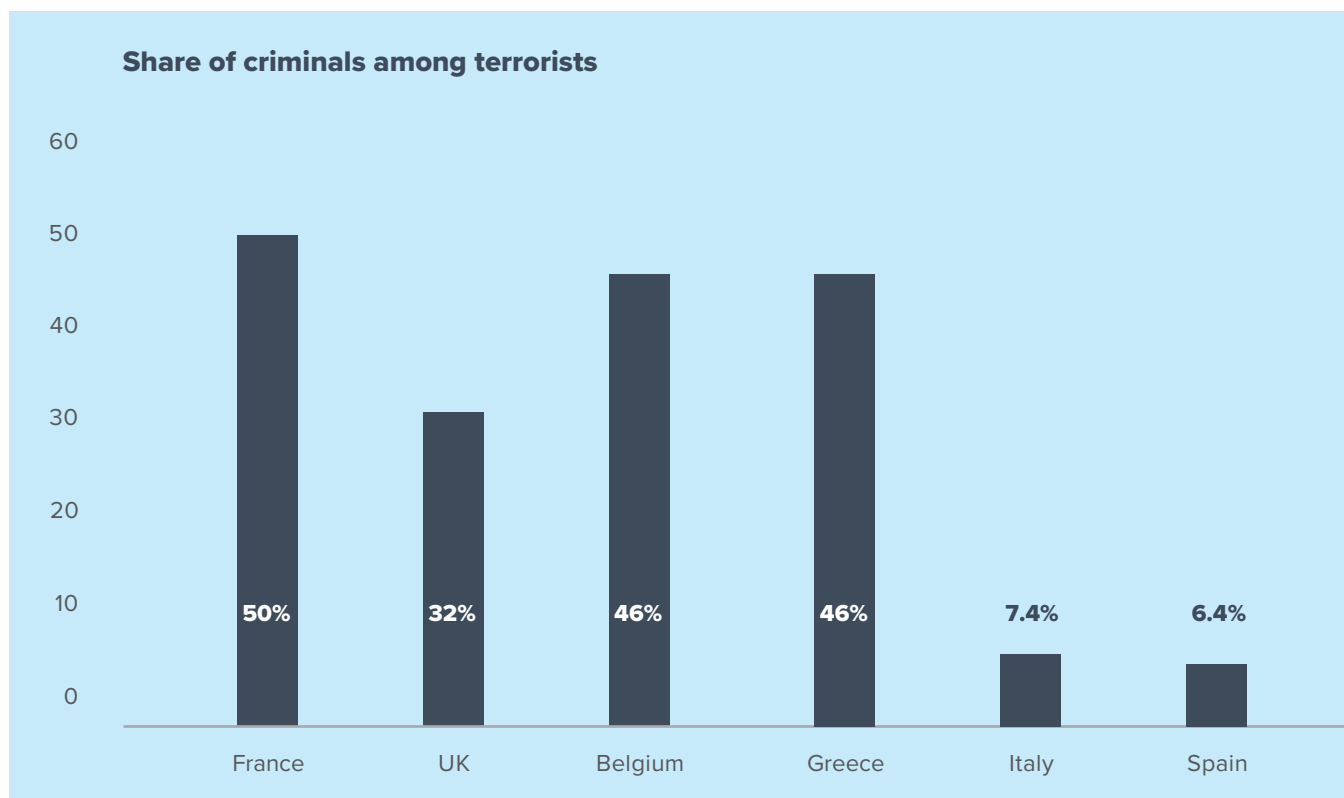


Figure 3: Share of criminals among terrorists per country

The authors were able to conclusively catalogue 116 crimes committed by the 56 individuals before 2015, i.e., 2.07 crimes per person. A closer examination of the crimes (see Fig. 4 below) **supports to an extent the conclusions of the seminal Basra et al. study on the link between petty criminality and terrorism in Europe**, as 33% (38 out of 116) of the recorded crimes were of a less severe nature, such as theft, burglary, drug possession or dealing, speeding, or affray.<sup>11</sup> The other major categories, amounting to 67% of all known crimes, however, are far more serious, i.e., money laundering, violent robbery, assault, murder, acts involving weapons and explosives, or terrorism offences. Thus, these findings also show that the **European crime-terror nexus is also about more serious crime and involves a higher number of hardened or seasoned criminals than previously thought**.

the authors strive to improve the data collection on this point.<sup>12</sup> At the same time, however, the authors stand by their conclusion that more serious crime has also been a part of the crime-terror nexus, which could be less about petty criminals and more about more experienced “gangsters” progressing towards jihadism, at least in some European countries.<sup>13</sup> The final result of the first international and detailed attempt to quantitatively map out the criminal pasts of today’s jihadis in particular, and Europe’s terrorists in general, to be published a year from now, will allow for a definitive stance on this point.

The crime-terror nexus, as identified by the authors, comprises **individuals with very different criminal careers**. Some had been committing terrorism offences before their second terrorism arrest in 2015, others had been hardened criminals with multiple

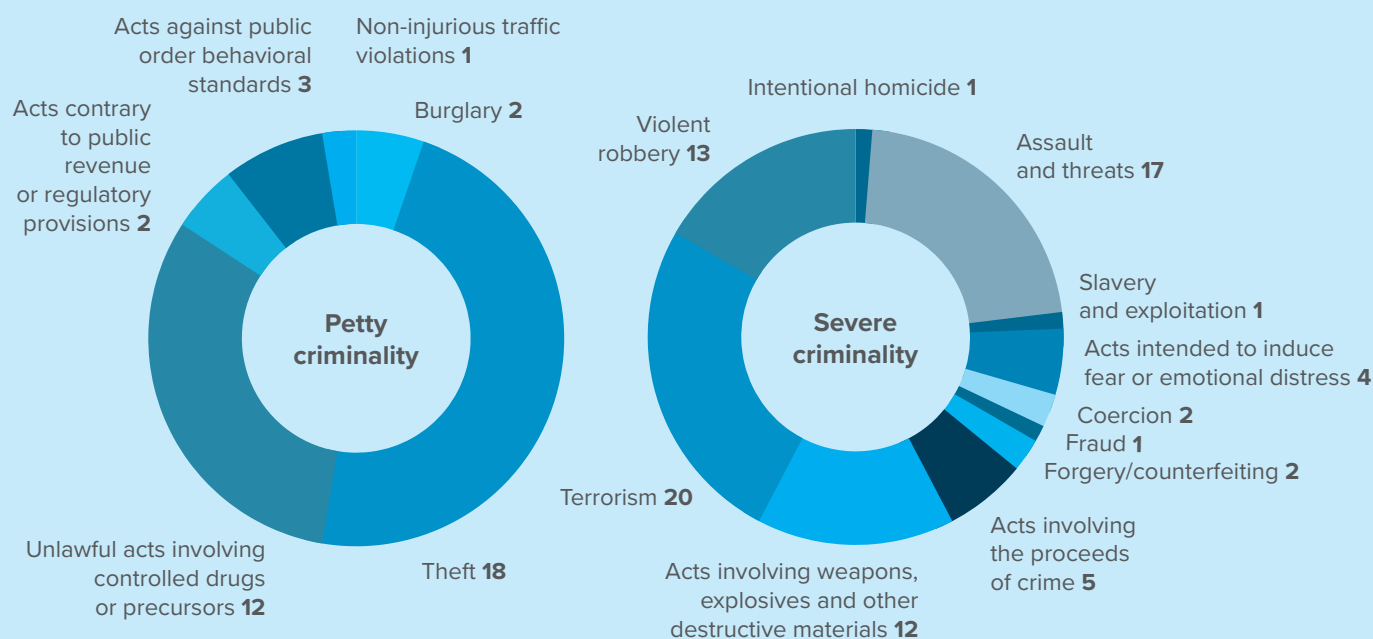


Figure 4: Criminal pasts of terrorists (according to UNODC classification)

The authors acknowledge that in following the UNODC crime classification while using open sources, but not solely desk-based ones, the information intuitively gears the model towards finding and coding more countable crimes, e.g., assaults, burglaries, thefts, etc. Thus, the instances of some harder-to-quantify crimes (e.g., drug dealing or possession of illegal substances), which at the moment amount to only 10% of the crimes committed by the criminals-turned-terrorists could be undervalued in the existing dataset. Consequently, this could alter the share of petty vs. serious crime as the project progresses into its second year and

offences, and some were individuals with relatively scant criminal careers. Consider the following “stories” to grasp a fuller, i.e., beyond qualitative, understanding of the issue at hand:

- the dataset includes **an individual whose criminal career spans three decades**, during which he, e.g., was involved in attempted homicides and serious assaults, on one hand, and illegal possession of firearms and offences against the public order, on the other. It also features a former attempted murderer who happened to share a prison cell with a well-known jihadi;

- ▶ another example of a long-term criminal with a notable criminal career preceding his arrest on terrorism charges is the life story of a non-Muslim individual who was involved in armed robberies, subsequently jailed for those crimes, and converted to Islam upon leaving prison. Later on, he tried to **re-use some of his violent crime experience while attempting to purchase firearms for future jihadi attacks**.
- ▶ on the other hand, **the dataset also includes seasoned terrorist operatives who had a track record of involvement in jihadi circles long before their 2015 arrest, death, or expulsion**, and, e.g., experience as a foreign fighter coupled with completing one's radical tutelage amongst jihadi inmates in prison. All of the aforementioned happened before he managed to travel to Syria and join ISIS in 2014 while later being tried *in absentia* for this endeavour.
- ▶ alternatively, **one's colourful criminal career (with arrests for the possession of narcotics and of a firearm) does not prevent the individual from progression through the ranks of ISIS**. Conversion to Islam while in prison for the aforementioned offences and later becoming an acquaintance of a famous ISIS member was enough to provide a former criminal with a ticket to the world of jihad.

▶ interestingly, **the dataset also includes individuals whose criminality blossomed after migrating to Europe from North Africa, as did their jihadi career**, while being arrested for non-terrorism crimes;

- ▶ at the same time, **another individual had a far less impressive criminal career**, as his only known pre-2015 crime was disorderly behaviour during a protest. Similarly, **another criminal turned terrorist, from another country, had a history of minor delicts and a supermarket robbery, for which he was later jailed**. As it later turned out, during his stay in prison he was exposed to a radical ideology and upon regaining freedom, he re-emerged into the society keen on joining ISIS in Syria.

These “stories” **often feature prison, with almost 70% (39 out of 56) of the criminals turned terrorists subset having been incarcerated for their pre-2015 offences (See Fig. 5 below)**. The fact these punishments were handed down points to the severity of their crimes or their repetitive nature. What is more, data show that 6 individuals included in the dataset served multiple prison sentences for crimes varying from theft and drug dealing to murder and to an attempt to join a terrorist organisation. The longest sentence for a pre-2015 crime in the whole dataset was 20 years.

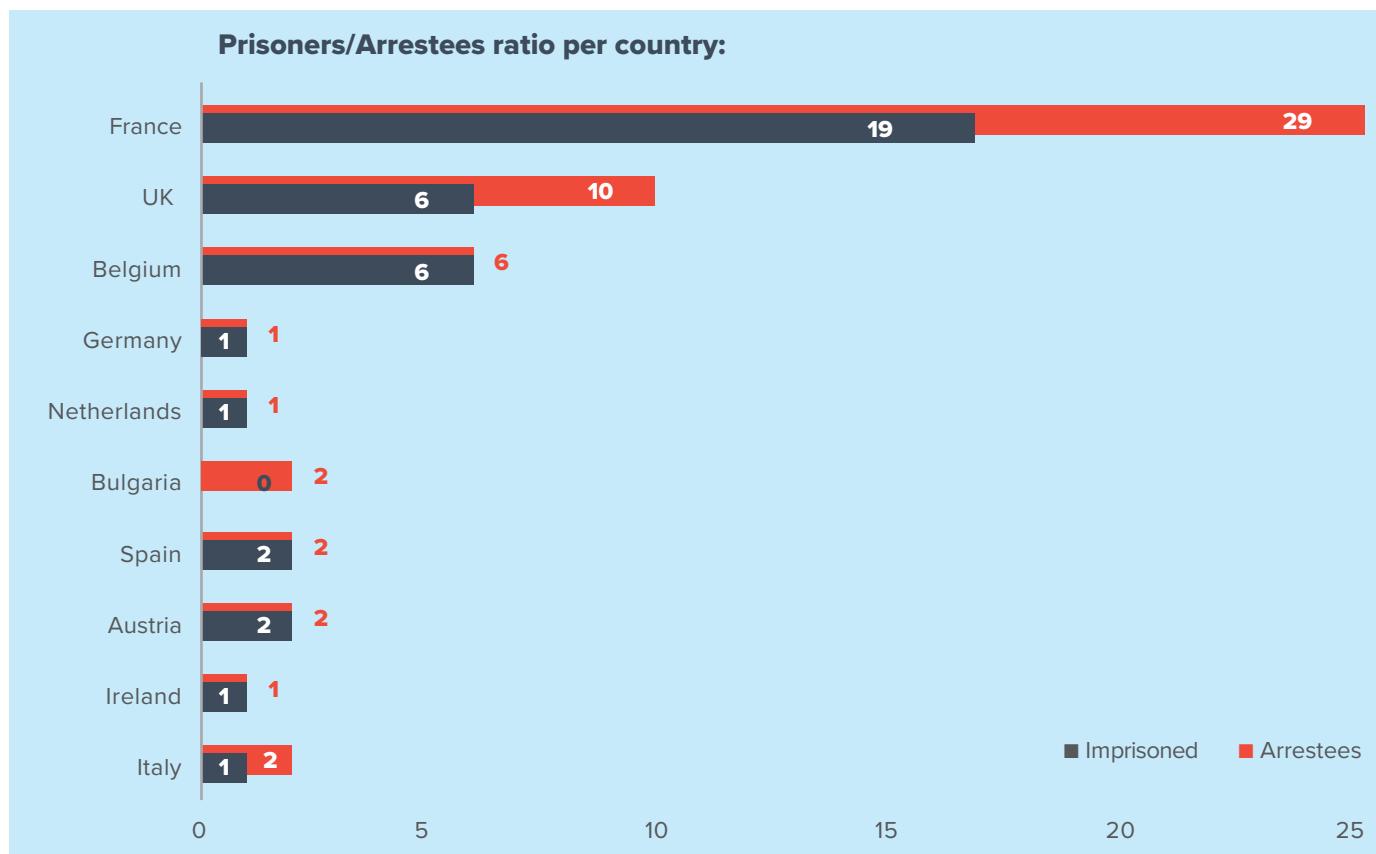
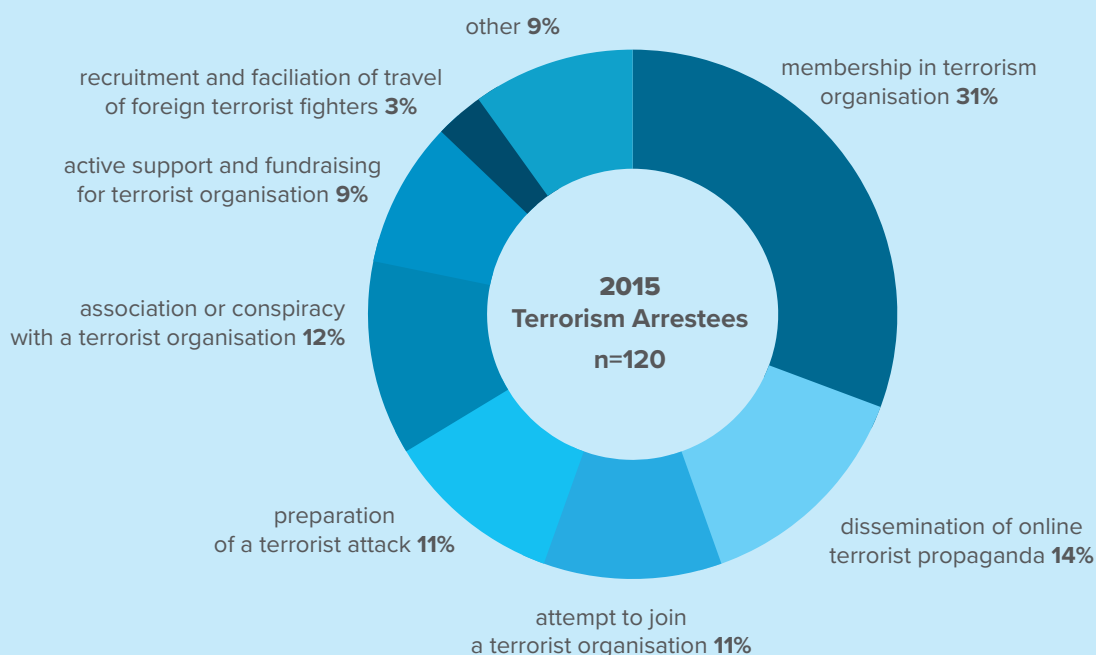


Figure 5: European criminals turned terrorist: arrested and later imprisoned



The qualitative analysis of available data on the subset of 2015 terrorism arrestees found that the highest number of terrorism arrests were connected

**terrorism arrestees in the dataset will be released from prisons.**



to **membership in a terrorist organisation (31% of arrests)**, namely ISIS (See Fig. 6 below). The second-largest group, representing **14% were sharing terrorist propaganda materials**. An additional **12% of the sample were arrested for association or conspiracy with a terrorist organisation**. A further two groups, **representing 11% each, were arrested in relation to preparing an attack or attempting to travel with the aim to join a terrorist organisation**. **Of the European jihadi arrestees, 9% were actively supporting, organising rallies and meetings in support of the proscribed groups, or even fundraising for these groups**. A smaller fraction, **3% were arrested for recruitment and facilitation of travel for foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) trying to reach Syria or Iraq**.

**An average prison sentence** (excluding four cases in which the convicts were given life sentences) **for 2015 terrorism crimes in the dataset is 8 year and 7 months long** (individuals convicted of association and conspiracy with terrorism organisation average a 9 year and 6 months sentence; those convicted of preparation of attacks average an 8 year and 9 months sentence; membership of a terrorist organisation equalled an average sentence of 7 years and 4 months whereas facilitation and support of terrorism - 6 years and 4 months, and, finally, an attempt to join a terrorist organisation abroad produced an average sentence of 4 years). **This effectively means that by 2023 a majority of the**

Figure 6: Terrorism arrests 2015 offences

The multitude of difference in criminal and jihadi evolution in the cases studied in the project effectively means that there exists **no single conveyor belt from one milieu to the other (See Fig. 7 below)**. At the moment of writing this report, the authors could comprehensively map out and connect the criminal pasts of 28 jihadis (or 50% of the criminals turned terrorists) in the dataset plus their fate in 2015. Of these, 21 were arrested for terrorism offences in 2015 and 7 died while staging terrorist attacks or preparing terrorist attacks in the same year.

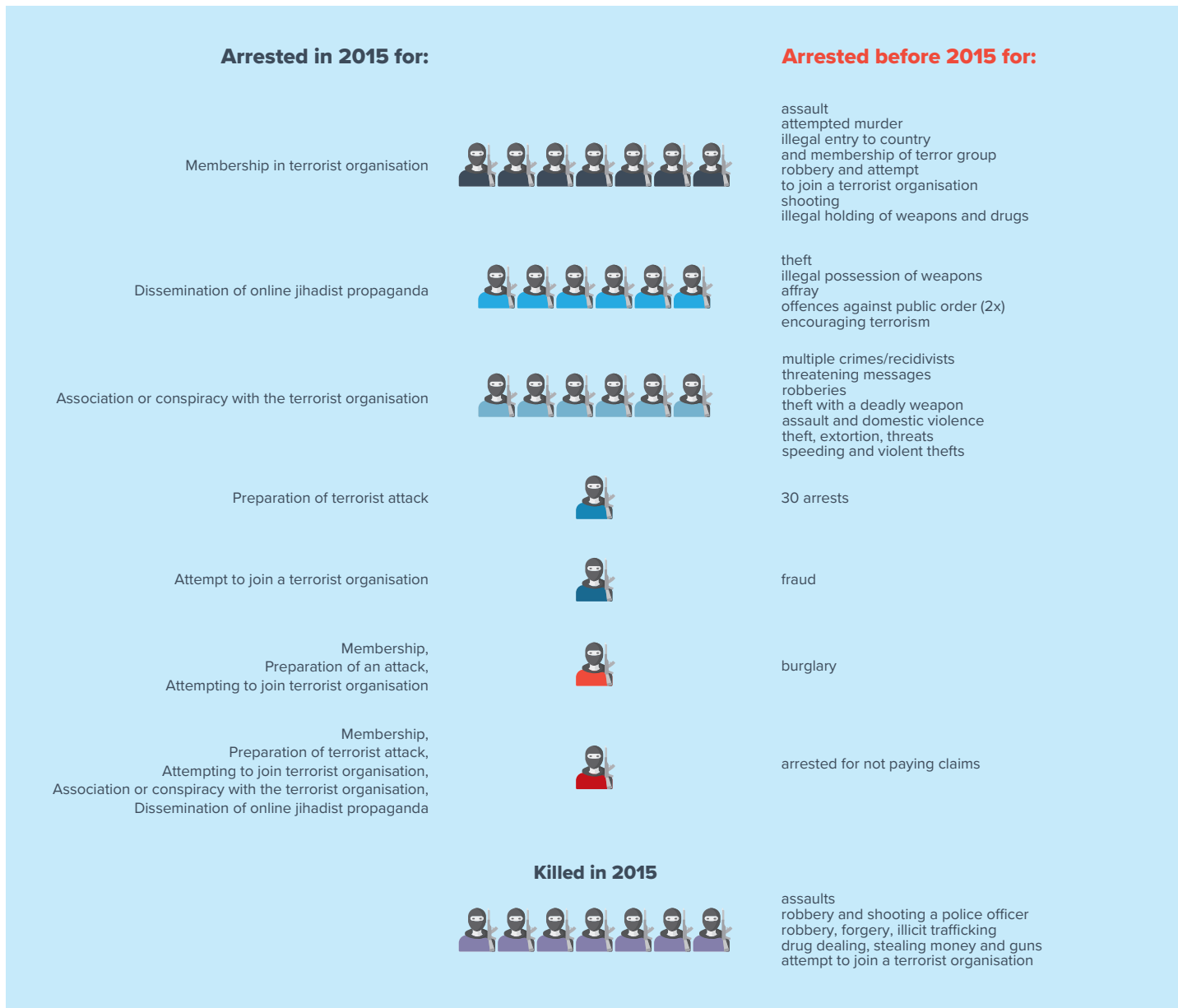


Figure 7: From criminal arrests to terrorism arrests

The 21 criminals turned terrorists arrested in 2015 were categorised into 5 groups based on their terrorism offences. The largest group consists of 7 cases of **terrorism arrestees who were arrested for membership in the proscribed groups**. In looking at their criminal activities before 2015 and their pre-2015 arrests, data show **violent crimes such as assault, attempted murder, or robbery but also 2 cases of travelling with the aim to join terrorist groups and 1 case of illegal drug possession**. Another group is represented by **individuals arrested for the dissemination of online jihadist propaganda** (6 cases). Five out of the 6 individuals in this group have committed **crimes connected to violating the public order**, such as affray, while one was previously arrested for encouraging terrorism. The authors also identified six profiles of individuals

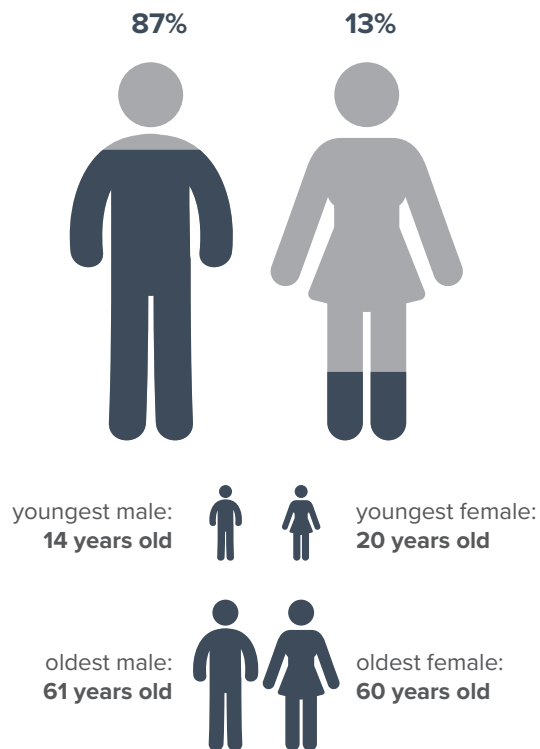
arrested in 2015 for **conspiring with a terrorism organisation** and with prior criminality varying from **theft** (3 cases) or **robbery to threats and violent crimes**. Data on 5 out of these 6 profiles show that these individuals committed multiple crimes or were recidivist in nature. One individual with a record of arrest for fraud was arrested in 2015 while attempting to join a terrorist organisation. Among those who were arrested for planning a terrorist attack is 1 profile with a history of more than 30 arrests. Specific data regarding the offences is not available.

A separate group of 7 criminals turned terrorists consists of **jihadis who died in 2015**. Their profiles include a list of **criminal records for crimes, such as an attempt to join a terrorist organization abroad** (Syria, 3 cases), **robbery** (2 cases) and then **assault, forgery, drug dealing, shooting and illicit trafficking** (1 case each). One of these individuals died while

fighting in Syria in 2015 while the rest died while staging attacks in Europe.

**The paths of yesterday's criminals towards jihadism display many common features, which, like prison radicalisation, will be discussed in the next chapters, but at the same time, one struggles to find an overarching life story amongst the individuals included in the dataset.** It is worth remembering that the prison systems of the 11 countries included in the study are populated by more than 400 000 prisoners, of whom a huge majority have not and will not evolve into terrorists.<sup>14</sup> The ratio would look even bleaker if one was able to count "all" of Europe's criminals and compare them to the number of "all" of Europe's terrorists. This is not to diminish the usefulness of the crime-terror nexus phenomenon as a useful perspective for studying and countering terrorism, especially as almost 30% of the project's dataset consists of criminals turned terrorists, but to stress the fact that a single criminal's **potential progression into the ranks of terrorists depends on much more than just previous involvement in petty, "gangster", or serious criminality.** In short, **the nexus**, which the authors perceive as existing and functioning, **is not a monolith** and far more granularity is needed before anyone is able to fully or satisfactorily explain its functioning and structure. **It certainly is more pervasive in some though not all EU countries, prominently features prisons as incubators of criminals turning terrorist, and includes a larger than previously thought share of hardened criminals.**

# AGE & GENDER OF EUROPEAN JIHADIS



(the average age of the full sample is 30.3) but not necessarily teenagers or adolescents, as has been suggested in some publications.<sup>19</sup> The individuals with a previous arrest history in the dataset are no different, with an average age of 30.9. In total, 43% (85 out of 197) of the cases are jihadis born in the 1980s and 27% (53 out of 197) in the 1990s. At the same time, a further 20% (39 out of 197) were born even earlier, i.e., before 1980, which means that a sizeable segment of the terrorist milieu in Europe is composed of middle-aged individuals.<sup>20</sup>

Figure 8: Age & Gender of European Jihadis

The literature on women in ISIS, their roles, the organisation's appeal to women, or female radicalisation more broadly, is vast.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, the role of women as real or potential ISIS terrorists or future radicalisers is also often discussed.<sup>16</sup> Nonetheless, **jihadi terrorism in Europe is a predominantly male phenomenon, with a male-to-female ratio of 87%-13%.**<sup>17</sup>

The average age of the respective subset by sex stands at 29.9 for males and 32.8 for females. While the youngest male arrestee was a juvenile of 14 years old, the youngest female was 20 years old when arrested.<sup>18</sup> The two oldest individuals among the arrestees (both in their 60s) were in fact a married Christian couple attempting to travel to Syria, persuaded by their two daughters, one of whom had by then already become a foreign fighter for ISIS. Both parents and their other daughter were arrested before they could reach their destination.

It is also becoming evident that jihadi **terrorism in Europe is the domain of relatively young people**

# EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT OF EUROPEAN JIHADIS

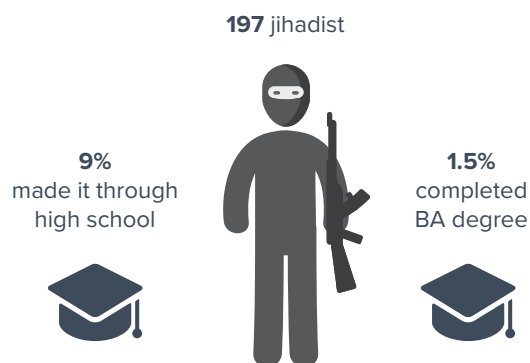


Figure 9: Education European Jihadis

Data on the education of European jihadis is surprisingly scarce. The authors were able to collect reliable information on educational backgrounds in only 49% of all the cases in the dataset (96 out of 197). For this reason, the following findings should be treated as preliminary while the authors continue to fill the gaps in knowledge on this variable.

**Europe's jihadi terrorists are not especially well-educated,**<sup>21</sup> with only 9% (18 out of 197) finishing high school. Only three of those later completed their BA studies and two of the three are in the criminals turned terrorist subset. At the same time, the latter group is even less-educated in general, as only 5% of terrorists with criminal pasts (3 out of 56) made it through their secondary education.

With relevant data available for 75% of the dataset (147 out of 197), the authors are confident in concluding that the **employment careers of European jihadis are far from impressive, since almost 40% (78 out of 197) were unemployed at the time of their arrest, death while staging a terrorist attack, or expulsion for alleged terrorism association (See Fig. 10).**<sup>22</sup> Simultaneously, only 28% (56 out of 197) were employed and their jobs varied from services (21 individuals) and administrative or clerical jobs (10) to construction (7), with 15 others still enrolled as students. **The statistics for the criminals turned terrorists look even bleaker, with 52% (29 out of 56) unemployed at the time of their 2015 arrest, killing, or expulsion.**

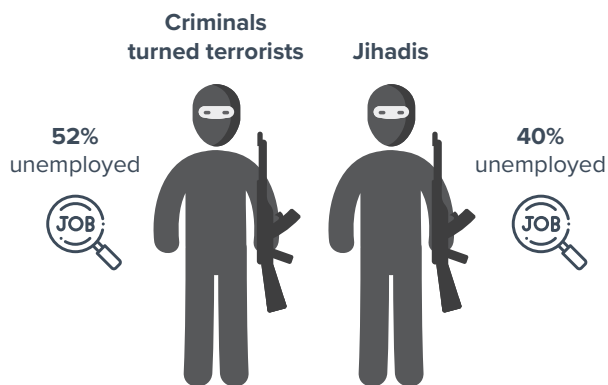


Figure 10: Employment of European jihadis

# HOW DO EUROPEAN JIHADIS FINANCE THEMSELVES?

The low education levels and lack of success in their professional lives could suggest that European jihadis are more prone to financing their terrorism careers via illegal activities. However, this does not seem to be the case, as **European jihad is financed by a variety of different, mostly legal, sources (See Fig. 11).**<sup>23</sup> What is more, the gathered evidence suggests that **past criminality does not rule out seeking legal means of financing terrorist activities in the future.** These findings have the caveat that reliable data on how individual terrorists finance themselves are often hard to come by, as the dataset includes information on this variable in relation to only 39% of the cases (78 out of 197).

Among the 78 individuals with available and relevant data, the biggest group are jihadis that used exclusively one purely legal source of financing, such as savings, salary, or benefits (16%, or 31 out of 197). Another group used various combinations of these legal sources to sustain their terrorism careers (9%, or 18 out of 197). An example is individuals who mix incomes from salaries, benefits, and/or savings to finance their terrorism futures. This finding dovetails with the observation by Petter Nesser, Anne Stenersen and Emilie Oftedal, who studied jihadi terrorism plots in Europe and concluded that 43% of these were legally financed and that “contrary to widespread notions of a crime-terrorism nexus,

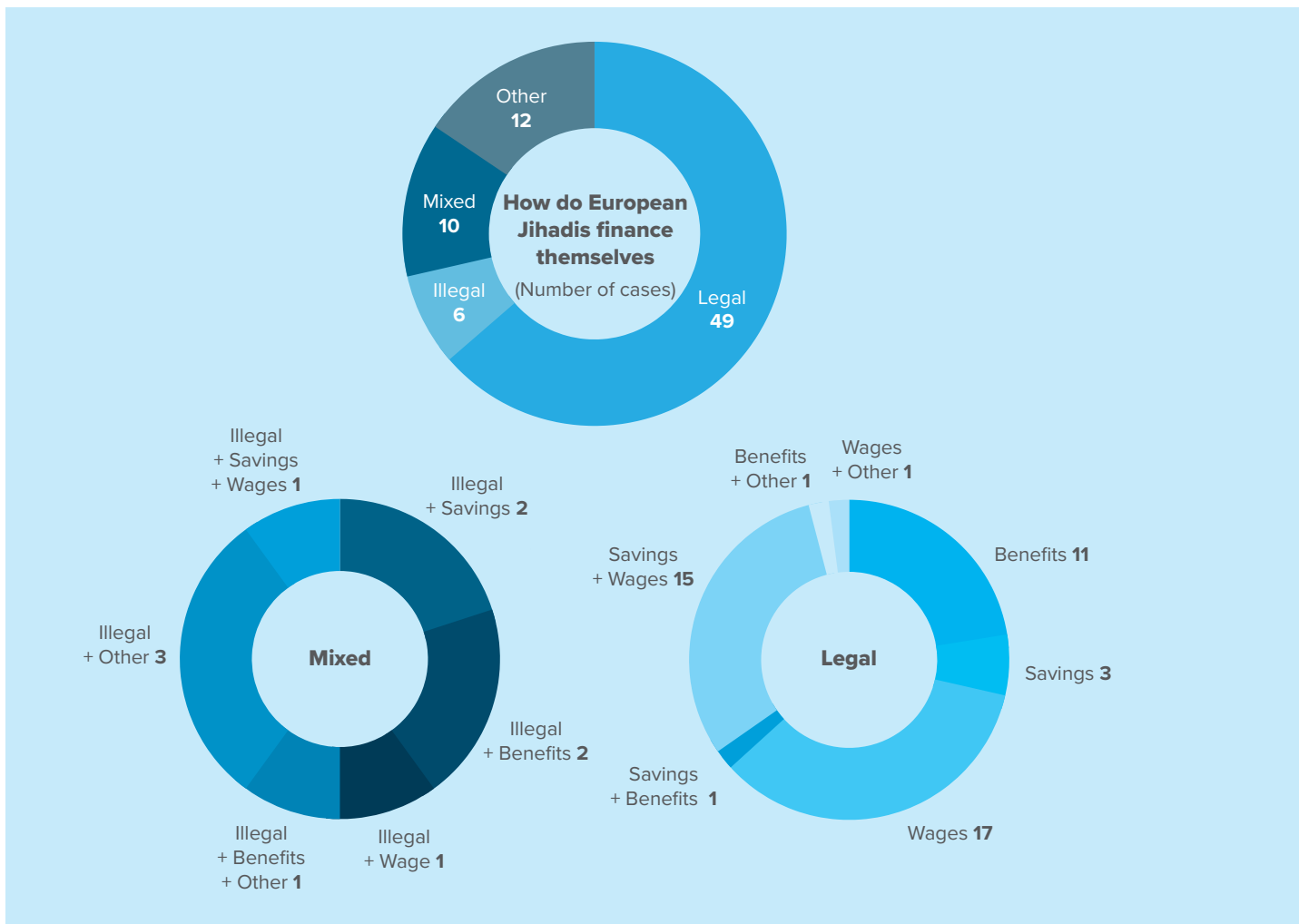


Figure 11: Terrorism financing

criminal activities are not a very common source of funding for attack plots in Europe of late. [...] Only 23% of the plots in 2014-2016 were financed wholly or partly by money from crime.”<sup>24</sup>

Only 3% (6 out of 197) of the individuals in the dataset used purely **illegal sources** to fund their terrorism activities.<sup>25</sup> These include human trafficking, drugs or cigarette smuggling, as well as robbery. In one rather peculiar case, a young student fraudulently obtained student loans to fund her ambition of joining ISIS in Syria. Such cases clearly demonstrate **the diffuse and diverse nature of the crime-terror nexus, which is not solely about former petty criminals or thugs, or gangsters gravitating towards jihad,**<sup>26</sup> **but also involves white-collar crime (e.g., loan fraud, VAT fraud)** which helps “microfinance the Caliphate.”<sup>27</sup>

Simultaneously, a group of 10 individuals (5% of the dataset) used a mix of legally and illegally obtained financial means to fund their terrorism activities. Amongst them were **individuals functioning in different countries at the same time who were both involved in violent robberies and also happy to receive benefits from the state.** All their finances were later channelled into sustaining their terrorism careers.

In a further surprising twist to the crime-terror nexus stories, the authors encountered another group, comprising 16% (9 out of 56) of the **criminals turned terrorists** in the dataset, **who used solely legally obtained funds to sustain their terrorism careers** (a further 11% of the criminals turned terrorists, 6 out of 56, tapped both illegal and legal sources of funding for their terrorist activities). One of these individuals worked as a salesman after serving a prison sentence and used his salary to finance his becoming an FTF while also recruiting others for the same journey. Another individual was born in a war-torn non-European country and has a long track record of involvement in robbery and blackmail. He was also jailed in his new, adopted EU country, but sustained his terrorism activities while not in custody from benefits.



# WHAT, BY WHOM, WHERE AND HOW IS A EUROPEAN JIHADI EXPOSED TO RADICAL IDEOLOGY?

The issue of **radicalisation** has been hotly debated in relation to terrorism and political violence since the 2004 Madrid bombings perpetrated by an Al-Qaeda cell long based in Spain. It is in the aftermath of that attack that the term “**violent radicalisation**,” i.e., the embrace and violent expression of opinions, views, and ideas potentially leading an individual to join a terrorist group, organisation, or network,<sup>28</sup> became a point of reference in all studies devoted to the phenomenon of terrorism.<sup>29</sup> Its prevalence, however, has not helped with answering questions related to:

1. the practicalities of its violent or non-violent nature as “fanatically embracing an ideology is not a necessary condition for terrorism or mass killing,”<sup>30</sup> and
2. factors fuelling or triggering individual or group radicalisation that might be driven by personal or ideological issues.<sup>31</sup>

There is also doubt as to what radicalisation entails and how it works in practice, especially since many studies on the issue are more conceptual than empirical.<sup>32</sup> What is more, studies of radicalisation also have prompted a growth in interest in de-radicalisation, a reverse, rarely achieved process, and different from “disengagement” from terrorism.<sup>33</sup> Finally, the debates on how conducive one is to terrorism radicalisation is continued to the present day with, e.g., some of the leading experts debating the merits of the “Islamisation of radicalism” or “radicalisation of Islamism”.<sup>34</sup>

The authors, while aware of the ongoing debates on radicalisation and the critical approach of some scholars towards mostly “anecdotal,” i.e., studies on the issue that are empirically insufficient and descriptive in nature,<sup>35</sup> **decided nonetheless to seek data on three issues related to radicalisation: the when** (i.e., the timeline of radicalisation), **the**

**who** (i.e., known involvement of other individuals in instigating the radicalisation),<sup>36</sup> and **the where** (i.e., in what kind of environment, e.g., offline or online, did the process take place). While attempting to answer the three questions on the issue, they assumed that all individuals included in the dataset had, to at least some extent, fanatically embraced jihadism, which prompted them to get involved in jihadi terrorism in Europe. Nevertheless, the authors acknowledge that this approach is fraught with some risks. The dataset not only includes hardened and experienced ISIS or Al-Qaeda terrorists who would be expected to fall into the “radicalised” category, but also individuals on the fringes of different terrorist networks or cells, whose true commitment and dedication to the cause (sometimes, also their understanding of) could be considered lukewarm. Nonetheless, it was felt that analysing the existent or non-existent radicalisation trajectories of such individuals will allow the project to go beyond the “anecdotal” in this area.

## THE WHEN



Figure 12: From first exposure to radical ideology to terrorism arrest

**Almost 64% (or 126 out of 197) of the individuals included in the dataset had first been exposed to a radical ideology more than six months prior to their arrest.** Moreover, in 38 cases the first exposure took place more than 5 years before their 2015 terrorism arrest, death in a terrorist attack, or expulsion for alleged terrorism association. This underscores the fact that **a sizeable chunk of the European jihadi milieu is composed of individuals with long records of participation in radical networks in Europe.** Such a finding supports the conclusions of a recent report by the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, which indicated that in Canada, “the speed of mobilisation to [terrorist] violence takes an average of 12 months,”<sup>37</sup> but diverges from the findings of German research on that country’s FTFs, of whom “nearly half (46%) [...] left [Germany for Syria] within one year after the beginning of the radicalisation process, with close to a quarter (22%) departing within six months of the start of this process.”<sup>38</sup> The authors, however, were only able to find seven individuals who were first exposed to the radical ideology less than six months before their arrests, death, or expulsion, with, e.g., one undergoing radicalisation as a fresh start from a life full of psychological problems and heavy drug addiction and two others beginning their radical journey shortly before their arrests at a young age.

The authors will attempt to reconcile the diverging perspectives on the radicalisation timeline as they collect and analyse more data before publishing their final report next year.

## THE WHO

Other researchers stressed the role families play either in the cases of networks,<sup>39</sup> solo actors,<sup>40</sup> or as instigators (via “pre-existing ties”) of “bloc recruitment.”<sup>41</sup> The dataset concurs with these conclusions as **ties of friendship and kinship feature prominently in the radicalisation processes of the 2015 terrorism arrestees: in 26% (52 out of 197) of all the cases in the dataset, radicalisation was instigated by individuals close to the 2015 terrorism arrestees, either family or friends.** At the same time, in 107 cases, friends of a given jihadi in the dataset were either involved or aware of their terrorism involvement, and in 97 cases members of family had knowledge of, or were themselves involved in, radical activities. In all but 2 cases (out of 107) friends had themselves been involved in terrorism whereas family members, while being aware, in 22 (out of 97) cases chose not to be involved in the same activities themselves. This effectively means that **friends of the European jihadis are more active radicals than the jihadis’ immediate families.**

**Another 8% (16 out of 197) of the individuals in the dataset fell prey to the efforts of active recruiters,** who sought them out either offline (11 out of 16 cases) or online (5 out of 16 cases). The role of mentors<sup>42</sup> or “indoctrinators,”<sup>43</sup> often yielding “enormous influence”<sup>44</sup> over radicalising individuals, has been widely covered in the literature. Some of the jihadis who were “mentored” by a radicalising agent from outside their circles of family and friends ended up acting as future jihadi recruiters themselves or, e.g., gravitated towards roles in ISIS media operations. Very few of these sought out by radicalising agents were converts. This fact only underscores the findings that **only 10% (20 out of 197) of the**

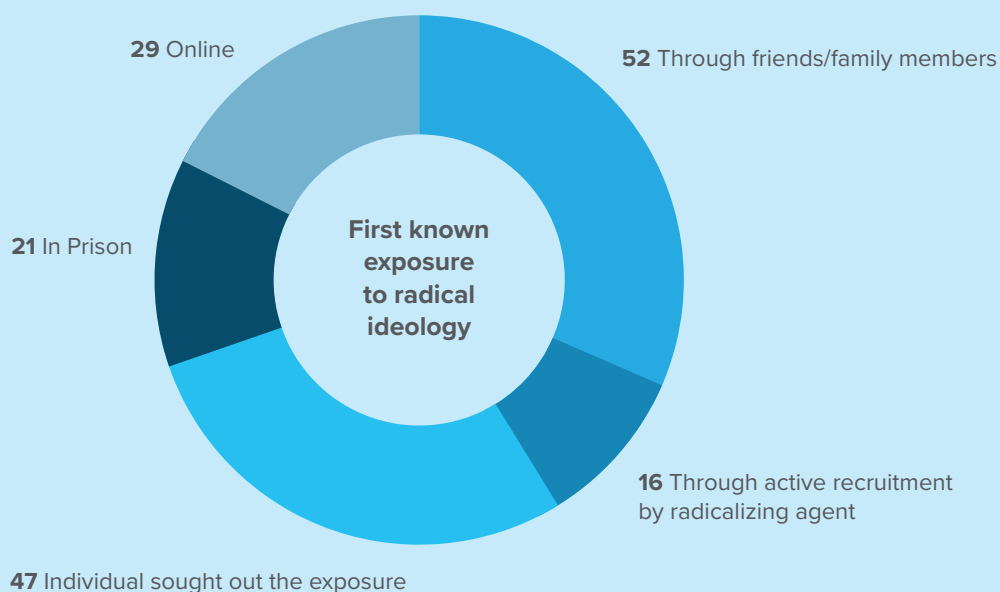


Figure 13: First known exposure to radical ideology

**European jihadis in the dataset are converts.**<sup>45</sup> Five of these converts (25% of the subset) have a history of a previous, i.e., pre-2015, arrest.

## THE WHERE?

Data on the issue is sometimes lacking but the authors know of at least **88 cases (45% of the total dataset) in which radicalisation was instigated offline**, or in which online radicalisation only played a supporting, secondary role. At the same time, only 19 individuals themselves sought radical exposure in an online environment.

The key offline locality or institution, or entity, that kept coming up in the data analysed for this report

was **prison**.<sup>46</sup> **33% (13 out of 39) of the individuals in the study who had been in prison developed contacts with radical extremists while imprisoned** while 8 maintained this contact after leaving incarceration. **At the same time, 54% (21 out of 39) of these prisoners were exposed to radical ideology for the first time while serving their sentences.** According to data collected so far, this phenomenon is most prominent in France, Belgium, Germany, and Italy. In short, **even if the overlap between criminal and terrorist milieus in Europe is less straightforward than previously thought, prisons still play a prominent role as the place where many criminals graduate towards political violence (See Fig. 14).**

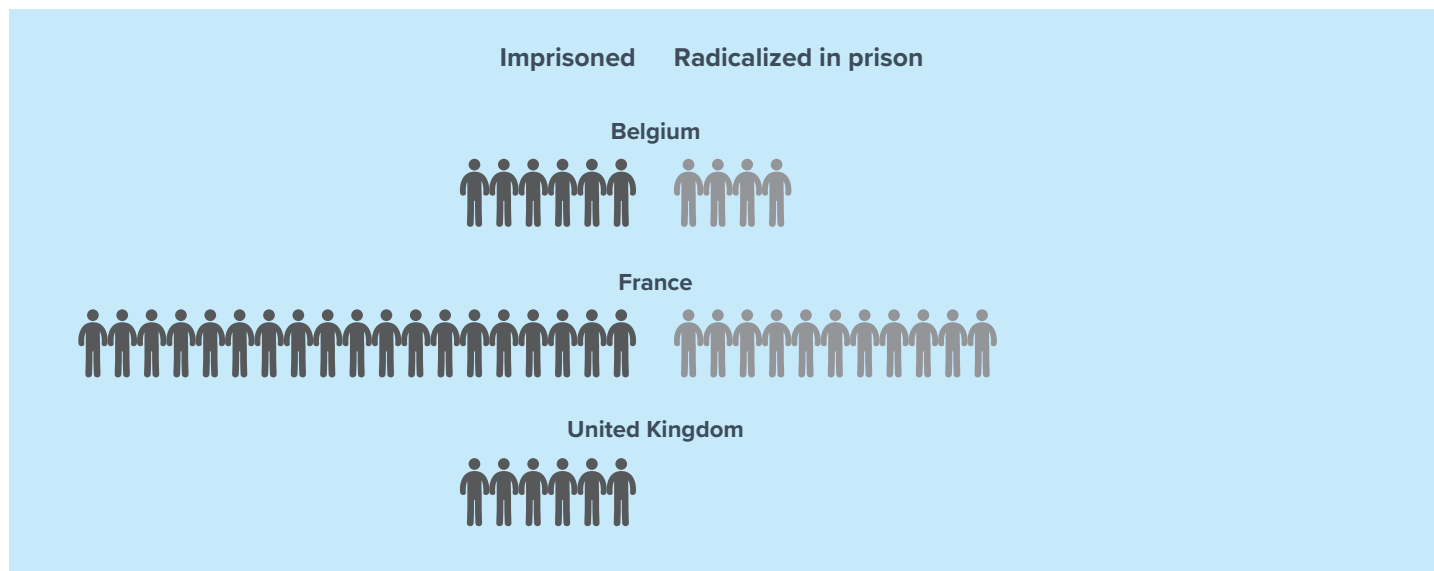


Figure 14: Prison radicalisation

# EUROPEAN JIHADI: HOMEGROWN OR IMMIGRANT?

At least since 2004, i.e., the Madrid bombings by Al-Qaeda, Europe has been gripped in the debate on **the origins of jihadi terrorism threatening the wellbeing of its citizens**. It has now become commonly held wisdom that the majority of European terrorists are **homegrown**, i.e., perpetrated within the borders of a given country by a national of that country and targeting his/her co-citizens.<sup>47</sup> The European migrant crisis and the fact that European ISIS operatives successfully smuggled themselves back to Europe amidst the wave of refugees, reignited the debate on the origins of European jihad.<sup>48</sup> Moving beyond the simplistic and wrong “all refugees are terrorists” statement, some stressed the actual end of the homegrown phenomenon as terrorism had become more interconnected and threatened both Europe, or the broader West, and the MENA region.<sup>49</sup> Due to its embedded or newly natural international or even global character, it allegedly no longer could be viewed through homegrown/immigrant lenses. Indeed, traces of such a **transcontinental interconnection** are not hard to find amongst modern jihadi networks, which have consistently featured individuals either motivated to strike in Europe by a perceived unjust conflict in the Middle East,<sup>50</sup> or acting as recruiters of FTFs attempting to travel to Syria/Iraq to join ISIS.<sup>51</sup>

Nonetheless, the authors of this report, while taking into account the transnational and transcontinental aspects of European jihad<sup>52</sup> and acknowledging the necessity for the field to focus more on terrorism networks,<sup>53</sup> decided to study more closely the countries of origin and nationalities of the cases included in the dataset to provide a more detailed answer as to **how local European jihad truly is**.

**The available data show that 73% (144 out of 197) of the individuals in the dataset spent most of their lives (50%+) in the EU.** That leads to the tentative conclusion that terrorism in Europe is not a by-product of the 2015 migrant crisis (see Fig. 14 below). It could thus be described as **homegrown, as the terrorists arrested, killed, or expelled from the EU had lived there, often long before embarking upon their terrorism careers. The share of those who spent most of their lives in the EU is even higher among the criminals turned terrorists** subset and

stands at **86% (48 out of 56)**. At the same time, the authors acknowledge that assessing the scale or potential of previous criminal involvement of some of the non-Europeans in the dataset is often fraught with difficulty. This concerns especially the expellees in the dataset who lack EU citizenship, are suspected of terrorist affiliations and are sent back, most usually by Italy or Bulgaria, to their countries of origin. Sometimes, their stay in Europe is so short that no open-source evidence on their past outside the EU emerges.

Altogether, **101 (51% of the total) of the studied jihadis were born in a EU member state**. What is more, **72% (141 out of 197) are EU citizens, which further underscored the point of the homegrown nature of European jihad**. This group includes a subset of 9% (17 out of 197) individuals with dual citizenship, French Algerians and Belgian Moroccans being the most prominent among those. **At the same time, however, the data show that 11% (22 out of 197) of the cases in the dataset comprise naturalised first-generation immigrants to the EU.** This number could increase as the project team continues to assess the place of birth and citizenship of 18 other cases in the dataset (141 with EU citizenship minus 101 born in the EU minus 22 naturalised terrorists equals 18), who at some point in their lives became EU citizens, meaning the authors have not yet been able to assess whether these are homegrown, i.e., EU-born, terrorists.

The final, large category that merits a mention when discussing the homegrown or immigrant status of European jihadis concerns **non-EU nationals who were neither born in the EU, nor acquired EU citizenship, nor spent their lives in the EU. This group comprises 17% (33 out of 197) of the dataset.** Again, this number could increase as the project team gathers more data on the last 23 cases, which at the moment do not fall either into the homegrown or naturalized, or external categories.

**The authors conclude that European jihad is homegrown in nature but also features significant contributions from naturalised individuals and foreigners who had spent relatively little time in the EU (See Fig. 15 below).**

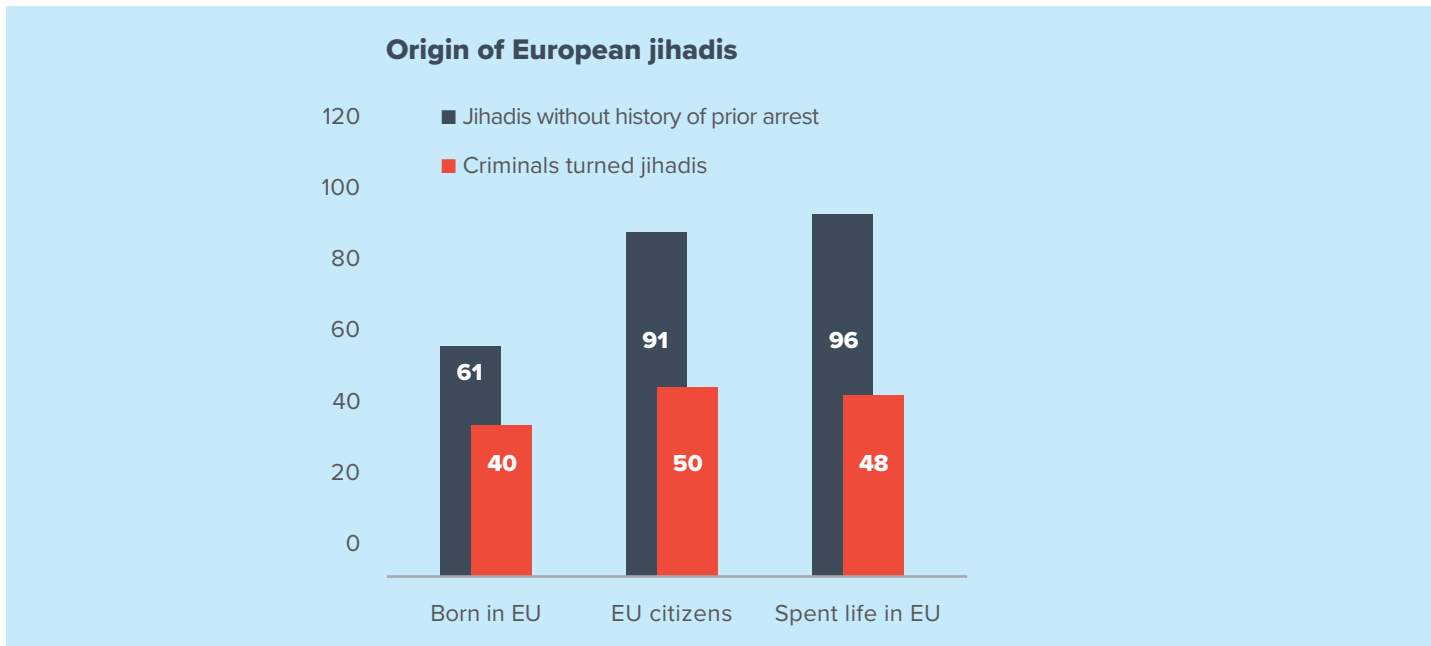


Figure 15: Origin of European jihadis

# FOREIGN FIGHTING EXPERIENCE

Since 2012, a year into the civil war in Syria, the issue of foreign fighters or individuals travelling to join the war in Syria, voluntarily and without pecuniary award, registered on the radar of some European Middle Eastern and terrorism experts.<sup>54</sup> As more and more of these fighters ended up either in the ranks of the Al-Qaeda affiliated Al-Nusra Front or ISIS, the travellers to the war in Syria/Iraq became known as **foreign terrorist fighters or FTFs**.<sup>55</sup> Their motivations, travails, and returns fuelled a string of publications, and FTFs largely dominated discussions on the threat of jihadi terrorism to Europe and “the state of European jihad” from 2013 onwards.<sup>56</sup> As some of them began to return home, the focus shifted to returning FTFs, or **returnees**.<sup>57</sup> The current project looks at the European jihadi milieu in the peak year of jihadism (2015), i.e., when buoyed by ISIS’s success, wannabe foreign fighters were still leaving Europe, so the authors were not surprised to encounter troves of data pertaining to the issue of FTFs in their dataset.

Of the total, **26% (or 52 out of 197) of the individuals included in the dataset had been FTFs** before their 2015 terrorism arrest, death in a terrorist attack, or expulsion for alleged terrorism affiliations. All but one were male and their average age in 2015 was 26.4 years, i.e., circa 4 years younger than the average of the 197 jihadis in the whole dataset. The biggest cohort (31 individuals) of FTFs in the database came from France. The rest consisted of 10 Belgians, 4 Dutch, 3 Bulgarians, 3 Austrians and 1 British.

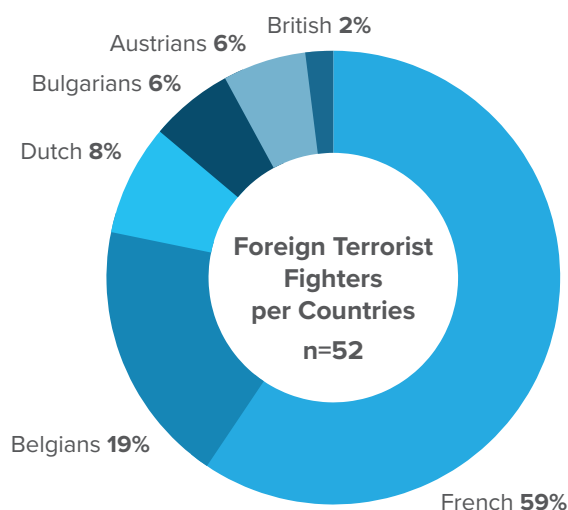


Figure 16: Foreign Fighters per country

Half of the FTFs served as regular ISIS foot soldiers but others played different roles: officers, policemen, propagandists, and recruiters. The dataset also includes five individuals who were **arrested while either attempting to join the terrorist group or who had trained with ISIS but left the territory due to insufficient combat skills**.

Of the FTFs in the dataset, 36% (20 out of 56, or 15 French, 3 Belgian, 1 British and 1 Austrian) had a history of a pre-2015 arrest. Sixteen of these were later convicted of their crimes and 14 served time in prison before 2015. Thus, one could tentatively conclude that **the phenomenon of FTFs could be even more crime-penetrated than the overall jihadi milieu in Europe**.<sup>58</sup> The majority of these FTFs began as petty criminals, mostly involved in theft, but only 4 stayed at this level of criminal activity before becoming FTFs. At the same time, 9 FTFs committed severe crimes such as armed assault or illegal trade involving weapons and drugs. Lastly, the remaining criminals were convicted of terrorism-related activities, either for attempting to illegally enter foreign states or for planning terrorist attacks.

Due to the high tempo of terrorist attacks targeting Europe in 2015, the FTF subset includes **33% (17 out of 52) of the individuals-returnees who died while staging terrorist attacks in Europe**, **29% (15 out of 52) who were arrested upon their return from the battlefields of the Middle East**, and **23% (12 out of 52) who were expelled from the EU** as they were deemed a threat to the national security of one of the 11 national case studies analysed in the project. Finally, **15% (8 out of 52) are still fugitives** who have been tried *in absentia*.

## Fate of Foreign Terrorist Fighters in 2015

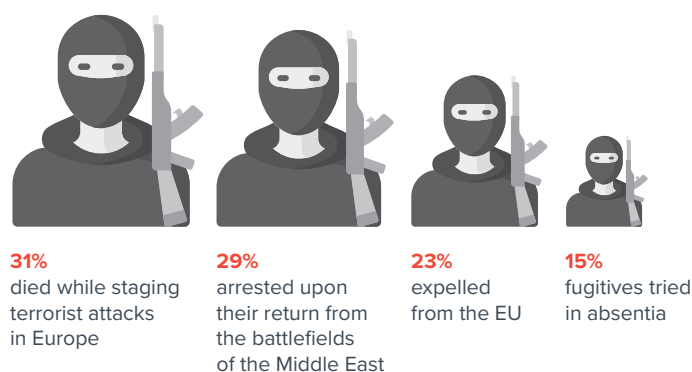


Figure 17: Fate of Foreign Terrorist Fighters in 2015

# IS THE EUROPEAN JIHADI A SOLO ACTOR?

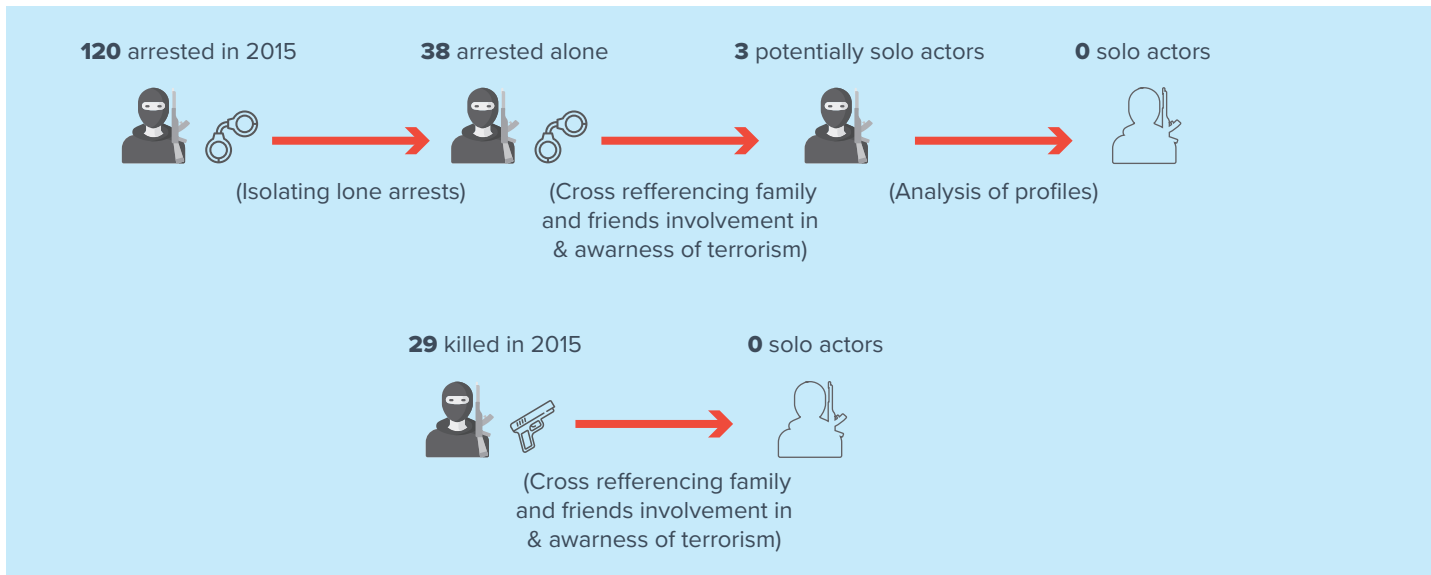


Figure 18: “Solo actors”

At least since 2011 and the infamous attacks perpetrated by Anders Behring Breivik in Norway,<sup>59</sup> the moniker of **“lone wolf” (or lone actor or solo actor)** became a standout feature of the European perception of the terrorist threat.<sup>60</sup> It received so much attention that seven years after Breivik’s attacks, some of the authorities on the issue called it “the typology that should not have been” and asked for a “reconsideration of the utility of the lone-wolf concept.”<sup>61</sup> Nonetheless, given ISIS’s ongoing calls to its supporters to attack Europe, of which some could potentially involve just a lone attacker inspired by the terrorist organisation’s propaganda,<sup>62</sup> the authors were keen to establish the true number of “lone wolves” or solo actors amongst the dataset.

To do this, the authors took a special interest in individuals who were arrested alone for terrorism offences in 2015 and not as part of large counterterrorism sweeps (none of the 2015 terrorism attackers who died while staging an attack was a solo actor and such information on individual terrorism expellees is sometimes hard to come by). The collected data show that **29% (58 out of 197) of the jihadis were arrested alone which could potentially mean they had been preparing terrorist acts on their own.**

Subsequent inquiries, however, indicated that amongst the 58 lone arrestees, in 19 cases the

families of the arrestees had been aware of their involvement in terrorism, and in 15, with some overlap, the family members had even been involved in terrorism themselves. What is more, in 24 of the 58 cases, close associates were involved in terrorism activities as well. Cross-referencing the aforementioned categories and thus isolating the seeming solo actors with no associates, nor family involved in or aware of their terrorism activities, leads to the identification of **3 profiles of individuals who could possibly be labelled solo actors (or 2% of the total dataset).** The character of the data entries available to the project team, though, allows the authors to conclude that **the dataset as of now does not include a single lone actor.** In two out of three of these isolated cases, the individuals were in contact with an online community sharing ISIS propaganda or even actively recruiting new supporters. In one remaining case, there is solid evidence the individual had links to a known terrorist involved in larger networks. Based on such evidence, **the authors are of the opinion that European jihad is not the domain of “solo actors.”**



# NATIONAL CHAPTERS

## FRANCE

The French constitute the biggest single contingent in the dataset, with 29% of the total (58 out of 197), or 58 terrorists arrested by France, expelled from the country, or killed in France while staging terrorist attacks. This ratio reflects the fact that France declares the highest number of terrorism arrests to Europol.<sup>63</sup> The French jihadi contingent in the dataset is 93% (54 out of 58) male.<sup>64</sup>

The French jihadi milieu is full of individuals previously involved in what could be called ordinary crime: 50% of the subset (29 of the 58) could be treated as criminals turned terrorists, as they have a history of previous arrests.<sup>65</sup> Moreover, as stated by the project's French research team in their national report on the crime-terror overlap in France, "the crime-terror nexus in France appears to be composed of "in-betweeners" rather than hardened criminals: low-to-mid-level delinquents and "polycriminals" who seized opportunities."<sup>66</sup>

Ten of the criminals turned terrorists went to prison because of relatively petty offences: non-violent thefts and burglaries. The second-largest group amongst them (9 individuals), however, are individuals with another, earlier terrorism arrest behind them, which indicates their long-term presence in a terrorism network in France and their dedication to jihadism. A further 6 committed crimes and were later jailed in relation to the possession of or trade in drugs or other illegal active substances.<sup>67</sup> In total, 33% (19 out of 58) spent some time in prison before 2015, with 47% of this subset (or 9 out of the 19) radicalised while serving their sentences, an indication of the key role French prisons often play as far as this process is concerned.

The 2015 terrorism arrests in 11 French cases in the dataset were sparked by their "participation in any group formed or association established with a view to the preparation, marked by one or more material actions, of any of the acts of terrorism participation."<sup>68</sup> A further 3 were arrested on charges of performing recruitment into terrorism and the same number for membership of a terrorism group or conspiring with a terrorist group. The average sentence from the judicial verdicts following the 2015 terrorism arrests is 9 years.

Altogether, 56 of the French cases in the dataset (97%) are EU citizens (mostly French but also Belgian), and 11 have dual-citizenship (including one from outside the EU); 17% (10 out of 58) were born outside of the EU. The age range for the French cases in the dataset is between 18 and 48 years old, with 66% (38 out of 58) of the jihadis aged between 18 and 30. The average age of the French jihadis is 28 years old. Of the total, 55% (32 out of 58) were unemployed in 2015, with the share slightly lower for the criminals turned terrorists subset (52%, or 15 out of 29).

As far as their radicalisation is concerned, 34% (20 out of 58) began their journey towards jihadism more than 5 years before their 2015 arrest, death, or expulsion, and none in less than six months (no cases of snap radicalisation). This is further proof of their longstanding links to the jihadi milieu in France. The biggest category of the French cases in the dataset underwent a multifaceted and complex radicalisation with some combination of: friends and family, acquaintances, mentor/jihadi entrepreneur, or prison playing a role in the process (29%, or 17 out of 58); 21% (12 out of 58) were radicalised almost solely by their families and friends; and, 15% (9 out of 58) while serving a pre-2015 prison sentence.<sup>69</sup> So far, the dataset contains very little evidence of radicalisation progressing solely via an online environment.

Altogether, 53% of the cases in the French subset are FTFs (31 out of 58), another reminder of the fact that in recent years European jihadism has been to a large extent not only dominated by foreign fighters but also oriented towards recruiting individuals for jihad in the MENA region and sending them there, with the possibility of returning to stage attacks at home. Interestingly, almost half of these FTFs (15 out of the 31) have previous criminal backgrounds.<sup>70</sup>

The French cases are geographically clustered, i.e., there is a high degree of territorialisation, with subsets of individuals from the same localities jointly involved in illegal, i.e., either ordinary criminal or terrorist activities. In some cases, the individuals included in the dataset hail from localities with a high proportion of population living under the poverty line where a significant number of individuals often rotate in and out of prison. This effectively normalises the prison experience for many of the future jihadi

alumni and their social circles. Such individuals could then become crime-terror hybrids.<sup>71</sup> Hardly any of them later becomes an organised crime kingpin, although some are involved in what effectively could be described as micro-criminal organisations, marked by loose and flexible structures. What is more, **the French project team observed an inverse correlation between terrorism and it being funded by criminal deeds, i.e., the more financial resources a given individual gains via illegal means, the less likely are they to invest these resources into terrorism. In short, more successful and rich criminals are unlikely future terrorists.**

The qualitative data on the French cases points to the fact that on many occasions a move into crime, and then later a shift towards jihadism, can be instigated by personal or professional failure, trauma connected with, e.g., divorce, a broken home, or abuse, or even competition amongst friends keen to outdo each other in professing jihadi thoughts. In short, personal crises may directly contribute more to one's radicalisation than the radical ideology itself, but it is the latter that in many cases preys upon the former and is able to influence a vulnerable and impressionable individual.



## UNITED KINGDOM

Based on the collected data, the authors conclude that **the British jihadi milieu to a sizeable extent consists of individuals with criminal backgrounds.** In the dataset, 32% (10 out of 31) of the individuals have been previously arrested for some type of "ordinary" (i.e., non-terrorist) or petty crime but one could hardly conclude that they had enjoyed truly long-term criminal "careers." Their crimes included possession of drugs or attempted burglary. More than half of these individuals (6 out of 10), however, were later convicted and served their sentence in prison before their later terrorism-related arrests in 2015. Contrary to other studied countries, data coming from the United Kingdom does not confirm the theory of prisons as a breeding ground for radicalisation, since **none of the UK prisoners had been exposed to a radical ideology during their time in prison.**

**British jihadism is to a large extent a homegrown affair.** All, bar one, or 97% (30 out of 31) of the British jihadis in the dataset are citizens of the European Union and 26 of them are British citizens. The average age of a British jihadi was 29 years with the age span of 15 to 55 years. The majority was born in the 1980s (12 jihadis) and the 1990s (12 jihadis), and these were intent either on travelling to join ISIS in Syria or staging attacks in the UK. The few

older jihadis were mostly involved in collecting and (attempting to) provide funds for ISIS.

Out of the sample, **35% of the jihadis were unemployed** (11 out of 31) at the time of their arrest. Their education level, however, looked more impressive than in other studied countries, with 19% (6 out of 31) having university experience. Three individuals in the subset even completed their undergraduate studies.

Available data also show that the time between first exposure to radical or extremist ideology and arrest was longer than 5 years in 26% of the cases (8 out of 31). Taking a closer look at radicalisation factors, **45% (14 out of 31) of the British jihadis were radicalised by friends and family or acquaintances.** Lines between typical **mentors or influencing figures who later became friends**, however, were often blurred in the British cases, as the authors would often pick up information about more localised mentoring processes happening simultaneously in different parts of the country with no overarching radicalisation hub present. Another 45% (14 out of 31), after individual inquiries, offline or online, sought out exposure to the ideology by themselves, and 13% (4 out of 31) were converts.

With data already available on the sentences for the 2015 arrests of studied individuals, the authors were able to estimate the average sentence for terrorism offences committed by the individuals in the dataset at 8 years. **This means that many of the 2015 British terrorism arrestees will be out of prison in the early to mid-2020s.**



## SPAIN

The Spanish subset consists of 31 cases, i.e., 16% of the full dataset (31 out of 197 cases) of arrestees. **Only two of these individuals (6% of the subset) had been arrested prior to their terrorism arrests (29 out of 31 individuals or 93%) or expulsion for alleged terrorism association (2 out of 31 or 7%) in 2015.** Thus, the authors can conclude that the crime-terror nexus phenomenon is less pervasive in Spain than in the other countries covered in this report, but this finding is likely to change as the project progresses into its second year and data on more jihadis is collected by summer 2019.

The project's Spanish research team underscored the fact that if a given Spanish, or Spain-based jihadi, since 52% (16 out of 31, 14 of them are Moroccan citizens) do not have Spanish citizenship, has a criminal background, then it is **most usually connected to relatively petty offences** (the two violent criminals in the dataset at the moment are

expected to be exceptions; both later received prison sentences and one underwent radicalisation while incarcerated). Moreover, a **connection between organised crime and terrorism is lacking in Spain**, although back in 2014, a jihadi cell that included a returnee FTF who participated in the conflict in Mali was actively involved in insurance fraud. As a significant amount of jihadis were arrested, e.g., for disseminating terrorist propaganda (see below for more on the issue), they needed relatively little money to sustain their illegal activities and **mostly financed themselves via their own salaries and savings or benefits from the Spanish state, or a combination of these**.

Spain has a track record of a relatively high number of terrorism arrests (second behind France in terrorism arrest statistics maintained by Europol), followed by an equally high number of convictions of terrorism offences.<sup>72</sup> As the Spanish penal code includes broad elaborations on terrorism, it allows for a proactive, preventive approach in which jihadi cells are dismantled. The most voluminous category of 2015 terrorism arrests is for the offence of membership in the terrorism organisation (11 individuals, 35% of the subset), followed by dissemination of terrorist propaganda (10 individuals, 32% of the subset) and involvement with and collaboration with terrorist organisations (5 individuals, 16% of the subset). **The average sentence received by the jihadis is 5.5 years, which means that, like France and to some extent the UK, many of the 2015 terrorism arrestees in Spain will be at large in the early 2020s.**

Radicalisation of Spanish jihadis was: online, 8 individuals (26% of the subset, later they were all, with one exception, arrested for spreading jihadi propaganda and eulogising terrorism); by recruiting agents, 8 individuals (26%); initiated radicalisation themselves while actively seeking exposure, 4 individuals (13%); but the largest group, 11 individuals (35%), is comprised of individuals whose radicalisation was instigated by family or friends already active in jihadi circles. Interestingly, the time between first exposure to a radical ideology and the 2015 terrorism arrest or expulsion is shorter in Spain than, e.g., in France, with 8 individuals radicalised in under two years, 5 in under one year, and 4 in under six months. However, these were not, as sometimes expected, “snap” processes taking days or weeks.

The demographics for Spain are no different from the overall dataset on the European level. The Spanish jihadi phenomenon is predominantly male (87% or 27 out of 31 of the individuals in the subset). The age range is from 15 to 53 years at the time of arrest; 45% of the subset (14 out of the 31) were between 18 and 30 years old at the time of

their arrests (average age of the Spanish jihadis in the dataset is 28.3 years old). The picture of formal education and job experience is as equally bleak as in the overall European dataset. Only one Spanish terrorism arrestee had finished high school, with the rest only having some high school experience. Furthermore, 39% (12 out of 31) were unemployed at the time of the arrest.

## ITALY

The Italian subset comprises 14% (27 out of 197) of the 2015 terrorism arrestees (13 out of 27 Italian jihadis in the subset plus one individual who is a fugitive from justice) and individuals expelled for alleged terrorism associations and other terrorism-related crimes (13 out of 27 plus). **Only 2, or 6% of the subset, had been arrested prior to their 2015 terrorism arrest or expulsion** (one for involvement in human trafficking, the other for counterfeiting documents), **which indicates that the crime-terror nexus phenomenon is not the defining feature of the jihadi milieu in Italy**. Financing of terrorist activities happens mostly through combinations of various sources. Two offenders used a combination of illegal means and money collected through charity, one combined profit from illegal activities with a salary, and purely legal and purely illegal means were both used in one case, respectively.

**As the issue of terrorism financing shows, however, gaps in the data on Italian jihadis exists and mostly stem from the fact that in 48% of the subset (13 out of 27), the Italian authorities expelled individuals suspected of terrorism associations to their countries of origin, as they had no Italian citizenship.** Consequently, gathering more data on these individuals can be difficult for the Italian project team because quite often these individuals hardly feature in the open sources available in Italy and it is not within the team’s capability to collect such data from their countries of origin.

**This reality is very much reflected in the statistics related to the countries of origin of the jihadis in the Italian subset: only 4 individuals had been born in the EU and only 6 have EU citizenship, while 8 spent most of their lives in the EU.** As with the other national cases, the Italian jihadis are mostly male (81% or 22 out of 27 in the subset). The age range is from 19 to 61 years old at the time of arrest, with the majority (20) being composed of persons between the age of 18 and 30 (the average age of Italian jihadis is 37 years old). Concerning employment, there is a noticeable variance compared to the overall dataset, as 30% (8 out of 27 in the subset) were employed in 2015 and *only* 22% (6 out of 27) unemployed. Moreover, the Italian research team

collected qualitative evidence on the fact that some of the unemployed worked in the grey economy, e.g., on building sites, without any registration. Similarly, hard-to-quantify qualitative evidence also points to the fact that some of the immigrant expellees who worked in the grey economy were better-educated and only worked in blue collar jobs in Italy due to their illegal status in the country.

Family and friends are the prevailing agents of radicalisation, having played a major role in 8 cases, subsequent to 3 instances of online radicalisation in combination with the previous category.

## GREECE

**The crime-terror nexus is a tangible reality that has existed for many decades in Greece, of late in relation to far-left terrorism** (22 out of the 27, or 81%, Greek cases in the dataset could be described as left-wing terrorists, the rest, right wing). **The Greek cases in the dataset include 46% (13 out of 28) individuals with a history of previous arrests.** Since the 1970s, members of 17N, Greece's most enduring and best-known terrorism group, have accounted for many criminal acts that are unrelated to terrorism. Interestingly, just as the case with jihadi terrorists and recruitment into terrorist networks in prisons, **incarceration of "famous" far-left terrorists led to an increase in terrorism recruitment within the prison walls. The 2015 sample reflects this, as 44% (11 out of 28) of the individuals in the Greek cases were first exposed to radical ideology while serving their prison sentence,** especially in Korydallos prison—currently undergoing the controversial process of "decongestion", which sees the likes of Dimitris Koufodinas, the chief hitman of 17N, first receiving monthly prison leaves and then finally transferred to what was dubbed a "luxury" open-air jail.<sup>73</sup> Radicalisation to terrorism in Greece, however, is not solely a prison phenomenon, as the data show that quite often it is the family (siblings) or even the romantic partner of a given terrorist who fuel or jointly fuel this process, or later the terrorist joins their loved ones in a given terrorist organisation such as the Conspiracy of Fire Nuclei.

There are several more characteristics, apart from the ideological backgrounds of the terrorists that make the Greek subset distinct within the larger dataset, project, and consequently, for this report. **The average age of the Greek terrorists is 38.3, with the age range between 23 and 60 years old.** The available data show they are generally more mature individuals whose decision to join a terrorist organisation is not impulsive. **Another distinct characteristic is that 10 out of the 28 individuals in the Greek dataset have military experience,**

**a much higher percentage than in relation to the jihadis.<sup>74</sup>**

Greek criminals turned terrorists are also more educated and older than their jihadi counterparts: 6 out of 28 completed high school, 3 completed undergraduate studies, 2 had some postgraduate studies experience, and their average age is 38.1 years (age range of 24-57 years old). They often have a track record of committing numerous crimes like theft (19% of the known Greek terrorists' pre-2015 crimes), violent robbery (17%), or acts involving drugs (13%). At the same time, these crimes also include previous terrorism offences (6%) or more broadly, acts involving weapons and explosives (15%). Interestingly, **46% of the Greek individuals included in the dataset had not been employed prior to their 2015 terrorism arrests, as they financed their terrorism activity through criminal activities such as human trafficking, armed robbery, and theft.**



# NOTES

<sup>1</sup> See: Kacper Rekawek, Stanislav Matejka, Martina Babikova, Tomas Nagy, Jakub Rafay, *From Criminals to Terrorists and Back?* Kick-Off Report, GLOBSEC, 2017, <https://www.globsec.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Crime-Crime-Terror-Nexus-update.pdf>, (accessed: 2 August 2018).

<sup>2</sup> See: <https://www.globsec.org/initiatives/globsec-intelligence-reform-initiative/>, (accessed: 1 August 2018).

<sup>3</sup> For more on this issue, see the 3rd report of GLOBSEC Intelligence Reform Initiative (GIRI): <https://www.globsec.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/GLOBSEC-Intelligence-Reform-Initiative-vol.3.pdf> (accessed: 1 August 2018).

<sup>4</sup> See: HM Government, *CONTEST. The United Kingdom's Strategy for Countering Terrorism*, June 2018, [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/716907/140618\\_CCS207\\_CCS0218929798-1\\_CONTEST\\_3.0\\_WEB.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/716907/140618_CCS207_CCS0218929798-1_CONTEST_3.0_WEB.pdf), (accessed: 1 August 2018).

<sup>5</sup> See: <https://www.globsec.org/news/globsec-travels-criminals-terrorists/>, (accessed: 1 August 2018) for more on the public and expert engagement activities performed by the project team so far.

<sup>6</sup> See: note 1.

<sup>7</sup> See: <https://www.globsec.org/projects/criminals-terrorists-back/>, (accessed: 2 August 2018).

<sup>8</sup> See: note 6, pp. 10-13.

<sup>9</sup> See: [https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/statistics/crime/ICCS/ICCS\\_English\\_2016\\_web.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/statistics/crime/ICCS/ICCS_English_2016_web.pdf), (accessed: 5 August 2018).

<sup>10</sup> Other, most commonly national or, at best, binational, quantitative studies of given terrorist populations (usually focusing on FTFs or wannabe FTFs) include: Edwin Bakker, Roel de Bont, "Belgian and Dutch Jihadist Foreign Fighters (2012–2015): Characteristics, Motivations, and Roles in the War in Syria and Iraq," *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, 27:5, pp. 837-857 where the author states that 20% of their sample of 370 Belgian and Dutch FTFs had been "suspected of criminal activity prior to departure" (p. 844); Alessandro Boncio, looked at 40 Italian FTFs and found evidence of 33% having a criminal record from before their departure to Syria. See: Alessandro Boncio, "Italian Foreign Terrorist Fighters: a quantitative analysis of radicalization risk factors," *SICUREZZA, TERRORISMO E SOCIETÀ*, International Journal, vol. 4, issue 2, 2016, pp. 16; Carola García-Calvo and Fernando Reinares studied a different population of terrorists, i.e., ISIS terrorism arrestees in Spain and found that one-third of 130 individuals had a criminal record "as ordinary delinquents" before their terrorism arrests. See: Carola García-Calvo and Fernando Reinares "Patterns of Involvement among Individuals Arrested for Islamic State-related Terrorist Activities in Spain, 2013-2016," *Perspectives on Terrorism*, vol. 10, issue 6, 2016, <http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/562/1114>, (accessed 5 August 2018), p. 109; Daniel H. Heinke, who studied 784 German FTFs and concluded that "two-thirds of the departees have been the subject of criminal investigations." See: Daniel H. Heinke, "The German Foreign Fighters in Syria and Iraq: The Updated Data and its Implications," *CTC Sentinel*, March 2017, vol. 10, issue 3, <https://ctc.usma.edu/german-foreign-fighters-in-syria-and-iraq-the-updated-data-and-its-implications/>, (accessed: 5 August 2018), pp. 18; Anton W. Weenink, who studied 140 Dutch FTFs, found out that 47% of the sample of 140 were included in the "police registration system of suspicions." See: Anton W. Weenink, "Behavioral Problems and Disorders among Radicals in Police Files," *Perspectives on Terrorism*, vol. 9, no. 2, 2015, <http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/416/826>, (accessed: 5 August 2018), pp. 17-33.

<sup>11</sup> See: Rajan Basra, Peter R. Neumann, Claudia Brunner, *Criminal Pasts, Terrorist Futures: European Jihadists and the New Crime-Terror Nexus*, ICSR, 2016, [https://icsr.info/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/crime-terror-report\\_20171214\\_web.pdf](https://icsr.info/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/crime-terror-report_20171214_web.pdf), (accessed: 5 August 2018).

<sup>12</sup> In practice this means that the given research team knows that individual A had been a drug dealer and codes him as such but finds it difficult to quantify how many times the aforementioned dealer actually dealt drugs on the street. At the same time, the given team finds it much easier to code information on him/her being a perpetrator of an assault, or even a burglary, as reporting of such crimes is often more detailed, and they are also less numerable.

<sup>13</sup> See: Matthew Valasik and Matthew Phillips, "Understanding modern terror and insurgency through the lens of street gangs: ISIS as a case study," *Journal of Criminological Research Policy and Practice*, vol. 30, no. 3, 2017, pp. 192-207 for a comparative study between ISIS and gangs. See also: Pieter Van Ostaeyen, "Belgian Radical Networks and the Road to the Brussels Attacks," *CTC Sentinel*, June 2016, vol. 9, issue 6, <https://ctc.usma.edu/belgian-radical-networks-and-the-road-to-the-brussels-attacks/>, (accessed: 5 August 2018) for a detailed study of potentially the most famous ISIS-related gang: the Zerkani network.

<sup>14</sup> See: "World Prison Brief," Institute for Criminal Policy Research, Birkbeck, University of London, 2016. [http://www.prisonstudies.org/highest-to-lowest/prison-population-total?field\\_region\\_taxonomy\\_tid=14](http://www.prisonstudies.org/highest-to-lowest/prison-population-total?field_region_taxonomy_tid=14) (accessed: 6 Feb 2018).

<sup>15</sup> See, e.g.: Fernanda Buril, "Changing God's Expectations and Women's Consequent Behaviors—How ISIS Manipulates "Divine Commandments" to Influence Women's Role in Jihad," *Journal of Terrorism Research*, vol. 8, issue 3, October 2017, pp. 1-10; Roel de Bont, Daan Weggemans, Ruud Peters, Edwin Bakker, "Life at ISIS: The Roles of Western Men, Women and Children," *Security and Global Affairs*, September 2017, Universiteit Leiden, pp. 3-17; The Carter Center, *The Women in Daesh: Deconstructing Complex Gender Dynamics in Daesh Recruitment Propaganda*, May 2017, [https://www.cartercenter.org/resources/pdfs/peace/conflict\\_resolution/countering-isis/women-in-daesh.pdf](https://www.cartercenter.org/resources/pdfs/peace/conflict_resolution/countering-isis/women-in-daesh.pdf), (accessed: 1 August 2018); Kiriloi M. Ingram, IS' Appeal to Western Women: Policy Implications, *ICCT Policy Brief*, October 2017; Elizabeth Pearson, Emily Winterbotham, "Women, Gender and Daesh Radicalisation," *The RUSI Journal*, 162:3, pp. 60-72; Andrea Sjøberg Aasgaard, Migrants, Housewives, Warrior or Sex Slaves: AQ's and the Islamic State's Perspectives on Women, *Connections: The Quarterly Journal*, vol. 16, issue 1, pp. 99-111.

<sup>16</sup> See, e.g.: General Intelligence and Security Service, *Jihadist women, a threat not to be underestimated*, December 2017, <https://english.aivd.nl/publications/publications/2017/12/14/publication-jihadist-women-a-threat-not-to-be-underestimated>, (accessed: 1 August 2018) for an overview of the Dutch cases or Robin Simcox, "The 2016 French Female Attack Cell: A Case Study," *CTC Sentinel*, June/July 2018, vol. 11, issue 6, pp. 21-25, <https://ctc.usma.edu/2016-french-female-attack-cell-case-study/>, (accessed: 1 August 2018) for a story of an all-female French terrorist attack cell.

<sup>17</sup> These findings dovetail with the numerical ratio included in the recent Joana Cook, Gina Vale, *From Daesh to 'Diaspora': Tracing the Women and Minors of Islamic State*, ICSR, July 2018, <https://icsr.info/2018/07/23/from-daesh-to-diaspora-tracing-the-women-and-minors-of-islamic-state/>, (accessed: 1 August 2018) where the authors indicate that 13% of ISIS international recruits have been female.

<sup>18</sup> When a juvenile is prosecuted as an adult due to the serious crime they committed (here: terrorism offences), the authors only indicate that person's country of arrest and age for statistical purposes and due to legal restrictions stop short of coding any

further data. Thus, the fully anonymised dataset is not biased in relation to the age of the 2015 terrorism arrestees. So far, the authors have encountered 10 under 18-year old jihadis arrested for terrorism offences or killed while executing terrorist attacks in 2015. The authors know of no individual of this subset expelled from any of the 11 countries for their alleged terrorism associations.

<sup>19</sup> See, e.g.: Robin Simcox, "The Islamic State's Western Teenage Plotters," *CTC Sentinel*, February 2017, vol. 10, issue 2, pp. 21-27, <https://ctc.usma.edu/the-islamic-states-western-teenage-plotters/>, (accessed: 1 August 2018) for a perspective on the subset of plotters, and their relatively young ages, in the ranks of ISIS, or Colleen McCue, Joseph T. Massengill, Dorothy Milbrandt, John Gaughan, and Meghan Cumpston, "The Islamic State Long Game: A Tripartite Analysis of Youth Radicalization and Indoctrination," *CTC Sentinel*, September 2017, vol. 10, issue 8, pp. 21-27, <https://ctc.usma.edu/the-islamic-state-long-game-a-tripartite-analysis-of-youth-radicalization-and-indoctrination/>, (accessed: 1 August 2018) for an analysis of ISIS's long game on the weaponization of its youngest recruits in future plots.

<sup>20</sup> See, e.g.: John Horgan, Mia Bloom, Chelsea Daymon, Wojciech Kaczkowski, and Hicham Tiflati, "A New Age of Terror? Older Fighters in the Caliphate," *CTC Sentinel*, May 2017, vol. 10, issue 5, pp. 13-20, <https://ctc.usma.edu/a-new-age-of-terror-older-fighters-in-the-caliphate/>, (accessed: 1 August 2018).

<sup>21</sup> See, e.g.: Weenink, op. cit., for a discussion on the low education levels of the Dutch FTFs.

<sup>22</sup> See, e.g.: o Boncio, "Italian Foreign Terrorist Fighters...", pp. 7-21, for a discussion on the high unemployment levels amongst the Italian FTFs. Spanish ISIS terrorism arrestees are somehow a bit more educated, with as many as 60% enrolled in secondary education. See: García-Calvo, Reinares, op. cit.

<sup>23</sup> See: Emilie Oftedal, "The financing of jihadi terrorist cells in Europe," Norwegian Defence Research Establishment, 2014 for a groundbreaking paper on the issue of terrorism financing in Europe. See also: Stefan Heißner, Peter R. Neumann, John Holland-McCowan, Rajan Basra, *Caliphate in Decline: An Estimate of Islamic State's Financial Fortunes*, ICSR, 2017, <https://icmr.info/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/ICSR-Report-Caliphate-in-Decline-An-Estimate-of-Islamic-States-Financial-Fortunes.pdf>, (accessed: 1 August 2018) for an overall assessment of ISIS financial fortunes.

<sup>24</sup> See: Petter Nesser, Anne Stenersen and Emilie Oftedal, "Jihadi Terrorism in Europe: The IS-Effect," *Perspectives on Terrorism*, vol. 10, issue 6, December 2016, <http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/553>, (accessed: 1 August 2018), p. 16.

<sup>25</sup> This finding is not to suggest that a terrorist organisation does not use illegal means to finance their activities. See, e.g.: Christian Leuprecht, Olivier Walther, David B. Skillicorn & Hillary Ryde-Collins, "Hezbollah's Global Tentacles: A Relational Approach to Convergence with Transnational Organized Crime," *Terrorism and Political Violence*, vol. 29, issue 5, 2017, pp. 902-21 for an account of Hezbollah's cigarette smuggling rings operating in the US.

<sup>26</sup> See: Steve Swann, "Aine Davis: The gangster who ditched drugs for jihad," *BBC News*, 9 May 2017, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-39824267>, (accessed: 1 August 2018).

<sup>27</sup> Magnus Ranstorp, "Microfinancing the Caliphate: How the Islamic State is Unlocking the Assets of European Recruits," *CTC Sentinel*, vol. 9, issue 5, May 2016, <https://ctc.usma.edu/microfinancing-the-caliphate-how-the-islamic-state-is-unlocking-the-assets-of-european-recruits/>, (accessed: 1 August 2018), pp. 11-16.

<sup>28</sup> See: The Expert Group on Violent Radicalisation, "Radicalisation Processes Leading to Acts of Terrorism. A concise Report prepared by the European Commission's Expert Group on Violent Radicalisation," 15 May 2008, [http://www.rikcoolsaet.be/files/art\\_ip\\_wz/Expert%20Group%20Report%20Violent%20Radicalisation%20FINAL.pdf](http://www.rikcoolsaet.be/files/art_ip_wz/Expert%20Group%20Report%20Violent%20Radicalisation%20FINAL.pdf), (accessed: 8 August 2018).

<sup>29</sup> See: Judith Tinnies, "Bibliography: Homegrown Terrorism and Radicalisation," <http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/476/935>, (accessed: 7 August 2018) for a 35-page bibliography on the subject.

<sup>30</sup> Randy Borum, "What drives lone offenders?," *The Conversation*, 27 September 2016, <https://theconversation.com/what-drives-lone-offenders-62745>, (accessed: 7 August 2016).

<sup>31</sup> See e.g.: Zora A. Sukabdi, "Terrorism in Indonesia: A Review on Rehabilitation and Deradicalization," *Journal of Terrorism Research*, vol. 6, issue 5, May 2015, pp. 36-66.

<sup>32</sup> See: Jonathan Githens-Mazer, "The rhetoric and reality: radicalization and political discourse," *International Political Science Review*, 33(5), 2012, pp. 556-567.

<sup>33</sup> See: Tore Bjorgo, John G. Horgan (eds.), *Leaving Terrorism Behind: Individual and Collective Disengagement*, London: Routledge, 2009 and John Horgan, *Walking Away from Terrorism: Accounts of Disengagement from Radical and Extremist Movements*, London: Routledge, 2009.

<sup>34</sup> See: Olivier Roy, *Jihad and Death: The Global Appeal of Islamic State*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017 and Gilles Kepel, *Terror in France: The Rise of Jihad in the West*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017, for two divergent views on the issue.

<sup>35</sup> Andrew Silke, Tinka Veldhuis, "Countering Violent Extremism in Prisons: A Review of Key Recent Research and Critical Research Gaps," *Perspectives on Terrorism*, vol. 11, no. 5, October 2017, <http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/640/html>, (accessed: 7 August 2018), pp. 2-11.

<sup>36</sup> The project looks at individuals who were responsible for the first known exposure of the jihadis included in the dataset. It is beyond its remit and capabilities to establish all other individuals who played a role in the radicalisation processes of the individuals included in the dataset.

<sup>37</sup> "Mobilization to Violence (Terrorism) Research, Key Findings," Canadian Security Intelligence Service, p. 11.

<sup>38</sup> Daniel H. Heinke, op.cit., p. 19.

<sup>39</sup> See, e.g.: Christian Leuprecht, Olivier Walther, David B. Skillicorn & Hillary Ryde-Collins, op. cit.

<sup>40</sup> Pieter Van Ostaeyen, "Belgian Radical Networks and the Road to the Brussels Attacks," *CTC Sentinel*, June 2016, vol. 9, issue 6, <https://ctc.usma.edu/belgian-radical-networks-and-the-road-to-the-brussels-attacks/>, (accessed: 5 August 2018), p. 10.

<sup>41</sup> See: Francesco Marone, "Ties that Bind: Dynamics of Group Radicalisation in Italy's Jihadists Headed for Syria and Iraq," *The International Spectator*, 52:3, pp. 48-63. See also: Marion van San, "Belgian and Dutch Young Men and Women Who Joined ISIS: Ethnographic Research among the Families They Left Behind," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, vol. 41, issue 1, pp. 39-58, for a different perspective on the issue based on ethnographic research oriented towards family members of FTFs.

<sup>42</sup> See: Van San, op. cit.

<sup>43</sup> Georg Heil, "The Berlin Attack and the 'Abu Walaa' Islamic State Recruitment Network," *CTC Sentinel*, February 2017, vol. 10, issue 2, <https://ctc.usma.edu/the-berlin-attack-and-the-abu-walaa-islamic-state-recruitment-network/>, (accessed: 6 August 2018), p. 5.

<sup>44</sup> Gaetano Joe Ilardi, "A Homegrown Terrorist Cell: Observations of a Police Undercover Operative," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, vol. 41, issue 6, 480.

<sup>45</sup> See: Julien van der Elzen, "Radicalisation: A Subtype of Religious Conversion?," *Perspectives on Terrorism*, vol. 12, issue 1, February 2018, <http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/679>, (accessed: 8 August 2018), pp. 69-80; Bart Schuurman, Peter Grol, Scott Flower, "Converts and Islamist Terrorism: An Introduction," *ICCT Policy Brief*, June 2016, for other works featuring statistics on to what extent the radical networks are penetrated by converts.

<sup>46</sup> See: Michelle Dugas, Arie W. Kruglanski, "The Quest for Significance Model of Radicalization: Implications for the

Management of Terrorist Detainees," *Behavioral Sciences and the Law*, 32: 423-439, 2014.

<sup>47</sup> For a summary of a report analysing the backgrounds of the UK terrorism arrestees, see, e.g.: Duncan Gardham, "Terrorism in Britain 'mostly home grown', report says," *The Telegraph*, 5 July 2010, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/terrorism-in-the-uk/7871139/Terrorism-in-Britain-mostly-home-grown-report-says.html>, (accessed: 6 August 2018).

<sup>48</sup> Jean Charles Brisard, Kevin Jackson, "The Islamic State's External Operations and the French-Belgian Nexus," *CTC Sentinel*, November/December 2016, vol. 9, issue 11, <https://ctc.usma.edu/the-islamic-states-external-operations-and-the-french-belgian-nexus/>, (accessed: 1 August 2018), p. 8.

<sup>49</sup> See: Jytte Klausen, "The Myth of Homegrown Terrorism," in: Robert Morgan Byrne-Diakun (ed.), *Georgetown Security Studies Review*, February 2017, pp. 50-61.

<sup>50</sup> See: Nesser, Stenersen, Oftedal, op.cit., p. 16.

<sup>51</sup> See: Georg Heil, op. cit.

<sup>52</sup> See: Thomas Hegghammer, "The Future of Jihadism in Europe: A Pessimistic View," *Perspectives on Terrorism*, vol. 10, issue 6, December 2016, <http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/566/html>, (accessed: 6 August 2018), pp. 156-170 for a view on the ongoing relevance of the conflicts in the Middle East as far as recruiting more individuals into European jihad is concerned.

<sup>53</sup> See: Leuprecht, op.cit. for arguments on focusing on terrorism networks.

<sup>54</sup> King's College International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation (ICSR) was possibly the first with its quantitative and qualitative updates on the phenomenon. Its first estimate of the number of the people involved was published in April 2013. See: <https://icsr.info/2015/01/26/foreign-fighter-total-syriairaq-now-exceeds-20000-surpasses-afghanistan-conflict-1980s/>, (accessed: 6 August 2018).

<sup>55</sup> The threat from the FTFs was deemed severe enough to merit a special UN Security Council resolution (Resolution 2178 of September 2014) on the issue. See: [http://www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/2178%20%282014%29](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/2178%20%282014%29), (accessed: 6 August 2018).

<sup>56</sup> See an early attempt at putting together a concise bibliography on the issue: Eric Price, Bibliography: Foreign Fighters of Terrorism, <http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/409/802>, (accessed: 6 August 2018). See also: Alastair Reed, Johanna Pohl, Marjolein Jegerings, "The Four Dimensions of the Foreign Fighter Threat: Making Sense of an Evolving Phenomenon," *ICCT Policy Brief*, June 2017, <https://icct.nl/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/ICCT-Reed-Pohl-The-Four-Dimensions-of-the-Foreign-Fighters-Threat-June-2017.pdf>, (accessed: 6 August 2018) for a concise analysis of the threat posed to Europe by the phenomenon of the FTFs.

<sup>57</sup> See: Rik Coolsaet, Thomas Renard, "Returnees: who are they, why are they (not) coming back and how should we deal with them? Assessing policies on returning foreign terrorist fighters in Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands," *Egmont Paper 101*, February 2018, [http://www.egmontinstitute.be/content/uploads/2018/02/egmont.papers101\\_online\\_v1-3.pdf?type=pdf](http://www.egmontinstitute.be/content/uploads/2018/02/egmont.papers101_online_v1-3.pdf?type=pdf), (accessed: 6 August 2018) for a recent analysis of the threat from the returnees and the best measures to tackle it from experts in three European countries.

<sup>58</sup> See: sources in note 9 for national statistics on the issue.

<sup>59</sup> See: Åsne Seierstad, *One of Us: The Story of a Massacre in Norway—and Its Aftermath*, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2016.

<sup>60</sup> See, e.g.: Clare Ellis, Raffaello Pantucci, Jeanine de Roy van Zuijdewijn, Edwin Bakker, Melanie Smith, Benoît Gomis and Simon Palombi, "Analysing the Processes of Lone-Actor Terrorism: Research Findings," *Perspectives on Terrorism*, vol. 10, issue 2, April 2016, <http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/>

<article/view/499/987>, (accessed: 6 August 2018), p. 33-41 for results of a wide-ranging study on the issue.

<sup>61</sup> Bart Schuurman, Lasse Lindekilde, Stefan Malthaner, Francis O'Connor, Paul Gill, Noémie Bouhana, "End of the Lone Wolf: The Typology that Should Not Have Been," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/1057610X.2017.1419554?needAccess=true>, (accessed: 6 August 2018).

<sup>62</sup> See: Raffaello Pantucci, "Britain on Alert: The Attacks in London and Manchester and the Evolving Threat," *CTC Sentinel*, August 2017, vol. 10, issue 7, <https://ctc.usma.edu/britain-on-alert-the-attacks-in-london-and-manchester-and-the-evolving-threat/>, (accessed: 6 August 2018), pp. 1-12.

<sup>63</sup> In 2015, the peak year of European jihadism, France declared 424 arrests to Europol. This number constitutes 41% of the total of the terrorism arrests declared to Europol by the 11 countries covered in this study. See: Europol, TE-SAT 2016. European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2016, the Hague, 2016, [https://www.europol.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/europol\\_tesat\\_2016.pdf](https://www.europol.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/europol_tesat_2016.pdf), (accessed: 1 August 2018).

<sup>64</sup> See: Edith Bouvier, Céline Martelet, *Un parfum de djihad: Qui sont ces Françaises qui ont rejoint une organisation terroriste?*, Paris: Plon, 2018 for a detailed study of the French females who joined ISIS.

<sup>65</sup> Note that not all of them, however, later served prison sentences, as some were given suspended sentences or were sentenced to other forms of punishment.

<sup>66</sup> Pierre Colomina, Olivier de France, Damien Saverot, *The In-Betweeners? Links Between Crime and Terror in France Quarterly Report: France*, GLOBSEC, 2018, <https://www.globsec.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/From-Criminals-to-Terrorists-and-Back-Quarterly-Report-2018-France.pdf>, (accessed: 2 August 2018), p. 2.

<sup>67</sup> Note that some of these categories might overlap as some might have been sent to prison for more than one crime.

<sup>68</sup> See: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Preventing terrorist acts: a criminal justice strategy integrating rule of law standards in implementation of united nations anti-terrorism instruments. Technical Assistance Working Paper Terrorism Prevention Branch, Vienna, 2006, <https://www.unodc.org/pdf/terrorism/TATS/en/3IRoLen.pdf>, (accessed: 1 August 2018), pp. 26-8.

<sup>69</sup> Note that some of these categories might be overlapping.

<sup>70</sup> See: David Thomson, *Les Revenants, Ils étaient partis faire le jihad, ils sont de retour en France*, Paris: Seuil, 2016 for a study of the French who departed to join ISIS.

<sup>71</sup> See: Jean-François Gayraud, *Théorie des hybrides. Terrorisme et crime organisé*, Paris: CNRS Editions, 2017.

<sup>72</sup> See: <https://www.europol.europa.eu/activities-services/main-reports/eu-terrorism-situation-and-trend-report>, (accessed: 9 August 2018) for the collection of TE-SAT which include such statistics.

<sup>73</sup> Helena Smith, "Growing backlash over transfer to 'luxury' jail for Greek terrorist," *The Guardian*, 5 August 2018, [https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/aug/05/growing-backlash-over-transfer-to-luxury-jail-for-greek-terrorist?CMP=share\\_btn\\_fb](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/aug/05/growing-backlash-over-transfer-to-luxury-jail-for-greek-terrorist?CMP=share_btn_fb), (accessed: 7 August 2018).

<sup>74</sup> Nonetheless, 18 of the Greek terrorists in the dataset still managed to avoid the seemingly compulsory Greek draft.









