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EUROMED SURVEY OF EXPERTS AND ACTORS

VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN THE EURO-MEDITERRANEAN REGION

RESULTS SAMPLE BASED ON RESPONSES FROM EUROMESCO EXPERTS

IEMed.

With the support of:

These are preliminary results of the 8th edition of the Euromed Survey on violent extremism in the Euro-Mediterranean region. Among a sample of the 6,500 experts and actors in the region, 500 experts members of the EuroMeSCo network were invited to answer the survey. So far, 82 EuroMeSCo members participated. The results reflect participants opinions.

The Euromed Survey is still in progress.
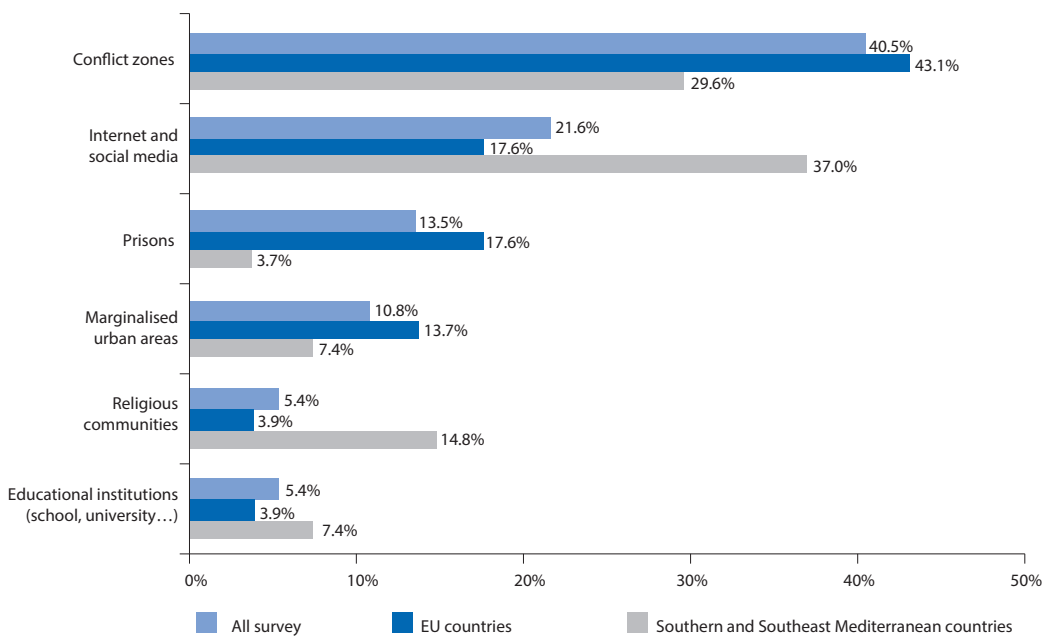Final results will be available by the end of September.
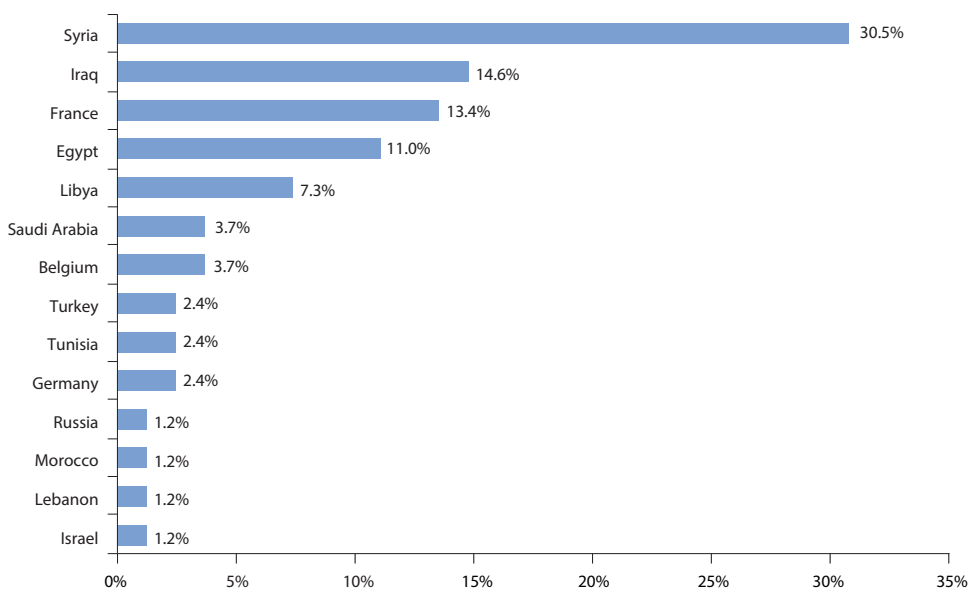
08

8ᵗʰ Euromed Survey: preliminary results

Context and Drivers of Violent Extremism

- Overall, conflict zones are seen as the most fertile environment for violent extremism.

- EuroMeSCo respondents from the Southern Mediterranean tend to consider in higher proportions than their counterparts from the Northern Mediterranean that the internet and social media are a fertile environment for violence extremism.

- Apart from Syria and Iraq, France and Egypt are seen as the most likely targets of violent extremism in the upcoming years.

In which environments and contexts are recruiters more likely to successfully turn an individual into a violent extremist? (respondents were invited to choose three and rank them: results show first choice)

Environment	All survey	EU countries	Southern and Southeast Mediterranean countries
Conflict zones	40.5%	43.1%	29.6%
Internet and social media	21.6%	17.6%	37.0%
Prisons	13.5%	17.6%	3.7%
Marginalised urban areas	10.8%	13.7%	7.4%
Religious communities	5.4%	3.9%	14.8%
Educational institutions (school, university…)	5.4%	3.9%	7.4%

Legend: All survey · EU countries · Southern and Southeast Mediterranean countries

Which of these countries* are likely to become targets or continue being targeted by violent extremism in the upcoming years (respondents were invited to choose three and rank them: results show first choice)

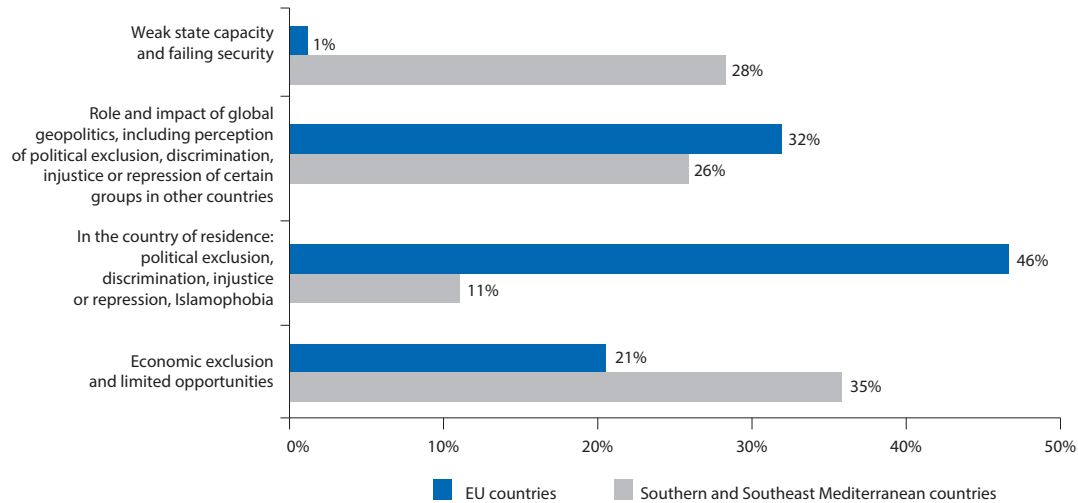| Country	%
Syria	30.5%
Iraq	14.6%
France	13.4%
Egypt	11.0%
Libya	7.3%
Saudi Arabia	3.7%
Belgium	3.7%
Turkey	2.4%
Tunisia	2.4%
Germany	2.4%
Russia	1.2%
Morocco	1.2%
Lebanon	1.2%
Israel	1.2%

* Respondents had a drop-down menu with the 43 Euro-Mediterranean countries
(members of the Union for the Mediterranean) as well as Russia, the US and the Gulf countries, Iran and Iraq.

- Varying perceptions of main drivers of violent extremism: rather socio-economic for respondents from Southern Mediterranean and socio-political for European respondents.

- However, all in all, exclusion and discrimination seem to be keywords across the board.
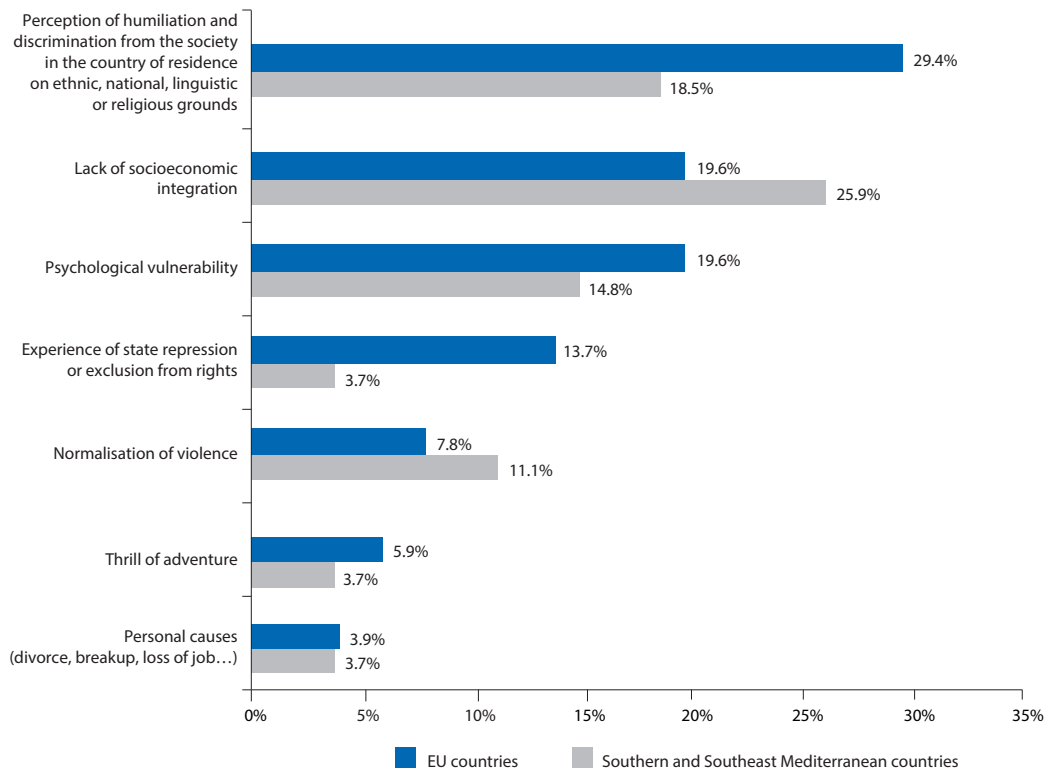
Drivers providing fertile ground for the development of violent extremism
(% of the most significant driver by group of countries)

Driver	EU countries	Southern and Southeast Mediterranean countries
Weak state capacity and failing security	1%	28%
Role and impact of global geopolitics, including perception of political exclusion, discrimination, injustice or repression of certain groups in other countries	32%	26%
In the country of residence: political exclusion, discrimination, injustice or repression, Islamophobia	46%	11%
Economic exclusion and limited opportunities	21%	35%

In addition to an enabling environment, to what extent can the following elements help to explain why an individual turns to violent extremism?
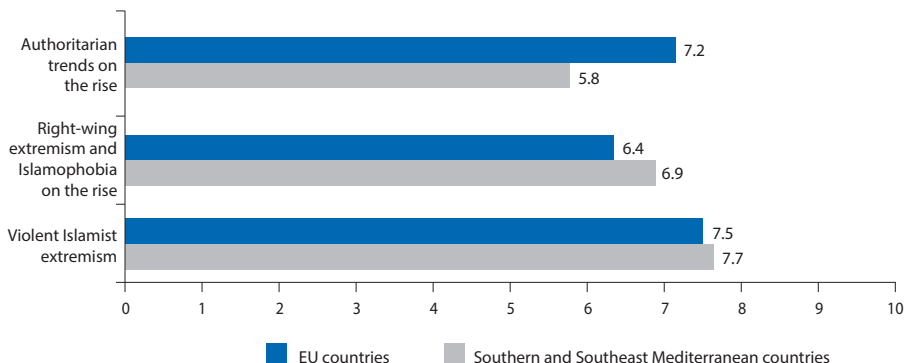(respondents were invited to choose three and rank them: results show first choice)

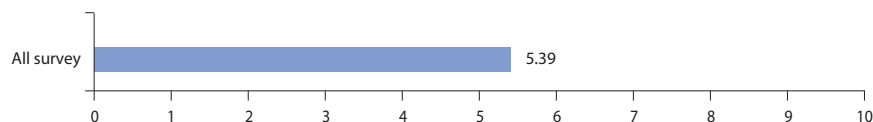| Element	EU countries	Southern and Southeast Mediterranean countries
Perception of humiliation and discrimination from the society in the country of residence on ethnic, national, linguistic or religious grounds	29.4%	18.5%
Lack of socioeconomic integration	19.6%	25.9%
Psychological vulnerability	19.6%	14.8%
Experience of state repression or exclusion from rights	13.7%	3.7%
Normalisation of violence	7.8%	11.1%
Thrill of adventure	5.9%	3.7%
Personal causes (divorce, breakup, loss of job…)	3.9%	3.7%

Impact of Violent Extremism

- Violent Islamist extremism is perceived as main threat to the region. However, other phenomena are also perceived as affecting the stability and security of the region: right-wing extremism and Islamophobia (for a majority of respondents from Southern Mediterranean countries) and authoritarian trends (for a majority of European respondents).

- Throughout the survey, respondents establish links between these phenomena.

To what extent do you consider that the following phenomena threaten the stability and security of the Euro-Mediterranean countries and societies as a whole?
(mean 0: very low extent, 10: very high extent)

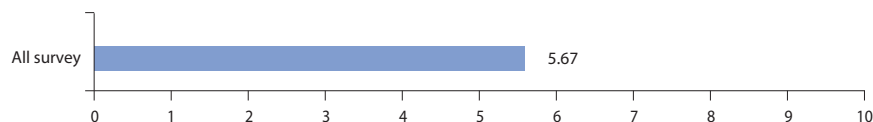|	EU countries	Southern and Southeast Mediterranean countries
Authoritarian trends on the rise	7.2	5.8
Right-wing extremism and Islamophobia on the rise	6.4	6.9
Violent Islamist extremism	7.5	7.7

Do you agree that defeating or weakening Daesh will be a major contribution to the eradication of the violent extremism threat in the Euro-Mediterranean region?
(mean 0: very low extent, 10: very high extent)

All survey: 5.39

Do you agree that foreign terrorist fighters (as defined in the United Nations Security Council 2178 resolution) represent the biggest threat to violent extremism?
(mean 0: very low extent, 10: very high extent)

All survey: 5.67

- While acknowledging the impact of Daesh on the one hand and of foreign fighters on the other hand, responses show that the threat of violent extremism is definitely not limited to these two phenomena.

- When dealing with foreign terrorist fighters, respondents clearly favour preventive actions over reactive and repressive ones.

Defeating Daesh might be a part of the puzzle. The other part is the quality of Governance in the region.

SSE country respondent

The defeat or weakening of Daesh might have an impact on the radicalisation of European Muslims (loss of a trend). However, in the whole Euro-Mediterranean region there are many other violent extremist groups active that can replace Daesh.

EU country respondent

It is an ideology that is sufficiently popular and it will be able to capitalize on widespread socioeconomic and political grievances.

SSE country respondent

The next major threat may not even exist yet. Few predicted that Daesh would be the next big threat until it was.

EU country respondent

Most harmful attacks

Paris attacks in November 2015 were indiscriminate (everybody could have been a target, including Muslims), attacks on the Charlie Hebdo office targeted specifically the concept of freedom of expression. Both specifically tried to amplify a divide within Europe (Muslims and non-Muslims) and between Europe and the Middle East.

EU country respondent

Terrorist attacks across the MENA region are constantly undermining the state capacity and the economic performance from most of their countries. This brings more instability into the region as a whole as it affects negatively not only the country which suffered the attack but also its neighbours
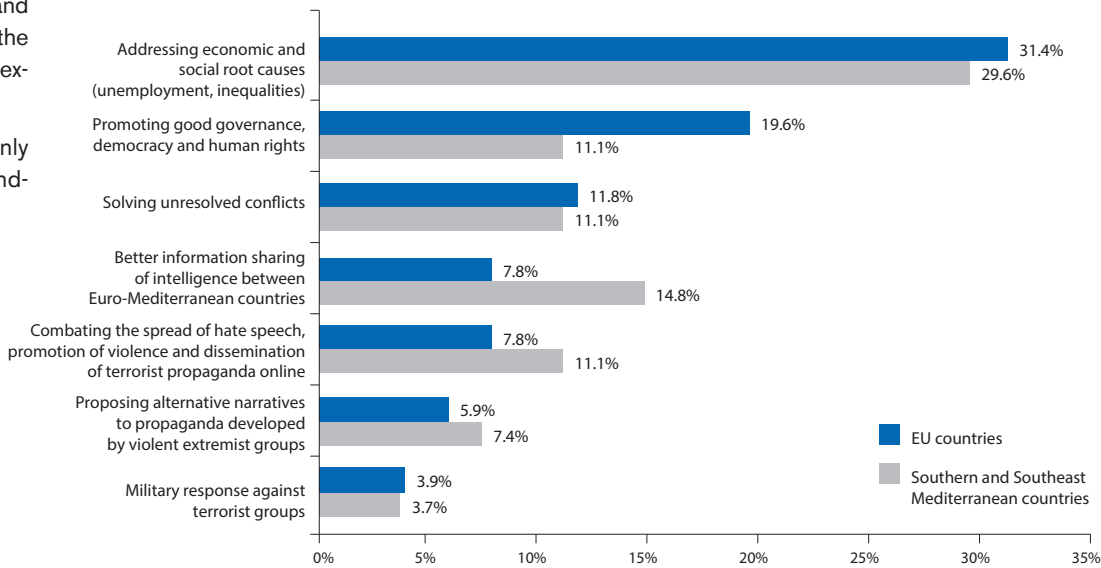
EU country respondent
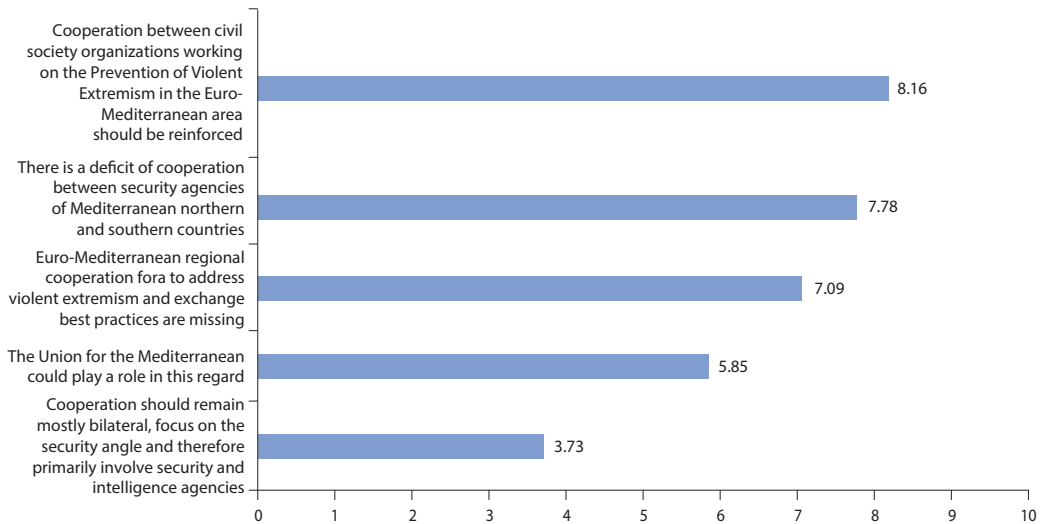
"Post Daesh" scenario

Confronting Violent Extremism

- In general, respondents assess that addressing structural elements (and in particular tackling economic and social root causes) would be the best remedy to counter violent extremism.

- Increasing border control is only mentioned by 2% of the respondents in this context.

What should be the main priorities in order to effectively counter violent extremism in the Euro-Mediterranean region? (respondents were invited to choose four and rank them: results show first choice)

Priority	EU countries	Southern and Southeast Mediterranean countries
Addressing economic and social root causes (unemployment, inequalities)	31.4%	29.6%
Promoting good governance, democracy and human rights	19.6%	11.1%
Solving unresolved conflicts	11.8%	11.1%
Better information sharing of intelligence between Euro-Mediterranean countries	7.8%	14.8%
Combating the spread of hate speech, promotion of violence and dissemination of terrorist propaganda online	7.8%	11.1%
Proposing alternative narratives to propaganda developed by violent extremist groups	5.9%	7.4%
Military response against terrorist groups	3.9%	3.7%

- Regarding Euro-Mediterranean Cooperation in particular, respondents acknowledge that there is a deficit of cooperation between security agencies of Mediterranean northern and southern countries and agree to a very large extent that cooperation between civil society organisations working on PVE should be reinforced and think that regional Euro-Mediterranean fora to tackle Violent Extremism are missing.

Do you agree with the following statements regarding Euro-Mediterranean cooperation? (mean 0: very low extent, 10: very high extent)

Statement	Value
Cooperation between civil society organizations working on the Prevention of Violent Extremism in the Euro-Mediterranean area should be reinforced	8.16
There is a deficit of cooperation between security agencies of Mediterranean northern and southern countries	7.78
Euro-Mediterranean regional cooperation fora to address violent extremism and exchange best practices are missing	7.09
The Union for the Mediterranean could play a role in this regard	5.85
Cooperation should remain mostly bilateral, focus on the security angle and therefore primarily involve security and intelligence agencies	3.73

- Commenting more specifically on the action of the EU and its member states, respondents from Southern Mediterranean countries are of the opinion that countering discrimination should be the main priority.

- Responses from European participants in the survey are more spread out among different priorities; they think that EU's main focus should be on contributing to solving conflicts outside the EU that provide fertile ground for violent extremism.

- Overall, other results show that specific and operational initiatives (such as tracking online terrorist-related content or strengthening the fight against terrorist financing) are considered more effective than broad policy frameworks.
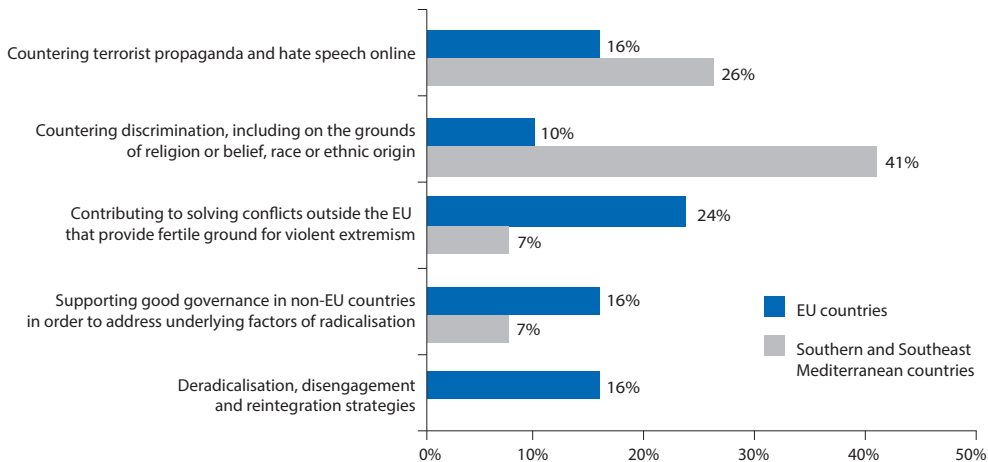
What should the EU and its member states focus on as a matter of priority? (respondents were invited to choose three and rank them: results show first choice)

Priority	EU countries	Southern and Southeast Mediterranean countries
Countering terrorist propaganda and hate speech online	16%	26%
Countering discrimination, including on the grounds of religion or belief, race or ethnic origin	10%	41%
Contributing to solving conflicts outside the EU that provide fertile ground for violent extremism	24%	7%
Supporting good governance in non-EU countries in order to address underlying factors of radicalisation	16%	7%
Deradicalisation, disengagement and reintegration strategies	16%	

In a nutshell

1. Overall, conflict zones are seen as the most fertile environment for violent extremism. EuroMeSCo respondents from the Southern Mediterranean tend to consider in higher proportions than their counterparts from the Northern Mediterranean that the internet and social media are a fertile environment for violent extremism.

2. Apart from Syria and Iraq, France and Egypt are seen as the most likely targets of violent extremism in the upcoming years.

3. Exclusion and discrimination are keywords to understand causes of violent extremism.

4. Violent Islamist extremism is perceived as main threat to the region. However, other phenomena are also perceived as affecting the stability and security of the region: right-wing extremism and Islamophobia (for a majority of respondents from Southern Mediterranean countries) and authoritarian trends (for a majority of European respondents) and respondents establish links between these phenomena.

5. While acknowledging the impact of Daesh on the one hand and of foreign fighters on the other hand, responses show that the threat of violent extremism is definitely not limited to these two phenomena.

6. When it comes to dealing with foreign terrorist fighters, respondents clearly favour preventive actions over reactive and repressive ones.

7. In general, respondents assess that addressing structural elements (and in particular tackling economic and social root causes) would be the best remedy to counter violent extremism. Increasing border control is only mentioned by 1.2% of the respondents in this context.

8. Along this line, it is widely agreed that cooperation and information sharing should be improved. Regarding Euro-Mediterranean Cooperation in particular, respondents acknowledge that there is a deficit of cooperation between security agencies of Mediterranean northern and southern countries and agree to a very large extent that cooperation between civil society organisations working on PVE should be reinforced and think that regional Euro-Mediterranean fora to tackle Violent Extremism are missing.

9. Commenting more specifically on the action of the EU and its member states, respondents from Southern Mediterranean countries are of the opinion that countering discrimination should be the main priority. Responses from European participants in the survey are more spread out among different priorities; they think that EU's main focus should be on contributing to solving conflicts outside the EU that provide fertile ground for violent extremism.

10. Overall, other results show that specific and operational initiatives (such as tracking online terrorist-related content or strengthening the fight against terrorist financing) are considered more effective than broad policy frameworks.