FOREWORD

Recent years have seen growing concern over the hardening of attitudes among children and young people, as well as their violent radicalisation in digital environments. Extremist movements have long been active online, seeking to normalise hate and violence and to recruit new members. Hate speech and violent material have already become commonplace on many online forums – and, unfortunately, also part of the digital reality for many children and young people.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989/1991) mandates the protection of children and young people from all violence and oppression, including in digital environments (General Comment No. 25/2021 by the Committee on the Rights of the Child). As adults, it is our responsibility to build a digital world that is safe for children and young people.

The growing web of hatred does not only threaten children's future – it undermines the very foundations of democracy. The normalisation of violence and emotion-driven polarisation erode not only individual well-being and the sense of security, but also the core pillars of social stability and trust. A negative 'us versus them' mentality is a central building block of extremist ideologies, and as such, the increasing polarisation and normalisation of hate speech in everyday life serve the objectives of violent extremist movements.

We need more effective measures to address hostile and violence-normalising content, both within digital environments and beyond. Professionals working with children and young people are already doing invaluable work to support their growth into empathetic and responsible members of society. However, these professionals require the support of strong societal structures and effective legislation.

This publication provides a concise overview of the multifaceted web of hatred exploited by extremist actors to influence the attitudes of children and young people, as well as what we, as adults, can do to protect them and strengthen democracy.

Kaisa Leikola
General secretary
Save the Children Finland

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

The radicalisation of children and young people, and their exposure to extremist propaganda spreading online, has become a significant concern both in Finland and internationally. Digital environments are becoming increasingly intertwined with various aspects of daily life, as reflected in the increased online activity of children and young people and the rapid development of applications and technologies. Up to 95% of Finnish children have their own smartphone by the age of nine[1]. Consequently, children are being exposed to extremist influence online at an increasingly early age.

Several indicators of child and youth well-being point to a worrying trend: well-being is declining, which unfortunately creates fertile ground for violent radicalisation. Young people's faith in the future is at an all-time low, while experiences of loneliness, mental health challenges and bullying have been on the rise. On a positive note, however, the vast majority of children and young people feel they can talk to their parents about their own matters.[2]

Well-being is becoming increasingly polarised. The results of the 2025 'Children's Voice' survey by Save the Children present a picture of a society where children's daily lives are increasingly divided into different realities based on their family's income level. This polarisation can affect, for example, the position of minorities and the well-being gaps between different genders.

This division has also occurred on an emotional level. Negative polarisation between different groups has increased, which also appears to contribute to the normalisation of extremist discourse and ideas in digital environments. The number of suspected hate crimes in Finland is at an all-time high,[3] with online environments serving as one of the primary arenas for these acts.

Social instability also tends to increase the appeal of extremist ideologies. A deteriorating economic situation, increasing polarisation of values and the accumulation of various crises can all contribute to this trend. In their propaganda, extremist actors seek to channel perceived concern, threats, and injustice as fuel for their activities. Furthermore, they are becoming increasingly adept at exploiting the opportunities offered by the internet, thereby reaching young people in particular through their recruitment. Children and young people are particularly vulnerable, as their stage of development makes them more susceptible to influence and, consequently, attractive targets for recruitment.

The development of digital environments has been significantly faster than legislative reform, although in recent years, the EU in particular has taken determined measures to rectify the situation. Nevertheless, it is clear that legislation alone is not enough to prevent these risks. Children and young people require a wide range of support, skills and encouragement to effectively resist the often cunning influence of extremist movements in digital environments. Youth work professionals and others working with children have a vital role to play in this.

This publication addresses the current state of extremist online recruitment targeting children and young people. The publication describes the complex web of hate to which children are often exposed completely unintentionally. For professionals, the publication offers guidance on addressing this phenomenon, and for decision-makers, it presents recommendations for measures to prevent the online recruitment of young people.

---

1 DNA School Survey (2025)
2 Youth Barometer (2024); School Health Promotion Study (2025)
3 Police University College (2025)

Terms

Violent radicalisation

Violent radicalisation refers to a process through which an individual begins to view violence as an acceptable means of achieving ideologically motivated goals. During this process, an individual's values, attitudes and worldview become increasingly polarised, and they begin to demonstrate a growing commitment to a violent ideology and/or activities. This is an individual process, influenced by various psychological, social and societal factors.[4] Violent radicalisation can lead to violent extremism as it progresses.

Violent extremism

Violent extremism refers to the support, encouragement, threat or actual use of violence based on an ideology. Violence can take many forms, such as psychological or physical violence. Different extremist ideologies are typically united by opposition to diversity, equal human rights, democracy and the rule of law. It is also common for one's own ideology to be viewed as superior and other viewpoints as wrong or false.[5]

Terrorism

Terrorism is the most extreme form of violent extremism. It is violent activity that violates both national and international law, aimed at causing widespread fear and unrest.[6]

Extremist online recruitment

Extremist online recruitment is a systematic process that utilises digital platforms to spread and normalise extremist ideologies, while seeking to lure new individuals into the movement. It can be directed at broad audiences (passive) or targeted at specific individuals (active). Passive online recruitment utilises propaganda - material designed to influence people's general attitudes and values in a way that serves a specific ideology. Active recruitment is directed at selected individuals with whom the recruiter establishes personal contact, employing various methods of manipulation.[7]

Extremist grooming

Extremist grooming refers to the luring of individuals into extremist activity and is a form of active recruitment. It is a gradual, manipulative process in which the recruiter seeks to build a relationship of trust with a child or young person with the intention of exploiting them later. In the grooming process, the recruiter may use personal information obtained from the child to blackmail them into committing extremist acts.[8]

Everyday extremism

Everyday extremism refers to a phenomenon where mindsets and rhetorics rooted in extremist ideologies gradually seep into everyday social interaction and digital environments. This often occurs imperceptibly over a long period of time, strengthening polarization between groups of people, normalising a violent extremist worldview and lowering the threshold for violence.

---

4 Ministry of the Interior (2024); Jakonen et al. (2023); Benjamin & Vallinkoski (2021)
5 Ministry of the Interior (2024); Ministry of the Interior – Counter-terrorism
6 e.g. Schlegel & Kowert (2024) RAN (2021)
7 Prezelj & Zalokar (2024); UNODC (2019)
8 e.g. Schlegel. & Kowert (2024) RAN (2021)

EXTREMIST TRENDS IN FINLAND AND WORLDWIDE

The hybridization and blurring of ideologies challenges prevention

Until the late 2010s, extremist movements were divided into quite clearly identifiable and distinct ideologies, such as far-right, far-left and jihadist extremism, as well as radical alternative movements that utilised violence. However, with the COVID-19 pandemic, these boundaries have become blurred and **ideologies have since become increasingly diverse and difficult to distinguish.**[9]

Whereas ideologies were previously clearly distinct, today extremist propaganda can even exploit the intersections between ideologies that are considered opposites. This crossing of ideologies is particularly evident in digital environments and makes identifying and countering extremism increasingly challenging, as it creates new and unpredictable forms of extremist thinking.[10]

Even in more organised groups, ideological unity is no longer necessarily the most defining factor of their operations; instead, there is a greater readiness to be flexible in order to achieve their goals. Individuals are increasingly constructing their own ideological frameworks from selected elements that are important to them. This phenomenon has been compared to a salad bar, from which everyone selects the ingredients of their choice. On the other hand, especially for young people, the significance of ideology itself may be more tenuous as a whole, meaning that other motivational factors – such as a search for adventure or social factors – drive their actions.[11]

Conspiracy salad   Fasism strips   Sliced misogyny   Grated racism   Anti-gender wedges
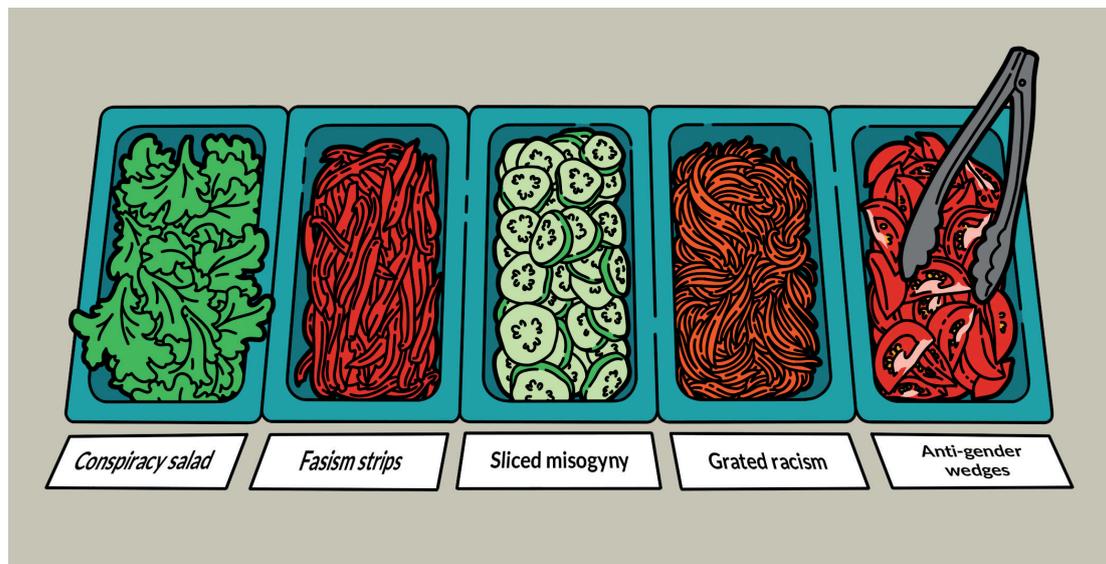
9 Expert interviews, 27 August 2025 and 30 October 2025
10 EU TE-SAT (2025
11 Expert interviews, 27 October 2025 and 30 October 2025

Various violent and extremist phenomena spreading online often emerge rapidly and can therefore be difficult to detect. An example of this is the emergence of new types of violence-oriented networks that manipulate and extort children and young people into committing serious acts of violence against themselves or others. The activities of these networks are not based on any single, clearly defined ideology; instead, elements from various different online subcultures have been identified within them. Members of these online communities are united by the glorification of violence, and the purpose of their activities is to cause violence and chaos, thereby gaining status within the group. Recruiters ask children and young people to document their actions using photos, videos or livestreams. Observations that children and young people are also participating in the coordination of these activities by recruiting their peers are particularly concerning.[12]

Despite the mixing of the ideological landscape, both far-right and jihadist extremism remain central concerns in Finland and Europe. According to the Finnish Security and Intelligence Service, the threat of far-right terrorism has grown in Western countries in recent years, including Finland.[13] Far-right extremist content is visible across all types of open online services, not just on closed platforms. Jihadist extremist content is also present in open online environments, but propaganda is disseminated and shared more primarily through encrypted instant messaging apps and discussion groups.[14]

Affective polarisation defies democracy

Affective polarisation - the emotional confrontation between groups with differing viewpoints - has increased globally throughout the 21st century. This type of negative 'us versus them' thinking is also highly central to extremist ideologies. The deepening of this divide can, for example, strain relations between different population groups and increase violent radicalisation, as well as the prevalence of hate speech and hate crimes. All of this is liable to undermine the democratic system, as its central pillars, such as the rule of law, are called into question. In international comparisons, affective polarisation in Finland remains moderate, although it has increased throughout the 21st century.[15]

According to the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), hate speech has become more prevalent and reached a critical level in Finland[16]. According to a recent report by the Police University College, the number of hate crimes is also at a higher level than ever before. In 2024, the police recorded 13 per cent more suspected hate crimes than in the previous year. In most cases, the motive for the suspected crime was racist. In nearly 70 per cent of cases, the motive was related to the victim's national or ethnic background. The internet was the second most common location for hate crimes, immediately following public outdoor spaces.[17]

---

12 National Bureau of Investigation (2025); Malkki et al. (2025)
13 Finnish Security and Intelligence Service – Far-right ideology
14 Finnish Security and Intelligence Service – Radical Islamist terrorism; Expert interview, 30 October 2025
15 Suojanen et al. (2024)
16 ECRI (2025)
17 Rauta (2025)

The Finnish multi-party system and a politically diverse society are beneficial to the democratic system. The differences between parties and a variety of perspectives encourage citizens to participate in politics and express their views. On the other hand, narrowing of ideological differences or, conversely, polarisation can erode trust in both democracy and society more generally. According to the researchers, political polarisation is not harmful in itself, but the affective polarisation it generates becomes problematic. The risk of adversarial thinking increases as pluralism weakens. This provides a breeding ground for extremist thinking, where ideological enemy images are used to justify violence.[18]

The effects of polarisation have also been recognised in Europe, where violent extremism is being countered by comprehensively safeguarding the democratic system. In 2020, the European Commission adopted the European Democracy Action Plan, which aims to promote free and fair elections, strengthen media freedom and counter disinformation.[19] Defending democracy and human rights is considered essential, especially now that authoritarian movements have gained ground across Europe[20], notably in Hungary and Belarus.

18 Suojanen et al. (2024)
19 European Commission (2020)
20 Expert interview, 30 October 2025

Global events provide momentum for extremist influence

Extremist movements exploit current events and conflicts, such as the wars in Gaza and Ukraine, to spread their messages. Old narratives and conspiracy theories are being reactivated and adapted to suit the current climate and social context, in a way that best supports the message of extremist ideologies[21] Affective polarisation within society can create fertile ground for conspiracy theories and narratives that foment further division.

Narrative refers to an account that portrays events, experiences and ideas in a structured, story-like manner. It may be fictional, factual or a blend of both. In the context of violent extremism, narrative refers to a framework that provides clear explanations of events and their relationships to each other, intended to encourage action that promotes an extremist ideology.[22] They create enemy images of another group or groups, who are deemed responsible for perceived injustices.

Conspiracy theory refers to the belief that an entity perceived as influential is secretly manipulating events and situations with harmful intent. It is a belief that has no scientific support. Conspiracy theories often begin with a suspicion as to who may benefit from what has happened. The human tendency towards biased thinking can lead one to perceive clear cause-and-effect relationships even in random events. The prevalence of conspiracy theories often increases during times of uncertainty or crisis, as they offer simple explanations for complex situations.[23]

---

21 Expert interview, 17 October 2025
22 Askanius, Haselbacher, et al. (2024); THL - Terminology related to radicalisation
23 Lewandowsky & Cook (2020)

The impact of world events on extremist narratives:

THE 2015 REFUGEE CRISIS	THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC	THE GAZA WAR	RUSSIA'S WAR OF AGGRESSION	THE US PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS
There was a significant increase in anti-immigration and xenophobic disinformation on social media. In 2019, for example, just minutes after a stabbing attack at a school in Kuopio, news began circulating on social media falsely claiming that the attacker was a refugee.[24]	Violent, hostile and threatening speech increased, and extremist online discussions leaked increasingly onto public platforms. Conspiracy theories concerning the causes of COVID-19 and its vaccines increased anti-government sentiment and mistrust in several European countries.[25]	The war has increased extremist propaganda across the entire spectrum of ideologies. Extremist jihadist organisations have sought to use it as a pretext to incite violence, particularly against Jews and Israelis. It has also been observed to have revitalised racist, xenophobic and antisemitic propaganda, as well as white supremacist theories in online environments.[26]	The spread of far-right and anti-government narratives, in particular, has become more prevalent in Europe as a result of the war. Since Finland joined NATO, Russia has intensified its influence efforts, seeking to portray Finland as an increasingly hostile enemy[27]. This stoking of instability and polarisation is likely to increase the appeal of extremist narratives.	During the presidential election, conspiracy theories targeting democratic institutions gained traction, notably the 'Deep State' narrative, which alleges the existence of a malevolent shadow government operating within the elected administration. Following Trump's election victory, a clear spike in misogynistic content was also observed across social media platforms.[28]

---

24 Saari et al. (2025

25 Allchorn et al. (2025); Jarašiūnaitė-Fedosejeva (2025)

26 EU TE-SAT (2025)

27 EU TE-SAT (2025); Overview of information influence activities (2025)

28 Frances & Ayad (2024); Holt & Zoschak (2024)

Growing concern over the online radicalisation of young people

The interest of children and young people in violent extremist movements, and their involvement in terrorist activities, has increased in Europe in recent years. In Finland and across the rest of Europe, there is particular concern regarding the radicalisation of young people in online environments. This concern particularly pertains to teenage boys and young men, who are a primary target group for extremist jihadist and far-right online communities.[29]

The radicalisation of girls and young women and their participation in extremist activities can be more difficult to detect, but it does occur. Different types of online propaganda are targeted at boys and girls based on assumed gender interests. In addition, gendered propaganda utilises gender roles that are divided into 'good' and 'bad'. In propaganda, the gender roles of the 'good woman' or 'good man' are steered in a direction that serves the core objectives of the ideology.[30]

> Online extremist jihadist and far-right narratives are heavily gendered and reinforce gender stereotypes. Women's roles are characterised using terms such as 'housewife' and 'mother', whereas roles for men emphasise qualities such as 'leader' and 'protector'. Despite this, and somewhat paradoxically, propaganda aimed at girls and women nevertheless promises them an active role and agency.[31]
>
> In far-right propaganda, motherhood may be described as a superpower, feeding into the narrative of women as 'saviours of the white race'[32]. In jihadist propaganda, experiences of discrimination among young women or social debates - such as proposals to ban the hijab and/or burqa seen in several EU Member States, including Finland - are exploited. In seemingly sisterly discussion groups, extremist activity is presented as a solution to perceived injustices.[33]

Young people participate in extremist activity most often by sharing, translating and producing propaganda material online. Unfortunately, participation in violent activities has also become more common in Europe. In 2024, authorities disrupted several terrorist attack plots involving teenagers.

Unfortunately, the participation of young people in violent activities is also evident in Finland. In recent years, we have witnessed several stabbings carried out by teenagers, for example in Pirkkala and Oulu. These acts reflect broader European trend, in which a large proportion of extremist and terrorist acts have been similarly committed by lone actors. Typically, such incidents are driven by social networks that promote radicalisation, particularly within digital environments.[34]

---

29 Finnish Security and Intelligence Service (2025); EU TE-SAT (2025)
30 Ingram (2024)
31 RAN (2022)
32 Askanius (2021)
33 RAN (2022)
34 Finnish Security and Intelligence Service (2025); EU TE-SAT (2025)

However, it is important to remember that extensive internet use does not automatically lead to violent radicalisation. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that social media platforms and gaming environments have brought extremist ideologies, actors and communities within the reach of young people more effectively and with less risk than ever before. Online recruitment and the production of propaganda are effective methods for extremist actors, as active online engagement has been observed to accelerate the individual radicalisation process.

According to researchers, internet use does not merely increase violent radicalisation; it has become an increasingly central part of the radicalisation process itself. There has also been a general increase in interest in violence among young people, which may have made extremist ideologies and activities increasingly appealing.[35] **It is good to be aware that young people often do not need to actively seek out violent or hateful content**, but they are exposed to such materials on social media and gaming platforms regardless, for instance through recommendation algorithms or content shared by friends. The older a child is, the more likely they are to encounter them.[36]

35 Finnish Security and Intelligence Service (2025); Williams & Tzani (2022)
36 Save the Children (2025)

EXTREMIST ONLINE RECRUITMENT

Passive and active online recruitment

Extremist online recruitment utilises several different methods, which can be broadly divided into two types: passive and active. **Passive recruitment** describes situations in which extremist actors disseminate propaganda and ideological content on social media without specific targeting. Passive recruitment does not, therefore, involve personal contact; instead, individuals find their way to the content through other means – often by chance or through their own interest. **In active recruitment**, by contrast, the recruiter contacts selected individuals or groups, either online or face-to-face. Targets are often chosen deliberately based on observed vulnerabilities or interests.

By disseminating propaganda and other material, recruiters get information about who might be a potential target for active recruitment. On digital platforms, they can monitor young people's interests, likes and comments and carry out active recruitment in a tailored manner.[37] Some of the recruited young people have also moved from online discussions to real-life meetings, where their relationships with the group typically deepen even further. In Europe and Finland, concern has been raised by, for example, far-right combat clubs, which are united by hypermasculinity, nationalist ideology and an effort to prepare for conflict with a perceived enemy, such as a specific ethnic group.[38] Hypermasculinity refers to an exaggerated adherence to traditional male gender roles, characterised by aggression, dominance, the suppression of emotions and contempt for anything perceived as feminine.

Passive online recruitment propaganda is produced systematically, but a large part of its visibility on digital platforms is due to ordinary users who share and react to the material. Not all material is illegal, and some of it can be very subtly veiled 'borderline content', which nevertheless contains discriminatory rhetoric that segregates groups of people or is dehumanising.

Researchers use the term everyday extremism to describe this phenomenon. The term describes how extremist narratives gradually creep into people's everyday lives, particularly on digital platforms. Messages inciting hatred are often veiled in clever wordplay, humour, emotive elements or visual techniques. Extremist content can therefore be difficult to identify, and a young person spending time on social media may not necessarily understand the material's links to extremist movements. Softer messages, packaged into humour, visually engaging short-form videos or pithy catchphrases, nevertheless serve extremist ideologies and normalise hate speech.[39] Extremist actors use, for example, aesthetics familiar from video games popular with children and young people, such as Roblox, as well as popular internet memes to spread their message.

---

37 Prezelj & Zalokar (2024); UNODC (2019); Expert interview, 27 August 2023
38 Yle (24 Feb 2025)
39 Askanius et al. (2024)
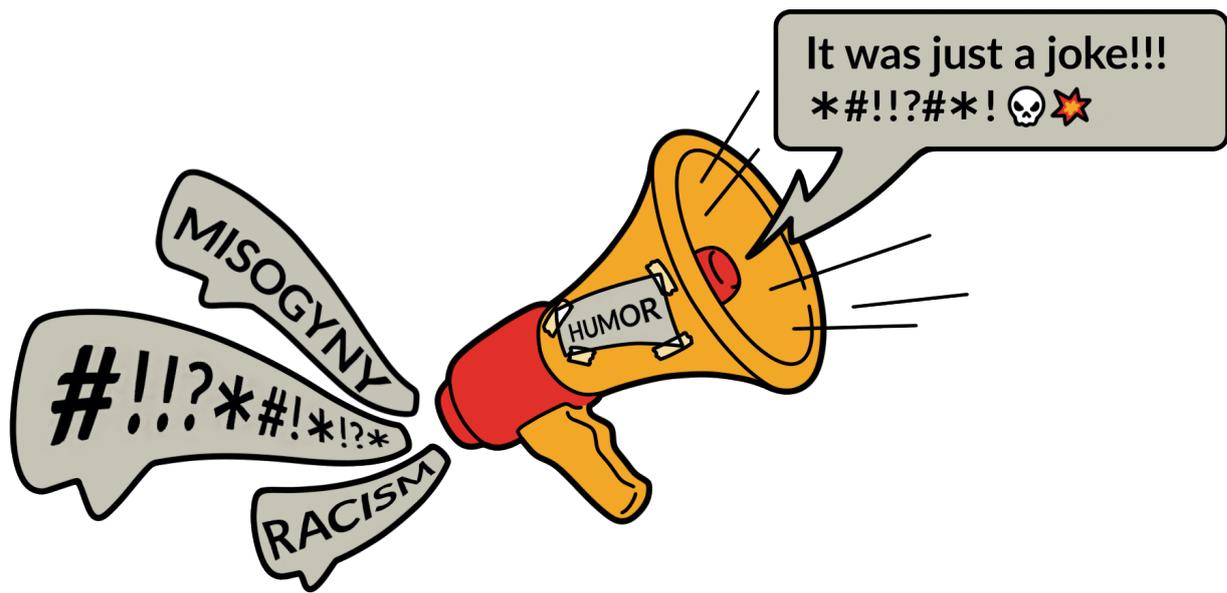
Online recruitment methods

The language and choice of words used have a decisive impact on how extreme ideas and topics are presented and, conversely, how receptively they are perceived. Online discussions employ, for example, coded language, memes, double meanings and various direct and indirect references to ideology, religion, conspiracy theories or extremist works[40].

In online discussion groups, there is often a shared understanding regarding the meaning of specific emojis, numerical combinations, symbols or phrases, but it can be more difficult for an outsider to recognise the hostile message hidden behind them. The ultimate goal of communication and recruitment is to create a positive image for the extremist group and make it appear in a favourable light, while simultaneously creating a negative portrayal of the ideological enemy. This framing serves as a basis for escalating polarisation and inciting conflict against the enemy.[41]

Extremist groups often seek to present their activities as attractive, counter-cultural movements that stand in opposition to the mainstream. This appeals especially to young people's needs to rebel against the system, adults or authorities.[42] **Popular culture and humour** are also key elements of influence. In far-right communication, for example, humour is used to specifically appeal to young, frustrated white boys and men[43]. In extremist jihadist online material, the ideology may also be marketed through various means as something 'cool' and trendy, for instance by skilfully utilising **aesthetics**, satire and linguistic techniques adopted from far-right groups, such as humorous memes[44].

---

40 Sengul (2025)
41 Sengul (2025); Gentile & Gomez O'Keefe (2025); Williams & Tzani (2022)
42 Juntunen (2025)
43 Sinokki (2025)
44 Huey (2015); Vincente et al. (2024)

Such content types are inherently suited to appealing to young people, but humour also serves other purposes. It has been observed to blur the message inciting hatred and increase identification with the content creator – even when the reader does inherently accept the claims presented under the guise of humour. Furthermore, **repetition reinforces the message's impact**: when a person is exposed to the same message time and again, it begins to feel acceptable over time.[45]

Both young people themselves and professionals in the education sector have reported observing this phenomenon in their daily lives. For example, discriminatory, racist or sexist comments may be brushed off by stating: "It was just a joke".[46] Recent Finnish surveys have raised concerns particularly regarding the hardening attitudes of boys in online environments. It appears that some boys are growing up in an online culture where hate speech, violence and the deliberate crossing of boundaries have become normalised.[47]

The culture of hatred prevailing in gaming environments has been discussed for several years, and the topic remains highly relevant today. According to research, as many as 85 per cent of those using online games or gaming-related platforms have witnessed or experienced hate speech, such as misogyny, racism, xenophobia, antisemitism, homophobia and transphobia[48]. Young people also recognise the hostile atmosphere prevailing on gaming-related platforms.[49]

In addition to the hate speech spread by users, the **gamification** of extremist ideologies is also a method used in recruitment. Extremist and terrorist organisations have modified well-known games (such as GTA and Call of Duty) in an attempt to simulate battles that align with their own extremist ideologies. Such games can reach a large audience, as open gaming platforms like Steam have facilitated the spread of modified games by making them available to the general public. Games designed from the ground up to serve an extremist ideology can also be found on digital gaming platforms. In these games, the content is often so explicit that the player is required to carry out extremist or terrorist acts.[50]

Extremist actors do not only strive for entertainment value in their communication, but also seek to **evoke emotions** that increase receptivity to extremist ideologies. In their communication, they exploit experiences of grievance, bitterness and injustice, as well as feelings of uncertainty and fear, through which hatred and violence are justified.

---

45 Sinokki (2025)
46 Hearings of young people, 8 December 2025, 9 December 2025 and 17 December 2025
47 Save the Children (2025); The Mannerheim League for Child Welfare (2025)
48 Schlegel & Amarasingam (2022)
49 Hearings of young people, 8 December 2025, 9 December 2025 and 17 December 2025
50 Cauberghs (2024)

The dissemination of **conspiracy theories** and intentionally misleading information, or **disinformation**, is also beneficial for extremist actors, as people experiencing uncertainty and threat are often more receptive to views that condone violence. Such methods are used to create an image of one's own group as an innocent victim that must fight and take immediate action because 'there are no other options'. Through experiences of threat, an ideological enemy is painted as a scapegoat upon whom hatred and violence can be directed. Furthermore, sharing negative emotions and experiences of anxiety within the group can create a sense of identification and community.[51] However, communication does not only appeal to negative emotions; it also emphasises, for example, the perceived glory and heroism associated with the activity.

When it comes to children and young people, it is important to understand that not all extremist recruitment relies on methods where the youth is merely motivated to the activity voluntarily. Extremist grooming may involve serious **manipulation and blackmail** to steer children towards extremely harmful activities, even against their will. International communities and also the Finnish police authorities have recently been concerned about, for example, new types of violence-oriented networks that target their activities exclusively at children and young people. The youngest victims have been eight years old.[52]

Members of these groups look for targets in peer support groups related to, for example, eating disorders and self-harm, as well as on popular mainstream apps favoured by young people, such as TikTok, Discord, Minecraft, Roblox, Twitch, Steam and Telegram. In their communication, private messages are preferred, as they make it easier to build a relationship of trust and to collect private information from children. Later, this personal information is exploited to blackmail the child into committing even extremely violent acts.[53]

---

51 Williams & Tzani (2024); Allchorn et al. (2025); Jakonen et al. (2023)

52 National Bureau of Investigation (2025)

53 National Bureau of Investigation (2025)

Summary: Key elements in extremist recruitment and propaganda

Insider language, such as code words and double meanings

Utilising elements from popular culture and humour

The gamification of extremist content, such as modifications of familiar games and games that simulate extremist and terrorist acts

Creating a sense of community through, for example, shared emotional experiences and common interests

Reinforcing a victim status by inciting enemy imagery, threats and fear

The dissemination of misleading information that supports an extremist worldview

Serious manipulation and blackmail, and the grooming of vulnerable individuals in, for example, peer support groups related to self-harm or eating disorders

Online environment enhances visibility of extremist content

Young people use various apps and gaming platforms in their daily lives, but there are gendered differences in usage.

Most used apps among girls and boys aged 13–18
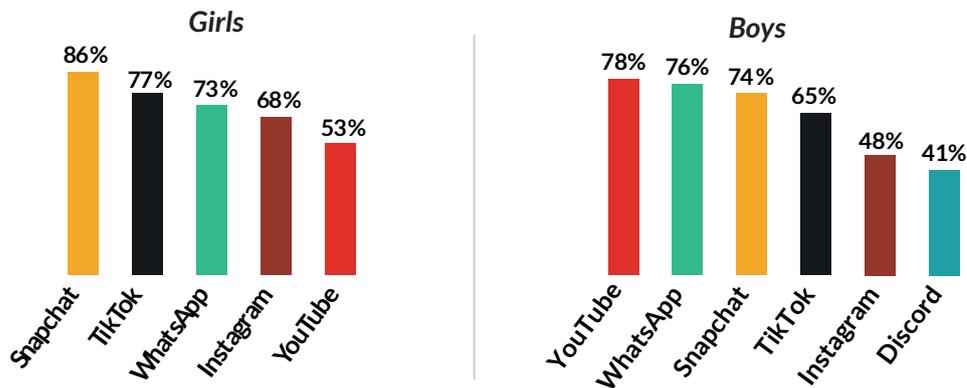
Source: DNA School Survey (2025)

According to young people, hostile and violent content spreads particularly on TikTok, Telegram and game-related platforms such as Discord. Hate speech targeting minorities and racist, derogatory commentary are especially common. On social media, young people also encounter content depicting real-life violence, such as videos of fights and video material involving suicides.[54] One-third of young people report that, above all others, TikTok is where the most hostile and violent content of all kinds is found.[55]

Social media is also a significant **news source** for young people. According to a study by the News Media Finland, TikTok has been the most popular news channel for young people since 2023, and its role has strengthened even further. More than half of 13–18-year-olds follow the news via Tik-Tok.[56] This can serve extremist actors if children and young people's media literacy and source criticism are not at a high level. Fake news, incorrect information presented as expert advice by popular influencers and other disinformation and propaganda spread easily on these platforms.

Social media **algorithms** amplify the visibility of content that attracts attention and reactions. Violent and hostile content that provokes strong emotional reactions is often of this nature. Furthermore, the content filtered for the user is personalised and often highly restricted, even though a greater diversity and variety of information is available to children and young people than ever before.

The social media content encountered by friends and family members is likely to be entirely different from that of a young person living in their own 'social media bubble'. Consequently, a young person may mistakenly believe that the specific content they consume and the thoughts they share are more prevalent than they truly are. This phenomenon is known as the **false consensus effect.** When it is assumed within a group that everyone is in agreement, radical ideas begin to appear acceptable and even normal. This also subtly reinforces the adoption of a shared enemy image within the group and lowers the threshold for violent thought and action.

---

54 Hearings of young people, 8 December 2025, 9 December 2025 and 17 December 2025
55 Mannerheim League for Child Welfare (2025)
56 News Media Finland (2025)

Social media platforms collect data on which content a user pauses to watch for longer, what they like and what they search for, click or share. Furthermore, children and young people inadvertently share information with these companies regarding, for example, their friendships, hobbies and other aspects of their daily lives. Algorithms aggressively direct users towards content that keeps them on the platform for as long as possible.[57] This becomes particularly problematic when the algorithm repeatedly offers a young person harmful material, such as violent or hate-inciting content.

Extremist groups also utilise the latest technology in recruitment and the production of online propaganda. According to Europol's latest report, **artificial intelligence** has given unprecedented proportions particularly to the spread of far-right propaganda and hate speech. Individuals are able to produce a vast amount of propaganda quickly, allowing a larger volume of it to pass through moderation. AI and deepfake technology enable the production of convincing and misleading content without more profound technological expertise.[58] The quality of images and videos manipulated with AI is high, making them increasingly difficult to identify.

The quantity of material also matters. Repeated exposure to a certain type of content influences thinking. It can lead to content previously considered inappropriate beginning to feel acceptable and normal.[59] For example, the opinions and recommendations of public figures can have a very powerful impact on behaviour and attitudes. For a young person, a social media influencer or other public figure may be an important role model.

Similarly, normalising effects can stem from terms, narratives or symbols originating in extremist ideologies that are presented in politics. For example, AfD, one of Germany's largest political parties, has incorporated references to conspiracy theories, such as the 'Great Replacement' and 'Eurabia', into its communications[60]. The demonisation of political opponents, the questioning of human dignity and the challenging of democracy are also visible in digital environments.[61] If extremist narratives become part of everyday life and are encountered often, the intensity of the negative emotional experience associated with them can decrease. Researchers also raise concerns about a trend where inappropriate comments and hate-inciting speech in public have increased, but are no longer publicly condemned to the same extent[62].

Recently, there has been much discussion, for example, regarding social media influencers favoured by young men whose message is misogynistic. The short, inspiring messages and simple life advice of charismatic performers may appeal to young people as they search for their own identity.

Like many other phenomena, misogynistic content online exists on a continuum, at the extreme end of which are extremist incel communities. Incel stands for involuntary celibacy. Within online incel communities, users share the experience of an inability to form sexual relationships with women. Women are seen as the culprits of this situation, under the belief that they are obligated to provide relationships and sex to these men. At their most extreme, these communities glorify violence and acts of terror carried out by those identifying as incels.

---

57 Uski (2024)
58 EU TE-SAT (2025)
59 Uski (2024)
60 Ebner (2023)
61 Ebner (2023)
62 Expert interview, 27 August 2025

Young people are a central target for online recruitment

Due to their age and developmental stage, young people are particularly vulnerable to extremist influence in online environments. They also spend a vast amount of time online, where they encounter various types of misleading and hostile content. Simultaneously, they are practising key life skills, constructing their own identity and seeking to distance themselves from their parents. As emotional processing, the understanding of cause-and-effect relationships and self-regulation skills are still developing, disappointments or other negative experiences can feel particularly intense to a young person. Significant adult support is required for emotional processing, as without this support, unprocessed experiences can accumulate and be channelled in harmful ways.[63]

In the midst of the turmoil of change, the **black-and-white nature, simplified narratives and quick rewards** of extremist ideology may seem appealing to a young person, especially if they appear to offer something they feel they have been missing out on. Rewards can stem, for instance, from abundant reactions to shared content or the sense of community provided by an extremist movement's 'secret inner circle'. On the other hand, due to their developmental stage, a young person may not fully grasp what the broader consequences of the content they share online might be. A young person's motives for following, sharing or producing extremist content can even be trivial, and do not necessarily involve the same kind of ideological commitment as with adults. However, this does not mean that adult intervention is not just as essential in such situations.[64]

Social media opens a gateway for young people to a world of endless possibilities, for better and for worse. For some young people, this environment of boundless comparison can intensify experiences of the limitations of their own opportunities or of being underprivileged. This may increase the sense of **relative deprivation - the feeling that oneself and one's peers have less than others, even if there is no actual deprivation. Relative deprivation, therefore, does not describe reality, but rather a perce**ived unfair deficiency. Research has found that the experience of such relative deprivation can be a factor predisposing individuals to radicalisation.[65] The experience of relative deprivation can also become a shared group experience, where an extremist group considers that they lack lawful means to influence their own unfair position. Since this is a matter of perception, even those in highly privileged positions can experience this as a central motivation for joining extremist activities.[66] However, low income or minority status may predispose a young person more strongly to such influences.

General susceptibility to radicalisation is influenced by many social, psychological and societal factors. For example, mental health challenges can have various connections to joining such activities: they may precede involvement, but they can also manifest as consequences of the radicalisation process or participation in the activities. Among some individuals, particularly those who have acted alone, obsessive behaviour, anxiety and isolation have been identified in their backgrounds. These may have involved treatment contacts within mental health services as well as previous violent behaviour.

Recently, attention has also been drawn to the autism spectrum, as its prevalence among clients of services preventing extremism has been significantly higher according to some studies. In young people, the autism spectrum can increase isolation and predispose them to bullying, which are risk factors for mental health disorders in themselves. Although direct links cannot be drawn between mental health problems and extremism, it is important to consider this in preventative work as one of the factors influencing susceptibility to radicalisation.[67]

---

63 Jakonen ym. (2023)
64 Jakonen ym. (2023)
65 e.g. Osborne et al. (2025)
66 Kunst & Obaidi (2020)
67 Juntunen (2025)

Social relationships are a fundamental human need. For a young person distancing themselves from their parents, the peer community is especially vital. The experience of loneliness is crushing and its extensive effects can also extend to violent radicalisation. An extremist community can offer something to replace this missing need. Nevertheless, the experience of loneliness is still just one possible component in complex and individual radicalisation processes. Only a few of those experiencing loneliness become radicalised.[68] However, the experience of loneliness among young people is a distressingly common challenge; by preventing it, we can support youth wellbeing and digital resilience - the ability to resist negative influences online.

Already in 2021, our survey found that **children and young people often interact with strangers online**. At that time, as many as 66 per cent reported doing so daily.[69] This figure is unlikely to have decreased by today, as the significance of online environments for young people has grown even further. If the adults around them have no idea what kind of people the young person is spending time with online, it can be extremely difficult to recognise violent radicalisation or the extremist manipulation being targeted at them.

Summary: Why do extremist groups target recruitment particularly at young people online?

- **Young people spend a lot of time online and many of them also interact with strangers online**

- **Young people are only just practising essential life skills, such as emotional processing and self-regulation**

- **Key developmental tasks of youth include creating an independent identity and distancing from one's parents, making young people particularly susceptible to adopting external influences online**

- **Adolescent thinking is characterised by black-and-white logic, as the perception of cause-and-effect relationships is still developing, which is why the simplified messaging of extremist movements can seem appealing and offer answers to life's complex questions that suit a young person's way of thinking**

- **In youth, the need for a sense of community is emphasised, and an extremist group can provide a lonely young person with a community and an experience of belonging**

- **Social comparison to others is heightened in online environments, which can create an experience of relative deprivation - the feeling that others have more than oneself**

- **Mental health challenges can specifically predispose individuals to extremist recruitment, as extremist groups seek to reach particularly those young people who are in vulnerable positions**

---

68 Langenkamp (2025)
69 Save the Children (2021)

HOW CAN WE PROTECT YOUNG PEOPLE FROM EXTREMIST ONLINE RECRUITMENT?

It is difficult to anticipate and monitor changes in the materials circulating on online platforms and in the functionalities of these platforms, as the pace of change is so rapid. **However, the risk and motivation factors predisposing individuals to radicalisation are quite permanent in nature.** Therefore, supporting a young person's growth, wellbeing, friendships and sense of community, as well as preventing the root causes that jeopardise a young person's development, constitute core preventative work. Rather than focusing solely on managing activities occurring on platforms, it is vital to support the balanced growth of young people, strengthen their digital resilience and thereby enhance their ability to reject extremist influence both in digital environments and beyond them. [70]

At the core of preventing violent radicalisation is the **securing of basic needs**. Universal human needs – such as a sense of significance, belonging and a feeling of security – have a decisive impact on a young person's wellbeing and choices. It is therefore essential to ensure that every young person feels seen and heard, feels able to influence matters that affect them and feels significant to others. Even a single meaningful relationship is important for a young person, and even one adult who listens, sees and cares can be significant.

Emotional and interpersonal skills are also central to combating violent thinking patterns. The learning of these skills is part of the basic education curriculum, but they must be practised constantly in everyday situations, not just during lessons. Empathy skills, in particular, play a key role: they help one step into another person's shoes and view the world from their perspective, which supports the development of positive interactions. If empathy skills are weak, the dehumanisation and objectification of others, as well as the undermining of their human dignity, become significantly easier - and it is precisely this that can lower the threshold for adopting violent attitudes and thinking patterns.

Extremist groups seek to exploit feelings such as fear, uncertainty and bitterness.[71] Young people also recognise the emotional impact of hostile content online. Such material causes sadness and anxiety, among other things; it normalises violence and makes it more difficult to view matters objectively. Furthermore, the content has a negative impact on mental health and mood.[72] It is important for professionals working with children and young people to support them in processing various emotions and to model emotional skills through their own example in everyday situations.

Alongside emotional skills, **democracy education** plays an important role in the prevention of violent radicalisation among young people. In addition to schools, families, youth work, libraries, and organisations - essentially all parties that reach young people - can participate in this.[73] Children and young people must be given opportunities to participate in societal decision-making and to express their views even before reaching voting age. Supporting participation and the opportunity to exert influence in all environments is an essential part of democracy education.

---

70 Expert interview, 31 October 2025
71 Bah & Lindberg 2025
72 Hearings of young people, 8 December 2025, 9 December 2025 and 17 December 2025
73 Hantula et al.. (2024)

Violent extremism is anti-democratic,[74] and young people are the maintainers of future democracy. At the same time, young people hesitate to participate in the society due to factors such as their perceived lack of expertise. Early experiences of participation, as well as strengthening self-esteem and a sense of self-efficacy, are decisive in ensuring that young people grow into active and responsible members of society.

Young people have grown up alongside digital environments, which offer opportunities to learn new things, build communities, communicate, find entertainment and construct their own identities. At the same time, however, the risks of digital environments must be taken into account, and it must be ensured that young people possess the necessary **skills for safe internet use**. As a professional, one does not need to know everything, but taking an interest and having an open attitude towards the digital world of young people is a good starting point. It is vital that a young person is surrounded by safe adults with whom they can discuss even difficult topics and receive support if they have concerns related to online environments.

It is important for professionals to be familiar with reporting practices regarding online content so that any detected extremist activity can be addressed quickly. It is important to make sure that young people, their parents and adults in general know how to report harmful content and understand how it contributes to online safety. In addition to social media, it is important to pay attention to gaming environments, where a failure to react to hate speech and extremist rhetoric is particularly common.[75]

Young people express a desire for adults to be genuinely interested in what they encounter in digital environments - both the good and the bad. Their message is clear: banning social media, blaming the young person for being exposed to harmful material or advising them simply to ignore it are, in their opinion, the worst possible ways to resolve challenges related to digital environments. Young people feel that such reactions dismiss their experiences and leave them to face harmful content alone. Blaming and dismissing can also increase shame and isolation.[76]

Instead, young people need adults who listen, ask questions and show interest.[77] Open dialogue and an interest in a young person's experiences create a sense of security and help them process the difficult emotions that encountering hate-fuelled and violent material can evoke. When an adult shows that a young person's online encounters are not trivial, it also helps the young person understand that digital environments are interconnected with other areas of life - that online experiences can affect emotions, relationships and behaviour.

> Hate speech not only harms the individual, but it also erodes trust in society, increases polarisation and weakens the fundamental pillars of democracy. Discussing the digital world is also important because it helps young people learn to recognise the broader impacts of harmful content and understand that hate-fuelled speech and exposure to violence in online environments shape people's attitudes and actions offline as well.

---

74 Expert interview, 30 October 2025
75 Kowert et al. (2024); Cook et al. (2023)
76 Hearings of young people, 8 December 2025, 9 December 2025 and 17 December 2025
77 Hearings of young people, 8 December 2025, 9 December 2025 and 17 December 2025

Strengthening digital resilience supports children and young people's ability to protect themselves from extremist online recruitment.

Strengthen young people's participation, emotional and interpersonal skills, as well as their democratic skills.

» Provide young people with experiences of participation and opportunities to influence matters that affect them, including in everyday situations.

» Support positive integration into society and encourage young people to engage with diverse groups of people, resolve conflicts and respect different views.

» Strengthen young people's self-awareness and critical thinking skills.

» Emphasise the positive impacts of equality, human rights and a democratic society on both individuals and communities.

» Support young people during challenges or disappointments and encourage them to process their emotions in a constructive manner.

Show interest in the digital life of young people and strengthen their digital resilience.

» Remember that digital environments are important tools for communication and avenues for identity building for young people. The internet is also a place to learn new things, relax and find entertainment. It is the responsibility of adults to make the internet a safe platform and to provide the necessary skills for navigating the online world.

» Encourage young people to talk about their lives in digital environments in the same way they would about their offline lives.

» Don't be afraid to ask - you don›t need to know everything yourself. Feel free to ask young people about social media phenomena and the platforms where they spend their time.

» Do not judge or belittle the thoughts and experiences young people share regarding digital environments.

   • It is important that young people have safe adults they can talk to about the challenges or concerns they encounter in digital environments.

» Support the practice of media literacy and digital safety skills through joint reflection and encouragement.

   • Discuss current online phenomena with young people and talk about how to act when encountering extremist content or recruitment.

» Familiarise yourself with reporting practices for online content:

   • If you encounter material online that is unsuitable for children and young people, report it to the platform.

   • If the content is clearly illegal, report it directly to the police.

   • Share information among other professionals and, where possible, with guardians as well.

LEGISLATION RELATED TO COUNTERING ONLINE RECRUITMENT

The rapid development in digital environments since the late 2010s has inevitably led to regulation lagging behind in countering harmful phenomena. Furthermore, social media and other online environments have been observed to be an increasingly integral part of both ordinary everyday life and societal debate. Powerful algorithms quickly learn that violent content, or other material that causes hate, terror and anxiety, keeps the user engaged.[78]

New regulation concerning the online environment has been drafted this decade, particularly at the European Union (EU) level, and efforts have also been made to reform and develop these acts according to identified needs. Furthermore, Finland is bound by several international agreements that require the protection of children from online recruitment. These agreements address, among other things, human rights, humanitarian law, criminal law and issues related to terrorism, child labour and human trafficking.[79] Many international agreements rely centrally on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child[80] and complement its principles.

EU legislation

In 2022, the Regulation to address the dissemination of terrorist content online (2021/784, Terrorist Content Online, TCO) entered into force in the EU. The initiative for the regulation arose from an identified need to be able to counter the sophisticated terrorist propaganda of Isis online. Other extremist groups have since followed suit and refocused their efforts on online recruitment in new ways. Consequently, this regulation is even more relevant today.[81]

The regulation aims to counter terrorist content online, which includes texts, images and audio or video clips that incite terrorist acts, provide instructions for terrorist activities, encourage joining terrorist groups or threaten a terrorist act. Platforms are obliged to remove such content within one hour of a removal order from the authorities.

Another regulation that is essentially related to the security of digital environments is the EU's so-called **Digital Services Act** (2022/2065, Digital Services Act, DSA), which entered into force in February 2024. It seeks to counter illegal content spreading online other than terrorist content, such as fake news, propaganda, hate speech, violence, harassment and child sexual abuse.

The Digital Services Act imposes an obligation on all types of digital service companies to implement "appropriate and proportionate measures to ensure a high level of privacy, safety, and security of minors".[82] Its strictest obligations apply to very large online platforms, or so-called tech giants, which have more than 45 million active monthly users within the EU. These companies must prepare a risk assessment and a risk mitigation plan for their operations, the appropriateness and implementation of which can be evaluated by the authorities.

---

78 Uski (2024)
79 UNODC (2019); Supplementary Protocol to the UN Palermo Convention (SopS 70-71/2006); ILO Convention 182 (SopS 16/2000); Eighth Review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (77/298);
80 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (SopS 59/1991); Optional Protocol to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict SopS 30-31/2002); General Comment No. 25 on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC/C/GC/25, 2021)
81 Expert interview, 30 October 2025
82 Digital Services Act (2022/2065), Art. 28

The obligations of both regulations cover preventative measures as well as responses to identified harmful content or illegal activities. However, neither of the acts imposes a general obligation on service providers to monitor the information transmitted or stored on their platforms, nor to actively seek out illegal activity.

The activities of companies providing digital services are supervised through a shared framework by both the national authorities of EU Member States and the Commission. The Commission is responsible for supervising the tech giants, while designated national authorities supervise smaller companies. In Finland, the key competent authorities are Traficom (Digital Services Act) and the National Bureau of Investigation (Terrorist Content Online). The content of the regulations can be examined in more detail in the comparative table attached to this report (Appendix 1).

The provisions of the **EU Artificial Intelligence Act (2024/1689, AI Act)** will enter into force in stages between 2024 and 2026. It contains various obligations and regulations depending on the level of risk associated with the use of the AI systems. The AI Act prohibits, for example, AI-based systems that can be used for human manipulation, *subliminal influence* - meaning communication that affects a person without their awareness - or other deceptive purposes. Furthermore, the Act includes a broad principle of transparency: users must be informed if they are interacting with AI or consuming content generated by AI.

Actions taken in the EU to improve legislation

In the EU, the development of regulation concerning children's online safety is based on the B**etter Internet for Kids strategy** (BIK+). In particular, there have been active efforts to develop the Digital Services Act since its entry into force. In 2025, the Commission published guidelines for online platforms on measures to ensure the privacy and safety of minors online.[83] These guidelines aim to strengthen the implementation and supervision of the Digital Services Act's specific protection obligation for children (Article 28). In practice, the guidelines are not directly binding, but they are significant when assessing whether online platforms have fulfilled their obligations regarding appropriate and proportionate measures to ensure the safety and privacy of minors.

Key Commission guidelines for online platforms to protect minors

- A minor's user account must be private by default.
- When a platform identifies a user as a minor, its algorithms and recommendations must function accordingly (addictive content must not be offered to minors and recommendation systems must be easily understandable, transparent and controllable).
- Blocking and muting other users must be possible.
- The downloading and screenshotting of posts made by minors should be prevented.
- Moderation tools and reporting channels must be clear, so that reporting is easy even for children and young people.

---

83 EU Commission guidelines on the Digital Services Act (C/2025/5519)

A significant turning point for safe internet use for children was also when researchers were granted access to data from very large companies, starting in autumn 2025, to study social and societal impacts.[84] This is an important step forward in researching the risks of online services, such as the spread of violent or other illegal content, and in protecting children from harmful content. Furthermore, the Commission has announced that it is working actively towards the introduction of harmonised age verification methods for digital services across the EU.[85]

National regulation

In Finland, national regulation concerning extremist activity in online environments is based on the **Criminal Code**. Extremist content shared online may, for example, meet the criteria for incitement to hater and violence, illegal threats or defamation. [86] A hate motive can also serve as grounds for an increased sentence.

Furthermore, the Criminal Code contains provisions on **terrorist offences**.[87] At the time of writing this report in November 2025, the Government has submitted a proposal to Parliament regarding amendments to the legislation on terrorist offences[88]. The primary purpose of the reform is to clarify the regulations, but also to ensure their comprehensiveness and to increase the severity of penalties. In future, criminal liability would also apply to actions that promote the commission of a future terrorist offence by another person or persons. Recruitment for terrorist activities, or the attempt thereof, is already criminalised[89].

---

84 EU Commission Delegated Regulation on data access (EU 2025/2050)
85 European Commission, 10 Oct 2025 and 29 Oct 2025
86 The Criminal Code of Finland (39/1889)
87 Chapter 34a of the Criminal Code of Finland (39/1889)
88 HE 163/2025 vp
89 Under Section 4c of the Criminal Code, activities in which a person recruits or attempts to recruit individuals to a terrorist group or to commit a terrorist offence are defined as punishable.

Regulatory gaps and challenges in implementation

The functionalities and features of applications are constantly evolving, which is why legislation must be flexible to ensure the safety of children and young people, even in changing digital environments. On the other hand, **extremist online recruitment is also changing and evolving**. Propaganda is hidden more skilfully, for example through various euphemisms, which is why the tools used in moderation do not always recognise them[90].

The most stringent obligations of the Digital Services Act apply only to very large companies. However, young people use applications that do not fall within this scope - for example Telegram, which has faced significant criticism regarding the spread of violent, extremist and other illegal content. The companies themselves are responsible for calculating and reporting the number of users within the EU, based on which any decision to designate a platform as a very large online platform or search engine is made. According to their own data, Telegram's services do not exceed the threshold of 45 million active users in the EU[91].

The purpose of the Digital Services Act is not to define illegal or harmful content, **nor do companies have a general obligation under EU law to monitor information moving on their platforms** or to seek out illegal activities. Digital platforms have an obligation to "take measures to protect users and increase transparency"[92], but no unambiguous boundary conditions have been defined for these practical measures. This has led to online service companies still having a fairly high degree of discretionary freedom in how they implement their moderation.[93]

> The reduction of harmful content as intended by the Digital Services Act is largely based on the users' right to report, the companies' obligation to process reports and removal orders and other supervisory activities by authorities. Amidst the vast amount of harmful content circulating online, there are justified reasons for concern regarding the sufficiency of these measures.
>
> The Regulation on Terrorist Content Online is more specific compared to the Digital Services Act, as it concerns the countering of terrorist content spreading on online platforms. It also includes more detailed obligations, such as deadlines for the removal of content. However, the issuance of removal orders is primarily the responsibility of national supervisory authorities, whose operating practices and resources may vary.

As platforms do not have a directly assigned obligation to actively screen their content, for-profit companies tend to conduct their moderation in a way that has the minimal possible impact on user numbers. Although violent and hostile online content is precisely what the regulations aim to reduce, from the companies' perspective, it is beneficial content because it evokes emotions, captures attention and gathers reactions.

Tech giants favoured by children and young people, such as Meta and TikTok, have been subject to supervision under the Digital Services Act, and several official processes are ongoing at the time of writing this report. These proceedings investigate, for example, the harmful effects of platform functionalities and the adequacy of companies' preventative measures regarding the spread of terrorist and violent content, hate speech and disinformation.

---

90 Expert interview, 1 September 2025
91 EU - Parliamentary question - E-001293/2025(ASW)
92 https://www.consilium.europa.eu/fi/policies/digital-services-act/
93 e.g. Expert statement, 19 November 2025 (Traficom)

The Commission has made preliminary findings of breaches of obligations, such as failing to provide users with simple reporting mechanisms for illegal content or effective opportunities to challenge content moderation decisions.[94] This, combined with recent information regarding decisions by tech giants to reduce moderation - for example, by abandoning third-party fact-checking - raises serious questions from the perspective of the spread of extremist online recruitment and propaganda[95].

Official supervisory processes related to the verification and removal of extremist content are complex, and bringing them to a conclusion can take a considerable amount of time. In the aforementioned processes, no official decisions had been made by the end of 2025; therefore, information regarding potential sanctions, for instance, is not yet available.

In 2025, under the EU AI Act, AI-based systems that can be used for the manipulation of individuals, subliminal influence or other deceptive purposes were prohibited. This has been an important step in protecting users. However, more specific obligations to prevent the use of AI in producing propaganda and recruitment material are missing, even though the AI models used for content generation have moved within the scope of stricter transparency requirements.

In the coming years, requirements concerning high-risk AI-based systems will be introduced, which will strengthen the comprehensiveness of the regulation. Nevertheless, as AI becomes more prevalent, extremist actors may develop their own systems that remain outside the scope of regulation, as the AI Act primarily concerns AI-based systems placed on the EU market through official channels. Furthermore, **the AI Act does not separately classify systems that can promote violent radicalisation or extremism**, which leaves significant gaps in risk management. Overall, while AI-related regulation is progressing within the EU, its ability to respond to rapidly evolving risks remains limited.
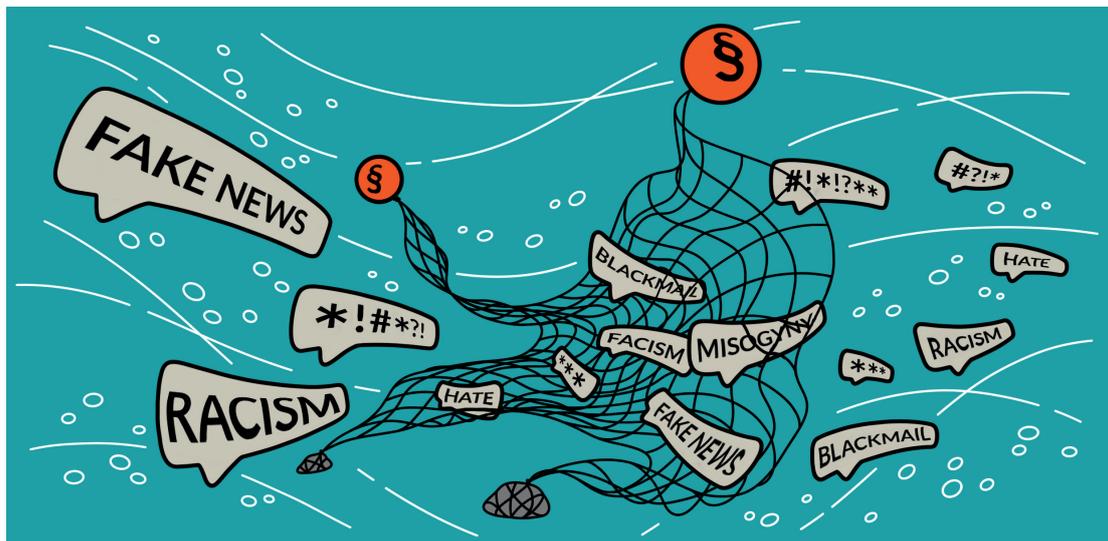
94European Commission, 24 October 2025; European Commission, 19 February 2024;European Commission, 19 October 2023
95 Yle, 8 January 2025

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICYMAKERS

The challenges of violent radicalisation and extremist online recruitment are best addressed by investing in preventative work. Penalties and legislative measures are an important part of the whole, but they do not address the root causes of violent extremism. Therefore, preventative work is key to safeguarding children and young people from extremist influences, both online and offline.

Violent radicalisation is a complex and multifaceted process influenced by many different factors. Consequently, **the measures to prevent it must also be comprehensive and sufficiently diverse, and the work must be carried out over the long term** – there is no single 'magic wand' for eradicating violent radicalisation and extremist online recruitment.

From the perspective of preventing radicalisation, it is essential to ensure that every child and young person is surrounded by safe adults who strengthen the young person's experience of inclusion and of being heard. Loneliness, feelings of alienation, and various experiences of rejection can be contributing factors to extremist recruitment.

In all decision-making, the special status of children must also be taken into account. Children have the right to protection and to safe growth and development, including in digital environments. In the prevention of extremism and in policy measures concerning children, the developmental stage of children and young people must be considered, and particular attention must be paid to the vulnerability of children in the most disadvantaged positions.

National recommendations for policymakers

1. Increase the presence of professionals in digital environments and ensure the operational conditions for digital youth work.

2. Ensure that all children and young people have strong digital literacy and digital safety skills, so that the harms of digital spaces do not accumulate among the most vulnerable children and young people.

3. Combat hate speech extensively both within digital spaces and beyond them, strengthening the understanding of its impact on democracy and the realisation of equality and human rights.

4. Strengthen the sense of safety and inclusion among children and young people.

Recommendations for the development of EU legislation

The objective of regulating digital services is to ensure that digital service companies act responsibly and fulfil the obligations set for them regarding the special protection of children. The Digital Services Act, the Regulation on addressing the dissemination of terrorist content online and the AI Act are central tools in creating safer digital environments, but the legislation still requires significant development. In their current form, the regulations are not sufficiently binding, and providers are not required to take sufficiently proactive measures to prevent harmful content.

To ensure safe digital environments:

1. **The Digital Services Act must be strengthened to be more binding and clear, unambiguous boundary conditions must be added that apply to all digital service providers regardless of their size.**

2. **The supervision process of the Digital Services Act must be streamlined and accelerated at both the EU and Member State levels**

3. **The AI Act should include an obligation to prevent the production of extremist propaganda and recruitment material, as well as to identify harmful content even when attempts are made to hide it using euphemisms or visual means.**

SOURCES

Allchorn, W., Orofino, E., & Babu Saheer, L. (2025). Analysing Radicalization Dynamics in the Language of Non-Violent Extremists Online in the UK (2016-2021): A Longitudinal Analysis of Britain First, 5 Pillars, and Earth First. Crime and Delinquency, 71(3), 656–686. https://doi.org/10.1177/00111287241264230

Askanius T. (2021) Women in the Nordic Resistance Movement and their online media practices: between internalised misogyny and "embedded feminism". Feminist Media Studies, 22(7), 1763–1780. https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2021.1916772

Askanius T., Haselbacher M., Reeger U. & Stoencheva J. (2024) Visualisation report of emerging extremist narratives across Europe. Malmö University and Austrian Academy of Sciences. https://voxpol.eu/file/visualisation-report-of-emerging-extremist-narratives-across-europe/

Bah A. and Lindberg M. (2025) Minustako terroristi? Opas väkivaltaisen radikalisoitumisen ymmärtämiseksi (Could I become a terrorist? A guide to understanding violent radicalisation). Warelia Kustannus Oy.

Benjamin S. and Vallinkoski K. (2021) Huolena nuoren radikalisoituminen? Opas nuorten kanssa toimiville (Concerned about a young person's radicalisation? A guide for those working with young people). https://katsomusdialogi.fi/material/huolena-radikalisoituminen/

Cauberghs O. (2024) Hate the player, not the game: Exploring extremist and terrorist use of games, gaming platforms and gamification strategies for propaganda purposes. Radices, Volume 4, Issue 1/2024, 90-110. https://doi.org/10.21825/radices.94142

Cook C., Tang S. & Tammy Lin J. (2023) Comparing shades of darkness: trolling victims' experiences on social media vs. online gaming. Frontiers in Psychology. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1163244

CSIS (2025) Left-Wing Terrorism and Political Violence in the United States - What the Data Tells Us. CSIS Briefs, September 2025. Accessed 12 November 2025 from https://www.csis.org/analysis/left-wing-terrorism-and-political-violence-united-states-what-data-tells-us

DNA Koululaistutkimus (2025). DNA School Survey 2025. https://corporate.DNA.fi/medialle/DNA-tutkimukset/koululaistutkimus-2025

Ebner, J. (2023) From Margins to Mainstream: How Extremism Has Conquered the Political Middle. ICCT. Accessed 17 November 2025 from https://icct.nl/publication/margins-mainstream-how-extremism-has-conquered-political-middle

ECRI (2025) ECRI Report on Finland. European Commission against Racism and Intolerance. https://www.coe.int/en/web/european-commission-against-racism-and-intolerance/finland

European Commission (2025) List of national competent authority (authorities) and contact points. Accessed 17 November 2025 from https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/internal-security/counter-terrorism-and-radicalisation/prevention-radicalisation/terrorist-content-online/list-national-competent-authority-authorities-and-contact-points_en

European Commission (2023) Accessed 22 December 2025 from https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/new-push-european-democracy/protecting-democracy_fi

European Commission (19 February 2024). Press Release. Commission opens formal proceedings against TikTok under the Digital Services Act. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_24_926

European Commission (10 October 2025). News Article. Commission releases enhanced second version of the age-verification blueprint. https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/news/commission-releases-enhanced-second-version-age-verification-blueprint

European Commission (24 October 2025). Press release. Commission preliminarily finds TikTok and Meta in breach of their transparency obligations under the Digital Services Act. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_25_2503

European Commission (19 October 2023). Press release. Commission sends request for information to TikTok under the Digital Services Act. https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/news/commission-sends-request-information-tiktok-under-digital-services-act

European Commission (29 October 2025). Press release. New measures unlock access to data from largest online platforms to support research. https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/news/new-measures-unlock-access-data-largest-online-platforms-support-research

EU TE-SAT (2025) Europol: European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend report 2025. European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend report 2025 (EU TE-SAT) | Europol

Frances I. & Ayad M. (2024) "Your body, my choice:" Hate and harassment towards women spreads online. Institute for Strategic Dialogue. Accessed 4 November 2025 from https://www.isdglobal.org/digital_dispatches/your-body-my-choice-hate-and-harassment-towards-women-spreads-online/

Gentile F. & Gomez O'Keefe (2025) Use of coded language by far-right extremists online: Emojis, numbers, and symbols reinforce in-group identity. Centre for Information Resilience. Accessed 24 November 2025 from https://www.info-res.org/articles/use-of-coded-language-by-far-right-extremists-online-emojis-numbers-and-symbols-reinforce-in-group-identity/

Hantula K., Lauha H., Mäkelä R. & Vahti J. (2024) Demokratia osaksi arkea. Selvitys yhteiskunnallisen osallistumisen esteistä nuorten aikuisten elämässä. (Democracy as part of everyday life. A study on the barriers to social participation in the lives of young adults). Sitran selvityksiä 238. Tammikuu 2024. https://www.sitra.fi/julkaisut/demokratia-osaksi-arkea/

Holt J. & Zoschak C. (2024) The prospect of post-election conspiracy-motivated violence. Institute for Strategic Dialogue. Accessed 4 November 2025 from https://www.isdglobal.org/digital_dispatches/the-prospect-of-post-election-conspiracy-motivated-violence/

Huey L. (2015) This is Not Your Mother's Terrorism: Social Media, Online Radicalization and the Practice of Political Jamming. Journal of Terrorism Research 6(2). https://doi.org/10.15664/jtr.1159

Hulkko M., Kiuru I., Sundberg L. & Träskelin V. (2025) Verkkoväkivalta lasten silmin. Selvitys 9-15-vuotiaiden kokemasta ja tekemästä verkkoväkivallasta. (Online violence through the eyes of children. A report on online violence experienced and perpetrated by 9–15-year-olds). Pelastakaa Lapset. Save the Children.https://www.pelastakaalapset.fi/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/verkko-vakivalta-lasten-silmin-selvitys-2025-kippari-hanke.pdf

Hämäläinen M., Järventaus A., O'Loughlin R. & Sundberg L. (2021) Kuka haavoittuu verkossa? (Who is vulnerable online?). Pelastakaa lapset ry. Save the Children. https://www.pelastakaalapset.fi/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/kuka_haavoittuu_verkossa_2021.pdf

Iyengar S., Sood G. & Lelkes Y. (2012) Affect, Not Ideology: A Social Identity Perspective on Polarization. September 2012 Public Opinion Quarterly 76(3):405-431. https://doi.org/10.1093/poq/nfs038

Informaatiovaikuttamisen katsaus (2025). Overview of information influence activities. Valtioneuvosto. Finnish Government. Accessed 3 November 2025 from https://valtioneuvosto.fi/valtioneuvoston-viestinta/informaatiovaikuttamisen-katsaus

Ingram K. (2024) Why Gender Matters in Violent Extremist Propaganda Strategy. ICCT Policy Brief. September 2024. Accessed 11 November 2025 from https://icct.nl/publication/why-gender-matters-violent-extremist-propaganda-strategy

Jakonen V., Haavisto R., Heikkilä E., Kurki A. & Udeh E. (2023) Nuoret harhaanjohtavan tiedon maailmassa. (Young people in a world of misleading information). Pelastakaa Lapset ry. Save the Children. https://www.pelastakaalapset.fi/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/nuoret_harhaanjohtavan_tiedon_maailmassa-final.pdf

Jarašiū naitė -Fedoseyva G. (2025) COVID-19-related conspiracy theory beliefs: Examining individual, country-level, and cross-level predictors. Social Sciences and Humanities Open, Volume 12 (2025). https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssaho.2025.101642

Juntunen M. (2025) Mielenterveysnäkökulmia väkivaltaiseen ekstremismiin ja radikalisoitumiseen. Teoreettisia ja käytännön lähestymistapoja ennaltaehkäisevän työn kentälle (Mental health perspectives on violent extremism and radicalisation. Theoretical and practical approaches for the field of preventative work). Kide-säätiö. https://www.kidesaatio.fi/ajankohtaista/2025/5/19/kide-sti-on-julkaissut-mielenterveyden-ja-vkivaltaisen-ekstremismin-suhdetta-ksittelevn-kirjan

Kansallisen turvallisuuden katsaus (2025). National Security Overview 2025. Suojelupoliisi. Finnish Security and Intelligence Service. Accessed 31 October 2025 from https://katsaus.supo.fi/alaikaisten-radikalisoituminen-euroopassa

Keskusrikospoliisi (2025) Tietopaketti: The Com – Lapsiin ja nuoriin kohdistuva väkivaltakeskeinen verkkoyhteisö (Information package: The Com – A violence-focused online community targeting children and young people). National Bureau of Investigation. Accessed 31 October 2025 from https://ankkuritoiminta.fi/documents/9123075/11195236/The%20Com%20tietopaketti.pdf

Kowert R., Kilmer E. & Newhouse A. (2024) Taking it to the extreme: prevalence and nature of extremist sentiment in games. Frontiers in Psychology 15. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2024.1410620

Kouluterveyskysely (2025). Aiempaa useampi kokee terveytensä hyväksi ja moni voi keskustella usein asioistaan vanhempiensa kanssa (School Health Promotion Study 2025. More pupils than before feel their health is good and many can often discuss things with their parents). THL Statistical Report 44/2025, Julkari. https://URN.fi/URN:NBN:fi-fe2025091596210

Art J. R. & Obaidi M. (2020) Understanding violent extremism in the 21st century: the (re)emerging role of relative deprivation. Current Opinion in Psychology 2020, 35:55–59. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2020.03.010

Langenkamp A. (2025) Linking social deprivation and loneliness to right-extreme radicalization and extremist antifeminism. Current Opinion in Behavioral Sciences, Volume 63, June 2025. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cobeha.2025.101525

Lewandowsky, S., & Cook, J. (2020) The Conspiracy Theory Handbook. Accessed 25 November 2025 from https://climatecommunication.gmu.edu/all/the-conspiracy-theory-handbook/

Malkki L., Ali-Hokka H. & Benjamin S. (2025) Väkivaltakeskeiset verkkoyhteisöt. (Violence-focused online communities). RADIA review 1/2025. https://www.helsinki.fi/assets/drupal/2025-11/RADIA-katsaus%201%20-%202025.pdf

Mannerheimin Lastensuojeluliitto (2025) Nuoret ja nettikiusaaminen. 13–18-vuotiaiden kokemuksia kiusaamisesta digitaalisissa ympäristöissä (Youth and cyberbullying. Experiences of bullying in digital environments among 13–18-year-olds). Mannerheim League for Child Welfare. https://www.mll.fi/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/nettikiusaamiskysely_2025_A4.pdf

Nuorisobarometri (2024) Nuoruuden kolme vuosikymmentä. Youth Barometer 2024. Three decades of youth. Happonen K. & Kiilakoski T. (eds) https://tietoanuorista.fi/julkaisut/nuorisobarometri-2024/

Osborne, D., Lilly, K. J., Art, J. R., Obaidi, M., & van den Bos, K. (2025). The Role of Relative Deprivation in the Process of Radicalization into Violent Extremism. In M. Obaidi & J. Kunst (eds.), The Cambridge Handbook of the Psychology of Violent Extremism (pp. 323–344). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009407892.019

RAN (2022) Extremists' Targeting of Young Women on Social Media and Lessons for P/CVE. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2022. Accessed 11 November 2025 from https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-03/ad_hoc_young_women_social_media_Lessons-p-cve_022022_en.pdf

RAN (2021) Digital Grooming Tactics on Video Gaming Video Gaming Adjacent Platforms Threats and Opportunities. Conclusion paper online meeting 15-16 March 2021. Accessed 11 November 2025 from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/381310484_RAN_CN_Digital_Grooming_Tactics_on_Video_Gaming_Video_Gaming_Adjacent_Platforms_Threats_and_Opportunities_online_meeting_15-16_March_2021

Rauta J. (2025) Poliisin tietoon tullut viharikollisuus Suomessa 2024 (Hate crime reported to the police in Finland 2024). Poliisiammattikorkeakoulun katsauksia 41. Police University College Reviews 41. https://URN.fi/URN:NBN:fi-fe2025100299240

Prezelj, I., & Zalokar, L. (2024). Recruitment models and approaches of Islamist terrorist groups: The cases of al-Qaeda and ISIS. Cogent Social Sciences. https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2023.2289873

Saari, D., Moilanen, P., & Hautala, M. (2025). Disinformation Landscape in Finland (V2). EU Disinfo-Lab. https://www.disinfo.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/20250402_Disinfo-landscape-in-Finland-V2.pdf

Schlegel L. & Amarasingam A. (2022) Examining the Intersection Between Gaming & Violent Extremism. United Nations Office on Counter-Terrorism. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/364196314_Examining_the_Intersection_Between_Gaming_Violent_Extremism

Sengul K. (2025) How are far-right online communities using X/Twitter Spaces? Discourse, communication, sharing. Discourse, Context & Media, 65, 100884. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dcm.2025.100884

Sinokki, Jani (2025) Se oli vain vitsi! – Huumoriin vetoaminen rasismin levittämisen välineenä (It was only a joke! – Appealing to humour as a tool for spreading racism). Niin & Näin 2/2025, 59-70. https://research.utu.fi/converis/portal/detail/Publication/499502464

Sisäministeriö (2024) Kansallinen väkivaltaisen radikalisoitumisen ja väkivaltaisen ekstremismin ennaltaehkäisyn ja torjunnan toimenpideohjelma 2024–2027. National Action Plan for the Prevention and Combating of Violent Radicalisation and Violent Extremism 2024–2027. Ministry of the Interior. https://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-324-977-6

Sisäministeriö (2016) Kansallinen väkivaltaisen radikalisoitumisen ja ekstremismin ennalta ehkäisyn toimenpideohjelma. National Action Plan for the Prevention of Violent Radicalisation and Extremism. Ministry of the Interior. https://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-324-092-6

Sisäministeriö - Terrorismin torjunta. Counter-terrorism. Ministry of the Interior. Accessed 30 October 2025 from https://intermin.fi/poliisiasiat/terrorismin-torjunta

Schlegel., L. & Kowert, R. (2024) Gaming and Extremism: The Radicalization of Digital Playgrounds https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/oa-edit/10.4324/9781003388371/gaming-extremism-linda-schlegel-rachel-kowert

Suojanen I., Lehtonen J. & Saarinen A. (2024) Tunteiden viemää: Affektiivinen polarisaatio ja sen yhteiskunnalliset vaikutukset (Carried away by emotions: Affective polarisation and its social impacts). Valtiotieteellisen tiedekunnan julkaisuja; 263 (Publications of the Faculty of Social Sciences 263). http://hdl.handle.net/10138/586881

Suojelupoliisi – Radikaali-islamistinen terrorismi. Radical Islamist terrorism. Finnish Security and Intelligence Service. Accessed 30 October 2025 from https://supo.fi/radikaali-islamistinen-terrorismi

Suojelupoliisi (2025) Kansallisen turvallisuuden katsaus 2025. National Security Review 2025. Finnish Security and Intelligence Service. https://katsaus.supo.fi/etusivu

Suojelupoliisi – Uhka-arvio. Terrorist threat assessment. Finnish Security and Intelligence Service. Accessed 31 October 2025 from https://supo.fi/uhka-arvio

Suojelupoliisi – Äärioikeistolainen ideologia. Far-right ideology. Finnish Security and Intelligence Service. Accessed 31 October 2025 from https://supo.fi/aarioikeistolainen-ideologia

THL – Radikalisoitumiseen liittyvä käsitteistö (Terminology related to radicalisation). Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare. Accessed 20 November 2025 from https://thl.fi/aiheet/vakivalta/tyon-tueksi/ratti-tukityokalu-radikalisoitumiseen-liittyvään-tuen-tarpeen-arviointiin/radikalisoitumiseen-liittyvaa-kasiteisto

UNODC (2019). Prevention of Child Recruitment and Exploitation by Terrorist and Violent Extremist Groups: The Role of the Justice System. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime Training Manual 2019. Prevention of Child Recruitment and Exploitation by Terrorist and Violent Extremist Groups | United Nations iLibrary. https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3825914?v=pdf

Uutismedian liitto (2025) Nuoret ja uutismediasuhde (Youth and their relationship with news media). News Media Finland. Accessed 4 November 2025 from https://www.uutismediat.fi/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/ul-nuoret-ja-uutismediasuhde-2025-poiminnat-tuloksista.pdf

Uski, S. (2024) Mitä some tekee meille? (What is social media doing to us?). Tammi.

Vincente Á., Driessen M. & García-Calvo C. (2024) New trends in jihadism. Quartery research review. Ran Policy Support 30 July 2024. Accessed 18 November 2025 from https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/document/download/996d78a8-6ad7-48b6-84e5-7c3dd500ed3f_en?filename=Quarterly%20Research%20Review%20New%20Trends%20in%20Jihadism_en.pdf

Williams, T. J. V., & Tzani, C. (2024). How does language influence the radicalisation process? A systematic review of research exploring online extremist communication and discussion. Behavioral Sciences of Terrorism and Political Aggression, 16(3), 310–330. https://doi.org/10.1080/19434472.2022.2104910

Yle 8 January 2025. Metan ilmoitus on pohjimmiltaan vain somejättien välistä kovaa kilpailua, sanoo sometutkija (Meta's announcement is essentially just fierce competition between social media giants, says social media researcher). https://yle.fi/a/74-20135355

Yle 24.2.2025 Äärioikeiston kamppailukerhot houkuttelevat nuoria – Suojelupoliisi huolestui alaikäisten radikalisoitumisesta (Far-right combat clubs attract youth – Finnish Security and Intelligence Service concerned about the radicalisation of minors). https://yle.fi/a/74-20144206

Expert interviews

Ali-Hokka Henrik, Research Assistant, University of Helsinki
Bauvois Gwenaëlle, University Researcher, University of Helsinki
Juntunen Marko, Docent, Middle Eastern Studies, University of Helsinki
Kyllönen Katri-Maaria, PhD researcher, University of Jyväskylä
Lehtolaakso Harry, Doctoral Researcher, University of Helsinki
Mankkinen Tarja, Head of Development, Ministry of the Interior
Pyrhönen Niko, University Researcher, University of Helsinki
Ryhänen Sami, Superintendent, Ministry of the Interior
Sippel Kirsti, Doctoral Researcher, University of Turku

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Comparison Table: Key content of the DSA and the TCO

	DSA (EU 2022/2065)	TCO (EU 2021/784)
Target	General obligations of the regulation apply to all companies offering services in the EU area, excluding micro and small enterprises. Regulation is stricter for very large online platforms and search engines with over 45 million monthly active users in the EU (Art. 2 and 33).	The regulation applies to all companies offering hosting services in the EU area that disseminate information to the public (Art. 1).
Supervision	The EU Commission is responsible for the supervision of very large companies. Companies with fewer than 45 million active users in the EU are supervised by the national authority of the EU member state where the company's headquarters or legal representative is located. (Art. 56) In Finland, the supervisory authorities are Traficom, the Consumer Ombudsman and the Data Protection Ombudsman.	Each EU country has designated a competent authority (or several) to monitor the implementation of the regulation and to issue removal orders and sanctions (Art. 12). In Finland, these authorities are the National Bureau of Investigation, the National Police Board and Traficom.[96] The EU-based Internet Referral Unit (EU IRU) supports member states in the supervision of the regulation.
Obligations	The purpose of the regulation is to combat illegal online content, disinformation and other societal risks. This refers to text, images, and audio or video clips containing, for example, fake news, propaganda, hate speech, harassment, violence or sexual abuse targeting children. Platforms must act transparently and provide understandable information about terms of use and operating principles. They must publish an annual report on the content moderation they have implemented. Special attention must be paid to the safety of minors, and its implementation must be ensured through appropriate and proportionate measures (Art. 14, 15, and 28). All companies must allow users to report illegal content on the platform. Companies have an obligation to process reports in a timely, diligent, non-arbitrary and objective manner, as well as to inform the parties involved of the measures taken (Art. 16–17). Platforms must react to orders issued by authorities regarding illegal content. If the platform service detects a suspicion of a crime threatening human life or safety, it has an obligation to immediately inform the relevant law enforcement authority (Art. 18 and 51). In addition, very large online platforms and search engines must prepare an annual risk assessment report and a risk mitigation plan based on the identified risks. Mitigation measures must be proportionate to the identified risks and the financial capabilities of the online platform. The supervisory authority conducts inspections on the implementation of the mitigation plan. (Art. 34–35)	The purpose of the regulation is to combat terrorist online content. This includes text, images and audio or video clips that glorify terrorist acts, provide instructions for criminal activity, encourage joining a terrorist group or threaten a terrorist act (Art. 2). The platform must remove content within one hour of receiving a removal order issued by the authorities (Art. 3, point 3). If the company's services have been found to be used for the dissemination of terrorist content, it must implement effective, targeted and proportionate preventive special measures to combat such content (Art. 5).
Penalties	Companies with over 45 million active users may be fined for non-compliance with the regulation up to a maximum of 6% of their turnover (Art. 52).	If the infringements are systematic, the company may be liable to pay a fine of up to 4% of its turnover (Art. 18).

96 European Commission (2025) List of national competent authority (authorities) and contact points.

![Save the Children logo] **Save the Children**
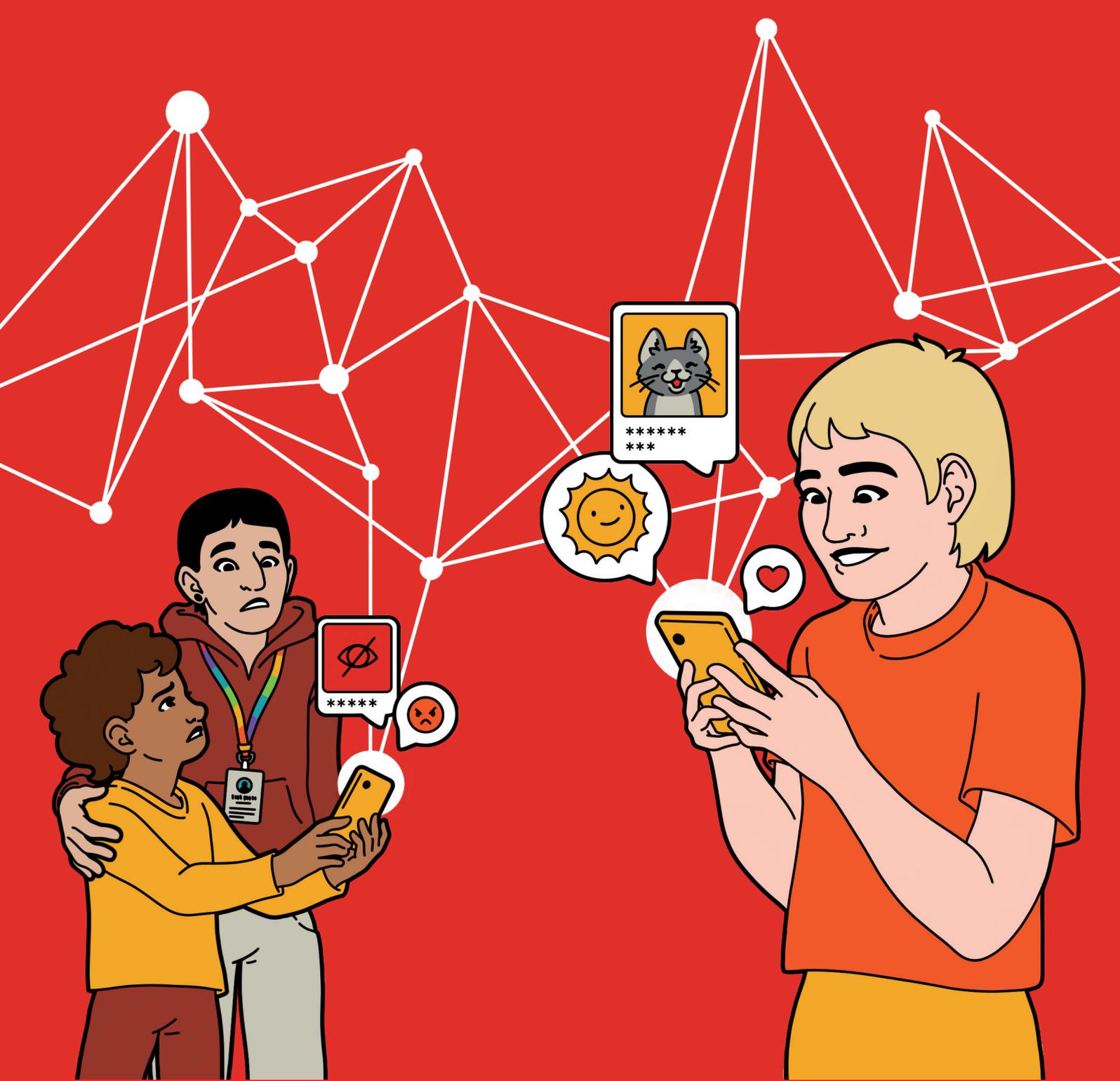
Save the Children is the world's leading independent children's organization, creating both immediate and lasting changes in children's lives. Together, we secure every child's right to life, protection, education, and participation in Finland and around the world.

Because children's future starts now.

savethechildren.fi