R3 Weeding out right-wing extremism

Proposer: Jong Groen
Agenda item: 1. Resolutions
Status: Withdrawn

Motion text

Violent extremism and terrorism pose a threat to the safety of all Europeans and the fabric of our societies. Following the September 11 attacks in 2001, the UN and EU created lists of persons and groups associated with terrorist acts, who would then be targeted with restrictive measures to limit their ability to inflict harm. The EU expanded upon this in Common Position 2001/931/CFSP (CP 931) which defines terrorist acts and the measures that can be taken against them. In 2016, after various attacks instigated by the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (Daesh), the EU expanded its sanctioning capacities for persons connected to Al-Qaida or Daesh. Now the EU could sanction persons and groups without requiring a prior listing by the UN or an EU member state. The current strategy appears to be relatively successful in combating terrorism and extremist violence motivated by Islamism. Sadly, every time the EU has acted after the fact, in 2001 as well as in 2016, even though the broader threat had been there for a longer time.

While Islamist violence remains the largest terrorist threat in Europe, right-wing violent extremism and terrorism is growing rapidly. Right-wing extremist violence stems from a reactionary ideology that blames social minorities and progressive politics for societal problems. The prevalence of hate against specific groups inevitably leads to violence being committed against them. The increase of right-wing violence in North-America, Oceania and Europe is a result of online hate speech and the mainstreaming of reactionary politics. Beyond violence directed at specific minorities, reactionaries also direct violence against basic democratic principles such as freedom of speech, fair elections and a free press. As global as the threat may be, countries are often left to their own devices to combat right-wing violent extremism. The national focus of right-wing extremists, belies their ability to form strong transnational bonds. Within Europe there exist financial and strategic linkages between similar right-wing extremist groups that enable them to further spread their message, radicalize new recruits and orchestrate deadly terrorist attacks. Therefore even a supposed lone actor still relies on a broad network spreading propaganda and encouraging violent action.

The terrorist attacks of Christchurch spurred an international reaction to combat and remove violent extremist and terrorist content from online fora. While these efforts were fruitful in removing the most heinous of content, internet companies still do far too little to combat harmful content on their platform. European states should further instrumentalize their collective leverage to diminish the radicalization potential of online media. These online platforms also provide an avenue for outside influencing, like Russian hybrid warfare, and the spread of violent conspiracy theories, like Q-Anon.

As of now the EU has not listed a single person, group or entity of a right-wing signature based on CP 931. There has not been a Union-wide effort to combat and prevent violent right-wing extremism through restrictive measures such as freezing assets. A broad approach, including close cooperation between law enforcement in various European countries is necessary to combat this threat. In order to effectively combat online radicalization, popular internet platforms should closely moderate their platforms to avoid hate speech turning into violence.

Concretely we:

- **Urge the EU to list violent right-wing extremist persons, groups and entities on the basis of CP 931, allowing the EU to freeze assets and limit travel by the listed extremists. Another possible course of action is targeting these right-wing extremists for money laundering.**

- **Advise to disrupt right-wing recruitment on online platforms, a strategy that was successfully implemented for Daesh and other Islamist extremist groups.**

- **Encourage a broader information exchange and investigative cooperation between European law enforcement.**