



7.1 Country Brief: A social psychological perspective on trends of extremism in Slovenia

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About the Project

D.Rad is a comparative study of radicalisation and polarisation in Europe and beyond. It aims to identify the actors, networks, and broader social contexts driving radicalisation, particularly among young people in urban and peri-urban areas. D.Rad conceptualises this through the I-GAP spectrum (injustice-grievance-alienation-polarisation) to move towards measurable evaluations of de-radicalisation programmes. We intend to identify the building blocks of radicalisation, including a sense of being victimised, being thwarted or lacking agency in established legal and political structures and coming under the influence of “us vs them” identity formulations.

D.Rad benefits from an exceptional breadth of backgrounds. The project spans national contexts, including the UK, France, Italy, Germany, Poland, Hungary, Finland, Slovenia, Bosnia, Serbia, Kosovo, Israel, Turkey, Georgia, Austria, and several minority nationalisms. It bridges academic disciplines ranging from political science and cultural studies to social psychology and artificial intelligence. Dissemination methods include D.Rad labs, D.Rad hubs, policy papers, academic workshops, visual outputs and digital galleries. As such, D.Rad establishes a rigorous foundation to test practical interventions geared to prevention, inclusion and de-radicalisation.

With the possibility of capturing the trajectories of seventeen nations and several minority nations, the project will provide a unique evidence base for the comparative analysis of law and policy as nation-states adapt to new security challenges. Mapping these varieties and their link to national contexts is crucial in uncovering strengths and weaknesses in existing interventions. Furthermore, D.Rad accounts for the problem that radicalisation processes often occur in circumstances that escape the control and scrutiny of traditional national justice frameworks. The participation of AI professionals in modelling, analysing and devising solutions to online radicalisation is central to the project’s aims.

Executive Summary

This country brief summarises the survey findings for Slovenia. It then embeds the survey findings within a national and cultural context for each country. The aim of these summaries is to situate the findings within their respective sociopolitical and sociocultural contexts. The literature review and rationale for the proposed model, analysis of the full dataset, and discussion can be found in the full 7.1 report, which also contains the country briefs.

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1. Results

Slovenia had 19.38% of participants reporting not knowing their political attitudes. This variable was subsequently excluded from the model, keeping all participants and resulting in Social Dominance Orientation.

Descriptives

Breakdown by age and sex.

Mean age (SD)	Sex					
	Male		Female		Other	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
23.56 (3.89)	159	49.69	161	50.31	0	0.00

Breakdown by religious affiliation.

	n	%
Christian	207	64.69
Agnostic/Atheist	81	25.31
Muslim	22	6.88
Other	9	2.81
Jewish	1	0.31
Buddhist	0	0.00
Bahá'í	0	0.00
Hindu	0	0.00
Sikh	0	0.00

Would you describe yourself as being a member of a group that is discriminated against in this country?

	n	%
Yes	73	22.92
No	217	63.10
Don't know	30	13.99

Breakdown of belonging to a group that is discriminated against.

On what grounds is your group discriminated against?

	n	%
Sexuality	20	27.40
Religion	17	23.29
Nationality	15	20.55
Colour or race	13	17.81
Language	13	17.81
Gender	13	17.81
Other	9	12.33
Ethnic group	8	10.96
Age	7	9.59
Disability	2	2.74

Note: participants were allowed to select multiple groups. As such, proportions will not necessarily add to 100%

Breakdown of different organizations participants reported being members of (active or inactive) or not.

	Active		Inactive		Not a member	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Church or religious organization	79	24.69	137	42.81	104	32.50
Sport or recreational organization	108	33.75	93	29.06	119	37.19
Art, music or educational organization	84	26.25	96	30.00	140	43.75
Labour union	36	11.25	97	30.31	187	58.44
Political party	30	9.38	80	25.00	210	65.62
Environmental organization	47	14.69	81	25.31	192	60.00
Professional association	51	15.94	77	24.06	192	60.00
Humanitarian or charitable organization	75	23.44	91	28.44	154	48.12
Consumer organization	41	12.81	77	24.06	202	63.12
Self-help group or mutual help group	59	18.44	76	23.75	185	57.81
Women's group	70	21.88	61	19.06	189	59.06
Other organization	22	6.88	57	17.81	241	75.31

Breakdown of different political actions participants reported taking in the last 12 months.

	Yes		No		Missing value	
	n	%	n	%	n	%

Contacted a politician or government official	64	20.00	223	69.69	33	10.31
Worked in a political party or action group	33	10.31	255	79.69	32	10.00
Worked in another ideological organization	48	15.00	240	75.00	32	10.00
Displayed a campaign badge/sticker	63	19.69	228	71.25	29	9.06
Signed a petition	133	41.56	157	49.06	30	9.38
Took part in a lawful public demonstration	62	19.38	216	67.50	42	13.12
Boycotted certain products	69	21.56	213	66.56	38	11.88
Posted or shared anything about politics online	90	28.12	196	61.25	34	10.62

Predictors of realistic threat

Holding stronger beliefs about inherent group hierarchies (social dominance orientation) was associated with stronger perceptions that migrants pose a threat to Slovenia and its resources. Perceiving that one's national ingroup was more economically deprived than migrants (group relative deprivation) was associated with stronger perceptions of threat. Feelings of anomie were also related to perceiving that migrants posed more of a threat to one's national ingroup.

Direct predictors of extremism

Holding stronger beliefs about inherent group hierarchies (social dominance orientation) was associated with increased support for extremism. Additionally, perceiving one's ingroup as being more superior to other social groups (collective narcissism) was linked with more support for extremism. Perceiving one's ingroup to be more economically deprived relative to migrants (group relative deprivation) was linked with increased support for extremism.

Indirect predictors on extremism

Online group identity had an indirect effect on extremist attitudes via collective narcissism: a stronger online group identity predicted increased collective narcissism, which in turn predicted increased support for extremist attitudes. The total indirect effect of online group identity (i.e., the sum of all indirect effects through other variables, even if these were not statistically significant on their own) was significant; a stronger online group identity predicted increased support for extremist attitudes via the combination of its relationship to the mediating variables in the model (thought note collective narcissism is explicitly responsible for over half of this total indirect effect).

Figure 16. Respecified model for Slovenia



Predictors of attitudes towards Russian culture, Russian and Ukrainian migrants

Greater social alienation was associated with more negative attitudes towards Russia. Support for extremist attitudes was also linked with more negative attitudes towards Russia and Russian culture. In contrast, a stronger social dominance orientation and experiencing more anomie were both separately associated with more positive attitudes towards Russia. In terms of attitudes towards Russian migrants, feeling more social alienation and endorsing more populist attitudes were both individually linked with worsening attitudes towards Russian migrants in the past twelve months.

In terms of attitudes towards Ukrainian migrants, greater social dominance orientation and endorsing more populist attitudes were both separately associated with worsening attitudes in the past twelve months. In contrast, having more trust in the Slovenian government was linked with improved attitudes towards Ukrainian migrants in the past twelve months. Additionally, holding more extremist ideologies was also associated with improved attitudes.

2. Situating the findings within the Slovene context

2022 was an important year for Slovenia. It saw the formation of a new government, with a notably high voter turnout of over 70%, contrasting sharply with the approximately 50% in the 2014 and 2018 elections. Slovenian voters demonstrated higher political participation and predominantly voted for center-left political options. The heightened electoral engagement was a response to the controversial administration of PM Janez Janša (2020-2022), marking a pause in Slovenia's era of populist, right-wing leadership (M. Novak, 2022, [Freedom House](#)). In his third term, 2020 - 2022, as a PM, Janša immediately renewed long-standing grievances with the press and critical media outlets upon assuming office; he further intensified his previous attempts to control and politicise the media. Janša's term witnessed concerning

democratic backsliding, including sidelining parliament, pressuring civil society/media, and adding Slovenia to the CIVICUS Watchlist (Freedom House, 2022; CIVICUS, 2020). The 2022 election turnout marked a pivot away from Janša's populism and towards liberal democracy under a new centre-left government led by PM Robert Golob and political newcomer, Freedom Movement. However, Golob faced challenges in implementing reforms, notably restructuring the national broadcaster RTV SLO. While the government changed, political polarisation persisted, with Janša's Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS) representing continued right-wing opposition. Slovenia's political landscape remains defined by divisions between new centre-left leadership versus Janez Janša's enduring right-wing populist base. Significant societal developments occurred in 2022, including legalising same-sex marriage and the historic election of the nation's first female president and the National Assembly's first female president. However, polarised views around progressive policies continue. Political shifts between the 2020 - 2022 government that left office on June 1st 2022, and the newly elected government provide essential context for interpreting the D.Rad Survey findings for Slovenia between October 2022 and February 2023.

Social Dominance Orientation and Attitudes toward Migrants

The survey results indicated that higher Social Dominance Orientation scores directly predicted stronger perceptions that migrants pose a realistic threat to Slovenia and its resources. This view was widely accepted and disseminated through different media outlets, including public broadcasters, during the 2015 refugee crisis when the media propagated narratives of migrants "flooding" the country as invaders and when Slovenia (at the time under the centre-left government of PM Cerar) started erecting razor wire on Croatia border and when migrants were primarily reinforced by the media as a threat, presented as a natural disaster, which all worked, as Pajnik (Abuse of Language, Media Collaboration in Solving the Migrant Question, 2015) to justify the migration policy.

Post-2015, SDS-affiliated outlets continued exploiting anti-migrant sentiment through sensationalised, racialised portrayals of non-white immigrants as criminals or extremists threatening Slovenia. A mutually reinforcing connection exists between SDS politicians, radicalised online supporters, and SDS-affiliated media, creating a vicious spiral of hateful anti-migrant rhetoric (Bulc, 2021). Enduring anti-immigrant rhetoric taps into dominant social ideologies that migrants pose a danger to the native Slovene population and society.

Social Dominance Orientation and Support for Extremism

The survey found that higher Social Dominance Orientation directly predicted greater extremist attitudes. The findings correlate with the affiliations between the Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS) and far-right entities. Given that the youth wing of SDS has well-established links to far-right groups, the survey results could indicate this relationship.

Investigative reporting reveals that the SDS maintains connections to Slovenian far-right and neo-Nazi organisations, creating an environment of implicit tolerance for their ideologies (Valenčič, 2022). For instance, MP Žan Mahnič publicly endorsed the extremist group Generation Identity (GI). The connections between the mentioned MP and GI indicate the party's long-standing flirtation with radicals since Mahnič, as SDS youth wing leader, welcomed a GI representative as a guest at an SDS annual youth event in 2017. The SDS

co-owned publishing house publishes books supporting GI far-right ideologies. Mahnič helped establish an SDS youth branch connected to, as Valenčič indicates, the neo-Nazi group Blood & Honor Slovenia, underscoring the role of SDS youth radicalisation.

In summary, the survey results linking higher SDO to extremism might reflect the SDS's ongoing direct and indirect engagement with extremist groups and ideologies and their impact on the radicalisation of youth through their offline and online reach out. Scrutinising the interconnections between the SDS and their impact on youth through online and offline presence, especially its youth wing and extremist organisations, remains critical.

Increased collective narcissism directly predicted increased support for extremist attitudes. The survey findings indicate that increased collective narcissism directly correlates with heightened extremist attitudes. This might reflect the rhetoric from the Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS) and affiliated media. SDS leader Janša invokes pan-European far-right conspiracy theories like "cultural Marxism"—a narrative positing liberal elites conspire to undermine white Christian civilisation through multiculturalism (Valenčič, 2021).

By echoing European populists like Hungary's Viktor Orbán, Janša internationalises these extremist theories. As Valenčič notes, contemporary neo-Nazis in Slovenia increasingly come from Serbian, Bosnian, or Macedonian migrant backgrounds, united by white European identity. They adhere to theories like "cultural Marxism" that position liberalism and diversity as threats to European culture (Valenčič, 2021).

As a PM, Janša articulated his views through national public television, arguing that cultural Marxism represents the greatest threat to the EU (example, RTVSLO, 2020). SDS media outlets reinforce these narratives. This politicises narcissistic biases, fueling defensive extremism to protect the privileged ingroup. In summary, SDS propaganda glorifies the ingroup, denigrates outsiders, and politicises identity grievances. This caters to collective narcissism, increasing extremism divorced from factual threat assessments.

Developing media literacy and intergroup cooperation initiatives among youth could be beneficial to counter such radicalisation. Media literacy education can build critical thinking to identify extremist messaging. Positive intergroup contact facilitates understanding between youth from diverse backgrounds, mitigating prejudices rooted in collective narcissism. Combining these approaches can reduce risks from extremist propaganda and outgroup distrust.

Online Group Identity

In the context of Slovenia, the survey findings suggest that online group identity plays a significant role in influencing extremist attitudes, mainly through the mediator of collective narcissism. Specifically, the path model accounted for 25.5% of the variance in extremist attitudes. While Social Dominance Orientation (SDO) did not influence extremism indirectly, it had a direct, positive relationship with extremist views.

In light of the national context of Slovenia, our survey findings resonate with pre-existing concerns about far-right extremist activities both online and offline. As Valenčič points out

(Valenčič, E., 2021), far-right extremist groups in Slovenia intertwine street activities with self-promotion online and pinpoint the strategic use of social media platforms to proliferate hate-based ideologies. Not only in Slovenia but internationally, a major shift has occurred in the far-right extremist (FRE) landscape from offline to online activism, as outlined in the document "Trends & Challenges" by Nikki Sterkenburg.

The high level of activity from far-right groups online in Slovenia might shed some light on our findings that stronger online group identity significantly correlates with collective narcissism, ultimately fostering extremist attitudes. In a society where collective narratives shared through official governmental channels, and SDP's affiliated media outlets emphasise that traditional values and social cohesion are under threat from ideologies (cultural Marxism in Janša's case), our model shows that these narratives may be feeding extremist tendencies, accounting for 25.5% of the variance in extremism scores. Notably, the language and sentiment from official sources, including the 2020 - 2022 Prime Minister, validate and perpetuate these extremist attitudes, potentially catalysing collective narcissism and, by extension, support for extremist ideologies.

In deradicalisation efforts, an area that needs attention is the relationship between online group identity, the radicalisation of youth in Slovenia, and the online space. This relationship is under-researched in the Slovenian context, making it crucial to commission targeted studies to fill this knowledge gap. Furthermore, media literacy aimed at youngsters is an important prevention measure.

Ukraine and Russian migrants

Participants reported that their attitudes towards Russian migrants in the last 12 months had not changed significantly. On the other hand, participants reported their attitudes towards Ukrainian migrants in the previous 12 months to have become a little better. The reason for the slight betterment towards the Ukrainian migrants might be attributed to the general support towards Ukraine from the ruling and opposition parties in Slovenia, as they have shown solidarity and readiness to accommodate Ukrainian refugees.

This unified stance towards supporting Ukraine deviates from the typical anti-migrant rhetoric often employed by the ruling SDS party. The break from SDS's traditional anti-migrant narrative could explain why the survey found mildly improved public sentiment towards Ukrainian migrants - the Slovenian public may be responding to a narrative that differs from the usual rhetoric, which often breeds radicalisation and extremist views.

Interestingly, increased support for extremist attitudes also predicted improved attitudes towards Ukrainian migrants, parallel to the position on Ukraine held by both left and right-wing parties. In summary, the rare alignment between typically opposed parties in support of Ukraine and deviation from typical anti-migrant rhetoric provides insight into why the survey found slightly improved public attitudes, specifically towards Ukrainian migrants, versus steady attitudes towards Russian migrants. The complex interplay between political messaging, extremism, and public attitudes highlights the potential to shape narratives to de-escalate rather than breed inter-group tensions.

In summary, analysing the D.Rad Survey findings in the context of Slovenia's political developments in 2022 provides valuable insights into the factors influencing the country's radicalisation, extremism, and potential deradicalisation efforts. Understanding these dynamics is important for fostering a more inclusive and tolerant society. In light of these findings, efforts to counter radicalisation in Slovenia should prioritise media literacy and intergroup cooperation initiatives among youth. Media literacy education can equip young individuals with critical thinking skills to identify extremist messaging, while positive intergroup contact can foster understanding and reduce prejudices rooted in collective narcissism. Additionally, the relationship between online group identity, youth radicalisation, and the online space warrants further research in the Slovenian context. Commissioning targeted studies in this area is essential for effective deradicalisation efforts.

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