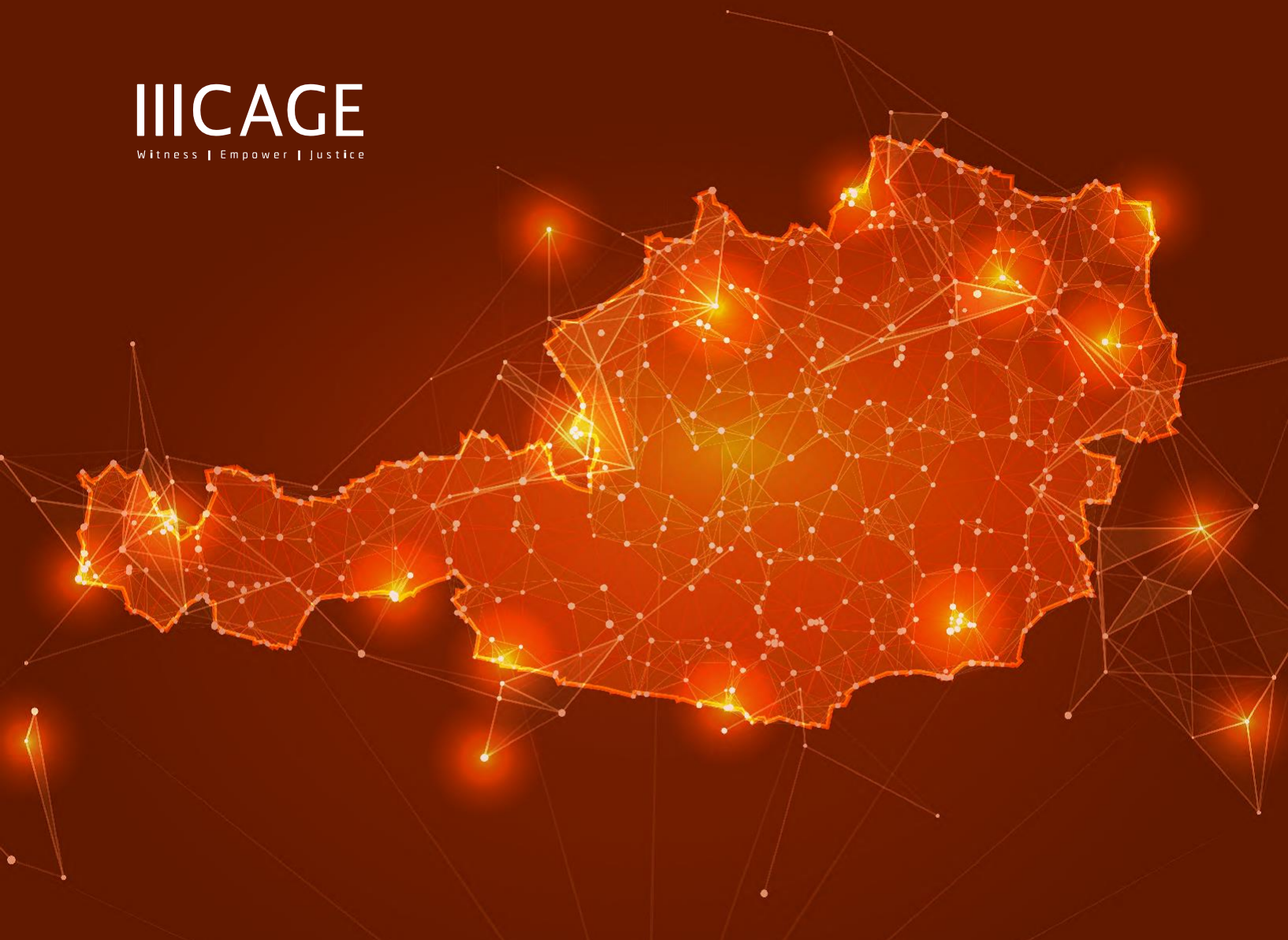


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AUSTRIA briefing: **June**

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Counter-terrorism

National funding call by Integration Minister, supposedly for migrants entering the workforce, emphasises 'extremism' prevention

- The Austrian Integration Ministry, led by [Minister Susanne Raab \(ÖVP\)](#), has launched a national funding call that places a dual emphasis on labour market integration for migrants and extremism prevention.
- On the one hand the funding is aimed at supporting projects that facilitate the entry of migrants into the workforce, particularly in high-demand areas like healthcare and caregiving. By offering specialised measures such as language courses and pre-qualification programs, the funding aims to increase employment participation and foster self-sufficiency among migrants.

On the other hand, the funding call targets projects that actively counter 'extremism' and societal segregation. Initiatives promoting awareness, sensitivity, and value transmission to combat extremism, radicalisation, and anti-semitism are among the focal points.

- This measure is the result of a highly securitised integration debate ongoing in Austria, with a clear drive to subordinate labour market needs to national security imperatives.

The national funding call appears to be an expansion of the Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) programme and agenda in Austria.

The focus on extremism prevention could potentially lead to the securitisation of certain migrant communities, perpetuating stereotypes and stigmatisation, alienating and marginalising individuals within these communities, and further exacerbating social divisions while fostering a climate of suspicion and surveillance within migrant communities.

- The funding call targets various groups, including third-country nationals, asylum beneficiaries, displaced individuals from Ukraine, EU citizens permanently residing in Austria, Austrian citizens with migrant backgrounds, and the general population.

[NGOs, associations, and non-profit organisations are being encouraged to submit their proposals](#) for funding.

Interior ministry funds discriminatory study on 'extremism' in migrant communities led by major proponents of securitisation

- The [recently published study on 'extremism' in migrant communities in Austria](#) analyses migrant communities from Turkey, the Arab region, Chechnya, and the Western Balkans.

It was conducted by a four-member research team led by Peter Neumann, founding director of the controversial International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation in the UK, and included figures like Heiko Heinisch and Nina Scholz, both of whom are affiliated with the Documentation Centre on Political Islam and were designated 'experts' on the repressive Operation Luxor case, before being removed.

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- The [study relies on interviews with select individuals](#) within the respective communities. This approach raises doubts about the validity and generalisability of the conclusions drawn. The lack of quantitative data or broader community involvement undermine the study's ability to present a comprehensive or authoritative picture of these migrant communities.
- The study [defines extremism broadly and categorises it into three groups](#):
 "violent extremism," which aims to achieve its objectives through unlawful physical force;
 "activist extremism," focused on mobilisation within the existing societal structure;
 and "passive extremism," which seeks disengagement from the rest of society while promoting its own ideology.

While this categorisation attempts to capture different forms of 'extremism', the definitions remain vague, repetitive and lack necessary depth.

- Furthermore, the study goes on to label whole communities as a proposed "security threat". For example the study claims to identify a "high radicalization potential" within the North Caucasus migrant community - primarily comprising Chechens - attributing this to alleged isolationist tendencies and a "violence-prone honor culture." The generalisation of the entire community raises concerns about stereotyping, stigmatisation, xenophobia and outright racism.

- The new state security agencies will also have their own departments for internet crime, which is on the rise in Austria, as well as for the fight against extremism on the internet. The authorities plan to increase staffing levels to accommodate these new responsibilities.

The head of the state protection agency, Omar Haijawi-Pirchner, has also [called for expanded powers to monitor communication](#) between suspected extremists via encrypted messaging apps.

The government is considering this request, but the junior coalition partner, the Greens, has expressed opposition to any "mass surveillance" measures.

- This new reform has made the priorities of the Austrian government regarding CVE quite clear, and in line with its fellow European partners.

With this new reform the government aims to expand its surveillance apparatus of communities, instead of focusing on tangible and specific threats, thereby using pre-crime methods to monitor, control, and criminalise already-marginalised communities.

Foiled Pride parade attack raises serious questions about integrity of investigation and role of foreign intelligence agencies

- The Director of State Protection and Intelligence (DSN) had announced in a press conference the [arrests of three suspects and the initiation of a foiled terrorism-related attack on the Pride parade in Vienna](#).

Investigations were based on information allegedly received from a foreign intelligence service.

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- However, it was later revealed that the specific evidence provided by the foreign agency had not been released for court use, making it inadmissible in legal proceedings, and the suspects have since been released.
- Critics, including the defense attorneys of the teenage suspects, [have raised serious doubts about the legitimacy of the allegations made by the DSN.](#)

The lawyers argue that there are no chat records or screenshots to support the terrorism-related charges against their clients. Instead, they claim that the DSN's case relies solely on a summary of information provided by the foreign intelligence agency without disclosing the source or providing verifiable evidence.

- This lack of concrete evidence has led to growing concerns about the actions of Austrian security services and their potential implications.

[Farid Hafez](#), who sees in this case parallels to Operation Luxor, emphasises that such actions without proper checks and balances could adversely affect marginalised groups, like the young suspects, who might not be fully aware of the circumstances they are being drawn into.


Austrian security apparatus advocates for the expansion of their online surveillance powers

- [Under the pretext of enhancing security measures](#), Austrian Interior Minister Gerhard Karner has pushed for more authority and surveillance powers for the police and the DSN, claiming they are needed to stay ahead of criminal groups and potential attackers. This call for increased control raises concerns about the potential erosion of civil liberties and privacy rights under the banner of national security.
- Karner seized the opportunity to highlight the recent incident involving the Pride Parade attack plot, using it as a platform to promote his agenda for greater surveillance. While acknowledging various security threats, he conveniently emphasised the dangers of so-called Islamic extremism and right-wing extremism, justifying his plea for more extensive monitoring measures.
- The Director of the DSN agency, Omar Hajjawi-Pirchner, echoed Karner's sentiment, [emphasising the need for targeted monitoring of communications \(Federal Trojan - a spying technology\)](#), claiming that Austria lags behind other European countries in this regard.

However, this justification masks the potential risks of mass surveillance and the violation of citizens' privacy without concrete evidence of wrongdoing.

The government's call for a "broad understanding" and a "nachrichtendienstliche Kultur" (intelligence culture) seems to be a veiled attempt to normalise intrusive surveillance practices without sufficient oversight.

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- Furthermore, [DSN demands penalties for 'fake news'](#) to counter conspiracy theories. They accuse various states, including Russia, China, and Turkey, of waging an 'information war' through disinformation, while also mentioning individual "actors" such as potential targets of the proposed bill.

The DSN suggests a new law to prevent the spread of false narratives and cites the storming of the US Capitol in 2021 as an example of the dangers of disinformation. In Austria, the distribution of false rumours was previously prohibited but was abolished in 2015.

- Critics have long expressed concerns about the potential abuse of power and the creation of a "gläserner Mensch" (glass human) where citizens' every move and communication are subject to government scrutiny.

The lack of transparency and accountability surrounding surveillance practices raises questions about the true motivations behind these measures.

Islamophobia

Integration Minister's visits to France and Denmark raise concerns about Austrian adoption of hardline integration measures

- Integration Minister Susanne Raab is now apparently [working on what she calls a "Ghettoliste" to tackle 'parallel societies' in Austria](#), which will be based on a 'Segregation report'.

The reports, which use parameters such as the proportion of foreigners, unemployment rates, women's employment rates, and crime rates to identify problematic situations will likely lead to stigmatisation of certain neighbourhoods and communities.

- Raab seems to be enamoured with the radical approach taken in Copenhagen's problem district, Mjølnerparken, where entire neighbourhoods and communities are forcefully transformed and displaced based on government-defined criteria.
- Raab's admiration for the Danish model conveniently ignores the fact that such heavy-handed measures might raise serious concerns about human rights and the autonomy of individuals and communities.
- Her statement about Austria's ongoing debate on so-called 'parallel societies' reeks of dismissiveness and lack of understanding. While she marvels at Denmark's efforts to break down parallel societies, she seems uninterested in the nuanced discussions happening in Austria, as the latest reports have [concluded the non-existence of parallel societies in Austria](#).

- Furthermore, [Raab's planned visit to a suburb in Paris, alongside French Secretary of State Sonia Backes](#), was prevented due to the security situation in the city.

The Minister's plan to maintain contact with France through the "Vienna Forum" on extremism raises questions about the effectiveness of these expert exchanges and highlight the dangers of the Forum.

Raab's response to the Paris revolts against police brutality appears reactionary and lacking in a comprehensive strategy to address integration challenges. Instead of rushing to develop a Segregation Report and focusing on security concerns, a more thoughtful and inclusive approach is needed to foster genuine understanding and cooperation between different communities in Austria.