



Enhancing collaboration between law enforcement and other stakeholders in P/CVE

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RAN 
Practitioners

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Introduction

Violent extremism is both a security issue and a social problem. Therefore, approaches to address violent extremism must be crafted to promote the inclusiveness of different societal elements and governmental levels.¹ Addressing the impact of any form of extremism requires inclusiveness and multidisciplinary with the involvement of many stakeholders, not only those of law enforcement and security but also from civil society and the community. The Western Balkan (WB) countries, especially in the last decade, have faced and continue to face the threats of violent extremism and terrorism, be it ethno-nationalist or religiously motivated extremism with the tendency for right-wing extremism to grow. Internal governmental and civil society organisation (CSO) reports and research, international reports about the WBs such as European Commission progress reports for WB countries, as well as United States (US) Department of State country reports on terrorism, recognise progress and successes achieved in the field of preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE) such as the drafting of legislation, establishing of mechanisms or successes of law enforcement.² However, limited progress has been made in establishing a sustainable multi-agency approach to P/CVE.³ While WB countries have started to create a record of addressing P/CVE with inter-institutional mechanisms, including law enforcement agencies, segments of civil society and international stakeholders, interviews conducted for this paper demonstrate that this approach is still relatively new, as the general perceptions of policymakers and the P/CVE community were that violent extremism is still primarily a law enforcement and security issue.

The shift in the approach is especially visible in response to addressing the phenomenon of foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) who travelled to Syria and Iraq. In 2014, with the support of the EU and the US, all WB countries adopted a more holistic approach including P/CVE and involving other relevant stakeholders such as civil society, NGOs and religious communities. Due to the international focus on P/CVE and the support dedicated to this area, WB countries have created dedicated mechanisms and policies. However, it is unclear whether these mechanisms can become fully operational and sustained in the long term due to the following reasons:

- the rise of new challenges dealing with returning FTFs and their families diverting efforts from primary and secondary prevention to focus more on rehabilitation and reintegration (R&R),
- lack of coordination among central government and local stakeholders,
- lack of funding, allocation of resources and dependence on donor funds.

CSOs play a crucial role in a whole-of-society approach to P/CVE. CSO actors are often well-positioned, credible, and experienced in working with specific groups to help to identify and address the grievances that make individuals more vulnerable to the influence of violent extremist groups.⁴

In the WB countries, the increased involvement of CSOs in P/CVE started during the years 2014-2015, initially in raising awareness on the risks from violent extremism and terrorism and gradually having been involved in drafting policy and strategic documents, and later on, engaged directly in P/CVE and R&R.

The involvement and role of CSOs differ from country to country. In Kosovo* there is greater involvement of CSOs in all P/CVE approaches and activities, including in policymaking, drafting and implementation of strategic documents. In other countries of the WBs, there is the involvement of CSOs in prevention,

¹ 'Understanding Referral Mechanisms in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization That Lead to Terrorism: Guidebook for South-Eastern Europe', 39, accessed 15 August 2022, <https://www.osce.org/secretariat/418274>

² 'Balkans-Regional-Report.Pdf', 27, accessed 31 October 2022, <https://h2020connekt.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Balkans-Regional-Report.pdf>

³ Mensur Hoti, Government stakeholder questionnaire, 30 July 2022.

⁴ 'The Role of Civil Society in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization That Lead to Terrorism: A Guidebook for South-Eastern Europe', 10, accessed 7 March 2023, <https://www.osce.org/secretariat/400241>

*This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSC 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.

rehabilitation and reintegration; however, there is a lack of specific data about their involvement in strategy and policymaking.

There is a need for more engagement of CSOs in all processes of P/CVE, starting from strategy and policymaking, prevention, intervention, rehabilitation and reintegration. To achieve a whole-of-society approach, governments in WB countries should create a more enabling environment for the engagement of CSOs by engaging them in all processes, building trust and partnership, and capacity building.

This paper aims to address the challenges and obstacles that are presented along the multidisciplinary work in addressing P/CVE. It will identify lessons from the past and good practices that can be further explored, advanced and adapted to the current WB context. Furthermore, areas will be identified in which cooperation between law enforcement/security actors and other relevant actors should be strengthened, both in secondary and tertiary prevention. The paper will demonstrate cooperation models of the law enforcement/security sector with other relevant actors in the EU countries and how those models can be adapted considering the legislations in force in the WBs.

In the final part, recommendations will be given on how cooperation between actors can be strengthened among the multidisciplinary teams with special emphasis on the relationship between law enforcement/security officials and other relevant actors in P/CVE. The methodology used includes primary sources using questionnaires and official documents as well as research of existing literature in the field of P/CVE, especially RAN papers and a comparison of existing state models in the comprehensive approach to address P/CVE.

Taking stock of challenges, needs and lessons learned in the collaboration between security actors and other P/CVE stakeholders

All WB countries face some form of violent extremism, whether (violent) right-wing extremism, left-wing extremism or Islamist extremism, which challenges institutions and social cohesion in general in WB countries.⁵ Experience addressing the different ideologies present in the region vary however and is primarily linked to FTFs, as WB countries have developed a multitude of P/CVE programmes and policies in the field of R&R of FTFs and their families.⁶ However, despite the progress recognised by the reports of international institutions, it appears that the WBs' efforts are limited, and there is still no sustainability of the multidisciplinary approach mechanisms in P/CVE.⁷

Coordination between the central and local governments remains challenging, due to the lack of local capacities in P/CVE. Also, the involvement of segments of civil society and the creation of ownership of processes by civil society is a challenge due to the lack of local resources. Most international grants are focused/dedicated to supporting the efforts of R&R, rather than the primary and secondary prevention of violent extremism. Additionally, when working within the P/CVE domain, CSOs encounter resistance regarding the exchange of information from the security sector, the perceived dominant player in P/CVE.⁸ This cross-sector disengagement is mostly associated with the absence of formal regulatory and policy mechanisms supporting and regulating the exchange of information. Furthermore, the difference in

⁵ '2021 Enlargement Package', Text, European Commission - European Commission, accessed 31 October 2022, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_21_5275

⁶ '2021 Enlargement Package'.

⁷ '2021 Enlargement Package'.

⁸ Eric Rosand and Eric Manton, 'Lessons Learned from Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism in the Western Balkans' 41 (2021): 3, https://www.gcerf.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/rosand_and_manton_newsbrief.pdf

organisational cultures and objectives among stakeholders is a challenge to forming an effective multi-disciplinary approach.⁹

Still, some WB countries have managed to coordinate actions and create bodies between law enforcement/security agencies and other relevant stakeholders who have a role in P/CVE.¹⁰ In the following section, the existing mechanisms in selected WB countries are shortly described and the strategic documents or programmes for P/CVE, as well as the needs and lessons learned, are presented.

a) Institutional set-up and legal framework of the WB countries

All countries in the WBs have adopted common legislation in the field of preventing and fighting terrorism and are generally considered to be in full or close harmony with the EU acquis, including the definition and the sanctioning of all forms of terrorism.

Almost all WB countries have dealt with the issue of preventing and fighting terrorism through national strategies against terrorism. However, the involvement of citizens of the WB countries in the conflict zone, mainly within terrorist organisations, as well as the spread of extremist narratives and ideologies, identified the need to strengthen P/CVE efforts, by addressing identified concerns and threats through strategic documents and national laws planning.

The first efforts to draft P/CVE strategic documents in most of the WB countries date mainly from 2015. However, in recent years, reflecting on new emerging trends, challenges and threats there has been a common understanding of the inclusion of P/CVE in the framework of National Counter Terrorism Strategies, such as in the case of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and North Macedonia. However, for various reasons, some of the WB countries are facing challenges in realising their objectives, except for Albania, which has already approved the Cross-sectoral Strategy against Terrorism 2021-2025 and its Action Plan 2021-2023, based on the four main pillars, prevention, protection, pursuit and response to terrorism, based on the EU Strategy against Terrorism. Bosnia and Herzegovina's new counterterrorism (CT)/P/CVE strategy (2021-2026) was approved in October 2022. Currently, action plans are being produced by the authorities at the federal-state level (Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republika Srpska and Brčko District). However, the European Commission recommends that the new strategy should be adopted in line with the EU policy and that special importance be given to P/CVE, covering all forms of radicalisation and violent extremism (political, ethno-nationalist and religious) and addressing them also in field activities on P/CVE.¹¹ Based on interviews conducted with local experts, these recommendations are taken into account, and furthermore, the role of CSOs will be further detailed in follow-up documents (action plans).¹² Kosovo, during the year 2022, after evaluating the measures taken so far, as well as based on the assessment of the situation and new emerging threats from violent extremism and terrorism, has drafted a new strategy against terrorism 2023-2028, which has been published on the Ministry of Internal Affairs' (MIA) official webpage¹³ in July 2023.¹⁴

Serbia has yet to draft a new national strategy to replace the national strategy for preventing and fighting terrorism (2017-2021). However, the regular mechanism for monitoring and reporting regarding the implementation of the strategy was not functional based on the European Commission's report for Serbia for the year 2022.¹⁵

⁹ Luan Keka, Government stakeholder questionnaire, 21 June 2022.

¹⁰ Keka.

¹¹ Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations, 'Bosnia and Herzegovina Report 2021', 38–39, accessed 10 August 2022, https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/bosnia-and-herzegovina-report-2021_en

¹² Dr Vlado Azinovic, Expert stakeholder questionnaire, 1 August 2022.

¹³ 'Strategic Documents of MIAPA', accessed 1 August 2023, <https://mpb.rks-gov.net/f/39/Strategic-documents>

¹⁴ Rebeka Qena, CSO stakeholder questionnaire, 28 July 2022.

¹⁵ 'Serbia Report 2022', accessed 31 July 2023, https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/serbia-report-2022_en

North Macedonia, like other countries of the WBs, has adopted national strategies for countering terrorism (2018-2022) and for countering violent extremism (2018-2022) with related action plans.

Montenegro adopted its first Countering Violent Extremism Strategy for the years 2016-2018 and drew up the new Countering Violent Extremism Strategy 2020-2024 in October 2022.

All WB countries' strategic documents and draft documents in the process of approval for P/CVE constitute a basis for addressing challenges and threats through a comprehensive approach, based on the important role that all institutions have at the central level, but also at the local level, emphasising the irreplaceable role of and cooperation with civil society.

b) CT and P/CVE mechanisms in place in WB countries

Almost all WB countries have set up and operationalised coordination mechanisms in the field of CT and P/CVE, which include security and law enforcement agencies and institutions at the central and the local level such as educational institutions, social services, health services, civil society, CSOs and the private sector.

In the WB countries, the leading actor in CT is mainly law enforcement (police), supported by other security actors, including state intelligence agencies. The role of law enforcement in P/CVE mechanisms is mainly focused on community policing approaches.

All WB country models define a comprehensive approach to threats from terrorism and violent extremism. Furthermore, most of the WB countries have embraced a whole-of-society approach to P/CVE.

Whole-of-society approach

An approach to P/CVE that envisions a role for civil society actors and non-governmental actors, as well as relevant governmental actors across sectors, in the prevention of violent extremism (OSCE).¹⁶

The WB countries have established specific coordination mechanisms for issues related to P/CVE, which differ in terms of their position and hierarchy from one country to another but are quite similar in terms of their missions and commitments. While in Albania and North Macedonia separate entities have been created, in Kosovo and Serbia these mechanisms are located within the Ministry of Internal Affairs, while in Bosnia and Herzegovina this mechanism is located within the Ministry of Security.

Albania

Albania has established the Center for Countering Violent Extremism (CVE Center), which is responsible for capacity building, coordinating CVE activities across government institutions and overseeing the implementation of the national CVE strategy.¹⁷ The CVE Coordination Center in Albania is also engaged with the institutions at the local government level to increase awareness of P/CVE and the evaluation of the work by the stakeholders in relevant municipalities in the establishment of Local Safety Councils (LSCs). These LSCs consist of frontline practitioners, such as teachers, psychologists, sociologists and community policing officers, and religious communities. The CVE Coordination Centre's outreach includes staff in prisons and

¹⁶ 'A Whole-of-Society Approach to Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization That Lead to Terrorism', 7, accessed 3 February 2023, https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/a/7/444340_0.pdf

¹⁷ Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations, 'Albania Report 2021', 43,44, accessed 12 August 2022, https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/albania-report-2021_en

probation.¹⁸ It is worth noting that the cooperation between law enforcement/security and other stakeholders is mainly occurring around R&R with FTFs and their families returning from Syria.¹⁹

Bosnia and Herzegovina

The Ministry of Security of Bosnia and Herzegovina is the main responsible government institution that deals with P/CVE on the national level and has a dedicated office for cooperation with other actors in the field. As in other WB countries, various international organisations support and implement various programmes in the field of P/CVE, such as capacity building, awareness raising, deradicalisation, repatriation and rehabilitation.

In terms of stakeholders involved, a wide range of institutions is active in countering terrorism and violent extremism and dealing with returning FTFs and their families.

The project 'Institutional Strengthening: Establishing a Formal Referral Mechanism for Preventing Violent Extremism in Bosnia and Herzegovina'²⁰ of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) envisages work with families, the media, employment centres, local mayors, the police, the Islamic community and youth. The purpose is to put in place a referral mechanism approach to identify at-risk individuals and respond early and appropriately.²¹ There is also a collaboration between international and local CSOs in the implementation of various projects for P/CVE and the coordination of efforts between the stakeholders.

Kosovo

The Government of Kosovo has appointed the Minister of Internal Affairs as the National Coordinator for the Prevention of Violent Extremism and the Fight against Terrorism, who supervises and coordinates inter-institutional efforts in P/CVE.²²

Also, many other actors are involved and have coordinated activities in this direction. It is worth mentioning that other relevant stakeholders are civil society, local and international experts, governmental and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and the Islamic Community of Kosovo (BIK). CSOs in Kosovo undoubtedly represent one of the most important stakeholders in awareness raising, deradicalisation and P/CVE. The international community mainly has a capacity-building and advisory role, and it should be underlined that most of the funding for local CSOs in the prevention of radicalism and violent extremism comes from them.²³

With the existing strategies, the whole-of-society approach to P/CVE has been embraced and more responsibility has been given to the local actors. In this context, the local level is comprised of Municipal Safety Councils (MSCs) led by mayors with the participation of representatives from the local assembly, security institutions, ethnic and religious representatives, CSOs, local media and businesses. Furthermore, in 2016, the first Referral Mechanism for P/CVE was created as a pilot project in one municipality, which has been shown as a success story and is expected to be replicated in three other municipalities.²⁴

Unlike in other countries, cooperation and coordination of activities between law enforcement/security and other stakeholders in P/CVE in Kosovo mainly take place through the Division for the Prevention and Reintegration of Radicalized Persons (DPRRP). This mechanism was created in 2017 in the MIA and is primarily tasked with country-level cross-sector coordination of reintegration activities for released (terrorism-charged) prisoners. Participating officials are from the MIA, Kosovo Police (KP), Ministry of Justice, Ministry

¹⁸ Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations, 43,44.

¹⁹ Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations, 43,44.

²⁰ Damir Kapidži, 'BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA', 9, accessed 12 August 2022, https://h2020connekt.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Bosnia_CONNEKT_Approaches_to_extremism.pdf.

²¹ Kapidži, 9.

²² Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations, 'Kosovo Report 2021', 19 November 2021, 44, https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/kosovo-report-2021_en.

²³ Lulzim Peci and Agon, 'Kosovo - Macro-Drivers of Radicalisation and Violent Extremism', *Connekt* (blog), 5, accessed 4 August 2022, <https://h2020connekt.eu/publications/mapping-the-drivers-of-radicalisation-in-the-light-of-state-dynamics-in-kosovo/>.

²⁴ Lulzim Peci and Agon, 5.

of Labour and Social Welfare, Kosovo Probation Service (KPS), Kosovo Correctional Service (KCS), municipalities and other stakeholders.²⁵ This cooperation in recent years has occurred in the repatriation of FTFs and their families as well as in the process of reintegration, rehabilitation and resocialisation. The challenge remains the lack of structured risk assessments by some important actors, including the KCS, KPS and MIA, needed to respond to the needs and risks posed by returnees and repatriated citizens.²⁶ Despite these actors, KP and intelligence noted that they have used existing models, such as VERA2 and ERG22, to assess the level of the threat from FTFs.²⁷

North Macedonia

North Macedonia has a National Committee for Countering Violent Extremism and Countering Terrorism (NCCVECT), whose chair is the National Coordinator for CT and CVE. Represented within the Committee are key institutions responsible for CT and violent extremism such as representatives from all ministries, police and the intelligence community.²⁸ This body is responsible for coordinating inter-institutional cooperation at the national level and local levels. In practice, NCCVECT conducted awareness-raising activities around the national CVE action plan to strengthen implementation capacity.²⁹

Serbia

The main responsible institution to implement the strategy for preventing and countering terrorism in Serbia is the Ministry of the Interior, while other relevant stakeholders are the intelligence service, relevant ministries, stakeholders from the private sector and civil society.³⁰ In the 2017-2021 counter-terrorism strategy, Serbia underlines the involvement of CSOs as collaborators and sometimes as partners in the prevention of violent extremism. However, from the research of the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia, the level of mistrust of security actors towards CSOs appears as a challenge.³¹ Despite this, there are efforts at the local level to address P/CVE, as is the case with the DamaD centre in Novi Pazar-Serbia that offered and supported the creation of a referral mechanism that brings together different local actors (e.g. police, prosecutors, schools, sports clubs, religious institutions, media, CSOs).³²

As in the cases of Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, in recent years more intense cooperation of law enforcement/security and other stakeholders is taking place on the issues of repatriation, reintegration and rehabilitation of returnees from Syria.³³

c) Multi-agency and multidisciplinary approaches in the WBs

The WB countries acknowledged the need for a comprehensive approach to P/CVE. To effectively deliver services in the framework of P/CVE and enhance cooperation between all stakeholders, WB countries adopted a multi-agency/multidisciplinary approach that is crucial for implementing preventive measures for the protection of citizens against exposure to extremist ideologies.

²⁵ Qena, CSO stakeholder questionnaire.

²⁶ Ardit Orana and Skender Perteshi, 'Disengagement, Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Foreign Terrorist Fighters', 10, accessed 12 August 2022, <https://qkss.org/en/publikimet/disengagement-rehabilitation-reintegration-foreign-terrorist-fighters>

²⁷ Ardit Orana and Skender Perteshi, 10.

²⁸ Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations, 'North Macedonia Report 2021', 40, accessed 16 August 2022, https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/north-macedonia-report-2021_en.

²⁹ 'North Macedonia', *United States Department of State* (blog), accessed 16 August 2022, <https://www.state.gov/reports/country-reports-on-terrorism-2020/north-macedonia/>.

³⁰ 'Uspon desnice: slučaj Srbija – Ekstremizam, terorizam, strani borci', *helsinški odbor za ljudska prava u srbiji*, 2022, 56,57, <https://www.helsinki.org.rs/serbian/doc/Uspon%20desnice%20-%20slucaj%20Srbija.pdf>

³¹ 'Uspon desnice: slučaj Srbija – Ekstremizam, terorizam, strani borci', 46.

³² 'Referalni-Mehanizam-Za-Prevenciju-i-Suzbijanje-Ekstremizma-i-Radikalizma.Pdf', accessed 1 November 2022, <https://www.kcdamad.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Referalni-mehanizam-za-prevenciju-i-suzbijanje-ekstremizma-i-radikalizma.pdf>

³³ Azinovic, Expert stakeholder questionnaire.

In the following paragraphs, models of referral mechanisms that are being developed in WB countries are presented where collaboration and involvement of law enforcement/security agencies with other stakeholders takes place.

Kosovo is among the first countries in the WBs that piloted a referral mechanism in 2016 in one of the municipalities affected by extremism. This referral mechanism in the municipality of Gjilan adopts a multidisciplinary and holistic approach to community engagement and community-oriented policing that involves all sectors of society. The referral mechanism uses existing collaboration between local authorities, the police, and the local community to accept referrals of individuals at risk of being drawn into violent extremism, to assess the nature and extent of that risk, and to develop the most appropriate support for the individuals concerned. However, the referral mechanism in Gjilan serves for the early identification of individuals at risk of or vulnerable to radicalism to prevent the radicalisation of individuals in society. Therefore, it does not include tertiary processes of resocialisation and reintegration. The members of the referral mechanism are representatives of the local level who have close contact with the community in their daily life, such as municipal officials, KP, KCS, Department of Education, schools, Department of Social Services, religious communities, psychologists and parents councils, while external partners with whom the referral mechanism cooperates in handling cases are NGOs, other enforcement institutions, community safety forums, media representatives and youth organisations.³⁴

The referral mechanism has five main responsibilities, always in accordance with the principles of confidentiality and data protection:

1. early identification of individuals at risk,
2. assessing the nature of the risk and determining measures for treatment in the form of a support package,
3. implementation of the support package (measures for treatment),
4. ensuring that the person has received appropriate advice and support,
5. evaluation of the effectiveness of the implementation of the package.

Referral mechanism process:

- The referral process includes the phase of identifying persons vulnerable to radicalism, which is done by various actors in society, who have received prior training, especially in identifying indicators of risk and vulnerability, such as the police, family members, peers, the schoolteacher or psychologist, the doctor of the health centre in that neighbourhood municipality, representatives of religious entities and sports coaches.³⁵
- After the end of the identification phase, the case review phase begins, in which phase the members of the referral mechanism collect information on the individual's vulnerability to radicalism, including the assessment of the individual's needs, as well as the risk assessment.
- The next phase includes the referral for support, in which phase the assessment of the provision of support is made, based on the identification of the needs of the individual, the risk assessment, and the determination of the needs for support. During this phase, the members of the referral mechanism decide by majority vote whether to continue with the provision of support if the person is at risk. In the case that it is estimated that the referred individual is not vulnerable to radicalism, or they are being treated by any other institution, members of the referral mechanism may decide not to continue with the provision of the support package. In cases where it is decided to provide support, the members of the referral mechanism, based on the assessment of needs, examine and define the support package (Definition of the support package) that will be offered to the person in question, which may include social assistance, professional training, psychological counselling, etc.
- In the case of designing an appropriate support package, the referred person is offered that package (Support package delivery). Afterwards, the progress is monitored, and the vulnerability is reviewed

³⁴ Interview with Luan Keka.

³⁵ Luan Keka, Government stakeholder questionnaire.

to determine whether the package has provided adequate support and the person can exit the mechanism (Exit) or the package was not successful, and this person must undergo the referral process once again (Return) or be referred further to other institutions. In cases where there is a high level of risk, the person will be referred to the police for further action.

The referral mechanism in Kosovo is considered a successful pilot model to address P/CVE and was planned to be established in other municipalities affected by radicalisation and extremism. However, with the emerging trends of FTF returnees and their families, and the need to establish and strengthen the Division for Prevention and Re-integration within the MIA, the focus has been oriented at the central level, therefore the referral mechanism has not been able to be expanded to other municipalities.³⁶ According to local expert Mr Mensur Hoti, plans are to expand to other municipalities and adopt the same referral mechanism as in the United Kingdom's (UK) 'Channell' model that is being piloted in Hani i Elezit municipality.

With the establishment of the referral mechanism, the involvement of the local level and the multidisciplinary approach in the identification of needs and the implementation of programmes to protect vulnerable individuals from the influence of extremist ideologies has been achieved. The referral mechanism of Gjilan has enabled cooperation, coordination, and real communication between all institutions at the local level, the BIK, and especially the educational institutions, which have increased communication with parents in addressing their concerns and coordination of activities. Despite the results achieved, according to those involved in the management of the programme, as of 2018 it had treated 10 cases, almost all of which had avoided individuals radicalising further.³⁷ The referral mechanism faces challenges, such as lack of funds intended for the implementation of prevention programmes, as well as the lack of experience of all actors within the referral mechanism. According to the annual report for 2022, seven cases of minors exhibiting signs of radicalisation were treated that year.³⁸

The referral mechanism of Gjilan focuses only on identifying individuals vulnerable to extremist ideologies and radicalism, while the return of foreign fighters and their families from the conflict zone has raised the need to develop programmes in the field of reintegration and resocialisation, as well as the involvement of local CSOs.

Currently, the transfer of responsibilities from the DPRRP at the local level has begun. As a result of this process, the implementation of the referral mechanism has begun in the municipality of Hani i Elezit (expansion to other municipalities is expected to commence soon), based on the UK Channel model, which will be elaborated below in the document. Within this mechanism, relevant actors from the local level are included, such as those of health, psychological support, social and educational services, police, etc.³⁹ After a series of study trips to the UK from central and local Kosovar first responder teams involved in P/CVE who learned about the model and received trainings from the UK experts in Kosovo, building on similarities that Kosovo law enforcement have in their community policing approach with the UK model, and the support offered from the UK government, the decision was taken to start and implement the Channel model.

The role of the referral mechanism will be to support and protect persons at risk of or vulnerable to violent extremism and terrorism.

Unlike the UK Channel model, which is mainly focused on vulnerable people and those at risk from the influence of extremist ideologies, the Hani i Elezit mechanism is also involved in the resocialisation and reintegration of returnees from the conflict zones, as well as persons released from prisons after being sentenced for terrorism offenses.⁴⁰

³⁶ Interview with Luan Keka.

³⁷ 'Understanding Referral Mechanisms in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization That Lead to Terrorism', 103, accessed 7 March 2023, <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/7/4/418274.pdf>

³⁸ Mensur Hoti, Government stakeholder questionnaire, 4 August 2023.

³⁹ Hoti, Government stakeholder questionnaire, 30 July 2022.

⁴⁰ Hoti.

UK Channel model

Channel is a voluntary, confidential programme that safeguards people identified as vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism. It is a multi-agency process, involving social workers, schools, further education colleges and universities, youth offending services, children's and adults' services, local safeguarding arrangements, local authority safeguarding managers (adult and/or children), local authority Early Help services, Home Office Immigration (Immigration Enforcement, UK Visas and Immigration) Border Force, housing, prisons and probation providers.⁴¹

Channel responsibilities and objectives are to:

- identify individuals at risk,
- assess the nature and extent of that risk,
- develop the most appropriate support plan for the individuals concerned.

The role of the police at Channel is mainly focused on risk assessment and risk management, which assessment should be done alongside the assessment of the subject's needs. Also, the police, considering the nature of their work, serve as a referral address for cases.

North Macedonia, since 2019, has started implementing the referral mechanism known as 'Passage4prevent', which is a multi-agency mechanism responsible for referrals of individuals who are at risk of radicalisation that can lead to violent extremism. This referral mechanism was developed within the framework of the project 'Educate to Prevent – Strengthening Front-line School Workers and Parents to Build Youth Resilience to Violent Extremism', implemented by the Centre for Research and Policy Making in partnership with CED and NEXUS, funded by the EU within the STRIVE Global Program managed by the Hedayah Center of Excellence for Countering Violent Extremism.⁴²

This is a referral mechanism model that is anchored at the community level and foresees a multi-agency structure allowing for risk assessment and support of the individual from different perspectives: psychological, educational, social, health, cultural and religious. Passage4prevent does not include the creation of a special mechanism but is only an upgrade of the existing mechanisms at the local level intended for other issues, such as the mechanism against domestic violence, with a single difference: the police do not have direct access to those referred, as extremism is considered a pre-criminal phase.⁴³

Within the Global Community Engagement & Resilience Fund (GCERF) grants for capacity building, and assistance to returned FTFs and their families (psychosocial support and skill development), a consortium of North Macedonian CSOs is engaged in different activities in P/CVE and R&R.⁴⁴ An example of the CSOs is also NEXUS involved in activities such as drafting documents as follows:

- monitoring and evaluating the existing strategies and action plans;
- active contribution on drafting the new national strategies for CVE and CT and their action plans,
- organising community events within specific municipalities, where returned FTFs and their family live, on various topics, such as different forms of violence, basic children's rights, rights to R&R of vulnerable categories, and raising awareness among communities for the reintegration of former violent extremist offenders and their families;

⁴¹ 'Channel Duty Guidance: Protecting People Vulnerable to Being Drawn into Terrorism', 7, accessed 24 August 2022, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/964567/6.6271_HO_HMG_Channel_Duty_Guidance_v14_Web.pdf

⁴² 'Passage4Prevent-Prelom-Ang.Pdf', 5, accessed 16 August 2022, <http://www.crpm.org.mk/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Passage4Prevent-prelom-ang.pdf>

⁴³ 'Passage4Prevent-Prelom-Ang.Pdf', 18.

⁴⁴ 'North Macedonia', GCERF (blog), 5 January 2022, <https://www.gcerf.org/north-macedonia/>.

- preparation and drafting the full set of documents, for the frontliners, in accordance with the National Plan for R&R and in consultation with the National Committee and local multidisciplinary teams:
 - questionnaire for assessing the degree of radicalisation of the individual who is part of the R&R process,
 - standard operating protocol for working with returnees and their families,
 - handbook of symbols referring to early radicalisation in the community,
 - standardised model of approach for rehabilitation, resocialisation and reintegration of combatants returning from foreign battlefields and their families,
 - standardised approach model to CVE,
 - Handbook 1: Radicalism and radicalisation: basic terms and characteristics of the phenomenon,
 - Handbook 2: Prevention of radicalisation,
 - Handbook 3: Rehabilitation from violent extremism and radicalisation.

These documents are not publicly available and are only for the internal use of the National Committee⁴⁵ for CVE and CT, as well as for all those national institutions and bodies that work on this issue.⁴⁶

Serbia, since 2018, has started to implement a multi-agency referral mechanism at the local level (municipality of Novi Pazar). The referral mechanism for the prevention and control of radicalism and violent extremism is a complete framework for institutional action and improvement of cooperation of different social actors in Novi Pazar (institutions and services, bodies, local governments, religious communities, NGOs, media and others), based on existing mandates and responsibilities. The purpose of the referral mechanism is preventive/proactive work on preventing and eliminating risks and aiding and providing support for children and young people when they are exposed to the risk of radicalisation, reactive/intervention work on early recognition of possible connections with extremism and radicalism, and effective response before a criminal act.

The main goal of the referral mechanism is to:

- ensure respect for the human rights of children/youth at risk or related to extremism and radicalism, provide an efficient way of providing service within each institution;
- enable referral/referral to other service providers, whenever it is in the best interest of the child/young person, and referral to the city coordination body, if the system of the service is unable to process the case by itself;
- synchronise efforts to improve local policy and procedure about a wide range of challenges, risks, and threats to human security and social security in the local community;
- collect data on the services provided and identify needs to improve the system of making public policies related to issues of extremism and radicalism.⁴⁷

Relevant actors participating in the referral mechanism are divided into two main groups: **The primary actors** are institutions/organisations that work directly with or meet children and young people and on a daily basis provide different types of services by their mandates. All primary actors can be the point of first contact — an entry point into the system of providing services (community police, schools, religious communities, centres for social work, sports associations, health institutions, prosecution, courts, NGOs and media). **Secondary actors** are policy- and decision-makers, organs and bodies that can influence the quality of providing services through the distribution of budget funds and other strategic decisions (the city of Novi Pazar, Local Security Council, Council for Gender Equality, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Employment and Social Affairs, etc).⁴⁸ The role of the police within the referral

⁴⁵ Represented within the Committee are key institutions countering terrorism and violent extremism such as representatives from all ministries (especially health, education, culture and social), police and the intelligence service.

⁴⁶ Afrodita Musliu, CSO stakeholder questionnaire, n.d.

⁴⁷ 'Referalni-Mehanizam-Za-Prevenziju-i-Suzbijanje-Ekstremizma-i-Radikalizma.Pdf', 13.

⁴⁸ 'Referalni-Mehanizam-Za-Prevenziju-i-Suzbijanje-Ekstremizma-i-Radikalizma.Pdf', 15.

mechanism is mainly focused on the Community Police, which mainly serves as a point of contact for the referral of cases by citizens and other actors for the referral of cases.

Challenges and needs

Looking at the institutional set-up and legal framework of WB countries, we note that all countries have adopted a legal framework and national strategic documents and adopted action plans for P/CVE. In most countries, these strategies are in the process of being or have been reviewed and redrafted. All WB countries are parties to the *Joint Action Plan on Counter-Terrorism for the Western Balkans*⁴⁹ that provides for a comprehensive plan with five different objectives enhancing capacities, legislations and harmonising policies emphasising also P/CVE.⁵⁰

Law enforcement (police) and other security actors play a critical role in P/CVE in all WB countries; this is also due to the security-based approach of governments in the past to deal with violent extremism and CT, but also due to the existing level of capacities of law enforcement, as they must deal with the issues of providing security and safety in the community.

For the most part, police and other security actors in the WBs are mainly involved in tertiary and secondary prevention.⁵¹ The institutional set-up and legal framework of most WB countries, in general, allow for the advancement of the role of the police and enhance collaboration in P/CVE with other stakeholders even though it is necessary to make interventions with primary and secondary legislation. Furthermore, it is noted that even though there are incentives in some municipalities across the WBs by establishing multi-sectoral or multidisciplinary mechanisms to deal with P/CVE, the challenges to be considered and addressed are as follows.

Main challenges in P/CVE

- lack of trust towards segments of civil society and other stakeholders such as institutions at the central and local levels, which are not directly involved in security issues, such as psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers and municipal workers;
- insufficient capacities at the local level such as limited resources of probation officers, social workers, psychologists at schools;
- lack of systematic procedures and methods for risk assessment between stakeholders responsible for P/CVE;
- lack of information exchange between law enforcement/police, local-level practitioners and CSOs;
- lack of joint protocols for inter-agency communication and cooperation;⁵²
- political instability in WB countries;
- lack of sensitivity and awareness of P/CVE-related issues among police;⁵³
- lack of effective mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the coordination and implementation of activities;⁵⁴
- the challenge of sustainability, lack of specific funds dedicated to mechanisms;

⁴⁹ European Commission, 2018, Joint Action Plan on Counter-Terrorism for the Western Balkans, https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2018-10/20181005_joint-action-plan-counter-terrorism-western-balkans.pdf

⁵⁰ Arber Fetiu and Diana Mishkova, '31.12.2020 Diana Mishkova, Simeon Evstatiev', n.d., 6, <https://www.prevev-balkan-mena.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/D5.1-Policy-brief-the-Balkans-1.pdf>

⁵¹ 'NSCITF-Report-on-Countering-Violent-Extremism.Pdf', n.d., 15,16.

⁵² <http://www.crpm.org.mk/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Passage4Prevent-prelom-ang.pdf>, 18.

⁵³ Qena, CSO stakeholder questionnaire.

⁵⁴ Fetiu and Mishkova, '31.12.2020 Diana Mishkova, Simeon Evstatiev', 18.

- political appointees in national CVE centres hinder the continuity of multi-agency work after the change of government.

Strengthening the role and collaboration of law enforcement with other actors in P/CVE across the WBs

Across the WBs, law enforcement, namely the police, is part of multi-agency working groups in the field of preventing radicalism that leads to violent extremism and terrorism — be it through community policing, MSCs, LSCs, or referral mechanisms at the local level, and at the central level with members specialised in CT and intelligence.

The police in these multi-agency mechanisms can play an important role. Some of the areas where the police can cooperate with other actors and at the same time contribute include: the repatriation processes of FTFs and their families, risk management and resocialisation, reintegration and rehabilitation.

- Risk management and resocialisation⁵⁵

The role and responsibility of the police for creating a safe and secure environment in the community give the advantage of creating trust and the possibility of influencing the community, especially through community policing, interacting with local institutions and different levels in the community to provide a safe and secure environment. Therefore, these factors place the police in an important role in risk management and resocialisation of released ex-violent extremist offenders. Even though risk management and resocialisation do not fall under the responsibility of the police, neither in the pre-release phase of offenders while in prison nor after release, the police can play a role in cooperation with prison services and probation services. In the early phases of detention of the offender, police can share individual risk/threat assessments of the violent extremist offenders with prison services. These assessments will serve prison services to tailor individual programmes for deradicalisation in prison and manage security concerns inside the prison. The same procedure and cooperation can be used jointly with probation services in the pre-release phase and after the offender is released. Furthermore, the unique position police hold in the community, such as providing safety and security to the community on a daily basis, interacting with key local players in the domain of safety and security, having access to and engaging with different levels of the community, places the police in a favourable position to contribute to the process of the risk management and resocialisation of released former violent extremist offenders.⁵⁶

As mentioned above, risk management and resocialisation fall under the responsibility of the prison service, and programmes within prisons for deradicalisation can also be conducted in cooperation with NGOs and CSOs. In this context, the role of the police, even based on the legislation in WB countries, does not foresee an involvement inside the prisons. However, models where the police have a role in the pre-release phase exist, as in the case of Aarhus in Denmark. This approach allows the local police to carry out prison visits to the prisoner, which enables a relationship of trust to be established at an early phase of the deradicalisation process and resocialisation while serving the sentence in the prison and which relationship can be developed and furthered after release.⁵⁷ Likewise, this method of action gives the police valuable information that they can share with the social workers involved in the process after the release of the offender and facilitates the process of the subject's reintegration into the community.

⁵⁵ 'GCERF-Strategy-for-Investment-in-the-Western-Balkans.Pdf', 3, accessed 3 February 2023, <https://www.gcerf.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/GCERF-Strategy-for-Investment-in-the-Western-Balkans.pdf>

⁵⁶ https://homeaffairs.ec.europa.eu/system/files/201906/ran_pol_role_do_police_play_in_resocialisation_marseille_20190520_en.pdf, 4.

⁵⁷ https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2019-06/ran_pol_role_do_police_play_in_resocialisation_marseille_20190520_en.pdf, 4.

Aarhus Model – Denmark⁵⁸

This model offers intervention at two levels: it addresses the general population as well as individuals.

General population intervention:

- Raising awareness of practitioners and the public through briefings and workshops for professionals and teaching institutions.
- Entails collaboration with local communities. Involves respectful and assertive dialogue with religious entities, cultural associations and other major players in local communities.

Individual intervention:

- First-line staff of the Task Force carry out risk evaluations of individuals and groups.
- Professional staff are counselled on dealing with cases linked to radicalisation.
- Counselling is provided for individuals and families in cases related to radicalisation.
- Mentoring is provided for individuals at risk of radicalisation or involvement in violent extremism.
- Contingency plans are made for foreign fighters and their families.

This model is considered simple, easy to apply, especially in small municipalities, and, what is more important, it minimises the stigmatisation of certain communities. Therefore, we estimate that this is one of the many models that could be used for WB countries.

- Repatriation, reintegration, and rehabilitation

As mentioned in the section above, law enforcement together with other stakeholders, such as CSOs, the local community, religious representatives, media, etc., have an essential role in the WBs in countering terrorism as well as P/CVE. In the current context, the police have a critical role in the repatriation of FTFs, especially in threat assessment and coordination of the return process of FTFs and their families from Syria.

This was the case, especially for the WB countries Albania, North Macedonia, and Kosovo, that undertook operations for the repatriation of the citizens (FTFs and their families) from Syria. Likewise, the police are one of the main actors in risk management and assessment in cooperation with prisons and the probation service in the pre-release phase. While in the post-release phase, as in the case of Kosovo, it cooperates closely with the multidisciplinary mechanism for reintegration and rehabilitation through the DPRRP in the MIA).⁵⁹

This cooperation occurs especially in tertiary prevention,⁶⁰ where it is intended to through tailored programmes achieve common objectives for disengagement, deradicalisation, reintegration and rehabilitation of violent extremist terrorist offenders, returned FTFs and their family members.

To achieve the desired results in the DPRRP, the police have seconded police officers with adequate knowledge, experience, and skills to handle P/CVE cases and work together with other institutional actors and civil society. The police have provided the necessary information about the subjects and risk assessments for other practitioners who had to intervene based on needs and requirements. On the other hand, the police have benefited from this multidisciplinary mechanism as they have been informed more about the subject's psychological profile through mental health services, and have gained knowledge on the

⁵⁸ 'Aarhus Model: Prevention of Radicalisation and Discrimination in Aarhus', accessed 16 October 2022, https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/networks/radicalisation-awareness-network-ran/collection-inspiring-practices/ran-practices/aarhus-model-prevention-radicalisation-and-discrimination-aarhus_en

⁵⁹ Prevention and Reintegration Division, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Kosovo.

⁶⁰ 'NSCITF-Report-on-Countering-Violent-Extremism.Pdf', 2.

receiving community, family, and social aspects where the subject has been reintegrated. This has helped police and security actors plan better for community safety.

Even at the local level, the police through referral mechanisms where they are established, by the LSCs and MSCs, play an important role in P/CVE. In all these mechanisms at the local level, the police do not have a leading role but contribute through the expertise it has about trends and phenomena in the community and knowledge about the community. The police are mainly involved in these mechanisms through community policing. In the research done so far in the WBs, the importance of cooperation between the police and other actors in P/CVE is noted. However, further research and appropriate evaluation are needed for the results achieved, the impact of this cooperation in society and, more importantly, if sustainability has been achieved in these mechanisms.

On the area of R&R, WB countries' international NGOs in cooperation with representatives of civil society from WB countries, such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and North Macedonia, have benefited from the EU-founded project DRIVE, which is a European-funded project and aims at mitigating threats related to foreign fighters and Islamist extremists through the improvement of effective disengagement, rehabilitation and reintegration (DRR) practices based on human-centred treatment and the involvement of local communities and public actors. For this purpose, the DRIVE project aims at identifying and diffusing best practices and policies regarding DRR programmes particularly in WB countries and strengthening these practices through the development of specific training modules and targeted dissemination campaigns.⁶¹

Based on the whole-of-society approach, the DRIVE project is tailored to target different actors and stakeholders, including national and local policymakers, state institutions, CSOs, social workers, youth organisations, security and law enforcement institutions, religious actors, corrections and probation services.

DRIVE project in North Macedonia

The partner for the implementation of the activities within the DRIVE project in North Macedonia is the NGO NEXUS - Civil Concept, whose basic goal is promotion and advancing of democracy.

Within this project, NEXUS has been engaged in:

- published research and analysis on vulnerable categories (women and minors) based on the North Macedonia context and compared with other partner countries.
- provided training "Strengthening the capacities of frontline workers (members of the multidisciplinary teams) to prevent radicalisation that can lead to violence and assist in the rehabilitation and reintegration of violent extremists, returned FTFs and their family members (women and children)."⁶²

- Other roles of law enforcement/security to enhance with stakeholders

Law enforcement/security as explained above are involved in various multi-agency approaches to prevent radicalism and extremism that lead to terrorism. Therefore, in addition to the roles explained above, they also have other roles and responsibilities with which they contribute to the enhancement of collaboration and the achievement of objectives in the entire process in P/CVE. Following are some of the roles that law enforcement/security perform:

- due to their proximity to the community, they also do **early identification and early warning** of persons who may be vulnerable to radicalisation and trends in the community regarding the risks of radicalisation and extremism;

⁶¹ 'The Project - MARTE - Methodology, Objectives, Expected Results', *DRIVE* (blog), accessed 9 March 2023, <https://drive-ontherightpath.eu/the-project/>

⁶² Afrodita Musliu, CSO stakeholder questionnaire.

- raise **awareness** together with other stakeholders in the community to enhance community resilience;
- do **risk assessments** for persons who are vulnerable to extremist ideologies and radicalisation, as well as **individual assessments** for persons who have already been affected by radicalism.

“Police do not have all the information and police cannot do it alone. ... Police shouldn’t spend resources on a task better done by someone else.”⁶³

Kosovo model for R&R⁶⁴

Since 2018, Kosovo has created a programme guideline for R&R for radicalised persons, vulnerable persons, and especially FTF returnees and their families. **The main elements of this programme are:**

- a) socio-economic support,
- b) psychological support,
- c) theological or ideological support,
- d) family counselling,
- e) support through recreational and cultural activities,
- f) mentoring.

This programme is implemented by the DPRRP in collaboration with the multidisciplinary team at the central and local levels and supported by CSOs of the central and local levels, which are supported by external donors such as the GCERF, IOM and EU, and by different embassies (US, Dutch and United Kingdom) accredited in Kosovo.

Part of the multidisciplinary groups at the central level are:

- a) National Coordinator Against Violent Extremism and Terrorism
- b) Division for the Prevention of Radicalism and Reintegration
- c) Kosovo Police
- d) Correctional Service
- e) Probationary Service
- f) Psychologists and Psychiatrists
- g) Non-governmental organisations
- h) Civil Society
- i) Religious preachers and theologians

Under DPRRP-led programmes more than 400 individuals have been treated, and all interventions have been done based on individual needs assessments and risk assessments.

In the implementation of the R&R programme, the DPRRP has a primary role, while it is the government’s goal that responsibility is transferred to the local level, where multidisciplinary teams are being established.⁶⁵

Local level

The central level is cooperating with the local level in handling cases and addressing P/CVE, strengthening their role in capacity building, and identifying responsible persons in the creation of multidisciplinary teams

⁶³ https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/system/files_en?file=2020-09/ran_pol_role_for_police_officers_utrecht_212016_en.pdf

⁶⁴ Hoti, Government stakeholder questionnaire, 30 July 2022.

⁶⁵ Hoti, Government stakeholder questionnaire.

through pilot projects who would oversee P/CVE and R&R. As discussed above, such a project is being implemented with the support of the UK based on the Channel model in the municipality of Hani i Elezit.⁶⁶ An exemplary list of positions to be included in the multidisciplinary team are:

- a) representative of the Directorate for Labour and Social Welfare,
- b) the representative from the Municipal Directorate of Education,
- c) the representative of the Directorate for Youth, Culture, and Sports,
- d) the representative of the Directorate of Public Health,
- e) representative of the Probation Service,
- f) the representative of the Police in the Community,
- g) representatives from civil society,
- h) representative from a religious community.

Below is an example of the involvement of different actors in R&R and their tasks:

Person X (FTF) returns from Syria with his wife and children.

Person X (FTF) will be treated according to the criminal code through the justice system.

- The police do a security check and risk assessment.

The DPRRP together with the multidisciplinary team makes assessments related to the respective expertise:

- social workers scan the socio-economic situation,
- doctors do the medical evaluation,
- psychiatrists do the psychiatric assessment,
- religious representatives or theologians do the ideological assessment.

Based on the findings, a general R&R programme is made for the family and for each child according to specific needs.

Then the Local Prevention and Reintegration Teams implement the activities.

For example, for the family:

- based on the need, social and economic support, housing, education, clothing, etc.

For example, for children:

- various recreational, sports and cultural activities,
- school registration and provision of the Catch-Up learning programme,
- sessions with the psychologist and psychiatrist, etc.

For women:

- psychiatric and psychological treatment,
- workshop on various topics such as parenting,
- professional training for employment or self-employment,
- grants for self-employment, etc.

During the entire process, civil society is involved together with other stakeholders. Depending on the capacities of NGOs, their involvement may be focused on terms of psychosocial support, help in education

⁶⁶ Hoti, Government stakeholder questionnaire, 30 July 2022.

and professional preparation, help for self-employment through grants, or even through other educational and cultural activities, to facilitate the process of separating subjects from extremism and violence, or even sensitising them to the benefits of R&R programmes. The role of NGOs and other segments of civil society can be more efficient in R&R programmes, especially for some more sensitive categories, such as women and children.⁶⁷

With the cooperation between institutional actors and CSOs in drafting strategic documents and programmes for R&R, it has been determined that implementing activities has been more straightforward and well-coordinated. This also led to the raising of capacities and opportunities in implementing R&R programmes.

However, even though a good practice of cooperation and coordination between institutional actors and civil society in R&R has been achieved, the issue of sustainable funding **remains a challenge**, as a significant part of the R&R programme continues to be based on international donations.

The following paragraph highlights the cooperation of the institutions with civil society actors in implementing activities to achieve the objectives of P/CVE.

The fact that CSOs are involved in P/CVE and R&R in cooperation and coordination with other law enforcement actors is also confirmed by interviews with stakeholders representing CSOs and officials of state institutions. To successfully implement activities and assess the individual needs of returned FTFs and their families, the police through the DPRRP of the MIA shared data with CSOs of returned FTFs and families and of locations of the receptive communities. Moreover, CSOs were involved in drafting the R&R programme in Kosovo funded by the IOM and led by the DPRRP.⁶⁸

To further illustrate, the Community Development Fund (CDF), Advocacy Training and Resource Center, Community Building Mitrovica and some other local NGOs in coordination with the DPRRP are implementing the R&R programme in Kosovo based on the individual needs of the returnees. The returnees (women) are offered vocational courses and parenting classes and are supported through grant provision — as well as the creation of linkages with local businesses through the provision of internships.⁶⁹ The same applies to male returnees. Even though they are detained after their return, they are offered vocational courses in prisons.

Furthermore, they organise forum theatre activities where school children watch the performances and continue to discuss the specifics; recreational and educational activities (visiting historical and cultural sites) as well as healing and education through arts, drama therapy and process drama, which enables them to express their experiences through arts, which allows them to deal and overcome their traumas. Children returnees as well as their parents on the other hand also benefit from individual sessions with psychiatrists who are provided through the MIA in collaboration with the Ministry of Health.⁷⁰

The GCERF established a multi-stakeholder Country Support Mechanism (CSM) in Kosovo in 2016 that remains active today. The mechanism is chaired by the MIA and comprises members from various government institutions, including members of the donor community. Members of civil society and international organisations also provide strategic guidance to the CSM. The main function of the CSM is to ensure ownership and strategic oversight of the GCERF's work in Kosovo, from the assessment of needs to the development of a strategy for investment, the development of expressions of interest, review of proposal applications, and funding recommendations.⁷¹

⁶⁷ Mensur Hoti, Government stakeholder questionnaire, January 2023.

⁶⁸ Mensur Hoti.

⁶⁹ Rebeka Qena, CSO stakeholder questionnaire, 28 February 2023.

⁷⁰ Rebeka Qena.

⁷¹ Mensur Hoti, Government stakeholder questionnaire.

Kosovo is currently preparing the local/municipal levels to increase their capacities in dealing with returning FTFs and the CDF is preparing a training-of-trainers training where various profiles (psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers) will become trainers-of-trainers in addressing the mental health of returnees and will further on continue with offering their knowledge to the local-level professionals.

Key Lessons

1. Governments and institutional mechanisms on their own cannot be successful in P/CVE without a multi-agency and multidisciplinary approach, where the role of NGOs and civil society is crucial.
2. Multi-agency and multidisciplinary referral mechanisms have yielded results in P/CVE, especially in some WB countries' models that apply an active involvement of different civil society entities.
3. The role of law enforcement is crucial in P/CVE, especially considering their expertise in preventing and countering terrorism and violent extremism. However, cooperation between law enforcement and other relevant actors in some countries of the region is not at a satisfactory level.
4. R&R programmes in the WBs function/are in place and can be efficient in minimising violent extremism, especially with the active involvement of local governance mechanisms. There are hundreds of FTFs, and their families who already returned to the WBs. So far, there has been no evidence of their reinvolvement in cases of terrorism (recidivism).
5. Different referral mechanism models that are used in EU countries can be used by WB countries, being adapted according to the local context.

Recommendations

1. Ensuring not securitising the process, through providing opportunities and assigning responsibilities to other relevant actors including educational institutions, social workers, psychologists, psychiatrists, CSOs.
2. Establishing and strengthening cooperation including information exchange and mutual trust building between law enforcement and the above-listed actors: educational institutions, social workers, psychologists, psychiatrists, civil society, including media outlets.
3. The expertise of the police and intelligence should be used for risk assessments of radicalised persons, by organising joint training with other stakeholders.
4. The police, the probation services and the correctional services should increase the exchange of information on those convicted of violent extremism and terrorism with other stakeholders involved in implementing activities in R&R on the need-to-know and need-to-share basis.
5. Foster capacity building in P/CVE on the local level (between law enforcement, social workers, psychologists, etc.), including the implementation of R&R programmes.
6. Cooperation should be increased not only in CVE but also in prevention between other actors and the police without hurting the trust in the community.

7. Safeguarding these efforts by creating sustainable mechanisms through long-term national and local financial planning.

Further reading

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