



**Report**  
**on the activities of the Regional Cooperation Council**  
**in the area of Countering Radicalization and Violent**  
**Extremism (CVE)**

**Sarajevo, February 2017**

## **Introduction**

The emergence of new security threats in recent years, such as radicalisation and terrorism captured the attention of the RCC Participants from South East Europe (SEE). The RCC Participants, consequently, have called on the RCC to engage and contribute to addressing this pernicious phenomenon.

The SEECP Ministers of Foreign Affairs, in the Joint Statement adopted in Tirana on 24 February 2015, expressed their concern about this serious threat and requested RCC to design a regional cooperation platform, which would bring together relevant stakeholders and develop a common approach to the issue of terrorism and foreign terrorist fighters.

Moreover, the RCC has been invited to support the development and implementation of the Western Balkans Counter-Terrorism Integrated Plan of Action (WBCTI PA) by the Ministers of Justice and Home Affairs of the Brdo Process and SEECP, at their conference held in Budva, on 17 April 2015.

In response to this mandate, the RCC has established the SEE Regional Platform for Countering Radicalization and Violent Extremism leading to Terrorism and Foreign Terrorist Fighters (henceforth referred to as the SEE Regional Platform on CVE/FTF).

This report presents the progress made by the RCC in the implementation of the first phase of the SEE Regional Platform on CVE/FTF. The report focuses on activities and results achieved in 2016, as well as summarises the activities foreseen to be implemented throughout 2017. The document puts forward recommendations with the purpose of informing policy making in addressing radicalization and violent extremism in SEE in the short- and medium-term.

## **Regional Platform for Countering Radicalization and Violent Extremism leading to Terrorism and Foreign Terrorist Fighters in South East Europe**

The SEE Regional Platform on CVE/FTF is aimed at strengthening coordination and cooperation on countering radicalization and violent extremism at national and regional levels, under the SEECP political umbrella.

The following have been established as the main goals of the regional platform:

- Achieve a more coherent and effective regional cooperation in the field, including cooperation with the relevant out-of-region actors, and coordination among various regional initiatives and fora;
- Enhance inter-agency cooperation at national level within/among the SEECP Participants;
- Strengthen the existing exchange of information and good practices between the RCC Participants and other relevant organisations and initiatives;
- Provide support national Radicalization Awareness Networks (RANs) to be established within WBCT Integrated Plan of Action;

- Develop a regional web-based platform for the exchange of information on Violent Extremism (VE);
- Develop a Matrix of Counter-Terrorism (CT) activities in the region;
- Foster analysis and research on VE and foreign fighters;
- Develop a master counter-narrative to counter extremist and terrorist propaganda, especially online, and recommendations regarding legal and technical means to shut down sources of such propaganda;
- Facilitate the establishment of a regional consortium of research institutes to promote radicalization monitoring tools;
- Engage civil society in projects on Countering Violent Extremism (CVE).

The expected outcome is a coordinated, all-inclusive and regionally owned process in place, as a contribution to the overall European and global counter-terrorism efforts.

The SEE Regional Platform on CVE/FTF is embedded in the EU-backed Western Balkans Counter-Terrorism Initiative (WBCTi) and its activities are relevant in the framework of the recently adopted Integrative Internal Security Governance (IISG) – an EU Programme designed to assist the Western Balkans in tackling serious and organised crime including terrorism in an integrative and coordinated approach.

## **Mechanism for implementation of the Platform**

The RCC invited the SEECF Participants to appoint National Focal Points to serve as contact points between the national authorities and the RCC, and as national coordinators of all CVE efforts. The RCC Board, at its meeting in October 2015, established the RCC Group of National Focal Points for Countering Radicalization and Violent Extremism Leading to Terrorism and Foreign Terrorist Fighters in South East Europe (NFP CVE-FTF Group).

The NFP Group, bringing together the National Coordinators of all CVE efforts, has a strategic coordinating role. It serves as a clearinghouse for ideas, proposals, and initiatives for regional CVE-FTF projects and activities and exchange of information and experience on CVE-FTF. The Group formulates policy recommendations, which feed the decision-making process of the SEECF Participants in their efforts to counter radicalisation and violent extremism.

**The first meeting of the NFP Group** took place in Sarajevo on 27<sup>th</sup> of January 2016. The participants discussed the current situation as regards the radicalization and violent extremism leading to terrorism and recruitment of foreign terrorist fighters in SEE. The Group paved the way for better cooperation and coordination of CVE activities, agreed on the development of a web-based platform for exchange of information on CVE-FTF to be hosted by the RCC and endorsed the CVE Work Plan for 2016.

**The second meeting of the NFP Group** for Countering Violent Extremism and Foreign Terrorist Fighters in SEE was held in Tirana on 11<sup>th</sup> November 2016, back-to-back with the

Regional Counter-Terrorism and P-CVE Coordination Conference. The participants exchanged views on the current trends, efforts, and challenges in P-CVE in SEE, took stock of the activities undertaken by the RCC, and endorsed the Work Plan for 2017.

The Group was instrumental in the course of 2016 in formulating **policy recommendations** that can contribute to national and regional efforts to address challenges in countering violent extremism in a more coherent and effective way. More specifically:

- A systematic collection of information and relevant documents on ongoing or planned projects should be conducted and intensified at national and regional level. Documents, such as legislation, action plans, statistical data, research articles, etc. collected as a result of this process, should be shared through the new P-CVE RCC website.
- The RCC should facilitate the coordination of activities at the regional level, especially by strengthening the role of the NFP Group and bringing together all relevant stakeholders.
- The number of people trying to join the FTF ranks has been greatly reduced due to the military defeats of terrorist organisations on battlefields in Syria, and increasingly efficient work of the law enforcement agencies from SEE and beyond. These developments have highlighted the need to structure the focus of CVE efforts in the region. More specifically, the activities of the Police Cooperation Convention (PCC SEE) and other stakeholders revolve around the repression (“hard”) side of counter-terrorism and countering violent extremism efforts. The RCC, on the other hand, will increasingly channel its P-CVE efforts to regional coordination, prevention, and rehabilitation of former FTF and other terrorists and violent extremists.
- The RCC Participants from the region are encouraged to consider the establishment of monitoring mechanisms to track the progress in implementation of national CT/P-CVE strategies and action plans. This information should be shared with domestic stakeholders and regional partners.
- Coordinated efforts are needed to implement the already accepted principle of “whole of government” and “whole society” approach in prevention of violent extremism (PVE). The governments should intensify their cooperation in the P-CVE field with academia and civil society. In particular, the results of scholarly research should be taken into account in the legislative process, while updating the existing and drafting new national strategies and action plans, and in daily practice of law enforcement and other relevant government agencies. Religious, community, youth and female leaders should be included in drafting and implementation of P-CVE programmes.
- The role of education is crucial. National training programmes on tolerance should be devised, with the help of out-of-region stakeholders.
- In order to increase the effectiveness of small-scale P-CVE programmes (focused on particular communities) a better coordination is required. All engaged stakeholders (international and regional organisations and initiatives, out-of-region embassies and development agencies, foundations, etc.) are strongly encouraged to announce and coordinate such programmes with the respective NFP / national coordination body.

- Efforts should be stepped up to ensure timely exchange of relevant CT-CVE-related information between the national police services, state attorney's/prosecutor's offices, security services and other relevant government agencies – bilaterally and regionally.
- Exchange of experience and good practices in dealing with former terrorists and violent extremists (including FTF, but not limited to them) both inside SEE and in Europe is to be encouraged and stepped up in order to develop programmes for their rehabilitation and reintegration into society.

## **Relevance of the Platform in the EU context**

A number of activities under the Platform are also part of EU's Western Balkans Counter-Terrorism Initiative (WBCTi). The RCC plays an overarching role in this initiative, with the specific role of enabling and facilitating political decision-making process and policy cooperation and coordination.

This important role was confirmed on 11<sup>th</sup> November 2016 in Tirana, at the **Regional Coordination Conference on Counter-Terrorism, Prevention and Countering of Violent Extremism** (CT and P/CVE) in SEE. The main goal of the joint meeting of the SEE regional cooperation networks, held under the auspices of the EU Western Balkans Counter-Terrorism Initiative, was to raise awareness, exchange information and good practices, establish and develop contacts, as well as agree on future actions. The event convened stakeholders engaged in CVE-FTF in SEE, regional and international organisations and donors and provided for harmonisation of agendas and priorities, as well as a better interaction with donors.

The meeting resulted in joint conclusions and provided a context for strengthening synergies between RCC's NFP Group, Police Cooperation Convention's (PCC SEE) CT Network and the Network of Slovenia-led CTI.

## **Mapping the initiatives in the area of preventing/countering violent extremism in South East Europe**

The RCC commissioned a **Survey of Regional Issues, Initiatives and Opportunities** in order to acquire a better understanding of the situation regarding violent extremism in the Western Balkans and Turkey. The Survey represents a useful tool for the governments and international organisations to get a clear picture about the latest trends and challenges in the region, as well as about the existing activities of international donors and initiatives of the civil society.

The study identifies gaps and overlaps in various interventions carried out by international donors and civil society organisations. It contains valuable recommendations on ways of tailoring interventions to the specific needs of the region, such as: stronger engagement of academia, civil society, local, and religious communities; establishment of P-CVE monitoring mechanisms; more

research on various aspects of violent extremism and terrorism. The Survey is available on the RCC website (<http://www.rcc.int/pubs/38/initiatives-to-preventcounter-violent-extremism-in-south-east-europe-a-survey-of-regional-issues-initiatives-and-opportunities>).

## **RCC's support to law enforcement agencies, academia and civil society in P/CVE-FTF**

The practical cooperation among law enforcement agencies was another pertinent dimension to the activities of the RCC. The RCC Secretariat organised the regional workshop for law enforcement experts and state attorneys/prosecutors from SEE on “**Legal and practical challenges in countering violent extremism leading to terrorism and dealing with current and former foreign terrorist fighters**” (Sarajevo, 4 May 2016). The meeting highlighted the importance of sharing best practices in countering extremist propaganda and dealing with FTF; assessing relevant national CT-CVE-FTF legislation and signing/ratifying the Additional Protocol to the Council of Europe Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism. The meeting has also provided a framework for enhancing practical cooperation between all relevant stakeholders at national level, as well as for intensifying cooperation with regional expert networks such as the SELEC, SEEPAG, PCC SEE.

Moreover, the workshop on “**Factors and drivers underlying radicalization and violent extremism leading to terrorism**” (Sarajevo, June 2016) was dedicated to internal and external drivers of violent extremism leading to terrorism in SEE.

Experts from within and outside the region identified specific gaps in research with regard to CVE in SEE that should receive greater attention. Some of them relate to identifying protective factors explaining resilience to violent extremism; shedding light on the manipulation of the threat of violent extremism and its counter-productive impact on CVE; identifying, documenting and evaluating existing CVE efforts; researching possible links between recruitment to terrorism and/or travel to conflict zones with trafficking in human beings; informing a necessary debate about values and violent vs. non-violent extremism.

The need to strengthen interaction between and among CVE researchers, policy-makers and practitioners in SEE has also been pointed out. Researchers could be brought together to exchange methodologies, findings and carry out joint research projects. The availability of existing research could be made more easily accessible to policy makers and practitioners through a web-based portal.

The civil society should be actively involved in strategic communications for CVE in support of the development and dissemination of counter and alternative narratives to challenge incitement to hate, violence and spread of intolerance. Public authorities should encourage and support credible voices in civil society, while respecting their independence.

The RCC continued its efforts to **streamline the P/CVE themes** in the work of specialised regional security cooperation structures such as the South East Europe Military Intelligence Chiefs' forum (SEEMIC) and South East Europe National Security Authorities' forum

(SEENSA). More specifically, SEEMIC offers its expertise in assessing risks related to migration, radicalization and violent extremism and terrorism in SEE. The open source intelligence assessment on “Migration crisis, roots of radicalization and violent extremism leading to terrorism in South East Europe” adopted in 2016 will be succeeded by a similar report in 2017 on the “Use of social networks by violent extremists”. The RCC submitted the 2016 OSINT Assessment to the RCC NFP Group to be taken into account while assessing the regional trends and developments.

## **Plan of action for 2017**

The efforts of the RCC to raise awareness of the problem and improve cooperation between pertinent stakeholders have been recognised and supported by the European Commission, the RCC Participants and other international and regional organisations.

Building on the existing momentum and taking into account the new trends in security threats for the region, the RCC will shift the focus of its actions from the recruitment of FTF to prevention of violent extremism, and dealing with the “returnees” (former FTF) in the course of 2017.

The RCC will carry out number of activities which will support national stakeholders from the region in addressing these issues. These efforts will be rolled out in close coordination with the WBCTi, the first pillar of the newly adopted EU’s Integrative Internal Security Governance initiative (IISG), while taking into account the new trends in security threats for the region.

The RCC will hold two meetings of the **SEE Group of National Focal Points for P/CVE** whose goals will be to take stock of the current state of efforts in CVE and exchange of good practices for future work in this area.

**An array of regional workshops/meetings** will focus on: a) the role of education system and civil society in prevention of radicalization; b) prevention and suppression of online radicalization and violent extremist propaganda; c) disengagement and de-radicalization of former terrorists and violent extremists.

The results of these activities are expected to inform national institutions and agencies in their efforts to devise future curricular and extracurricular activities for prevention of youth radicalization in SEE; measures for prevention of online radicalization in countering online violent extremism propaganda and develop effective programmes of disengagement and de-radicalization of former terrorists.

Moreover, the RCC will convene the second **Regional CT and P/CVE Conference**, under the auspices of WBCTi, thereby continuing the efforts of exerting a coordinating role in CVE cooperation.

**A Study on rehabilitation and reintegration of former terrorist fighters and violent extremists will be commissioned and** will serve both as preparation for the regional workshops planned in 2017 and to inform debates at the NFP Group meetings.

## **The way forward**

Building on the results achieved so far and in light of the evolving security environment, the efforts in **P-CVE in SEE should be focused on the following:**

- **“Whole society” approach, prevention through education:** PVE should be mainstreamed into general education systems curriculum and extracurricular activities; engagement of teachers, physicians, and social workers is needed, and trainings need to be organised for them to fulfil their role successfully.
- **Enhanced EU – SEE cooperation:** exchange of information and good practices between the EU, its member states and the RCC Participants from the region should be intensified at both conceptual and operational level.
- **Addressing the problem of “returnees”:** focused research is needed on former FTF and other former terrorists and violent extremists in order to formulate and start implementing workable programmes for their disengagement and rehabilitation.
- **Engaging the youth:** more numerous and better coordinated programmes intended to listen to and empower at-risk youth are needed to address the causes of their frustration and make them more resilient to VE propaganda.
- **Countering VE propaganda:** in addition to all mentioned measures, societies should engage in adopting and disseminating alternative (positive) narratives; also, greater control of hate speech and incitement to violence in public is needed, especially on internet and social networks.

The RCC, through the implementation of the SEE Regional Platform on CVE/FTF, will uphold a regional framework that will support the governments in the aforementioned endeavours.

### **Annexes:**

**Annex I:** Conclusions and recommendations resulting from the expert work carried out under the SEE Regional Cooperation Platform on CVE/FTF in 2016

**Annex II:** Summary proceedings and conclusions of the Joint Meeting of the SEE Regional Cooperation Networks in the area of Counter-Terrorism and Countering Violent Extremism under the auspices of the EU Western Balkans Counter-Terrorism Initiative

**Annex III:** SEE Regional Cooperation Platform on CVE/FTF - Work Plan for 2017

**CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

**RESULTING FROM THE EXPERT WORK CARRIED OUT UNDER THE SEE  
REGIONAL CVE- FTF PLATFORM in 2016**

**SEE WORKSHOP FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT EXPERTS AND STATE  
ATTORNEYS/PROSECUTORS ON “LEGAL PRACTICAL CHALLENGES IN CVE  
LEADING TO TERRORISM AND DEALING WITH CURRENT AND FORMER FTF**

**(Jahorina, 4 May 2016)**

- 1) The workshop provided an excellent opportunity for a fruitful exchange of views on legal and practical challenges and good national practices in countering extremist propaganda and dealing with prospective, current, and former foreign terrorist fighters.
- 2) Since this format of cooperation has proven its usefulness and, on the other hand, the complex of problems discussed is very likely to persist for a medium term, the RCC should convene similar workshops/meetings in the near future.
- 3) These conclusions are also to serve as a part of the preparatory work for the regional meeting of national police directors and chief state attorneys/prosecutors, which the RCC has planned for the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of the year 2016.
- 4) Most of the relevant CT-CVE-FTF legislation in SEECR/RCC Participants (jurisdictions) has been in place for a short period of time (typically, two years or less), it is still too early to assess its practical implementation. However, the practical dilemma law enforcement services and prosecutors are faced with in many parts of SEE is how to deal with people who engaged in violent extremist propaganda, as foreign terrorist fighters (FTF) and/or FTF recruiters before the relevant legislation was promulgated.
- 5) All SEECR/RCC Participants are encouraged to sign and/or ratify the Additional Protocol on the Council of Europe Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism.

- 6) Practical coordination, cooperation and engagement at the national level between all relevant stakeholders: relevant government agencies and services, local authorities and civil society, including interested groups, religious, community, female and youth and leaders and media engaged in CT-CVE-FTF efforts should be enhanced.
- 7) Existing regional expert networks in the field of law enforcement and prosecution (such as SELEC, SEEPAG, PCC SEE) should be used to their full potential. In general, these and other relevant RCC activities in the areas of Justice and home affairs and Security cooperation will continue to be connected with the EU-backed Western Balkans Counter-Terrorism Initiative (WBCTI).
- 8) More timely and more extensive and efficient international and regional cooperation in the exchange of operational information in countering terrorism and violent extremism (CT/CVE) is needed, especially as regards the exchange of operational information about prospective terrorists and foreign terrorist fighters.
- 9) Existing differences between the national legal frameworks might objectively slow down and hamper mutual legal assistance (MLA) procedures. Nevertheless, more could and should be done to shorten up response time to MLA requests in the region. In addition to that, work should be continued on improvement of the rate of admissibility of the legal information obtained through MLA as evidence at courts of justice.
- 10) Joint investigative teams are already used and they have proven their usefulness in practical law enforcement cooperation between some SEECRP/RCC Participants (jurisdictions). It is recommendable that such a practice should be more widely used in SEE.
- 11) There is a need to further explore the possibility of closer cooperation regarding CT/CVE between prosecutors, LE and intelligence bodies. Such cooperation in an early stage of operation should be executed in a format of Joint Task Force or similar.
- 12) The “whole government” and “whole of society” approach to CT-CVE-FTF should be encouraged and more widely used, meaning as full and as efficient as possible coordination of CT-CVE-FTF efforts between the different relevant government agencies and civil society, including academia; local, religious, community, religious, female, and youth leaders; media, and NGO activists. In that context, police in community engagement in detection of potential violent extremists and terrorists should be used to its full potential.
- 13) Different legal, political, and practical definitions of violent extremism, terrorists, and foreign terrorist fighters are an objective obstacle to coordinated and effective CT-CVE-

FTF efforts at all levels. Despite difficulties, work should be continued to achieve a common or at least closer understanding of these terms.

- 14) Regional cooperation in the area of CT-CVE-FTF education and training is to be encouraged. In the context, Turkey' authorities' offer to accept participants from the SEE region at such courses organized by the Turkish National Police (in Turkish, English and French) was noted with appreciation.

**SEE REGIONAL EXPERT WORKSHOP  
ON “FACTORS AND DRIVERS UNDERLYING RADICALIZATION AND  
VIOLENT EXTREMISM LEADING TO TERRORISM”**

**(Sarajevo, 7 June 2016)**

**FIRST PANEL: INTERNAL (DOMESTIC) DRIVERS OF VE LEADING TO TERRORISM IN SEE**

1. Youth are generally more susceptible to propaganda influence than more mature population.
2. Political drivers have more influence among male persons vulnerable to radicalization and violent extremist propaganda than female ones; this especially applies to young people.
3. Many young Muslims see the West as the enemy of Islam.
4. Insufficient functioning of democratic political systems, including freedom of speech, widespread corruption, and lack of sufficient and adequately organized and supported education for tolerance make a fertile ground for radicalization, violent extremism, and terrorism.
5. Violent extremists are very good in attracting women, especially young, and have tailor-made propaganda items for female audience.
6. Given the widespread feeling of lack of sense and purpose, young people are often attracted to violent extremist ideologies and practices perceiving VE as an answer to their search for identity and purpose.
7. Generally speaking, in practice there is a lack of whole society approach. Specifically, counter-narratives are not offered through well-coordinated (and funded) public campaigning. CVE training at grassroots level is insufficient.

8. Level of engagement of non-governmental sector in CVE is very low, and the level of cooperation of government and non-government sector in this field even lower.
9. Youth engagement in CVE is not well-developed. Therefore, peer-to-peer education in CVE and PVE is almost non-existent.
10. Educational system and welfare services are not delivering their roles in CVE. Also, communication among educational system, religious communities, and state institutions relevant for CVE is insufficient.
11. There is a lack of trainings for parents, especially mothers, to help them recognize symptoms of radicalization.
12. Institutional efforts on de-radicalization, rehabilitation, and reintegration into society of incarcerated terrorists and violent extremists are not sufficient. Otherwise, there is a danger for prisons to become centres of radicalization and recruitment of new violent extremists and terrorists.

## **SECOND PANEL: EXTERNAL (INTERNATIONAL) DRIVERS OF VIOLENT EXTREMISM LEADING TO TERRORISM IN SEE**

1. Developments and events in Syria, Iraq and other countries and territories outside of SEE where there are prolonged armed conflicts, widespread terrorist activities, state of lawlessness, and prosecution and discrimination of large groups of people because of their religious, ethnic, political, or other identity greatly contribute to the recruitment of foreign terrorist fighters (FTF), radicalization, and incitement to violent extremism in SEE.
2. Many people joined the ranks of FTF feeling the solidarity with their “oppressed brothers and sisters” in faraway countries.
3. Terrorist and extremist propaganda through Internet and social media, internationally well-connected, but usually tailor-made for individual “national markets”, is a very important driver of radicalization and VE.
4. Imams born and bred in cultures alien to SEE (especially in Gulf Arab states), or educated there, bring to SEE their interpretation of Islam which is not only foreign to local tradition, but contributes to antagonizing Muslims with non-Muslims in the Balkans. It also led to the establishment of parallel (unofficial) religious structures, not part of the official Islamic Community. All of it made many communities more vulnerable to radicalization and VE.

5. Foreign funding from undisclosed and often illegal sources greatly contributes to VE in SEE. There is a connection with organized crime. Moreover, international charities, cultural foundations and other NGOs are often abused as channels of extremist propaganda, recruitment of FTF, or for financing of terrorism.

**THIRD PANEL: WAY FORWARD: HOW TO FIND AN APPROPRIATE MIX OF PREVENTION AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE RESPONSE IN SEE?**

1. Jurisdictions in South Eastern Europe (SEE) should continue strengthening their CVE efforts beyond securitization, with more of an emphasis on prevention and further involvement of public authorities outside the security sector.
2. There is need to promote and support further scholarly research on the drivers underlying violent extremism and the effectiveness of CVE measures, and to ensure that CVE policies and measures are based on empirical evidence. CVE research and responses in SEE need to be dynamic to keep abreast of the evolving threat of terrorism and violent extremism.
3. CVE is still often approached by countries in SEE in a secretive manner. Public authorities should ensure transparency in their efforts and promote public dialogue on violent extremism and how to effectively prevent and counter it. This can be facilitated by domestic or international stakeholders perceived to be neutral and acting as convener.
4. More space needs to be carved and enabling conditions ensured for a genuine involvement of civil society in CVE in SEE. Civil society stakeholders should be involved from the formulation of CVE policy and approaches, to the delivery and evaluation of specific measures.
5. Public authorities in SEE should address comprehensively all manifestations of violent extremism and explore synergies in preventive efforts against terrorism, hate crime, hooliganism or recruitment into organized crime.
6. CVE should be coherent and consistent with efforts in other relevant policy sectors, such as youth, education, gender equality, and local development. Ensuring cross-references between national strategies, action plans and other policy documents is instrumental in this regard.
7. SEE countries should ensure that they address the entire life cycle of radicalization to terrorism, from preventive efforts to rehabilitation and reintegration (R&R). R&R, including in the prison setting, appears to be a weak link of current CVE efforts in SEE. R&R is the critical juncture between criminal justice response and prevention.
8. Alternative sentencing options for violent extremist and terrorist offenders need to be defined and judges trained for their adjudication. This is essential to ensure effective sentencing, proportionate to the seriousness of the offences committed and avoid counter-productive long prison sentences that may put inmates at further risk of radicalization rather than be conducive to R&R. This is especially important in the context of juvenile justice.

9. SEE countries should follow a multi-pronged approach to counter violent extremism online, including clarifying the legislative and regulatory framework for effective criminal and administrative response, developing partnerships with Internet and social media businesses to leverage corporate social responsibility and enforcement of commercial terms of use, as well as empowering end-users through referral mechanisms and positive use of social media. All these efforts should uphold the rule of law and human rights, in particular freedom of the media, freedom of expression, and the right to privacy.
10. Civil society should be actively involved in strategic communications for CVE in support of the development and dissemination of counter and alternative narratives to challenge incitement to hate, violence and the spread of intolerance. Public authorities should encourage and support credible voices in civil society, while respecting their independence.
11. Specific research gaps were identified in SEE with regard to CVE that should be addressed, namely: identifying protective factors explaining resilience to violent extremism; shedding light on the manipulation of the threat of violent extremism and its counter-productive impact on CVE; identifying, documenting and evaluating existing CVE efforts; researching possible links between recruitment to terrorism and/or travel to conflict zones with trafficking in human beings; informing a necessary debate about values and violent vs. non-violent extremism.
12. There is a need to strengthen the interaction between and among CVE researchers, policy-makers and practitioners in SEE. Researchers themselves could be networked to exchange methodologies, findings and carry out joint multi-country research projects. The existing research available could be made more easily accessible to policy makers and practitioners through a web-based portal. Horizontal co-operation and information exchange on CVE between institutional stakeholders across SEE need also to be strengthened.

**RCC SURVEY OF REGIONAL ISSUES, INITIATIVES AND OPPORTUNITIES  
“INITIATIVES TO PREVENT/COUNTER VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN SOUTH EAST  
EUROPE” (July 2016)**

**General Recommendations**

1. Officials and independent actors alike note that they need more information on what is happening in each location and in the region, in terms of diagnostic analysis and current or planned PVE/CVE activities. This report should be shared broadly to begin to fill this gap.
2. Personal contacts and networks among appointed expert focal points can help to fill this gap. The RCC Focal Points for CVE should have updated Terms of Reference to facilitate a stronger role in sharing information. Those RCC participants that do not have a dedicated CVE focal point should appoint one.

3. Depending on the actors and initiatives in each location, formal and regular consultation mechanisms – including independent experts and CSOs – should be established, with meetings at least twice yearly. This can then serve as the basis for more effective regional-level consultation.
4. To effectively share information on PVE/CVE activities, information should be actively collected on a regular basis, perhaps twice yearly, and shared publicly to ensure access by all stakeholders.
5. As strategies and action plans are developed and implemented, they should all have formal monitoring plans, including a clearly defined monitoring mechanism detailing responsibilities and providing an overarching analysis. This information should be shared with domestic stakeholders and regional partners. In addition independent monitoring and analysis should complement official monitoring.
6. Regional-level monitoring and analysis of individual CT/CVE strategies and action plans can both facilitate domestic implementation while enabling regular exchange of good practices and lessons learned. Strategies and, in particular action plans, should be flexible enough to respond both to changing circumstances and project feedback.
7. Each of the RCC participants applying the referral mechanism approach to early warning, prevention and intervention at the community level should share information about the mechanism implementation process domestically and with others in the region, to facilitate frank discussion among officials, experts and community leaders on what does and does not work, and why.
8. Each RCC Participant should more regularly and broadly consult with civil society organizations (including religious communities) and policy groups to ensure broader based buy-in and support.
9. National Coordination Mechanisms should be established in order to effectively implement policies aimed at countering the financing of terrorism. These mechanisms should bring together officials, private banking managers and others on a regular basic to ensure policy and practical coherence. The UK and Austria are good performers on this issue.
10. More expert research is needed to ensure evidence-based assumptions and response/program design. Specific topics are included in the case study summaries. A broad range of expertise and expert organizations should be supported and cultivated to ensure a wide range of perspectives and voices, and subsequent rigorous debate.

11. While informal projects, camps and activities can target at risk youth and provide opportunities for preventive engagement, the best mechanism to prevent and counter the development of extremist views is through the school system. Respondents in every location noted the need for targeted and general educational reform and improvement. Examples of other successful education initiatives (e.g., to prevent school violence) can offer a road map on how to mainstream PVE/CVE themes into the curricula.
12. Some respondents noted that there is a risk of “CVE fatigue” if too much emphasis is put on this issue to the exclusion of other pressing social issues. This could also lead to certain communities being unfairly targeted, potentially increasing their sense of isolation. Further, preventive activities such as social welfare reform, education support and strengthening of psycho-social services may in fact contribute to communities resilient to radicalization, but should not necessarily be promoted or branded as such.
13. Some respondents noted that they feel there can be little follow up in terms of either action or communication following conferences and events. Fewer, better, sustained events and initiatives – within a long-term strategic context - are preferable to a proliferation of broad events with little continuity.
14. It would be too simplistic to simply claim that these challenges are due to insufficient economic resources. A deeper diagnostic on the successes and failures of good governance over the past two decades – the period of time in which respondents note extremism has managed to gain a foothold, and which represents the evolution of a person from birth to adulthood – is critical if any preventive measures are to be properly calibrated and delivered. It is unfortunate that the geopolitical factors have facilitated the rise of VE, and the specific new global threat of VE. However, if this threat succeeds in leading to substantial reforms that strengthen governmental accountability, improve domestic and regional coordination, engage civic stakeholders in policymaking, introduce comprehensive education modernization based on critical thinking, tolerance and human rights and generally strengthen communities, then the threat and response will have resulted in positive change regionally as well as globally.



## Annex II

### **Joint Meeting of the SEE Regional Cooperation Networks in the area of Counter-Terrorism and Countering Violent Extremism under the auspices of the EU Western Balkan Counter-Terrorism Initiative (WBCTi) – Regional coordination conference Tirana, 11 November 2016**

#### **Summary proceedings and conclusions**

I. The Regional Coordination Conference was organized within the framework of the RCC Regional Platform for Countering Radicalization and Violent Extremism Leading to Terrorism and Foreign Terrorist Fighters in SEE, under the auspices of the EU WB Countering Terrorism Initiative. The Conference was attended by representatives of: RCC's Group of National Focal Points for Countering Violent Extremism and Foreign Terrorist Fighters (NFP Group); Police Cooperation Convention for South East Europe (PCC SEE) CT Network; Counter-Terrorism Initiative (CTI); US Embassy in Tirana; WBCTi Chair; EU (DG NEAR, DG HOME, EEAS, General Secretariat of the Council of the EU), UN (UNDP, UN Women, UNODC), OSCE, EUROPOL, INTERPOL; SELEC.

The main purpose of this „3 in 1“ comprehensive gathering was to raise awareness, exchange information, views, and good practices among all principal stakeholders active in P/CVE in SEE, establish and develop existing contacts, achieving better cooperation and coordination in regional efforts as well as to agree on future actions.

**The RCC Secretary General** opened the conference, the first in such a format, encompassing all relevant regional and international partners. He gave the participants a broad overview of the RCC activities in the area of P/CVE which are also relevant in the context of the EU WB Counter-Terrorism Initiative. Announcing the activities for 2017, he underlined the need of better cooperation and greater coordination in regional P/CVE efforts. He emphasized the importance attached by the RCC to the coordination conference and proposed that similar events be held on annual basis, in the future. (The opening remarks of the RCC Secretary General are attached).

**Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Albania** underlined the serious threat of radicalization in SEE. She also pointed out that although the number of foreign terrorist fighters has significantly dropped in the recent period, the terrorism is not wiped out and more focused regional cooperation, tailored and harmonized policies are needed. The format of this conference

represents the joint SEE platform for action, in this respect. Stopping the spread of terrorism could only be done by addressing its roots: marginalization, social policies, education, rehabilitation and reintegration. Special attention should be paid to the youth. Albania has adopted the CVE National Strategy with a number of comprehensive political and social measures envisaged.

**Albanian National Coordinator on CVE** emphasized the need to enhance practical cooperation on P/CVE in SEE. He stressed the importance attached by the Government of Albania to P/CVE; the appointment of the special advisor to the Prime Minister's Office on terrorism and P/CVE, who is also granted the role of National Coordinator, is a clear sign in this respect. He added that, in order to ensure efficient implementation of the National plan and actions envisaged, the Government intends to establish a National Centre to monitor the implementation of the Albanian CVE Strategy and its Action Plan.

**The representative of the EC/DG NEAR** reaffirmed the importance EU attaches to the security cooperation in SEE. He announced that the European Commission, under the framework of the IPA Multi-beneficiary, set a program to be adopted soon, worth 3 million euros, related to P/CVE activities in the Western Balkans. He briefed that the program's goal is to raise the visibility and coordination with concrete, small-scale activities to be implemented. Evaluation of the achievements will also be carried out. He highlighted that the Concept of Integrated Internal Security Governance will be the essential element in the EU-WB security cooperation and the future priority actions in the region should be commonly agreed, complemented by local ownership and efficient coordination without creation of new structures and overlapping of activities.

**The representative of EC/DG HOME** reported that the terrorism represents a serious threat for the EU, faced with unprecedented numbers of FTF, increased rate of radicalization as well as number of returnees. She noted that due to the internet, radicalization and recruitment period is shortened to a matter of weeks. In response, the EU agenda on security envisages comprehensive measures against terrorism, organized crime and cyber security. She also presented the key issues and principles of the EU CVE Strategy: supporting front line practitioners (RAN); supporting member states in their strategic communications (European Strategic Communications Network); tackling terrorists' use of internet (EU Internet Forum) and enhancing cross-sectoral approach. She reaffirmed the EU's strong commitment for cooperation in the area of CVE with WB, underlining that priority should be given to complementary approach and avoidance of duplicating efforts.

**The representative of the US Embassy in Tirana** underlined the importance of coordination and communication in order to efficiently cope with the terrorism threats. He emphasized the importance of timely implementation of the Albanian National CT Strategy. In this respect, the Embassy is engaged in close cooperation with important categories such as youth, religious communities, students, media and civil society.

**The WBCTi Chair** made a presentation on the current state of play, and future actions envisaged within the scope of the initiative. He also referred to the WBCTi Integrated Plan of Action 2015-2017, emphasizing the importance of better coordination, communication and prioritization of actions within the three different levels of the WBCTi pyramid: political (RCC), strategic (PCC) and operational (CTI).

**The Head of the RCC Political Department** referred to the RCC's engagement in regional security cooperation with primary role to engage and coordinate efforts of all relevant stakeholders in the field of P/CVE, at regional level. She emphasized the role of the two specialized regional security formats, SEEMIC and SEENSA, as a good example of efficient regional cooperation. She also highlighted the importance of the RCC's Regional platform on CVE-FTF and presented activities carried out under the Work plan so far. As regards the activities planned for 2017, the RCC will organize several workshops related to the prevention of radicalization, commission a study on rehabilitation and integration of former terrorists and violent extremists, facilitate coordination between law enforcement agencies and prosecutors and will continue with the meetings of the SEE NFP Group. These activities are aimed at increased awareness, enhanced coordination, better understanding of various aspects of radicalization and violent extremism leading to terrorism and improved exchange of views at regional level.

**The Chair of the PCC SEE CT Network** presented the activities carried out under the Network's Plan of action, pointing out that the PCC aims to enhance police cooperation and set up a bridge between the EU and the SEE in the area of policing. In terms of more efficient response to terrorism, he underlined the need of enhanced regional cooperation, amended legislation on data exchange, intensified police and intelligence cooperation as well as addressing social and economic factors as an important step to prevent radicalization.

**The Chair of CTI** provided an overview of the CTi concept and Plan of Action based on WBCTi aimed at ensuring efficient exchange of information, sharing of good practices and facilitating ongoing investigations. He noted that CTi as such represents an added value, which combines LE and Intelligence Community, provides cooperation between EU and Western Balkans, where Europol, beside Interpol, plays a very important role. As far as priorities for 2017 are concerned, he listed the fight against violent radicalization with special attention to so-called returnees, case analyses of terrorist offences, and fight against illicit firearms for the purpose of terrorism.

**The OSCE Representative** welcomed the adoption of the EU Global Strategy, which envisages close cooperation with the OSCE as a pillar to European security. Recalling the OSCE Ministerial Declaration on P/CVE adopted in December 2015, she expressed the OSCE's readiness to provide cost-effective support in the implementation of the SEE national P/CVE strategies through sharing of good practices, mobilization of communities, promotion of inter-agency cooperation and work on the ground with women, families and youth. . On foreign terrorist fighters, she stressed that the OSCE pledged support to the implementation of UNSCR 2178, with special emphasis on preventing the movement of FTFs through strengthening border

security capacity and encouraging enhanced use of API (advanced passenger information system).

**The representative of UNODC** presented the current and planned activities in the WB related to CVE-FTF. He also announced the UNODC–EU joint anti-FTF project for the WB to be implemented in the next four years, with focus on the following activities: normative and administrative challenges related to the emerging FTF threat; operational challenges related to FTF; protection and use of intelligence in investigations and prosecutions for countering terrorism and increased capacity of criminal and justice officers to counter terrorist activities on the internet.

The presentations were followed by *tour de table* with interventions of the representatives of: PCC (SI), UNDP, EUROPOL, INTERPOL, SELEC, Austria, Greece, Romania and Moldova.

The following important recommendations were made:

- Coordination and efficiency in the area of P/CVE should be improved, both on regional and local, as well as between the regional and international level
- Different regional scopes should work
- Active protection of societies is needed, with early addressing of root causes
- The role of local knowledge (mayors, religious communities, civil society groups) should be enhanced and taken into account
- Interception of terrorist communication should be enhanced
- Risk indicators use should be improved
- Concrete programs for de-radicalization and reintegration of returnees should be prepared and implemented
- Awareness campaign should be carried out for the first line practitioners - police and crime officers operating in the area of P/CVE
- Extremism info call centers should be established
- Communication and information sharing on the returnees should be enhanced.

**II.** Back-to-back to the joint conference separate sessions of the three networks were held:

**Second meeting of the RCC Group of National Focal Points on Countering Radicalization and Violent Extremism leading to Terrorism and Foreign Terrorist Fighters in South East Europe (NFP CVE-FTF Group)**

The meeting chaired by the RCC was attended by representatives of the RCC NFP Group, DG NEAR, DG HOME. Representatives of international organizations participated as guests.

The RCC Secretariat presented the activities performed since the 1st NFP Group meeting under the SEE Regional CVE-FTF Platform, ongoing activities, and those planned for 2017. After a short discussion, in which the need for all activities to be interconnected and results-oriented was emphasized, the Group endorsed the 2017 Work plan.

National Focal Points reported on the progress made since the 1st NFP Group meeting in P/CVE efforts in their jurisdictions and the challenges they are facing. Main highlights:

- National CVE strategies' are being implemented. Legislation and strategic documents still undergoing adjustments in many places.
- Number of new FTF greatly diminished, number of returnees increased.
- A number of former terrorists have been arrested and prosecuted.
- More emphasis is being given to raising awareness and prevention. An important part is engagement of education system and civil society, including religious leaders.

The meeting adopted the following conclusions and recommendations:

- The work on systematic collection of information on ongoing or planned projects is to continue and intensify at national and regional level. At the regional level, the RCC should have the leading role. Proactive approach in information collection is needed for good results. In that respect, the Participants which have not done so are strongly encouraged to share their relevant documents (legislation, action plans, statistical data, research articles etc.) with the RCC, to be shared through the new P-CVE RCC website.
- The RCC is to intensify its efforts to facilitate the coordination of activities of all relevant stakeholders in South East Europe engaged in CT/P-CVE-FTF, especially through strengthening the role of the NFP Group.
- The number of people trying to join the FTF ranks has been greatly reduced, due to the terrorist organizations' military defeats on battlefields in Syria, and increasingly efficient work of the SEE law enforcement agencies in SEE and beyond. Given that fact, and the activities of the Police Cooperation Convention (PCC SEE) and other stakeholders on the repression ("hard") side of counter-terrorism and countering violent extremism efforts, the RCC is to focus its P-CVE efforts on regional coordination, prevention, and rehabilitation of former FTF and other terrorists and violent extremists.
- The RCC Participants from the region are encouraged to consider the establishment of monitoring mechanisms to track the progress in implementation of national CT/P-CVE strategies and action plans. This information should be shared with domestic stakeholders and regional partners.
- Coordinated efforts are needed to implement already accepted principle of "whole of government" and "whole society" approach in prevention of violent extremism (PVE). In this respect, the governments should intensify their cooperation in the P-CVE field with academia and civil society. In particular, results of scholarly research are to be taken into account in the legislative process, updating of existing and drafting of new national strategies and action plans, and daily practice of law enforcement and other relevant government agencies. Also, religious, community, youth and female leaders should be included in drafting and implementation of P-CVE programmes.

- Role of the education system is crucial. Children and young people should be taught tolerance for people of different origin, value systems and ideas from kindergarten to university. They should also be taught not to tolerate expressions of hatred and calls to violence. In order for teachers to be able to teach tolerance and engage in PVE, they should be educated first. National programmes in that respect should be devised, with the help of out-of-the-region stakeholders.
- National coordination bodies should be established where it was not done up to now, and their role strengthened where there already exist. All relevant government agencies should be included, and the body empowered to make proposals to the highest decision-making bodies. It is recommendable to ensure a firm link between national coordination and regional cooperation and coordination.
- To increase effectiveness of small-scale P-CVE programmes (focused on particular communities), they have to be better coordinated. Therefore, all engaged stakeholders (international and regional organizations and initiatives, out-of-region embassies and development agencies, foundations etc.) are strongly encouraged to announce and coordinate such programmes with the respective NFP / national coordination body.
- Efforts should be stepped up to ensure timely (rapid) exchange of relevant CT-CVE-related information between the national police services, state attorney's/prosecutor's offices, security services and other relevant government agencies – bilaterally and regionally.
- Exchange of experience and good practices on dealing with former terrorists and violent extremists (including FTF, but not limited to them) both inside SEE and in Europe as a whole is to encouraged and stepped up, in order to develop viable programmes for their rehabilitation and reinsertion into society.
- Relevant government agencies should explore possibilities of engagement of former FTF and other former terrorists and violent extremists in P-CVE efforts. By telling the truth about violent extremist and terrorist groups as former insiders, they might provide the most effective counter-narratives.

### **Meeting of the PCC SEE CT Network**

The meeting was chaired by Mr. Andrej Rupnik, Chair of the PCC SEE CT Network. The PCC SEE Network members discussed the tasks they have committed to under the auspices of the WBCTi integrated Plan of Action 2015-2017, including: web platform on counterterrorism, offering to PCC SEE/CTI members a knowledge platform, learning base, secure exchange of information, links and documents; learning tools; development of list of risk indicators for border police for the PCC SEE region (based on the existing EU list). It was agreed that the activities will be done in coordination with the First Line project and CTI.

The PCC members also discussed the “Regional PCC SEE intelligence project”, agreed in early 2016, with an aim to strive toward a sufficient regional intelligence picture to guide law enforcement in operational work in the 11 Contracting Parties by overcoming obstacles to efficient data gathering and aligning the data gathering methodologies (where the limited possibilities to use Europol's functionalities on part of non-EU Contracting Parties are also

considered). An outline project plan was prepared in September 2016, beginning with an analysis of the PCC SEE Convention's legislative provisions, incl. on data protection. The structure of this draft was discussed today and approved by CTN members. The project will fully use existing mechanisms for information exchange (incl. SIENA) in the PCC SEE region. The solution does not foresee the establishment of a (new) central regional database. After the planning stage is finished (as our Network is intended to seek tactical solutions for the work of CT operatives) the implementation phase will be executed at the level of *the CTI network*. The PCC SEE Secretariat will support the activities logistically.

Members also agreed to bring to the attention of the RCC the following open issues:

- Need to support and encourage cross-border exchange of data within this regional exercise in 2017, which will be supported with clear rules on sharing data;
- The problem of differing regional scopes of the PCC SEE Network and the CTI Network should be further pursued – to enable the implementation of the “intelligence project” within the intended scope;
- Need to ensure appropriate national representation at the workshops (also police analytical units where necessary). CT units of the police have limited personnel and deal also with other types of crime;
- The CTI Network is invited to support the next phase of implementation, also in order to ensure smooth transfer to the operational level.

### **Meeting of the CTI Network**

The meeting was chaired by Albert Cernigoj, Chairman of the CTI Network. It focused on the national reports regarding the CVE-FTF situation, implementation of the CTi Plan of Action adopted in September 2016, further enlargement of the CT Network (the need to define the procedure and protocol) and presentation of the draft Europol report on terrorism in the WB (WB TESIT). Evaluating the situation at national level, the Chairman highlighted the issue of returnees as a new trend and challenge to cope in the immediate future. Based on data provided by participants, he underlined that significant drop in FTF number is observed. Notwithstanding the fact that no new terrorist attacks were reported, he pointed out that number of attacks were successfully anticipated and prevented. The representative of EUROPOL presented the main findings of the WB TESIT and emphasized the three key root causes of terrorism in the region: jihadist terrorism, ethno-separatist terrorism and economic and social discontent. The participants reached the following conclusions:

- To define measures for appropriate response to the returnees challenge
- To overcome certain difficulties regarding the interception of (crypto) communication used by terrorists,
- Further development of Common Risk Indicators

- Decision on presentation of the WB TESIT report, pending the final approval by EUROPOL
- In the light of strengthening cooperation on FTF between EU and Western Balkans, next CTi meeting will be organized in the margin with WG Dumas/Europol

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The RCC Regional Conference was concluded by presentation of the draft conclusions from the separate meetings of the three specialized regional formats, the RCC's Group of National Focal Points for Countering Violent Extremism and Foreign Terrorist Fighters (NFP Group); Police Cooperation Convention for South East Europe (PCC SEE) CT Network and Counter-Terrorism Initiative (CTI).

The participants agreed to gather in the same format on an annual basis, to review the progress and coordinate their efforts.

## Annex III

### REGIONAL PLATFORM FOR COUNTERING RADICALIZATION AND VIOLENT EXTREMISM LEADING TO TERRORISM AND FOREIGN TERRORIST FIGHTERS IN SOUTH EAST EUROPE (SEE CVE/FTF Platform) – Work Plan for 2017

Activity	Expected results	Tentative target date
SEE Group of NFP for P/CVE - FTF meeting	Stock-taking of the current state of CVE efforts and cooperation in the region, exchange of examples of good practice, guidance for future CVE work	30/03/17
Regional expert workshop on the role of education system and civil society in prevention of radicalization	Conclusions to serve as a basis for policy recommendations for future curricular and extracurricular activities in prevention of youth radicalization in SEE	15/04/17
Regional workshop for law enforcement experts and state attorneys (prosecutors) on fighting violent extremism and FTF	Exchange of information and views, conclusions on ways to improve the regional cooperation and practice of SEE law enforcement services and state attorneys' offices in dealing with extremist and terrorist offenders	01/06/17
Regional meeting of national police directors (commissioners) and chief state attorneys (prosecutors) on fighting violent extremism and FTF	Exchange of information and views, conclusions on ways to improve the regional cooperation and practice of SEE law enforcement services and state attorneys' offices in dealing with extremist and terrorist offenders	01/09/17
SEC Regional expert workshop on prevention and suppression of online radicalization and violent extremist propaganda	Exchange of good practices and recommendations on how to prevent online radicalization and counter online violent extremist propaganda	05/09/17
Commissioning a study on rehabilitation and reintegration of former terrorists and violent extremists	Study conclusions to serve both as a preparation for the corresponding workshop, and inform the debate at the forthcoming SEE NFP Group meeting	01/10/17
Regional expert workshop on disengagement and deradicalization of former terrorists	Conclusions to serve as a basis for policy recommendations for the development of effective programmes of disengagement and deradicalization of former terrorists	10/11/17
SEE Group of NFP for CVE - FTF meeting back-to-back with Regional P/CVE Coordination Conference	Debate of the work done in a year in the P/CVE area by the RCC, SEECR/RCC Participants' governments and other relevant actors; recommendations for the next year's work	01/12/17
Regional P/CVE Coordination Conference, co-organized with PCC SEE and other partners	Enhancement of cooperation between the relevant stakeholders, avoidance of unnecessary duplication, identifying and filling the gaps	15/12/17
Maintenance and development of the regional web-based P-CVE information exchange platform	Creating and maintaining a platform for exchange of useful CVE information, thus contributing to a better practical CVE cooperation in SEE	continous