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Counselling Line
for Women and Girls



Hedayah
countering violent extremism

This manual was developed by the Counselling Line for Women and Girls with the support of Hedayah and the European Union, as part of an initiative to preventing and countering violent extremism and radicalization leading to terrorism in Albania.

TRAINING MANUAL

For multi-agency cooperation in identifying and countering VE





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Tirana, Albania

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PREFACE

The phenomenon of radicalization leading to violent extremism or terrorism is multidimensional and complex. Experts in the field estimate that it relies on social, economic, political, cultural and historical factors, which intertwine with each other in a pulling spiral, which step by step involves the individual to undertake extreme acts, to the detriment of others and society as a whole. Socio-political alienation or the lack of feeling represented, the influence of religion and globalism, as well as the reaction to foreign policy are some of the factors that 'feed' radical and extreme thinking.

Albania, as many western countries, has also joined the coordinated efforts of strategic partners, the United States and the European Union, in its commitments against the phenomenon of violent extremism, considering the fight against this phenomenon an important state priority. This problem is considered a challenge to national security, which not only weakens the country's freedom and security, but also affects respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and the preservation of our national identity.

Given this importance, tackling this phenomenon is considered a fundamental priority materialized in the National Strategy for the Fight against Violent Extremism and in the Action Plan adopted in November 2015. This commitment is also expressed through the substantial and tangible contribution to international efforts against violent extremism and radicalization, for which our country has ratified a series of Conventions and Resolutions in this regard and has actively participated in the fight against the phenomena of extreme violence and terror in some countries of the world. The national strategy and its action plan require state institutions to take preventive and counter measures, as well as to guide other civil society or business community actors and other groups active in communities to work together through the inclusion of the "whole society" in opposing and preventing violent extremism.

Through the implementation of the inclusion approach of the whole society, mainly involving the state structures that are obliged by the Strategy for the Fight against Violent Extremism, reliable reintegration platforms are created, which will guarantee the non-involvement of individuals with extremist groups or terrorists, thus reducing the threat of their future engagement as fighters or as recruiters for these dangerous groups to our society.

In this sense, civil society organizations, including community-based ones, are an important part of implementing the concept of "inclusion of the whole society" in

opposition to violent extremism, guiding communities against creating a critical thought on issues such as democracy, religion, individual rights and freedoms, etc. Direct work with communities to provide various alternative services to communities affected by this phenomenon is another necessity to combat this negative phenomenon of our time.

This training module is an attempt to give modest contribution towards increasing the knowledge and skills of state employees at central and local structures, frontline workers and other civil society actors, whose work is a valuable contribution in preventing such phenomena, which affect the security of our society. Through a combination of theoretical and practical knowledge, it aims to further increase identification and management capacities of cases presented, through the whole society approach.

INTRODUCTION

The preparation of this comprehensive training manual is one of the results that the project "Strengthening a culture of resilience and harmony in Albania" intends to achieve. The manual is a tool that aims to increase the capacity of front line actors at the local level and, within it, to provide the basic knowledge necessary on the need and the effects of the cooperation between the various state and non-state entities in identifying and countering violent extremism.

The handbook is based on good inter institutional cooperation practices in preventing and countering violent extremism (P / CVE), as well as on a community engagement approach to address such complex issues in today's society, considering local actors as promoters and advocates of change for the good of the community.

There is a clear commitment by state structures and civil society to provide solutions to the long-term threat posed by violent extremism, a commitment that aims to influence and develop the identification, prevention, dissuasion and reintegration skills of individuals who work in this field. Through interventions in areas such as education, research and study, development of critical thinking, justice, the media, youth and women, religious communities and civil society or any possible actor / factor that has influence in local communities, it is intended to achieve security for the people and communities affected.

In this context, it is worth remembering that one of the most real and tangible threats in this sector is the **lack of knowledge and training on the phenomenon and the implications it has on society**, in particular among the most affected groups such as young people. Employees of state structures at central and local levels at the forefront, which are at the first ones to "witness" the phenomenon, have to increase their knowledge and skills for the identification, communication and provision of preventive alternative and effective solutions, for the benefit of the individual and society as a whole. Their ability to identify and react is the most essential element to prevent and contrast this phenomenon.

In the coming months, our country expects to repatriate about 70¹ mainly women and children, who are expected to return from the conflict zones in Syria and Iraq, who are being held in camps set up for this group of individuals. The reintegration programs of

¹ The data is partly variable, due to the situation in the camps where citizens who are expected to return are currently detained, which does not depend on the Albanian authorities.

these foreign fighters, including women and children, require the commitment of continuous and long-term human and financial resources. In conditions where these resources remain limited, the coordinated and careful commitment of all actors in society remains a very important factor for providing effective solutions.

Considering the above, this training manual does not focus only on radicalism or violent extremism, inspired by religious beliefs, ethnicity, nationality, etc. Different stimuli are also applied to other forms of extreme behavior such as politically driven violent behavior *or issue-based violence such as violence carried out by groups concerned with a single issue such as abortion or homosexuality*². At the same time, it is important to understand that radical behavior itself is not necessarily a problem. Radical nonviolent behavior, especially if intentionally attributed to changes in the political, economic, or cultural sphere, can help bring about positive changes in society. Violent extremism begins when radical behavior starts to use violence as a means of expressing ideas or achieving goals.

In compliance with the above, in order to provide as much information and knowledge as possible, relevant to the field we are dealing with, the manual contains 8 modules that provide theoretical and practical knowledge through an integrated approach. Each module is accompanied by videos that are relevant to show individual cases or even issues that explain the phenomenon.

First module addresses the concepts and terminology of violent extremism and other terms that are related to it, as well as describing how this phenomenon has emerged and evolved in recent years in our country. Second module explains some of the push and pull factors of radicalization and violent extremism, providing an overview of what triggers violent extremism in our country. Third module tries to explain the elements that influence individuals to enter the path of radicalization and to choose violence as a form of resolving issues that concern them. Fourth module addresses the role of women and youth on this issue, providing a dual perspective when looking at the problem. Fifth module addresses the approach of the inclusion of the whole society and the necessity of its implementation, as one of the strongest 'weapons' to face the challenges that this phenomenon presents in the society. Sixth module explains the reasons for engagement through an understanding of the Internet world and how it can be used to counter radical and extremist narratives that incite violence. Seventh module addresses ways and effects of inter-institutional cooperation between state and non-state agencies, implementing the approach of involving the whole society. Eighth module, which is also the last module of this manual, explains the integrated solutions through the creation of referral mechanisms that address such issues, as well as the referral mechanism that is being created in our country in this regard.

² "Extremism and radicalization leading to violence" Council of Europe, <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/extremism-and-radicalisation-leading-to-violence>.

This training manual offers several techniques, which may be used but certainly are not exhausted, so the trainer is invited to try new techniques, in accordance with the 'needs' of the audience. Some of the techniques³ are explained as below:

Lecture - This is a structured and orderly presentation of information delivered by the trainer. Its aim is to transmit knowledge or introduce skills on the topic in discussion. An interactive way of giving a lecture, can be more effective in terms of gained knowledge from the participants.

Group Discussions - This is the verbal exchange led by the trainer or the participants about a specific topic. Through talking, participants share facts, ideas and consider different points of view. Discussions are useful in both large and small groups.

Case Studies/Scenarios - Stories either made up or true, that contextualize and illustrate a problem by discussing what a character's options are or how these problems might be solved.

Brainstorming - A free exchange of ideas that discuss a given topic. Ask a question, pose a problem or raise an issue, and participants then suggest answers or ideas. Write all their ideas down for the group to see. No editorial comment or criticism is allowed. When the brainstorming is finished, the group looks at the ideas together, to identify those most useful or to categorize them in some helpful way.

Discussion Points/questions - Relevant points/questions at the end of an activity for discussion. This activity allows you to figure out what the group is learning and to help them build on the learning experience. It also allows anyone to raise a concern or question. You will not want to process each activity to the same extent, but be careful to process any activities that seem to cause any member of the group conflict or concern.

Games and Exercises - Games and exercises are very much a part of the learning process. They include introductions, energizers, and warm ups. These games and exercises speed up and enhance the amount and the quality of interaction in the group. Energizers and warm ups can be done just before the start of a session, during the session, immediately before or after a tea break or lunch and or just before the end of the day's sessions.

³ 'PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT OF EMERGING FORMS OF VIOLENCE', Lifeskills Promoters (LISP), 2017.

List of acronyms

VE	Violent Extremism
PVE	Prevention of Violent Extremism
CCCVE	Coordination Center for Countering Violent Extremism
CSO	Civil Society Organizations
CVE	Countering Violent Extremism
USA	United States of America
EC	European Commission
EU	European Union
FTF	Foreign Terrorist Fighters
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
MCA	Muslim Community of Albania
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	Non-Profit Organizations
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
P/CVERLT	Prevention and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization that Lead to Terrorism
RAN	Radicalization Awareness Network
VERLT	Violent Extremism and Radicalization that Lead to Terrorism

Module I. Violent Extremism in Albania

The ability of extremist groups to expand and project themselves beyond their points of national origin has increased exponentially over the past decade. ISIS and al-Qaeda, despite their origin, namely Syria and Saudi Arabia, have struck violently across their region, as well as in parts of Asia, Africa, Europe, and North America. Boko Haram and al-Shabaab now have significant regional access. Tens of thousands of lives were lost to violent extremism, 32,000 in 2014 alone and 29,376 in 2015. Right-wing extremist groups have been successful at mobilizing online recruits across national borders. The killing of 77 young people in Norway in 2011 and the killing of nine worshipers in a church in South Carolina in 2015, both originated from the same ideologies filled with hate⁴. Another similar attack happened in Christchurch, New Zealand, in which fifty people have been killed and another 50 wounded in shootings at two mosques. The violent extremism phenomenon has affected both Albania and the region of the Western Balkans, from which about 800 - 1000 citizens from different countries of Albanian nationality have joined the conflict in Syria.

1.1 What do we mean by radicalization that leads to violent extremism and terrorism?

To increase the understanding of the concepts and terms used in this training module, it is necessary to outline some definitions of their concepts. As with any other phenomenon with social or legal dimensions, it is necessary to elaborate and clarify the terminology used in this field. This helps the front-line employees from various areas of security and civilians, as well as civil society activists or anyone will use this training module.

Radicalism is a term used since the nineteenth century to show the concept of an innovative or revolutionary idea and, seen from this perspective, it can also express a positive perspective or purpose. However, when radicalism leads to hate crimes, violations of others' fundamental rights and freedoms, or even violent extremist behavior and terror, this is clearly cause for concern. Furthermore, what is important to understand is the fact that there are many factors that promote different forms of extreme behavior and that **radical attitude in itself is not necessarily a problem**. Radical NON-violent behaviors, especially if deliberately undertaken in the political, economic, or cultural spheres, can favor positive change. Violent extremism begins when radical views

⁴ Preventing violent extremism through promoting inclusive development, tolerance and respect for diversity, UNDP 2016.

embrace the idea of using violence as a means of expressing one's goals, which is considered a problem not only socially but also legally⁵.

The radicalization into violence is a decision to bypass the political process or non-violent methods to incite change, **favoring the use of violent methods to bring about change.**

There are different opinions by various scholars, whose base defines "radicalism into violence" as a process that calls as legitimate the use of force to achieve goals. While freedom of thought is a fundamental human right, and consequently having radical opinions is not a violation. However, the radical view that allows / favors the exercise of violence for further political purposes is considered 'Unacceptable' within the limits of the law.

The same stands for violent extremism concept, which at the very core of it has the use of force to achieve specific goals of an individual or group of people. This is a concept not yet officially defined by the United Nations or the European Union. It is left to the discretion of the United Nations Member States themselves to define the phenomenon. USAID defines it as "advocate, commitment, preparation or, in other words, ideologically motivated support or justified violence to further advance social, economic or political objectives". What is obvious is the fact that "violence" is the dominant element that goes with the use of this concept, which in fact makes it problematic.

'Countering Violent Extremism' is a new term, which also does not have an official definition, but presupposes **the adoption of preventive measures that seek to address the root causes or factors of violent extremism**⁶.

Anti-radicalization is a set of social, political, legal, educational, and economic programs designed specifically to dissuade dissatisfied (and perhaps already radicalized) individuals from moving on to terrorism⁷. Interventions in the field of education or other areas of intervention in the social plan may come from state or non-state actors, coordinated by public institutions. In our country, this coordination and policy-making role is played by the Coordination Center Countering Violent Extremism.

⁵ "PREVENTING VIOLENT EXTREMISM THROUGH PROMOTING INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT, TOLERANCE AND RESPECT FOR DIVERSITY", UNDP, 2016.

⁶ The terms/definitions are referred to the National Strategy Countering the Foreign Extremism and the Action Plan https://www.mb.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/strategjia_kombetare_per_luften_kunder_ekstrmizmit.pdf

⁷ Ibid.

Resilience includes factors, ideas, institutions, issues, trends, and values that enable individuals and communities to resist or prevent violence. It is necessary to distinguish between interventions in the context of risk mitigation/reduction, the so-called de-radicalization programs that seek to reduce the threat of individuals or groups who are already involved in violent extremism and interventions in the context of prevention. These programs are all part of the countering violent extremism measures

‘Foreign terrorist fighters’ are individuals who travel to a country that is not their country of residence or citizenship, **in order to perform the planning, preparation or participation in terrorist acts or providing or obtaining terrorist training, even if it is in connection with an armed conflict.**

The rule of law is a "principle of governance in which all persons, public and private institutions and entities, including the State itself, are accountable to laws issued publicly, enforced equally and judged independently, and which are consistent with international norms and standards of human rights "(United Nations, 2004, p. 4).

In other words:

- No one is above the law (including governments). Everyone is responsible.
- Laws must be clear, publicly approved and implemented, and equally applied.
- Justice systems must be accessible, fair, and independent (impartial).
- Legal systems and legal enforcement must comply with human rights norms.

1.2 When and why did it become relevant to take measures against violent extremism in our country?

“Violent extremism and radicalization, in all forms and manifestations, currently constitute the most serious threats to peace and security around the world. As such, the fight against these threats, regardless of where they occur or by whom they are committed, requires government actors to strengthen cooperation at the national as well as the regional and global levels”.⁸ The National Strategy Countering Violent Extremism is the key document that connects all the efforts of Albania in this global challenge. This document was adopted in November 2015, thus becoming the ‘umbrella’ of state efforts in the fight against violent extremism.

⁸ “Decision No. 930, dated 18.11.2015 For the Approval of the National Strategy Countering the Foreign Extremism and the Action Plan “.

This document relies on the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, which is the common international platform for all future efforts in this area. Albania is one of the countries that has supported and will continue to support international efforts against terrorism, in line with United Nations standards countering terrorism. Also, a key component that accompanies all the activity carried out in this regard remains the guarantee of human rights and the strengthening of the rule of law.

Furthermore, in June 2014, the National Security Strategy was reviewed and approved, which establishes its constitutional obligations to guarantee national security, as well as to strengthen fundamental freedoms, human rights and the rule of law, protecting the interests of Albanian citizens, wherever they are, as well as promoting national identity. A key component of the national security strategy also addresses concerns about violent extremism and radicalization. In line with the commitments made in this respect, there are different laws and decisions of the Council of Ministers which address issues directly or indirectly related to radicalization leading to violent extremism or terrorism.

However, the following questions arise: why is this state and legal importance given to the issue of radicalization that leads to violent extremism and terrorism in our country? How relevant are the adoption of these national security measures? What does Albania have to do with this phenomenon?

To answer the previous questions, we must understand that, in the era of globalization and geopolitical alliances, our country also maintains its position in the interests of national security, but also peace in the region and beyond. During the last decade and especially after the "Arab Spring", the escalation of the civil war in Syria and the strengthening of the Islamic State, a very problematic phenomenon was that of **people going to fight in the conflicts that occur in other countries, mainly in the Middle East, but not only**. These individuals are not only subject to violent extremist and terrorist ideologies and carry out these activities in those countries but are often accompanied by their relatives and family members. Furthermore, with the return to the countries of origin, they influence other people with their ideas and contribute to the spreading of these phenomena in these countries, especially if they are not treated systematically and with the proper security and psycho-social care by the state institutions. One of the most necessary measures to be undertaken by the responsible state institutions at the central and local level is to involve these individuals in de-radicalization and re-integration programs.

About 22,000 people from over 100 different countries around the world have fled, offering themselves as freedom fighters for the Islamic State since its inception, and

around 3,000 have returned to their countries of origin. **Such a phenomenon has also affected Albania, from which about 100-150 people left as foreign fighters in the armed conflicts that occurred in the Middle East, a small part of which returned home (40-45 people).** In addition, law enforcement and public order agencies have taken several actions against organized groups, which recruited individuals to be sent as "freedom fighters" in armed conflicts in the Middle East, some of whom are convicted by final decisions. Also, about 25-30 individuals are reported as killed in these conflicts.

In addition to the phenomenon of foreign fighters, some of whom are expected to be repatriated to the country, together with women and children in the camps in Syria and Iraq, our country has been the subject of numerous public threats or even attempts at acts of terror designed by foreign extremist groups. Among them, the most recent attempt was that of October 2019, where Albanian police reported that they prevented an attack planned by a "terrorist cell" supported by Tehran against opponents of the Iranian regime⁹. Police in a statement declared that: "*Cell belonged to Quds Force, an elite unit of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Corps (IRGC) responsible for foreign operations*". This cell "*had planned, among other things, a terrorist act prevented in March 2018*" aiming at a religious ceremony of the Bektashi religion, a religious group of the Sufi line, in Tirana.

Another case of attempted terrorist acts that is worth mentioning in this module are the planned attacks to be carried out simultaneously in Albania, Kosovo, and Macedonia, which were prevented in November 2016. Nineteen people were arrested in Kosovo, and six others in Albania and Macedonia. A total of twenty-five arrests were made in all three countries, making it the largest terror-related arrest in Europe in recent years. Explosives, weapons, electronic devices, and material linked to extremist religious groups were seized during raids of homes and other premises, following the arrests.

The suspects, planning "synchronized terrorist attacks", received orders from Islamic State member Lavdrim Muhaxheri¹⁰. Between 4 and 16 November 2016, suspects were arrested for planning terrorist attacks in Kosovo and Albania, coordinated by Lavdërim Muhaxheri and his friend, IS fighter, Ridvan Haqifi. According to the prosecution, the terrorist group planned attacks on international and national institutions, with the goal to create an Islamic state. They planned to attack Israeli soccer team, during a match that would take place in Albania. The night before the football match, it was decided to change the stadium from Shkodra to Elbasan. Among other targets were Kosovo government institutions and cult objects of the Serbian Orthodox Church. Due to the

⁹ In 2013, Albania agreed to receive about 3,000 MEK members at the request of Washington and the United Nations. The MEK is known as the opposition in exile against the Tehran regime.

¹⁰ L. Muhaxheri was reported killed in Syria in 2018.

coordination/cooperation of the law enforcement agencies from Kosovo, Albania and North Macedonia the planned attack was prevented.

1.3 Commitment of state structures at central level to counter violent extremism in Albania.

*"In order to effectively implement the National Strategy to Countering Violent Extremism, the Albanian government will draft relevant procedures and regulations, as well as establish inter-institutional structures. ... the advantages, measures and actions aforementioned are mostly cross-sectoral and inter-institutional"*¹¹. Based on the National Strategy and in order to promote cooperation with public and private sector actors, to preserve and promote the values of tolerance and religious harmony, protection of human rights, the rule of law and democracy, and the preservation of Albanian society by violent extremism it was established the Coordination Center for Countering Violent Extremism.

The CVE Center was established as a result of a series of measures taken by the Albanian Government to address the emergence of violent extremism by Albanian citizens who joined the ranks of extremist organizations in the Middle East conflicts in recent years, including the so-called Islamic State in Syria and Iraq (ISIS).

As mentioned above, due to events taking place in our country in relation to the emergence of the phenomenon of violent extremism, in 2015, the government developed and approved the [National Strategy Countering Violent Extremism](#) according to a decision of the Council of Ministers "On the approval of the National Strategy Countering Violent Extremism and the Action Plan", no. 930, which provides for the involvement of key actors in the prevention of violent extremism, promoting democratic values and addressing concerns at the local level that may promote radicalization.

Following the adoption of the National Strategy and Action Plan Counter Violent Extremism, the Council of Ministers established with DCM no. 737, dated 13.12.2017 the CVE Center, as the main public institution for the coordination and capacity development of local stakeholders and frontline practitioners involved in efforts to counter violent extremism in Albania and the region. The CVE center is directly subordinated to the Prime Minister's Office and funded from the state budget.

¹¹ National Strategy Countering Violent Extremism, Official Journal, 2015, number 203.

Objectives of the CVE Center's work are as follows:

- Strengthening coordination, cooperation, and partnerships locally, nationally, and internationally between government agencies, non-governmental organizations, private sector, religious communities, and the media in identifying and implementing effective interventions.
- Encouraging local research as a tool to understand the conditions, factors and causes that promote radicalization that can lead to violence and community resilience to violent extremism.
- Strengthening community resilience and reducing the attraction to radicalization and violent extremism through education and employment programs and policies by the community police.
- Reducing the impact of extremist propaganda on social networks and online recruitment, using social media as communication channels to promote alternative narratives and positive messages.

Since staffing and becoming functional, the CVE Center focused on the sectoral detailing of the Action Plan in cooperation with line ministries. This step was taken through a very intensive cooperation process, working groups from each ministry, represented by senior leaders and technical staff from each key sector that needed to be involved in the implementation of measures. This process was triggered and led by Center' Coordinators, who closely follow the implementation of the action plans of each ministry involved.

Ministries to assume obligations for implementation of the National Strategy and the measures provided for therein, are: Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth, Ministry of Health and Social Protection, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Finance and Economy and Ministry of Defense. Each of the aforementioned ministries has concrete activities to achieve the strategic objectives, and measures to be taken to achieve what is expected, which are described in each ministry's action plans.

The CVE Center also cooperates with other independent state institutions such as local government bodies, the Special Prosecution and the General Prosecutor's Office, the Visual Media Authority, the Commissioner for Protection against Discrimination, the Committee of Cults, the Committee of Minorities, etc. ... and with other important actors such as civil society organizations, religious communities, the media and international partners.

Another way to empower communities and create opportunities for the involvement of the whole of society in countering and preventing violent extremism is to create Center's networks such as Civil Society Network, Media Network, Religious Communities Network, Network of Youth, Women's Network, Scholars and Researchers Network. CVE Center networks are open cooperation platform between state institutions and the different actors of society who have influence and work to bring about change in communities.

Methodology of performing the training

- **Energizer**
- **Lecture/PPT presentation**
- **Short video presentation**
- **Group discussions**
- **Evaluation of the training day**

- **Group Discussions - 'The path of Albanian Muslims towards jihad in Syria'**

Hundreds of pages of documents and the account of a jihadi returning home shed light on the journey of dozens of young Albanians to the war in Syria, alongside al-Qaeda and the Islamic State.

<https://www.reporter.al/rruga-e-muslimaneve-shqiptare-drejt-xihadit-ne-siri/>

- **Video "The rise of the extreme far-right in Britain - BBC Newsnight"**

The former head of the Metropolitan Police's counter terrorism unit is warning the extreme right-wing is on the rise in Britain and we "haven't woken up" to it yet.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jcYnstBgC8M>

Module II. PUSH AND PULL FACTORS OF VIOLENT EXTREMISM

2.1 What drives the development/spreading of violent extremism in a society?

There is a growing understanding among state and non-state actors working to prevent and counter violent extremism that the interventions to be made in this area must include both aspects: interventions undertaken by the security agencies and interventions that are undertaken by civil society institutions and various actors of society. This type of approach brings more effectiveness in responding to the phenomenon by coordinating coercive measures (by security and justice agencies) and preventive measures (by civil society organizations and other community actors). Recently, a more specific focus is given to prevention efforts.

This approach is best reflected in the role given in the National Strategy to some ministries such as: Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Health and Social Protection, Ministry of Finance and Economy, etc. **whose interventions focus more on preventive and reintegration efforts versus the emergence of the phenomenon, which becomes apparent in the areas of their activities.**

Numerous studies show that violent extremism is multifactorial and extremely diverse, both in terms of the elements that influence it and in terms of the forms of its appearance. **It cannot be predicted by considering only one of the factors, because if that was the case, it would be easy to find the 'vaccine' or a definitive solution against it.**

A complex combination of various social, cultural, and individual factors is required for violent extremist movements to take place in a given society and for individuals to join

them.¹² To have a more complete understanding of the factors that influence violent extremism, it is necessary to conceptually divide them into three levels:

1. with situational factors acting at the macro level such as political situations, violation of human rights or discrimination of minorities (e.g. at national, regional, or local level),
2. with situational factors acting at the intermediate level, such as social / cultural factors (those that affect smaller communities or groups linked by the same identity)
3. and factors acting at the individual level, at the micro level (e.g. psychological factors).

Given the above division of influencing factors for involvement of individuals in extremist groups or those who act solely to carry out terror acts, interventions should also be devised in accordance with these levels. Thus, for the macro level, the interventions are related to the general democratic, economic, and social development, etc. For the middle level of action coordinated interventions countering violent extremism are required in socio-cultural aspects, and the micro level requires interventions at the individual level by law enforcement agencies and those providing services.

Religion and ethnicity are recognized as powerful expressions of individual identity and group identity. **There is compelling evidence that radicalization is a social process and that identity is a key factor in individuals engagement in violent movements.** Psychological research has begun to examine more and more how identity formation can become 'inappropriate' in a given context and how psychological processes influence the individual to form an 'opinion' which poses a higher risk from the point of view of implementing it.

2.2 What are the push and pull factors of violent extremism? Realizing that there is a variety of forms of violent extremism, it becomes clearer and more understandable that identifying them is crucial in all the initiatives that counter and prevent it. In the Albanian context, there are speculations that poverty is the basic factor that has influenced the engagement of about 150 individuals in the war zones in Syria and Iraq. But is it enough to just being poor, to push you to the point of joining such a geographically distant

¹² This material has been funded by UK aid from the UK government; however the views expressed do not necessarily reflect the UK government's official policies Harriet Allan Andrew Glazzard Sasha Jespersen Sneha Reddy-Tumu Emily Winterbotham 16 October 2015 Royal United Services Institute www.rusi.org Drivers of Violent Extremism: Hypotheses and Literature Review

conflict? To understand this, it is necessary to understand the reasons that push these individuals to join these violent causes.

Push factors: Are considered favorable conditions for the development of violent extremism and the structural context from which it is generated or created.

These include:

- lack of socio-economic opportunities;
- marginalization and discrimination;
- poor governance / poor governance, human rights violations, and lawlessness;
- prolonged and unresolved conflicts, both at local and national context;
- radicalization in prisons.

Pull factors are considered individual motives and processes, which play a key role in transforming the ideas and complaints of the individual into violent extremist action.

These include:

- individual background / history and personal motives;
- collective grievances and victimization resulting from suppression, oppression, subjugation, or interference of foreigners;
- distortion and misuse of beliefs, political ideologies, and ethnic and cultural differences;
- leadership and social networks.

In other words, 'push factors' refer to those factors that are structural within society, while 'pull factors' are the psychological ones that can make an individual more sensitive to the undertaking of violent extremist behaviors¹³.

Based on the above, five main factors are summarized which are considered favorable to violent extremism, namely:

¹³ [Conditions Conducive to the Spread of Terrorism](#), Drivers of violent extremism, 2018.

1. Lack of socio-economic possibilities.
2. Marginalization and discrimination.
3. Poor governance, human rights violations, and lawlessness.
4. Prolonged and unresolved conflicts, and.
5. Radicalization in prisons.

Each of these factors must be considered equally important and interrelated. From the outset it is worth noting that none of these possible paths that lead to violence, should be considered isolated from the others, because the practice has shown that generally there are included / combined many factors.

Furthermore, it should be understood that the contextualization of the combination of these different modes of radicalization leading to violent extremism is important in relation to issues that arise, not only locally but also nationally and internationally. For example, a young Albanian living in a rural area in the southeast of the country may have been radicalized in the same way (online) as a young person living in Germany, but the pull and push factors in both of these cases may be different. If we do not understand what has affected each of them, we will not be able to prevent other similar cases.

Below we will explain in more detail some of the above factors, to show the implications and impacts they have on individuals and society.

2.2.1 Lack of socio-economic possibilities

Lack of socio-economic opportunities can take different forms and cause different behaviors in individuals in a society. One of the key 'unequivocal' findings of the UNDP Report of 2017 was that economic factors can be significant drivers, with economic exclusion, unemployment and limited opportunities for upward mobility leading to alienation or frustration, which can result in radicalization leading to violent extremism (UNDP, 2017, pg. 5). This finding is in line with the importance of the Strategic Development Goal 8, which 'requires the promotion of sustainable and inclusive economic growth'.

Thus, the lack of employment or opportunities to undertake private enterprises that promote economic development and self-employment, especially among young people, cause great frustration and dissatisfaction among them, something that can be aggravated to evoke feelings of disrespect for legal and social rules of democratic

systems. There are many educated, irritated and unemployed young people who are 'thirsty' to get involved in various activities - and at worst join the causes of extreme violence.

In its study of 2016, 'Economic and Social Inclusion to Prevent Violent Extremism' the World Bank¹⁴, offers an interesting insight into the relationship between economic opportunity and violent extremism. **This study suggested that indicators of economic exclusion, predicted higher degree of radicalism ... and that excluded individuals, are likely to complaint more about the state.** Despite the above, there are other studies that highlight the fact that only in some states there is an identifiable clarity of the causal link between economic growth and violent extremism¹⁵.

Therefore, although there are statistical data that suggest some form of link between violence and lack of economic opportunities, caution should be exercised in drawing premature conclusions about this. Indeed, it is noted that economic inequalities and various disappointments are not always a major driver of violence. One case that supports this view is the shooting incident in Las Vegas in the US in 2017 when Stephen Paddock, a millionaire, killed 58 people and injured more than 800 people without any clear identifiable motive¹⁶. (The Guardian, 21 January 2018).

Additionally, it would be wrong to think that the lack of education or employment of individuals involved in acts of terror, are the only factors that play a role, or that they are always present in any case. A significant number of the most notorious terrorist attacks have been carried out by educated people (e.g., graduates with advanced university degrees or advanced professional training), such as terrorist pilots carrying out the 9/11 attacks, or former leaders al-Qaeda, Osama bin Laden or even ISIS leader Al Baghdadi.

Other socio-economic factors may also play a major role in the recruitment of such groups, particularly drug addiction, in the radicalization of youth, and ultimately in their recruitment by violent extremist groups such as IS and Al Qaeda, such as the case of the Maldives.

¹⁴ World Bank Middle East and North Africa Region, MENA Economic Monitor, 2016, pg. 11.

¹⁵ "Causal Linkages Between Domestic Terrorism and Economic Growth" Gries, Krieger dhe Meierrieks, 2011, fq. 493 and 496).

¹⁶ 'The Guardian', 21 January 2018.

2.2.2 Marginalization and discrimination

Marginalization and discrimination can take many forms, based on a variety of factors including socio-economic, ethnic, cultural, racial, religious, disabilities, or those forms associated with a particular status in society, such as immigrants. There is a long-standing agreement between scholars and researchers in this field that marginalization and discrimination are known to be factors that can act as drivers into violent extremism.

"Before an individual was prepared to take part in violent activities, he / she first had to belong to a section of society that perceives itself as marginalized. If such a marginalized group is discriminated against, there will always be those individuals, within such communities who will accept radical ideologies¹⁷". So, it is clearly understood the profound influence that marginalization has on the individual, an impact which can result in his loss of interest on the way of living in that society. This can obviously lead to a pushing marginalization towards violent extremism.

The EDH Action Plan identifies marginalization, alienation and discrimination, as well as gender inequality, as the main instigators of violent extremism. Although respecting the diversity of individuals in itself does not make countries more / less vulnerable to violent extremism, when a group has exclusive control of the political and economic sectors at the expense of other groups, this can result in growing of community tensions, gender inequality, marginalization, alienation and discrimination.

This situation can be reflected in various forms, such as limited access to public services, limited employment opportunities, obstacles to the implementation of the exercise of the right to freedom of religion, elements which may further incite discontent and individuals¹⁸.

These resentments, which are added to socio-economic factors provide a good opportunity for recruitment by extremist groups that exploit them to the fullest, offering their own 'attractive' alternatives.

¹⁷ Silke, A. "Becoming a Terrorist", 2003, pg. 39.

¹⁸ Raport of General Assembly A / 70/674, paragraph 26.

2.2.3 Poor governance, human rights violations, and lawlessness.

Just like other crimes, crimes related to violent extremism tend to increase in a country that is characterized by mis-governance, weak institutions, corruption or the culture of impunity for unlawful conduct, including the crimes that are committed by state officials. When misgovernment is combined with discriminatory policies or oppressive practices that violate human rights and undermine the rule of law, the tendency to embrace violent extremism by certain individuals or groups in society tends to increase.

In parallel, independent institutions and other governance structures that do not function according to democratic and governance standards, can bring disappointment and frustration in the lives of citizens, especially when combined with dysfunctional justice system, as was the case in our country.

Also, with regard to this factor, studies have shown that 'preference' that the government shows to a certain group of individuals in society, cases of paying various bribes to get public services to meet the low level of trust in the security / police bodies are also promoters with a major role in uniting individuals in extreme causes.

2.2.4 Radicalization in prisons.

This factor is considered crucial for the impact and significance that it has in the advancement of violent extremist agendas. This factor is considered key to the impact and importance it has on advancing violent extremist agendas. Second, because conditions within prisons can enable the creation of hostilities, already present in inmates against the government.¹⁹ or the justice system.

Studies in this area show that “harsh and unfair treatment in prisons can play a somewhat powerful role in recruiting a large number of individuals who have joined violent extremist groups and terrorist organizations.²⁰”. This fact brings to attention once again the immense importance of respecting human rights in these environments.

In this context, factors such as the poor physical condition of the prison, mistreatment of prisoners, institutional corruption and criminal activity there should be considered as

¹⁹ Prisoners always vote against the government on a large scale.

²⁰ Report of the General Assembly A / 70/674, par. 31.

motives for persons detained or convicted to seek assistance and protection of violent extremist groups or individuals involved in such matters.

In addition to addressing such issues more effectively, there is an urgent need to establish better mechanisms to prevent or at least reduce the current levels of promotion of violent extremist ideologies.

Even in our country, preventive activities are carried out in the prison system, as part of the implementation of the action plan for this sector, which among other things aim to increase staff capacity to identify, report and properly handle such cases, and provide appropriate alternatives and treatment to individuals who show signs of radicalization leading to violent extremism or who have been convicted of such crimes. Currently in our prisons there are 13 convicts for criminal offenses related to the terrorism crimes²¹.

Methodology of performing the training

- **Energizer**
- **Lecture/PPT presentation**
- **Short video presentation**
- **Brainstorming**
- **Case Study**
- **Evaluation of the training day**

Work in group and discussions

- **Video - Extreme Dialogue - Adam Deen**

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LnmBa_IDNAw

Adam joined the British Islamist extremist group al-Muhajiroun at university but later found that his values and sense of what was right, both for himself and in the eyes of the Islamic faith, conflicted with those around him. Stop hate. Start the dialogue today.

- **Brainstorming**

What could be the main drives of an Albanian young married man with little, to join an armed conflict so far from the country and to bring his family with him?

²¹ Official figures obtained from the General Directorate of Prisons.

- **Case study** - A radicalized young man with family problems

A young man, who was radicalized through online contact with a terrorist recruiter, has been detained by border authorities near an area of known terrorist activity, and has returned to his country of origin. Some of the 'push' factors included abusive family members, to whom he did not want to return.

- What factors should authorities consider in making decisions in this situation?
- How to intervene in relation to his family?
- What kind of measures should be taken to support him and his family, to solve the problems presented?

Module III. Engaging with individuals who are pulled into the path of violent extremism

To better understand the real threat of violent extremism and what is causing it, and to work further to prevent and counter it, we need to understand the local context of the situations that have driven individuals toward it. That is because violent extremism is an intensely local issue and is rooted in people's lived experiences. **Because radicalization and recruitment towards it are usually facilitated by personal relationships and through local networks, they need to be understood locally.** Because of these issues, violent extremism develops in diverse ways in different contexts.

This also means that, if we want a particular policy or program designed to prevent violent extremism to be successful, we must **first consider the context and conditions present in that community.** This also implies that the same policy or the same program in one context or another may not be effective. Therefore, all interventions and efforts made must be adapted to each particular context.

3.1 Who can be the most vulnerable subject to be pulled into the path of violent extremism?

Clarification on this issue will help us design policies and intervention programs that tend to be more effective because they consider the needs of the individuals who will be involved in them. And, they should first be considered for those individuals who are more vulnerable to the 'pull' in the way of violent extremism.

For this, research and studies conducted in the field of violent extremism come to our aid, showing us e.g. recruitment forms that have been implemented in a certain area or who are those individuals who have been affected, thus creating a certain 'profile' for that area, which needs to be considered to identify individuals vulnerable to 'call' towards violent extremism. All this must be contextualized in a certain community / area, and we must keep in mind that there is no 'basic profile' of a violent extremist, because there is a high diversity of factors that lead an individual to extreme violent behavior. Gender perspectives regarding this issue are also important to be considered because this phenomenon tends to be attributed only to males while it is not so.

Radicalism mostly endangers groups in need, including children and young people, those who have experienced extremism and violent conflicts, people (women and men) living in poor socio-economic environments. Also, **radicalism can affect children and young people who come from different social backgrounds, because, given their age,**

it is precisely the time when they form their identity, seek adventure, seek answers about faith and belonging. Therefore these factors make this group open to extremist influences. The latter provide answers, identity and a strong network of social connections.

Also, the strategic and improved use of the Internet or social media to influence young people makes them more vulnerable than the rest of the population. Individuals who live in areas that have had a history of extremism and violent conflict are influenced by extremist groups, as this category is very vulnerable and sensitive to radicalization or recruitment in these groups.

Also, **low-income people and those living in poor, unfavorable socio-economic environments are more vulnerable to radical ideas**, and are often labeled "easy" targets. The extremists recruited are predominantly male (but not always). **Women and families are increasingly affected by extremist recruiters, some of whom specifically target women for committing violent acts, with the aim of establishing a gender balance in support of extremism.**

Identifying people at risk from extremist groups can be an extremely delicate and challenging process. With this in mind, it is important not to allow further harm and harm to individuals in need, protecting them from harmful radicalization schemes.

3.2 How can we understand that an individual is "being pulled" or "committing" to the path of violent radicalization and extremism?

Individuals are attracted to radical and violent movements, **through socialization processes which are usually facilitated / encouraged by personal, emotional and psychological factors: alienation, search for identity and dignity; revenge for the loss of a family member or for previous abuse or imprisonment; or through real and virtual communities on social media through other platforms when exercising their strategies or tactics.**

Radicalization is a process that can happen quickly, but it can also take a long time. Therefore, opportunities are created for the early identification of risks and to find the most appropriate solution to protect and remove people from this path.

To work effectively to prevent these phenomena, we must be able to identify / understand the warning signs that individuals can show. They are NOT exhaustive, because as discussed above, we first need to consider the community context in which

the events take place and, secondly, we need to consider the individual characteristics of the person we suspect is 'entering' that path.

However, identifying some possible hallmarks will help us understand what is happening to the individual and collaborate with specialized agencies to deal with such cases, maintain both sides: individuals and community safety. Many individuals join such causes, usually because they lack something in their lives, and these groups help to fill that gap.

Some of the signs that can make this problem visible are the following:

- lack of belonging to a certain group, looking for it where the feeling of belonging to a specific group / community is offered. This often becomes evident when the individual becomes detached from interaction with community members.
- fluctuations in temperament, sudden and drastic loss of interest, as well as distancing from previous activities, family or friends.
- make friends, who hide their identity and affect them negatively.
- character fluctuations, sudden and drastic changes in appearance or clothing.
- general changes in mood, temper and fluctuating behaviors related to food, language, or finances (saving or spending money unexpectedly).
- changes in the social sphere, antisocial comments, refusal of authority, refusal to interact socially, withdrawal and isolation.
- speaking in a divisive way "them and us", or in derogatory terms with others who are different, refusing to deal with them or abusing them.
- expressing radical opinions or supporting such opinions, justifying extremist actions, supporting extremist messages, or violent acts.
- greater sensitivity to apocalyptic and conspiracy theories and feelings of persecution.
- sudden interest in domestic or foreign policy, showing distrust and irritation towards politicians.
- use of extremist literature and images.
- establish contacts with extremist recruiters, join or attempt to join extremist organizations.
- attempts to recruit others into extremist ideologies.
- preparation to say farewell, in the sense that the individual shows signs that will leave the family forever (to join an armed conflict or other types of extreme actions that may end up with its imprisonment or even other extreme situations).
- be reserved and reluctant to discuss activities, positions, collaborators.

- spending too much time online or on the phone, changing identities online, owning cell phones or similar devices and keeping them strictly private.

Sometimes the warning signs are clear and in other cases less evident, especially if the radical group asks its members for secrecy. Practically **all of these signs, especially when assessed separately, can be caused by many factors and not necessarily by radicalization.** This includes the challenges or crises that people can face in life, development phase (especially in young people), abuse of drugs or alcohol, etc. ... Therefore, it is **particularly important not to exaggerate the reactions to people who display such signs, in order not to cause stigmatization, further weakening and victimization.**

Methodology of performing the training

- Energizer
- Lecture/PPT presentation
- Short video presentation
- Group discussions
- Case Study
- Evaluation of the training day

- **Video - A Way Out from Violent Extremism | Robert Örell | TEDxVilnius**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CNIgKsb1QbA> - In this talk Robert shares his experience in helping people to get out of such groups and start a new life.

Every day and wherever we are there will be reports about violent extremists in the news. We hear about the horrifying attacks of ISIS and Al Qaeda, we hear about attacks on refugee camps, of bombings and shootings, and lone-wolf attacks. We hear about right-wing extremists spreading in Europe.

What they all have in common is spreading fear and violence. **And all of them claim to represent the truth, the only truth, that even validates the use of violence towards others.**

Robert Örell is a director at Exit Sweden, a project launched by NGO Fryshuset to help members safely leave racist, violent, and extremist groups. He has over thirteen years of experience in disengagement from political extremism and criminal gangs. He also has experience in social work, supporting victims of crime, parental support,

networking, and management.

Since 2012, Robert has been a member of the steering committee of the European Commission's RAN (Radicalization Awareness Network), where he co-chairs the working group RAN Exit. This year, he joined the expert pool at the RAN Center of Excellence. In 2014, he supervised the work at the family support hotline project Sy. Realize, which addresses the concerns of families affected by the Syrian conflict.

- **Group discussions**

Topic - Many individuals join such causes, usually because they lack something in their lives. What can be such a lack?

- **Case Study**

A.R. is a former Imam who was just recently released by the prison, due to the finishing of his sentence. He went back to his family at his home town and a couple of months ago, started to frequent his old Mosque, which is under the responsibility of another Imam, who follows the religious ideological line of the Albanian Myslim Community. Due to the ideological different opinions that A.R. openly shows during their gathering in the Mosque, there is a growing concern that he would influence the other believers with his radical views on Islam.

- What factors should be considered in order to make the right decisions in this situation?
- What could be effective to intervene by different authorities to 'peacefully' solve the situation?

Module IV. WOMEN AND YOUTH

TO EFFECTIVELY COUNTER AND PREVENT VIOLENT EXTREMISM

Since 2012 the influx of foreign fighters and supporters who have joined the so-called Islamic State in Iraq and Syria has been notable for the significant number of women involved, ranging from around 15-20% globally, up to 30 % in some countries. As a result, the United Nations and member states have increasingly recognized the role of women in preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE) in their national policies and international regulatory documents.

In addition, studies show that 44 young people from western countries, some of whom were 12 years old, have attempted to commit acts of terror in the West on behalf of ISIS since 2014. 50% of these young people were radicalized by online recruiters. About 17% of these children have NOT had formal contacts with ISIS, indicating that they have only become radicalized through contacting online its propaganda.

Since women and young people are among the groups that suffer most from the radicalism that leads to violent extremism, they must receive proper attention and treatment.

4.1. Women and the duality of gender perspective in the issue of violent extremism

There has been a long-standing trend believing/ stating that terrorism or violent extremism issues are a men matter, leaving aside the study of the influence of gender elements on them. But in the last decade there was an increase in attention towards a gender perspective in viewing violent extremism issues, an element that sometimes attracts everyone's attention through the presentation of media cases.

As a result, awareness, and recognition of the complex role of girls and women is growing, which may include supporting or encouraging violent extremism.

In the absence of specific studies on the factors that influenced Albanian girls and women to join such violent causes, we can bring similar examples from such situations in western countries. Therefore, based on various studies, it is suggested that the contributing factors to girls and women in western countries adhering to ISIIS may include "*the rejection of Western feminism; online contact with recruiters offering marriage and adventure; the*

influence of peers or family; adhering to the ideology and politics of Daesh; naivety and romantic optimism; and the opportunity to be part of something new, exciting and illegal²²."

However, it is observed that men and women are often affected by the same factors, but the mechanisms that put them into action and their personal manifestation change. Given that radicalization is often influenced by economic, social and political factors and that all these processes influence aspects of society that are reflected from a gender point of view, the path of opposition to radicalism and the detachment from violent extremism comes from the opposing / countering these factors.

But how is gender defined and what are its implications in this matter? *"Gender refers to the roles, behaviors, activities, attributes and opportunities that any society considers appropriate for girls and boys, women and men. Gender interacts with, but is different from, the binary categories of biological sex'²³. So, more specifically, gender refers to the features built by society for men and women. They are expressed in the roles attributed to the parties through social norms or the relationships that must be established between each-other. These social roles or norms change in every society, they also change over time.*

Studies show that over the past thirty years there was an increase in the direct involvement of women in acts of violent extremism, particularly as suicide bombers (so-called suicide attacks), organized by violent secular and (more recently) religious extremist groups.

On the other hand, cultures / manifestations of gender-based violence can worsen during a conflict and **often those who suffer most are girls, women, and children**. As mentioned in the modules above, our country plans to repatriate girls and women from conflict areas in Syria and Iraq, which are currently held in camps there. Upon their return, the reasons for their involvement in this conflict will be studied, trying to understand their reasons to join it.

Industry experts, having studied more in this regard, raise the issue that we **shouldn't consider all girls and women to be victims of violent extremism, arguing that this vision does not reflect reality, which tends to be even more complex**.

²² Understanding the Role of Gender in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization That Lead to Terrorism', Good Practices for Law Enforcement, Published by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Vienna, May 2019.

²³ Ibid.

On the other hand, systematic discrimination and abuse of women is a strategic and deliberate tactic of a number of violent extremist groups. As the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Sexual Violence in Conflict wrote, "*extremist groups such as ISIL and Boko Haram view women's bodies as 'tools' for the production of a new generation, which may arise in the image them according to their radical ideology.*"²⁴

One of the main indicators of the spread of extremist ideologies includes, among other things, the increase in discrimination against women and girls. This is a strong indication of why the defense and strengthening of equal rights for women and girls and the effective implementation of gender equality laws or policies should be placed on top of state priorities and implemented without delay. The laws and policies are important obstacles in the prevention of violent extremism.

In many developing or developed countries, women have been at the forefront of efforts to counter political, social, and cultural factors that allow violent extremism. Women are among the most powerful preventive voices - in their homes, schools, and communities - women's organizations and movements have played a significant role in promoting inclusion and tolerance.

Women's organizations also offer alternative social, educational, and economic activities for young women and men at risk. **They can therefore uniquely help build the social cohesion necessary to resist the appeal of a violent extremist group.** However, most programs against violent extremism currently focus only on men. Women are also absent from the decision-making process on how violent extremism is addressed.

Praising the foregoing, a more complete understanding of the roles that women play about violence and conflict in itself is needed. This is an essential element for the development of tailored strategies to strengthen resistance to violent extremism and to support victims and survivors.

This not only requires the involvement of women themselves or the organizations that represent them, but also other organizations that defend human rights, state institutions and policy-makers already engaged in preventing violent extremism, but also requires commitment of all actors in society. It is important to engage in these initiatives with religious leaders, media, individuals who have influence in the community, public

²⁴ UN (2015). "Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism"; <http://www.un.org/en/index.html>.

security institutions and the private sector, to promote values in accordance with human rights international standards and norms.

Investing in women's economic autonomy is also essential in preventing violent extremism, as women's economic status directly affects their ability, as well as that of their families, against membership in extremist groups.

4.2 Young people, as vulnerable subjects to radicalism and preventing them from radicalization leading to violent extremism.

More than half of the world's population is under 30 years of age, and while most young people are peaceful, they still form the 'backbone' of the paramilitary and terrorist groups in the world (*the name of the most fearsome terrorist group al-Shabaab Africa translates simply as "The youth"*).

Violent extremism is disproportionately affecting young people, as they fall prey more easily to radical thinking. This appears to be a consequence of the loss of family control over the education and lifestyle of their children, mainly because young people are increasingly moving to urban areas in search of work. Studies show that young people must be widely integrated into the life of the country in order to avoid their involvement in violent and extreme activities.

4.2.1. How can we understand that a young person or a group of young people are entering the process of radicalization or are engaged in such activities?

There is not just one sign, or just one behavior, that indicates a young person is being radicalized. Since everyone reacts differently to different situations, there are many types of behaviors that are possible indicators. Some warning signs to be aware of include:

- becoming socially isolated, or withdrawal from some social activities without apparent reason;
- suddenly becomes more interested in politics or religion;
- Dresses or otherwise change appearance in a specific way (make a tattoo with meaning or grow the beard etc. ...);
- makes new friendships, ignoring previous friends;
- loses interest in school or other previous hobbies
- admires the use of violence to support a particular cause;
- does not accept opinion other than his own;
- gets more often into fights / quarrels with friends and family members;

- spend too much time online and / or social media;
- visits extremist websites;
- begins to show sympathy for extremist groups;
- exhibits intolerant and discriminatory behavior towards people of other races or ethnicities.

It is worth noting that the above list is not exhaustive and that each case is unique in itself. **Therefore, it should keep present that although the young person exhibits one or more of these behaviors, this does not mean that he is being radicalizing.** Some of these warning signs may indicate that there is another problem, such as depression, drug use, etc. Even in this case, it is also important to be aware of these issues and to provide the help needed to improve the psychological health of the young person.

Finding out what is really going on in a young person's life is a complicate/ challenging task, especially if they are determined to keep going on chosen path and don't want to tell about it. Therefore, it is particularly important to recognize these warning signs which signal a situation that needs further 'investigation'. This is the first step in moving them away from the radicalization path..

It is also important to keep in mind that radical groups have become quite adept at instructing their recruits to act as normally as possible and will require that they do not change their behavior too much with those around them (family members, friends, teachers, etc.), so as not to be noticed and then caught by the authorities.

4.2.2 Preventive work with young people, outside the school premises

Given that young people in Albania represent about 50% of the population²⁵, work with them plays a significant role in developing interventions countering radicalization leading to violent extremism. Equally important is empowering young people to become active participants in a democratic society.

Wanting to have a voice in the development of the country, young people play an important positive role, giving extremely valid models to their peers. Young people are already transforming their communities, countering violence, and building peace. However, their efforts remain largely invisible due to the lack of appropriate mechanisms for participation and the lack of opportunities to become partners with decision-making bodies.

²⁵ <http://www.instat.gov.al/>

But, how to work with young people to prevent them from being radicalized to the causes of violent extremists?

Referring to a manual of European Awareness Network “The role of youth work in the prevention of radicalization and violent extremism”, there are three types of prevention:

1. Generic prevention²⁶;
2. Target prevention; and,
3. Indicated prevention.

It also explains the three types of preventive work with young people and identifies professionals who should intervene in each of them.

Generic prevention targets all young people in an indirect way. Youth work’s contribution at a generic level is about equipping young people with the life skills that contribute to their democratic resilience and strengthen their democratic values. In itself, this type of prevention helps to a large extent in the prevention of radicalization, since extremist groups have as their primary goal the recruitment of individuals by this age group.

Youth workers or activists at this level should:

- be the mediators and facilitators when discussing difficult topics or topics they are not familiar with;
- discuss questions of meaning with young people in a safe environment;
- dare to discuss taboo topics;
- know the trends, tune in to young people’s reality;
- enable young people to understand human rights and democratic values in practice;
- be aware of their own values and implicit identity;
- assess their own ability for self-reflection, critical thinking and emotional resilience;

²⁶ Merle Verdegaal and Wessel Haanstra ‘The role of youth work in the prevention of radicalisation and violent extremism’, RAN Centre of Excellence, 2017.

- encourage intercultural and interfaith discussions which underscore common values;
- make best use of existing training opportunities on the radicalization processes;
- provide positive narratives to counter extremist ideologies;
- inform young people about public anti-discriminatory networks.

Targeted prevention aims to reach young people who show tendencies towards or are interested in antidemocratic, extremist ideologies (or fragments of these ideologies) and propaganda. Targeted prevention is not as much part of the day-to-day business of youth workers as generic prevention, but only with those who have shown signs of radicalization or may be 'close' to extremist groups and are already in contact with these groups. It will therefore be beneficial to have some knowledge of the process and signs of radicalization and further on the path that leads to violent extremism. At the targeted prevention level, youth work can be effective both with individuals and in group settings.

Youth workers/activists at this level should:

- be aware when young people cut off bonds with their social groups: this could be a sign of radicalization leading to violent extremism;
- try to identify the signals and assess them correctly: they are often merely a cry for attention;
- establish/build up a trusting relationship and show willingness to listen without judging;
- work with the mind-set of youngsters;
- be familiar with the social context around the youngsters and be ready to intervene on-site;
- use peer education activities to prevent young people from getting more involved in extremist circles;
- find out about young people's motives and reasons for joining extremist groups and develop strategies and social alternatives;
- be aware and follow the principles of the Do No Harm approach
- create space for and get involved in dialogue - train in dialogue facilitation techniques;

familiarize themselves with the processes and dynamics of violent radicalization and of propaganda, as well as motives and attraction. **'Indicated prevention' targets young people who are already engaged in an extremist group or with extremist ideals and who want to drop out (or who are regarded as being open to receiving support for dropping out).** This prevention work should only be provided by experts and youth workers who are specifically trained for this. Here, youth workers, along with other key professionals, can support young people to transition out of these groups.

Youth workers/activists at this level should:

- build a bond of trust with the young people they are working with;
- be sure that they can meet the challenges before intervening;
- form alliances with key figures in the community;
- understand the process, work on the causes, and develop alternatives.
- approach the family, get to know its dynamics, and seek the right person to get approval from before intervening.
- develop security protocols to ensure security for the young person and themselves;
- be aware and follow the principles of the Do No Harm approach
- collaborate with experts from different sectors such as NGOs, schools, justice, security, and social institutions.

As indicated, prevention involves specialized knowledge and skills, not all youth workers will be trained and equipped to execute this type of work.

Methodology of performing the training

- **Energizer**
- **Lecture**
- **Group discussions**
- **Case Study**
- **Short video presentation**
- **Evaluation of the training day**

- **Group Discussion**

Topics for discussion/ Questions for reflection

1. How do you see young people? What do you think about the characteristics of youth?
2. How do you think the approach to working with young people should change?
3. How can young people be involved in initiatives or programs dedicated to de-radicalization? Do you think the programs designed by the young people themselves contribute to their involvement?

Reference literature

Young people and extremism resource pack for youth workers - SALTO-Youth network

<https://www.salto-youth.net/downloads/4-17-3550/Young%20people%20and%20extremism%20resource%20pack%20for%20youth%20workers.pdf?>

‘Hoodies, louts, scum’: How media demonizes teenagers’ Richard Garner. The Independent, 13 March 2009,

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/hoodies-louts-scum-how-media-demonises-teenagers-1643964.html>

- **Case study: The return of a foreign terrorist fighter**

A female citizen from a town in central Albania is known to have traveled to conflict zones in Syria and Iraq. Information obtained from her social media accounts and other traces she has left on the Internet reveals that she is married to a terrorist fighter, but there is no evidence to suggest that she has been directly involved in terrorist activities or fighting of any kind.

The interviews with the close family members have clarified the fact that they have not been involved in this regard and are even shocked by the fact that a young intelligent woman, with clear goals for life and sociable, with a bright future, could take such a path.

A year ago, the girl gave birth to the couple's first child, and she is currently three months pregnant with her second child. Her husband posted photos on a social media channel titled "the new armed war puppy" with their little boy, near an

automatic weapon.

Recently, it was confirmed that the woman's husband and the father of the two children were killed in the fighting. Since then, the woman has re-established contact with her family and said she wants to "get home" and that she was "previously blocked" and that "she couldn't escape, she was so scared, but there was no way out." She stated she saw women who tried to escape but were killed. She said she was ready to talk to the authorities.

The following questions serve as a guide to help design and / or implement PVE / CVE strategies and plans, considering the above scenario:

1. Who needs to know, first, for her return? Who else should know afterwards?
2. What is the status of the two children in terms of their nationality?
3. If she returns, what work should be done to create programs tailored to the case study?
4. What criminal offense could the woman have committed?
5. What resources or support should be provided to women and children?

- **Video - 'Undercover Mosque | The Return 2 | Real Stories '**

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JRF_yPQy-Qo

After the first video 'Undercover Mosque' that witnessed the rise of extremist Wahhabism inside mosques in the UK, 'Undercover Mosque: The return' further explores the horrific beliefs of a growing ideology within the UK in 2016.

Module V. Narratives and counter-narratives - why should we engage in the creation of on-line security?

"The fight against extremist propaganda, while spreading democratic values" is one of the strategic objectives set out in the National Strategy, through which, "The Government of Albania aims to oppose the message of violent extremism, especially its transmission through online materials and campaign messages"²⁷.

Especially after the suggestions of recent studies in this field, which emphasize that a significant part of individuals from groups in weak positions, radicalizes and joins extremist groups such as young people (in Albania young people represent about 50% of the country's population²⁸), more attention is being paid to the approach given to strategic communication with the public.

The approach chosen in the Strategy for this intervention to weaken the impact of extremist propaganda is presented in two directions:

- 1) **first**, by improving communication with the public to raise awareness on radicalization and threats that accompany it. Through clear and effective channels of communication, whether online or offline, using reliable voices, such as community leaders, religious authorities and others that serve as a model, the government seeks to mediate public discourse, empower local communities with information, demolish myths and give answers to various concerns related to violent extremism. These efforts will serve to separate violent extremism from any particular religious group, emphasizing Albania's rich cultural heritage and religious tolerance. By informing the public about the CVE efforts undertaken by the government, this communication plan will increase transparency, as well as promote the support and trust of high-risk groups and population, in general.
- 2) **secondly**, through the drafting of messages and carefully designed campaigns that oppose violent extremist propaganda on the Internet, using channels and methods that are more inclined to reach and influence groups and individuals at risk.²⁹

As the Strategy guides, nowadays, where the vast majority of communications between people occur through on-line media platforms, it is necessary to build communication

²⁷ NATIONAL STRATEGY COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM, DCM no. 930, dated 18.11.2015.

²⁸ <http://www.instat.gov.al/>

²⁹ Ibid.

strategy localized according to the needs of communities that exhibit such problems, simple, understandable for the public, accessible and effective.

Regardless of whether it is used to spread extremist messages, to facilitate networking, or to raise funds, it is clear to experts and citizens that online platforms and activities serve as impetus or strengthen the multipliers of radicalism in the Western Balkans.³⁰

A powerful feature of the Internet³¹ in the context of radicalism is that content can transcend its creator or it can be updated and maintained even when its creator is no longer free to interact with the public; such is the case with the infamous Macedonian jihadist recruiter Rexhep Memishi, whose online platforms remain quite active despite his imprisonment and continue to contain radical content (see ERF Report Macedonia 2018)³².

5.1 Effective communication in preventing radicalization and violent extremism

Especially in the field of communication and its set-up in relation to communities that have encountered problems with these matters, some elements should be taken into consideration to help create the right foundations for the effectiveness required by them.

A particularly crucial element to avoid when building communication strategies or dedicated messages, which is moreover part of the "do no harm" principle, is to avoid stigmatizing individuals, groups or communities at all costs. This should be avoided especially when we want to build a counter-narrative to 'denigrate' a message from extremist groups, or when we want to give an alternative message to violence. Stigmatization occurs when a certain community is put in focus (e.g. a town where there have been cases of foreign fighters, or a certain religious community, etc.).

Another element to avoid is that communication specialists can feed the "they are against us" narrative, choosing to focus their communications only on a remarkably close audience. If this happens, without paying attention to the consequences it creates and, without having a mitigating strategy, the opposite effect will be achieved, creating even more stigmatization than detachment from radical or violent extremist ideas.

³⁰ Azinovic, UNDERSTANDING VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN THE WESTERN BALKANS, pg.

³¹ In a survey of public opinion conducted in Serbia, almost half of respondents (47%) rated social media (Facebook and Twitter) as the most valuable tools of extremist propaganda (see ERF Report Serbia 2018, figure 3).

³² Ibid.

Another possible consequence of this is the existence of the risk that the intended communication will negatively affect the credibility of the interested actors (*NGOs, religious communities, activists working in this field*) or law enforcement institutions at local level, working in these communities. This could worsen the relationship between them and target audience, if not given proper care. In this regard, it is especially important to prioritize the relationship between stakeholders, local actors, and state professionals with the target audience in that community. If you do not cooperate in advance with them, predetermining and developing adequately countering narratives and alternative messages, communication specialists can inadvertently add problems or complaints, bringing more negative than positive effects. Thus, at worst, it could feed radicalization and be more counterproductive than effective.

Beyond the risks posed by the possible stigmatization of communities when they focus on developing counter-narratives and alternative methods, other risks need to be considered. In particular, government actors or other support / donor agencies try to avoid engaging, collaborating with, or funding members or community organizations without a careful control / vetting process. This would (unwittingly) avoid the support of those who support extremists or may present some other political ‘embarrassment’.

5.2 How can we better understand the audience we are aiming to influence?

In order to create messages on the issues we want to address and to have those effects that are needed at targeted individuals, groups or communities, we first need to increase our understanding of them.

As mentioned in Module II of this manual, which discusses push and pull factors that contribute to an environment conducive to radicalization that leads to violent extremism, there are no specific factors that influence / promote it. But the ones that appear repeatedly in relevant literature are the following seven factors.³³:

1. identity issues,
2. personal crises,
3. history of criminality,
4. exposure to extremism,

³³ Russell, ‘Developing counter- and alternative narratives together with local communities’, RAN, pg.9.

5. grievances, mainly on the functioning of institutions,
6. unmet aspirations, and
7. system failure in provision of services, employment possibilities, etc...

As it is reflected in the academic literature in this area, vulnerability toward radicalization, like other aspects, has particular local dimensions and reflections. For example, this vulnerability can be from the presence of an extremist organization, network or individual – of either the ideology of concern; lack of access to central or local services, low attainment in education, a significant wealth disparity, a lack of community cohesion between rich and poor, Christians and Muslims, etc., recent history of violence and revenge etc...

A good counter- or alternative narrative will understand the specific, and often local, **vulnerabilities** (which are often only of a certain community), **attitudes, behaviors, interests and media consumption habits of a particular target audience** that we want to address. Sometimes the target audience will be defined by these factors rather than by other demographic factors.

This means that we must choose our audience well, focusing on a closer group of individuals. For example, rather than aiming to reach 18–25-year-old Muslim men in Albania, a campaign could aim to reach 18–25-year-old Muslim men in Vora (**special local community**) who are exposed to ISIS propaganda (**vulnerability**), who consider political or religious violence to be appropriate (**attitude**), who have liked a certain Facebook page (**behavior**), who enjoy watching football (**interest**), or who read a particular diaspora newspaper (**media consumption habits**).

All of these factors will give a deeper understanding of a target audience and should therefore influence communication strategy and delivery of a good counter alternative narrative messages, as well as their distribution means, having a significant impact on targeted group.

In conclusion, reiterating once again the importance of considering local dynamics for building effective communication strategies in the field of prevention and counter violent extremism, one should always keep in mind the application of the principle "Do No Harm", which in this area takes on special importance.

Methodology of performing the training

- Energizer
- Lecture
- Short video presentations
- Group discussions
- Evaluation of the training day

Video - RAN Policy and Practice (Madrid): Involving young people in counter and alternative narratives-

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MdpQvwzdFbY&feature=emb_title

The RAN Policy & Practice event in Madrid on 25 April 2018 looked into how governments can support and enhance the creation of effective alternative and counter narratives, and how young people can be involved.

- **Video** - How young people join violent extremist groups -- and how to stop them | Erin Marie Saltman -

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HY71088saG4>

Terrorists and extremists aren't all naturally violent sociopaths -- they're deliberately recruited and radicalized in a process that doesn't fit into a neat pattern. Erin Marie Saltman discusses the push and pull factors that cause people to join extremist groups and explains innovative ways of preventing and countering radicalization.

- **Group discussions**

Topic - How local dynamics can help building effective communication strategies in the field of prevention and counter violent extremism?

- **Video - Narratives and strategies of far-right extremists**

Meet Hanna, our case study.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G2mqlkhi9-Y&feature=emb_rel_pause

Ideology stands at the core of an extremist or terrorist movement. No matter if it is Islamist or far-right. Ideology translates into narratives, which aim to manipulate specific target audiences for an extremist cause. It is only when we know what these narratives are, who is convinced by them and why, that we can start formulating a counter or alternative narrative, or provide alternative action to lessen the appeal of the extremist narrative.

An extremist narrative generally has three main components. First, it states what is or will go horribly wrong. Secondly, it says what should be done to stop this situation. Thirdly, it explains who should do this and why. Young people are most at risk. They are in a developmental phase, curious, and looking for answers and a place in society. This can make them vulnerable to manipulation.

Module VI. AN APPROACH OF INVOLVING THE WHOLE OF SOCIETY - in preventing violent extremism

6.1. The necessity of the commitment of the whole society to counter and oppose this phenomenon.

In February 2015, the White House hosted a summit on Countering Violent Extremism to highlight domestic and international efforts to prevent violent extremists and their supporters from radicalizing, recruiting, or inspiring individuals or groups in the United States and abroad to commit acts of violence.³⁴

The summit was also welcomed by President Barack Obama, whose stance marked the beginning of the approach of involving the whole of society, including civil society in this war that has taken on almost global proportions.

*"... Here, at this summit, we will make new commitments to help young people, including in Muslim communities. We will strengthen our efforts to interact with partners and raise awareness so that more communities understand how to protect their loved ones from radicalization. We need to devote more resources to these efforts. And as the government does more, even the community will have to move forward. We need to build the pilot programs that have already been discussed at this summit - in Los Angeles, in Minneapolis, in Boston. **These are partnerships that bring people together in a spirit of mutual respect and create more dialogue, more trust, and more cooperation.** If we want to solve these problems, then those most affected and with the potential to be affected - American Muslims - should have a seat at the table where they can help shape and strengthen these partnerships so that we can all work together to help communities to remain safe, strong and resilient. And finally, we must do what extremists and terrorists hope we will not do, and that is by staying true to the values that define us as free and diverse societies. If extremists are spreading the idea that Western countries are hostile to Muslims, then we need to show that we welcome people of all faiths."*³⁵

Albania was also invited to this summit, as one of the contributing countries in the countering extremism and terrorism, alongside Western countries. In the spirit of this summit, in May 2015, Albania hosted the Balkans Regional Summit on Countering

³⁴ Foreign ministers and leaders, senior UN officials and regional organizations, and representatives of private civil society were invited to the U.S. Department of State to discuss a wide range of challenges faced by nations working to prevent and counter violent extremism. The high-level event included opening and closing remarks by US administration senior officials, as well as panel sessions involving a wide range of international representatives and members of civil society.

³⁵ <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2015/02/18/remarks-president-closing-summit-countering-violent-extremism>

Violent Extremism in Tirana, where country representatives from the region pointed out the need to improve cooperation, not only in countering extremism, but also in addressing the associated challenges facing the region. Together with the May 2015 summit in Tirana, the White House Summit on Countering Violent Extremism (February 2015) and the Leaders' Summit in New York (September 2015) are important milestones in the implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.³⁶

Until then, the prevention and opposition of radicalism and violent extremism in general were based on interventions carried out by security structures that included identifying individuals and groups engaged in violent extremism, curbing funding that supported their activity, prevention of their free movement etc. This approach brought a new conception of the problem and a new dimension to its solution as well.

In this spirit, Albania, in November 2015, approved the National Strategy Countering Violent Extremism, where at the center of all government efforts is placed cooperation with communities, eventually. Policies and measures that are pursued through locally driven and cooperative initiatives, tailored to local contexts are the most effective in countering violent extremism over the long term. As such, a community-oriented approach will be instrumental in focusing and driving Albania's fight against violent extremism. This approach will be supported through increased coordination among government institutions and local community stakeholders³⁷.

6.2. Actors involved in implementing the inclusion of the whole society

The main actors involved in implementing the inclusion approach of the whole society are of course the state institutions of the country, which are coordinated by the CVE Coordination Center, which at the same time issues policies or guidelines to ensure that the National Strategy and its Action Plan are implemented as provided. The strategy imposes obligations on the implementation of preventive, rehabilitative and coordination measures by some ministries such as the Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth, the Ministry of Health and Social Protection, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Finance and Economy and the Ministry of Defense.

If we compare it with the counter-terrorism measures, which naturally fall mainly in the field of national security, which is headed by the Ministry of Interior, countering violent extremism measures include a number of important institutions of the country. This development opens up many opportunities for improved coordination and

³⁶ National Strategy countering Violent Extremism,

³⁷ Ibid.

communication between a large number of ministries, general directorates or various dependent and independent state agencies, giving a new dimension to inter-institutional cooperation which represents progress towards an all-government approach.

Effective prevention requires co-operation and co-ordination between relevant government actors and also requires dialogue and co-operation between governmental and non-governmental actors - according to the "inclusion of the whole society" approach. The general public, local communities and the private sector should be seen by state institutions as stakeholders and partners in preventing and countering violent extremism, and not merely passive subjects of law enforcement activities.

Non-state actors that can be valuable partners in this regard include young people, women, religious communities, researchers, civil society organizations and human rights activists, the media, the private sector and community leaders (individuals who have influence in the community). Young people and women, who are also the most vulnerable groups to extremist recruitment, are also powerful agents of social change, who can help individuals move away from radicalization to violence. Community leaders (elders, unit administrators, etc.) can be key to building bridges of cooperation between state agencies and community actors, or serve as facilitators of fostering a culture of tolerance and open dialogue, as well as cooperation with vulnerable members of the community in order to reject violent ideologies.

This element is also emphasized by the Strategy when it provides that '*... specific actions will concentrate on leveraging the competences of frontline workers: teachers, police personnel, social workers, religious leaders, and other individuals who are strategically placed to prevent radicalization*'.

First of all, preventing radicalization that leads to violent extremism means countering those factors that motivate individuals to join extremist groups. This requires commitment to: considering and addressing complaints and motivations that push people to join them; informing and raising awareness of individuals about the vulnerability and consequences of joining these groups; promoting a culture of peace and inclusion, through social media and audio-visual engagement; fostering dialogue and tolerance between religious, ethnic communities or the acceptance of diversity among society; countering nationalism; and, promoting transparent and accountable governance.

Governments have a responsibility to ensure security and respect for human rights, as well as to uphold the rule of law and implement policies that oppose discrimination, marginalization, and exclusion. But civil society actors are often skilled, knowledgeable,

and experienced in working with specific groups to help identify and address grievances that make individuals most affected by CVE. Private sector actors also have unique capacities that can make them ideal partners for governments³⁸.

In conclusion, some of the advantages of implementing the inclusion approach of the whole society are that it creates platforms and spaces for constructive engagement between state actors and citizens of the country, promotes mutual trust and understanding, expands the space for drafting and implementing policies and strategies in this field, thus contributing to the good governance of the country.

Methodology of performing the training

- Energizer
 - Brainstorming
 - Lecture
 - Short video presentations
 - Group discussions
 - Evaluation of the training day
-
- Brainstorming

Topic - Who could be the actors of the 'Whole of the society approach' relevant for the topic and in what way they can contribute to the matter?

- **Video - An inside look at Islamic extremism | Mubin Shaikh**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RK8zb8dA4G4>

Mubin Shaikh was “bit by the jihadi bug” when he was 19. Born and raised in Canada, he traveled to Pakistan to study Islam – and there found himself captivated by a group of extremists who encouraged him to embrace a violent and skewed interpretation of the religion. In his talk, Shaikh shares the story of how he was de-radicalized, and eventually became an undercover counterterrorism operative for the CIA.

³⁸ A Whole-of-Society Approach to Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization That Lead to Terrorism', A Guidebook for Central Asia, OSCE, 2020.

- **Video - Seeds of Peace: Building Peace at Summer Camp,**
<https://www.usip.org/public-education/educators/seeds-peace-building-peace-summer-camp>

Tamar and Suma are Israeli and Palestinian teenagers. They came together at a summer camp in Maine run by an organization called Seeds of Peace, which encourages dialog and understanding among young people to resolve international conflicts. The camp helps develop the skills and understanding necessary to build peace.

- **Group Discussions**

The discussions are focused into two topics:

1. What is the role of each actor involved with countering VE for informing and raising awareness of individuals about the vulnerability and consequences of joining these groups? How could it be done effectively?
2. Who are the most trustful actors of the society, for the promotion of a culture of peace and inclusion?

Module VII. THE NEED FOR INTER-INSTITUTIONAL COOPERATION, AND COOPERATION BETWEEN DIFFERENT COMMUNITY ACTORS

One of the biggest challenges countering radicalization and violent extremism is the complex nature of the interventions needed to be undertaken. This presupposes adaptation of traditional interventions so far implying them through security institutions. For this reason, this work requires time, vigilance, resilience, and perspective.

In this context, intervening against violent extremism does not only mean harsh preventive and punitive measures by security institutions, but it also means preventing the spread of ideologies, undermining the infrastructure of extremists, propaganda, recruiters and funders that radicalize and recruit or incite people to violence. Given the fact that there is still no profile of a violent extremist or a terrorist, there is therefore no way to predict who will be radicalized.

These issues once again bring to attention the importance of cooperation between various government, security and civilian agencies, as well as the importance of cooperating with the actors of society by "joining forces" to find effective and long-term solutions against this phenomenon. Although this cooperation may seem simple to implement, in practice inter-institutional and inter-agency cooperation has a very complex nature in itself, as well as numerous real barriers regarding information exchange, such as among state agencies themselves, as well as with other actors in society.

7.1. Forms of inter-institutional cooperation in this area

To understand the forms of inter-institutional cooperation in preventing and countering radicalization and violent extremism, first, we need to understand more clearly what this type of cooperation means from a conceptual point of view. In the respective literature there is no accepted definition of this concept, but its practical application which means aspects of working together by two or more institutions or organizations to get results where problems are complex and need improvement.

In reality, there are many forms and models of cooperation between different agencies and each of them offers specific benefits in addressing different problems. For example, some groups share a common goal of achieving results against a specific threat, for a short term; another group may be formed to address an issue that becomes present, the intervention for the resolution of which requires long-term strategic planning.

Interventions in this area first of all mean taking into account the potential risks. But more specifically, **what potential danger or threat are we trying to consider or address?**

Some explanatory examples that may be indicative, based on the set objective, can be as follows:

- It is our goal to **develop a strategic approach** (*such as the National Strategy and Action Plan*), which will help to prevent violent radicalization at an early stage - as a general objective.
- It is our objective **rehabilitation of identified individuals** (*individual treatment plans*) that are involved in the process of violent radicalization - direct intervention to the target group.
- Or our objective is **to support those who want to get out** (*individual exit / special programs*) from violent extremist / terrorist organizations - direct intervention with the target group.

Taking into consideration what we want to achieve in relation to the issue in question, it is necessary to examine as follows, some models³⁹ of inter-institutional cooperation activity, which can serve different purposes of the type: to take decisions; to coordinate the implementation of an inter-institutional obligation (*such as the coordination offered by the Center for Coordination Countering Violent Extremism*); or to provide a comprehensive service (*such as the services that Local Councils of Security can provide in addressing the problems that arise in this regard*).

a. Decision-Making Model

This model is useful when professionals from different agencies should gather together to take a decision on carrying out specific actions required. In the context of the prevention of violent extremism, this may mean planned or periodic organization of meetings of professionals in the fields of health, education, justice, police, local government, etc. to jointly determine how to intervene in communities whose individuals exhibit problems with radicalization. The decision-making focus of such working groups tends to be strategic (i.e. based on certain policies) and has no operational nature.

b. Service Offering Model

This type of cooperation model is oriented towards mainly providing community-based services. This means the fact that the working group of professionals in various fields such as education, health, employment, police, local government, etc. create a joint team,

³⁹ Sarma, 'Multi-agency Working and preventing violent extremism I', April 2018, pg. 3.

which is characterized by the expertise of each of the members of the working group in each sector and can coordinate services through an integrated service delivery approach. This type of model also includes the nature of the **decision-making model, due to the expertise involved, including the operational one, due to the operational nature it has** (e.g. in the case of decisions that can be taken by the Local Security Council, which at the same time make a decision on a case being handled and implement them simultaneously)

c. Service Delivery Model

This is a typical model that focuses on providing different combined services in relation to the needs that arise in handling a case, or a group of individuals. The working group that is formed in this case is composed by specialists in **providing specialized services directly** there. A typical of example of this work model is the establishment of a multi-disciplinary work group composed by community policing, education (teachers, security officers or school psychologists), social workers, doctors, etc. that creates an intervention program for an individual who is radicalized, implementation stages which include services by specialists / professionals in the above fields.

7.2 Challenges that accompany inter-institutional cooperation

Inter-institutional cooperation has shown that it brings positive effects in resolving complex issues that accompany the phenomenon of radicalism and violent extremism. However, even this type of cooperation itself is challenging due to the difficulties encountered during its implementation.

Some of these difficulties are related to the obstacles presented for the exchange of information between agencies, as well as the lack of policies or procedures established in advance in terms of interventions in this area.

Some of the specific barriers related to the exchange of information between different agencies / institutions first of all deal with the lack of knowledge and awareness⁴⁰ **for the process of radicalization and violent extremism by employees of the civil sector (education, health, employment, etc.) and those of civil society or other active actors in society.** There is also a lack of knowledge about the push and pull factors of radicalization and violent extremism, or the roles and responsibilities of various agencies, including security agencies (intelligence, police, etc.). If this issue is not sufficiently understood by first-line employees, then the very concept of working together becomes exceedingly difficult. Especially the civil sectors, such as health or education, etc. need to raise

⁴⁰ Sarma, 'Multi-agency working and preventing violent extremism I', April 2018, pg 6.

awareness and knowledge about the process and the factors that motivate it, so that they can work together, for its prevention since the genesis of the problem. Second, another obstacle in this regard is the **issue of mutual trust between employees of different sectors to share information** on individuals or issues related to the process of radicalization because: 1) radicalization is not illegal, and 2) very few individuals go from radicalization to terrorism or violent extremism.

As mentioned above, **the lack of clear policies and procedures⁴¹ how this kind of cooperation can work is a significant obstacle to the joint work of professionals.** These obstacles are most noticeable in the work of civil society sectors such as education, health, prison sector or probation service, local government employees who provide services or handle cases or even civil society professionals who contribute to this field. Most of these sectors have limited policies or procedures that regulate the institutional behavior of their employees dealing with the issues in question. This is also due to lack of knowledge or awareness, as mentioned in the first point. Both of these obstacles, together, make it difficult for professionals who, on the one hand, have the institutional obligations to fulfill and, on the other hand, lack clarity and orientation on how they should work in multi-disciplinary or inter-institutional teams, without clear instructions.

Recognizing the significant importance of increasing awareness, knowledge and skills in the field of information exchange within and between different institutions, it is important to work in these areas. An effective example, not only of the coordination between state and non-state agencies, but also of increasing the capacity of frontline employees mainly from civil sector, we find it reflected in the work of the Coordination Center for Countering Violent Extremism.⁴²

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² You can find the activity of the Center on its website www.cve.gov.al.

Methodology of performing the training

- Energizer
- Lecture/PPT presentation
- Short video presentation
- Working Groups
- Evaluation of the training day

Work in group and discussions

- **Video - How Government Corruption is a Precursor to Extremism | Sarah Chayes | TEDxFultonStreet**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QoiVyzlit5I>

A former reporter, she covered the fall of the Taliban for NPR, then left journalism to remain in Kandahar in order to contribute to the reconstruction of the country, living there almost continuously since December 2001. Deeply embedded in the life of the city and fluent in Pashtu, Chayes gained a unique perspective on the unfolding war. An expert on the dynamics of severe corruption, Sarah Chayes lived for most of a decade in Kandahar, Afghanistan, before serving as special assistant to the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. She now researches the role of corruption in driving security crises.

- **Working Groups**

Topic - Creating an effective intervention program

It is particularly important for various state agencies to build trust, working with communities. And building trust is ensured by providing meaningful community participation so that it can mobilize its resources in relevant preventive and counter radicalization and violent extremism activities.

Training participants are divided into working groups with the task to design a program: prevention; de-radicalization; re-integration (by random selection).

Module VIII. ESTABLISHMENT OF COMMUNITY REFERRAL MECHANISM - PROVIDING EFFECTIVE SOLUTIONS TO P / CVE ISSUES

Working to prevent and counter radicalization and violent extremism is of a different nature from the work done by security agencies dealing with counter-terrorism, due to its non-coercive nature, in the sense that it does not involve investigations and prosecutions or arrests of individuals dealing with such criminal offenses. The focus of working in this direction is mainly on: **preventing and countering the processes of radicalization that can lead to terrorism; reducing its pull and push factors, addressing and reducing the social, economic and political complaints and structural conditions that may be conducive to violent extremism; creating community-based and specifically designed programs to help those individuals who have already been radicalized, detached, and integrated into society; as well as working with communities through the inclusion of the whole of society to empower communities to understand and further empower themselves against the phenomenon and the consequences it has on our society.**

In light of the foregoing, the work in this regard presupposes the undertaking of a wide range of measures, which translate into activities implemented by governmental and non-governmental actors, which aim to prevent or mitigate violent extremism through non-coercive measures and that are united under the common goal of addressing the instigators of violent extremism in a given community. This kind of cooperation brings us to the establishment of institutional mechanisms that, firstly, involve state and non-state actors under a common umbrella and, secondly, provides solutions to the complaints and problems that are presented in the community.

8.1 Referral Mechanism and its importance

The development of referral mechanisms and other types of non-criminal interventions are complex efforts that need to be carefully created. When planned, structured, and financially supported, these efforts can help communities facing problems with radicalization and violent extremism find the solutions they seek. However, it is necessary to take into account the fact that such mechanisms should not be turned into structures that stigmatize individuals or communities, undermine freedom of expression, violate privacy rights or strengthen negative gender, religious, ethnic stereotypes, etc. ...

Early detection and prevention of radicalization in individuals through the creation of a referral mechanism in Western European countries has been one of the effective responses to countering violent extremism. The referral mechanism is not a special body,

but it is an instrument that consists of a series of rules and procedures, which specifically define the role of local institutions in preventing violent extremism. The mechanism serves for the early detection of signs of radicalization in individuals, for determining its causes, as well as enables the design and provision of a package of services for the individual, in order to prevent its further radicalization.

More specifically, a definition used by the OSCE for the referral mechanism is found below. It is considered as '*A formal or informal mechanism involving practitioners and professionals from different disciplines and/or agencies and organizations that aims to identify, assess, assist, and treat those individuals showing signs of being at risk of or vulnerable to engagement in VERLT or already on the path to VERLT.*⁴³'.

So, the referral mechanism can be independent of local councils, but it can also be an integral part of it, which prevents overlapping interventions and the creation of parallel structures. Provision of services depends on the specifics of each case presented, following an assessment of factors and radicalization stage of individuals or groups.

By services we may mean counseling with social workers and psychologists, with leaders of religious communities or the involvement of the person in sports, social, cultural activities, or special activities tailored to the individual. The type, nature and duration of the service is decided by the members of the mechanism, who represent distinct functions of the institutions that are an integral part of the mechanism, such as. representatives of educational, social, health and religious institutions, CSOs, as well as representatives of the police and the judiciary.

Anyone can refer cases of radicalization of individuals who show such signs, but the first to distinguish them are those first-line employees or those who are closer to these individuals. These are mainly family members, friends and teachers or psychologists, social workers and security officers in educational institutions (as they spend a lot of time with younger people, who are also the most affected group). Consequently, working with family, society and school is of particular importance, because **they not only must recognize the mechanism, but also have the confidence and security to refer the case.**

Also, civil society organizations have a special role in referring cases, as they work mainly with groups in weak positions, such as women or disadvantaged persons due to poverty,

⁴³ UNDERSTANDING REFERRAL MECHANISMS IN PREVENTING AND COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM AND RADICALIZATION THAT LEAD TO TERRORISM: Navigating Challenges and Protecting Human Rights: A Guidebook for South-Eastern Europe, p. 11.

lack of education, disabilities, etc. In some European countries⁴⁴, they have played a significant role in creating referral mechanisms, by driving, promoting or contributing to their creation. CSOs can also organize training for users of the referral mechanism, for example, on how to distinguish early signs of radicalization, monitor the effectiveness of its implementation, and whether or not it has been successful.

An essential element to consider when operating this type of mechanism is to avoid the negative effects it may have. Through its operation, especially in the first period, due to the lack of appropriate knowledge or clear rules of operation, there is a risk of handling cases through the filter of prejudice, stereotyping and thus, we risk doing more harm than solve them.

It is therefore important that the first signs of radicalization are analyzed initially for a certain period of time, to determine whether they recur and multiply. It is also important to distinguish between those who are interested in extremist content and those who genuinely believe in it.

8.2 Local Councils of Public Safety In line with internationally accepted best practices, which stipulate **that local self-government units should be strengthened in order to be able to protect and support their citizens**, municipalities in Albania consider themselves responsible for a considerable number of new aspects related to this care. In this context, the Local Security Councils (KLS) are established by the local government, in order to coordinate the forms of response of local actors to security problems that exist in the community.

Although the Law on Local Self-Government⁴⁵ there are no direct provisions countering violent extremism, Article 4 of the law states that in their activity the bodies of local self-government units must act in accordance with the Constitution, laws and bylaws. This provision obliges the municipalities to engage in the implementation of the Decision of the Council of Ministers no. 930/ 2015, "For the Approval of the National Strategy Countering the Foreign Extremism and the Action Plan."⁴⁶

⁴⁴ In the United Kingdom, there was a case when the staff of a kindergarten registered a four-year-old child in the de-radicalization program. Ben Quinn, Nursery 'raised fears of radicalisation over boy's cucumber drawing', The Guardian, 11.3.2016. <https://goo.gl/ieeEqs> 30

⁴⁵ Law no. 139/2015 "For local self-government".

⁴⁶ 'For Effective Municipalities, Active Communities, and Safer Citizens', Local Planning and Governance Project in Albania (PLGP), Tetra Tech, December 2019.

According to DCM 83/2015 “On the establishment and functioning of the Agency for Local Self-Government Support” (amended by DCM no. 11/2018”), Agency for Local Self Government Support⁴⁷ has instructed municipalities to establish **Local Councils of Public Safety. The council is chaired by the mayor and is the most suitable forum for dealing with local issues that are outside the scope of current referral mechanisms.** Local Councils of Public Safety can treat push factors, such as: exclusion, inequality, discrimination, or denial of human rights and freedoms; as well as pull factors, such as: the existence of extremist local groups or meetings and sermons of ideological / spiritual leaders, related to violent extremism and radicalization⁴⁸. At the present, there are established nearly 95 % of all this security mechanisms.

The composition of security councils is not the same in all municipalities and cities. Changes are encountered in elements such as: number of members, their function, etc. ... It is important that this composition be such as to enable the identification and resolution of problems. Although the State Police, as the main law enforcement agency, is not part of the local structure, **the central government has formalized various mechanisms (such as the mechanism for dealing with domestic violence, the mechanism for combating trafficking of human beings, the protection of children and the mechanism “schools as community centers”)** that empower municipalities in terms of preventing and addressing issues arising under the field of law and order, and security. Through the implementation of the community policing approach, there is another important bridge of cooperation and partnership between the municipalities and the State Police and between the latter and the citizens.

Also, it is also necessary that the composition of councils⁴⁹ be the representatives of the most important institutions at the local level, which cover the main links of the chain related to security issues, such as the mayor, the police chief at the local level, representatives of municipal bodies, the court, the prosecution, social and health services, etc. The participation of non-state actors in these councils is important in terms of strengthening participation, transparency and consultation, for example, with representatives of civil society, media, intellectuals and academics, business, freelancers in security matters, and with representatives of the local community, who reflect the ethnic and religious composition of the community.

⁴⁷ <https://amvv.qeverisjavendore.gov.al/>

⁴⁸ ‘For Effective Municipalities, Active Communities, and Safer Citizens’, Local Planning and Governance Project in Albania (PLGP), Tetra Tech, December 2019.

⁴⁹ By the end of 2020, it is planned to establish LSC in all 61 municipalities of the country. Practice shows that safety councils in municipalities and various (cities usually) have from 10 to 15 members. _____

LSC analyzes the security situation at the local community, based on which it drafts the local security strategy and the action plan for its implementation. The implementation of these basic tasks by the council should be done in a comprehensive and transparent manner, by organizing consultations and hearings with a wider circle of actors from the local community, or even direct surveys with the community. Transparency to the public, as well as consultation and inclusion of the local community and stakeholders is a way to overcome the difficulties that councils may have in their work.

Methodology of performing the training

- **Energizer**
- **Lecture**
- **Short video presentations**
- **Group discussions**
- **Brainstorming**
- **Evaluation of the training day**

- **Video - Countering Violent Extremism (CVE): Developing an Effective Approach**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vNXAjb3ayLo>

A collaborative in the Greater Boston region thoughtfully explored the topic of "Countering Violent Extremism (CVE)." This video provides insight and considerations about....

- **Group Discussions**

Topic - Compare Local Councils of Public Safety with the Gjilan Mechanism. Which do you think is more effective in terms of preventing cases identified or referred to therein?

Referral Mechanism Gjilan, Kosovo: A bottom-up approach:

Established in 2016, the referral mechanism P / CVE in Gjilan, Kosovo is part of an effort led by municipalities to prevent young people travelling to areas of conflict in Iraq and Syria. The mechanism is managed by the mayor's office and has 15 members

from various local institutions, including police, education, social assistance, health care and religious affairs.

Depending on the nature of the problem, the mechanism receives reports from members and families in the community and creates a group of two to three members to work on each case. Members of the mechanism cannot speak publicly on issues or discuss them with colleagues. According to the people involved in the management of the program, they dealt with ten cases since 2018, almost all have turned away from becoming a violent extremist. However, the mechanism is in its preliminary stages and has limited resources and extensive supportive intervention to provide.

- **Video** - <https://www.osce.org/secretariat/248276>

Experts from around the OSCE region are speaking up at the OSCE Counter-Terrorism conference organized in Berlin on 30 May and 1 June 2016 by the OSCE German Chairmanship in Office.

- **Brainstorming**

What should we take into consideration when developing policies to prevent and counter radicalization leading to violent extremism and terrorism? How can we engage youth in these efforts? And are there links between violent extremism and human rights violations?

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