ASSESSMENT OF KOSOVO'S CAPACITIES AND NEEDS IN THE FIGHT AGAINST VIOLENT EXTREMISM

September, 2022

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ACRONYMS

ASK -	Kosovo Agency of Statistics
ATRC-	Advocacy Training and Resource Centre
BIK -	Islamic Community of Kosovo
BIRN -	Balkan Investigative Reporting Network
CSO's -	Civil Society Organisations
EULEX -	European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo
FRE -	Far Right Extremism
GCERF -	Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund
IOM -	International Organisation for Migration
KCS -	Kosovo Correctional Service
KIA -	Kosovo Intelligence Agency
KII -	Key Information Interviewees
KPS -	Kosovo Probation Service
LGBTQI -	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex
MDE -	Municipal Department of Education
MEST -	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
MIA -	Ministry of Internal Affairs
OECD -	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OSCE -	Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe
P/CVE -	Preventing/Countering Violent Extremism
PISA -	Programme for International Student Assessment
PTSD -	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
R&R -	Reintegration and Resocialization
RRR -	Return, rehabilitation and reintegration
SPVERT -	Strategy for the Prevention of Violent Extremism and Radicalism that Leads to Terrorism
UNMIK -	United Nations Mission in Kosovo
VE -	Violent Extremism

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Kosovo is amongst the numerous states in the world endangered by both Islamic and far-right extremist groups. Low levels of education, a lack of economic development, a history of ethnic conflict and the rule of law not always extending across the country's entire territory all enable a conducive environment for all forms of Violent Extremism (VE), as do public perceptions of governance and institutional performance.

It is in this context that the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network's (BIRN) Kosovo branch has conducted a needs assessment, evaluating the current capacities of public institutions to handle both Violent Extremism and terrorism. The assessment finds that there is a high risk of extremism in Kosovo, and limited institutional capacity to mitigate this risk.

The analysis divides the findings into categories relating to context (findings 1-5), drivers of extremism (findings 6-7) and institutional capacities (8-16), before specifically focusing on forms of extremism outside religion based extremism (finding 17). The findings are explored in depth below but are presented in short form below:

1. Kosovo continues to face manifestations of Islamic extremism, and, in addition to participation in foreign conflicts, VE increasingly manifests itself in domestic attacks.
2. Kosovo's Albanian and Serb communities are the most vulnerable to radicalisation to VE.
3. Albanian and Serb communities in Kosovo are the two main groups prone to joining foreign wars.

4. Young people are particularly vulnerable to recruitment in extremist groups.

5. High internet access combined with digital illiteracy create a fertile ground for online propaganda, contributing to radicalisation and VE.

6. Despite the progress in addressing drivers, evidence gathered to inform strategic documents shows that structural problems such as weak economic growth, poverty, unemployment, weak institutional capacities and a lack of social inclusion and cohesion are the main factors driving VE of various forms. These problems remain active push and pull factors counteracting the country's efforts to manage radicalization to VE.

7. Poor social services exacerbate the drivers of radicalization and VE.

8. The development of impactful, sustainable, and responsible policies, as well as the criminalization of involvement in foreign wars and rehabilitation programmes, have proved successful in preventing and combating acts of VE. However, addressing the drivers that lead to VE remains a longer term process which requires legislation improvements.
9. Institutional setup and interventions for aftercare management proved to be successful in deradicalization and reintegration in Kosovo.

10. Ambiguities in the Strategy for Prevention of Violent Extremism and Terrorism and the lack of institutional capacities and coordination are affecting the work of the Correctional and Probation Service of Kosovo.

11. A lack of commitment, funds and human resources is hampering the important role of municipalities in preventing violent extremism.

12. The inclusion of the municipal level in the reintegration and resocialization process is a prerequisite for the successful implementation of R&R programmes.

13. The lack of capacities at the central level is preventing the successful implementation of Prevention and R&R programmes.

14. Mass education for parents and the community to report suspicious behaviour has not yet been carried out at the local level.
15. Local civil society and media have limited capacities to deal with issues relating to VE.

16. There is a lack of qualitative measurement of activities undertaken by the Ministry of Internal Affairs.
17. FRE and Ethno-nationalism is under researched and not properly addressed under the existing strategic framework in Kosovo.

Data for this assessment was obtained by BIRN in August and September 2022. It included both analyses and information received from state and non-state actors, as well as internal analyses conducted by the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA).

From this data, one clear conclusion is that the competencies relating to VE being delegated from the central level to the local must begin immediately, and be done via a gradual process spread over a number of phases. The initial phase must include an expansion of competencies at five pilot Municipalities (Mitrovica, Gjilan, Prishtina, Peja and Podujevo) in the first year. During the second year, this expansion of competencies should be spread to five other municipalities, including one Serb-majority municipality.

It is crucial that any processes supported by GCERF or any donor in the future must not be rushed and should be carefully thought through, while any expansion or replication of models presented must be done gradually. From the assessment conducted by BIRN, it is recommended that any future programming by GCERF should incorporate the following processes:
   a. Supporting municipalities in building multi-disciplinary mechanisms up until the point that the full capacities of these mechanisms are operationalised. This should be considered as a long-term priority, with a roughly 3-4 year timescale;
   b. Providing Municipalities with expertise on drafting Municipal Action Plans, which should be part of the process for establishing the multi-disciplinary mechanisms. This should be conducted at the five pilot municipalities initially, before adding new municipalities each year;
   c. Building capacities for Municipal officials working on Preventing/Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE) and Reintegration and Resocialisation (R&R) programmes through specialised training and mentorship programmes. This should be particularly aimed at Municipal officials tasked with working on Municipal Action Plans and on issues related to prevention, treatment, and R&R components such as working with returnees and those showing early signs of radicalisation, as well as those working on recognising and managing other forms of extremism including ethno-nationalism and Far-right Extremism (FRE). It is recommended that all individuals foreseen to be involved in implementation of future

strategies and action plans should undergo these training and mentorship programmes mandatorily;

d. Providing professional assistance and funds to the pilot five municipalities (Mitrovica, Gjilan, Prishtina, Peja and Podujevo) during the first year. This will allow financial support to be provided to individuals affected by extremism through essential packages and assistance in seeking employment.

e. Engaging social workers to provide assistance to individuals affected by extremism, either through Municipalities or Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), with one option being to engage a specialised group of psychologists that rotate between municipalities.

f. Providing direct support through grants and projects to CSOs, allowing them to work directly with groups affected by extremism or living in communities at a higher risk;

g. Designing and conducting a specialised programme aimed at raising capacities, mentoring and financially supporting CSOs working at the local level, allowing them to implement their own programmes on various forms of extremism, including FRE and ethnonationalism. These steps should go hand-in-hand as mentorship without financial support to follow through on the newly gained knowledge and skills would not reach the desired impact and vice versa;

h. Offering a special package of financial support through grants to businesses that offer employment and emergency care packages that support families and host communities affected by violent extremism so as to ease the social and economic factors;

i. Supporting awareness raising campaigns and media outlets that provide alternative or positive narratives, assist the general public in recognising FRE, ethnonationalism and hate speech, and prevent potential violence that may move from the online to offline sphere as a result of disinformation;

j. Increasing the capacities of institutions at the central level when it comes to handling other forms of extremism and radicalisation, as well as encouraging increased attention on these issues.

In terms of other, broader conclusions, the needs assessment recommends the following to all state and nonstate actors, while specific recommendations to central government, Municipalities, civil society and the media, as well as to the donor community, are presented in the final section of this report.

- The focus of all programming and capacity building efforts should be on addressing all types of extremism and terrorism, in addition to current programmes supported by donors which are primarily focused on religious extremism;
- Public and social institutions at both the central and local levels must be advanced and strengthened when it comes to early prevention of violent extremism as well as the final phase of disengagement from extremism;
- Institutions and donors, in close cooperation with the MIA's Public Safety Department, must ensure continuous support for the operationalisation of multidisciplinary teams at the local level. Support for these mechanisms must include resources for drafting the guidelines, developing individual plans, training the staff, financial support for returnees, providing psychological and social services, strategic communication and community outreach;
- Central level institutions and donors must ensure assistance for Municipalities in developing special action plans for the implementation of the strategy, including services provided by the

Municipalities in education, public services, culture, and planning for emergencies, amongst others;

- In close cooperation with partners, a process of strengthening and supporting civil society should be initiated in order to enable CSOs to carry out activities at the local level and to secure sustainable funding sources to fund these activities. These efforts should also involve the media. Implementation of these programmes must be in line with the trends and changes noted in the field in order to adapt to other forms of extremism;
- Re-Shifting the focus from prevention to R&R back to prevention, as while a higher focus on R&R was needed due to contextual changes back in 2019, the reduced focus and continuous work on prevention aspects, specifically on strengthening the resilience of the community against extremist ideologies, poses a challenge to the long-term and sustainable approach to deal and mitigate risks of the new emerging forms of extremism.
- A special package of financial support through grants to businesses that offer employment and emergency care packages that support families and host communities affected all forms of violent extremism so as to ease the social and economic factors;

INTRODUCTION

Genocide denial and anti-reconciliation narratives thrive in the states of the Western Balkans, with governments in the region often failing to address the legacy of the wars of the 1990s and using inflammatory rhetoric to further division and deepen political crises.

Regardless of the documentation and resources that are available, there is still no sign of fact-based narratives on the legacies created by wars in the region, mainly due to the persistent predominance of nationalistic discourse. Official representatives from all countries in the region continue to use "us and them" rhetoric in regard to wartime crimes, while political elites and state institutions have repeatedly supported and even promoted convicted war criminals.

Further to this, memorialization processes in post-Yugoslav countries are routinely ethnically based, with state commemorations organised to pay tribute only to victims of the majority ethnic group. Simultaneously, the education system reflects and even supports divisive narratives – history textbooks lack impartiality when it comes to the wars in the former Yugoslavia, as well as almost the entire history of the 20th century.

In 2018, BIRN produced a report titled "After the ICTY: Accountability, Truth and Justice in Former Yugoslavia"[1], which aims to map current challenges in regional cooperation in regard to war crimes prosecutions and missing persons, as well as victims' participation and the role of archives, art, media and museums in dealing with the past. This report called for a civic, all-inclusive, holistic approach around the prevention of violence and guarantees of non-recurrence.

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[1] https://birn.eu.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/After-the-ICTY-Report-2018.pdf

Meanwhile, A PREVEX report[2] notes that one of the characteristics of states in the Western Balkans is their ethnically and religiously mixed profile, with Muslims constituting the majority in Albania, Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), as well as in some regions of both Serbia (Sandžak/Novi Pazar) and the Republic of North Macedonia (RNM) — two countries where Orthodox Christians are the majority.[3]

The report further notes that while this profile does not in itself constitute a potential for tensions, when it is combined with unstable politics and democracies it may create fertile ground for different forms of extremist ideologies. To this end, the PREVEX research asserts that extremism in the context of the Western Balkans should be understood in two different, and in some instances intertwined ways: as religiously driven, above all by Islamist extremism, which came to a head following the military clashes and rise of ISIS in Syria and Iraq; and as ethnonationalist (far-right or politically motivated) extremism, which saw its peak during the Yugoslav wars of succession in the 1990s and whose influence remains strong or dominant.[4]

Contextual analysis reveals that Kosovo has been challenged by various forms of extremism, including ethnonationalist, religious, political and those driven by extreme right-wing ideologies.[5] Data and reports from various actors that monitor and report on these areas reveal that the factors driving radicalisation in the country continue to be evident. Correspondingly, Kosovar society is vulnerable to the dangers that come from all forms of violent extremism and terrorism.

The main identified risks continue to be ethnonationalist extremism, primarily prominent amongst the two largest ethnic communities living in Kosovo, Albanians and Serbs. Then there is political extremism, derived as a result of polarisation in the political scene and wide societal divisions, as well as ongoing political instability. Meanwhile, violent religious extremism tends to take the form of Islamist extremism imported by foreign influences, particularly from states in the Middle East. In recent years, there have been some indications that even extreme far-right groups are present in the region and in Kosovo.[6]

Thus, this Needs Assessment presents an overview of the current situation concerning prevention, reintegration and rehabilitation programmes relating to violent extremism, as well as their results on the ground. It also evaluates the potential of Kosovo fulfilling its strategic vision of strengthening capacities at the local level, as well as meeting its obligations relating to the prevention and combating of violent extremism and terrorism.

An analysis of the current risks from violent extremism and terrorism is also presented, which focuses on the impact on Kosovo of global and regional trends, particularly those related to right wing extremism. Finally, concrete recommendations are also provided to various stakeholders, as an outline of what is expected from each of them in order to address the findings.

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[2] PREVEX. https://www.prevex-balkan-mena.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/D5.2-FINAL_3019.pdf

[3] PREVEX. https://www.prevex-balkan-mena.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/D5.2-FINAL_3019.pdf

[4] Ibid

[5] Suspicions on preparation of terrorist attacks based on religion: https://kallxo.com/lajm/dosja-e-prokurorise-grupi-terrorist-qe-planifikonte-sulme-ne-kosove-i-lidhur-me-isis

[6] https://www.evropaelire.org/a/prokuroria-speciale-heton-organizatat-ilegale-nga-serbia/31995791.html

I.   PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

In August 2022, BIRN Kosovo was commissioned by the ATRC and GCERF to conduct a needs assessment aimed at assessing and identifying Kosovo's progress and needs when it comes to tackling Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism of all forms. This Needs Assessment is therefore aimed at informing GCERF and its governing board on the needs required to ensure a successful transition in Kosovo, and specifically in deciding whether a pivot towards addressing Far-right Extremism and Ethnonationalism is feasible and/or appropriate.

The specific objectives of the assessment are:

a) To briefly describe the VE context in Kosovo and identify and analyse the drivers of recruitment and radicalisation to VE in this region;
b) To provide a brief analysis of the progress made in return, rehabilitation and reintegration (RRR) over the last 5 years;
c) Outlining the opportunities and challenges to ensuring the sustainability of RRR over the long term;
d) Identify priority areas for continued R&R support (and to categorise them in terms of importance); which areas are prioritised and which are not; which areas have the greatest potential for addressing long-term aftercare solutions and which are the most challenging and why;
e) Identify which forms of extremism are present in Kosovo;
f) Identify the challenges and opportunities around ongoing work to address other forms of extremism in Kosovo.

METHODOLOGY

BIRN has used a mixed methods approach for data collection, which was carried out during August and September 2022. Key methods can be grouped as follows:

- *Desk research.* This method included reviewing key reports, policies, academic literature and other documents analysing the areas of focus. Besides focusing on documents/literature produced by key actors working on the issues under scrutiny in the context of Kosovo, the team also reviewed the research/monitoring materials produced by the Resilient Community Program thus far. The team also focused on selecting relevant data collected through monitoring activities for further analysis in line with the purpose of this assessment. In

addition, the BIRN team used data already collected through the year-long monitoring and two specific analyses (on employment and activities related to youth, culture and sports at the local level). Reports generated from this monitoring included over 135 interviews with relevant representatives from central and local level institutions, Civil Society Organisations and academia. Data gathered through pre- and post- community gatherings and regional workshops already held in Kosovo municipalities were also reviewed and analysed in the context of this Assessment. BIRN also held three (3) regional workshops in the municipalities of Prishtina, Gjilan and Mitrovica with 51 participants as well as five (5) community gatherings in the municipalities of Prishtina, Obiliq, Drenas, Shtime and Vushtrri with 81 participants. Thus, information and feedback from these meetings were also analysed and reviewed in the context of this Assessment.

- **Interviews.** Having designed a preliminary guide tailored to specific interviewees and relevant to their official position, backgrounds and professional qualifications, the team embarked on a series of semi-structured qualitative interviews. All 31 interviewees were selected following a *purposive sampling* based on their direct involvement through managing, coordinating, and participating in P/CVE and R&R interventions in Kosovo or having knowledge of FRE and ethnonationalism.

- **Focus groups.** One focus group was held online considering the timing of the interviews. The first focus group was held on August 30th 2022, with 9 representatives from the local level working in either education, social welfare and public safety. The second group was planned for when a draft is finalized to serve for validation of data obtained.

- **Comparative analysis of the needs of five municipalities.** BIRN also analysed and interviewed stakeholders from specific municipalities so as to compare how some models functioned. BIRN focused on Gjilan with the referral mechanism, Mitrovica with the model of CSO cooperation and Hani i Elezit with the coordinated municipal mechanism.

- **Standardised questionnaire with Kosovo Municipalities.** BIRN developed a questionnaire with around 40 questions and disseminated it to all of Kosovo's Municipalities. Questions covered the areas of overall preparation, readiness and capacities of Municipalities to receive and absorb new decentralised competencies, knowledge, data and efforts made to improve capacities in preventing right wing extremism, ethnonationalism and violent extremism of other forms and R&R and work with returnees and those who already served their time after convictions. The questionnaire was shared with municipal officials and they were given 10 days to return filled out questionnaires. After translating the questionnaire, BIRN shared it with the municipalities in Albanian and Serbian languages so that officials would be able to respond in their native languages. BIRN carried out follow up conversations with all officials and encouraged them to fill it out accurately. BIRN received responses from 21 municipalities.

Quality assurance, reliability, and validity

The quality of the work carried out in the field was ensured in the following ways:

The team conducted extensive reading of the key documents/reports/policies produced on the areas of focus to remind and improve understanding on the current context, rules, actors, and overall work. This provided an in-depth understanding of where each actor and process stand, as well as better understanding answers of the respondents, which would then enable the team to prepare follow-up questions or further points of information for aspects that remain under-explained.

Second, the team applied a mixed methods research approach and a multi-level analysis (national, local, state, non-state, etc), which will serve well for the purpose of triangulation to strengthen the validity of the assessment.

Limitations

The assessment was conducted in a relatively short time covering four thematic areas with several sub-questions, which posed the risk of an unequal depth of analysis for each area. Further to this, at the time of completing the questionnaire, a majority of educational institutions were on strike, meaning that obtaining information was a challenging process.

To help manage these limitations, the team relied on previous work and resources invested in these areas, particularly data collected over the last year through monitoring activities, to ensure any gaps in the data collected during this process were filled.

There are also methodological constraints, mainly due to the fact that interviews may be characterised by miscommunication of opinions. To address this, BIRN engaged a team that already had a substantial amount of information from direct monitoring of these areas, as well as information obtained from primary and secondary documents in the desk research phase. These enabled them to interpret or intervene with follow-up questions in cases of miscommunication.

Far-right Extremism (FRE) and ethnonationalism in Kosovo are not independent of global trends, which often feed the local trends. However, this assessment did not necessarily focus on unveiling the links between them, nor if the factors that drive these trends are similar to what is happening in other countries. However, the assessment did focus on identifying measures that have proved effective in other contexts.

In terms of risks, the intensity and scale of the data collection process is bound by the responsiveness and availability of individuals invited for interviews. The assessment was carried out during August and beginning of September 2022, which coincided with school holidays and teachers' strikes. In order to mitigate this, BIRN engaged in in-person, online and hybrid meetings with the Key Information Interviewees (KIIs). In the end, 21 Municipalities provided responses, with the rest blaming their failure to do so on attention being shifted to to the strikes and disruption in the school system.

Ethics

BIRN Kosovo strives to ensure full transparency, accuracy, objectivity and confidentiality is in place in all of its undertakings, and its teams of researchers are well trained to ensure full compliance with these principles. This means that the assessment team constantly reflected on important ethical issues such as anonymity and objectivity throughout the process.

During initial conversations and approaches with interviewees, municipalities and all other stakeholders, the team carefully explained the background and reasons for carrying out this assessment, regularly offered the chance to ask clarification questions, and reiterated the confidentiality of their responses and opinions.

KEY FINDINGS AND ALALYSIS

Violent Extremism: The Context in Kosovo

This chapter of the Needs Assessment presents the context in which violent extremism manifests in the Republic of Kosovo, as well as how external factors, including the current war in Ukraine can drive certain forms of extremism in the country.

This chapter also presents the evolution of the recruitment to violent extremist groups, the preparation and perpetration of terrorist acts, as well as the fragility of inter-ethnic relations and their tendency to contribute to violent extremism. The age groups most at-risk to fall prey of recruitment for terrorist groups and the impact of the internet are also identified.

Finding 1: Kosovo continues to face manifestations of Islamic extremism, and, in addition to participation in foreign conflicts, VE increasingly manifests itself in domestic attacks.

Since the end of the Kosovo war in 1999, violent extremism and terrorism have been an ongoing threat in the country. An OSCE report concluded that roughly 220,000 people from different communities have been displaced as refugees following the war.[7] This displacement of the population, as well as the consequences of the war, have left behind extremist groups that continuously produced inter-ethnic conflicts.

Violent incidents have taken many lives. In 2000, more than 10 Albanians were killed in North Mitrovica after local Serbs expelled all Albanian families living in the area.[8] Meanwhile ethnic Serbs have been attacked in areas across Kosovo, including an incident in the village of Gorazdevac, near Peja, in 2003 in which two Serbian teenagers were killed.[9] Post-war ethnic tensions culminated in the riots of March 2004, when over 19 people were killed and dozens of properties were destroyed in open conflicts between the Albanian and Serbian communities.[10]

The socio-economic environment of post-war Kosovo was conducive for the spread and dispersion of extremist ideologies. As were the shortcomings in the education system, which had been pushed into a parallel system housed in private homes throughout the 1990s. In a system lacking educational oversight, which only really began in 2002, a number of organizations managed to promote radical Islam mainly by offering courses in computer skills and the English language. A long process of promoting radical Islam was largely tolerated from 1999 to 2014. In this period, organizations, foundations, lecturers and preachers of radical Islam and people associated with terrorist organizations were allowed to operate.

In addition to education, the difficult socio-economic situation of Kosovar society was also used to encourage people to join radical Islamist groups. Food parcels, residential houses, and even religious institutions were built with money that came through questionable foundations which were blocked

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[7] OSCE Kosovo. December 2014
https://www.osce.org/sq/kosovo/130506

[8] Full article published in RTV21, 2018
, https://rtv21.tv/perkujtohet-masakra-e-kryer-ne-veri-te-mitrovices/

[9] Full article published in Radio Free Europe, on July 13 2003
https://www.evropaelire.org/a/1027904.html

10 OSCE, Tracking of March 2004 Riots Cases in Kosovo's Criminal Justice System, June 2008 ,
https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/e/9/32702.pdf

after 2014 by the Kosovo Prosecution. However, 14 years of unhindered activities promoting radical Islam culminated in the involvement of over 400 Kosovars in the wars in Syria and Iraq.

Until 2014, the main competencies in fighting and investigating radical Islamist groups and other terrorist groups was the Special Prosecutor's Office, which was headed by a EULEX prosecutor. In 2014, these powers were passed on to local prosecutors. This period also marked the start of massive arrest operations, the closing of schools and organizations with questionable funding, and the building of institutional capacities for the prevention and fight against terrorism.

Kosovo drafted a law through which it prohibited participation in foreign wars and drafted two strategies: one on prevention and the other on fighting terrorism. The strategy against terrorism warns of the dangers Kosovo faces, identifying ethnonationalism, religious extremism and far-right extremism as the most dangerous forms of extremism threatening its democratic values. Implementation of activities related to prevention and the fight against terrorism saw a marked increase in capacities in the Kosovo Police and Kosovo Intelligence Agency (KIA), both for investigation and documenting acts related to terrorism. Kosovo also started working on the early prevention and rehabilitation processes.

The undertaking of large state operations made it possible to create an environment where the problem began to be addressed. However, democratic values, the constitutional order, the lives and interests of Kosovo citizens and its partners continue to be endangered by the manifestation of violent extremism and terrorism.

Depending on the main drivers, Kosovo continues to face serious threats from ethnonationalist extremism, religious extremism and far right extremism. The existence of this risk is also mentioned in the current Strategy against Terrorism which is applicable until the end of this year.[11]

Data obtained from the field show that the manifestation of extremist groups and violent forms of extremism continue their presence in Kosovo. Islamist groups have changed their activities and now plan more attacks within the territory of Kosovo whereas far right groups have begun to make public appearances that encourage violence.

The decentralised structure of terrorist groups and calls 'for anyone to carry out an attack anywhere' resulted in an increased number of terrorist related activities in recent years and higher risks of terrorist attacks against specific groups and events in Kosovo's public domain.

From 2014 until now, 206 people have been arrested as suspects for involvement in terrorist groups. Women and children returned from Syria who are registered in programmes, are not included in these statistics. Moreover, these statistics do not include those arrested for inter-ethnic incidents, cyber-attacks or violent incidents in the north of the country.

The data secured reveals that the emergence of this phenomenon and other forms of extremism are still present among young people. In the past two years, 21 people have been arrested for terrorism-related crimes. With regard to arrests, there were more people arrested for crimes related to terrorism in the years 2021 and 2022 than in the three previous years (2018-2020).

Furthermore, the data collected show that violence has also escalated among the Islamic community in Kosovo. An Imam named Zeqir Berisha, known as a traditional imam, suffered serious injuries after

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[11] State strategy against terrorisem and the plan of action 2018 – 2023, https://kryeministri.rks-gov.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Strategjia-Shteterore-kunder-Terrorizmit-dhe-Plani-i-Veprimit-2018-2023-narrative.pdf

being attacked by a radicalised group who were previously reported to be intending to change the form of preaching in the village mosque. The incident provoked a large public debate, which revealed to the public a widely spread narrative by Islamist radicals that the state of Kosovo is against Islam. The debate was mainly focused on social media, where various demands (including wearing the headscarf and the introduction of religious education in schools) were made.

Currently, 75 people are under investigation by the Special Prosecutor's Office for terrorist-related activities, with five indictments filed last year alone. This statistic includes people under investigation who are currently in conflict zones but excludes investigations into violents acts or inter-ethnic incidents in the north of Kosovo, which often appear to have ethnonationalistic elements. Police reports also reveal that Kosovo has become more vulnerable to attacks within the country.

Global changes and ISIS's call for terrorists to act in their own country have changed the group's approach, from participating to foreign wars to planning actions inside the country. During 2021, a group was arrested on charges of planning attacks on NATO bases, while warnings of possible attacks on shopping centres have also been received.

Another terrorist threat phenomenon that has emerged in recent year is false bomb threats. Over 20 institutions[12], including the Airport, were subject to threats during 2022 by as yet unidentified groups.[13] Furthermore, LGBTI community activists have also highlighted attacks and continuous hate speech against them, especially during the period of public discussion for the new Civil Code.

Finding 2: Kosovo's Albanian and Serb communities are most vulnerable to radicalisation to VE.

Kosovo has a population composed of about 90% ethnic Albanians, over 5% ethnic Serbs and the rest made up of other communities including Roma, Ashkali, Egyptian, Turkish, Bosniaks and Gorani. Kosovo has 38 municipalities, of which 27 are ethnic Albanian majority municipalities, 10 are Serb-majority municipalities and one is a Turkish-majority municipality[14].

The population demographic composition also reflects on the leadership of these municipalities. The four northern Municipalities of Kosovo, namely North Mitrovica, Leposavic, Zvecan and Zubin Potok border Serbia, in an area that is largely out of control of both the Republic of Kosovo and Serbia, and is an area that is often used politically to incite violent acts.[15]

The wars of the 1990s left behind a legacy of conflict between Kosovo's ethnic communities and inter-ethnic incidents have continuously created narratives and manifested FRE groups amongst both Albanians and Serbs. These groups have often promoted narratives aimed at domination over the other ethnic group.

Albanians claim that Serbia unjustly occupied Kosovo in 1912, which prevented the establishment of an Albanian national state. On the other hand, Serbs consider Kosovo as the cradle of the Serbian

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12 https://kallxo.com/lajm/perseri-alarm-per-bombe-ne-stacionin-e-autobuseve-ne-prishtine/

13 https://kallxo.com/lajm/alarm-per-bomba-ne-disa-shkolla-te-rajonit-te-gjilanit-pamje/

14 Kosovo Statistics Agency, Yearbook for 2021. Statistical Yearbook of the Republic of Kosovo, 2021, page 43.

15 BBC. Why is trouble flaring between Serbs and Albanian led governments. https://www.bbc.com/news/62382069

nation, connecting the establishment of the Serbian state with the battle of Kosovo in Gazimestan in the 15th century.

The end of the war did not mark the end of the promotion of ideas and groups that endorse the dominance of one ethnic group over another. Among Albanians, organisations that promote national unity have emerged and perpetrated violent acts, including attacks against other communities. One organisation aimed at national unity, self-proclaimed as the 'Albanian National Army (AKSH)', was declared a terrorist organization after an attack on a bridge in Leposavic in 2002. Other anonymous organisations also promoted threats and narratives aimed at liberating Albanian lands from the invaders.

On the other hand, in Serbia, the declaration of Kosovo's independence encouraged the establishment of a number of ethno-nationalist organisations. These organisations often seek the re-occupation of Kosovo and the annulment of its independence. Organisations such as the '1389 Movement', 'Czar Lazari's Guard', and the 'Movement for the Protection of Kosovo, and Metohija', have been identified as FRE organisations which are based in Serbia but exert influence through their activities in Kosovo.

Meanwhile, data obtained from Kosovo's security institutions indicate the establishment of an organisation within Kosovo's territory named the 'Army of the North', which is being investigated for several attacks on local Serbs working within Kosovo institutions.

The European Commission's report 'Violent Right-Wing Extremism in the Western Balkans'[16] states that Albanian right-wing extremism is characterised by feelings related to the independence of Kosovo and includes ethnic Albanians in Albania, North Macedonia and Serbia. Although the idea of uniting the "Albanian lands" often carries an emotional appeal, it still seems fragile as an idea and does not enjoy much support among the people and far-right organisations that advocate or support Greater Albania are of marginal influence.

However, this does not mean that such extremist right-wing ideas should not be considered as a potential threat. 58 FRE organisations consider Kosovo as a small enclave within Serbia: the so-called 'Historical Heart of Serbia.' Most right-wing Serbs have adopted the position that Albanians are "dangerous enemies" who seek the creation of Greater Albania and, at the same time, consider Albanians as denizens. They have close ties with international far-right groups and activists.

The lack of justice for war victims in Kosovo and the mass destruction of the war, contributed to creating massive divisions amongst the two biggest ethnic groups in the country. Consequently, the narrative of injustice, victimisation and collective blaming of the other ethnicity is widely present amongst both communities. Less than 100 people have been convicted of crimes committed before, during and after the war in Kosovo.

The city of Mitrovica, divided since 1999 between an Albanian south and a Serbian north, and especially the Ibar bridge connecting the two areas, has become a focal point of numerous protests since 1999 as well of inter-ethnic incidents. Following the declaration of Kosovo's independence in 2008, acts of violence by local Serbs against government officials trying to establish customs control

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[16] https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/whats-new/publications/violent-right-wing-extremism-western-balkans-july-2022_en

on, and prevent smuggling across, the border with Serbia have occurred, occasionally with Russian involvement, in 2008, 2011, 2017, 2019, and 2021.

Media reports and analysis conducted by security institutions show that in all four municipalities in the north of Kosovo (North Mitrovica, Leposavic, Zubin Potok and Zvecan) there is a well-established structure that aims to violently hinder the extension of the rule of law and order in this part of the country.

The Governments of Kosovo and Serbia continue negotiating in Brussels in efforts to achieve a legally binding comprehensive final agreement between the two countries. However, this lengthy process has continuously created a conducive environment for interethnic hate.

Finding 3: Albanian and Serb communities in Kosovo are the two main groups prone to joining foreign wars

Based on ethnic composition, there are two demographic categories of people in Kosovo who engage in foreign wars. There are a number of Kosovo Albanians who joined the ranks of ISIS, whereas a number of Kosovo Serbs have joined the ranks of Russian troops in Ukraine.[17]

It is estimated, that about 358 Kosovar nationals travelled to Syria and Iraq from 2012 to either join designated terrorist organizations or to migrate to territories controlled or administered by them. About 71 percent of the total contingent were adult males at the time of departure, 15 percent women, and 14 percent minors. At least 81 children were born to Kosovar nationals in Syria and Iraq between 2012 and 2019, bringing the total number of Kosovar nationals (or individuals entitled to Kosovar nationality) to have spent time in Syria and Iraq to 440.[18]

According to reports, the Ukraine Embassy in Serbia estimated that over 300 Serbian citizens joined the pro-Russian forces in the conflict in eastern Ukraine that began in 2014.[19] This number does not exclude Serbs living in Kosovo who also hold Serbian citizenships; nevertheless, there is no exact data on the number of Serb foreign fighters with connections to Kosovo.

According to the PREVEX report, the phenomena of foreign fighters in Kosovo can be traced back to the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s, when jihadi foreign fighters from Middle Eastern countries supported Muslim fighters in the region and a number of Islamic Relief organizations and NGOs set up their branch offices in Kosovo. Meanwhile, the creation of a climate of exporting fighters to war zones amongst the Serb community was based on support the Milosevic regime received from paramilitary groups from Russia during the war in Kosovo.[20]

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[17] Article published in Radio Free Europe. https://www.evropaelire.org/a/serbi-lufta-ne-ukraine-/32025939.html, Published on September 9th, 2022.

[18] Shtuni, Adrian. "Dynamics of Radicalization and Violent Extremism in Kosovo." USIP, December 2016. https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/SR397-Dynamics-of-Radicalization-and-Violent-Extremism-in-Kosovo.pdf and IRI. "Understanding Local Drivers of Violent Extremism in Kosovo." Spring 2017. https://www.iri.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/2017-9-17_kosovo_vea_report.pdf

[19] Ibid.

[20] Video filmed during the war in Kosovo regarding a Russian soldier killed in Koshare, published in 2014. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LjzptHk1eAQ

Finding 4: Young people are particularly vulnerable to recruitment in extremist groups.

Analyses conducted by the Kosovo Police[21] and the justice system have shown that young people are most vulnerable to being recruited to extremist groups. This has been observed especially in the case of religious radicalization, where groups of young people have been convinced to go to war.

Research has also shown that recruiters have used different methods to reach their audience, with early contact being made online. Meanwhile, religious online propaganda is regularly targeted to the Kosovo Albanian community, and FRE content at Kosovo Serbs. The results of this propaganda have been seen in Kosovo's north, where support of Russia's war in Ukraine is widespread, and posters have appeared of war criminals convicted of genocide.[22]

The government of Kosovo, as well as religious communities, have not yet managed to build a strong opposing narrative and recruitment and direct indoctrination are still considered problematic.

Police operations in mosques have stopped lectures and private meetings in areas that have been previously difficult for law enforcement to penetrate. However, preachers and distributors of radical Islamic literature continue to promote and recruit new followers through closed and secretive meetings.

Other data also show that these groups have recruited from outside of Kosovo as well. Radical Islamic groups have managed to radicalise young people from the diaspora, some of whom ended up participating in foreign wars. Approximately 25% of foreign fighters came from the diaspora. Meanwhile data has also shown that extreme right-wing groups originating from Serbia have exported numerous members to Kosovo.

Finding 5: High internet access combined with digital illiteracy create a fertile ground for online propaganda, contributing to radicalisation and VE.

Kosovo is among the countries with the highest levels of internet access with over 90% of the population estimated to have access to the internet from their homes. The materials that are read on the internet are often assessed as problematic because readers frequently do not evaluate the information provided critically, while online news producers are often non-professionals. Analysis by the Kosovo Press Council has shown that over 60% of online portals operate without editors or mechanisms for filtering information before publication.

Citizens' access to information also generates issues that arise from both linguistic and narrative differences. Albanian journalists often produce biassed Albanian narratives, while Serbian journalists often produce biassed Serbian narratives. As a result, reporters face problems in terms of veracity and equal access, and reports in the media and portals regarding different ethnic groups in Kosovo are often inaccurate.

Religious leaders have also found new ways to reach people. Imams who were previously arrested by the police have now created a large audience on social networks and have managed to gain thousands

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[21] Interview with Luan Keka, deputy-head of Anti-Terrorism Unit at Kosovo Police.

[22] *https://kallxo.com/lajm/krimineli-i-luftes-ratko-mlladiq-lartesohet-ne-zvecan-mekanizmat-shteterore-te-kosoves-heshtin/*

of followers. Data from Crowd Tangle shows that over 10 pages that promote Islam and intolerant narratives have found large audiences. Even extreme right-wing groups and nationalist groups that promote "Greater Serbia" have managed to gather millions of followers on social networks.

During 2021 and 2022, online propaganda aimed at seeding an anti-NATO discourse in the country has also been identified in Kosovo. Information published warning of the departure of American troops from Kosovo was characterised as pure Russian propaganda. Even the Kosovo Security Force has, in some instances, responded to false news stories aimed at destabilising security in Kosovo.

Data shows that Kosovo's institutions have not worked sufficiently to build alternative narratives to these messages. The Ministry of Internal Affairs had foreseen the drafting of a communication strategy, but it has not yet been completed. Data collected in Municipalities also show that the local governments have not carried out any activity aimed at the education of the masses regarding propaganda on the internet.

Several initiatives have been taken to block Russian propaganda, including the Independent Media Commission blocking access of Russian media in Kosovo, but data shows that information continues to be published by online satellite media in Kosovo.

Despite these setbacks, however, media reporting in Kosovo has, in some cases, been taken as a model for professional reporting and professional delivery of messages in opposition to narratives.

PUSH AND PULL FACTORS/DRIVERS

The following chapter identifies push and pull factors for various forms of violent extremism, the progress reached in addressing these factors and the current situation on the ground. Long term structural drivers of extremism are also noted, including the difficult economic and social situation, a lack of employment perspectives, limited institutional capacities, a lack of social cohesion and the unsatisfactory quality of social services.

Key findings include the following, as elaborated below:

Finding 6: Despite the progress in addressing drivers, evidence gathered to inform strategic documents shows that structural problems such as weak economic growth, poverty, unemployment, weak institutional capacities and a lack of social inclusion and cohesion are the main factors driving VE of various forms. These problems remain active push and pull factors counteracting the country's efforts to manage radicalization to VE.

Despite the continuous efforts of Kosovo's institutions to improve the situation, the research shows that a significant number of the push and pull factors that drive recruitment to VE groups continue to have an impact on Kosovar society. Poverty, the perception of corruption, lack of institutional capacity, the political situation and conflicts from the past, continue to remain the main driving factors of radicalism in all its manifestations.

A lack of quality education, including inadequate religious education, online propaganda and a lack of critical thinking, emotional crises and a lack of social care, have created huge gaps that still lure young people to join radical groups. This situation has been exploited by some radical religious leaders to

radicalise young people to join foreign wars or to commit terrorist acts within the country. The situation is also being used by far-right groups to incite acts of violence within the country, and to promote participation in the war in Ukraine.

Manifestations of extremism and terrorism in Kosovo have different sources of gravity. Ethno-nationalist and far-right extremism constantly invoke the purity of the nation and ethnicity, the historical roots and the glorious past as well as its preservation. On the other hand, religious extremism calls for the creation of an Islamic state and political governance based on the values of Islam.

The different forms encountered in Kosovo help and complement each other. On a political level, the manifestation of nationalist hatred among politicians representing ethnic groups continues to dominate public discourse, while there are also communication problems between local and central institutions. These problems appear especially in municipalities with an ethnic Serb majority, some of which still do not fully recognize the state of Kosovo.

Political groups have also demonstrated hatred towards the LGBTQI+ community. A fierce debate ensued when the draft-law on Civil Code was sent to the Assembly, as it was set to recognise civil unions between persons of the same gender. The draft-law was not approved at the Assembly of Kosovo due to objections by some MPs, with some parliamentarians criticised for using hate speech. There is no analysis yet as to whether the MPs' rejection of this draft-law was due to their religious beliefs or due to FRE tendencies.

Kosovo is among the countries with the weakest results in the PISA test by OECD. The evaluation shows that students in Kosovo lack critical thinking and, therefore, are more inclined to believe narratives they come into contact with. The education system in Kosovo is divided along ethnic lines, with the Kosovo Government having no control over the curricula of schools and universities operating in the Serbian language. Even basic services are developed separately among communities. Events such as sports leagues, theatrical performances, concerts, etc., are held only along ethnic lines and do not promote communication between ethnic groups.

As a result, Albanian students learn a different narrative than Serbian students about events that have happened in Kosovo. The two ethnic groups continue to learn partial truths about the history, culture, and language of other ethnicities. In a system where history is partially taught and, in some cases even falsified, the two main ethnic groups in Kosovo are characterised by huge divisions, which can easily be used to incite violent acts.

Even basic services are developed separately among communities. Events such as sports leagues, theatrical performances, and concerts are held only along ethnic lines and do not promote communication between ethnic groups.

The political system is also one of the great dividers of society on ethnic grounds. The whole system is built on the basis of ethnic representation rather than on the basis of citizen representation. Therefore, Albanians have their political parties, the Serbs their political parties, as well as the Roma, Ashkali, Bosniaks, Turks and Egyptians. Referring to political parties on ethnic grounds imposes attitudes which are based on the past.

Debates such as the union with Albania or the return of Serbia's regime over Kosovo continue to be part of discussions pushed by political parties in Kosovo. Field experts consider these discussions and differences in Kosovo as a potential risk for turning into violent extremism.[23] Meanwhile, certain politicians have also come to power by opposing the rights of the LGBTQI community or even by promoting the introduction of headscarves and religious education in Kosovo's schools.[24]

Poverty is also considered to be one of the elements making Kosovo easily vulnerable to radical currents, and radical Islamic groups have used economic aid as a way to recruit families.

The latest data from the Kosovo Agency of Statistics (ASK) reveal that by the end of June 2022, more than 25,000 families with a total of over 100,000 members were registered on the social assistance scheme. The same data reveal that more than 5% of the population is on a social scheme. The financial support of 100 euros per month received by families on the scheme is often insufficient to cover living costs.

Other population groups are also affected by poverty. Old-age pensioners in Kosovo receive less than 100 euros of income from their pensions. Poverty also affects non-majority communities, such as Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians, who are also often stigmatised and lack education. On the other hand, Serbian citizens in the north of Kosovo employed in parallel institutions, are often forced to appear in barricades and protests to oppose various decisions taken by Kosovo government institutions.[25]

Finding 7: Poor social services exacerbate the drivers of radicalization and VE.

Kosovo's current strategic documents on P/CVE identify parents, the community, teachers, doctors, psychologists, social workers, education workers, municipal officials and religious leaders as first responders. Although training programmes have been held, a significant proportion of these first responders have not yet received basic information. There is also concern that even key officials at the local level, including municipal directors, still do not have basic knowledge about VE.[26]

As in many other countries, social care for citizens is insufficient in Kosovo. The capacities of Kosovo's institutions to provide psychiatric treatment for people who have suffered trauma are limited, as are the capacities for social work in the community. Kosovo has gone through the great trauma of the war. Women suffering sexual violence during the war (estimated to be around 20,000) have never received treatment to manage PTSD. At the same time, other victims of war, such as the wounded, prisoners or mistreated, have not received psychiatric or psychological care to cope with the trauma of war. Even later developments and traumatic events, such as the civil unrest and ethnic violence of March 2004, have never been addressed by the country's institutions in terms of the psychiatric, psychological and social aspects.

In most schools in Kosovo, there are no psychologists or staff who take care of identifying violent or suspicious behaviour among students. Data also shows that Kosovo's education system lacks a mechanism to identify early behaviours, instead treating issues afterwards. Less than 10% of teachers

[23] Interviews with Aferdita Sylaj, CBM and Valdete Idrizi, Municipality of Mitrovica, August 2022.

[24] Interview with Lulzim Fushtica, IOM, August 2022.

[25] Full article published in Radio Free Europe, on July 1st 2022. https://www..evropaelire.org/a/serbia-ua-ndalon-pushimet-serbeve-veri/31924863.html

[26] BIRN monitoring report on the implementation of activities foreseen by the Strategy on the Prevention of Violent Extremism leading to Terrorism.

are equipped with basic training for identifying suspicious behaviour, while less than 140 psychologists work in Kosovo's schools.

The number of social workers in Kosovo is also low compared to the number of inhabitants. Currently, one social worker provides social services to 10,500 residents, while the standard requires one social worker to cover 3,000 residents. Data shows that in certain municipalities this number is even more alarming. In Municipalities such as Prishtina, one social worker covers 26,000 residents. It is estimated that at least 15 social workers should be recruited immediately.[27] Even current officials have limited capacities as only officials in 12 municipalities are trained in violent extremism and terrorism programs.

STATE AND NONSTATE INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITIES AND RESPONSIVENESS

This chapter of the Needs Assessment identifies the development of legal and strategic policies concerning participation in foreign wars, the impact these changes introduced, the success of R&R programmes and the need to secure continuity. Furthermore, this Chapter assesses the institutional coordination and cooperation with the Correctional and Probation Services, and how this affects the service's quality.

Particular focus is given to the role and crucial importance of the local level, namely Municipalities and their concrete role in preventing violent extremism, with the chapter also scrutinising the lack of preparedness and human and financial capacities present, despite the essential role the local level ought to have as a precondition in successfully implementing R&R programmes.

This chapter also looks in detail at the correlations between the lack of central level capacities and the impact or inability of the local level of governance to fulfil obligations derived from strategic documents. Another important issue identified is the immediate need for raising awareness amongst local communities, particularly amongst parents, as well as the strengthening of local civil society mechanisms and the media so as to be able to fulfil their role in combating various forms of violent extremism.

Finally, this chapter also identifies the lack of capacities and mechanisms that ensure quality assessment of strategic activities, in particular those pertaining to the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA).

The following findings have been identified and are presented below:

Finding 8: The development of impactful, sustainable, and responsible policies, as well as the criminalization of involvement in foreign wars and rehabilitation programmes, have proved successful in preventing and combating acts of VE. However, addressing the drivers that lead to VE remains a longer term process which requires legislation improvements.

Up until 2014, Kosovo's institutions were not given the competencies to handle issues relating to VE, with international missions UNMIK, and then EULEX, maintaining exclusive competencies over these issues, largely due to sensitivities concerning the inclusion of both of Kosovo's major ethnic

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[27] Interview with Ilfete Uka, August 2022.

communities. When these competencies were transferred, more serious treatment of these problems was initiated, especially in regard to Islamist radicalisation.

With the aim of tackling all forms of extremism, the institutions of the Republic of Kosovo drafted relevant legislation and strategic documents through which a comprehensive approach has been established. This includes a societal approach alongside an institutional response, one that highlights the vital role of local actors and civil society organisations. The drafting of this legislation was then followed by the strengthening of professional capacities for investigating and conducting criminal proceedings against suspects who breached this legislation.[28]

The planned deadline for the implementation of the Strategy for the Prevention of Violent Extremism Leading to Terrorism 2015-20 has expired, while the planned implementation period for the State Strategy Against Terrorism expires at the end of this year. The implementation of the Prevention of Violent Extremism strategy was assessed as 'disparate' by the US State Department's 2020 Terrorism Report.

In the upcoming months, the Government of Kosovo aims to approve a new Strategy against Violent Extremism and Terrorism. In the implementation of strategic objectives, Kosovo's institutions have foreseen a multitude of activities for different institutions, with a special focus on transferring Prevention, Reaction and Protection competencies to Kosovo's Municipalities.

When it comes to handling returnees, Kosovo began dealing with the issue of returning foreign fighters from conflict zones in 2014. While up until then the country's institutions had built capacities to fight radicalisation through the criminalization of participation in foreign wars, these capacities were not focused on the resocialization and reintegration process of returnees and their families.[29] Data shows that the first groups of foreign fighters were arrested and incarcerated in 2014, while resocialization and reintegration programmes started much later. In 2015, Kosovo adopted the Strategy on the Prevention of Violent Extremism and Radicalisation Leading to Terrorism 2015-2020.[30]

Implementation has been uneven across government ministries, and challenges continue, largely owing to a lack of capacity, inadequate resources, and an overly securitized approach to CVE. An inter-ministerial working group is drafting a new strategy and action plan, which aims to merge CT and CVE into a unified strategy expected to be unveiled in 2022.[31]

In implementing the activities coming out of the Strategy on the Prevention of Violent Extremism, there are various means and approaches used across various Municipalities, which also often differ to the central level, meaning that there is no standardised approach. For example, the Municipality of Gjilan has implemented many activities in the scope of the Referral Mechanism, a model that has been tested in the municipality, yet, other Municipalities have not taken any examples or lessons learnt from this already tried and tested approach. It has also been observed that municipal activities do not guarantee sufficient engagement of young people in recreational and extracurricular activities.

One of the key issues identified within the strategic documents drafted so far in Kosovo when it comes to prevention of extremism and the fight against terrorism is the lack of mechanisms to oversee the implementation of strategies. Undoubtedly, the level of fulfilment of activities is satisfactory for some institutions, but there is still a lack of mechanisms created to hold institutions that do not implement the obligations derived from the strategy in a timely manner to account. Research conducted by BIRN

[28] https://kallxo-com.translate.goog/ligji/aktakuze-ndaj-nje-gruaje-per-pjesemarrje-ne-isis/?_x_tr_sl=sq&_x_tr_tl=en&_x_tr_hl=en&_x_tr_pto=sc

[29] Law no. 05 / L-002, 02/04/2015, "The Law on the Prohibition of Joining Armed Conflicts Outside State Territory"

[30] Strategy on Prevention of Violent Extremism and Radicalization Leading to Terrorism, https://kryeministri.rks-gov.net/repository/docs/STRATEGJIA_parandalim_-_SHQIP.pdf

[31] https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Country_Reports_on_Terrorism_2020.pdf

titled 'The Institutional Approach towards the Strategy Against Terrorism and Violent Extremism' concluded that: "in the current governmental structure, a minister cannot demand accountability from a ministry or municipality employee when they do not carry out the obligations derived from the strategy."[32] The same report also noted issues related to the budgeting of these activities derived from the strategic documents – especially those pertaining to local level institutions.

Another issue identified in the process of implementing the previous strategy was the lack of exact definitions surrounding the budget and allocation of the budget for the implementation of specific activities. For example, the strategy included the stipulation that some activities would be supported by donors, without having prior commitments from said donors.

Despite these shortcomings however, Kosovo institutions have demonstrated great willingness to handle issues related to violent extremism, especially religious based extremism. In fact, limited institutional capacities have tended to push institutions to focus their capacity building in handling cases of Islamic extremism. This focus has contributed to leaving other forms of extremism somewhat aside.

Up until 2019, the return of foreign fighters to Kosovo was handled in an unorganised and voluntary manner, with all returnees arrested and prosecuted upon their return. In 2019, Kosovo organised the return of the first group of foreign fighters from camps in Iraq, which involved 110 citizens returning home — 74 children, 32 women and four men.[33]

Part of the Strategy for returnees was to centralise competencies for the resocialization and reintegration process of returnees and their families, which was to be carried out under the supervision of the MIA. Research has also shown that Kosovo institutions did not trust the municipal level to handle the process of dealing with returnees from foreign wars back in April 2019, due to lack of capacities and knowledge to deal with such specific and sensitive phenomena.[34]

The resocialization and reintegration programme also included another group of returnees who returned in 2021, while those who returned voluntarily before 2019 and the families of those killed were left out of the programme. In terms of strategic objectives, Kosovo has adopted three strategies to address the aforementioned issues:

- The National Strategy Against Terrorism of the Republic of Kosovo 2012-2017;[35]

- The Strategy on Prevention of Violent Extremism and Radicalisation Leading to Terrorism 2015-2020 (henceforth referred to as the 'Strategy for the Prevention of Extremism');[36]

- The National Strategy Against Terrorism and Action Plan 2018-2023 (henceforth referred to as the 'Strategy Against Terrorism').[37]

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[32]BIRN research report " "Institutional Approach towards the Strategy against Terrorism and Violent Extremism". Available at: - https://kallxo.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/BIRN_analiza-e-strategjive_alb4_compressed.pdf

[33] Adelina Ahmeti, 26 October 2019 https://kallxo.com/shkurt/video-plani-i-rikthimit-te-110-kosovareve-nga-siria/
[34]Ibid.

[35]National Strategy Against Terrorism of the Republic of Kosovo 2012 – 2017 Http://www.kryeministriks.net/repository/docs/Strategjia_e_Republikes_se_Kosoves_per_Parandalimin_e_Krimit_dhe_Plani_i_Veprimit_ 2013-2017.pdf

[36] National Strategy Against Terrorism and Action Plan 2018 - 2023 https://kryeministri.rks-gov.net/repository/docs/STRATEGJIA_parandalim_-_SHQIP.pdf

[37] Strategy on Prevention of Violent Extremism and Radicalisation Leading to Terrorism 2015 - 2020 https://mpb.rksgov.net/Uploads/Documents/Pdf/AL/46/STRATEGJIA%20SHTET%C3%8BRORE%20KUND%C3%8BR%20TERRORIZMIT%20D HE%20PLANI%20I%20VEPRIMIT%202018%20%E2%80%93%202023.pdf

Through these strategies, the Republic of Kosovo's institutions have issued various reports on the drivers of violent extremism in Kosovo, on the basis of which preventive activities have subsequently been undertaken. Despite the implementation of activities, the strategies have still not undergone an independent impact assessment.

Economic and social weaknesses, levels of unemployment, poverty, young people lacking a positive direction and insufficient institutional capacities have all been identified as factors driving violent extremism.[38] In addition to economic and social factors, current issues that Kosovo faces, such as a public administration in need of reforms, the fight against corruption and the need for improved integrity in public administration have also been found to be factors that could potentially lead to extremism.

Presently, Kosovo lacks strategic direction in the prevention of violent extremism, as the Strategy that was in force has expired. The new draft Strategy, which was expected to supersede that of 2020, was drafted by the previous government led by Prime Minister Avdullah Hoti, but it did not receive the approval of the current government led by Prime Minister Albin Kurti.[39]

The current Minister of Internal Affairs, Xhelal Sveçla, who also serves as the Coordinator of the Strategy for the Prevention of Extremism, has ordered the drafting of a new Strategy which foresees the merging of the two strategies, namely the National Strategy Against Terrorism of the Republic of Kosovo 2012-2017 and Strategy for the Prevention of Extremism. During 2021, the working group for the drafting of the new Strategy held several meetings, which have continued to take place during 2022 as well. The strategy is expected to be finalised in October 2022.[40]

Other fragile and vulnerable factors in Kosovo related to the spread of religious extremism are the lack of legal regulations on the functioning of religious communities. The law on religious communities continues to be blocked due to the lack of will and political agreement to establish the legal basis on which religious communities are registered and function. As a result, religious communities are governed on the basis of the previous regulation and the law on Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), which is then characterised by a great deficiency in their regulation, starting from sources of financing to the values they promote. Field research shows that the Islamic Community of Kosovo, BIK, has made no effort to control the content distributed by all imams in their mosques. Even more problematic are the activities held outside religious buildings. Imams with radical tendencies are considered to use situations of death, family crises or traditional ceremonies to promote dangerous messages.

The legal basis has also failed to bring under one rule the other religious communities living in Kosovo.

Finding 9: Institutional setup and interventions for aftercare management proved to be successful in deradicalization and reintegration in Kosovo.

Management by the MIA

In 2019 the government of Kosovo decided to assign the process of handling persons returned from war zones as a responsibility of the Department for Public Security at the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The process was foreseen so that competences would be easily transferable to the municipalities.

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[38]Strategy on Prevention of Violent Extremism and Radicalisation Leading to Terrorism 2015 – 2020, page 8 https://kryeministri.rks-gov.net/repository/docs/STRATEGJIA_parandalim_-_SHQIP.pdf

[39] Kosova Press, 2020, https://kosovapress.com/mbahet-takimi-me-grupin-punues-per-hartimin-e-strategjise-shteterore-per-parandalimin-e-ekstremizmit-te-dhunshem-dhe-luftimit-te-terrorizmit/

[40]Ministry of Internal Affairs, 30 November 2021, https://mpb.rks-gov.net/f/57/1663/U-mbajt-takimi-i-grupit-punues-per-hartimin-e-"Strategjise-shteterore-kunder-terrorizmit-dhe-ekstremizmit-te-dhunshem"

However, the pandemic, as well as limited performances by the institutions, all contributed to competencies not being transferred to the local level.

Analyses show that the work of the Department for Public Security provided care for returned children, women as well for some convicted persons following the serving of their sentence. Children received social-psychological treatment, while women received training and support to launch small businesses. This mechanism was established to coordinate, cooperate, communicate, monitor, and evaluate the reintegration process.

The program, which was also supported by donors, is estimated to have been a success. Analyses show that returnees have not been involved in new terrorist acts and have started a process of re-integration into society. Furthermore, data obtained by BIRN show that the process of supporting families generated a positive impact both in terms of mental health, education and the economic prospects of returnees.

In the economic aspect, families were able to receive food packages and support to start family businesses. Families were also supported with training for professional development as well as business skills. In addition, families were also provided with psychiatric and psychological support as a crucial element in dealing with trauma and stress, as well as crisis management.

Furthermore, the data obtained from the education system show that special programmes for children have proven successful due to children having learnt local languages and having attended intensive programmes to strengthen their learning capacities and bring them up to speed with their peers. At the same time, cultural and recreational activities with children have also produced results in terms of integrating children into the social environment they live in. Children who were part of these support programmes also received healthcare support, which came as a result of the malnutrition and other health problems they faced.

The detailed support programmes implemented by Kosovo Government are elaborated in the following table, which shows the number of grants provided, the type of training and support for returnees and their families. Where applicable data is also segregated by gender.

ACTIVITIES OF THE MINISTRY OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS	Female	Male	Total
Provision of Grants	36	47	83
Providing professional training	20	4	24
Providing training for capacity building	6	0	6
Support in the provision of housing rent	15 families		
Support with food packages - 3 months	37 families		
Support with food packages	239 families		
Clothing support	37 families		
Support with fuel	21 families		

Activities with children	29 activities
Courses for children	24 courses
Support with school supplies	50 children
Medical services	115 cases
Trainings with service suppliers	5 treatments

Table 1. Support programmes provided by the Ministry of Internal Affairs to returnees and their families.

In terms of capacity building through training held, the MIA organised six training sessions with women returnees and other women in the community. According to the MIA, the training held was supported by GCERF and IOM and focused on parenting. These trainings were held across all of Kosovo. The selection of women from the communities as well as those returned from conflict zones was done together with the Social Centres at the local level.

However, the findings of this analysis reveal that since Government of Kosovo does not have any special funds allocated to P/CVE and R&R, most of these activities have been financed by external donors, such as GCERF, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), foreign embassies and other parties.[41] In particular, the Resocialization and Reintegration of returnees from foreign wars in Kosovo was a focus of many international donors who have supported institutions and CSOs in the development of many activities that were foreseen in the National Strategy against Violent Extremism and Terrorism.

The United Kingdom has particularly contributed to the issue of returnees. The British Embassy has worked closely with the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Reintegration Division. They have engaged in strengthening the special division within the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and have sent British experts to train officials who deal directly with returnees. At the same time, they are supporting the new mechanism which is training the frontline officials dealing with the reintegration of returnees with practical cases. In addition to training, the British have supported the Ministry of Education in the drafting of manuals.

Training support is also provided by the OSCE mission in Kosovo, with psychologists and psychiatrists who deal directly with returnees. The OSCE has also engaged external experts for teacher training. From 2019 to 2022, roughly 30 people per year were provided with training. Meanwhile, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) is engaged in central and local level training, as well as training for parents, providing them the opportunity to engage themselves in the process of identifying early deviant behaviours.

Civil Society Organisations tend to be more concerned with the local level. The Forum of Civic Initiatives (FIQ) NGO is engaged in the field of prevention through the organisation of activities and the promotion of activism among citizens. This organisation has supported innovative ideas with

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[41] Interview with representatives of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, August 2022.

funds, has trained young people and has offered grants for business start-ups to the youth of the municipality of Kaçanik.

Another NGO, Democracy Plus (D+), has worked closely with young people through interactive lectures held in schools aimed at promoting a critical thinking approach to help combat the phenomenon of extreme approaches that lead to violent acts. Meanwhile, the Kosovo Rehabilitation Centre for Torture Victims (KRCT) NGO has provided direct services and psychosocial assistance as well as raised the capacities of mental health providers for psychologists in schools. KRCT has also organised training on how to approach children returnees and their management in schools. It offered its services in the seven central municipalities of Kosovo with roughly 300 trained teachers and family doctors.

The Community Building Mitrovica (CBM) NGO meanwhile is engaged in capacity building. Alongside the municipality and experts, it has issued a municipal strategy for the prevention of violent extremism among young people in Mitrovica and has organised training for municipal officials.

Nevertheless, the Monitoring Report by BIRN on the implementation of activities from the Strategy for the Prevention of Violent Extremism that leads to terrorism, shows that the Ministry of Internal Affairs was not able to fully carry out two important activities and that Kosovo had not managed to fulfill its objectives for deradicalization. These activities relate to the delegation of some competencies and responsibilities from the central level to municipalities when it comes to P/CVE and R&R programmes in their respective territories.

The MIA was also not able to draft the Plan for Strategic Communication as of yet. This Plan would serve as a guidance to build awareness-raising campaigns on prevention measures and in creating a conducive environment for R&R processes to be fully and successfully implemented in the community.

Thus, the strategic message of preventing and fighting terrorism has not been conveyed to all actors, especially to local actors. Eighty-two per cent of municipalities said they do not have an official in charge of implementing the strategy. Meanwhile, most respondents and participants in focus groups at the local level have confirmed that they have not read the strategy or action plan. Most municipalities do not have a detailed plan for implementing strategic activities. Meanwhile, Serb municipalities have confirmed that there is a lack of information on the development of strategic activities in these areas.[42] A lack of information among municipalities on the strategic framework that leads the work of institutions to deal in a consistent and systematic manner with the problem of all forms of VE, may create problems in the system of operation, mainly due to ad-hoc actions.

Initially, the internal report itself, prepared by the Secretariat of the Security Council of Kosovo within the Office of the Prime Minister for the implementation of the SPVERT Action Plan 2015-2020, showed that the objective of deradicalization and reintegration of radicalised persons has the lowest degree of implementation compared to the other three objectives. The data show that only 36% of the planned deradicalization and reintegration activities have been fulfilled/implemented.

A report by the Kosovo Centre for Security Studies (KKSS) shows that the 2015-2020 Strategy has failed to be fully implemented in terms of the reintegration of people and their resocialization, which was the fourth strategic objective of this strategy.

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[42] Results generated from the survey with Kosovo municipalities, conducted during August 2022.

Meanwhile, data provided by BIRN in the monitoring report show that the Ministry of Internal Affairs has failed to implement two of the activities foreseen in the strategy. The non-drafting of the communication strategy, the non-implementation of messages against radical behaviour and the non-establishment of identification mechanisms are three activities that were never carried out by the Ministry of Internal Affairs during the previous strategy.

External evaluators, as well as statistical data, show that, despite all the difficulties in the field, the program was a success as none of the people who were part of the program showed signs of radical behaviour and were not involved in new criminal offences. Grant support for families and women, provision of education assistance for children and other programmes showed satisfactory results in the process of de-radicalization and separation of families affected by extremism.

Finding 10: Ambiguities in the Strategy for Prevention of Violent Extremism and Terrorism and the lack of institutional capacities and coordination are affecting the work of the Correctional and Probation Service of Kosovo.

Management by the Correctional and Probation Service

Data from the process implemented by the Ministry of Internal Affairs for the treatment of returnees are encouraging. Women, children and some men have been monitored and continue to show good results in the programmes implemented. Based on the security analysis, these people have not shown any danger and have not violated the law while they are in the program.

However, 67 percent of the prisoners detained by the Kosovo Correctional Service have not managed to attend professional training and rehabilitation programmes in prison. This is because the resocialization programmes' training and development activities in prisons started late, and the prisoners were released from prison before the programmes started.

Within the mechanisms of the Ministry of Justice, there were communication problems between the Correctional Service and the Probation Service. The files of those released were submitted late to the Probation Service, while the latter still do not have sufficient capacity to draw up individual supervision and resocialization plans for supervised persons. The Kosovo Probation Service does not possess a tool based on which it would assess the risk and suitability of parolees.[43]

Interviews with officials from the service show that the institution has not correctly specified the obligations from the Strategy for the Prevention of Violent Extremism and Terrorism. Currently, parolees serving sentences for terrorist offenses are treated the same by the Probation Service as parolees for minor criminal offenses.

In addition to the lack of special programs for the treatment of returnees, the Probation Service of Kosovo also lacks staff training, since only two officials of this institution have received specific training for the treatment of those convicted of terrorist offenses

Training of Officials in the Probation Service of Kosovo	
Number of Officials	Trained

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[43] Interviews with the heads of the Probation Services and Correctional Services, August 2022.

35	2

Table 2: Training of KPS officials

Another problem identified during a direct interview with the leader of this institution, which is considered vital to address, is the provision of access to the criminal past of the convicted. Currently, Probation Service officials are aware of the criminal past of the convict only after they are released on parole from serving their sentence. In this way, these officials are deprived of the possibility of earlier preparation for dealing with these prisoners.

Another need that needs to be addressed by this institution is communication and cooperation with other institutions and, in particular, with Employment Offices and Professional Training Centres. This is because the biggest demand of parolees is to create a post-penal life, ensure work and well-being. Currently, the Probation Service is only allowed to offer psycho-social counselling for parolees to have better mental health. The Probation Service of Kosovo does not have special programs for the treatment of those released on parole for terrorist offences and treats these persons the same as those released for minor criminal offences.

Kosovo Correctional Service

The Correctional Service of Kosovo also plays an important role in the implementation of the R&R program. This mechanism was expected to start the training of its officials as early as 2019, however, due to the pandemic, the process was blocked and the programs started late. As a result, 65% of the people who served the sentence were not part of these programs and, as such, were released.

The number of convicts for crimes related to terrorism released by the KCS during the years 2018 - 2021	
2018	14 convicted
2019	14 convicted
2020	19 convicted
2021 (until December)	9 convicted
Total convicted, released	56 convicted
Currently serving a sentence in the KCS	16 convicted

Table 3: The number of convicts for crimes related to terrorism released by the KCS during the years 2018 - 2021

In addition, the data collected from the interview with the director of the Correctional Service shows that none of the three people who are considered to be the leaders of the people convicted of terrorist offenses have completed any activity in prisons and all three refused any cooperation, work and activity of the correctional service. Their continued refusal to be part of the activities in the Correctional Service of Kosovo means that none of them have acquired any new professional skills in

prison and, as a result, none of these three people who were considered the most problematic are ready for life outside of prison following their release.

Finding 11: A lack of commitment, funds and human resources is hampering the important role of municipalities in preventing violent extremism.

Management by municipalities

Kosovo has a decentralised system in which most prevention activities and R&R are delegated to the local level. However, data from the research show that, despite improvements, there are still big gaps at the local level that could jeopardise the successful process of prevention and treatment of radicalised persons.

There are several factors that have created this environment. Based on its constitution, Kosovo has a decentralised government in many areas, with the local government functioning almost independently from the central level in the implementation of its tasks.

Consequently, priorities are set directly by the local government. Mayors of Municipalities are elected directly by the citizens while strategic decisions are taken by the Municipal Assembly, which functions as a body elected by the direct votes of the citizens. Mayors of Municipalities are elected directly by the citizens and are accountable only to their voters and not to other government mechanisms. Currently, Kosovo has 38 municipalities, of which 27 are led by Albanian mayors, 10 by Serbian mayors and one by a Turkish mayor.

In this regard, the 2020 Report by the US State Department on global terrorism, which evaluates the efforts of Kosovo institutions in the fight against terrorism and violent extremism, underlines the critical role of the local level and civil society in the fight against terrorism and violent extremism. The same report also highlights the unequal efforts between different sectors when it comes to the implementation of the 2015-2020 Strategy for the Prevention of Violent Extremism and Radicalism that Leads to Terrorism, and underlines the discrepancy between the central and local level in regard to fulfillment and concentration on commitments derived from strategic documents.

The MIA's own analysis meanwhile reveals that the process of establishing various mechanisms should be carried out in several stages and not simultaneously in all municipalities due to limited professional and financial capacities. According to the MIA, current capacities allow the process to start in five municipalities and then continue in other municipalities.[44]

Current capacities at the municipalities do indeed show that the process of establishing and strengthening the multidisciplinary mechanism cannot be carried out immediately without first raising the capacities at the local level. For example, at the Municipality of Hani i Elezit at least one year of monitoring is required to launch the construction of the mechanism. During this process, Municipalities must draft documents, define competent officials for identifying cases and train them in order to make this mechanism functional. Currently, this costly process cannot be supported by public funds from the Municipalities, as it requires central level expertise.

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[44] Interview with representatives of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, August 2022.

Data from the research show that a mechanism was established in the Gjilan area, which was known as the Referral Mechanism. This mechanism, which included representatives from the Directorate of Education, the Police, religious communities, the local community, and social workers, managed to achieve several positive results.

According to the data, at least three cases of early radicalization were identified and dealt with by the authorities in this area. The Referral Mechanism worked until the time of the pandemic, which affected its effectiveness, however, the strong preparation of municipal officials to identify cases at an early stage has yielded good results on the ground. Another initiative that yielded results was piloted in the Mitrovica region. There it was possible to draw up a local plan to help achieve goals set by the state-wide strategy. However, the process is currently suspended due to the expectation of the new central strategy.

The piloting of a "multidisciplinary mechanism" for handling returnees has also been launched at the Municipality of Hani i Elezit. This process, launched a few months ago, is only in the phase of increasing the capacities of staff at the local level. Officials from the Municipality of Hani i Elezit and local police are expected to conduct study visits and receive training on case management, identification of early signs of radicalisation, and the handling of cases, so that they can operationalize the Multidisciplinary Mechanism.

The Multidisciplinary Mechanism aims to establish a municipal group which manages and treats the first or early signs of extremism, but also the process of resocialization and disengagement of persons convicted of extremism. The mechanism will operate under the supervision of the National Coordinator who will be monitoring the parties and offer advice during the process.

In terms of R&R, the Mechanism will also deal with the supervision of persons released from prison after completing their sentences, while in terms of prevention, the mechanism will work with the host community and groups affected by extremism as well as with the families of convicted persons, in order to prevent and address the causes that push people to become radicalised.

The MIA will also transfer information from central agencies to the mechanism so they have all relevant information. The Ministry of Internal Affairs has a database with all materials of convicted persons and would offer the multidisciplinary mechanism limited access to this database.

As it is a municipal mechanism, it will be led by municipal officials and chaired by social workers or representatives of the Directorate for Work and Social Welfare. The case list, which will be set at the local level, will be led by the Social Worker and will be attended by representatives from the directorates of education, culture, youth and sports, civil society, the Police, the Probation Service and, depending on the situation and needs, psychologists, psychiatrists or any other necessary assistance will also be invited. Depending on the situation, the mechanism should address the problems with the aim of preventing violent extremism and also guarantee a favourable environment for the disengagement process.

The activities that the mechanism can carry out also include awareness campaigns in the community, meetings with the community, implementation of projects that deal with the causes of extremism, and work with the host community. Another important part of the mechanisms' work is the handling of individual cases by offering social assistance, psychological and psychiatric treatment, education

programs, or even assistance for social welfare and education. One very important element will be the communication of this mechanism with the central level since it will report every action to the MIA in order to ensure that other state agencies have sufficient information from the field.

So far, data collected by BIRN monitoring has shown that the municipal level has not managed to fulfil its defined mission. BIRN generated this data in 2021 when measuring the level of implementation of the Strategy for the Prevention of Violent Extremism that leads to Terrorism as part of its monitoring activity in the scope of the Resilient Community Program, in which all institutions at the central and local level tasked with implementing portions of the Action Plan derived from the Strategy were assessed.

According to data acquired during this assessment, the municipalities of Vushtrri, Drenas, Fushe Kosove, Mamusha, Lipjan, Kamenica, Suhareka, Kacanik, Dragash, Junik and Peja have not undertaken any activity related to the obligations deriving from the Strategy.[45]

IMPLEMENTATION OF ACTIVITIES IN THE STRATEGY												
Implementation of the activities of the Strategy for the Prevention of Violent Extremism that leads to Terrorism		QUESTION 1		QUESTION 2		QUESTION 3		QUESTION 4		QUESTION 5		QUESTION 6
		Organisation of information sessions with students for the reaction to negative phenomena that lead to extremism		Providing training for psychologists to respond to negative phenomena that lead to extremism		Organisation of workshops to identify radical behaviours		Organisation of workshops to identify children with signs of radicalism and extremism.		Allotment of scholarships for the training or employment of persons returned from foreign wars.		Providing emergency packages to vulnerable families
		NO		NO		NO		NO		NO		NO
1	Implementation in %	58.3	%	8	%	16.5	%	4.16	%	0.0	%	20.8	%

Table 4: Implementation of the activities of the strategy

The table drawn from BIRN's monitoring report shows that the local level has shown minimal levels of implementation of activities determined by the action plan. As one example, the data presented in the report show that no municipality has allocated scholarships for training or employment of persons returned from foreign wars. There was also limited implementation when it came to providing training for psychologists, the organisation of workshops for the identification of radical behaviours and the provision of emergency packages. The organisation of informative sessions for students had a better level of implementation but 58% of Municipalities had still not organised such sessions.

For the purpose of this report, BIRN sent a survey to 38 Municipalities to ascertain whether they have the capacity and are ready to undertake the establishment and management of the mechanism and

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[45] BIRN Monitoring report: "Challenges in the reintegration and resocialization processes in Kosovo", covering year 2021.

implement activities from the new State Strategy for the Prevention of Extremism of Violence and Terrorism. The results of these surveys are expressed in percentages, depending on the answers of the municipalities regarding specific questions, which are presented in the table.

PERCENTAGE OF MUNICIPALITIES THAT HAVE RESPONDED – (NO)												
The percentage is derived on the basis of the municipalities that have returned answers to the specific question		QUESTION 1 Does the municipality have an official responsible for strategies?		QUESTION 2 Does the municipality have a risk assessment analysis?		QUESTION 3 Has the Municipality campaigned for the prevention of extremism?		QUESTION 4 Does the municipality have baseline data with returned persons from war zones?		QUESTION 5 Does the Municipality offer free psychological counselling to people in need?		QUESTION 6 Do municipalities have psychologists in schools?
		NO		NO		NO		NO		NO		NO
1	REALISATION IN %	83	%	73	%	58	%	92	%	53	%	53	%

Table 5: Percentage of municipalities that have responded with no

The table above shows the results of the survey carried out with Kosovo municipalities. According to the survey, 92% of Municipalities that responded do not possess a database of returnees from war zones. This means that civil servants tasked with handling returnees from war zones have no idea who those individuals are, nor where they or their families are located. The lack of this crucial information makes the process of efficient resocialization impossible for the returnees as they are not even on the radar at the local level.

Another statistic produced from the survey is that 83% of municipalities that responded have no officials tasked with implementing activities deriving from the Strategy. This means that they do not have an individual responsible for ensuring the implementation of obligations of the Strategy on Prevention of Violent Extremism and who would be a focal point in communication with institutions at the central level, civil society and other interested stakeholders. Assigning a focal point would ease the implementation of R&R programmes at the local level as it would contribute to this focal point overseeing the implementation of activities and raising the alarm with the Mayor to take proper measures for timely implementation of all responsibilities and obligations derived from the Strategy.

The percentage of municipalities that do not have a risk assessment analysis is also high. Around 73% of Municipalities have indicated that they do not have a risk assessment analysis, which means that the majority of Kosovo's Municipalities have not conducted any analysis to assess the dangers posing a threat to their citizens. The lack of such analysis shows that Municipalities are not aware of the danger from religious extremism and other forms of extremism in their territory.

When asked if they offer free psychological treatment to people in need, 53% of municipalities responded that they do not offer any free psychological treatment. This means that people in need of psychological advice do not have an address to which they can express their concerns and that citizens unable to pay for a psychologist are left without.[46]

Several institutions in Kosovo have been engaged in providing services related to the R&R process of returnees and their families, but professionals from most of these institutions, including health institutions, schools and centres for social work, have not been trained in increasing their knowledge of the R&R process for returnees and their families, as well as the problems that accompany these processes.

In addition, the following factors are also evident:

- the lack of knowledge and skills of service providers regarding the R&R process for returnees and their families
- the lack of communication and exchange of information between service providers,
- the lack of monitoring and follow-up of the quality and impact of their work, and
- the lack of a document or handbook that specifies the main mental health problems facing persons returned from foreign wars and their families, and the best possible approaches to their treatment and management.

Currently, GCERF is supporting a Community Development Fund (CDF) program intended to build a holistic approach where information can be exchanged and activities and work coordinated between sectors as well as training of educators who can carry out similar training in the future.Moreover, within the framework of this programme, cooperation between the MIA and the University of Prishtina (UP) has been initiated, which is a very important step in the involvement of the professionals from UP who, in addition to benefiting from the training, will be included in the provision of a new training module, more specifically that of monitoring and evaluation, and will have the opportunity to monitor the process of providing training from the central to the local level. Additionally, 4 professionals from the University of Prishtina will attend the Training for Teachers training sessions in order to increase the overall capacities of the Institution of Psychology which will ensure that the Psychology Department is capable of monitoring the local level deliverance of trainings, oversee the usage of professional materials and increase the potential to offer such trainings in the future.

As part of the programme a total of 19 Central Level practitioners will deliver training to:

- 110 psychologists and psychiatrists at Centres for Mental Health, and doctors at Centres for Family Health (QMF)

- 20 psychologists and psychiatrists of the University Clinical Centre of Kosovo (UCCK) and Kosovo Correctional Services .

- 22 social workers; 88 teachers and 22 other staff (school psychologists)

This is important, considering the high number of municipalities in Kosovo that do not have any school psychologists. There are nine municipalities with no psychologists at all in schools, including the Municipality of Mitrovica which has over 80,000 inhabitants. Aside from Mitrovica, the municipalities

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[46] Results generated from the survey with Kosovo municipalities, conducted during August 2022.

of Obiliq, Fushe Kosova, Hani i Elezit, Dragash, Vushtrri, Drenas, Junik and Rahovec also do not have school psychologists.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, MEST, has determined that during the learning process, Kosovo's students need consultations and treatment by psychologists. The psychologist, according to the MEST curricula, handles physical and psychological violence, bullying, but also shows signs of depression in students.

The presence of psychologists in schools has been designed due to the lack of psychological treatment in the country and a stigma that citizens visit psychologists only when they have severe mental health issues. According to the calculations of MEST, there should be one psychologist for every 1,000 students in Kosovo. MEST has planned to engage around 500 psychologists in all schools in Kosovo, while currently only 104 are engaged.

PERCENTAGE OF MUNICIPALITIES THAT HAVE RESPONDED – **(YES)**												
The percentage is derived on the basis of the municipalities that have returned answers to the specific question		QUESTION 1 Does your municipality support the transfer of R&R responsibility to the local level?		QUESTION 2 Do municipalities have the capacity to implementation of R&R programs		QUESTION 3 Percentage of municipalities that see danger from violent religious extremism		QUESTION 4 The percentage of municipalities that see danger from other forms of violent extremism		QUESTION 5 Do you know which NGOs have carried out anti-terrorism activities in your municipality?		QUESTION 6 Is there cooperation between the municipality and NGOs in the field of terrorism?
		YES		YES		YES		YES		YES		YES
1	REALISATION IN %	83	%	40	%	80	%	60	%	62	%	50	%

Table 6: Percentage of municipalities that have responded with yes

The above table conveys the answers of the Municipalities about the capacities and risk from violent religious extremism and other forms of extremism. The survey shows that, although without conducting the risk assessment analysis, 80% of municipalities see violent religious extremism as the main risk, while 60% assess other forms of extremism as the highest risk. So, most municipalities see the danger from religious extremism as greater than the danger from other forms of extremism, such as that of the right wing or extremism on a national basis.

Unlike the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Kosovo Police and Kosovo Intelligence Agency (KIA), which have separate plans for the implementation of strategy activities, this standard has not been implemented at the local level. Thus, municipalities have not appointed a person who coordinates and supervises the progress of activities in this field. Seventy-eight per cent of municipalities have declared they do not have a risk assessment for religious extremism and other forms of extremism. Such an analysis has

not been sent to the municipalities even from the central level, while there have been no initiatives by the municipalities themselves to draft such analyses.[47]

These data also show that 83% of municipalities support the establishment of the new municipal mechanism within the new Strategy for the Prevention of Violent Extremism. The Municipalities have stated that the new approach of the central level for strengthening the capacities at the local level and the establishment of a special mechanism for the Resocialization and Reintegration of persons returned from foreign wars can be implemented at the local level only if their capacities are strengthened. This is because, when asked if they have the capacity to deal with the reintegration and resocialization of the returnees, only 40% of the municipalities said that they believe they have sufficient capacity to deal with this process, while the majority of them, i.e. 60% of those that responded to the survey, have said that they do not have capacities and training for the implementation of R&R activities.

In the survey conducted for the purposes of this analysis, municipalities were also questioned about cooperation with civil society in the implementation of activities for the reintegration of returnees from war zones. The results of the survey show that 62% of responding municipalities are aware of which CSOs have carried out activities against violent extremism in their municipalities. This percentage indicates sufficient knowledge of the local level regarding NGOs that have carried out activities for the prevention of extremism in their municipalities. Another interesting piece of data from the municipalities shows that only 50% of them who responded to the survey had cooperation with CSOOs that carried out activities at the local level.

Readiness of the local level to receive delegated competencies on R&R

Municipalities that support delegation of responsibilities from the central level to the local one		Municipalities that do not support delegation of responsibilities from the central level to the local one
Pejë	Malishevë	Juniku
Istog	Ferizaj	Drenas
Rahovec	Gjilan	Dragash
Mitrovicë	Viti	
Skenderaj	Hani i Elezit	
Kamenicë	Deçan	
Ferizaj	Gjakovë	
Klinë		

Table 7. Municipalities readiness to obtain delegated competencies

18 municipalities responded to this question, with 15 municipalities supporting a delegation of responsibilities.

PERCENTAGE OF RESPONSES OF MEDS AND SOCIAL WELFARE						
	QUESTION 1	QUESTION 2	QUESTION 3	QUESTION 4	QUESTION 5	QUESTION 6

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[47] Results generated from the survey with Kosovo municipalities, conducted during August 2022.

The percentage is derived on the basis of the municipalities that have returned answers to the specific question	Do municipalities have teachers trained to identify the first signs of extremism?		Do MEDs have extra-curricular programs for children who are not achieving good success?		Is there an assessment of the returned children, regarding delays in intellectual development?		Is there a family doctor trained to identify signs of violence and trauma?		Is there free psychological treatment for convicted persons and their families?		Have the municipalities implemented youth activities related to the topic of violent extremism?	
	NO		NO		NO		NO		NO		NO	
1 REALIZATION IN %	69	%	20	%	62	%	64	%	92	%	77	%

Table 8:Percentage of responses (NO) of MDEs and Department of Social Welfares

The table above presents the results of the survey as answered by the Municpal Departments for Education, Departments for Social Welfare and the Department for Culture, Youth and Sports.It shows that 69% of the municipalities that responded lack teachers who are trained to identify early signs of potential radicalisation. This data is derived from the responses of the Municipal Departments of Education that stated that they do not have trained teachers who can identify potential early suspicious signs amongst their pupils.

There is also a high percentage of Municipalities that have not declared that they have not made any assessment of the intellectual development of children returned from war zones, with 62% of municipalities giving this answer. This means that the majority of municipal directorates have not evaluated the intellectual development of children who have returned from the war zones and are enrolled in education, while in relation to the special curriculum programs for students with poor school achievements, the majority, or 80% of the municipal directorates of education have said that they have defined and implement them.

For the purpose of this analysis, through this survey, BIRN has also measured the approach of other municipal directorates which are expected to be part of the new local mechanism that will implement the R&R programs.

An important directorate in this regard is that of health and social welfare, as well as the Directorate of Culture, Youth and Sports. From the Directorate of Health and Social Welfare, the data show that 64% of those who answered the survey do not have doctors trained to identify signs of violence and trauma. This means that most of them do not have trained doctors who would notice the signs of trauma and violence and then report them to the competent institutions.

Another important data obtained from these surveys is that 92% of them do not offer psychological treatment for convicted persons or their family members. The psychological treatment of persons returned from war zones and their families is extremely important for the faster re-socialization and re-integration of these persons into society.

Meanwhile, the data collected by the directorates of culture and youth show that the number of municipalities that have not undertaken activities with the theme of violent extremism is high. About 77% of them answered that they did not organize activities on this topic, although their organization was also determined by the action plan of the State Strategy for the Prevention of Violent Extremism

and Terrorism, since these directorates can easily activate their youth on topics against violent extremism.

Finding 12: The inclusion of the municipal level in the reintegration and resocialization process is a prerequisite for the successful implementation of R&R programmes.

Kosovo's institutions have established and strengthened the necessary professional capacities to launch an early identification process for terrorism. Furthermore, these institutions have developed multidisciplinary professional capacities to design and implement violent extremism prevention and reintegration and resocialization (R&R) programmes.[48]

The presence of these phenomena in the field has highlighted the need to strengthen these capacities and involve new actors in the process, including at the local level. The information collected reveals that Kosovo continues to face the emergence of new extremist and terrorist individuals and groups.

Currently, Kosovo is home to over 250 returnees from war zones, while the Western Balkans region now hosts over 700 Islamic State fighters who have been returned to countries such as Kosovo, North Macedonia, Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Twenty-one people convicted of terrorism are currently imprisoned in Kosovo, while the rest have been released. The release of these prisoners was carried out without a genuine rehabilitation process in the prisons. Consequently, these people have not yet been part of resocialization programmes and they must now move to the next stage of re-socialisation, at the local level.[49]

The remainder, including women, have gone through re-socialisation programmes. The evidence shows that most of those who have been part of reintegration programmes have had no problems with the law and constant efforts are being made with them to achieve final disengagement. Children returned from war zones have also attended rapid learning programmes. The aim of this year's plan is to include them in the regular learning process.[50]

According to official data from the Ministry of Internal Affairs, a total of 467 people — of whom 96 were men, 37 women and 187 children — were beneficiaries of R&R programmes between 2019 and 2021. None of those involved in these programmes have been involved in terrorism-related acts, considering all new cases of arrests for acts related to terrorism have been new individuals and not recidivists.[51]

Analyses by the MIA, which were also presented to the strategy working group, show the limited capacities of the MIA department in prevention and R&R. As a result, it is extremely necessary to start involving the local level in this process. Legally, the local level has competence over most of the early activities of terrorism prevention and the activities of the last phase of re-socialization and re-integration.

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[48] KALLXO. Tested models of re-socialisation of children. August 2022. https://kallxo.com/gjate/modelet-e-testuara-te-risocializimit-te-femijeve/

[49] KALLXO. Over 61 terrorism convicts did not undergo vocational training. December 2021. https://kallxo.com/gjate/mbi-61-e-te-denuarve-per-terrorizem-nuk-u-aftesuan-ne-burgjet-e-kosoves/

[50] KALLXO. Challenges to the integration in the education system for children returned from Syria. July 2019. https://kallxo.com/gjate/analize/sfida-e-integrimit-ne-arsim-per-femijet-e-rikthyer-nga-siria/

[51] KALLXO. Indictment on terrorism. November 2021. https://kallxo.com/lajm/aktakuze-per-terrorizem-2/

Returnees from conflict zones according to municipalities they live in		
Nr.	Municipality	Number of Returnees
1	Prishtinë	66
2	Gjilan	34
3	Mitrovicë	24
4	Prizren	22
5	Ferizaj	15
6	Viti	13
7	Fushë Kosovë	9
8	Pejë	8
9	Podujevë	4
10	Lipjan	1
11	Obiliq	2
12	Drenas	1
13	Shtime	2
14	Dragash	5
15	Rahovec	1
16	Suharekë	4
17	Istog	2
18	Klinë	7
19	Kamenicë	1
20	Vushtrri	3
21	Skenderaj	1
22	Gjakovë	5
23	Kaçanik	10
24	Hani I Elezit	16
	TOTAL	256

Table 9: Returnees from conflict zones according to municipalities they live in

In the strategic vision presented in the new strategy, an early pillar has been added which aims to identify and address the circumstances that lead to violent extremism and radicalism that lead to terrorism and minimize their impact. Activities aimed at involving the family, schools, local community, and CSOs, in the timely identification and reporting of radical behaviours in the community are foreseen in this pillar.

The establishment of this mechanism is a novelty in Kosovo and aims to build a community that is able to understand extremist narratives, identify them and promptly report individuals affected by radicalism.

The government's strategic decision aims for state institutions to focus on four strategic objectives in:

- Prevention

- Defence

- Follow-up

- Reaction

In the framework of the implementation of the strategic objectives, the institutions of Kosovo have foreseen a multitude of activities for different institutions, while a special focus has been devoted to the process of transfer of competences to the Municipalities of Kosovo related to prevention, response and protection.

As for the strategic vision, the government has foreseen that, in addition to the resocialization process, it will start the implementation of the last phase, that of "Disengagement." The goal of the Government of Kosovo in the future is to realise the process of transfer of powers to local authorities through the use of a model which is currently being piloted in the municipality of Hani Elezit. The programme is titled "Multifunctional Mechanism." This mechanism aims to establish a municipal council led by workers or superiors of Social Work Centers who will deal with prevention and R&R.

In addition to the social worker, the municipal group will also include the police, the health department, the education department, NGO mechanisms and community representatives. The mechanism will be monitored all the time by the MIA within a structured reporting database where each field activity will be reported and made accessible to the monitoring officials.

Finding 13: The lack of capacities at the central level is preventing the successful implementation of Prevention and R&R programmes.

Lack of central level capacities

In some central level institutions, professional capacities to implement Prevention and R&R programmes have not yet been developed to a satisfactory level. In the Kosovo Probation Service, which is an important resocialisation mechanism, only two officials have attended training in the field of terrorism. Other officials are unprepared to deal with this topic.[52]

The Ministry of Education has trained fewer than 2,000 teachers, which is less than 10% of the total number.[53] At primary level, the ministry has not yet managed to meet the standard of one psychologist engaged per 1,000 students. There are 104 psychologists working in schools, while the ministry's calculations show there should be at least 500. The distribution of resources is also not equal between municipalities, as there are certain areas where there is no designated psychologist, including nine municipalities whose schools do not have a single psychologist.[54]

The Ministry of Culture has failed to guide subordinate institutions to incorporate R&R, prevention and treatment programmes in the design of their cultural programmes. According to the data received, there were no cultural or sports programmes at the central or local levels designed in this direction.[55]

The Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare still lacks capacities in the provision of social services. Currently, one social employee provides social services to 10,500 inhabitants, while according to the standards, one social employee should cover only 3,000 inhabitants. In certain municipalities, this

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[52] Interview with the head of Kosovo Probation Services, carried out during August 2022.

[53] Interview with the representative of the Ministry of Education.

[54] Results generated from the survey with Kosovo municipalities, conducted during August 2022.

[55] A research conducted by BIRN on the organization of culture and sports activities at the local level aimed to fight terrorist groups narratives.

number is even more alarming, since in municipalities such as Prishtina, one social worker covers 26,000 residents.

Social workers are designed to be the central point of the multidisciplinary mechanism. Information from the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare shows that some social workers do not have the academic training to deal with such topics. The data provided to BIRN shows that of the 170 social workers, 30% have completed law school, 23% studied sociology, 14% psychology, 12% pedagogy, nine per cent completed school for social work, three per cent completed social policy and two per cent have completed studies in economics.

In addition to education, data provided by the Ministry of Labour shows that only 51% of social workers have received training related to the prevention of violent extremism and radicalism leading to terrorism. Of Kosovo's 38 municipalities, social worker training has been held in only 12.[56]

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has not implemented any activities within the framework of the strategy, although there have been frequent incidents of terrorism-related acts by Albanians abroad.[57]

Finding 14: Mass education for parents and the community to report suspicious behaviour has not yet been carried out at the local level.

The community continues to be uninformed about identifying early signs. BIRN's research shows that 88% of village representatives in Kosovo do not know how to identify early deviant behaviour. The National Coordinator is responsible for drafting a strategic communication document, but it has not yet been drafted.[58]

Finding 15: Local civil society has limited capacities to deal with issues relating to VE

From the data provided, we understand that while civil society organisations at the central level have satisfactory knowledge and experience in dealing with violent extremism, local NGOs suffer from a significant lack of knowledge in this field. The same situation applies to media operating at the local level.[59]

The media have a lack of professional staff – particularly when it comes to reporting in a fair and professional manner on this phenomenon, especially in terms of accurate terminology, the confidentiality and privacy of the parties, but also the recognition of the obligations arising from strategic documents in the country.

According to the data provided, 42% of municipalities in Kosovo have had no cooperation with local NGOs in the field of violent extremism and terrorism. Most local civil society organisations have never been involved with R&R programs and lack the basic knowledge to deal with these programmes. These organisations also have a lack of capacities, as they often lose staff with proper professional training due to a lack of funds.

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[56] Interview conducted with officials of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, August 2022.

[57] BIRN monitoring report on the implementation of activities foreseen by the Strategy on the Prevention of Violent Extremism leading to Terrorism.

[58] Results generated from the survey with Kosovo municipalities, conducted during August 2022.

[59] Interviews held with Civil Society Organizations, August 2022.

The role of local CSOs with the new mechanism is expected to be of great importance. However, until this happens, it is important to organize specific training for staff that are expected to deal with activities from the action plans drawn up as part of the new state strategy against violent extremism that leads to terrorism.

Finding 16: There is a lack of qualitative measurement of activities undertaken by the Ministry of Internal Affairs

So far, the impact of activities in the Strategy for the Prevention of Violent Extremism and Terrorism has been measured through quantitative data, with qualitative information on the impact of activities not considered. BIRN's research on the institutional approach to the strategy shows that all activities are measured in numbers and not according to their quality.[60]

This is reflected in the training sessions that are held for central and local level officials who attend training in the field of preventing extremism, although there is a lack of a methodology or evaluation instrument that measures the level of knowledge acquisition by trainees.

It is also reflected in the activities held at the local level where, even though cultural and sports activities are often carried out as obligations derived from strategic documents, the Municipalities have not managed to establish a methodology for measuring and evaluating the social impact of the activities carried out, or any connection with the subject of violent extremism.

Other types of extremism and current strategies to address them: Ethnonationalism and Far Right Extremism

Apart from religious extremism, BIRN also looked at the other forms of extremism, especially Far-right Extremism (FRE) and ethnonationalism.

Finding 17: FRE and Ethno-nationalism is under researched and not properly addressed under the existing strategic framework in Kosovo

Kosovo's strategic documents, specifically the Strategy on the Prevention of Violent Extremism and Radicalisation Leading to Terrorism and the National Strategy against Terrorism, identify multiple forms of extremism capable of hindering the constitutional order and the rule of law, alongside religious extremism. Based on the analysis of the current situation regarding these two documents, ethnonationalism and Far-right Extremism (FRE) are amongst the key dangers to the country highlighted in the domestic plan.

At a meeting of a European Commission expert group, the following working definition of right wing extremism was employed: *"Violent right-wing extremism is acts of individuals or groups who use, incite, threaten with, legitimise or support violence and hatred to further their political or ideological goals, motivated by ideologies based on the rejection of democratic order and values as well as of*

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[60] BIRN analysis on institutional approaches to the published on Kallxo.com, https://kallxo.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/BIRN_analiza-e-strategjive_alb4_compressed.pdf

fundamental rights, and centred on exclusionary nationalism, racism, xenophobia and/or related intolerance."[61]

Both strategic documents against terrorism and violent extremism identify far-right violent extremism motivated by nationalism as a key risk, particular in the the north of Kosovo. Nevertheless, none of the action plans corresponding to these strategies have foreseen specific activities relating to this type of extremism. Thus, current P/CVE mechanisms based on these strategies must address all forms of violent extremism in the future.

Ethno-National Extremism (ENE), similarly to FRE, is primarily disseminated along ethnic lines and is based on identity principles and ultra nationalist politics. It is also often connected to religion, especially amongst Serb extremists, as religion still plays a crucial role in forming Serbia's policies towards Kosovo.

Despite being present across Kosovo, ENE and FRE are primarily manifested in ethnically mixed areas, and especially in Serb-majority municipalities in the north of the country.

A form of right wing nationalistic motivated extremism was also manifested through the so-called AKSh (Armata Kombëtare Shqiptare), which proclaimed protection of Albanians from others and implementation of "Greater Albania", as a solution to the Albanian issue in the Balkans. The group perpetrated some violent acts at the beginning of 2000 and was decreed as a terrorist organisation with an administrative decision by the SRSG (Special Representative of Secretary General of United Nations).

However, this group never received popular support and it does not conduct any activities presently, only manifesting itself through anonymous individuals issuing press releases on current events. Their last activity was in 2011, and since then they have made no public appearances.

Another organisation called "Rugovasit" appeared in 2017 and claimed responsibility for launching rockets at the building of the Kosovo Parliament, at the time when the issue of border demarcation with Montenegro was being discussed. Six individuals were arrested in connection to this organisation. All of them denied any connection to the group, and the trial is ongoing.

Another organisation that appeared around the same time was "Syri i Popullit", which was accused of having planned to kill leaders of the country. A former President of Kosovo during Yugoslav rule was reportedly shot by a member of this group. The alleged perpetrator died during the trial, while a trial is ongoing for others.

Kosovo has also seen manifestations of violence against LGBTQI+ community in 2017, when a group of football fans attacked an event organised by the community. Five individuals were wanted but no arrests were made. The manifestation of hate against LGBTQI+ community has been constantly noted on social media, while the organisation of pride parades are held annually but under rigorous security measures.

Violent acts are even more present among the Serb community. Oliver Ivanovic, a Kosovo Serb political leader was killed in January 2018, while other Kosovo Serb politicians deemed collaborators of the

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[61] High Level Commission Expert Group on Radicalisation. September 2021. https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-02/VRWE%20working%20definition_en.pdf

Kosovo Government have also been subjected to violence. In 2021, the son of former Kosovo MP Nenad Rasic was attacked at his own school in Gracanica. Testimony provided by Rasic and the ensuing arrests suggested that the group that had conducted the attack were motivated by Serb nationalist groups.

The non-acceptance of the past also manifests itself in violence and hatred towards initiatives that promote intercultural cooperation. The "Miredita, Doberdan" festival held by the Integra NGO, is continuously hindered in its regular activities in Belgrade, with Serb radical groups continuously protesting and interrupting this festival.[62]

On the other hand, the ENE and FRE among the Serb community that led to armed conflicts in the former Yugoslavia has been revitalised in Kosovo by extremist groups. These include the Serbian National Movement, composed of Serb war veterans who have established a Christian Military Unit for the so-called "liberation of Kosovo and Metohija." Members of these groups have been involved in violent acts and provocations intended to destabilise the security situation in Kosovo and have been stopped in Serbia and in Kosovo, both by local and international authorities.

Threats from nationalist extremists had been on a decreasing trend in recent years, however, in the past few months, fuelled by political developments, there are indications of increased activity amongst nationalist extremist groups, including those with potential connections to FRE.

Currently, threats from nationalist extremism are primarily present in the north of Kosovo, but with tendencies of expanding into other areas. A considerable number of nationalist extremist organisations are present in Kosovo, particularly in the north, including organisations known for right wing extremist ideologies, often strongly tied with orthodox religion. Despite the majority of these organisations having been established in other countries, primarily in Serbia, their activity extends to the Republic of Kosovo as well, and is especially manifested during orthodox celebrations, such as Vidovan.

FRE Serb movements see Kosovo as a small enclave within Serbia; a so-called historical heartland and have internalised the stance that Albanians are "dangerous subversives" seeking to create a Greater Albania and consider Albanians intruders. They have close relations with international FRE organisations and activists. The primary activity of these organisations is propaganda against Kosovo statehood, inciting violence and protecting the so-called interests of Serbia in Kosovo. Some of these organisations who are active in Kosovo despite not being established in the country include: Obraz, Otadzbina, Srpski Pokret Dveri, Srpski Narodni Pokret 1389, and Cetnici Sever.

There have been an increased number of cases (10) of armed attacks against Kosovo Police patrols, especially after the events of July 2022 in the north of Kosovo, when blockades were installed and armed and masked people appeared at various locations. At the same time, graffiti was placed celebrating the so-called northern army, "*Severna Armija*", which were followed by the messages "*Tu Smo, Cekamo vas*" ("We are here, waiting for you"). There were also messages openly decrying the expansion of the rule of the law and Kosovo authorities in the north of the country.

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[62] Balkan Insight, Did Serbia's elections signal a further tilt to the right. April 2022. https://balkaninsight.com/2022/04/08/birn-fact-check-did-serbias-elections-signal-a-further-tilt-to-the-right/

Similarly, there has been stronger resistance to holding activities related to the LGBTQI+ community in Serb-majority areas than in other parts of Kosovo. Violence against members of this community in Serbia, has made it impossible to hold pride parades even in Serb majority areas in Kosovo.

Information obtained by BIRN shows that Kosovo Government and security authorities have recently started dealing with FRE and ENE groups. In 2021, for the first time ever, the Kosovo Government expelled two Russian diplomats on the grounds of having supported enemy activity. Prime Minister Albin Kurti publicly denounced the involvement of these two individuals in establishing barricades in the north of Kosovo.

The information published by Prime Minister Kurti showed that Montenegrin citizen, Vladislav Dajković, is also a member of the Russian Imperial Movement, a group which has been declared a terrorist organisation by the USA. Another individual whom the Prime minister mentioned publicly is Igor Braunović, the general director of "Srbijašume", who was publicly praised by his deputy, Bratislav Dikić, for his participation in establishing barricades in Jarinje and other locations in the north of Kosovo.[63]

There were other cases in the north of Kosovo as well. In August, two French citizens were arrested on the grounds of illegal entry to Kosovo. According to Police and Prosecution data, the French citizens driving a Serbia plate car, had illegally crossed to Kosovo from Belgrade, through illegal routes. They were detained immediately and are still in pre-detention, however the purpose of their illegal crossing to Kosovo has not been revealed.

Additionally, on September 10, Kosovo prohibited the entrance of two Russian citizens Dimitrije Markovic and Nenad Jeremic on grounds of activities against Kosovo sovereignty and security. According to Kosovo security authorities, Markovic and Jeremic are known for pro-Russian activities conducted under the covert charity activities, through which they spread propaganda against Kosovo and incited inter-ethnic hatred, all with the purpose of damaging the image of Kosovo and presenting an unrealistic picture of conditions for the Serb community in Kosovo. Markovic is further known for very close ties with the Russian Federation Liaison Office in Kosovo, especially its former head, Andrei Lisovoi.

The Kosovo Government also provided details of a case in July 2022, when a member of the European Solidarity Front for Kosovo (ESFK) group was detained. The ESFK promoted anti-western sentiments and supported close ties with Russia. It was classified as a FRE movement in the Report on Extremism in the territory of the Czech Republic, published in 2013 by the Czech Republic's Interior Ministry.

In 2019, security bodies of the Republic of Kosovo detained eight members of this organisation, who had planned to release a drone at the Fadil Vokrri stadium carrying the insignia "Kosovo is Serbia."

Impact of the war in Ukraine

[63] Vijesti. May 2020. https://www.vijesti.me/vijesti/drustvo/434929/protestna-kolona-vozila-u-podgorici-dajkovic-objavio-da-je-uhapsen

Kosovo has a mixed ethnic population, with Kosovo Albanians consisting the majority while the Serb community is the largest non-majority community, followed by Roma, Ashkali, Egyptian, Bosniak, Turkish, and Gorani communities.

Data obtained show that Kosovo Albanians and Kosovo Serbs had very different approaches towards the war in Ukraine. Kosovo became a target of high Russian officials, including the Russian Foreign Minister, Sergei Lavrov,[64] who stated that Kosovo is recruiting people to fight in the war in Ukraine. In an interview provided for "Russia Today", Lavrov stated that there was information that the countries of the Western Balkans were "recruiting mercenaries for US-instigated military conflicts." Meanwhile, the Russian News Agency (Tass)[65] quoted Lavrov as saying that: "Kosovo and some other parts of the Western Balkans are becoming a fertile ground for crime. There are terrorists and drug dealers there."

Putin reinforced his subordinate's statements after talks with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, when he said that the number of "mercenaries from Kosovo" was increasing in Ukraine. "Russia is registering a growing number of mercenaries from third countries, in particular from Albania and Croatia, militants from Kosovo and even jihadists with war experience from Syria," the Kremlin said in a statement.[66]

However, these allegations were denied by Kosovo institutions and labelled disinformation from Russian officials. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs[67] stated that Kosovo citizens are denied by law from participating in foreign wars, and that the law[68] provides for severe penalties for doing so. To prevent the spread of disinformation, the Independent Media Commission temporarily removed broadcasting channels originating in the Russian Federation.

In March 2022, at the height of the war in Ukraine, the Kyiv Independent quoted a high ranking general of the Ukrainian Army as saying that Russia is bringing fighters from Syria, Serbia, and Nagorno-Karabakh[69] to replenish troops in Ukraine. Meanwhile, messages showing full support for Russia's war on Ukraine have appeared in areas in Kosovo inhabited primarily by Serbs.[70]

The Balkan Investigative Reporting Network has conducted research on far-right extremism across the Western Balkans in the past two years and has created a specialised reporting page on the matter. This research has shown that far-right extremism is widespread throughout the region, with a strong presence in mainstream political narratives.[71]

Nationalist groups are present in all countries in the region and make strong reference to the wars of the 1990s, with many glorifying war criminals and ethnic cleansing. However, extremist groups in the region all tend to share the same animosity towards LGBTI people, Romani people and migrants.[72] Members of extremist groups are often involved in organised crime and do not hesitate to use

[64] https://www.euractiv.com/section/politics/short_news/moscow-claims-mercenaries-from-western-balkans-fight-in-ukraine/

[65] https://tass.com/world/1406183?utm_source=google.com&utm_medium=organic&utm_campaign=google.com&utm_referrer=google.com

[66] http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/67907

[67] https://www.mfa-ks.net/single_lajmi/4583

[68] https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=10763

[69] https://kyivindependent.com/uncategorized/ukrainian-general-staff-russia-is-bringing-fighters-from-syria-serbia-nagorno-karabakh-to-replenish-troops-in-ukraine

[70] RTV 21. North of Mitrovica full of Putin photos. January 2019. https://rtv21.tv/veriu-i-mitrovices-mbushet-me-fotografi-te-putinit/

[71] Numerous research articles produced by BIRN covering the Western Balkans may be found at: https://balkaninsight.com/far-right/

[72] Ibid.

violence. More common ground between groups in the Western Balkans can be found in anti-NATO and anti-EU politics, as well as pro-Russian attitudes.[73]

A Radicalization Awareness Network Conclusion Paper based on meetings with CSOs around the Western Balkans showed that there is a consensus amongst CSOs that FRE in the Western Balkans is reciprocal and cumulative, characterised by exclusionary, clerical, ethnonationalism and racism, homophobia, toxic masculinity, anti-immigrant sentiments, authoritarian leadership, a quest for historical roots and attachment to historical myths, twisting human rights issues into security concerns and distortion of the meaning of European and democratic values and fundamental rights.[74]

The Conclusion Paper further noted that FRE has been pervasive and prevailing in politics, economics, culture and sports, among ordinary people, young people, scholars and practitioners. The boundaries of illegality are not yet clear, so FRE operates in a grey area, rarely prosecuted (e.g. for hate speech, violence against minorities, etc.) and not addressed by clear state interventions aimed at preventing and countering such phenomena. The normalisation of FRE makes effective Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE) efforts in the Western Balkans difficult.[75]

Nevertheless, when it comes to Kosovo, there has been very limited analysis, research and publicly available information on the far right and ethnonationalism. However, there is much more information and research available on religious extremism, including directly from BIRN Kosovo and the Resilient Community Programme.

The data secured reveals that the emergence of this phenomenon and other forms of extremism are still present among young people. At least 10 people have been arrested for terrorism-related crimes, while LGBTQI community activists highlight attacks and continuous hate speech against them. Currently, 75 people are under investigation by the Special Prosecutor's Office for terrorist-related activities, while five indictments were filed last year alone.

The occurrence of violent acts in the north of Kosovo and increased number of individuals arrested for these acts, signal an issue that must be dealt with, because the motives of such violent acts have been identified as ethnonationalist but also with extreme right wing elements.[76]

The political will to handle far right extremism

Kosovo's political parties are primarily built on nationalist rhetoric and often do not have clear political ideologies. Consequently, they attract monoethnic constituents and contribute to ethnic divisions. This is also manifested in the representatives put forward by political parties, where members of "the other community are limited or entirely non-existent."

Thus, attempts by politicians to build multi-ethnic coalitions transform into narratives of political antagonisation, which label citizens or politicians as "friends of the Serbs" or "friends of the Albanians." These narratives have continually dominated the political scene in an attempt to present cases of inter-ethnic cooperation as a betrayal, and those cooperating as traitors to their ethnicity[77].

[73] Ibid.

[74] https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2020-11/ran_cn_conclusion_paper_videogames_15-17092020_en.pdf

[75] Ibid.

[76] KALLXO. Kosovo police attacked in the north, again. April 2022. https://kallxo.com/lajm/sulmohet-serish-policia-e-kosoves-ne-veri/

[77] https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/04/world/europe/kosovo-license-plates-dispute.html

Kosovo has 38 municipalities, out of which ten are inhabited by a majority population of ethnic Serbs. They are all currently governed by Lista Srpska,[78] a political party with extremely close ties with the President of Serbia that denies Kosovo's statehood in every public appearance.[79]

Leaders of this political party have continuously called for the creation of the Association for Serb-Majority Municipalities,[80] while at the same time publicly going against all decisions issued by the Government of Kosovo. Local capacities at the four northern municipalities, namely Leopsavic, Zubin Potok, Zvecan and North Mitrovica are not yet fully functional, whereas the remaining six Serb majority municipalities, in particular their education and healthcare system, are not under the control or oversight of Kosovo Government institutions.

In January 2018, a moderate Serb politician, Oliver Ivanovic, a political rival of Lista Srpska was assassinated in front of his party's office in North Mitrovica[81], with the indictment filed by Kosovo Special Prosecution naming the deputy-President of Lista Srpska, Milan Radojcic, as the organiser of this assanisation[82].

Manifestations of inter-ethnic tension are also often noted in Albanian majority municipalities. In the municipality of Gjakova, huge discussions and protests were organised to oppose the return of Serb citizens in the city, while in Decan, protests took place to oppose a decision of the Constitutional Court concerning the Decani Monastery.[83] Inter-ethnic incidents have also been identified in Mitrovica and Skenderaj.

At the central level, far right extremism is particularly manifested in the opposition to the rights of LGBTQI+ communities, which was particularly evident during discussions on civil unions between same-sex couples.[84] A political party holding about 10% of the popular vote publicly opposed the Civil Code (the Alliance for the Future of Kosovo, AAK)[85] recognizing same-sex civil unions, while a significant minority of MPs from Vetevendosje, the ruling party, also came out against this initiative.[86] In 2022, there were also major public discussions concerning the hesitation of the Kosovo Prime minister to participate in the Pride Parade held in the capital city.[87]

Institutional capacities

Kosovo's institutions' emphasis on fighting Islamist extremism has contributed to creating good institutional capacities in preventing and combating extremism, as well as resocialization. Nevertheless, the same capacities have not been developed in order to handle individuals involved in ethnonationalist and far-right extremist groups. Kosovo does not have a specialised programme to treat these types of radicalisation nor to work on prevention or R&R. Messages and awareness raising campaigns carried out so far have not targeted ethnonationalism nor far right extremism.

[78] https://www.euractiv.com/section/politics/short_news/serb-list-wins-all-10-seats-reserved-for-serb-minority-in-kosovo/

[79] https://prishtinainsight.com/srpska-lista-scores-landslide-victory-in-north-kosovo-polls/

[80] https://balkaninsight.com/2022/08/12/kosovo-must-deliver-on-municipal-association-if-it-wants-normalisation/

[81] https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-42701712

[82] https://balkaninsight.com/2019/12/10/oliver-ivanovic-murder-indictment-names-kosovo-serb-crime-gang/

[83] https://balkaninsight.com/2022/10/10/serbian-orthodox-monastery-demands-land-awarded-by-kosovo-court/

[84] https://prishtinainsight.com/civil-code-debate-has-caused-spike-in-hate-towards-lgbt-community-mag/

[85] https://kallxo.com/lajm/aak-dhe-minoritetet-kunder-kodit-civil-ldk-kerkon-qendrimin-e-qeverise/

[86] https://www.euractiv.com/section/non-discrimination/news/kosovo-snubs-recognition-of-same-sex-civil-unions/

[87] https://kosovotwopointzero.com/en/the-prime-minister-who-didnt-attend-the-parade/

Training at the central and local level has not focused on these two themes either. Activities carried out by institutions have focused exclusively on religious extremism, which was a priority due to its more widespread manifestations. School curricula and capacity building activities targeting teachers also did not tackle these topics. Data obtained show that even reintegration programmes developed by the MIA focused exclusively on Islamic extremism. All individuals that were part of the programme were convicted of terrorism based on religious foundations.

Strategic documents adopted so far in Kosovo, have not explicitly foreseen the risks coming from far-right nor ethnonationalist extremism, and even the actions plans, activities, programmes and measures entailed have entirely focused on religiously motivated extremism.

Consequently, while reintegration and resocialisation of those involved in religiously motivated extremism and terrorism, not even a single programme is dedicated to other forms of extremism. Kosovo Correctional Services and Kosovo Probation Services do not have individualised programmes for handling convicts and nor do they possess individual training programmes for those convicted on religiously motivated extremism and terrorism, and as such, they do not have the capacities to handle other forms of extremism. [88]

The same principle also applies in terms of prevention, especially at the local level, with data obtained showing that municipalities do not possess even minimal capacities in regard to recognizing and treating other forms of extremism in their early development phase. Municipalities also face problems when it comes to connecting their cultural and sports activities with fighting narratives of extremist groups and in preventing terrorism, a difficulty that is noted even more so in terms of recognizing other forms of extremism.

The majority of officials involved in this report reported that they do not possess even basic knowledge on the manifestation of ethnonationalist and far-right extremism. Even those involved in implementing the national strategy on the prevention of violent extremism leading to terrorism report that they have only basic knowledge on other forms of violent extremism, whereas the local level and other relevant institutions have no knowledge whatsoever concerning other forms of extremism.[89]

Others assessed that while dealing with religiously motivated violent extremism, Kosovo completely overlooked other forms of extremism, consequently no public officials are tasked with implementing R&R programmes nor do they have any basic knowledge on other forms of extremism. [90] No teachers, psychologists or social workers have been trained in identifying early signs of extremism of other forms nor in handling these individuals.[91]

Similarly, there are limited capacities amongst Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) to handle other forms of extremism at the local level. No local level CSOs have implemented activities focusing on other forms of violent extremism. While local level NGOs have the advantage of knowing and understating their community best, they also have the disadvantage of not knowing the means of identifying other forms of extremism and are consequently disengaged from developments happening in other municipalities and at the national level. This in turn raises the need for continuous training for CSOs to improve their skills and knowledge on other forms of extremism initially, and subsequently in addressing the needs resulting from this knowledge.

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[88] Interview with director of Correctional Services, Sami Gashi. August 2022.

[89] Interview with Lulzim Fushticen and Mentor Vrajollin, August 2022.

[90] Interview with Ramadan Ilazi, August 2022.

[91] Interview with Aferdita Jahja and Ilfete Uka, August 2022

CONCLUSION

Based on the data obtained by BIRN, analysis and information received from state and non-state actors as well as internal analysis of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA), it can be concluded that the process of delegation of competencies must start immediately in a gradual process spread through phases. The initial phase must include expansion of competencies in municipalities such as Mitrovica, Gjilan, Prishtina, Peja and Podujevo during the first year/phase. During the second year, the programme of expansion of competencies should be spread to five other municipalities, including one Serb majority municipality.

The experience so far and MIA analysis show that the process must not be rushed and should be carefully thought through and this expansion should be gradual and involve 5 municipalities per year. Both the Mechanism but also the Strategy need periodic quality assessment by an external mechanism in order to assess the impact of the activities and performance of public institutions in implementing the strategy.

In addition, the focus on future activities should focus on the following issues:
1. Supporting municipalities in the process of building multi-disciplinary mechanism should be a long-term priority (about 3-4 years) until full capacities of this Mechanism are created and operationalized

2. When initiating the process of establishing the multi-disciplinary mechanism, municipalities should be provided with expertise on Drafting the Municipal Action Plans (for the first five municipalities initially, and then adding new municipalities each year). This would entail drafting an action plan with concrete activities foreseen by the municipality to work on P/CVE and R&R programmes.
3. Capacity building of municipal officials on P/CVE and R/&R programmes - this would entail specialised training and mentorship programmes for municipal officials tasked with working on Municipal Action Plans and issues related to prevention, treatment and R&R components of working with returnees, those showing early signs of radicalisation as well as working towards recognising and managing other forms of extremism such as ethno-nationalism and RFE. All individuals foreseen to be involved in the Multi-Disciplinary Mechanism should undergo these training and mentorship programmes.
4. During the first year, the first five municipalities (Mitrovica, Gjilan, Prishtina, Peja and Podujevo) should receive professional assistance and funds to financially support individuals affected by extremism with essential packages and assistance in employment
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5. Municipalities or alternatively CSO's should engage social workers to provide social assistance to individuals affected by extremism;
6. Provision of psychological assistance and services either through municipalities or CSO programmes to include but not be limited to engaging psychologists on rotation to work on these municipalities with schools, returnees etc.
7. Provision of direct support in the form of grants/projects to CSO's to work directly with groups affected by extremism or living in communities at a higher risk.
8. A specialised programme to raise mentoring of NGO's and provide financial support for NGO's at the local level must be designed and carried out so that NGO's are able to carry out programmes on various forms of extremism. These should go hand-in-hand as mentorship without financial support to follow through on the newly gained knowledge and skills would not reach the desired impact and vice versa.
9. A special package of financial support with grants for businesses on employment and emergency care packages to support families and host communities should be provided in order to ease the social and economic factors.
10. Awareness raising campaign, activities and support for media to work on providing alternative narratives or positive narratives that aim to help the general public recognize RWE, ethnonationalism, hate speech and potential violence that may move from online to offline as a result of disinformation.
11. At the central level, the capacities of institutions to deal with other forms of extremism and radicalisation should be increased together with increased attention of the institutions in other forms of extremism.
12. Civil society, media and other representative groups must undergo thorough training, mentorship and financial support in order to tackle the issues of RWE and ethnonationalism. The programme should entail basic training and mentorship in the beginning and gradually move to more advanced forms of support.

Recommendations

Based on these conclusions, the following recommendations are divided per institution/institutions responsible for the implementation:

Kosovo Government, municipalities, civil society and donor community:

1. Focus of all programming and capacity building efforts should be placed on handling all types of extremism and terrorism, in parallel to current programmes supported by donors which are primarily focused on religious extremism;
2. Institutional and societal institutions at the central and local levels must be advanced and strengthened in the early prevention of all forms of violent extremism and the end phase of disengagement from extremism;
3. Institutions and donors, in close cooperation with the MIA's Public Safety Department, must ensure continuous support for the operationalisation of the multidisciplinary teams at the local level. Support for these mechanisms must include resources for drafting the guidelines, developing individual plans, training the staff, financial support for returnees, providing psychological and social services support, strategic communication and community outreach;
4. Central level institutions and donors must ensure assistance for the municipalities in developing special action plans for the implementation of the strategy, including services provided by the municipalities in education, public services, culture, emergencies, etc.;
5. In close cooperation with partners, a process of strengthening and supporting civil society should be initiated in order to enable them to carry out activities at the local level and to secure sustainable funding resources to fund these activities. These efforts should involve the media as well. Implementation of these programmes must be in line with the trends and changes noted in the field in order to adapt to other forms of extremism;
6. Re-Shifting the focus from prevention to R&R back to prevention as while a higher focus on R&R was needed due to the changes in the context back in 2019, the reduced focus and continuous work on prevention aspects, specifically on strengthening the resilience of the community against extremist ideologies, poses a challenge on the long-term and sustainable approach to deal and mitigate risks of the new emerging forms of extremism.

7. A special package of financial support with grants for businesses on employment and emergency care packages to support families and host communities should be provided in order to ease the social and economic factors.

National Coordinator/Kosovo Government:

8. A Communication Strategic Plan must be designed, accompanied by a detailed financing plan for its implementation, with a focus on funding alternative-narratives to the promotion of extremism on the internet and mass media;

9. The National Coordinator must compile a detailed guideline for municipalities instructing them on the establishment and operationalisation of multi-disciplinary P/CVE and R&R teams as well as creating a detailed dissemination plan for the multidisciplinary mechanism spread across various phases. This is due to the multidisciplinary teams in the municipalities being tasked to carry out P/CVE and R&R activities, while cooperating very closely with the Department on Prevention and Reintegration of Radicalised Persons;

10. Special mechanisms for monitoring and assessing the performance of institutions in implementing the strategy must be devised. These mechanisms must include checking the accuracy of reporting as well as qualitative and comparative monitoring of reporting;

Justice Institutions:

11. The Kosovo Judicial Council, Kosovo Correctional Service, Kosovo Probation Service, Social Centres and the Employment Agency must establish a coordination mechanism to build individual and specific programmes for convicts of terrorism offences, according to the type and length of conviction, start time of the sentence, probation services, and the reintegration and resocialisation of perpetrators through vocational training, employment and self-employment.

Kosovo municipalities:

12. There should be support for activities aimed at enhancing and strengthening the dialogue amongst communities at the local level as a mean to preventing inter-ethnic violence;

13. There should be support for activities that strengthen communities and their resilience through activities focused on culture, sports, education, debates, etc.;

14. Where applicable, municipalities should establish the Multi-Disciplinary Mechanisms in order to coordinate efforts on issues related to prevention, treatment and R&R components of working with returnees, those showing early signs of radicalisation as well as working towards recognising and managing other forms of extremism such as ethno-nationalism and RFE;

15. Municipalities must request support in Drafting the Municipal Action Plans to include concrete activities foreseen by the municipality to work on P/CVE and R&R programme in line with Strategic Priorities of Kosovo Government;

16. Municipalities or alternatively CSO's should engage social workers to provide social assistance to individuals affected by extremism as well as provision of psychological assistance and services;

Civil Society and Media:

17. A specialised programme to raise capacities of local level CSO's followed up by mentorship and financial support so that NGO's are able to carry out programmes on various forms of extremism.
18. More experienced CSO's and media organisations on various forms of extremism should share the accumulated know-how, experience and expertise with grassroots CSO's and media at the municipal level in the form of capacity building, mentorship and joint initiatives supporting the communities;
19. Media and civil society must build internal capacities to capacitate the staff in order to monitor the implementation of teh strategy and measure its impact on the ground.
20. Designing and carrying out awareness raising campaigns, activities and support the media to work on providing alternative narratives or positive narratives that aim to help the general public recognize RWE, ethnonationalism, hate speech and potential violence that may move from online to offline as a result of disinformation;
21. Civil society, media and other representative groups must undergo thorough training, mentorship and financial support in order to tackle the issues of RWE and ethnonationalism specifically, due to scarce knowledge and capacities.

Donor Community:

22. Support the Government of Kosovo and municipalities to finalise the strategy and future implementation of foreseen activities in order to reach the set objectives;
23. Facilitate the process of creating new capacities amongst civil society, media and community groups to carry out programmes and small-scale initiatives addressing various forms of extremism, including ethnonationalism and FRE;
24. Support awareness raising campaigns and increased knowledge amongst local level public officials, civil society and media on risks of ethnonational and FRE and efforts to support both R&R programmes as well as prevention of the rise of ethnonationalism, RFE and religious extremism in the future;

25. Facilitate cooperation and joint programming efforts between more experienced CSO's and media organisations with less experiences groups working at the very grassroots level to encourage share of know-how, increased capacities and mentorship, followed up by concrete financial support;