GCERF Strategy for Investment in North Macedonia
2024– 2027

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This document is guided by

- GCERF's original "Strategy to Engage Communities and Address the Drivers of Violent Extremism (2017- 2020) and Updated Strategy for 2021 – 2025.[1]
- Government of North Macedonia National Strategy for Countering Violent Extremism and Action Plan 2023-2027.
- GCERF's Investment Strategy for the Western Balkans (2019) and updated Investment Strategy for the Western Balkans (2021).
- Desktop research.
- GCERF'S Approach to R&R, November 2023 BM.19/DOC.07
- Consultations with North Macedonian National Committee for Countering Violent Extremism and Countering Terrorism (NCCVECT).
- Consultations with GCERF in country partners, including representatives from US, EU and Nederland embassies, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and local researchers.
- EU's Joint Action Plan on Counterterrorism for the Western Balkans.[2]
- Consultations with GCERF Independent Review Pannel experts.

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[1] GCERF-Strategy 2017-2020
[2] See at: https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/36546/joint-action-plan-on-ct-for-wb.pdf

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Acronyms

CAT	Community Action Teams
CBO	Community–Based Organisation
CoP	Communities of Practice
CSM	Country Support Mechanism
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CWG	Community Working Group
EU	European Union
FATF	Financial Action Task Force
FIO	Financial Intelligence Office
FRWE	Far-Right Wing Extremism
FTF	Foreign Terrorist Fighters
GCERF	Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund
GCTF	Global Counter–Terrorism Forum
IGC	Intergroup Contact
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
LMT	Local Multi-Disciplinary Teams
LPC	Local Prevention Council
MIA	Ministry of Internal Affairs
NCCVECT	National Committee for Countering Violent Extremism and Countering Terrorism
MCIC	Macedonian Centre for International Cooperation
MYLA	Macedonian Young Lawyers Association
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe
P/CVE	Preventing/Countering Violent Extremism
PR	Principal Recipient
PYD	Positive Youth Development
RFTFs	Returning Foreign Terrorist Fighters
RNA	Regional Needs Assessment
R&R	Rehabilitation and Reintegration
RRR	Rehabilitation, Reintegration and Re-socialisation
RWE	Right-Wing Extremism
SOP	Standard Operating Procedures
SR	Sub-recipient
ToC	Theory of Change
US	United States of America
WB	Western Balkans
VERLT	Violent Extremism and Radicalization that Leads to Terrorism
VRWE	Violent Right-Wing Extremism

Executive Summary

North Macedonia became a GCERF partner country in April 2020. This partnership was confirmed by the GCERF's Governing Board in June 2020, where GCERF's Regional Strategy for Investment in the Western Balkans was also approved. From 2020 GCERF's work in North Macedonia has been guided by the GCERF's Investment Strategy for the Western Balkans (2019) and the updated Investment Strategy for the Western Balkans (2021).

Over the least four years, GCERF's work in North Macedonia has made significant strides in supporting the reintegration and rehabilitation of returnees, alongside bolstering community resilience against violent extremism. Collaborating with local organisations, GCERF has facilitated critical individual and family counselling, whilst also fostering trust and open communication within the communities to which returns are taking place.

The systematic expansion of GCERF's program has laid the groundwork for a sustainable, community-driven approach prioritising individual well-being and collective resilience in North Macedonia.

While GCERF's Rehabilitation and Reintegration (R&R) programs for returnees are crucial, an exclusive focus on rehabilitation overlooks the burgeoning threats of far-right extremism (FRE)[3] and ethno-nationalism. These ideologies serve as breeding grounds for radicalisation and may undermine R&R by targeting returnees who remain vulnerable. These ideologies have tangible consequences, fuelling hate crimes, inter-group tensions, and political violence, beyond immediate R&R benefits, addressing FRE and ethno-nationalism is crucial for preventing future radicalisation, safeguarding communities from violence, and fostering a more peaceful and inclusive North Macedonia. Proactively tackling the root causes of extremism through initiatives promoting tolerance, intercultural dialogue, and critical thinking skills can equip communities to resist extremist ideologies, ultimately contributing to social cohesion and stability.

As part of its commitment to long-term sustainability, GCERF seeks to establish a legal framework that supports community-driven initiatives, ensuring that the programs resonate with the local context and endure beyond the duration of the intervention.

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[3] Although recently North Macedonia has faced limited public manifestation of far-right extremism, the threat is present, and it is more visible in situations where members of far-right organizations have been actively involved in threats and violence against journalists, politicians and other individuals that do not share the same political views. ETHNIC AND POLITICAL EXTREMISM IN NORTH MACEDONIA: Mapping the main action frameworks in the extremist scenes (NEXUS CC, page 16).

GCERF's Proposed Approach

WHAT	A balanced approach to R&R and Prevention/Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE) of all forms of extremism through capacity building, reinforcing mechanisms, and mitigating polarisation.
WHO	At-risk groups and individuals, including children, youth, and returnees. Returnees and their family members or legal guardians.
WHERE	Skopje, Polog, South-western, and North-eastern regions acknowledging the diverse dynamics within North Macedonia.
HOW	Civil Society Organisation (CSOs) central and local institutions will be equipped with tools and support to work towards a sustainable and coordinated approach, addressing both P/CVE and R&R. This includes targeted capacity-building initiatives, reinforcing existing mechanisms such as Local Multi-Disciplinary Teams (LMTs), Local Prevention Councils and implementing strategies by establishing referral mechanisms and mitigating polarisations.

Guiding principles

The following principles will guide GCERF's investment in North Macedonia:
- Ensure that programming is aligned with good practices and recommendations of the GCTF.[4]
- Assistance to returnees (FTFs) and their families, along with other categories of citizens susceptible to radicalisation, through individual and group counselling, social services, professional development.
- Creation of functional local referral groups at the municipal level consisting local stakeholders/ community leaders (religious leaders, teachers, social workers, CSOs etc.).
- Respect for multi-ethnic and multi-cultural aspects of society.
- Capacity building and sensitisation of state and non-state actors.
- Conflict sensitive approaches that follow the Do No Harm principle.[5]
- Gender responsive, intersectional programming.[6]

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[4] Including: GCTF Recommendations for Funding and Enabling Community-level P/CVE (2023), Memorandum on Good Practices in Strengthening National-Local Cooperation in Preventing Violent Extremism Conducive to Terrorism (2020); Rome Memorandum on Good Practices for R&R of VE Offenders (2016) and its Addendum (2020); The Hague-Marrakech Memorandum on Good Practices for More Effective Response to the FTF Phenomenon (2016) and its Addendum (2020); Good Practices on Addressing the Challenge of Returning Foreign Terrorist Fighters (2018).
[5]http://www.conflictsensitivity.org/do-no-harm-local-capacities-for-peace-project/
[6]Global Counter-Terrorism Forum: Gender and Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism Policy Toolkit, 2022

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- Institutional framework and coordination mechanisms for P/CVE & de-radicalisation and rehabilitation, re-socialisation, and reintegration (RRR) actors strengthened.

GCERF Positioning

Integration

In 2020, GCERF expanded its operations to North Macedonia and Albania, introducing a Regional Strategy for Investment in the Western Balkans and establishing the Regional Accelerated Funding Panel (RAFP) for overseeing investments. Focused on the R&R of Returning Foreign Terrorist Fighters (RFTFs) and their families, the strategy involves capacity building for institutions, direct assistance to returnees and initiatives to reduce stigmatisation and promote re-socialisation. Active engagement in the Regional Network of National Coordinators (RNNC) for Countering and Preventing Violent Extremism (C/PVE) in the Western Balkans facilitates collaboration, leading to the development of a Regional Action Plan on CVE. GCERF attends the RNNC and contributes updates on EU-funded programme activities.

GCERF added value

Since 2021, GCERF has collaborated with North Macedonia on a comprehensive initiative, investing USD 1.3 million to strengthen both governmental and non-governmental capacities in preventing violent extremism (PVE) and facilitating rehabilitation and reintegration of returnees from Northeast Syria. The commitment provides direct support to returnees from conflict zones, covering medical, psycho-social, educational, administrative, and livelihood aspects to address diverse transitional needs. Beyond tangible assistance, the program aims to reduce the stigmatisation of returnees and emphasises inter-religious and ethnic tolerance to enhance social cohesion. With two active grants, GCERF's ongoing efforts in North Macedonia illustrate a holistic approach to tackling the intricate challenges of violent extremism while promoting sustainable reintegration and re-socialisation of RFTFs into communities.

GCERF's approach to Rehabilitation and Reintegration (R&R)

GCERF employs a comprehensive R&R approach, featuring tailored case management for trauma recovery. This includes psychological, psychiatric, medical, educational, economic, and social assessments. Both Macedonian Centre for International Cooperation (MCIC) and Macedonian Young Lawyers Association (MYLA) are GCERF grantees in North Macedonia actively involved in these efforts.

MCIC focuses on providing comprehensive R&R support to returnees, aiming to reduce stigmatisation and enhance community acceptance. This work extends to capacity building and coordination among governmental and non-governmental R&R stakeholders.

In complement, MYLA concentrates on capacity-building initiatives within local institutions, strengthening capacities of LMTS, fostering resilience among children, youth, and parents specifically in the context of P/CVE. Their efforts aim to reduce stigmatisation while promoting a more accepting environment for returnees. MYLA's approach aligns with the broader goal of building a supportive community that is well-equipped to address the multifaceted aspects of R&R.

MYLA work collectively underscores the importance of a multi-dimensional and community-focused approach in addressing the complexities of R&R and P/CVE in North Macedonia.

Lessons Learned and Good Practices

- A highly effective case management approach has been implemented by GCERF grantees in North Macedonia, bridging the gap between vulnerable returnees and authorities previously lacking the necessary knowledge and resources to address their complex needs.
- A key strength of this approach is its commitment to personalised support. Individual development plans are particularly crafted to address the specific needs of each returnee and their family, ensuring that assistance is tailored and impactful. Notably creditable is the inclusion of psychosocial support specifically for women and children, demonstrating a keen awareness of the unique mental health needs of this vulnerable group.
- A holistic approach promotes access to essential social services through intervention and advocacy, creating a supportive and enabling environment for successful reintegration into the community.
- The strategy is continuously updated and refined based on valuable lessons learned from previous funding rounds, insightful third-party monitoring report and the dynamic exchange of information and best practices within established Communities of Practice.

Current Context, Drivers of Violent Extremism and Perceived Threats

Almost 80 people returned to North Macedonia from foreign conflicts from Syria and Iraq. Political instability and inadequate reconciliation caused by previous conflicts have polarised communities along ethnic, religious, and cultural lines. High unemployment, limited trust in institutions, and established criminal networks contribute to violent extremist narratives.[7] The situation in North Macedonia regarding violent extremism is impacted by the country's history of ethnic conflicts and by the ideologies to which ethnic Macedonians and ethnic Albanians have been exposed since the 2001 conflict. These factors have produced three main types of

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[7] GCERF-North-Macedonia_factsheet-February-2024.pdf

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extremist trends: ethno-nationalism, religiously motivated extremism, and political extremism including violent right-wing extremism.[8]

Ethno-nationalism is an ideology that emphasises the nation and its identity as being solely defined by a specific ethnicity or cultural group. This often leads to the belief that the nation belongs exclusively to this group and that other groups pose a threat.[9] **Religiously-motivated extremism** is the use of violence or threat of violence inspired by a religious ideology to achieve political, ideological, or religious goals. This can include targeting individuals or groups deemed to be enemies of the faith or promoting intolerance and hatred.[10] **Violent right-wing extremism** encompasses political ideologies and movements on the far right that advocate for violence or other unlawful means to achieve their goals, often characterised by racism, xenophobia, nationalism, and authoritarianism.[11] The above-described forms of violent extremis, can eventually overlap thus exacerbating the radical narrative equally present in groups opposed to each other.

Returnees from foreign conflict in Syria & Iraq

The National Committee for Countering Violent Extremism and Countering Terrorism (NCCVECT) estimated that 143 citizens of North Macedonia (excluding children) travelled or attempted to travel to Syria or to Iraq, or both, to join terrorist groups in recent years. Of these 143 adults (133 male, 10 female), 38 were killed, 79 returned, 5 are believed to remain in Syria, and 2 are in prison or a displaced persons camp. Authorities assessed the terrorist threat level to be "medium-low," although former ISIS members and sympathizers maintained a presence in the country.[12]

RNM signed and ratified all conventions for the fight against terrorism and terrorism-related protocols of the United Nations, including Resolution 2178 (2014) of the UN Security Council and the Council of Europe Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism. In line with the commitments from the Joint Action Plan on Counterterrorism for the Western Balkan, the Government of North Macedonia approved the National Plan on RRR of returnees from foreign armed groups and their family members (women and children).

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[8]Violent Extremism in the Western Balkans and MENA Region: Key Findings and Implications for Research Theoretical Synthesis Paper p. 7 PAVE_Theoretical_Synthesis_Paper.pdf (pave-project.eu)

[9] Brubaker, Rogers. Ethnicity without Groups. Harvard University Press, 1997.

[10] Schmid, Alexander P. The Psychology of Terrorism. Springer, 2012.

[11] Cas Mudde, Lühr. Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe. Cambridge University Press, 2007.

[12] https://www.state.gov/reports/country-reports-on-terrorism-2022/north-macedonia/

Violent Right-Wing Extremism radicalisation and challenges for P/CVE in North Macedonia

Far-right ideas and politics are deeply embedded in the Western Balkans and pose a serious threat to the stability of the region. They accentuate ethnic and religious divisions, undermine civic movements, and de-legitimise local democratic institutions and their international sponsors.[13]

The 2023 EU Progress Report finds: At the local level, measures to prevent violent extremism and terrorism continue to be implemented by local councils for prevention, action teams in community, and local multidisciplinary teams. Two additional local action teams were set up in November 2022 in Prilep and Struga. Local multidisciplinary teams now operate in nine municipalities – Skopje, Kumanovo, Gostivar, Tetovo, Kicevo, Ohrid, Struga, Stip and Prilep – to provide support for returnees and their families.

The PAVE research project (2020-2023)[14] results reveal that radicalisation and violent extremism, in their many forms, remain challenges for North Macedonia. The state has managed to avert some of the more acute threats, such as the threat of internal attacks by foreign fighters and radical figures who have been released from prison. Yet these and other phenomena, such as a growing trend of violent **right-wing extremism, ethno-nationalism** and sport hooliganism[15], appear to be challenges at both the macro (societal) and micro (individual) levels throughout the country and in specific municipalities, among them Tetovo and Kumanovo. All forms of extremism exist in both main communities in North Macedonia, but they are manifested with different intensities.

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[13] https://hopenothate.org.uk/chapter/europeanstateofhate-spotlight-western-balkans/

[14] https://berghof-foundation.org/work/projects/pave

[15] North Macedonia do not face hooliganism if we mean by it only *"the behaviour of a violent person who fights or causes damage in public places"* (https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/hooliganism) or *"deliberate destruction of property or injury to persons, sometimes involving theft, whether by a gang or a small group of (usually) young people."* (http://encyclopedia.uia.org/en/problem/hooliganism).

Typical for North Macedonia is "violence on sports fields" where fanning is ethicized and where xenophobia is more important than cheering for the club. The violence is more often manifested with hate speech, rude words against different ethnic backgrounds. The last few years there has been a trend in increasing of intra-ethnic intolerance, which occurs more as a result of polarization on belonging to a different group. *"Identification of factors that influence violence on sports fields in North Macedonia".* Nexus, 2022.

Drivers of Radicalisation

Inter-ethnic tensions in the county and region, limited employment opportunities, social exclusion, perceived corruption, and security challenges from domestic and external sources, are issues of concern in North Macedonia, which require a comprehensive approach.

Factors that contribute to the emergence of violent extremism in North Macedonia include:

- **Returnees from Foreign Conflict Zones** - The return of individuals from foreign conflict zones, particularly from Syria and Iraq, introduces a potential source of radicalisation. These returnees may bring with them extremist ideologies and experiences, contributing to the spread of radical beliefs within the local context.
- **Inter-ethnic Tensions and Polarisation** - The presence of ethnic-driven tensions in the country and the broader region contributes to a climate of social division and animosity. Community polarisation along ethnic, religious, and cultural lines fosters closed groups that may be more susceptible to radicalisation and violence.
- **Political Instability** - The post and pre-conflict context marked by political instability has led to the polarisation of communities. This polarisation, along ethnic, religious, and cultural lines, creates an environment conducive to the emergence of violent extremism.

PVE Threats

- **Returning FTF** "Foreign terrorist fighters" and members of their families.[16]
- **Online Radicalisation**[17]**:** The pervasive influence of the Internet, social media and online propaganda materials can target and recruit young individuals.
- **Cyber Terrorism**[18]**:** The use of technology to undermine national security, compromise sensitive information, and disrupt critical infrastructure. Advancing technology can be used as a tool to create new opportunities for extremist groups.
- **Radicalisation in prisons:** This leads to terrorism or violence in prisons is still a matter of concern, and an increased number of activities are required.
- **Irregular Migration Routes:** North Macedonia is on one of the main transit routes for migration movements. North Macedonian geographic position along migratory paths by foreign terrorist FTF.

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[16] Resolution 2396 (2017) calls upon member-states to strengthen their efforts in eradicating the threats from return and displacement of FTFs and members of their families, including women and children, through measures of border control, criminal justice and exchange of information among member-states and relevant organizations, such as INTERPOL, in detecting FTFs.

[17] This activity is aligned with the National Committee's Action plan Strategic Objective: 1.4 Preventing online radicalization and 1.4.3 Addressing the issue of the power of cyberspace in spreading violent extremism and inciting terrorism.

[18] Ibidem note 16.

North Macedonia's Portfolio Objectives

1) GCERF will continue to support R&R efforts in North Macedonia.
2) Increase community resilience to all forms of radicalisation.
3) Enhance cooperation among institutions and NGOs to counteract far-right ideologies and ethno-nationalist elements.
4) Empower local communities and organisations through increasing their capacities to take ownership of and sustain R&R and P/CVE programs.

Thematic focus

The thematic focus is continuing building Community Resilience to various forms of violent extremism and capacity building support for PCVE and R&R with inclusion of Countering Far-Right Extremism and Ethno-Nationalism programming.

Institutional framework

North Macedonia signed and ratified all conventions for the fight against terrorism and terrorism-related protocols of the UN, including Resolution 2178 (2014) of the UN Security Council and the Council of Europe Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism.[19] The Government of the Republic of North Macedonia approved the National Plan on Reintegration, Re-socialisation and Re-habilitation of returnees from foreign armed groups and their family members (women and children):

- North Macedonia's **legislative framework** is aligned with the EU acquis and international counterterrorism instruments and is sufficient for the prosecution of individuals suspected of committing or aiding terrorist activities or participating in foreign wars.[20]
- **Joint Action Plan Countering Terrorism in the Western Balkans 2022:** In December 2022, the European Commission and North Macedonia's Ministry of the Interior signed a new arrangement for the implementation of a joint action plan on counterterrorism for the Western Balkans. The arrangement upgrades cooperation on counterterrorism and action to prevent / counter violent extremism. Implementation of the newly signed counterterrorism arrangement began with some priority activities, undertaken in accordance with the schedule.[21]

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[19] https://vlada.mk/sites/default/files/dokumenti/strategii/eng_national_cve_strategy_2023-2027.pdf
[20] https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2023-11/SWD_2023_693%20North%20Macedonia%20report.pdf
[21] https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2023-11/SWD_2023_693%20North%20Macedonia%20report.pdf

- **The National Strategy for Countering Violent Extremism** is a joint document of representatives of governmental institutions, relevant civil society/civic associations, the academia, and the international community. The [National Strategy for Countering Violent Extremism](#) is envisaged for a period of five years (2023 – 2027), followed up by revision of processes and analysis with regard to further steps.
- **The Standard Operating Procedures** on reintegration, re-socialisation and rehabilitation of foreign fighters and their family members are aimed at putting into effect the procedure which is based on the fundamental values for the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, a whole-of-society approach, individual approach and treatment, and the principle of confidentiality.[22]

Legislation and law enforcement

North Macedonia's legislative framework allows prosecution of individuals suspected of committing or aiding terrorist activities or participating in foreign wars. Sentencing for terrorism-related offenses improved significantly, compared with previous years, and sentences are now longer than in other Western Balkans countries. Various international partners, especially the U.S. Department of Justice, but also Germany and Netherlands provided mentoring and battlefield evidence to case prosecutors and investigators[23] [24]

The Ministry of Interior's "Terrorism and Violent Extremism Sector" led law enforcement-related CT efforts. North Macedonia developed a new 2021-25 **National Strategy for Developing the Penitentiary System,**[25] which includes a component for de-radicalising and rehabilitating FTFs. The Department for Execution of Sanctions signed a Memorandum of Understandings (MOU) with the United Kingdom and began implementation of a corrections intelligence unit focusing on the identification and prevention of terrorism threats and criminal activity in prison facilities.

Current state of affairs

- **Continuity of the strategic planning process**. The new Strategy follows up on the process of implementation and lessons learnt from the 2018 – 2022 Strategy for CVE.

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[22] [https://vlada.mk/sites/default/files/dokumenti/strategii/eng_national_cve_strategy_2023-2027.pdf](#) p. 6
[23] [https://rm.coe.int/national-strategy-penitentiary-north-macedonia-eng/1680a4618c](#)
[24] [https://www.state.gov/reports/country-reports-on-terrorism-2022](#) / [https://www.state.gov/reports/country-reports-on-terrorism-2021/north-macedonia](#)
[25] [https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2023-11/SWD_2023_693%20North%20Macedonia%20report.pdf](#)

- **The National Committee for Countering Violent Extremism and Counter-Terrorism** strengthened its capacities and actively participates in policymaking in the field of preventing violent extremism.
- Nine **Local Multidisciplinary Teams** - LMTs, involved in working with FTFs and their family members were established at the local level, as well as six (6) Community Action Teams - CATs that designed their Action Plan.
- **Community Action Teams (CAT)** on CVE have been established in several municipalities including: Chair, Kichevo and Gostivar. The role of the CAT involves typical prevention programming designed to build community resilience and social cohesion to resist the appeal of radicalisation that can lead to violent extremism.
- Eight municipalities in North Macedonia are members of the **Strong Cities Network**.
- The U.S.-funded Women without Borders' **Mother Schools program** continued teaching mothers in identified municipalities how to recognise and respond to early warning signs of radicalisation and extremism in their children and their communities.
- **Community Working Groups (CWGs)** have been formed in the municipalities of Kumanovo, Veles, Gazi-Baba and Tetovo. One of their roles is to implement educational activities and to promote critical thinking, nonviolent opposition and protest, exchange information and organise events, public discussions, debates that raise awareness and community resilience to radicalisation[26]
- **Local Prevention Councils (LPC)** represent a key tool in the chain of mechanisms for effective management of local communal, security and other daily problems and challenges, but also a tool for effective democratic policing. Its key features are the focus on preventive activities and the basis of a multi-perspective approach involving all local actors. The successfully established LPC system has great potential for increasing citizens' trust in the local government and the police.[27]

Where **LPCs** are concerned, the roundtables made clear that these mechanisms have the potential to serve as a municipality-led tool for ensuring that all stakeholders are included in discussing issues of public safety. However, the absence of a **legal requirement** for all municipalities to establish LPCs, in addition to other challenges for multi-agency cooperation, has prevented the establishment and continued function of such a body in all of the municipalities in which the roundtables were held.[28]

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[26] The mechanism is developed by Civil centre for freedom within the project 'Communities against violent extremism', financed by the Embassy of USA.

[27] https://eurothink.mk/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Local-preventio-council-for-enhanced-local-collaboration.pdf

[28] https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/e/5/467109.pdf p.27

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Geographic Scope

North Macedonia, with its complex ethnic and religious landscape, is also susceptible to the influence of external factors and regional tensions. The country's proximity to Kosovo and Serbia, which have experienced conflicts in the past, raises concerns about the potential for spillover effects of extremism and radicalisation.

To ensure full and effective coordination with and between these different stakeholders, GCERF's model calls for a range of representatives working in the PVE space to form a Country Support Mechanism (CSM) as a precursor to the design and implementation of grants. The CSM supports funding decisions for grants made through GCERF's Core Funding Mechanism, typically for a period of three years. CSMs play an essential role in both grant development and grant management, from the call for Expressions of Interest in a country, to the

validation of grantee Principal Recipients and sub-grantees, to input and agreement on GCERF's investment strategy, and subsequent facilitation and support to implementing partners during the active grant phase.[29]

Demographic focus

Target beneficiaries:
GCERF aims to build the capacity and connect all relevant P/CVE and R&R actors. Initiatives will focus on working with:

- Relevant national/local institutions and frontline workers as identified in NMK Strategy on P/CVE and R&R.
- Local and community based CSOs across the country that currently or plan to work in P/CVE and R&R.
- Children and youth, including returnees.
- Returnees and their family members or legal guardians.

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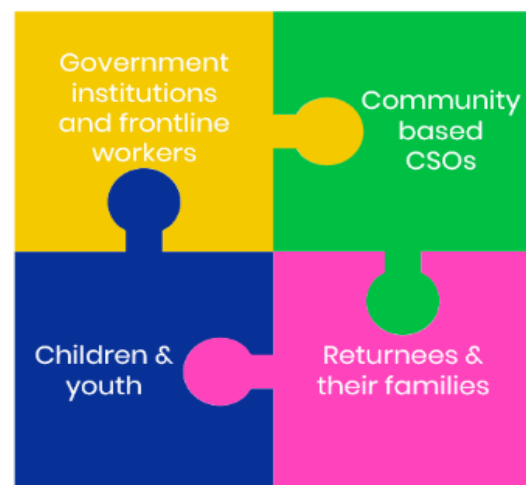
[29] https://www.gcerf.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Annual-Report-2022_English.pdf p.49

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North Macedonia - Targeted Municipalities/Communities – Desk Research

Municipality	Local Characteristics	Location
Chair (City of Skopje)	• At least three mosques outside of the jurisdiction of the Islamic Religious Community (IRC). • Inter-ethnic and inter-confessional with Albanian Muslims dominating. • The stronghold of one of the most notorious football fans (Shverceri) in the country **Response:** • Strengthen community engagement and tolerance-building programs. • Improve coordination with religious communities to monitor mosques. • Implement counter-radicalisation efforts within football fan groups.	Located in Skopje
Gazi Baba (City of Skopje)	• Gazi Baba is the urban slum of Skopje and Chair, facing problems both in terms of religious and right-wing radicalisation. • Ethnically and religiously mixed, with ethnic Albanians dominating demographically. • At least one mosque out of IRC's jurisdiction. **Response:** • Implement awareness campaigns on the dangers of radicalisation. • Foster inter-ethnic and inter-religious dialogue.	Located in Skopje
Gostivar	• Ethnically mixed municipality consisted of Albanians, Macedonians, and Turks; • Multi-confessional with good track record of inter-ethnic relations. • Still, several confirmed cases of radicalisation leading to VE have been confirmed, as well as FTFs. **Response:** • Enhance educational programs promoting inter-ethnic understanding. • Collaborate with local leaders and organisations to counter radical narratives.	70 km from Skopje
Kumanovo	• Ethnically mixed municipality with history of tensions among high school students; • Populated mainly by Macedonians, Albanians, Serbs, and Roma, with Macedonians being the largest ethnic group; • Site of violent clash between police and armed Albanians in 2015; • Multi-confessional with ethnically segregated schools. **Response:** • Implement programs to reduce tensions among high-school students. • Promote inter-ethnic cooperation in schools and communities.	30 km from Skopje
Shtip	• One of the most politically polarised municipalities due to its history of producing influential political leaders both on the Left and the Right of the political spectrum; • Hosts Macedonian Patriotic Organizations (MPOs); • Roma and Turkish minorities present.	100 km from Skopje

	Response: • Facilitate dialogue between political factions to reduce polarisation. • Monitor and address activities of Macedonian Patriotic Organizations. • Implement programs promoting minority rights and inclusion.	
Struga	• Multi-ethnic and multi-confessional municipality mainly consisting of Macedonians, Albanians, and Torbesh (Macedonian Muslims); • Track record of ethnic nationalist outbursts, inter-religious quarrels in the villages, as well as high school segregation. **Response:** • Implement initiatives to reduce ethnic nationalist outbursts. • Address inter-religious quarrels in villages and promote dialogue. • Develop programs to reduce school segregation.	170 km from Skopje
Strumica	• Politically polarised municipality in the country; • Has several registered Macedonian Patriotic Organizations, but also significant political polarisation among the Macedonians; The Roma and the Turkish communities are present minorities. **Response:** • Address political polarisation through inclusive governance. • Monitor and counter activities of Macedonian Patriotic Organizations. • Promote inter-ethnic and inter-religious understanding.	170 km from Skopje
Tetovo	• Ethnically-mixed municipality which was the most exposed to the 2001 violent conflict; • Albanians are the majority, with Macedonians, Roma, and Turks following; • Home of the notorious Ballisti, fans of FC Shkendija from Tetovo, and the Vojvodi, fans supporting FC Ljuboten; • These two groups have a history of clashes. **Response:** • Strengthen inter-ethnic and inter-religious dialogue initiatives. • Organising and educating the local police in the community to prevent clashes between football fan groups. • Local authorities awareness raising aimed at preventing of regional separatist ideologies and objectives manifestation at political and ethnic meetings/events	40 km from Skopje
Veles	• Veles is located in central Macedonia and it is known for hosting Macedonian Patriotic Organizations propagating right-wing extremism; • Some members are currently imprisoned following the April 27, 2017 violence in Parliament. **Response:** • Monitor and counter the activities of Macedonian Patriotic Organizations. • Promote inclusive governance and minority rights. • Enhance community policing to prevent right-wing extremism.	40 km from Skopje

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Gender and Intersectionality

The recently devised investment strategy and programming in North Macedonia reflects a dedicated commitment to a thorough and inclusive approach, placing a central focus on gender and intersectionality considerations. Acknowledging the varied needs and vulnerabilities of individuals, the strategy underscores the importance of gender-sensitive and intersectional programming. This commitment comes to life through tailored initiatives addressing the distinctive challenges encountered by women, youth, and marginalised groups in the spheres of preventing and countering violent extremism, as well as rehabilitation efforts. The preventive model must recognise the different needs, interest and the different experiences by men and women, and boys and girls.[30]

Theory of Change

All grants funded under this strategy will be aligned with the Country-Level Theory of Change (ToC), which allows GCERF to evaluate the cumulative effect of its programming. All proposed grantee programming should be able to be reflected in the ToC and should use a selection of the country-level indicators included below.

Problem statements: Central and local institutions lack the resources and capacity to fully decentralise the rehabilitation and reintegration processes in a sustainable matter, to continuously address the systematic drivers of radicalisation to violent extremism in society.

Response:
- IF GCERF works closely with National/local institutions, frontline workers, Local and community based CSOs and build their capacities. This involves providing training and resources to empower local stakeholders, ensuring they are well-equipped to address and prevent radicalisation and violent extremism independently.
- IF GCERF commitment to sustainability in the North Macedonian context involves actively working towards enabling in country stakeholders. This includes fostering partnerships, supporting local initiatives, and developing strategies that ensure the longevity and effectiveness of the interventions beyond the immediate project timeline.
- IF GCERF's sustainability plan actively supports linkage and inclusivity among governance actors, CSOs, and community-based mechanisms. This involves establishing and strengthening connections between these entities, ensuring a collaborative and integrated approach to P/CVE.

AND the following assumptions hold true:
- Decentralisation of R&R responses is critical in addressing radicalisation to VE and polarisation.

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[30] OSCE and ODIHR, "Recommendations and Findings: Gender Mainstreaming in Operational Responses to VERLT," 22–23 November 2016.

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- Greater integration and implementation of local prevention councils (LPCs) leads to efficient and sustainable responses on R&R, RWE, and PVE.

THEN,
- Government institutions, community-based mechanisms, and CSOs will have the tools and capacity to continue addressing R&R and various forms of extremism with reduced international support.
- Local ownership and coordination between the national and local levels will be strengthened, and joint responses will continue to be implemented.

<u>This overarching Theory of Change will lead to the following:</u>

Programmatic Outcome:

- Institutional capacities on early intervention and prevention of various forms of violent extremism are strengthened, improved mechanisms for early identification of radicalisation signs are established, fostering collaboration among institutions, communities, and individuals in a shared commitment to preventing violent extremism.

- The public has increased awareness on various forms of violent extremism, including far-right extremism and ethno-nationalism, community members build strengthened resilience to radicalisation, have the knowledge and the tools to reject extremism ideas, promote peace and inclusivity.

- Central and local PVE structures, including Local Prevention Councils, have sufficient knowledge and capacity to implement effective P/CVE initiatives within communities.

- R&R programmes are decentralised, returnees and their families/caregivers receive professional support on rehabilitation and reintegration into the community, frontline professionals in the social protection, mental health and case management fields involved in the R&R process are capacitated to deliver systematic quality services.

- Community-based organisations who work on prevention and R&R are able to sustain their operation, strengthen partnerships with local and regional organisations, and are capable of mobilising resources, locate additional funding mechanism, and implement community-driven initiatives that enhance local ownership and sustainability.

Outcome Indicators/Metrics
1. % of institutional actors who are working actively on prevention of various forms of violent extremism

2. % of community members who finds justified the usage of violence to achieve societal goals

3. % of municipalities that have a functional local prevention structure for identifying and referring individuals at risk of radicalisation or those in need of support services

4. % of the first responders and frontline workers who can deliver quality R&R services and preventive work with at-risk individuals

5. % of returnees, their families, caregivers who improved psycho-social wellbeing

6. % of programme indicators on sustainability that achieved their target

Output Indicators/Metrics
1. # of institutional actors trained on early intervention and prevention of various forms of violent extremism
2. # of people reached through awareness raising, community engagement events focusing on resilience-building, peace promotion and counter-extremism narratives
3. # of Local Prevention Councils established/# of Local Prevention Councils members are trained and engaged
4. # of the first responders and frontline workers trained on delivering quality R&R services and prevention works
5. # of returnees and family members supported
6. # of community-based organisations supported to conduct PVE work

These SMART indicators provide specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound criteria for evaluating the success of the programmatic outcome. Grantees will be required to select and report on these indicators in their programs and results frameworks, facilitating effective monitoring and evaluation of the achievement of goals during and after the grant-making process.

Priority Programming Areas

GCERF programming on R&R efforts target the support of foreign terrorist fighters and their families, providing psychological counselling, vocational training, and comprehensive assistance. The strategy underscores the importance of robust enforcement through improved cooperation among institutions with established reporting and referral mechanisms and transparent response measures towards all forms of extremism to minimise the consequences of radicalisation.

1. Strengthened Institutional Capacities and Early Intervention for Prevention

Key Actions:

- Conduct a thorough analysis of needs assessment, emphasising factors contributing to radicalisation within the national context, differentiating from regional and international influences.
- Work hand in hand with different target groups to prevent different forms of extremism which are evident in the country, such as the religious based extremism, ethnic-driven extremism, and far-right extremism.
- Develop and distribute educational materials to various stakeholders, focusing on identifying and addressing early signs of radicalisation.
- Increase cooperation between law enforcement agencies and communities to address extremist threats.

Outcomes:

- Institutional capacities are strengthened on early intervention and prevention of various forms of extremism, improved mechanisms for early identification of radicalisation signs are established, fostering collaboration among institutions, communities, and individuals in a shared commitment to preventing violent extremism.

2. Increase Public Awareness on Radicalisation Prevention, Far-Right Extremism and Ethno-Nationalism

Key Actions:

- Facilitate confidence-building dialogues within communities and other community-based interventions, aiming to reduce the impacts that can lead to radicalisation to violence and violent extremism, promote tolerance and inclusivity.
- Facilitate dialogue sessions between different ethnic and cultural groups.
- Develop targeted awareness campaigns to counteract extremist narratives.
- Provide training for educators on recognising and addressing far-right extremism and ethno-nationalism in educational settings.
- Monitor and analyse online platforms for far-right extremist content ethno- nationalism.
- Collaborate with the National Committee, relevant government institutions, and local authorities to develop a comprehensive action plan for countering far-right extremism and ethno-nationalism. This plan should include specific goals, objectives, and activities, as well as clearly defined roles and responsibilities for each stakeholder.
- Facilitate peer-to-peer learning and exchange of best practices. Encourage and support exchange programs and workshops between different regions and municipalities in North Macedonia to learn from each other's experiences and share effective practices for countering FRE and ethno-nationalism.

- Develop indicators and mechanisms to track progress and measure the effectiveness of interventions against far-right extremism and ethno-nationalism.
- Create spaces for young people to participate in constructive activities and dialogue, promoting social cohesion and belonging.
- Address the root causes of FRE, identify the underlying factors that contribute to the rise of far-right ideologies, such as economic inequality, social exclusion, and lack of access to opportunities.

Outcomes:

- Public has increased awareness on various forms of extremism, including far-right extremism and ethno-nationalism, community members build strengthened resilience to radicalisation, have the knowledge and the tools to reject extremism ideas, promote peace and inclusivity.

3. Community Resilience and Empowerment Initiatives - Comprehensive Protection

Key Actions:

Establishing and Strengthening Local Prevention Councils (LPCs):

- Strengthen the capacities of Local Prevention Councils to improve the work with communities.
- Provide targeted capacity-building training for LPC members on P/CVE strategies.
- Facilitate regular meetings and knowledge-sharing sessions among LPCs.
- Foster collaboration between LPCs, community leaders, NGOs and stakeholders.
- Support LPCs in developing and implementing tailored prevention programs.
- Advocate for local government financial support and recognition of LPC contributions.

Empowered and Resilient Communities:

- Promote the concept of Local Prevention Councils (LPCs) and ensure continuity and support for the drafting of local strategies for prevention of violent extremism.
- Implement a program for the legal socialisation of youth at the local and national level.
- Provide training for primary and secondary school students on critical thinking, peaceful conflict resolution, non-violent communication, and tolerance through education.

Outcomes:

- Central and local PVE structures, including Local Prevention Councils, have sufficient knowledge and capacity to implement effective P/CVE initiatives within communities.

4. Response and Rehabilitation and Reintegration (R&R)

Key Actions:

- Promote the R&R programs in the local self-government units.
- Develop and implement programs, including training of trainers and workshops for teaching staff in pre-school, primary, and secondary education, to enable early recognition of radicalisation signs.
- Analyse possibilities for involving religious communities in the rehabilitation and re-socialisation process.
- Execute the program for the treatment of convicted persons, integrating both psychological and rehabilitative measures.
- Train professionals in correctional facilities, fostering awareness and preventive measures.
- Implementation of the RRR programmes for returnees from foreign armies and their families, with a focus on social protection and security.

Outcomes:

- R&R programmes are decentralised, returnees and their families/caregivers receive professional support on rehabilitation and reintegration into the community, frontline professionals in the social protection, mental health and case management fields involved in the R&R process are capacitated to deliver systematic quality services.

5. Countering violent right-wing extremism:

Key Actions:

- Analysis of the prevalence and drivers of far-right extremism and ethno-nationalism.
- Develop targeted awareness campaigns to counteract extremist narratives.
- Implement community-based interventions to promote tolerance and inclusivity.
- Facilitate dialogue sessions between different ethnic and cultural groups.
- Increase cooperation between law enforcement agencies and communities to address extremist threats.
- Provide training for educators on recognising and addressing far-right extremism and ethno nationalism in educational settings.
- Monitor and analyse online platforms for far-right extremist content ethno nationalism.
- Collaborate with the National Committee, relevant government institutions, and local authorities to develop a comprehensive action plan for countering far-right extremism and ethno-nationalism. This plan should include specific goals, objectives, and activities, as well as clearly defined roles and responsibilities for each stakeholder.
- Facilitate peer-to-peer learning and exchange of best practices. Encourage and support exchange programs and workshops between different regions and municipalities in North

Macedonia to learn from each other's experiences and share effective strategies for countering FRE and ethno-nationalism.

- Develop indicators and mechanisms to track progress and measure the effectiveness of interventions against far-right extremism and ethno-nationalism.
- Create spaces for young people to participate in constructive activities and dialogue, promoting social cohesion and belonging.
- Address the root causes of FRE, identify the underlying factors that contribute to the rise of far-right ideologies, such as economic inequality, social exclusion, and lack of access to opportunities.

Outcomes:

The implementation of key actions is anticipated to yield multifaceted outcomes in the efforts to counter far-right extremism and ethno-nationalism in North Macedonia. This comprehensive approach aims to achieve heightened awareness and understanding within communities, fostering inclusivity and reducing the appeal of extremist ideologies. Dialogue sessions and community-based interventions seek to build trust and social cohesion among diverse ethnic and cultural groups. Enhanced cooperation between law enforcement and communities is expected to result in more effective prevention. The provision of training for educators, engagement with influential community leaders, and the establishment of reporting mechanisms. The collaborative development of a national action plan and coordination mechanisms ensures a well-defined strategy with specific goals and roles, while ongoing evaluation and adaptation of strategies aim to track progress and measure effectiveness.

6. Sustainability and Local Empowerment:

Key Actions:

- Improve the grantees' capacities in P/CVE programmes and resource mobilisation strategies, to ensure the continuation of programs after the exit strategy of GCERF.
- Implement financial literacy programs for local organisations, contextualising content to the specific economic landscape of North Macedonia and providing practical guidance for managing funds efficiently.
- Conduct regular assessments of local program impact and effectiveness, involving local stakeholders.
- Establish a community-driven grant system for small-scale projects, involving local communities in the decision-making process and tailoring the system to the specific needs and aspirations of North Macedonian communities.
- Collaboratively develop a community-led sustainability plan for programs, engaging local stakeholders in the planning process to ensure that the plan reflects the unique characteristics and aspirations of communities in North Macedonia.

Outcomes:

- Community-based organisations who work on prevention and R&R are able to sustain their operation, strengthen partnerships with local and regional organisations, and are capable of mobilising resources, locate additional funding mechanism, and implement community-driven initiatives that enhance local ownership and sustainability.

Funding and Investment Scenarios

GCERF facilitates community empowerment by backing R&R and LPCs. Moreover, it prioritises response and rehabilitation, collaborating with local stakeholders to implement risk assessment tools and comprehensive programs for individuals at risk. In countering FRE, GCERF supports community-based interventions and fosters cooperation between law enforcement and communities. GCERF is committed to ensuring the sustainability of these efforts by establishing funding mechanisms, building local capacities, and promoting community-driven initiatives.[31]

The GCERF funding and investment scenarios in North Macedonia focus on multifaceted strategies, including prevention, public awareness, protection, response and rehabilitation, re-socialisation of FTFs, community resilience, countering all forms of extremism, gender inclusivity, and financial stability, aligning with a holistic and sustainable vision to counter violent extremism in North Macedonia. To implement these strategic priorities, GCERF is pledging **USD 2,5 million** through 2027. This funding will be channelled through several consortium-led grants, ensuring a collaborative and inclusive approach to addressing the challenges and opportunities in North Macedonia.

GCERF's Transition Strategy

WHAT	A focused transition strategy emphasising the sustainability of R&R efforts while enhancing capacities for future challenges, addressing all forms of extremism, aligned with the GCERF investment strategy in North Macedonia.
HOW	Capacity building at national and local levels, with a particular focus on knowledge transfer. Strategic investment in the support for the establishment of LPCs and strengthening Local Multidisciplinary Teams (LMTs) for service delivery in line with R&R and P/CVE objectives.
Eligibility	North Macedonia remains eligible for GCERF funding, responding to evolving needs and feasibility.

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[31] 2023 Q2 Western Balkans consolidated report. See annexes.

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Value-Add and Complementarity	The strategy is crafted in coordination with relevant stakeholders, ensuring complementarity with existing PVE initiatives supported by national and donor entities.
Grantee Performance	Grantee performance assessments indicate that current partners in the country demonstrate medium to high capacity.[32] However, additional operational and thematic support is required for local organisations.
Government Support	Effective coordination with relevant government entities, such as the National Comity for P/CVE, is maintained.
Outcomes/Impact	Previous GCERF-funded programs have primarily focused on R&R efforts. While objectives have been achieved, the strategy acknowledges the need to localise support for returnees and enhance P/CVE capacities to address urgent crises related to all forms of extremism, including FRE and Ethno-nationalism.
Policy Development	While national-level policy development in PVE has occurred, sustained investment is required for progress at the local community level. GCERF-funded projects will align with the government's strategy, building capacity at the municipal level. LMTs need further regulation, and facilitation by GCERF grantees necessitates efforts to develop their sustainability concept.[33]
Gender	A thoughtful gender-sensitive approach is crucial for R&R and P/CVE programs in North Macedonia. Understanding the role of gender in recruitment strategies and internal operations of extremist groups is essential. Efforts will be made to actively involve women in narratives and discussions, customising programs to address gendered experiences.

The GCERF comprehensive investment scenarios cover: **Rehabilitation and Reintegration (R&R)**, **Prevention of Violent Extremism (PVE)**, **Countering Violent Extremism (CVE)**, **Strengthening capacities of Local Prevention Councils (LPCs)**, and the transition phase towards countering **far-right extremism and ethno-nationalism**, including the establishment of local **financial sustainability** through a **legal framework**.

Targeted Areas of Impact

- **National Level:** GCERF's efforts aim to improve coordination among governmental and non-governmental organisations involved in PCVE and R&R initiatives.
- **Municipal Level:** The organisation's programming seeks to strengthen the PCVE and R&R capacities of Local Multidisciplinary Teams responsible for the reintegration of returnees.

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[32] The TPM's main recommendations. See annexes.
[33] (CMC) TPM Report for GCERF 2023. See annexes.

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- **Community Level:** GCERF's initiatives focus on fostering inter-ethnic tolerance among youth, reducing the stigma associated with returnees, and improving local media coverage of PCVE and R&R.
- **Individual Level:** The organisation provides tailored R&R support to returnees, offers livelihood support to returnees and vulnerable groups, and strengthens the capacity of parents through pedagogical skills training.

Challenges

While North Macedonia's comprehensive approach to addressing radicalisation and violent extremism is creditable, several challenges still persisting.

- The intricate nature of **online radicalisation** poses a continuous challenge, demanding adaptive strategies to address emerging threats
- **Countering far-right extremism and ethno-nationalism** requires a nuanced understanding of local dynamics and historical factors.
- **Building and sustaining community engagement** initiatives face obstacles such as socio-economic disparities and varying levels of civic participation, necessitating tailored approaches to ensure inclusivity.
- The **effective implementation** of response and rehabilitation programs requires coordination among diverse stakeholders, including religious communities, demanding a multi-faceted and inclusive approach.
- Ensuring **long-term sustainability** hinges on navigating financial constraints and fostering genuine local ownership, underscoring the need for innovative funding solutions and community-driven initiatives.

Monitoring and evaluation

GCERF recognises that effective M&E is challenging given the complexity of programming towards P/CVE. GCERF PRs (Principal Recipients) in North Macedonia have developed strong M&E systems throughout the previous rounds of funding and aim to pass this on to their SRs (Sub Recipients). GCERF provides guidelines, virtual support throughout the grant development and management, as well as in-country visits by the Country Manager, Regional Advisor and GCERF Secretariat.

The core elements that GCERF supports its PRs with are developing:

1. Theory of Change in line with GCERF's Strategy for Investment.
2. Results Framework, including Outcome and Output design and indicator target estimation.
3. Data collection and analysis plans to produce RF indicator values.
4. Research design for the Outcome indicators to support the claims of projects.
5. Data Quality Assurance (DQA) to ensure project/grant indicator values are reliable and valid.

The GCERF Performance & Impact Unit works closely with the GCERF Portfolio Management and Finance Units to develop these five elements in prospective grant recipients' concept papers and subsequent grant proposals. The implementation timeline is - January 2024 to February 2027.

ANNEX 1: Current and Past Programming in North Macedonia

GCERF's current programming in North Macedonia focuses on enhancing the capacity of governmental and NGOs involved in P/CVE and R&R efforts. Additionally, the organisation aims to raise awareness about PCVE and R&R, particularly regarding the reintegration of returnees, and reduce any stigma associated with them.

Key Initiatives:

- **Macedonian Centre for International Cooperation (MCIC):** This project, implemented in collaboration with four sub-recipients, aims to strengthen the capacity of stakeholders involved in R&R efforts, specifically targeting returnees. It also seeks to enhance coordination among these stakeholders and promote awareness about PCVE and R&R.
- **Macedonian Young Lawyers Association (MYLA):** This initiative, involving three sub-recipients, focuses on building the capacities of local institutions to effectively address R&R challenges. It also aims to strengthen the resilience of children, youth, and parents in the context of PCVE, while reducing stigma and promoting acceptance of returnees[34].

ANNEX 2: GCERF's new Investment Strategy in North Macedonia

The program adopts a holistic approach, focusing on prevention, protection, enforcement, response, and rehabilitation in addressing radicalisation and violent extremism in North Macedonia. The new investment strategy encompasses a multifaceted approach to strengthen North Macedonia's resilience against violent extremism. Key areas include enhancing institutional capacities through targeted training, preventing online radicalisation with a focus on media literacy and counter-narratives, and empowering communities through local prevention councils. The plan also prioritises response and rehabilitation, employing risk assessment tools and comprehensive programs for individuals at risk. Additionally, efforts are directed towards countering far-right extremism, fostering community-based interventions, and promoting cooperation between law enforcement and communities. The strategy underscores sustainability by establishing funding mechanisms, building local capacities, and ensuring community-driven initiatives, collectively contributing to a comprehensive and enduring framework for peace and security in North Macedonia.

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[34] 2023 Q2 Western Balkans consolidated report. See annexes.

Investment Strategies for North Macedonia

Initiative	Focus Areas	Investment Strategies	Outcome Expectations
Integrated R&R and PVE Initiatives with Referral Mechanism	-Strengthen R&R programs for returnees and families. -Implement community-based PVE initiatives. -Establish robust referral mechanism.	-Fund comprehensive R&R programs. -Support community-driven PVE projects. -Develop referral mechanism.	-Successful reintegration of returnees. -Reduced radicalisation through community-based PVE and referrals.
Establishment and Strengthening of Local Prevention Councils (LPCs) with Enhanced Referral Protocols	-Establish diverse and representative LPCs. -Enhance LPC capacity to address local drivers of radicalisation. -Improve referral protocols within LPCs.	-Train and resource LPC members, including referral procedures. -Establish communication channels between LPCs and national entities. -Encourage community-driven initiatives through LPCs with emphasis on referrals.	-Active and empowered LPCs contributing to localised PVE efforts. -Improved coordination with streamlined referral processes.
Transition Phase towards Countering Far-Right Extremism and Ethno-Nationalism with Enhanced Referral Mechanism	-Adapt PVE/CVE strategies to address far-right extremism. -Develop educational programs promoting tolerance and inclusivity. -Mitigate youth polarisation through targeted interventions with responsive referrals.	-Fund research and assessments on far-right extremism drivers. -Implement awareness campaigns and educational initiatives. -Enhance referral mechanism to address specific needs.	-Adapted strategies effectively countering far-right extremism. -Reduced ethno-nationalism with improved referral pathways for specialised support.
Establishing Local Financial Sustainability through Legal Framework with Referral Integration	-Develop legal framework for sustainable local funding. -Implement financial literacy programs for local organisations.	-Collaborate with experts to develop and implement a sustainable funding mechanism. -Fund financial literacy programs targeting local organisations, with	-Established legal frameworks enabling sustainable funding. -Enhanced financial management skills among local organisations, with

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	-Create mentorship program connecting experienced organizations with local initiatives, incorporating referral pathways.	integrated referral pathways. -Facilitate mentorship programs to transfer knowledge on financial management and responsive referrals.	streamlined referral mechanisms.

This adapted transition strategy aims to ensure the sustainability of GCERF-funded efforts in North Macedonia and strengthen the country's resilience against extremism.

ANNEX 3: Overview of other P/CVE and R&R related projects in North Macedonia

Donor/implementing partner	Programme title/description	End date
Netherlands – North Macedonia Counter-terrorism Platform 2	The project aims to strengthen prevention, investigation and prosecution capacity of responsible actors in North Macedonia for cases of violent extremism and terrorism through targeted advanced training and peer to peer exchanges between professionals from North Macedonia and the Netherlands. 1). strengthening the prosecution in dealing with cases concerning terrorism and violent extremism; 2). strengthening the department of counterterrorism within the Ministry of the Interior in dealing with cases concerning terrorism and violent extremism; 3). providing insights on the Dutch model for a local approach in dealing with preventing violent extremism (PVE). **IP:** Center for International Legal Cooperation CILC **B:** Office of the National Coordinator for CVE/CT, Public Prosecution, MoI, NSA	01.09.2023 – 31.08.2024
Stability Funds: Western Balkans Anti-Disinformation Hub – Exposing Malign Influences through Watchdog Journalism	**Exposing Malign Influences through Watchdog Journalism** The project will debunk the chief propaganda claims that deny the existence or minimise the importance of foreign malign influences i.e. disinformation originating from external actors in WB, providing evidence about the actual situation on the ground in the form of long-lasting public record, creating a data-driven early warning infrastructure for disinformation threats and potential harm. **IP:** Metamorphosis Foundation **B:** civil society organisations, policymakers, journalists, citizens in WB6	1 November 2021 – 30 April 2025

Netherlands – North Macedonia: Building capacities of frontline workers for return, R&R	**Building capacities of frontline workers for return, reintegration and rehabilitation** The project aims to support RRR of children returnees by creating a conducive environment through improving the adequate knowledge of front line workers (FLW). The project aims to increase capacity, competence and confidence of FLW for the reintegration programs in local level, support a tool to improve the flow of information between FLW and affected government and local institutions and facilitate the development of individual educational plans for children. **IP:** Pleiades – organisation for active healthy development	01.08.2023 – 31.07.2024
Women without Borders, funded by the U.S. Department Mother Schools IV 2023-presen	**Mother Schools'** sustained engagement in North Macedonia continues to equip mothers with the competence and confidence to translate their unique potential into action and safeguard their children from extremism in their communities **IP:** Mother Schools, implemented in cooperation with local implementing partner Pleiades.	2023-2026
EU Delegation to North Macedonia	Youth Civic Education CSO Platform for Countering Radicalization (Youth Counter)	01.01.2021-31.12.2023
European Commission Hedayah	Understanding the impact and value of P/CVE interventions implemented in school setting in North Macedonia	01.01.2024-30.06.2024
Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of North Macedonia	Active involvement and influence of civil society, state and non-state actors in P/CVE in North Macedonia	January 2024 – December 2024
British Embassy Skopje	Strengthening the resilience of the local communities to violent extremism in North Macedonia	Phase II - 2023

Annex 4: GCERF's Investment Strategy for the Western Balkans (2019).

Annex 5: GCERF's updated Investment Strategy for the Western Balkans (2021).

Annex 6: Risk assessment for the North Macedonia GCERF Strategy for Investment 2024-2027.

Annex 7: Inception Report Conflict Management Consulting (CMC) – North Macedonia.

Annex 8: Third Party Monitoring Report in North Macedonia – Conflict Management Consulting (CMC).

Annex 9: GCERF Western Balkans Consolidated Report, quarter two 2023.

Annex 10: Preliminary Conclusions and Recommendations Thematic Visit to Germany and North Macedonia on the repatriation, return, reintegration and prosecution of persons returning from conflict zones where designated terrorist groups are active (2023).

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