



CIVIL SOCIETY IN PREVENTING AND COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN KOSOVO



This project is funded by
the European Union



This publication was produced with the financial support of the European Union. Its contents are the sole responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.

Published by: Partners Center for Conflict Management

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- Mapping Report -

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FOREWORD

Civil society organizations (CSO) in the Western Balkans have been increasingly encouraged to engage in prevention and countering of violent extremism (P/CVE) focusing primarily on countering radicalization leading to violence, but also on broader issues related to promoting tolerance, preventing hate speech, reconciliation, and civic education. A key barrier to effective programming on P/CVE within the Western Balkans remains the lack of understanding of existing local community actors that have the capacity and credibility to deliver P/CVE programming at a grass-roots level.

Therefore, a consortium made of six CSOs from the Western Balkans (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo¹, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia) has simultaneously conducted a mapping of the range of stakeholders relevant for implementing P/CVE actions. This publication contains research findings on identified CSOs, faith based organisations (FBOs) and formal and informal local community groups (LCGs), working in the field of P/CVE in Kosovo and provides understanding of quality and potentials of their relations with key local, national, and regional stakeholders from public, civic and business sector. The mapping has been done using a single robust mapping methodology deployed by each partner.

The report was drafted by a local NGO in Kosovo “Center for Advanced Studies FIT”, Anil Gashi Researcher on mapping of CSOs in the field of P/CVE in Kosovo. Currently in Kosovo, regarding the P / CVE activities, governmental institutions (Kosovo Police and other security agencies) have expressed readiness to cooperate with all relevant stakeholders in this field as well as with CSO’s in Kosovo, which are contributing greatly through implementation of a number of the projects in this field in Kosovo, and in the region. Strengthen of youth programs for prevention against radicalization and violent extremism at local communities, Reintegration of returnees’ women and children Strengthen of rehabilitation programs (including design of vocational educational programs) for convicts during and after their release from prison promoting inter-sectoral cooperation with the aim of involving the private sector in supporting and integrating returnees at the local level.

The activity is part of the regional project “Communities First: Creation of Civil Society Hub to Prevent and Counter Violent Extremism—from prevention to reintegration” implemented by Center for Legal Civic Initiatives (Albania), Hope and Homes for Children (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Partners Kosova - Center for Conflict Management (Kosovo), Forum MNE (Montenegro), Center for Common Ground (Macedonia), and Cultural Center DamaD (Serbia) and financially supported by the European Union through Civil Society Facility and Media Programme 2016-2017, Consolidating Regional Thematic Networks of Civil Society Organizations.

¹ This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244(1999) and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

1.0. Overview of Violent Extremism Threat in Kosovo

After its liberation in 1999, Kosovo became the ideal place to finance initiatives whose goal was to spread radical ideology to various target groups within the Kosovar society - with a specific focus on youth. Prior to the liberation, Kosovo's religiosity was suppressed from the Serbian oppression². However, a population with the lack of proper institutions and with a population of 95% Muslims, Kosovo is the right place to promote the primacy of religious identity. The funding for the spread of radical ideology has not been made in a single direction, thus, it was spread into many paths.

The threat of violent extremism was a taboo in Kosovo for a long time. As a matter of fact, whoever took the courage to talk about this topic and raise this issue was immediately declared as a "traitor" or as an "emissary of the enemy". However, during the time that Kosovo was seen as one of the countries with the highest level of religious tolerance, the extremism groups were actively working on their agenda. The weak work of the international community (that was in charge for Kosovo) and the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government in the prevention of the spread of radicalism, led Kosovo to become the country that has the highest number of foreign fighters per capita in Europe who have joined ISIS, al-Qaeda affiliated organisations, and other radical groups in Syria³. Approximately 403 Kosovo citizens have travelled to Syria and Iraq to fight for or join ISIS or al-Nusrah Front, of which approximately 74 are deceased⁴.

The conflict in Syria awakened the sleeping consciousness of the institutions and the society in Kosovo. Suddenly everyone started to think that there may be a possibility that attacks may also happen in Kosovo. In 2015, a video was released in YouTube from an Albanian from Macedonia who had joined ISIS, stating that: "Black days are coming to you... You will fear to walk in the streets. You will fear working in your offices... We will put fear in you and terrorize you even in your dreams when you are asleep... this will happen very soon". Not a year had passed, when in the summer of 2016, more than forty people got injured during the Beer Fest event as participants panicked and stampeded when someone shouted "ISIS" and fired a fake gun⁵. Since then, a common understanding is that violent extremism is a threat to Kosovo. According to Kosovo Security Barometer, around 75% of the respondents consider that violent extremism is a threat for Kosovo's society. However, only 25% believe that religious based extremism is a threat⁶.

2 Phillips, D. L. (2017, February 22). Violent Extremism in the Western Balkans: External Influences and Local Drivers.

3 Kursani, S. (2015). Report inquiring into the causes and consequences of Kosovo citizens' involvement as foreign fighters in Iraq and Syria. Pristina, Kosovo: Kosovo Center for Security Studies.

4 U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Counterterrorism and Countering Violent Extremism. (2018). Country Reports on Terrorism 2017.

5 Polden, J. (2016). Forty people are injured as drinkers panic and stampede at a beer festival when someone shouts 'ISIS' and fires a fake gun.

6 Kelmendi, V. (2018). Kosovo Security Barometer Special Edition: Citizens Perception and Community Response on Returned Foreign Fighters (Rep. No. 05/2018). Pristina, Kosovo: Kosovo Center for Security Studies.

Based on the information gathered from various stakeholders in the P/CVE field, with a majority of them being Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), it can be assessed that there is a general opinion that Kosovo is threatened from violent extremism. According to the responses of the interviewees, the biggest threat comes from the religiously-based violent extremism. From the 403 Kosovars who have joined terrorist organizations, some 133 of these individuals have returned⁷. A significant number of them are sentenced or are awaiting trial while in jail. In addition to the returned foreign fighters, there are also imams who have been sentenced for spreading radical ideology. While in prison, there is genuine fear that both groups can further promote violent extremism and radicalization. This has changed the perception of the public that the threat of violent extremism is from abroad, but now there is the fear that prisons are serving as the new place where radical and extreme ideology will be promoted.

It must be emphasized that currently violent extremism and radicalization is not a “hot topic” for the public as it was in the last two to three years, nor does it have the attention that it used to have from the international donors. However, one of our interviewees, who happens to be an imam stated that: “This is the calm before the storm. Each and single day that we lose by not working actively on prevention, radicalized individuals work on promoting the phenomenon”. He added that more work needs to be done from the security institutions in Kosovo. Another interviewee, executive director in one of the organizations that has the biggest budget for prevention of violent extremism stated that: “Even if all the Kosovo NGOs are engaged in the prevention of violent extremism, the financing of radicalism and violent extremism in Kosovo is that big, so it will be impossible for us to stop it. Therefore, it is Kosovo’s Government that first need to efficiently implement the strategy on prevention of violent extremism and radicalisation, and only then we can do a more effective job on prevention. It is impossible to prevent violent extremism with any activity, if someone else is brainwashing the youth, and is also incentivizing them with cash payments”. Such reactions were common from many of our interviewees who believe that the security institutions should do much more, otherwise the work of CSOs will not bring the outcomes that it can. One of the interviewees from Gjilan, one of the cities that is considered a “hotspot” of radicalization, told us that it has been more than one year that he does not enter inside the mosque during the Friday prayers due to the fear that an attack will happen. It should be emphasized that there were organizations that stated that they do not have an opinion if Kosovo is threatened from violent extremism or not since they work only in prevention, and do not want to give any conclusion for something that they are not sure about. However, it can be concluded that based on the responses of our interviewees, the majority of them believe that Kosovo faces an ongoing threat from violent extremism.

⁷ U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Counterterrorism and Countering Violent Extremism. (2018). Country Reports on Terrorism 2017.

2.0. Information gathering

The mapping report is based on primary and secondary data collected by Center for Advanced Studies FIT throughout the period of July to September 2018. During the research phase Center FIT identified the stakeholders needed in order to do the report which includes: civil society organizations, faith based organizations, international donors, government representatives, international bodies, and international organizations.

The list of stakeholders included: twenty-eight (28) CSOs; faith-based organizations (FBOs); the National Coordinator for the Prevention of Violent Extremism and Radicalization (PVER); Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE); U.S. Embassy; British Embassy; United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); International Organization for Migration (IOM); European Union Office in Kosovo; referral mechanism in the Municipality of Gjilan; representatives of Islamic Community of Kosovo (ICK); and one student club within the Rochester Institute of Technology in Kosovo (RIT-K).

Each stakeholder was contacted by Center FIT in order to be informed for the purpose of the mapping assignment. In addition, Center FIT has requested meetings with each stakeholder in order to discuss about their previous and current work in the field, but also to get their perspective on what intervention should be made in the near future. Center for Advanced Studies FIT managed to meet the majority of the targeted stakeholders. However, there were civil society organizations that explained that they work in the field but they are not interested to be profiled as an organization that work on P/CVE; in addition, there were organizations/institutions that did not reply at all to the invitation.

Center FIT continued its work by collecting and analyzing secondary data through various reports related to prevention and countering of violent extremism, including: The Measure of Public Perception regarding the Threats of Violent Extremism in Kosovo; The Push and Pull Factors for Violent Extremism from Kosovars; The Map of the State of Play of Institutional and Community involvement in Countering Violent Extremism in Kosovo; Public Pulse Analysis on Prevention of Violent Extremism in Kosovo etc.

3.0. Areas of CSO engagement

The work of the civil society organizations (CSOs) that Center for Advanced Studies FIT has interviewed may be divided into two categories, and various sub-categories as described below:

- prevention and countering of violent extremism;
 - a) engage youth in decision making processes,
 - b) build creative critical thinking skills,
 - c) engage youth in the information and communications technology (ICT) field,
 - d) entrepreneurship training,
 - e) increase of awareness about the risks of violent extremism and radicalization,
 - f) working directly with parents to raise their awareness about the signs and behavior of their which can indicate radicalization,
 - g) creating sport clubs and provide sport equipment for schools,
 - h) providing small grants for local initiatives, grass-roots organizations, or local NGOs.
- research on violence extremism

3.1. Prevention and countering

As for which area of P/CVE are CSOs most active, and in what regions do they contribute, that is highly determined from the donors themselves, as the CSOs are only implementers of their objectives. The majority of the civil society organizations (CSOs) that Center for Advanced Studies FIT interviewed, which are working in the prevention-focused P/CVE are particularly focused on youth. It should be emphasized that some of the civil society organizations are engaged in more than one specific field of P/CVE.

Engaging youth in decision making processes: Civil society organizations (CSOs) such as Community Building Mitrovica (CBM), Kosovar Youth Council (KYC), and LIZA-R are some of the organizations that are actively working to engage Kosovo youth in the decision making processes. CBM is currently implementing a project funded by Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF) with one of the objectives being to engage individuals from Mitrovica aged 19-24 to draft the Strategy of Municipality of Mitrovica for Youth Development. In addition, the project foresees the engagement of Mitrovica youth in drafting the changes in the school curriculum, which will include materials whose goal is to raise awareness of students for the risks arising from radicalism.

Kosovar Youth Council (KYC) trains student councils in many schools in Kosovo on how to be active citizens and how to participate in decision making processes.

Some of the trainings have been conducted in Advocacy and Lobbying. During trainings, they address the importance of advocacy and lobbying and how through these forms students can raise awareness of their valuable role and make positive changes within their schools. KYC specifically focuses on the process of writing an appeal where each of the students can use this knowledge to write a professional appeal.

LIZA-R is another CSO working in the region of Anamorava in Kosovo for the creation of a new generation of leaders. Their work is primarily concentrated on integrating youth in the decision-making processes starting from the level of school, to local governance, and continuing to the central government.

Building critical thinking skills: Another area in which civil society organizations contribute significantly is the building of skills for critical thinking among Kosovar youth. CSOs such as Partners Kosova, Kosovar Centre for Security Studies (KCSS), S'bunker, Civil Development Organization (CDO), and Center for Advanced Studies FIT are some of the organizations working in this area. This work is divided into two categories: those that work directly in the topic of P/CVE, and those that work indirectly.

On the former, Kosovar Centre for Security Studies, for example, organizes critical thinking debates with high school students whose purpose is to inform young students about the violent extremism phenomenon and highlight their role in preventing the phenomenon. The groups formed by the students discuss different topics related to violent extremism, present their findings to other groups and engage in an interactive debate on the topics. Through such activities KCSS aims to make sure that young students are engaged in platforms of development of critical thinking on various phenomena that they may face in their community⁸. Partners Kosova also works with youth by conducting interactive workshops with secondary schools with the focus to build credible voices skills through trust building in order to influence change of community attitude “staying silent” towards radicalization.

In contrast to the previous two organizations, CSOs like Center for Advanced Studies FIT and Civil Development Organization (CDO) have created “Debate Clubs” within schools, and have trained students on how to debate on the Karl Popper format. The goal of the creation of the clubs and trainings was to build critical thinking skills for youth which would serve as a tool for the prevention of violent extremism; however, all of this work has been done without mentioning the words “violent extremism” at all. In addition, S'bunker has created critical thinking programs where in an interactive way they discuss with youth various interesting topics and make critical analysis.

⁸ Youth in action - critical thinking debate in municipality of obliqi.(n.d.). Kosovo: Kosovo Center for Security Studies

Information and Communications Technology: Civil society organizations such as Open Data Kosovo (ODK) and Community Development Fund (CDF) work on P/CVE projects involving Information and Communications Technology (ICT). Open Data Kosovo (ODK) has implemented the project “Countering Through Technology”. The project contributes to P/CVE among youth in the Municipality of Gjilan by engaging them in ICT workshops, increasing their skill-based employability, improving their capacity for critical thinking and increasing their self-confidence, thus enabling them to better voice their opinions and become active participants in policy making. Such projects, aim to: equip youth with necessary skills and knowledge to contribute to the local community and develop platforms for youth needs; improve youth professional ICT competencies; identify needs and issues that require digital solutions; increase the employability of the students and reduce the likeliness of radicalization.⁹In addition, a GCERF-funded program - Building Resilience for Communities and Individuals in Kosovo (BRICK) – implemented by the Community Development Fund (CDF) and its partners, is providing ICT training to high school students in the Municipality of Kaçanik. Building Resilience for Communities and Individuals in Kosovo is a student development program, based on contemporary framework for the Positive Youth Development.

Entrepreneurship (including social entrepreneurship): It is believed that preparing Kosovo youth to become future entrepreneurs is one of the effective ways for P/CVE. CSOs involved in this area include Forum for Civic Initiatives, which is training the youth of the Municipality of Kaçanik on social entrepreneurship. The Kosovo Center for Business Support (KCBS) is providing similar training to the young people in Prishtina, Gjilan, Ferizaj, Mitrovica and Prizren; and CDF is conducting entrepreneurship training for high schools students in Kaçanik. Although not a recipient of “P/CVE” funding, the Jakova Innovation Center work as a business incubator with the mission to promote and support young entrepreneurs in the construction and development of new companies is contributing to P/CVE in the Municipality of Gjakova.

Engaging with students/awareness raising: A number of CSOs are active in this area. For example, Civic Initiative in Skenderaj and Democracy Plus (D+) discussing with students the risks and consequences that violent extremism will have in youth’s life. Civic Initiative in Skenderaj have engaged a sociologist from Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich to engage high school students in this municipality on the importance of religious tolerance and the risks and consequences of violent extremism. In addition, Democracy Plus (D+) is preparing a manual for youth about the consequences of violent extremism, which will be presented in five municipalities (Prishtina, Gjilan, Ferizaj, Mitrovica, and Prizren).

⁹ Countering Through Technology (n.d.). Open Data Kosovo.

Working with parents: Organizations such as Kosovar Woman Initiative (KWI) works directly with mothers in the Gjakova region, including by helping parents better understand and identify the behaviors of and other signs in their children, which might indicate radicalization to violence. Democracy Plus (D+) is preparing a manual for parents which will guide them on how to protect their children from radicalization and violent extremism.

Civil society organizations are involved in other types of prevention work linked to P/CVE. In most of these cases, they are supported also from international organizations. Such activities include, for example,

- providing small grants for local initiatives, grass-roots organizations, or local NGO that aim the improvement of the community;
- delivering internet safety awareness workshops for students, teachers and parents;
- monitoring and reporting social media groups activities which promote radical ideology;
- creating of educational materials for teachers on how to protect their students from radicalization and violent extremism;
- building the professional capacities and knowledge of the media and journalists in local level on issues related to violent extremism, radicalization and terrorism;
- organizing training for journalists of all Kosovo municipalities on reporting, analyzing, of the issues related to violent extremism, radicalization and terrorism;
- training of trainers for young individuals from religious communities on human rights, tolerance and freedom of religion;
- convening interethnic youth forum on the importance of dialogue between communities in order to address the past, bias, prejudice and discrimination.

Although most of the civil society engagement on P/CVE in Kosovo focuses on prevention, some CSOs are working further “down-stream”, e.g., with those returning from conflict zones in Iraq and Syria.

For example, the Kosovar Centre for Security Studies (KCSS), with support from the U.S. Government, is implementing a project aimed at reducing the threat posed by foreign terrorist fighters and other radicalized individuals in Kosovo, by capacity building of involved stakeholders in conducting localized counter-messaging and engaging in the community. The final goal of the project is to engage citizens and community members in countering and preventing violent extremism and radicalization in Kosovo¹⁰. The project covers 11 municipalities in Kosovo including: Prizren, Peja, Mitrovica, Gjilan, Ferizaj, Kamenica, Elez Han,

Kacanik, Gjakova, Klina and Decan. Security Policy Research Center (SPRC) has been engaged to activate and train grass-root organizations on how to counter violent extremism. In addition, they have held regular meetings with the municipal councils for community security where they have discussed together forms on how to counter violent extremism in their communities.

In order to counter violent extremism, there has been also a significant help from the international community. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has helped to create a Referral Mechanism, piloted in the Municipality of Gjilan, which is Kosovo's first mechanism, which offers support to vulnerable individuals at risk of radicalization. It should be emphasized that the creation and operation of the Referral Mechanism in Gjilan has been made without the active involvement of CSOs. Lastly, there is an initiative from the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) to conduct lectures for de-radicalization in Kosovo prisons with a focus on the returned foreign fighters. This process will be in co-operation with the Islamic Community in Kosovo, and various civil society organizations.

3.2 Research

Civil society organizations are also conducting research on violent extremism in Kosovo. For example, the Kosovar Institute for Policy Research and Development (KIPRED) was one of the first CSOs to be engaged in this field. In 2005, KIPRED published a report - "Political Islam among the Albanians: Are the Taliban coming to the Balkans?"¹¹. In 2016, they published another study named "What happened to Kosovo Albanians: The impact of religion on the ethnic identity in the state building-period". The Kosovar Centre for Security Studies (KCSS) has conducted various research studies on the pull and push factors of violent extremism and radicalization in Kosovo; citizens' perceptions on violent extremism; the citizens views against violent extremism and radicalization in Kosovo; women in violent extremism. The Security Policy and Research Center (SPRC) has also conducted research on the field by publishing the report "Influencing factors on radicalization and violent extremism: lessons from Peja, Mitrovica, Gjilan, Ferizaj and Kacanik".

4.0. The gaps of CSO engagement on P/CVE-specific and P/CVE relevant issues

As explained in the previous sections, numerous civil society organizations (CSOs) are engaged in P/CVE in Kosovo. Civil society organizations are providing also institutional support - especially by contributing to the drafting of the "Strategy on prevention of violent extremism and radicalization leading to terrorism from 2015 to 2020". Based on our assessment, the prevention and countering of violent extremism is well covered from the civil society side. However, there is a significant gap on the regions that are covered from the civil society organizations.

¹¹ Biumi, I. (2005). 'Political Islam Among the Albanians: Are the Taliban coming to the Balkans? 2nd Edition', KIPRED: Prishtina.

The project of civil society organizations are mainly focused on the “hotspots” of radicalism and areas where the threat of violent extremism is higher - CSOs justified that this happens based on donors request to be focused on vulnerable areas. For example, training for entrepreneurship, followed by small grants for local initiatives are mainly focused on the Municipality of Kaçanik which is recognized as one of the places which has the highest numbers of foreign fighters who have joined ISIS. Such initiatives are more than welcomed from the inhabitants of this area; however, based on a field assessment that Center FIT did in 2017, this is leading to the dissatisfaction of the citizens of other areas, such as Podujeva, that did see members of their community travel to conflict zones in Syria and Iraq. Although Podujeva doesn't have any foreign fighters, it has seen an increase in the number of people with radical views. Therefore, there is a gap of CSO engagement on specific areas, but it can be considered that in the “hotspots” the situation is well covered. It should be emphasized that another gap is that the vast majority of CSO engagement is on the prevention side of the issue, with extremely limited involvement of CSOs in the intervention/rehabilitation/reintegration arena.

5.0 The relationship between CSOs and national and municipal governments and the private sector

Kosovo's national coordinator for PVE/R (Prevention of Violent Extremism and Radicalization) sits in the Office of the Prime Minister. He is responsible for monitoring the implementation of the national strategy on prevention of violent extremism and radicalization, which envisages multi-stakeholder approach to the threat. However, so far the government does not appear to have a list of all the stakeholders in Kosovo dealing with P/CVE nor does there appear to exist a mechanism to facilitate government-CSO cooperation on the implementation of the PVE/R strategy. It should be noted that the government is attempting to create a mechanism which would regulate such issues.

In 2017, the OSCE Mission in Kosovo began to develop the “VERLT Database” (VERLT: Violent Extremism and Radicalization Leading to Terrorism), that was to include a database of the relevant government and non-governmental P/CVE stakeholders in the country. However, this effort, which was intended to support the Kosovo Security Council Secretariat (KSCS) of the Office of Prime Minister, to follow-up and coordinate VERLT related activities of all stakeholders, partners, and supporting organizations, stalled. The creation of the database was meant to assist the KSCS in avoiding possible duplication and repetition of activities, and to enable them to produce more qualitative periodical reports on the implementation of the Strategy and Action Plan on the Prevention of VERLT. Regardless of the lack of a specific mechanism for cooperation between CSOs and national government, the office of the national coordinator works directly

with the international community (including donor organizations) to coordinate their efforts on P/CVE. Specifically, the national coordinator has a monthly meeting with the donor community in Kosovo. In addition, the office of the national coordinator for PVE/R requests narrative reports every three months from the civil society organizations that implement projects of a larger scale. The national coordinator is active on monitoring the strategy on prevention of violent extremism, including monitoring the implementation efforts of various relevant national ministries who are part of this strategy.

The national coordinator's engagement with CSOs has been ad hoc and largely reactive. He has responded positively to invitations from various civil society organizations to attend their meetings/activities, and to their information requests. He has also participated in the thematic meeting "Engagement and Coordination of Stakeholder in the Prevention of Violent Extremism" organized by Advocacy Training and Resource Center (ATRC). Based on our interviews, national government support for CSOs' efforts have been limited to providing information and permission to operate (i.e. permission to implement activities in schools), and has not included any financial support. In October 2018, an inter-institutional commission for addressing violent extremism was established from Kosovo's Government. The Office of the Prime Minister will provide administrative support to the work of the Commission, which will analyze, recommend and address all issues related to the violent extremism in Kosovo.¹²

Cooperation between CSOs and local government is uneven as it depends on the willing of the relevant mayor to cooperate. For example, based on the responses of our interviewees - until this year, the municipality of Gjakova did not express any interest in P/CVE - as they didn't believe that violent extremism has spread to this municipality – and thus cooperation with CSOs on this agenda was nonexistent. However, with the newly elected mayor, the situation has changed dramatically. In the first quarter of 2018, he made P/CVE a priority and has looked to strengthen cooperation with local CSOs in this field.

Although the majority of our respondents said that they did not receive any support from the local government for the implementation of their P/CVE projects, they noted that the local authorities were not impeding the development or implementation of any CSO-led P/CVE initiatives in their municipalities.

In addition to the challenges of government-CSO cooperation around the P/CVE agenda in Kosovo, there is a lack of coordination between the national (central) government and local government around the implementation of the national strategy on prevention of violent extremism and radicalization leading to terrorism. This is partly due to the limited capacity of municipalities to engage

¹² Office of the Prime Minister. (2018). Government of Kosovo. Strategy on prevention of violent extremism and radicalisation leading to terrorism 2015-2020. Pristina: Kosovo.

in this space. However, efforts are being made to address this gap: the national government, in partnership with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), is conducting capacity building for municipality officials for the implementation of the national strategy. This project is being piloted in the municipalities of Prishtina and Mitrovica, and based on the results, it will be considered if this will continue in the other municipalities as well.

It is quite a known fact that the majority of companies in Kosovo do not have corporate social responsibility activities. Therefore, when it comes to the cooperation between CSOs and the private sector in Kosovo, it must be noted that none of our respondents have stated that they have received any support or cooperation from the private sector.

Lastly, it should be noted that cooperation among CSOs in Kosovo working on P/CVE issues is limited. In addition to there being no network or other mechanism to enable such cooperation, CSOs tend to see each-other as competitors (for grants) and thus are reluctant to share project ideas or experiences.

There are some indications that the situation is improving. For example, ATRC has recently convened CSOs working in the P/CVE space, including for the purpose of sharing experiences, good practices, and challenges in implementing P/CVE projects in the country.

In addition, the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF) has recently supported the creation of three CSO consortiums, involving more than 16 local CSOs, which are implementing GCERF-funded P/CVE projects.

6.0. Strengths of CSOs in developing and delivering P/CVE programming and engaging on P/CVE policy issues

Civil society organizations (CSOs) in Kosovo have been highly engaged in the P/CVE field, especially during the last three years when the phenomenon became one of the most discussed and worrying topic in the Kosovar society. As previously noted, CSOs have primarily been engaged in the prevention space, working in a number of field. The greatest strength of the majority of CSOs in Kosovo is that they continued to work in their specialized field, but they have connected it with the prevention of violent extremism. For example, organizations who have worked to build critical thinking for Kosovo youth, have continued this work but now with the goal to prevent violent extremism. In addition, CSOs who have worked on research on the security field, have continued to stay on their specialty, but now with the focus on the research for the prevention/countering of violent extremism. Using their previous experiences and approaches on

their fields, has strengthened CSOs to provide a more qualitative work for the prevention of violent extremism.

Based on the donor results that they have shared during interviews, Kosovo CSOs have been successful in the promotion of certain values such as religious harmony, civic engagement, interethnic relations etc.

Based on our assessment, another strength of Kosovo CSOs is that they have been prepared to support institutions to create better policies and strategies for P/CVE, one of the examples is the contribution of CSOs for the creation of the national strategy on PVE. It is assessed that the advocacy for certain policies comes from well-grounded research and analysis. In addition to their contribution for the creation of the national PVE strategy, Kosovo CSOs have played a key role also on the implementation of this strategy. The engagement of CSOs for the creation of the national strategy on PVE/R has been by invitation only. Whereas the contribution of CSOs for the creation of better policies is mostly project base (support by a donor).

Although collaboration among CSOs in the P/CVE field has been limited to date, with them often seeing each other as competitors for limited donor funds, GCERF's recent engagement in the country is creating more opportunities for cooperation. GCERF funds supported the creation of three CSO consortia in the country, involving some 16 CSOs. These consortiums (or networks) will result with a combination of various activities in the field, which will automatically bring added value, and will result more beneficial for the citizens.

Based on our assessment, it appears that CSOs, which have a track-record of working directly with members of the relevant communities and have developed the requisite expertise, are often better informed about the situation and are better positioned to engage at the local level than the government institutions.

7.0. Weaknesses of CSOs in developing and delivering P/CVE programming and engaging on P/CVE policy issues //

Among the weaknesses stems from the fact that CSOs are dependent on donor funding for their P/CVE projects and have had to make mid-project implementation adjustments based on donor requests. Our interviewees stated that in many cases, even when their project initially got selected to receive funding, there have been major interventions in the activities, in order to adjust to the changing donor desires. There have also been instances where CSOs were selected to receive funds for a P/CVE project, however, due to the changes requested from the donor organization in their activities, the CSO was not willing to make the changes and divert from the project's original objectives and thus ended up losing the fund.

Another weakness is the lack of sustained project funding. When designing projects, many CSOs envisage turning over the implementation to a state institution or other partner once the donor funding runs out.. However, in many cases they have been unable to do so. One of the examples is the creation of “Debate Clubs” within Kosovo schools, which are created with the assistance of CSOs, and then the members of the club are trained from CSOs, and also an activity plan is created with the assistance of CSO. However, it is understandable that a CSO cannot continue its work indefinitely, therefore aiming to leave the management of “Debate Clubs” in the hands of students and school administration, but in most cases these student clubs did not continue their operation due to a lack of interest from the school side.

Another weakness is that CSOs have failed to consult sufficiently with the project beneficiaries in s the project-design phase , which can undermine the effectiveness of the project.

Additionally, some CSOs are politically biased. This is particular so in the small municipalities, where some CSOs are actively involved in political parties. Although links to a political party (especially to those in power) can facilitate their operations in the short term, some interviewees noted that this it much easier for them to operate.

Finally, the lack of mechanisms to facilitate coordination and cooperation among the CSOs working on P/CVE, and between CSOs and national (central) and local government is also seem as a weakness.

Annex 1: **Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) active in the field of prevention / countering of violent extremism (P/CVE)**

Name of the organization	Geographic focus	Mission	Website
Columbus Institute	Entire Kosovo	The mission of the Institute is to contribute to the creation of a culture in Kosovo that promotes active citizenship in the society. Columbus Institute is a sub-recipient of GCERF funds and its main role is to promote the activities of other CSOs that are part of the "Building Resilience for Communities and Individuals in Kosovo (BRICK)" program.	www.institutocolumbus-ks.com
LIZA-R	Anamorava region	LIZA-R is a non-governmental organization established with the aim to integrate, empower and enhance youth capacities in the democratic processes in the region of Anamorava.	www.liza-r.org
Civic Initiative in Skenderaj	Skenderaj & Drenas	The mission of CIS is to strengthen the role of civil society in decision-making processes and to also raise the level of local governance in the Municipality of Skenderaj. CIS is currently implementing the project "Educating Youth for the Risks of Violent Extremism".	www.iqskenderaj.org
Civil Development Organization (CDO)	Mitrovica, North Mitrovica, Vushtrri, Skenderaj, Zvecan, Leposavic & Zubin Potok	The goal of CDO is to empower Kosovo citizens to influence the enhancement of transparency, responsibility and accountability of local and governmental institutions. CDO is currently implementing a P/CVE by offering positive alternative to Kosovo youth through debate training.	N/A
Kosovo United States Alumni (KUSA)	Entire Kosovo	The organization observes strictly democratic values and diversity of opinion and background and fosters open discussion and debate. KUSA also distributes funds as grants for non-profit organizations or individuals that aim strengthening democracy and human rights in Kosovo.	www.kusaalumni.blogspot.com
Youth Center "AVOKO"	Dragash	Youth Center "AVOKO" is active in the peace-building in the Municipality of Dragash by working actively in the non-formal education of youth. AVOKO implemented a P/CVE project by debating with lower secondary and high school students about the importance of religious tolerance.	N/A

Name of the organization	Geographic focus	Mission	Website
Forum for Civic Initiatives	Entire Kosovo	Forum for Civic Initiatives (FIQ) is a national foundation with a long tradition of community development works to promote philanthropy for sustainable development. FCI is the primary recipient of GCERF funds and will implement a project with a focus on social entrepreneurship for Kosovo youth.	www.fiq-fci.org
Community Development Fund (CDF)	Entire Kosovo	Community Development Fund (CDF) is supporting institutional capacity-building at the community and municipal level so as to improve the quality and sustainability of service-delivery and increase civic participation in local development. CDF is the primary recipient of GCERF funds and is currently implementing the program "Building Resilience for Individuals and Communities in Kosovo (BRICK)". BRICK is a youth development program and aims at developing the personal and professional skills of students. The main purpose of the BRICK program activities is to empower students and their existing structures.	www.kcdf.org
S'bunker	Entire Kosovo	S'bunker is an online blog, which operates as a non-governmental organization aiming to have a direct effect in the rebuilding of the public sphere in Kosovo. S'bunker has implemented P/CVE project by working with youth in Kosovo to build their creative critical thinking skills.	www.sbunker.net
Kosovar Centre for Security Studies		Kosovar Centre for Security Studies is an independent policy research centre. KCSS is dedicated to security sector development and reform in Kosovo and Western Balkans. It proactively promotes principle of good governance, integrity and resilience. KCSS has the "Countering Violent Extremism Program" which intends to analyze the Violent Extremism phenomena and Preventing Violent Extremism at a community level.	http://www.qkss.org

Name of the organization	Geographic focus	Mission	Website
Open Data Kosovo		Open Data Kosovo is a nonprofit organization that believes in using civic-tech and digital humanitarianism to open government. This initiative promotes the idea that governance data should be made freely available for everyone to use and republished as they wish, without restrictions from copyright, patents or other mechanisms of control. ODK is the sub-recipient of GCERF funds, and they will implement a project where youth will learn coding.	www.opendatakosovo.org
Jakova Innovation Center	Gjakova	Jakova Innovation Center is a non-profit organization which was established by the Ministry of Trade and Industry of the Republic of Kosovo, in cooperation with the municipality of Gjakova. This center serves as a business incubator with a mission of promoting and supporting young entrepreneurs in the construction and development of new companies	www.jic-ks.com
Security Policy Research Center (SPRC)	Entire Kosovo	The mission of SPRC is to conduct qualitative studies in the security field for Kosovo and the Balkan region. SPRC is a sub-recipient of GCERF funds, and will work actively with local communities on the P/VE.	www.sprc-ks.org/
Kosova Woman Initiative	Dukagjini region	Improvement of citizen's role in decision making through projects and programs for education and advocacy in that way to influence in better governance in Kosovo. KWI has implemented a P/CVE project by raising the awareness of parents in the Dukagjini region about the risks of P/CVE.	N/A
Center for Advanced Studies FIT	Entire Kosovo	The mission of the organization is to improve the position of the most sensitive groups of society, through research, advocacy, education, and awareness raising. The primary target groups of the Center FIT are children, youth, students, the elderly, women, the unemployed, environment etc. Center FIT is the sub-recipient of GCERF funds and is the partner of CDF in the implementation of the "BRICK" program. Center FIT is implementing activities that aim to promote safer internet use for children.	www.fit-ks.org

Name of the organization	Geographic focus	Mission	Website
Kosovar Institute for Policy Research and Development (KIPRED)	Entire Kosovo	KIPRED's mission is the promotion and consolidation of democracy and democratic values in Kosovo and in the region through independent research, capacity development and institution building. KIPRED is a sub-recipient of GCERF funds, and is part of the project "With Democracy Participating for a Kosovo without Radicalization".	www.kipred.org
Advocacy Training and Resource Center (ATRC)	Entire Kosovo	ATRC is a non-governmental organization that works in increasing citizen and civil society participation in decision-making, as a prerequisite for a developed democratic society and regional stability. ATRC is the primary recipient of GCERF funds and is the leader of the consortium of CSOs that implement the project "With Democracy Participating for a Kosovo without Radicalization".	www.advocacy-center.org
Kosovar Youth Council (KYC)	Entire Kosovo	Kosovar Youth Council (KYC) is a youth non-governmental organization (NGO) established to activate young Kosovars to respond to their problems brought on by massive expulsion from their homes to Albania in 1999. KYC acts to build a civil society through youth participation, by creating and supporting youth NGOs and coordinating their leadership. KYC is the sub-recipient of GCERF funds and is the partner of CDF in the implementation of the "BRICK" program.	www.kyc-ks.org
Democracy Plus (D+)	Entire Kosovo	The principal goal of D+ is to support democratic values and practices in the scope of good governance, rule of law, elections and political parties, social issues, and human rights. D+ is a sub-recipient of GCERF funds, and is part of the project "With Democracy Participating for a Kosovo without Radicalization".	www.dplus-ks.org

Name of the organization	Geographic focus	Mission	Website
Kosovo Center for Business Support (KCBS)	Entire Kosovo	The objective of the NGO is to support economic growth across various areas and sectors that are vital for the growth of Kosovo's economy. KCBS is a sub-recipient of GCERF funds, and is part of the project "With Democracy Participating for a Kosovo without Radicalization". The focus of KCBS will be to provide entrepreneurship training for youth.	www.kcbs-ks.org
S'bashku	Prishtina	S'bashku is a student club within the Rochester Institute of Technology in Kosovo (RIT-K) created to develop messages against violent extremism.	N/A
Community Building Mitrovica	Entire Kosovo	Community Building Mitrovica (CBM) is a local non-governmental organisation (NGO) operating in the field of peace and community building in the wider region of Mitrovica, northern municipalities of Kosovo. The overall aim of CBM is to facilitate contact and dialogue between citizens in the whole of Mitrovica municipality. CBM is the primary recipient of GCERF funds, and will implement activities aiming to P/CVE in the region of Mitrovica.	www.cbmitrovica.org
INTEGRA	N/A	Integra works directly with targets and like-minded partners in Kosovo and Region to enable stakeholders and actors to develop powerful responses in the face of emergent challenges. Integra is the sub-recipient of GCERF funds and is the partner of CDF in the implementation of the BRICK program.	www.ngo-integra.org
Innovation Center of Kosovo (ICK)	Entire Kosovo	Inspiring entrepreneurs into action. With knowledge, skills, and commitment, ICK is on a mission to develop a culture of innovation in Kosovo. ICK is the sub-recipient of GCERF funds and is the partner of CDF in the implementation of the BRICK program by promoting entrepreneurial mind-set to Kosovo youth.	www.ickosovo.com

Name of the organization	Geographic focus	Mission	Website
Cross Cultures Project Association – Kosovo	N/A	Cross Cultures Project Association (CCPA) was formed in February 1999 as an international politically independent, non-profit organisation that exist for the purpose of developing, participating in as well as implementing projects cutting across cultural lines, and which have as their main objective the promotion of reconciliation, social integration and civil society participation through dialogue and collaboration. CCPA Kosovo is the sub-recipient of GCERF funds and is the partner of CDF in the implementation of the BRICK program	www.ccpa.eu/countries/kosovo
Balkan Investigative Reporting Network	Entire Kosovo	BIRN, the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network, is a network of local non-governmental organisations promoting freedom of speech, human rights and democratic values. BIRN is the sub-recipient of GCERF funds and the partner of ATRC for the implementation of “With Democracy Participating for a Kosovo without Radicalization”.	www.birn.eu.com
MUNDESIA	Mitrovica region	Mundesia is a civil-society organization aiming to improve the situation of marginalized groups in Kosovo. Mundesia is the sub-recipient of GCERF funds, in the consortium led by Community Building Mitrovica.	N/A

Annex II -Definitions

Having in mind that terminology around violent extremism and preventing and countering can be confusing and problematic - terms are often politicized and used interchangeably and often without clear definition, resulting in the same terms being used to describe different approaches - for the purposes of this mapping, definitions developed by the Regional Cooperation Council as part of its Regional Platform for Countering Radicalization and Violent Extremism Leading to Terrorism and Recruitment of Foreign Terrorist Fighters were used:

i. violent extremism (VE): The name for the phenomenon whereby people or groups, in pursuit of their ideological goal, display a willingness to use violence as the ultimate consequence of their extremist way of thinking; the use of violence to pursue political goals; the process of taking extremist/radical (political, religious, or ideological) views and putting them into violent action.

i. Preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE): Using non-coercive means that seek to address the drivers or root causes of violent extremism. According to UNDP, “a distinction can usually be drawn between CVE, which is focused on countering the activities of existing violent extremists, and PVE, which is focused on preventing the further spread of violent extremism. However, in practice, initiatives will frequently work on both aspects, with a combined approach.” This mapping should include CSOs, inter alia, working on projects that are labeled or otherwise described as “CVE”, “PVE”, or “P/CVE”.

Additional relevant definitions:

P/CVE-specific: CSOs listed in the mapping should be classified as P/CVE-specific when engaged in the following activities: preventing and countering violent extremism, deradicalization, disengagement and reintegration, counter-narrative and counter-messaging, and building community resilience to violent extremism. Such activities are designed with the explicit goal of reducing or building resilience to violent extremism.

De-radicalization: the social and psychological process whereby an individual's commitment to, and involvement in, violent extremism is reduced to the extent that they are no longer at risk of involvement and engagement in violent activity, i.e., rejecting the underlying violent ideology or belief and the commitment to use violence to advance it. De-radicalisation may also refer to any initiative that tries to achieve a reduction of risk of re-offending through addressing specific and relevant disengagement issues. De-radicalisation implies a different change than that associated with disengagement alone: it implies change at a cognitive level, not simply the physical cessation of some observable behavior.

Disengagement: the process whereby an individual experiences a change in role or function that is usually associated with a reduction of violent participation – i.e., forswearing violence rather than the underlying ideology or beliefs.. It may not necessarily involve leaving the violent extremism organization or movement. Additionally, whole disengagement may stem from role change, that role change may be influenced by psychological factors such as disillusionment, burnout, or the failure to reach the expectations that influenced initial involvement. This can lead to a member seeking a different role or roles within the movement.

Reintegration: the process whereby a returning “foreign terrorist fighter” (FTF) or former violent extremist who is deemed not to pose a security threat is provided psycho-social support, education, employment, or training to facilitate their re-entry in the community from which they originated or another appropriate community.

Counter-narrative/messaging: messaging that offers an alternative view to extremist recruitment and propaganda. Messaging can provide an alternative answer or path to potential recruits who may be seeking guidance or meaning. Counter-narrative messaging may also seek to deconstruct extremist narratives and expose logical flaws..

Community resilience: the ability of a community to withstand, respond to and recover from a wide range of harmful and adverse events. [Note: depending on the design/target of a “community resilience” program, these efforts could be categorized as P/CVE-specific or P/CVE-relevant.]

P/CVE-relevant: CSOs listed in the mapping are classified as P/CVE-relevant when engaged in activities that indirectly address the drivers of violent extremism through: youth and women’s empowerment, rule of law, anti-corruption, civic engagement, human rights, democracy, good governance, vocational training, education, trust-building and community engagement, and conflict resolution. P/CVE-relevant activities are ones the purpose of which is not to prevent or counter violent extremism, but which nevertheless contribute to reducing or building resilience against violent extremism.

ABOUT THE PROJECT

Communities First is a regional Western Balkans civil society platform for P/CVE lead by consortium of six non-governmental organizations from Montenegro, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, and Serbia. This three-year initiative is focused on fostering national and regional co-operation among grassroots CSOs, faith based organizations, and community activists engaged in P/CVE. The goal of the program is to empower these actors, to increase their capacity, improve efficiency and accountability, and to enable them to become more effective influencers of relevant P/CVE policies.

Activities include: mapping of CSO-led P/CVE programmes and initiatives; developing online CSOs' hub for sharing good practices, resources and increasing regional cooperation; capacity building and mentoring programmes; and creating and implementing small grant programme.

Partners Kosova is member of NGO consortium with 5 other originations from the region on implementation of this project "Communities First: Creation of Civil Society Hub to Prevent and Counter Violent Extremism—from prevention to reintegration"

Partners Kosova (PK) is a member of Partners Global Network of twenty independent local organizations in the world. Founded in 2001, PK as locally-managed NGO with over 17 years of experience that work to advance civil society, good governance and a culture of change, peace and conflict management in Kosovo, EU and further - globally.

Since 2016, Partners Kosova has been among of the first NGO's to implement several P/CVE projects in co-operation with Kosovo central and local government, as well as with international stakeholders – organizations and donor focusing on preventing the further spread of violent extremism activities. PK is committed to continue working on prevention through awareness and education campaigns, trainings, roundtables, messaging, etc, while Governmental institutions and businesses community to create jobs as a form of their reintegration. Website: <http://www.partnerskosova.org> under construction and Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/partnerskosova>

About the author 

Anil Gashi received his Bachelor's degree from the Rochester Institute of Technology in Kosovo and has pursued the graduate certification program in Education Leadership and Policy Analysis at the University of Missouri in Columbia (USA). Since March 2015, Mr. Gashi has joined Center for Advanced Studies FIT where he currently serves as Project Manager. Throughout his time at Center FIT, he has managed various projects funded by U.S. Embassy Prishtina, Save the Children in Kosovo, Kosovo Civil Society Foundation (KCSF), Kosovo Education Center (KEC), and European Foundation for Democracy (EFD) based in Brussels. Mr. Gashi is the author of several publications, including the research study "Internet Safety for Children" which is unique at its kind by assessing children's behaviors in the online world. Mr. Gashi has participated in the U.S. Department of State's premier professional exchange program: International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP), and is also the recipient of the scholarship from Transformational Leadership Program (TLP) by USAID.

