

Horizontal Facility for Western Balkans and Turkey

Funded
by the European Union
and the Council of Europe



EUROPEAN UNION

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Implemented
by the Council of Europe

Regional Conference:

SHARING EXPERIENCES ON DERADICALISATION, MANAGEMENT AND REHABILITATION OF PRISONERS IN WESTERN BALKANS

CONCLUSIONS

03-04 October 2018, Skopje

The Regional Conference in Skopje provided an excellent forum to the prison authorities and practitioners from all 6 Horizontal Facility Beneficiaries from Western Balkans to increase collaboration on deradicalisation in prisons and to initiate an exchange of good practices on disengagement from violence and strengthening prison management, which should result in successful rehabilitation of violent extremist offenders and their reintegration back into society.

The presentations and discussion focused on a great variety of radicalisation related topics, including the phenomenon of violent extremism and radicalisation process in prison, international standards and practices addressing radicalisation in prison and good practices in other Council of Europe Member states, the need for inter-agency and regional co-operation in addressing violent extremism and preventing radicalisation in prisons, good prison management rehabilitation and treatment programmes for radicalised prisoners. All 6 prison systems present at the Conference introduced their respective practices and challenges on addressing the issue of violent extremism and radicalisation in prisons.

The following conclusions were adopted:

- The participants in the 2-day conference strongly welcomed enhancement of regional cooperation on approaches and methodologies to address the issue of violent extremism and radicalisation in prisons *and called to its further improvement*.
- The participants called for *further strengthening of the collaboration* among their respective prison services and exchange of good practices in the area of *screening and assessment tools* taking into account the specific sociological, cultural and ethnic background of the diverse Western Balkans societies.
- The participants welcomed the idea of *continuation of exchanging ideas and experience* on the application of *specific rehabilitation programmes or individual treatment plans* for radicalised prisoners and risk management and allocation practices.
- Sharing good prison *staff training strategies and modules* between the prison services in the Western Balkans was emphasised as a way forward.
- Frontline staff shall be trained to act in line with *principles of dynamic security* in order to maintain safety, security and good order in prison and to contribute to the prisoner's rehabilitation.
- All participants agreed that it is highly recommendable for all prison staff to receive *general awareness training on radicalisation* including basic identification techniques, with an emphasis on the prison professionals who work directly with violent extremist offenders and the need for their in-depth and specialised training according to their role in the process.
- *Good prison management* and individualised sentence plan with an emphasis on the prisoners' goals, motivations and needs will provide for successful and focused

rehabilitation efforts of all prisoners, including violent extremists, to ensure safe reintegration back into society.

- It is very important to pay *special attention to the management of specific groups*, such as young people, female offenders and first-time offenders.
- The participants underlined the need to include *religious communities/priests/imams* into the disengagement process. Involvement of *volunteers, peers and family members* should also be considered as they may be very beneficial for efficient reintegration of offenders.
- The responsibility to prevent violent extremist offending or re-offending, manage extremist offenders in prisons and integrate them successfully back into society is not just the responsibility of correctional services, but of various national agencies and organisations, including civil society.
- The participants agreed that ensuring efficient and sustainable *collaboration with probation services and inter-agency cooperation* is a key to fighting this phenomenon. The multi-agency arrangements with a focus on both security and rehabilitation efforts, and on facilitating opportunities can help to change an individual's interest and involvement in extremism.
- *Further investment in research* in the region is essential to provide more evidence-based information on risk and protective factors, desistance, disengagement and de-radicalisation programmes for violent extremist offenders. On-going collection of central data on the risk and needs assessment tools already in place would be a good starting point for this process.
- The participants agreed that *budgetary constraints and scarce resources* cannot be used as excuse for not acting and encouraged search for innovative approaches to deal with the phenomena;
- All participants agree that with regard to designing safety and security measures related to violent extremist offenders, it is crucial that these be based on the *rule of law and respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms*.
- From the organisers' point of view the work continues on building upon the results and the conclusions from the conference in Skopje and use it as a basis for development of a *fully-fledged regional project on radicalisation in prisons and disengagement from violence*, to be implemented under the Horizontal Facility phase 2, co-funded by the European Union and the Council of Europe, implemented by the Council of Europe.