



HORIZONTAL FACILITY FOR THE WESTERN BALKANS AND TURKEY 2019-2022

FOR YOUR RIGHTS: TOWARDS EUROPEAN STANDARDS

Enhancing penitentiary capacities in addressing radicalisation in prisons in the Western Balkans

The Council of Europe assists Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia (the six Western Balkans Horizontal Facility Beneficiaries) in overcoming the shortcomings and practical deficiencies and building synergies throughout the region on identification, assessment and rehabilitation of violent extremist offenders in prisons through the implementation of the Regional Action on "Enhancing penitentiary capacities in addressing radicalisation in prisons in Western Balkans" (the Action).

The Action will provide a forum for sharing experience among the Beneficiaries and standardisation of the approaches in the Western Balkan penitentiary systems on the issue of radicalisation in prisons. It will aim to contribute towards setting minimum standards and unified methodologies on combatting violent extremism and radicalisation in the prisons in the region. The Action will co-ordinate its actions with the Beneficiary authorities (prisons and probation services) and the local Counter-Terrorism and Countering Violent Extremism Co-ordination mechanisms.

The Action is funded by the European Union and the Council of Europe as part of the "Horizontal Facility for Western Balkans and Turkey II" (Horizontal Facility II) and implemented by the Council of Europe. The Horizontal Facility II will provide technical assistance and expertise in the areas of ensuring justice; fighting corruption, economic crime and money laundering; promoting freedom of expression and freedom of the media and promoting anti-discrimination and protection of the rights of vulnerable groups, with the aim to assist the authorities in implementing key recommendations of Council of Europe monitoring bodies, prioritised according to the needs within the enlargement negotiations of the European Union.

The duration of the Action is 36 months and it is expected to be completed by 23 May 2022, with an overall budget of EUR 2.000.000.

Background

It has been proven that the prison environment can be a potential ground for radicalisation of prisoners. Therefore, rehabilitation efforts and intervention programs should include and pay a special attention to violent extremist offenders. The growing numbers of extremist offenders, especially foreign terrorist fighter returnees in Western Balkans' prisons, calls for reflection on existing measures and interventions, as well as discussion on developing joint approaches and common methodologies on addressing this issue and preventing further radicalisation among prisoners. At the same time, the authorities have the duty to provide support, resources, training, safety and supervision to staff at all levels who are working with violent extremists and those radicalised while in prison.

Interventions to counter violent extremism may require a different focus from those used to address other forms of offending behaviour. Specific risk assessments are intended to provide information that allow professionals to decide on how to best intervene in order to minimise risks and maximise the potential for positive change, while responding to the individual needs of the inmate or the person on probation. In addition, all prison and probation practitioners should be trained on how to identify signs and address situations of radicalisation among offenders. The lack of proper training could increase the risk of mistreatment of offenders based on prejudices and misinterpretations and can even further fuel radicalisation in prisons.

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.

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Main Action's outcomes and aims

The project's overall aim is to contribute to regional security by addressing radicalisation in prisons and disengaging violent extremist prisoners from violence. This will be accomplished through the achievement of the following specific aims:

- * raise awareness and understanding of the process of radicalisation in prisons among the penitentiary and probation services in the Western Balkans region
- * encourage a culture of sharing information and good practices among teams of prison and probation practitioners
- * ensure regular communication and sharing of know-how and best practices with RAN P&P and other professional groups with extensive expertise in the topic
- * assist practitioners recognise signs of radicalisation and empower first-line officers with the necessary knowledge and skills they need to respond appropriately
- * facilitate and encourage multi-agency partnerships to counter radicalisation in prisons and provide adequate post-penal support to released violent extremist offenders

Intermediate outcomes

The following **outcomes** are to be achieved with the implementation of the project:

- * The application of the tools and mechanisms by the practitioners with regards to addressing radicalisation in prisons further strengthened in light of the identified good practices in the region and Europe
- * The capacities of the practitioners involved in identifying and countering radicalisation in prisons strengthened through application of the gained knowledge and skills in their everyday work
- * Prison managers and prison staff in Serbia are able to identify, assess and address radicalisation in their every work through systematic application of the newly developed methodologies and tools (Beneficiary-specific component)

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