

BRIEFING PAPER

COUNCIL OF EUROPE PROJECTS ON ADDRESSING RADICALISATION IN PRISONS IN WESTERN BALKANS

1. MULTILATERAL MEETING – presenting the CoE Guidelines and Handbook for prison and probation staff on dealing with radicalisation and violent extremists in prisons, 23–24 November 2016, Strasbourg

The expert meeting overall objective was to enhance capacities of member states to fight radicalisation in prison and probation services. The Guidelines, adopted by the Committee of Ministers in March 2016, and the draft Handbook for prison and probation services regarding radicalisation and violent extremism, were the foundation of the meeting (the Handbook was adopted in its final version on 22 March 2017).

The meeting was attended by 81 designated specialists working in prison and probation service among the Council of Europe (CoE) member states, as well as by the members of the Council for Penological Co-operation (PC-CP) Working Group drafting the Handbook, European Commission (EC), Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN), United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNDOC), European Organisation of Prison and Correctional Services (EuroPris) and Confederation of European Probation (CEP).

Results:

- The meeting provided a forum for discussions among the CoE member states' designated specialists on the topic of fight against radicalisation to violent extremism by prison and probation services.
- The needs for assistance in different services were identified, such as proper selection and training of staff to deal with this phenomenon)
- Good practices were collected during the expert meeting
- A handbook "Prison: a breeding ground for radicalisation and violent extremism?" was published in 2018 and summarizes the good practices collected during this expert meeting.

COUNTRY SPECIFIC PROJECTS IN WESTERN BALKANS:

2. PROJECT in Bosnia and Herzegovina: "Supporting reintegration of violent and extremist prisoners in Bosnia and Herzegovina", 1 May 2017 – 31 March 2018

The project achieved substantial results in its short duration of implementation (11 months). It managed to gather representatives of Ministries of Justice, prison admission, treatment and security services with representatives of relevant law-enforcement agencies that agreed on setting up regular meetings to discuss efficient rehabilitation and reintegration mechanisms for violent extremist prisoners. All three Ministries of Justice enhanced their system(s) through establishing standardised procedures – such as criteria for a risk and needs assessment tool (RNA) and pre-release treatment programme (PRP) – to treat violent extremist prisoners.

Results:

- A PRP for violent extremist prisoners was developed and approved for use by Assistant Ministers for execution of criminal sanctions at the level of the three entities;
- Representatives of prison and law-enforcement agencies (LEAs) (BiH Ministry of Security, BiH Border Police, RS Ministry of Interior, FBiH Ministry of Interior, State Investigation and Protection Agency, Service for Foreigner Affairs) agreed on the set up of regular meetings to discuss efficient rehabilitation and reintegration mechanisms for violent extremist prisoners;
- A tailored-made RNA with criteria to assess violent extremist prisoners was developed for the first time in BiH prisons for this category of prisoners approved by all three Assistant Ministers for execution of criminal sanctions;

- One *Manual on assessment and rehabilitation of violent extremist prisoners in Bosnia and Herzegovina* groups the RNA, PRP and all project deliverables and offers a unified training tool and guidelines to prison staff dealing with this category of prisoners. The Manual was printed in 100 copies and distributed to relevant agencies, namely Assistant Ministers and prison inspectors from all three Ministries of Justice, prison governors and prison staff from Banja Luka, Bijeljina, Foča, Tuzla, Zenica, Mostar, Doboј and Bihać prisons as well as representatives of LEAs who participated in the consultation meetings.
- 41 prison multidisciplinary staff from treatment service, admission unit and security service from 8 prisons in BiH (4 from Federation BiH, 4 from Republika Srpska) and State Pre-trial detention unit enhanced their knowledge and capacities in dealing with violent extremist prisoners and with different treatment programmes applicable to these prisoners. In addition, they are better equipped to identify signs of radicalisation and violent extremism.

3. PROJECT in North Macedonia: “Strengthening the protection of the rights of sentenced persons” (radicalization component introduced in January 2018, to continue until May 2019)

At the beginning of 2018, CoE, under the auspices of the current prisons project, conducted an assessment mission with regards to radicalization and violent extremism in the prisons in the country.

Some of the key findings and recommendations:

- Staff working in assessment and admission phase should be trained to identify the indicators of radicalisation
- Train all the personnel working with the prisoners to understand the radicalization phenomenon and make observations
- Prison administration should provide the personnel with screening tool and compact assessment tool for recognizing radicalization
- Create a path to relocate and support prisoners who have shown willingness and motivation to disengage from extremist ideology
- Establish cooperation with the religious community, as well as cooperation with appropriate institutions, municipalities and NGO`s to support prisoners with their releasing processes
- Follow the sentence plan carefully with radicalised inmates and invest resources on meeting their criminogenic needs.

Accordingly, the Council of Europe assisted the authorities in designing a specific screening and RNA tools and methodology for development of individual intervention/treatment plans for radicalised prisoners, as well as supported them in piloting the tools in two prison establishments. The project also delivered basic and advanced training sessions for prison staff addressing radicalisation in prisons, as well as will support the authorities in establishing coordination between the relevant stakeholders on provision of post-penal assistance.

4. PROJECT in Albania “Support to the Prison reform and fight against radicalization in prisons”, September 2018 – February 2019

In November 2015 the Government of Albania has drafted a National Strategy for Combating Violent Extremism, along with the Action Plan. The National Strategy, among others, provides for the establishment of a Coordination Centre against Violent Extremism in Albania (in force from December 2017). Still, further support is needed to make the Centre fully operational. Accordingly, with UK support, the CoE currently implements a project that will provide support towards a more coordinated and systematic approach to the CVE in Albania through assistance to the institution-building of the National Centre for CVE.

The focus is on development of the CVE Center’s internal procedures, an info-sharing protocol, strengthening the Center’s reporting capacities (focus on data gathering and reporting on prison radicalisation) and network building (prisons, religious communities and NGOs).

5. FOLLOW-UP project in Bosnia and Herzegovina (continuation of the previous project): “Structured sentence management for violent and extremist prisoners”, November 2018 – October 2020

This Project is building on the work previously done under the previous project “Supporting reintegration of violent and extremist prisoners in Bosnia and Herzegovina”.

The overall objective is enhancing the safety of and security in the society through rehabilitation and reintegration of violent and extremist prisoners upon their release from prison. It will roll out on the basis of its four main components (first two components will be financed by USAID and the last two by UK):

- Strategic policy document to facilitate the implementation of operational procedures in prison and the multi-agency cooperation is developed;
- Prison managements are better equipped to select staffing for high security units;
- Case management system (CMS) for violent and extremist prisoners is made available;
- Peer review of the risk and needs assessment tool and specific treatment programmes for violent and extremist prisoners is completed.

6. NEW project component in North Macedonia implemented under the Horizontal Facility Programme, start date – June 2019

The project will build on the activities of the ongoing project. It will aim to further enhance the capacities of prison management and multi-disciplinary teams designated to deal with radicalised prisoners and prevent further radicalisation in prisons. It will also help the national authorities in setting up a system within the prisons for staff to report signs of radicalisation so that information could be used by relevant law enforcement and intelligence agencies and developments properly followed. The project will work on developing adequate pre-release programme and strengthening post-penal assistance by developing protocols for inter-agency cooperation and action upon release of inmates, thus preventing prisoners from returning to violent extremism upon their release.

7. NEW project component in Montenegro implemented under the Horizontal Facility Programme, start date – June 2019

The project builds on the results achieved through the first phase of the HF Action in Montenegro (2016-2019) in the area of police and prison reforms. The third component of the new project aims at developing a new tool for the identification of radicalized imprisoned persons and at strengthening the capacities of prison staff to use the new tool in practice. It is expected that with the support of the project penitentiary staff will be better equipped to read the signs of radicalization and will have a better understanding of the phenomenon within prisons.

WESTERN BALKANS REGIONAL APPROACHES AND PROJECTS:

8. REGIONAL CONFERENCE on sharing experiences on deradicalisation, management and rehabilitation of prisons in Western Balkans, 03-04 October 2018, Skopje

The Regional conference gathered more than 60 prison authorities, practitioners and experts from all 6 Horizontal Facility Beneficiaries¹ from Western Balkans, who presented and discuss the approaches and novelties regarding combatting radicalisation and violent extremism in prisons in light of promoting cooperation between the penitentiary and probation services in the region, with purpose to meet their practical needs and the prospective use of new methods and tools.

¹ Serbia, Montenegro, Albania, North Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo*.

*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.

The overall aim of the conference was to contribute towards establishing regional collaboration among prison authorities with regards to radicalisation in prisons, while the objective was to initiate proficient and sustainable cooperation and exchange of good practices on disengagement from violence, good prison management and effective implementation of rehabilitation programmes.

9. REGIONAL PROJECT: Enhancing penitentiary capacities in addressing radicalisation in prisons in Western Balkans, to be implemented under the Horizontal Facility Programme, start date – June 2019

The overall aim of the project is to enhance regional security through increasing cooperation on radicalisation prevention in prisons. Through regional multilateral and multi-institutional activities, the project will target all 6 Horizontal Facility Programme Beneficiaries, with aim to develop an efficient and sustainable cooperation and exchange of good practices on disengagement from violence and prevention of radicalisation in prisons in Western Balkans.

Accordingly, the project will strive to enhance regional cooperation and inter-agency collaboration to address the issue of violent extremism and radicalisation in prisons. It will also set minimum regional standards and improved methodologies on identifying and combatting violent extremism and radicalisation in prisons,

The regional project will also include **one country-specific component (Serbia)**, assisting the national authorities in raising the awareness of the phenomenon among prison staff, with focus on identification of radicalised prisoners and development of screening and RNA tools and intervention plans/programmes.

MULTILATERAL THEMATIC MEETINGS:

10. MULTILATERAL CONFERENCE on the importance of training prison professionals to detect and combat radicalisation and encourage disengagement from violence in prison, 16 – 17 October 2018, Toulouse

The conference gathered around 35 representatives of prison authorities and prison practitioners as well as trainers of prison staff from some 20 Council of Europe Member States, who agreed on the need to further develop training for prison staff on radicalisation, specifically on identification of radicalised inmates, on dealing with radicalised inmates, and on ensuring the appropriate exit strategies. The conference was based on the Council of Europe Guidance and Manual for prison and probation services dealing with radicalisation and violent extremism.

The conference served an excellent forum for exchange of good practices on addressing the issue of radicalisation within initial and continuous training for prison staff and prison management. The participants agreed on the need for tailor made training of prison staff based on specific needs of their respective services while respecting human rights of inmates and prison safety. The conclusions of the conference were adopted on the second day, and will also serve as an important input for future work of the Council of Europe on the training for prison staff.