

THE REGIONAL PLATFORM FOR COUNTERING RADICALIZATION AND VIOLENT EXTREMISM LEADING TO TERRORISM AND FOREIGN TERRORIST FIGHTERS IN SOUTH EAST EUROPE

(SEE CVE-FTF Platform)

Radicalization, violent extremism, terrorism, and foreign fighters are interconnected phenomena. No part of the world is safe from them, and these threats are recently on increase. Radicalization leading to the outflow of foreign terrorist fighters is a phenomenon with a serious presence in South East Europe. The governments in the region have recognized it as a serious threat.

The SEECP “requested RCC to work on the preparation of a regional cooperation platform that would bring together all relevant national, regional and international stakeholders with an aim of developing a common approach on the issue of terrorism and foreign terrorist fighters” (Joint Statement on Terrorism of SEECP Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Tirana, 24 February 2015). Moreover, the Joint Statement of the Conference of Justice and Home Affairs Ministers of the Brdo Process and SEECP, held in Budva, Montenegro, on 17 April 2015 states the need for a “multi-sectoral approach, which brings together stakeholders from different areas, such as social, health, education, police and prosecution services, as well as civil society, industry, internet providers, taking due account of the initiatives and decisions taken by the UN and other regional and international fora, as well as ongoing and planned activities in the Western Balkans region”. The Ministers of Justice and Home Affairs “reiterate the request for the RCC to work on the preparation of a regional platform” and “invite the RCC to support, within its mandate, the development and implementation of WBCT Integrated Plan of Action”, as well as “to contribute to the development of a matrix on counter-terrorism activities in the region”.

The SEE is also part of global and European commitments in this respect, such are those stated in the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2178 (2014), and the relevant documents of the EU, OSCE, and the Council of Europe.

A lot has been done already through the national efforts, bilateral cooperation, cooperation with international actors outside of the region, such as the EU and the USA, and the regional initiatives and activities, such as those in the framework of the Western Balkans Counter-Terrorism Initiative (WBCT), Police Cooperation Convention for the South East Europe (PCC SEE), South East Europe National Security Authority Chiefs Forum (SEENSA), South East Europe Military Intelligence Chiefs Forum (SEEMIC), South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of the Small Arms and Light Weapons (SEESAC), and RACVIAC – Centre for Security Cooperation. In particular, the EU Regional workshop on countering violent extremism (CVE) in the

Western Balkans, held in Ljubljana, 16-17 October, and the Regional CVE Summit held in Tirana, 19-21 May 2015 resulted in important recommendations on the measures to be taken in this respect.

To fulfill the task given to it by the SEECP ministers, and help coordinate and streamline ongoing efforts in the SEE in order to make them more efficient and effective, the RCC proposes the establishment of a **SEE CVE-FTF Platform**. The platform aims at strengthening the coordination and cooperation on combatting radicalization and violent extremism in SEE at national and regional level under the SEECP political umbrella, through a multi-sectoral approach, within an all-inclusive process. The platform is open to the participation of EU, USA and other relevant RCC stakeholders and international donors.

Main objectives:

- Achievement of more coherent and effective regional cooperation in the field, including cooperation with the relevant out-of-region actors, and coordination of efforts of various regional initiatives and fora, avoiding duplications and creating synergies;
- Better coordination and enhanced inter-agency cooperation at national level within/among the SEECP Participants;
- Enhancing support to the relevant SEE regional initiatives;
- Enhancement of the existing exchange of information and good practices between the RCC participants and other relevant organizations and initiatives;
- Support to the national Radicalization Awareness Networks (RANs) to be established within WBCT Integrated Plan of Action;
- Development of a regional web-based platform for the exchange of information on VE;
- Development of a Matrix of CT activities in the region;
- Fostering focused analysis and research on VE and foreign fighters;
- Development of the master counter-narrative to counter extremist and terrorist propaganda, especially online, and of recommendations regarding legal and technical means to shut down sources of such propaganda;
- Facilitating the establishment of a regional consortium of research institutes to promote radicalization monitoring tools;
- Engaging civil society in CVE projects.

The process will be coordinated by RCC in close cooperation with the SEECP C-i-O. The RCC Secretary General will regularly report to the SEECP MFAs and the RCC Board on the progress achieved and submit recommendations for further actions. The

SEECF MFAs and the SEECF Summit will periodically assess the progress achieved and ensure political support and guidance.

Expected outcome: to achieve a coherent regional approach within a coordinated, all-inclusive and regionally owned process, with concrete results in this field, as a contribution to the overall European and global counter-terrorism efforts.

Outline:

The RCC Secretary General will propose to the SEECF Ministers of Foreign Affairs to appoint a National Focal Point (NFP) for CVE within the Governments, possibly in the Prime Minister's Office.

After the appointment of national focal points on CVE¹, the RCC will, in cooperation with the SEECF Chairmanship-in-Office (CiO), convene the first meeting of the **NFPs Group**. Such working meetings co-chaired by the SEECF CiO and the RCC Secretariat shall be held regularly, possibly twice a year. The EC, USA and other RCC Participants may be invited as guests.

National focal points should serve not only as a point of contact between the national authorities and the RCC and other regional and international organizations and initiatives, but also – in accordance with their respective national legislation and policies – as national coordinators of all CVE efforts, having a strategic coordinating role.

The NFPs Group should discuss and adopt its Terms of Reference in its first meeting. The Terms of Reference should take into account other existing initiatives and mechanisms as well as cross-references to relevant guidance decisions and should be reviewed periodically or when appropriate.

The conclusions will be presented to the SEECF participants. National Focal Points Group will discuss and adopt policy recommendations, to be submitted to the SEECF Governments for their consideration and decision on further action.

These activities would not duplicate or try to supersede the existing efforts through the established cooperation frameworks, such as those mentioned before, especially in the area of police and wider justice and home affairs. The RCC shall intensify its efforts to map, analyze, and – to an extent possible – coordinate them, so to avoid the duplication as much as possible, and to make the CVE cooperation in SEE as efficient and effective as possible.

¹ CVE meant comprehensively, as to include the connected phenomena of radicalization, violent extremism, terrorism, and foreign terrorist fighters, and the overall efforts on their prevention and suppression.

In its work in this field, the RCC may, in accordance with the specific needs and available resources, engage expertise and consultancy services outside of its Secretariat.

The RCC will organize regional workshops, training courses and conferences (with possible out-of-the-region participation) on different aspects of CVE (please see the Annex for details).

This Platform may at a later stage be amended in accordance with relevant global and regional developments.

The RCC Secretariat will strive to avoid duplication and overlapping, and to cooperate as much as possible with other international, regional and national organizations and initiatives active in the CVE-FTF area in SEE, using their experience and expertise.

In addition to the listed activities, the RCC Secretariat shall engage in meaningful and results-oriented consultations with all relevant international, regional, and national actors active in the field.