



## International and Regional Cooperation with focus on Euro-Atlantic Integration Pillar

### “Regional Workshop on Prosecution, Detention, Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Returning Foreign Terrorist Fighters”

**27-29 November 2017**

RACVIAC - Centre for Security Cooperation  
*Rakitje, Republic of Croatia*



#### **Introduction**

On 27-29 November 2017 the “Regional Workshop on Prosecution, Detention, Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Returning Foreign Terrorist Fighters” was held in Rakitje, Croatia. The event was jointly organized by RACVIAC - Centre for Security Cooperation, Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) and the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina (OSCE BA). Based on the conclusions from the several previous

events, such as the “Regional Conference in Sarajevo” (2015), “Regional Workshop in Rakitje” (2016), and the “OSCE Conference in Vienna” (2017), this event underpinned different international efforts in the region to address the issues of foreign terrorist fighters (FTF), in particular the process of prosecution, detention, rehabilitation and reintegration of returning FTFs.

The purpose of the event was to evaluate the existing policies,

programs, and actors, as well as the challenges in relation to the role of CSOs in the rehabilitation and reintegration of returning foreign terrorist fighters from South East Europe, and members of their families (especially children), who followed them to/from war zones.

In addition, the event served as an opportunity for analyses of the specific needs of the countries in order to develop a national program for the engagement with CSOs in the process of rehabilitation and reintegration of FTFs and their families, and evaluated the role of the gender perspective in the prevention of further radicalization and recruitment to violent extremism, and effective rehabilitation and reintegration of returning FTFs.

The target audience included national mid-level representatives (in the field of law enforcement especially), the civil society, international organizations, academia, media and the religious

## Execution

Opening the Workshop RACVIAC Director Ambassador Haydar Berk said that "In accordance with RACVIAC mission to foster dialogue and cooperation on security matters in SEE we see this Conference as an excellent opportunity to further coordinate efforts in this field which leads to stronger synergy and stronger message to the region. The Conference will focus on the analyses of the specific needs of the countries in order to develop a national program for the engagement with civil society organizations in the process of rehabilitation and reintegration of Foreign Terrorist Fighters (FTFs) and their families as well as to identify the role of the gender perspective in the prevention of further radicalization and

community. In total, there were over 40 participants from the Republic of Albania (4), Bosnia and Herzegovina (5), Republic of Bulgaria (2), Republic of Croatia (1), the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia\*(1), Montenegro (1), Moldova (3), Republic of Slovenia (1), Kosovo\*\*(3), Turkey (1) as well as RCC (3), OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina (2) and RACVIAC staff (7).

During the event eight speakers from different institutions were involved in the presentations and discussions, including the IISG Chair (DCAF Ljubljana), OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina, University of Sarajevo, European University of Tirana, Ministry of Security of Bosnia and Herzegovina, OSCE Department on Trans-National Threats, UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women and Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia\*.

recruitment to violent extremism and effective rehabilitation and reintegration of returning FTFs.



Ambassador Haydar Berk, RACVIAC Director

\* Turkey recognizes the Republic of Macedonia with its constitutional name.

\*\* 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.

Ambassador Berk emphasized that this activity has been organized following the conclusions from the previous events related to UN Security Council Resolution 2178 organized by RACVIAC and given that RACVIAC is taking part in the 'EU Western Balkan Counter-Terrorism Initiative: Integrative Plan of Action Objective 7: To Raise Awareness and Best Practice Exchange on Reintegration and Rehabilitation'.

Addressing the participants RCC Secretary General Goran Svilanović said that this Workshop was a reflection of an ongoing effort of the RCC and its partners to contribute to tackling the problem of returnees.



RCC Secretary General Goran Svilanović

“The end of the terrorist para-state in Syria does not mean the end of violent extremism and radicalization leading to terrorism in South East Europe. Many former foreign terrorist fighters came back to their countries of origin, still more are coming. The RCC puts great emphasis on this line of work and in just two days from now, in Brdo pri Kranju, together with the Slovenian SEECF Chairmanship-in-Office we will organize the second Regional Coordination Conference in the area of Counter-Terrorism, Prevention and Countering of Violent Extremism.”

The Regional Workshop on Prosecution, Detention, Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Returning FTFs

was divided into two sessions: *‘Rehabilitation and reintegration of returning FTFs’* and *‘The role of the gender perspective in the effective rehabilitation and reintegration process of returning FTFs’*.

Prior to the first session Mr Rajko Kozmelj, Programme Manager & IISG Chair, DCAF Ljubljana, held a presentation on DCAF Support to the Integrative Internal Security Governance (IISG) in the Western Balkans, reiterating the role of the Western Balkan Counter-Terrorism initiative (WBCTi), a coordinated and needs-based response to radicalization leading to violent extremism and terrorism in the Western Balkans.

In continuation Ms Selma Zeković, National Programme Officer on Counter Violent Extremism from the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina, held a presentation on the activities of the OSCE in BA on multi-sectoral approach to P/CVE at the local level, in which she described the involvement of the OSCE BA in regard to dialogue and cooperation between communities for better dialogue and understanding.

The First Panel (session) entitled *“Rehabilitation and reintegration of returning FTFs”* was moderated by Mr Marinko Raos, Senior Advisor on Security Policy Issues, RCC. The panellists in this session were Professor Vlado Azinović, PhD, Faculty of Political Science, University of Sarajevo, who presented his latest study titled “A Waiting Game: Assessing and Responding to the Threat from Returning Foreign Fighters in the Western Balkans”, Professor Enri Hide, PhD, European University in Tirana, who gave the presentation “Returning Albanian FTFs, challenges of reintegration”, Mr Mario Janeček from the Ministry of Security of BA, and Mr Rajko Kozmelj, Programme Manager &

IISG Chair, DCAF Ljubljana, who gave a presentation on the P-R-A (Prevent-Refer-Address) mechanism and approach in the Western Balkans.

The second session, titled “*The role of the gender perspective in the effective rehabilitation and reintegration process of returning FTFs*”, was moderated by BG Gordana Garašić, Deputy Director of RACVIAC.



*BG Gordana Garašić, Ms. Vilma Petkovska, Ms. Dubravka Simonovic, and Ms. Georgia Holmer*

The panelists were Ms Georgia Holmer, Senior Adviser on Anti-Terrorism issues, OSCE Department on Trans-National Threats, Ms Dubravka Šimonović, UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, its causes and consequences and Ms Vilma Petkovska, Assistant Director, Directorate for Political and Security Cooperation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of MK, Skopje.

### **Conclusions**

In order to enhance the SEE countries' capacity in prosecution, detention, rehabilitation and reintegration of returning FTFs it was concluded that concrete, timely and actionable information sharing on known or suspected FTFs at the regional and global level is of crucial importance. To achieve this, it is important to secure a better use of the existing multilateral information mechanisms and establish new modalities to improve information sharing.

The recent trend of the returning FTFs has shown that most SEE countries are aware of the need to cope with the challenges of their rehabilitation and reintegration back to their native societies. It was highlighted that the process of prosecution of FTFs is not synchronised among neighbouring countries, due to non-standardized judicial policies in the region.

The regional countries lack sufficient resources and adequate knowledge necessary for officials, psychologists, social workers, and other stakeholders to successfully engage in rehabilitation, and reintegration programs.

It was also concluded that rehabilitation programs should be developed, and should incorporate a broad range of cross-disciplinary experts who closely coordinate to support wider inclusion of individuals in their habitats, while families of the returnees should also be integrated into rehabilitation programs.

The issue of FTFs is an upsetting phenomena that needs an adequate response. Returning FTFs should not necessarily be treated as lifelong extremists, but rather as potentially valuable members of their society, following a proper process of rehabilitation and reintegration.

For next activities related to FTFs, RACVIAC together with its partners will try to engage the religious leaders from the communities affected by the phenomena of returning FTFs, since this activity clearly suggested the importance of such inclusion.

Finally, it is of crucial importance to continue addressing the issue of FTFs in the future, due to the impact these individuals could have in relation to general security situation in the SEE region and its consequences.