Introduction

The “Workshop on Developing Strategies on Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Foreign Terrorist Fighters” was held in Tirana, Republic of Albania on 12th - 14th November.

The purpose of the Workshop was to assess existing policies, programs and actors on the national, regional and international level as well as to discuss the challenges in relation to the role of civil society organizations, religious community, youth and education system in the rehabilitation and reintegration of returnees (foreign terrorist fighters and their family members, especially children, who followed them to/from war zones).

The objectives of this Workshop were:
- To assess the level of implementation of the UN system on border security and data exchange, including the Advanced Passenger Information System (API);
- To encourage the improvement of international, regional and sub-regional cooperation to prevent the movement of foreign terrorist fighters from their country, in particular the return and relocation of foreign terrorist fighters;
- To analyse the specific needs of the countries in developing a national program for engaging civil society organizations in the rehabilitation and reintegration process of family members of FTF;
- To discuss perspectives in preventing further radicalization and employment of violent extremism and in ensuring the effective rehabilitation and reintegration of returning FTFs, and
- To discuss and get proposals for drawing up an Action plan with concrete ideas and activities that need to be implemented in the future.

The Conference was attended by forty participants and speakers from the Republic of
Workshop on Developing Strategies on Rehabilitation and Reintegration of FTF

Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, Montenegro, Republic of Serbia, Republic of Turkey and Kosovo**.

Participating International organizations and institutions were OSCE Presence in Albania, OSCE Mission to BA, European Delegation to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albanian Helsinki Committee, UNODC, RCC and European University of Tirana.

Execution

RACVIAC fourth Workshop in a series of activities was opened on 13th November 2018 with the Welcome addresses by:

- Major General (R) Jeronim Bazo, Director of RACVIAC - Centre for Security Cooperation
- Mr Petro Koci, Deputy Minister of Defence, Ministry of Defence of Albania
- Ms Selma Zekovic, Acting Head of the Security Co-operation Unit, Office of the Head of Mission, OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina, and
- Ms Kejda Hysenbegasi, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Albania.

Major General (R) Jeronim Bazo, Director of RACVIAC

On behalf of the Albanian Ministry of Defence, Mr Petro Koci, Deputy Minister of Defence, stated that the Western Balkans still remain vulnerable and fragile due to external pressures, internal divisions and continuous instability which are affected mainly by restricted economic opportunities, unemployment, organized crime and terrorist/extremist activities, in particular the foreign terrorist fighters phenomenon, which Albania is vocal and committed to deal with consistently not only in political and legal terms but also in practice. He added that the rehabilitation and reintegration of returnees is a complex issue and that it requires the synergy and commitment of many institutions that need to intervene in due time to draw the right path and achieve goals.

Ms Selma Zekovic (OSCE Mission to BA) gave an overview of OSCE’s engagement in BA on Preventing/Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalisation that Leads to Terrorism (P/C VERLT). She also pointed out the main areas OSCE Mission to BA is dealing with such as multi/stakeholder co-operation, education, religious communities, criminal justice, and youth.

The Albanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs representative, Ms Kejda Hysenbegasi, introduced the concrete measures Albania is taking in line with the CVE National Strategy and National plan. She emphasized that the end of major fighting operations does not

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* 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 (In accordance with Arrangements regarding representation and cooperation)
The enduring defeat of ISIS has been achieved. Rather, she added, there is still a role for every country and tailor-made hard and soft measures in degrading and defeating terrorism, i.e. much more has to be done.

The first Panel topic was “Trends, Exchange of Information and Experiences of Returning FTFs”. Mr Bekim Maksuti, PhD, Deputy Minister of Defence, MK, and first Keynote speaker, introduced his country’s current situation and the approach to that phenomenon. He stressed that “common cooperation, sharing of information and learning from each other even for developing or reaching the best strategies is the key answer to those challenges”.

Mr Joaquin Zuckerberg presented the UNODC’s mandate and role in countering terrorism. He introduced UNODC’s provided multilateral response in offering technical legal assistance, research and analysis and normative services. Finally, he pointed out the elaborated 19 international legal instruments to prevent terrorist acts which are open to participation by all UN Member States.

Due to the fact that internet has become one of the main weapons of contemporary terrorist organizations, cyber security and online radicalization have to be considered more intensively, Mr Zoran Popov, RCC, stated. He also presented RCC’s main recommendations for regional action on cyber security, f. e. to establish a regional centre of excellence in cyber security. At the end he introduced RCC’s Reintegration and Rehabilitation Programmes as well as RCC’s Multi-Stakeholder and Whole-of-Society approach for P-CVE.

The second session topic was “Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Returning FTFs in SEE”. Ms Sheelagh O’Brady (EU Delegation to BA), introduced a study she conducted in a prison in Zenica, BA. Talking to terrorists and having direct access to prisoners was a unique opportunity and a different approach to gain new insights through, she said. Although the result of this study doesn’t reflect the situation in other prisons, her general recommendations can be seen as an added value.

The afternoon was devoted to national views where RACVIAC Members presented their countries’ perspectives on best practices and current challenges thus providing information on national FTF strategies and policies as well as successful preventive actions.

This was followed by speeches delivered by Ms Rozana Baci (Albanian Coordination Centre for CVE), Mr Enri Hide (European University of Tirana) and Ms Mirian Angoni (Albanian Helsinki Committee). In their statements they said that Albania has drafted an inter-institutional plan for FTF that shares, divides and coordinates the responsibilities in order to be implemented by such institutions as the CVE Centre, Ministry of Interior, Albanian Intelligence Centre, the General Prosecutor’s Office, Ministry of Health and Social Protection, Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth. In addition, further cooperation between the Ministry of Defence, the CVBE Centre and the OSCE is planned.

Mr Hide introduced the “CVE Pyramid” showing measures - Prevention-Intervention-Reaction - to counter radicalization. At the end he explained the importance and the role of Civil Society in the process of reintegration.
Workshop on Developing Strategies on Rehabilitation and Reintegration of FTF and rehabilitation of former FTFs ending with a recommendation for CSOs.

Further focus should be put on rehabilitation and reintegration of former fighters, their families and children as well as on developing prevention measures.

Conclusions
In the Closing remarks MG (R) Jeronim Bazo stated that the FTF phenomenon is still an ongoing issue and that the number of radicalized individuals is decreasing but is still a live topic.
During the Workshop it was determined that there isn’t just one reason for radicalization, and, furthermore, that it can be caused by ideology, money reasons, private and family problems, vulnerability and other issues.

Since there isn’t a distinct pattern, possible answers can only be found through regional and international cooperation in order to tackle this threat with nationally developed strategies and Action plans.
The keywords in facing this threat are “Partnership for success” and “Prevention is better than cure”.

Group photo