DRIVE
on the right path

COUNTRY REPORT / KOSOVO

KCSS
Kosovar Centre for Security Studies

DISENGAGEMENT, REHABILITATION AND REINTEGRATION OF FOREIGN TERRORIST FIGHTERS

MARCH 2022

DRIVE

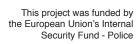on the right path

Table of Contents

Authors: Ardit Orana - Skender Perteshi

List of Abbreviations

DPRRP	Division for the Prevention and Reintegration of Radicalized Persons
DRR	Disengagement, rehabilitation and reintegration
MoIA	Ministry of Internal Affairs
MoJ	Ministry of Justice
MLSW	Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare
MCSC	The Municipal Community Safety Councils
MEST	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
KCS	Kosovo Correctional Service
KPS	Kosovo Probation Service
SPVRELT	Strategy on the Prevention of Violent Extremism that Leads to Terrorism

Abstract

According to the latest government and non-government sources, the Kosovo government has repatriated a total of 250 of its nationals since the conflict started in 2011. Unlike other Western European countries, Kosovo's policy on FFs and their families heavily focused on repatriation processes and ensuring that there is community-level facilitation of reintegration. The purpose of this report is to examine Kosovo's multi-level and multi-actor institutional response in consolidating (D)R&R practices in dealing with returning FFs and their family members. In doing so, the report finds that at the country level, significant work has been done in targeting the issue of radicalization through the development of a cross-sector strategy to guide overall P/CVE and R&R interventions. In addition to national mechanisms, Kosovo has also actively endorsed international and bilateral initiatives aimed at combatting violent extremism that leads to terrorism

The creation of a specialized Division for the Prevention and Reintegration of Radicalized Persons (DPRRP) has clearly distinguished Kosovo from other Western Balkans Countries. While the inception of DPRRP marked Kosovo's first attempt at formalizing cross-sector and multi-level cooperation on (D)R&R efforts, lack of a sub-legal framework development has significantly hampered the decentralization of these efforts.

While some security institutions Kosovo Police (KP) and the Kosovo Intelligence Agency (KIA) have utilized standardized risk assessments in their work, at the level of the Kosovo Correctional Service (KCS) and Kosovo Probation Service (KPS), Kosovo continues to lack a structured risk assessment methodology.

The report similarly finds that prior to the issue of FFs gaining traction in Kosovo, KCS had no specialized expertise in treating the phenomenon and as such, KCS was required to undertake a number of crucial internal reforms. The internal reform process marked a crucial shift in R&R development in the KCS, offering returnees necessary tools and support to their eventual resocialization.

On the other hand, despite the KPS' lack of capacities in treating returnees, the institution has continuously had to work with affected target groups. Even though KPS has essential role in the process of R&R of repatriated individuals from conflict zones, it has not sustainably benefitted from trainings provided by donors and state institutions engaged in P/CVE and R&R in Kosovo. In addition, lack of comprehensive inter-institutional coordination and specialized personnel likewise pose significant challenges to KPS's R&R responsibilities

Kosovo continues to rely heavily on international donor support to implement most of its R&R community-level interventions. Local CSOs and NGOs have similarly played an integral role in offering community-wide R&R support, however, this support remains sporadic and lacks significant coordination. Despite that many R&R activities have been implemented in Kosovo, the process of reintegration of repatriated individuals from conflict zones remains a challenge

In terms of vulnerable groups, the report finds that Kosovo's institutional support to women returnees has featured a distinct approach with a special focus on social reintegration programmes. On the other hand, although children have been technically reintegrated within the school system in Kosovo, additional social factors related to reintegration have not been as effective

1. Introduction

Similar to global trends, Kosovo has been subject to nationals joining the infighting in Syria and Iraq. Official and non-official reporting have found that an estimated 403 Kosovar nationals travelled to Syria and Iraq.[1] Out of the 403 nationals who travelled to the region, 255 are considered as 'foreign fighters' (FFs), while the other number accounts for women and children.[2] Until May 2019, an estimated 130 Kosovars have returned to Kosovo from Syria and Iraq.[3] In terms of coordinated repatriation, the Kosovo government in close cooperation with the United States, has repatriated an additional 110 Kosovo citizens in 2019.[4] 4 out of these returnees were FFs, while the rest were women and children.[5] In 2021, the Kosovo government facilitated another modest wave of repatriation of 11 citizens who still remained in Syria and Iraq.[6]According to the latest government and non-government sources, the Kosovo government has repatriated a total of 250 of its nationals since the conflict started in 2011.[7]

Unlike other Western European countries, Kosovo's policy on FFs and their families heavily focused on repatriation processes and ensuring that there is community-level facilitation of reintegration.[8]This approach developed by the Kosovo government largely followed suit on the changing global conceptualization on violent extremism (VE) and radicalization. While the government's and security institution's initial response focused on law enforcement and the criminal prosecution of individuals involved in the promotion of VE and radical ideologies, subsequent planning ushered in a more holistic approach focused on *disengagement, rehabilitation, and reintegration.* To accommodate this conceptual shift, Kosovo developed a number of policy mechanisms at the national and local level to ensure societal reintegration of returnees.

While the bulk of policies were devised by central level institutions (i.e. line ministries), the technical implementation was tasked at local level and correctional institutions. The Kosovo Correctional Service (KCS) and the Kosovo Probation Service (KPS) especially, have played a crucial role in ensuring that FFs and returnees (in this case women) are offered the necessary assistance pre and post release to stimulate their resocialization. Although these institutions have been subject to asymmetric support in building internal capacities, they have continuously worked towards improving the implementation of R&R activities. Kosovo's multi-level and multi-actor support to (D)R&R has featured a number of innovative and context-specific interventions that distinguish it as a distinct case regionally as well as internationally.

---

[1] Perteshi, S. and Ilazi, R. (2021). Unpacking Kosovo's Response to Returnees from the War Zones in Syria and Iraq. Kosovo Centre for Security Studies (KCSS): https://qkss.org/images/uploads/files/violent-extremism-eng_978757.pdf
Perteshi, S. (2018). Beyond the triggers: new threats of violent extremism in Kosovo. Retrieved from Kosovo Center for Security Studies (KCSS): http://www.qkss.org/repository/docs/violentextremism-eng_611603.pdf
[2] ibid
[3] Perteshi S. (2022). Baseline Assessment for the Kosovo Probation Service. (KCSS): https://qkss.org/images/uploads/files/SHSK.pdf
[4] ibid
[5] ibid
[6] ibid
[7] Perteshi S. and Balaj Sh. (2021). Community Percepctions on violent Extremism and repatriation of Kosovo Citizens' from ISIS battlegrounds. (KCSS): https://qkss.org/images/uploads/files/Extremism-Barometer-ENG 672182.pdf
Stakeholder Interview, January 2022
[8] Perteshi, S. and Ilazi, R. (2021). Unpacking Kosovo's Response to Returnees from the War Zones in Syria and Iraq. Kosovo Centre for Security Studies (KCSS): https://qkss.org/images/uploads/files/violent-extremism-eng_978757.pdf

The purpose of this report is to examine Kosovo's multi-level and multi-actor institutional response in consolidating (D)R&R practices in dealing with returning FFs and their family members. In doing so, the report presents its findings in four main parts. First, it unpacks the legal framework, its challenges, and institutional hierarchy regulating (D)R&R interventions. Second, it examines the type of risk assessment tools used by the government to assess FFs and other returnees. Third, it maps out the Kosovo Correctional Service's (KCS) and Kosovo Probation Service's (KPS) R&R policy practices and their subsequent implementation challenges. Lastly, the report explores how Kosovo's R&R practices have affected other vulnerable returnees, such as women and children.

2. Notes on Methodology

This report is based on a data triangulation methodology developed by the DRIVE project. In order to provide an overview of DRR practices in Kosovo, the report bases its findings through primary data collected through a number of Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and Focus Group Discussion(s) (FGDs). For the purpose of this study, a FGD was organized with a range group of stakeholders including: the Islamic Community in Kosovo, Kosovo Probation Service, Kosovo Correctional Service, local NGOs and CSOs engaged in R&R, Ministry of Internal Affairs (MoIA) and other line Ministry representatives. To follow up on the general discussion and thematic issues identified in the FGD, KCSS conducted three KIIs with representatives from DPRRP, the KCS and the KPS.

Data collected through the FGD and KIIs focused on understanding and examining challenges related to *disengagement, rehabilitation and reintegration* practices utilized by relevant institutions. The methodological approach was also developed on the basis of a baseline research framework developed by DRIVE which focused on seven (7) thematic pillars: 1) inter-governmental and inter-institutional cooperation on DRR, 2) Risk assessment tools, 3) R&R practices in the correctional service, 4) R&R in probation service, 5) existing reintegration measures and 6) vulnerable categories (women and children).

3. Inter-governmental and inter-institutional cooperation on DRR

Cross-cutting inter-institutional intervention design and implementation constitutes Kosovo's most important stride in offering sustainable (D)R&R to returning fighters and their families. This section provides an overview of Kosovo's inter-institutional mechanisms for the implementation of (D)R&R practices through three overarching thematic discussions. First, it examines how institutional (D)R&R practices are regulated through international commitments and national legislative framework. Second, it maps out the diverse range of multi-level institutional responsibilities and their hierarchical organization. Lastly, the section comments on the current challenges facing the composition of Kosovo's institutional approach to (D)R&R.

3.1 National Legislation on inter-institutional (D)R&R coordination

At the country level, significant work been done in targeting the issue of radicalization, however, much of the policy framework has been largely determined by how Western European countries have conceptualized the issue. Similar to international trends, Kosovo's current approach has shifted considerably from a distinctive emphasis on punitive measures in 2015 and 2016.[9] Following the exponential rise in Kosovar citizens joining the infighting in Syria, Kosovo's institutional response was exclusively focused on intelligence gathering and law enforcement operations aimed at targeting hotbeds and individuals promoting radical narratives stimulating engagement in the conflict.[10] This response directly led to numerous arrests of individuals and religious leaders, as well as the closing down of a dozen non-governmental organizations and online forums promoting violent extremism.[11] As the direct security threat from returning fighters and prospective fighters lowered significantly, Kosovo's political agenda-setting on violent extremism similarly shifted to more holistic approaches focused on *prevention, disengagement, rehabilitation, and reintegration.*

The development of cross-cutting national strategies has determined much of Kosovo's institutional response in line with the global policy shift on addressing violent extremism[12]. Although Kosovo had adopted a Strategy Against Terrorism as early as 2009, results-based interventions targeting the phenomenon had not been evident even in the subsequent planning for the period 2012-2017 and 2018-2023.[13]It wasn't until late in 2015 that Kosovo authorities-through concrete political steering- drafted the Strategy on Prevention of Violent Extremism and Radicalization Leading to Terrorism 2015-2020 (SPVERLT 2015-2020) that highlighted a significant shift from exclusive focus on intelligence and law enforcement activities to cross-cutting sector mobilization in prevention, de-radicalization and reintegration.[14] The Strategy set a new

---

[9] Avdimetaj, T. (2021). De-radicalization and Integration: Legal and Policy Famework. DeRadicalisation in Europe and Beyond: Detect Resolve, Reintegrate and Kosovo Centre for Security Studies (KCSS): https://qkss.org/images/uploads/files/violent-extremism-eng_978757.pdf

[10] Avdimetaj, T. (2021). Trends of Radicalisation. De-Radicalisation in Europe and Beyond: Detect, Resolve, Reintegrate and Kosovo Centre for Security Studies (KCSS): https://qkss.org/en/publikimet/trendet-e-radikalizimit-ne-kosove

Qehaja, F., Perteshi, S. and Vrajolli, M. (2017). Mapping the state of play of institutional and community involvement in countering violent extremism in Kosovo. [online] The Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers. Available at: https://www.qkss.org/repository/docs/KCSS_Needs_Assesment_final_42754.pdf.

[11] Avdimetaj, T. (2021). De-radicalization and Integration: Legal and Policy Famework. DeRadicalisation in Europe and Beyond: Detect Resolve, Reintegrate and Kosovo Centre for Security Studies (KCSS): https://qkss.org/images/uploads/files/violent-extremism-eng_978757.pdf

[12] Kosovo has also adopted a number of important laws in relation to the criminal prosecution of the phenomenon such as: Law no.05/L-002 on Prohibition of Joining Armed Conflicts Outside State Territory and the Law No.03/L-196 on the Prevention of Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing. For the purpose of this case-study, emphasis is placed upon the legislative/strategic framework that facilitates inter-institutional cooperation on (D)R&R rather than legal mechanisms regulating criminal proceedings against individuals participating in and financing terrorism.

[13] Qehaja, F., Perteshi, S. and Vrajolli, M. (2017). Mapping the state of play of institutional and community involvement in countering violent extremism in Kosovo. [online] The Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers. Available at: https://www.qkss.org/repository/docs/KCSS_Needs_Assesment_final_42754.pdf.

[14] Strategy on Prevention of Violent Extremism and Radicalization Leading to Terrorism (2015-2020)". 2015. [Accessed April 14] Available at:
http://www.qkss.org/repository/docs/STRATEGY_ON_PREVENTION_OF_VIOLENT_EXTREMISM_AND_RADICALISATION_LEADING_TO_TERRORISM_2015- 2020. pdf

Avdimetaj, T. (2021). De-radicalization and Integration: Legal and Policy Famework. DeRadicalisation in Europe and Beyond: Detect Resolve, Reintegrate and Kosovo Centre for Security Studies (KCSS): https://qkss.org/images/uploads/files/violent-extremism-eng_978757.pdf

precedent for conceptualizing the phenomenon including a background analysis featuring "push and pull", "economic and social" factors that highlighted the need for a cross-sector and multi-level (local and central) engagement of Kosovo institutions.[15]Above all, the Strategy prioritized early identification, prevention and reintegration as overarching mid to long-term objectives that Kosovo institutions would prioritize in tackling violent extremism (ibid). Despite not having a dedicated narrative discussion on cross-sector support in prevention and reintegration, the strategy's action plan featured the engagement of a wide range of institutional actors at the local and central level, as well as commissioned the creation of the Division for the Prevention and Reintegration of Radicalized Persons (DPRRP) as a specialized unit within the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) tasked with overseeing, implementing and coordinating inter-institutional prevention and reintegration efforts (Interview with Stakeholder, 2021).

In addition to national mechanisms, Kosovo has also actively endorsed international and bilateral initiatives aimed at combatting violent extremism that leads to terrorism. Kosovo was among the first countries to "adapt the legal basis" for regulating and sanctioning participation of nationals in foreign conflicts as part of the Global Coalition Against Daesh (Global Coalition Kosovo). Additionally, Kosovo has signed a bilateral Implementing Agreement for the Joint Action Plan on Counterterrorism for the *W*estern Balkans 2019-2020[16]Among others, the agreements seek to placate Kosovo's institutional response against terrorism and violent extremism through direct sector support by the EU.[17] Most recently, Kosovo has also established a formalized working relationship with Europol, paving the way for more enhanced cooperation with EU policing on a range of security issues including violent extremism and terrorism.[18]

3.2 Institutional Responsibilities and Hierarchical Organization in (D)R&R

The inception of DPRRP in 2017 marked Kosovo's first attempt at formalizing cross-sector and multi-level cooperation on (D)R&R efforts[19]. According to the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) draft Regulation on Amending and Supplementing of the Regulation on the Internal Organization and Systematization of Jobs in the Ministry of Internal Affairs, DPRRP is primarily tasked with "country level cross-sector coordination of reintegration activities for released [terrorism-charged] prisoners- MIA, Kosovo Police (KP), Ministry of Justice (MoJ), Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare (MLSW), Kosovo Probation Service (KPS), Kosovo Correctional Service (KCS), Municipalities, etc'.[20]Additionally, the DPRRP is responsible for "developing and implementing

Visoka, G. and Beha, A. (2021). Mapping Local Perspectives on Radicalization in Kosovo. (CBM): http://www.cbmitrovica.org/uploads/RCT/Mapping%20Local%20Perspectives%20(ENG).pdf

[15] ibid

[16] Avdimetaj, T. (2021). De-radicalization and Integration: Legal and Policy Famework. DeRadicalisation in Europe and Beyond: Detect Resolve, Reintegrate and Kosovo Centre for Security Studies (KCSS): https://qkss.org/images/uploads/files/violent-extremism-eng_978757.pdf

[17] ibid

[18] ibid

[19] Although the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) of the Republic of Kosovo provides the overarching political steering for P/CVE priorities and strategies, the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) through the National Coordinator for Prevention of Violent Extremism and the Fight Against Terrorism (exercised by the Minister of MIA) is tasked with oversight of the implementation of SPVERLT 2015-2020. The political agenda-setting on P/CVE issues is not included in this section as focus is centered on technical level inter-institutional coordination facilitated by DPRRP.

[20] ibid

host community-level activities in support of reintegration processes".[21] MoJ cross-sector support relates to oversight to legal proceedings of returnees and the implementation of rehabilitation programmes at the level of MoJ institutions such as the KPS and KCS[22]The Ministry of Education (ME) is also considered an important stakeholder as it supports reintegration measures for children returnees through re-engagement in education[23]. According to MIA personnel, DPRRP serves a focal point between central level rehabilitation and reintegration policy-coordination/development and local level implementation through direct exchanges with returnees and their families.[24]

Local actors at the Municipal level have somewhat been involved in the implementation of DPRRP's reintegration and rehabilitation activities. The Municipal Community Safety Councils (MCSC) for example, have continued to play an integral role as a supporting mechanism in the efforts of implementing the national strategy. DPRRP, has established a highly effective and sustainable communication with MCSCs across Kosovo in the implementation of its reintegration activities[25]. Although MCSCs are tasked with managing an extensive portfolio of security issues in their respective Municipalities, they have proved to be a necessary counterpart in prevention and reintegration undertakings by central level institutions.[26] To further support the social reintegration of returnees, DPRRP works directly with local Centers for Social Labor (CSL), Municipal mayors and directorates for education.[27]

3.3 Challenges to sustainable inter-institutional cooperation on (D)R&R

Effective decentralization of (D)R&R is one of the most prominent challenges to consolidating the role of the DPRRP as a multi-level coordinating body. Lack of direct budgetary support from the MIA to DPRRP has consistently overshadowed the units' competencies vis-à-vis local stakeholders.[28]According to a high-ranking civil servant in the MIA, DPRRP's reliance on NGO and international donor budgetary support highly limits its ability to effectively carry out operational tasks in various localities.[29] Even more concerning is the lack of overall knowledge of local stakeholders on the mere existence of the DPRRP, which comes as a direct result of its limited reach.[30] This in turn has negatively impacted the level of specialized expertise of local authorities

---

[21] ibid

[22] Avdimetaj, T. (2021). Trends of Radicalisation. De-Radicalisation in Europe and Beyond: Detect, Resolve, Reintegrate and Kosovo Centre for Security Studies (KCSS): https://qkss.org/en/publikimet/trendet-e-radikalizimit-ne-kosove

Perteshi, S. and Ilazi, R. (2021). Unpacking Kosovo's Response to Returnees from the War Zones in Syria and Iraq. Kosovo Centre for Security Studies (KCSS): https://qkss.org/images/uploads/files/violent-extremism-eng_978757.pdf

European Commission. (2018, April 17). Neighbourhood-enlargement. Retrieved from Europa: https:// ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/20180417-kosovo-report.pdf

[23] Stakeholder Interview, December 2021

[24] Stakeholder Interview, December 2021

[25] A prominent challenge remains the functionalization of MCSC in some Municipalities. Given that MCSCs do not enjoy direct budgetary support in numerous areas, many Municipalities have been left with dormant, and in some cases, never constituted MCSCs.

[26] Stakeholder Interview, December 2021

[27] Stakeholder Interview, December 2021

[28] ibid

[29] ibid

[30] ibid

in treating cases where returnees have been repatriated in various localities across Kosovo .[31] Local stakeholders note that capacity-building support envisioned in SPVRELT 2015-2020 in rehabilitation and reintegration in cases of violent extremism has been mostly channeled to central level institution personnel.[32]As elaborated in MIA IOM commissioned evaluation of the strategy, too much emphasis has been put on the capacity building of central institutions and little to no effort has been paid to raising awareness[33]As further noted, the significant emphasis on capacity building for central institutions, has been to the detriment of local awareness raising on the overall problem of violent extremism (ibid). This lack of awareness has in turn led Municipalities (namely their Mayors) to deem violent extremism and radicalization not even within their ten (10) most pressing issues (ibid). As such, DPRRP's current engagement in increasing the level of decentralization related to Municipal-led implementation of rehabilitation and reintegration activities has been futile in the absence of local capacities in dealing with the issue.[34]

Scarce sub-legal acts on inter-institutional cooperation have increasingly led to ad-hoc activities in (D)R&R featuring no effective oversight and evaluation. Ever since its inception, the DPRRP continues to lack necessary sub-legal acts at the level of MIA in order to regulate its role as a coordinating body vis-à-vis other central and local institutions. According to a MIA civil servant, sub-legal VE regulation and coordination in Kosovo would severely limit how targeted interventions are designed and executed.[35] This belief is held to a large part due to perceptions that added bureaucratization might hamper both the operational work of the DPRRP, and subsequent policy-planning on a rapidly changing issue such as VE. To fill this gap, DPRRP operates through a confidential internal Program on (Rehabilitation) and Reintegration, whose action plan is said to have cross-cutting institutional support for returnees and their families.[36] The lack of a clearly sub-legal framework is also reflective of the shortcomings in relation to [women] returnee reintegration support. An observation held by individual(s) tasked with supporting these cases has been the occasional abuse by returnees of grant-giving programmes.[37] In such cases, returnees were found to have sought financial support from central and local institutions to cover expenses for which they already received support (i.e. rent).[38] Absent of a clear sub-legal framework at the central level, Municipalities such as the one in South Mitrovica have opted toward drafting local-led strategies on P/CVE and (D)R&R practices through CSO and international donor support.[39] Given that this initiative was taken without the direct support of DPRRP, its success hinges on its ability to harmonize local implementation with effective oversight and evaluation from MIA.

---

[31] ibid

[32] ibid

[33] Stakeholder Interview, January 2022.

[34] Since the implementation of SPVRELT 2015-2020 central and local institutions had agreed to the appointment of a P/CVE focal point. Despite this joint commitment, these focal points are yet to be appointed.

[35] Stakeholder Interview, December 2021

[36] Ibid

[37] Stakeholder Interview, December 2021

[38] Stakeholder Interview, January 2022.

[39] Stakeholder Interview, December 2021

4. Risk Assessment Tools used in Kosovo

In addressing the FF threat, Kosovo authorities have implemented a combination of punitive and R&R measures. Actors across the government have emphasized the obligation to repatriate citizens, including the need for rehabilitation and focus on the eventual reintegration of the returnees back into society. Little effort has been spent in the process of developing of risk assessment tools for repatriated individuals from conflict zones. This section examines the types of risk assessment tools that have been utilized throughout the work of public institutions in Kosovo.

Kosovo currently lacks a structured risk assessment procedure, which has been highlighted by several key stakeholders, including the Kosovo Correctional Service, Kosovo Probation Service, Prosecution and MoIA. Lacking relevant risk assessment tools is key challenge in responding to both the needs and risks posed by returnees and repatriated citizens. Although some risk assessment tools for Violent Extremist Offenders (VEOs) do exist, such as the VERA-2R and ERG22+, and could be replicated in Kosovo, the success of those models could be limited and are not compatible with Kosovo. Additionally, the predominant focus on men and adult FFs, risks in-effective application of these models to cases of repatriated women and children.

Based on the official data, the Kosovo Police and Intelligence note that they have used the existing models (VERA 2 and ERG22) to assess the level of the threat from the FF's. The MoIA, KPS and KCS however, does not utilize any existing tools for risk assessment of FF's and other returnees.[40] The KCS conducts risk assessment reports based on their institutional monitoring visits, behaviors of the prisoners, and their interviews with the prisoner and reports prepared by the KCS intelligence unit.[41]The data and reporting are not regulated or standardized, and as such, are not based on any measured indicators. Additionally, case officers who conduct these assessments lack any formalized training in conducting risk assessments. The KPC similarly lacks any formalized risk assessment report. This to a large extent is due to their lack of data on FFs, and other individuals engaged in the violent extremism cases. What is even more concerning is that there is very limited cooperation between KPS and KCS in data sharing.[42]

To address this issue, Kosovo has benefitted from an EU funded project, implemented by the Council of Europe. This regional project assists Kosovo authorities with the development of a basic tools needed for radicalization identification and carrying out risk and needs assessments of violent extremist prisoners and radicalized inmates in addition to offering a tailor-made rehabilitation programme.

5. R&R in Kosovo Correctional Service

The Kosovo Correctional Service is part of Ministry of Justice (MoJ) and has a mandate to work with all Justice institutions in line with laws of Kosovo regulating the correction and re-socialization of prisoners (MoJ, 2022). In the last 10 years, this institution has been tasked with dealing with numerous challenges in managing and treating the returnees from conflict zones and

---

[40] Focus Group Discussion with Stakeholders, January 2022.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Stakeholder Interview, December 2021

implementing PCVE and R&R activities in Kosovo. This section examines the internal reforms and the work of the KCS aimed at improving R&R delivery to returnees.

The Kosovo Correction Service works based on the legislation by the Assembly of Kosovo. Law no. 04/L-149 on execution of criminal sanctions, by the Criminal Code of the Republic of Kosovo no. 06/L-074 approved by the Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo, as well as secondary legislation of MoJ and KCS.

Prior to the issue of FFs gaining traction in Kosovo, KCS had no specialized expertise in treating the phenomenon and as such, KCS was required to undertake a number of crucial internal reforms. Kosovo Correctional Services (KCS), started to repatriate individuals from conflict zones for the first time in 2014 based on media reports and official data.[43] The phenomenon of returnees and their rehabilitation process marked a new mandate for the KCS. This institution has had previous experience with religious radicalized individuals, and those with other criminal offences, but managing returnees remained a new experience and one of the institution's biggest challenges. KCS staff lacked the necessary capacities to work with returned FFs and other returnees from conflict zones in R&R processes. According to a senior officer in the KCS, the institution's staff had not received any relevant capacity-building support to design, manage and implement returnee R&R programmes.[44] In addition to lack of capacities in managing these cases, KCS staff was unaware of the societal challenges posed by the phenomenon and its effects on the wider population.[45] During 2015, when violent extremism was viewed to have reached its peak in Kosovo, KSC management did not have any internal plan or assessment dealing with returnees. During this time, the KSC had managed and treated returnees with standard procedures utilized for other prisoners sentenced with other criminal offences.

Following initial cases of treating returnees in Kosovo prisons and detention centers, KCS senior management launched an internal reform aimed at consolidating R&R programmes for this category of criminal offences. The first returnees and others sentenced with offences related to terrorism had been placed in the same prison sections as prisoners with other criminal offences.[46] KCS monitoring activities had rightly noticed that prisoners sentenced with terrorism cases, had spread radical narratives to other inmates with unrelated offences.[47] The dissemination of violent extremism and radicalization within KCS detention centers and prisons had gone unnoticed by the correctional officers of the KCS until 2017, due to their lack of knowledge on overall trends of radicalization and effects of returning FFs.

To further prevent radicalization and violent extremism and identify the needs of the KCS staff and capacities, the KCS has conducted an internal assessment with the support of the International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program (ICITAP), a program of the US Justice Department. The programme was designed with the primary aim of determining the effective approaches for KCS to follow in dealing with returnees.[48] Among others, the internal

---

[43] Stakeholder Interview, January 2020.

[44] Stakeholder Interview, December 2021

[45] Ibid.

[46] Stakeholder Interview, January 2022

[47] Ibid.

[48] Perteshi, S. and Ilazi, R. (2021). Unpacking Kosovo's Response to Returnees from the War Zones in Syria and Iraq. Kosovo Centre for Security Studies (KCSS): https://qkss.org/images/uploads/files/violent-extremism-eng_978757.pdf

assessment proposed that all prisoners convicted of terrorism secluded from the rest of the prisoners.[49] The internal assessment conducted in 2017, emphasized that there is no ongoing R&R in the KCS system and subsequently recommended the development of specialized programmes.[50] The report also suggested the increase of professional capacities and knowledge for KCS to promote know-how and soft skills in dealing with returnees.[51]

As a direct result of the internal report findings, KCS embarked upon an internal reform process aimed at integrating findings and increasing R&R capacities for returnees. KSC management subsequently changed procedures and practices on how to treat and manage returnees and others convicted with terrorism cases [52] KCS reforms regulated that all prisoners convicted with terrorism offences into two prison facilities. Those which were categorized with low and average security threat were sent in one pavilion in Dubrava detention center, and those who were categorized as a high security threat were sent to a specific pavilion in the high security prison in Gerdovc, Prishtina. This decision was made in order to protect other prisoners from the elements of radicalization and violent extremism that was propagated by FF's.[53] KCS with the support of ICITAP and other local and international partners, facilitated capacity building training for its officers and senior management on on-the-job training, implementation of R&R programmes, violent extremism, radicalization and terrorism, terms and history of terrorism, early sings of radicalization and terrorism.[54]

In the scope of R&R reforms in the KCS, returnee targeted interventions were also developed in the form of vocational training. Vocational training offered to returnees featured training in service-delivery professions, communication skills, business management and others (Stakeholder Interview, 2021). Training modules part of the R&R programmes provided to returnees offered them additional opportunities to be educated on topics including stress management and religious education provided by imams through a partnership with the Islamic Community of Kosovo (ICK).[55] According to an official from KCS, nearly half of prisoners convicted of terrorism cases categorized as a low and midlevel security threat were part of the programme.[56] Those categorized as a high security risk consistently refused to be part of any of KCS's R&R initiatives.[57]

5.1 R&R and Internal reforms in KCS

To support the development of moderate ideological beliefs, internal KCS reforms also highlighted cooperation with the Islamic Community in Kosovo. In 2018, the Ministry of Justice

---

[49] Stakeholder Interview, December 2021.

[50] Stakeholder Interview, January 2022.

[51] Perteshi, S. and Ilazi, R. (2021). Unpacking Kosovo's Response to Returnees from the War Zones in Syria and Iraq. Kosovo Centre for Security Studies (KCSS): https://qkss.org/images/uploads/files/violent-extremism-eng_978757.pdf

[52] Stakeholder Interview, December 2021

[53] Stakeholder Interview, January 2022

[54] Focus Group Discussion, January 2022

[55] Perteshi, S. and Ilazi, R. (2021). Unpacking Kosovo's Response to Returnees from the War Zones in Syria and Iraq. Kosovo Centre for Security Studies (KCSS): https://qkss.org/images/uploads/files/violent-extremism-eng_978757.pdf
Stakeholder Interview, December 2021.

[56] Ibid

[57] Ibid

(MoJ) and the ICK signed an agreement to implement a new programme in the KCS aimed at facilitating deradicalization and ideological disengagement of incarcerated returnees[58]According to the agreement, ICK was tasked with providing verified imams to conduct religious lecturers in the KCS, while the MoJ ensured the logistics of conducting these lectures KCS facilities. This initiative however, had limited success due to the resistance of prisoners who were sentenced with terrorism offences to take part in the lectures. In a recent Focus Group Discussion in Prishtina on the issue, an Imam noted that the prisoners did not deem them as legitimate representatives who could interpret religious scripture[59]

KCS internal reform in the context of R&R also impacted the internal organization of the institution. In 2019, the KCS established two internal units specialized in P/CVE and R&R management, namely the the unit on the Management of Violent Extremism within KCS and the unit of Intelligence and Analyses. These two internal mechanisms of KCS are independent mechanisms within KCS and support each other in analyzing, monitoring, and working with returnees' other target groups to reduce the threat from violent extremism and terrorism. The unit for management of violent extremism is composed of social workers, psychologists, human right experts, KCS officers, and others based on the needs identified by KCS. The unit of intelligence on the other hand, is composed of KCS analysts, who are tasked with working directly with MoIPA, Police and the Kosovo Intelligence Agency[60]

6. R&R in the Kosovo Probation Service

The Kosovo Probation Service (KPS) is the central body of state administration under the MoJ and is responsible for the organization, implementation, and supervision of the implementation of alternative punishments and social reintegration of persons convicted of various criminal offences, including those of terrorism. Additionally, the mandate of this institution is to supervise and provide assistance to persons convicted of various criminal offences, including those convicted of terrorism, who are sentenced or paroled by a final court decision.[61] The aim of this section is to examine the role and challenges of the KPS in dealing with returnees.

The Kosovo Probation Service bases its work on legislation approved by the Assembly of Kosovo. Law no. 04/L-149 on execution of criminal sanctions, by the Criminal Code of the Republic of Kosovo no. 06/L-074 approved by the Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo, as well as the Criminal Procedure Code of the Republic of Kosovo no.08/L-002, approved by the Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo in February 2021. The KPS also basis its work on the Juvenile Justice Code no. 06/L-006 that regulates the KPS treatment procedures related to juveniles convicted of various criminal offences.[62]

---

[58] Stakeholder Interview, January 2022
[59] Focus Group Discussion in Prishtina, January 2022
[60] Stakeholder Interview, January 2022
[61] Perteshi S. and Balaj Sh. (2021). Community Percepctions on violent Extremism and repatriation of Kosovo Citizens' from ISIS battlegrounds. (KCSS): https://qkss.org/images/uploads/files/Extremism-Barometer-ENG 672182.pdf
[62] Perteshi S. and Balaj Sh. (2021). Community Percepctions on violent Extremism and repatriation of Kosovo Citizens' from ISIS battlegrounds. (KCSS): https://qkss.org/images/uploads/files/Extremism-Barometer-ENG 672182.pdf

Despite the KPS' lack of capacities in treating returnees, the institution has continuously had to work with affected target groups. The phenomenon of violent extremism and radicalization was an unknown phenomenon and practice until late 2018 for KPS.[63] The lack of KPS capacities also relates to its neglection in the process of drafting national policies on countering of violent extremism and radicalization such as SPVRELT 2015-2020, and overall PCVE and R&R programmes until 2021. The KPS was and continues to be unprepared in managing and treating individuals convicted of terrorist acts.[64]

Kosovo Probation Services had started treating the cases of individuals convicted with terrorism cases who were released conditionally by Kosovo justice authorities in 2018. Absent of any previous experience or training on rehabilitation and reintegration, the general phenomenon of foreign fighters, violent extremism, and radicalization, KPS has continued to work with numerous individuals convicted of terrorism.[65]

Additionally, The KPS is currently treating 32 women who were repatriated from conflict zones and are conditionally sentenced by the court. Most of them were subject to two years and half of conditional sentence by a court decision. [66] These decisions were conducted in accordance with the legal framework in Kosovo, based on relevant mitigation measures, such as plea bargaining, good behavior and good cooperation with law enforcement and justice institutions in Kosovo during trials (Ibid). Due to the lack of internal capacities and knowledge related to VE and returnees, the KPS struggled considerably in managing cases of these women returnees.[67]

6.1 Challenges of Kosovo Probation Service in R&R

Even though KPS has essential role in the process of R&R of repatriated individuals from conflict zones, it has not sustainably benefitted from trainings provided by donors and state institutions engaged in P/CVE and R&R in Kosovo[68]This institution continues to lack basic information on the causes behind violent extremism and radicalism, as well as the identification of early signs of VE and radicalization. Due to the lack of experience dealing with repatriated individuals and lack of information and data on them, the KPS has found it increasingly difficult to design tailored interventions. [69] Strikingly, the KPS continues to use the same procedures to treat cases of persons convicted of terrorism and those used in case of persons convicted of other criminal offences.[70] Except from minor ad-hoc support to the institutions by local CSOs and international

---

[63] Stakeholder Interview, January 2022

[64] Stakeholder Interview, December 2021

[65] Focus Group Discussion in Prishtina, January 2022.

[66] Shtuni, A. (2021). Rehabilitation and Reintegration path of Kosovar Minors and Women Repatriated from Syria. (IRI): https://www.iri.org/resources/new-report-supports-rehabilitation-of-kosovo-youth-and-women-with-connection-to-violent-extremism/

[67] Perteshi S. and Balaj Sh. (2021). Community Percepctions on violent Extremism and repatriation of Kosovo Citizens' from ISIS battlegrounds. (KCSS): https://qkss.org/images/uploads/files/Extremism-Barometer-ENG_672182.pdf

[68] Stakeholder Interview, January 2022

[69] Adelina, A. (2021). Many Challenges for the Kosovo Probation Service in the reintegration and rehabilitation of those jailed for terrorism. KALLXO: Perteshi S. and Balaj Sh. (2021). Community Percepctions on violent Extremism and repatriation of Kosovo Citizens' from ISIS battlegrounds. (KCSS): https://qkss.org/images/uploads/files/Extremism-Barometer-ENG_672182.pdf

[70] Stakeholder Interview, December 2021

donors, there has been no integrated approach at the government level to facilitate KPS personnel capacity-building on R&R.[71]

Lack of comprehensive inter-institutional coordination and specialized personnel likewise pose significant challenges to KPS's R&R responsibilities. Kosovo institutions such as the Police, MoIA, KCS and KPS face significant problems in information sharing on cases of repatriated individuals. As it stands, only KPS is limited from having full access in the FTF's and other individuals convicted with terrorism database developed at the government level.[72] A recent KCSS policy report highlights that the KPS has been in-effective in the preparation of joint institutional trainings, sharing of analytical and monitoring reports for individuals convicted of offences related to violent extremism and terrorism cases[73] Additionally, KPS currently functions with a limited number of staff carrying out the work according to the legal mandate of the institution.[74] Currently, there are 65 employees Majority of them, around 25, are managerial and administrative staff. There are 40 officials dealing with convicts or parolees, including those for terrorism.[75]This challenge limits KPS in providing professional treatment for individuals convicted of terrorism cases. As noted in a recent Focus Group Discussion held in Prishtina, KPS staff have limited knowledge in treating cases of terrorism and violent extremism, including rehabilitation and reintegration of returnees from war zones.[76]

7. Reintegration measures in Kosovo

More than 250 individuals who have participated in conflict zones in Syria and Iraq are returned or repatriated in Kosovo. Many of them have passed or are undergoing rehabilitation and reintegration programs and initiatives undertaken by Kosovo institution and civil society organizations.[77]Institutions such as MoIA, MoJ, Ministry of Education, GCERF, IOM, ICITAP, Council of Europe and local organizations in Kosovo are implementing different R&R activities for women, children, and FT's returnees or repatriated from conflict zones. This section examines the scope of existing R&R activities and the division of responsibilities among implementing, designing, and managing institutions.

Kosovo's national strategy development on issues pertaining to VE, radicalization and repatriation has served a crucial role in garnering institutional and public support for R&R initiatives across Kosovo. In addition, SPVRELT 2015-2020, Kosovo has also drafted the National

---

[71] Stakeholder Interview, January 2022.

[72] Adelina, A. (2021). Many Challenges for the Kosovo Probation Service in the reintegration and rehabilitation of those jailed for terrorism. KALLXO: Perteshi S. and Balaj Sh. (2021). Community Percepctions on violent Extremism and repatriation of Kosovo Citizens' from ISIS battlegrounds. (KCSS): https://qkss.org/images/uploads/files/Extremism-Barometer-ENG 672182.pdf

[73] Perteshi S. and Balaj Sh. (2021). Community Percepctions on violent Extremism and repatriation of Kosovo Citizens' from ISIS battlegrounds. (KCSS): https://qkss.org/images/uploads/files/Extremism-Barometer-ENG 672182.pdf

[74] Stakeholder Interview, January 2022.

[75] Perteshi, S. and Ilazi, R. (2021). Unpacking Kosovo's Response to Returnees from the War Zones in Syria and Iraq. Kosovo Centre for Security Studies (KCSS): https://qkss.org/images/uploads/files/violent-extremism-eng_978757.pdf
Perteshi S. and Balaj Sh. (2021). Community Percepctions on violent Extremism and repatriation of Kosovo Citizens' from ISIS battlegrounds. (KCSS): https://qkss.org/images/uploads/files/Extremism-Barometer-ENG 672182.pdf

[76] Focus Group Discussion in Prishtina, January 2022

[77] Perteshi S. and Balaj Sh. (2021). Community Percepctions on violent Extremism and repatriation of Kosovo Citizens' from ISIS battlegrounds. (KCSS): https://qkss.org/images/uploads/files/Extremism-Barometer-ENG 672182.pdf

Strategy for Sustainable Reintegration of Repatriated Persons in Kosovo (NSSRRP 2018-2022) with a goal to work towards reintegration of returned persons from conflict zones and reintegrate them back in the community.[78]Among others, the strategy places important focus on receiving communities as drivers for reintegration and rehabilitation.[79]As such, community awareness raising is featured as prominent pillar in ensuring the sustainable delivery of R&R activities to returnees. The strategy also suggests that state authorities and CSO's should offer repatriated individuals psychological and religious counselling in prisons, as well as social support, accommodation, health support and education for women and children who are returned or repatriated from conflict zones. [80]

Kosovo is the only country in the Western Balkans that has created a special mechanism such as DPRRP tasked with coordinating and delivering R&R support to returnees (Stakeholder Interview, 2022). The division of MoIA is composed of civil servants who have received effective capacity-building support in designing and delivering R&R programmes at the community level. Since its establishment, the DPRRP has managed to develop trust and strong partnerships with repatriated families and individuals (Stakeholder Interview, 2021). The work of DPRRP initially began in 2017 when they directly worked those who returned on a voluntary basis through the provision of emergency relief support. However, DPRRP continues to lack human resources to reach all repatriated individuals and address their needs and concerns (Stakeholder Interview, 2021).

7.1 Rehabilitation and Reintegration Initiatives in Kosovo

Kosovo continues to rely heavily on international donor support to implement most of its R&R community-level interventions. ICITAP has implemented the first rehabilitation programme in Kosovo. Its aim was to implement rehabilitation activities for inmates convicted of terrorism in prisons and rehabilitation centers of Kosovo. Through this program the ICITAP has significant impact in increasing the professional capacities and knowledge of KCS in the areas of management of prisons and detention centers, risk assessment for terrorism convicts as well as overall monitoring and implementing of R&R activities.[81] The European Union has supported KCS and KPS in developing capacities in implementing R&R programmes for terrorism convicts. As of recent, the Council of Europe has offered support to KPS and KCS through a specialized P/CVE and R&R programme. The goal of this project is to assist the Kosovo corrections and probation service with the development of basic tools needed for radicalization identification and carrying out screening, risk and needs assessments of violent extremist prisoners and radicalized inmates and tailor-made rehabilitation programmes.

---

[78] Ministry of Internal Affairs. (2017). Documents/Strategic documents. Retrieved from Office of the Prime Minister: http://kryeministri-ks.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/ANG-StrategjiaShtet%C3%ABrore-per-Riintegrimin-e-Qendrueshem-te-PR-2018-2022....pdf

[79] Ministry of Internal Affairs. (2017). Documents/Strategic documents. Retrieved from Office of the Prime Minister: http://kryeministri-ks.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/ANG-StrategjiaShtet%C3%ABrore-per-Riintegrimin-e-Qendrueshem-te-PR-2018-2022....pdf

[80] Ministry of Internal Affairs. (2018). Documents. Retrieved from Office of the Prime Minister: https:// kryeministri-ks.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Strategjia-Nacionale-per-siguri-ne-Bashkesianglisht.pdf

[81] Qehaja, F., Perteshi, S. and Vrajolli, M. (2017). Mapping the state of play of institutional and community involvement in countering violent extremism in Kosovo. [online] The Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers. Available at: https://www.qkss.org/repository/docs/KCSS_Needs_Assesment_final_42754.pdf

Funded by
the European Union

In addition to international support, Kosovo institutions have developed integrated interventions through direct cooperation with the ICK. In 2018, MoJ signed an agreement with the Islamic Community of Kosovo (ICK) to organize religious lectures in prisons for those convicted of acts related to terrorism. This initiative failed because majority of convicts for terrorism refused to be part of these lectures and program.[82] Due to ideological reasons, prisoners have not accepted to be part of the lecturers provided from the chosen imams.[83]Based on the agreement, ICK had the responsibility to oversee all prison and detention center libraries for material that had ideological elements that would motivate VE, hate speech or terrorism inspired by Islamic scholarship.[84]

Local CSOs and NGOs have similarly played an integral role in offering community-wide R&R support. Some local organizations have benefitted from the Global Community Resilience Fund (GCERF, CDF, KRCT, FIQ, ATRC, CBM) an initiative seeking to strengthen the community against various forms of VE, as well as support local efforts for R&R of persons radicalized and repatriated from foreign wars. This initiative has provided vocational training for repatriated individuals (women and FTF) or their relatives for business startups, business management training and agricultural.[85] Through these initiatives, the GCERF aims at creating a safe and suitable environment for reintegration of returnees from war zones. Some of the women returnees reported positive experiences from R&R programmes provided by GCERF and implemented by local organizations.[86]Local CSOs such as KCSS, Partners Kosova and KRCT, with the support of US department of State, have implemented R&R programmes for citizens who returned from war zones, with a special focus on children returnees.[87]The activities for the children were focused on drama and recreational activities such as paintings to stimulate children's creative and positive thinking, self-expression, and the development of soft skills, education through the sport, their mental health challenges and preventing trauma and supporting education and integration of those children in community.[88]

7.2 R&R progress and challenges

Despite that many R&R activities have been implemented in Kosovo, the process of reintegration of repatriated individuals from conflict zones remains a challenge. In most cases, R&R activities implemented by local and international organizations were available only to repatriated children from the conflict zones. Ad-hoc activities targeting only repatriated children have to some extent prevented them from sustainably integrating due to significant. Repatriated children are still not well accepted from their peers in school, in kindergarten or community. According to the Kosovo Security Barometer data, forty-five percent (45%) of the respondents

---

[82] Stakeholder Interview, January 2022.

[83] Ibid

[84] Ibid

[85] Focus Group Discussion in Prishtina, January 2022.

[86] Ibid

[87] Ibid

[88] Perteshi S. and Balaj Sh. (2021). Community Percepctions on violent Extremism and repatriation of Kosovo Citizens' from ISIS battlegrounds. (KCSS): https://qkss.org/images/uploads/files/Extremism-Barometer-ENG_672182.pdf

said they would not allow their children to socialize with the children repatriated from conflict zones, while thirty-two percent (32%) of them did not have any problem in doing so.[89]

Similar activities were conducted also for women and returned foreign fighters. The R&R programmes and activities were organized only for women returnees and FF's and not the general public of the community. This approach has limited the contacts of community with the repatriated women which has made citizens more hesitant to directly integrate them into the community (Stakeholder Interview, 2022). Data from the Kosovo Security Barometer shows that fifty-one percent (51%) of Kosovo Security Barometer respondents said that they believed the returnees are a threat or a high threat for Kosovo, while forty-one (41%) percent of them believe that they pose very little or no threat at all.[90] The R&R approach of the government, international and local organizations should change. R&R programs should address the needs and context of the country, community and the individuals for whom the program was designed. In activities with repatriated individuals, other community members should also be included to ease resocialization processes. This approach will help to prevent the stigma and isolation of the repatriated citizens and could have positive impact of their integration in community.

8. DRR practices targeted at Vulnerable Categories

The design and delivery of cross-institutional support has varied significantly based on categories of returnees. Approaches to (D)R&R in cases of women and children who had joined their husband/fathers in Syria and Iraq have received targeted support from institutions. Following the latest wave of repatriation in 2019, it is estimated that Kosovo institutions have offered direct medical, psychological, financial, and other support to 74 children and 32 women.[91] This section provides an overview of the policies to support the reintegration and rehabilitation of women and children in Kosovo.

8.1 (D)R&R Support to women

Kosovo institutional support to women returnees has featured a distinct approach with a special focus on social reintegration programmes. Although women have been subject to criminal proceeding similar to men, in some cases, they have been offered alternative sentences.[92] Ensuring that government support is equally dispersed across affected individuals (in this case, women) remains challenging. A 2020 KCSS report highlights that a woman returnee had noted that the government had provided no significant long-term solution to the provision of social assistance.[93] This case, however, did not seem to be representative of what had been

---

[89] Perteshi S. and Balaj Sh. (2021). Community Percepctions on violent Extremism and repatriation of Kosovo Citizens' from ISIS battlegrounds. (KCSS): https://qkss.org/images/uploads/files/Extremism-Barometer-ENG 672182.pdf

[90] Perteshi S. and Balaj Sh. (2021). Community Percepctions on violent Extremism and repatriation of Kosovo Citizens' from ISIS battlegrounds. (KCSS): https://qkss.org/images/uploads/files/Extremism-Barometer-ENG 672182.pdf

[91] Perteshi, S. and Ilazi, R. (2021). Unpacking Kosovo's Response to Returnees from the War Zones in Syria and Iraq. Kosovo Centre for Security Studies (KCSS): https://qkss.org/images/uploads/files/violent-extremism-eng 978757.pdf

[92] Stakeholder Interview, December 2021

[93] Perteshi, S. and Ilazi, R. (2021). Unpacking Kosovo's Response to Returnees from the War Zones in Syria and Iraq. Kosovo Centre for Security Studies (KCSS): https://qkss.org/images/uploads/files/violent-extremism-eng 978757.pdf

achieved so far according to MIA. Alongside de-radicalization efforts, MIA officials have noted that international donor support has led to the employment of 12 women returnees in the private sector in Kosovo.[94] DPRRP's social reintegration programmes targeting women returnees have to a large extent focused on capacity-building trainings to stimulate employment and sustainable resocialization. Local NGOs have similarly played an important role in local civil sector trainings in offering women returnees the necessary material and psychological support to ensure their families' reintegration in their communities. This support, however, continues to be ad-hoc and scarce, and as a result, significantly hinders the prospects that all women returnees are offered equal.[95] Asymmetrical (D)R&R knowledge and budgetary support throughout Kosovo Municipalities is another reason for the disparity between R&R successes geographically.[96] Despite these hindrances, DPRRP has proven that if administered and monitored effectively, Kosovo's distinct community-level social reintegration can ensure women are reintegrated.

Ideological deradicalization has similarly been an effective (D)R&R measure that has been deemed successful in cases of women returnees. The Islamic Community of Kosovo (ICK) has continuously supported Kosovo institutions in deradicalization processes, often through formalized[97]. This cooperation has focused on promoting the work of imams and female preachers in communities or in prisons. According to local stakeholders, the work of these preachers has been instrumental in preparing communities to accept women returnees, as well as provide individual support on ideological de-radicalization.[98]

8.2 (D)R&R Support to children

Although children have been technically reintegrated within the school system in Kosovo, additional social factors related to reintegration have not been as effective.[99]The Ministry of Education has managed the reintegration of numerous age groups within school systems across Kosovo.[100] The social reintegration of children in Kosovo into the school system has been designed to limit their seclusion from their communities.[101]As argued in a KCSS report, the Ministry of Education has been successful in ensuring that children "of ages 6-7" attend first grade, and they have additionally instituted catch-up mechanisms for older age groups.[102]Despite this positive

---

[94] Shtuni, A. (2021). Rehabilitation and Reintegration path of Kosovar Minors and Women Repatriated from Syria. (IRI): https://www.iri.org/resources/new-report-supports-rehabilitation-of-kosovo-youth-and-women-with-connection-to-violent-extremism/
Stakeholder Interview, January 2022

[95] Perteshi, S. and Ilazi, R. (2021). Unpacking Kosovo's Response to Returnees from the War Zones in Syria and Iraq. Kosovo Centre for Security Studies (KCSS): https://qkss.org/images/uploads/files/violent-extremism-eng_978757.pdf

[96] Ibid

[97] Perteshi, S. and Ilazi, R. (2021). Unpacking Kosovo's Response to Returnees from the War Zones in Syria and Iraq. Kosovo Centre for Security Studies (KCSS): https://qkss.org/images/uploads/files/violent-extremism-eng_978757.pdf
Stakeholder Interview, December 2021

[98] Stakeholder Interview, January 2022

[99] Perteshi, S. and Ilazi, R. (2021). Unpacking Kosovo's Response to Returnees from the War Zones in Syria and Iraq. Kosovo Centre for Security Studies (KCSS): https://qkss.org/images/uploads/files/violent-extremism-eng_978757.pdf

[100] Ibid

[101] Stakeholder Interview, December 2021.

[102] Perteshi, S. and Ilazi, R. (2021). Unpacking Kosovo's Response to Returnees from the War Zones in Syria and Iraq. Kosovo Centre for Security Studies (KCSS): https://qkss.org/images/uploads/files/violent-extremism-eng_978757.pdf

Funded by
the European Union

engagement, support staff in public educational institutions have not been offered the necessary capacity-building to aid the reintegration of these vulnerable children[103]

As of 2021, DPRRP staff consists of four individuals, of which only one is a specialized clinical psychologist working on the rehabilitation and reintegration programme.[104]At the local level, psychologists employed at public educational institutions are said to completely lack any specialized knowledge in dealing with repatriated children.[105] While Municipal officials have noted that the number of psychologists employed at the local level is not a major obstacle, they consistently emphasize that lack of expertise in rehabilitation and reintegration of children returnees may not effectively treat traumas and any remaining radical affiliations.[106]

9. Discussion and Concluding Remarks

This report has highlighted that Kosovo has taken important strides in accommodating repatriated individuals as well as offering them necessary financial and capacity-building support in their reintegration. Following global policy shifts on VE and radicalization, Kosovo's institutional response followed suit in prioritizing restorative and reintegration measures instead of punitive ones. The development of SPVRELT 2015-2020 specifically, marked an important step in improving institutional knowledge and awareness on dealing with FFs and other returnees. The cross-sector and multi-actor engagement developed through the strategy and its action plan have ensured that a wide range of central and local institutions understand the societal impact of VE and radicalization. The creation of DPRRP as a specialized unit within MoIA tasked with P/CVE and R&R inter-institutional coordination has indeed distinguished Kosovo in its approach vis-à-vis its regional neighbors. The lack of secondary legislation to regulate inter-institutional coordination, however, has significantly limited current R&R decentralization and coordination efforts. As such, capacity-building and information sharing at the local level has been largely dependent on ad-hoc support by international donors and local CSOs.

Standardized risk assessment tools have not been institutionalized at the level of the KCS and KPS. The KCS and KPS continue to operate on internal risk assessment methods as opposed to the utilization of international best practices such as VERA 2 and ERG22. Although KP and KIA stakeholders have noted that these methods have been utilized in their work, their lack of usage by KCS and KPS is of significant concern. Absent of standardized models, the KCS and KPS has relied on internal ad-hoc risk assessment of individuals convicted of terrorism. As evident in stakeholder views, these risk assessments are often subjective in nature and feature no clear methodological guidance.

Asymmetric support and capacity development between KCS and KPS have limited the scope and sustainability of R&R initiatives. In the case of the KCS, its legal proximity and responsibilities in dealing with FFs and other returnees has established it as a central institution dealing with R&R.

---

[103] Stakeholder Interview, January 2022
Perteshi, S. (2018). Beyond the triggers: new threats of violent extremism in Kosovo. Retrieved from Kosovo Center for Security Studies (KCSS): http://www.qkss.org/repository/docs/violentextremism-eng_611603.pdf
[104] Stakeholder Interview, January 2022
[105] Ibid
[106] Ibid

Although significant donor and government support was required to build upon the capacities of KCS staff to design, manage and execute R&R initiatives, the institution has managed to successfully implement various interventions. The KCS' internal reform process which led to the development of specialized units dealing with P/CVE and R&R issues was pivotal in examining present successes. The reform period, similarly, allowed KCS to develop more sustainable interventions through cooperation with other (non)institutional actors such as the ICK. The same cannot be said about the KPS. Unlike KCS, KPS did not benefit from direct capacity-building and internal reform support in order to equip its staff with the specialized knowledge to treat returnees. As such, the KPS has been largely dependent on existing internal capacities to set the methodological scope of R&R within its institution.

Lack of government budgeting on (D)R&R and ad-hoc donor and CSO support has significantly hampered comprehensive institutional support to returnees. DPRRP implements a range of project-based interventions in R&R through partnerships with international donors and CSOs, however, it lacks a standalone budget code in MoIA. Lack of human resource and budgetary support has severely limited DPRRP's ability to fulfill its legal mandate as the central coordinating body in R&R. Heavy reliance on donor funds and reach of CSOs (and local NGOs) have not allowed DPRRP to streamline R&R support through a comprehensive action plan. Instead, many of the R&R initiatives at the local level often go unnoticed at the central level, and vice-versa.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Kosovo's development of the new Strategy on the Prevention of Violent Extremism and Radicalization that leads to Terrorism (SPRVELT) must focus much of its attention on regulating inter-institutional cooperation in the realm of R&R.

2. Drafting sub-legal acts at the level of the Ministry of Internal Affairs on inter-institutional P/CVE and R&R coordination is imperative for clear division of responsibilities among central and local level institutions

3. The MoIA, KCS and KPS should institutionalize the usage of professional judgment tools used in EU countries such as VERA 2 and ERG22.

4. [Recommendation for KCS]

5. Greater institutional, donor and CSO support must be channeled to support internal KPS capacity-building in implementing R&R interventions. This capacity-building support should be focused on the design and management of R&R interventions and effective risk assessment

6. The KPS, with the support of DPRRP, should work toward establishing specialized units in R&R at the organizational in order to more effectively implement and evaluate targeted interventions.

7. Government institutions, especially MoIA and the Ministry of Education must develop an operational plan for capacity-building support of educational institutions and their staff in providing necessary psycho-social support to children returnees.

8. Institutions and non-governmental organizations should be more transparent with community on their R&R work and try to increase the positive community response towards returnees.

9. Kosovo authorities led by MoIA and MoJ should create their own model of risk assessment tool based on the Kosovo context. This should be prepared in close cooperation with local and national stakeholders from both government and civil society, using interviews to solicit input for the creation of a tailored risk assessment tool for use on returning family members, FFs, and children returnees.

10. MoIA, Police, and KCS should increase the cooperation with KPS and share all the data of repatriated individuals from conflict zones, who are treated by KPS.

Bibliography

Avdimetaj, T. (2021). De-radicalization and Integration: Legal and Policy Famework. DeRadicalisation in Europe and Beyond: Detect Resolve, Reintegrate and Kosovo Centre for Security Studies (KCSS): https://qkss.org/images/uploads/files/violent-extremism-eng_978757.pdf

Avdimetaj, T. (2021). Trends of Radicalisation. De-Radicalisation in Europe and Beyond: Detect, Resolve, Reintegrate and Kosovo Centre for Security Studies (KCSS): https://qkss.org/en/publikimet/trendet-e-radikalizimit-ne-kosove

European Commission. (2018, April 17). Neighbourhood-enlargement. Retrieved from Europa: https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/20180417-kosovo-report.pdf

Ministry of Internal Affairs. (2018, February). Strategic Documents. Retrieved from Ministry of Internal Affairs: https://mpb.rks-gov.net/Documents/Strategjia%20Shteterore%20kunder%20Terrorizmit%20dhe%20Plani%20i%20Veprimit%202018-2023%20narrative.pdf

Ministry of Internal Affairs. (2018). Documents. Retrieved from Office of the Prime Minister: https://kryeministri-ks.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Strategjia-Nacionale-per-siguri-ne-Bashkesianglisht.pdf

Ministry of Internal Affairs. (2017). Documents/Strategic documents. Retrieved from Office of the Prime Minister: http://kryeministri-ks.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/ANG-StrategjiaShtet%C3%ABrore-per-Riintegrimin-e-Qendrueshem-te-PR-2018-2022....pdf

Qehaja, F., Perteshi, S. and Vrajolli, M. (2017). Mapping the state of play of institutional and community involvement in countering violent extremism in Kosovo. [online] The Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers. Available at: https://www.qkss.org/repository/docs/KCSS_Needs_Assesment_final_42754.pdf.

Perteshi, S. (2018, October 17). Beyond the triggers: new threats of violent extremism in Kosovo. Retrieved from Kosovo Center for Security Studies (KCSS): http://www.qkss.org/repository/docs/violentextremism-eng_611603.pdf

Perteshi, S. and Ilazi, R. (2021). Unpacking Kosovo's Response to Returnees from the War Zones in Syria and Iraq. Kosovo Centre for Security Studies (KCSS): https://qkss.org/images/uploads/files/violent-extremism-eng_978757.pdf

Strategy on Prevention of Violent Extremism and Radicalization Leading to Terrorism (2015-2020)". 2015. [Accessed April 14] Available at:

http://www.qkss.org/repository/docs/STRATEGY_ON_PREVENTION_OF_VIOLENT_EXTREMISM_AND_RADICALISATION_LEADING_TO_TERRORISM_2015- 2020. pdf

Perteshi S. and Balaj Sh. (2021). Community Percepctions on violent Extremism and repatriation of Kosovo Citizens' from ISIS battlegrounds. (KCSS): https://qkss.org/images/uploads/files/Extremism-Barometer-ENG 672182.pdf

Perteshi S. (2022). Baseline Assessment for the Kosovo Probation Service. (KCSS): https://qkss.org/images/uploads/files/SHSK.pdf

Interviews and FDGs:

(Official from Ministry of Internal Affairs. DRIVE Interview. January 2022)

(Official from Kosovo Probation Service. DRIVE Interview. December 2021)

(Official from Kosovo Correctional Service. DRIVE Interview, December 2021)

(Focus Group Discussion held in Prishtina, Kosovo. January 2022)