



# WESTERN BALKANS RESILIENCE FORUM

COLLABORATIVE APPROACHES  
TO CONFRONTING EXTREMISM  
THROUGH ACTION

November 14 - 16, 2018  
Budva, Montenegro

## Executive Summary

From November 14-16, 2018, the International Republican Institute (IRI) brought together 177 participants from six Western Balkan countries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia, as well as outside officials from Western Europe and the United States, for the Western Balkans Resilience Forum (WBRF) in Budva, Montenegro. IRI convened the WBRF with the goal of strengthening connectivity and partnerships among critical Western Balkans preventing/countering violent extremism (P/CVE) stakeholders as part of an overall effort to reduce violent extremism in the region.

The stakeholders who attended the WBRF included municipal-level elected and administrative officials; national officials, including ministers of interior and security and national CVE coordinators; civil society leaders; researchers and academics; and representatives of the United States (U.S.) government.

Participants discussed national and local approaches to countering religious and ethno-nationalist extremism in the Western Balkans and how to build community resilience, reflecting on existing CVE programs and exploring vertical and horizontal cooperation in the region and nationally.

This conference summary explores discussion highlights by theme, focusing on:

- Common Challenges & Cooperation
- Violent Extremism in Many Forms
- Roots of Violence
- Narratives & Counter-Narratives
- Sharing Research & Practices

Participants formed country-level working groups to develop lists of P/CVE priorities specific to their countries. Compiling these country-specific conclusions, IRI found common regional conclusions and recommendations, concerning issues such as:

- Who must be involved in P/CVE?
- What approaches should be prioritized?



- What risk factors affect violent extremism in the Western Balkans?

Finally, IRI proposes specific next steps for international donors and actors to build on WBRF results. These steps include:

- Support and connectivity for local-level government officials
- Interfaith cooperation on resilience
- Improving coordination and outreach
- Integration of female and child returnees
- Highlighting resilience

## Partners

IRI implemented the Western Balkans Resilience Forum with crucial support from partners, including the U.S. Department of State Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations, which funded the project; the Institute for Strategic Dialogue and its Strong Cities Network; and the U.S. Institute for Peace and its RESOLVE Network.



## The Forum

Deputy Assistant Secretary (DAS) **Pete Marocco**, IRI Vice President for Programs **Scott Mastic**, and Deputy Coordinator for CVE at the Bureau of Counterterrorism and Countering Violent Extremism **Christopher Harnisch** delivered opening remarks and emphasized that the main goal of this forum was to encourage dialogue and strengthen vertical cooperation between the local and national levels.

The first panel discussion, “**Regional Security Challenges and Cooperation in the Western Balkans**,” featured ministers and deputy ministers of interior or security from five countries. Minister of Interior



*“You are the most effective leaders in your community; you can affect your streets, your youth, so to take the next steps we must set up goals. Share information. We can do better if we know what others are doing. Let us share methods, ideas, and foster discussion across sectors, borders, and political and ethnic divides. Linking local actors with national strategies will produce regional success. All begins at the local level.”*

**PETE MAROCCO, DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE**

**Mevludin Nuhodzic** represented the host country, Montenegro, alongside Minister of Security **Dragan Mektic** from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ministers of Interior **Ekrem Mustafa** from Kosovo and **Oliver Spasovski** from North Macedonia, and Deputy Minister of Interior **Besfort Lamallari** from Albania. The ministers discussed both CVE as a security priority and their regional cooperation on this issue.

During the second panel discussion, “**Reviewing National CVE Strategies and Action Plans**,” national CVE coordinators **Agron Sojati** of Albania, **Samir Rizvo** of Bosnia and Herzegovina, **Lulzim Fushtica** of Kosovo, **Dragan Pejanovic** of Montenegro, and deputy CVE coordinator **Xheladin Ajvazi** of North Macedonia stressed that the inclusion of local government is crucial in P/CVE efforts and said that the participation of local mayors and city council members in this forum was encouraging. The CVE coordinators also spoke about their cooperation and explained that they were currently working on regional action plans to further strengthen cooperation among the Western Balkans countries on this issue.

Following the second panel, **Colonel Steven F. Egan**, director of the U.S. Joint Interagency Counter Trafficking Center in the European Command, addressed the forum participants with remarks on global approaches toward CVE.



*“We have already established national mechanisms for CVE, but the real problems are mostly at the local level. We should establish local councils that would keep track of the problem and know how to recognize it and deal with it.”*

**DRAGAN MEKTIC, MINISTER OF SECURITY,  
BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA**

IRI Regional Director for Europe **Paul McCarthy** chaired the final panel discussion, **“Reciprocal Radicalization and Cumulative Extremism.”** Panelists included **Edina Becirevic** from the University of Sarajevo; **Izabela Kistic**, executive director of the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights from Serbia; **Erik Larson**, legal advisor at the U.S. Embassy in Podgorica and former international prosecutor; **Afrodita Musliu** from Nexus-Civil Concept from North Macedonia; and **Vasko Shutarov**, a researcher from North Macedonia. They provided important insights into the phenomenon of cumulative extremism in the context of the Western Balkans, where the legacy of the ethno-nationalist conflicts still affects communities and states.

Finally, the first working day concluded with **working group sessions**. Local government officials, members of

parliament, and local CSO representatives convened with their respective national CVE coordinators and worked in groups to discuss the state of local-national government coordination and cooperation. Before the six country working groups started their discussions, IRI Resident Program Director **Borislav Spasojevic** officially announced IRI’s small grants program for local projects that seek to build resilience to violent extremism. Working group facilitators helped lead each of the discussions and explained in detail how IRI plans to support local initiatives and how CSOs and other stakeholders can apply for funding.

Day Two of the forum, November 16, started with **two breakout sessions**, which the **working group** participants attended. The remaining forum participants attended a panel discussion on **strategic communication and counter-messaging**, led by IRI partner organization Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD) from the United Kingdom, with panelists/presenters **Harry Holcroft** from ISD, CVE expert and researcher **Adrian Shtuni**, and **Leslie Woodward** from the Post-Conflict Researcher Center. The working group session kicked off with presentations from **ISD** and the **Resolve Network**. After the presentations, the



*Participants discuss CVE priorities in breakout sessions*



*“Recent research findings across the region indicate that primary security concerns should be the spread of non-violent extremism – including non-violent Salafi extremism, as well as Christian and other forms of extremism – and increased ethnic radicalization. Given the regional dynamics marked by unresolved identity issues and frozen conflicts, it is crucial that competing political narratives are viewed in terms of how they may contribute violence by feeding and reinforcing other extremism.”*

**EDINA BECIREVIC, RESEARCHER, BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA**

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working group participants continued with their discussions of CVE priorities in their respective countries. Each working group produced a set of priorities, which they presented during the WBRF closing session.

The final WBRF panel, chaired by IRI partner and CVE researcher, **Vlado Azinovic**, focused on **returnees and reintegration**. Azinovic provided a brief overview of the foreign terrorist fighter phenomenon in the Western Balkans and gave the floor to five experts who delivered remarks on informal and formal reintegration programs and prison exit

systems. Two prison wardens, **Redzo Kahric**, who runs the Zenica Prison in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and **Rasim Selmani**, who is in charge of a high-security prison in Kosovo, provided first-hand information about the treatment and behavior of convicted foreign terrorist fighters.



*“The embrace of radicalization in the Western Balkans has been quite a family business. We have these leaders, platforms, people that glorify violence. They talk about honor, naming and shaming and a higher purpose in life. We have a role of charismatic leaders, highly effective videos, sometimes secret chat rooms, dark web is playing its role. In the Western Balkans, peer to peer is crucial.”*

**EBI SPAHIU, RESEARCHER, ALBANIA**

## Key Themes and Topics Discussed

### 1. Common Challenges and Cooperation

Participants highlighted the cross-sector and cross-border nature of violent extremism. Montenegrin Minister of Interior Mevludin Nuhodzic remarked that the phenomenon is intermixed with “terrorism, organized crime, smuggling, narcotics, trafficking,” and other criminal activities. Besfort Lamallari, Albanian deputy minister of interior, noted that an effective approach to the complex phenomenon would have to involve youth development and empowerment, focusing on the development of critical thinking, which echoed Kosovo’s Minister of the Interior Ekrem Mustafa’s recommendations. North Macedonian Minister of Interior Oliver Spasovski also brought up the specific challenge that the internet and social media pose for P/CVE, saying that the entire region “is very poorly prepared for fighting cyber-crime” and addressing social media as a medium for radicalization. In order to address these common state weaknesses, speakers largely agreed that cooperation with regional partners is critical to addressing violent extremism, networks of which frequently cross borders. The ministers largely agreed that local government and civil society organizations must play a role in P/CVE,



*Mevludin Nuhodzic, Minister of Interior of Montenegro*

and that building their capacity should be a top priority for all Western Balkan states. They highlighted a focus on prevention, especially on setting up effective referral mechanisms.

Cooperation between local governments and civil society is crucial for identifying at-risk communities and vulnerable youth, and providing support and programs at local levels to improve resilience.



*Oliver Spasovski, North Macedonia Minister of Interior*

Kosovo’s national CVE coordinator, Lulzim Fushtica, described the need for donor and implementer coordination in P/CVE. “We have seen in the past period duplication of projects and sometimes waste of money, even sometimes two different institutions working in the same municipality or even working on the same project in the same town,” he noted. As a result, a year ago his office “established a mechanism to meet international donors every month” to better coordinate activities. National governments, he said, must take the first steps toward filling this coordination vacuum.

While Fushtica described Kosovo as flush with P/CVE funds, Elvira Hadzibegovic Bujanja, a researcher at Forum MNE, lamented limited and mistargeted funding in Bosnia and Herzegovina. “There is limited or non-existent national funding for local CSOs,” she noted, and in the absence of a coordination mechanism like what Fushtica implemented in Kosovo,

“cooperation among CSOs is very limited,” and frequently projects “are focused on donor-identified hotspots or the communities from which individuals” had left to be foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) from roughly 2014 to 2017.

## 2. Violent Extremism in Many Forms



Many participants noted that the framing of P/CVE as a field tends to restrict its focus to violent extremism wrapped in Islamic rhetoric; it is often nearly singularly focused on FTFs. Despite this focus, many other forms of violent extremism also threaten the Western Balkans. Violence and less-than-violent extremism can erupt not only along religious or ethnic lines, but among partisan, ideological, or other lines as well. Vasko Sutarov, a CVE expert from North Macedonia, noted that his country has faced inter-ethnic tensions but now faces “intra-ethnic tensions and tensions within one political party.” Afrodita Musliu, a researcher at Nexus Civil Concept, agreed, stating that the Western Balkans “still need[s] projects of reconciliation and resilience building among all communities, not only in multi-ethnic and multi-religious but also in mono-ethnic and mono-religious communities.”

Domestic and international politics often affect which forms of violent extremism

are emphasized and de-emphasized. Edina Becirevic, a researcher at the University of Sarajevo, commended Bosnian state institutions in particular for their cooperation with researchers and NGOs on Islamist radicalization and FTFs. But when she and other researchers tried to work with institutions to research Bosnians who left for Ukraine to fight illegally alongside Russian-led forces, she ran into difficulty. Becirevic pointed to “significant” Russian influence “on mainstream politicians in Republika Srpska” as one obstacle.

## 3. Roots of Violence



*Vasko Sutarov, researcher from North Macedonia, on the role of religious communities in CVE*

Becirevic noted that government protection of violent actors is part of an older pattern. In the recent past, especially in the 1990s, violence in the Western Balkans had even been state-sanctioned or state-sponsored. The state-crime-violence nexus of the 1990s is one aspect of what Izabela Kistic from the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia identified as the painfully “slow transformation of Balkan societies from war to democracy,” which is also typified by “unreadiness to overcome the war past in the region and impunity for war crimes.”





*Izabela Kisić, Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia*

The failure to address the legacies of the 1990s makes individuals in the Western Balkans particularly vulnerable to radicalization. Montenegrin CVE Coordinator Dragan Pejanovic discussed "online jihad" and radicalization, which often draws disaffected people in through "negative narratives in a soft version, without [seriously] extreme content." Further propaganda, often "in Arabic with captions in the local language" [primarily Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian or Albanian], then contributes to radicalization. The local language adaptation of this propaganda indicates some "local support from our region," Pejanovic concluded.

#### 4. Narratives and Counter-Narratives



*Harry Holcroft, International Communications Programs, ISD*

Sutarov noted how blatantly and openly radical actors operate on social media. In North Macedonia, when conducting research on violent extremism, "you do

not have to ask for information from the institutions; there is a lot of it on social media. After only opening some websites you can see the aims of and support for the radical groups."



*"Without understanding the complexity of the audience we are trying to reach, we are not going to be able to do effective counter-narratives... We need to understand that radicalization, recruitment and mobilization is very targeted and not accidental. It does not happen in a uniform matter everywhere."*

**ADRIAN SHTUNI, SPECIALIST AND CEO OF SHTUNI CONSULTING**

The Institute for Strategic Dialogue's Henry Tuck discussed state use of strategic communications and counter-messaging to address the sorts of negative narratives that Pejanovic and Sutarov identified. "There is first the need to accurately diagnose the problem and to understand what we are trying to combat," he explained. "It is very important we are constantly refreshing our diagnosis and what the problem is because it changes quickly. After we diagnose the problems, then we can have the right intervention." While other speakers had focused on teaching critical thinking to youth as a factor of resilience, Tuck warned that its effectiveness in addressing a phenomenon rooted largely in individuals' emotions could be limited. "When someone is already radicalized,

critical thinking might not be enough to pull him out," he cautioned. Emotional appeals may be necessary too. "It is about doing a proper response and with the right people."

## 5. Sharing Research and Practices

Speakers also noted several other specific approaches toward violent extremism that actors in the Western Balkans should consider, learning from research and best practices piloted in other countries.

Vlado Azinovic, a researcher at the University of Sarajevo, commended Kosovo's relatively successful approach in deradicalization of FTFs and preventing recruitment in prisons. "When it comes to this type of issue, we should learn from [Kosovo]. Some of the models that you have developed in Kosovo could also be useful in our prison systems. It appears that in other Western Balkans countries the prison systems themselves are not in a very good shape and they need a lot of intervention to improve the overall conditions, let alone to address these typical issues that have emerged with the influence of convicted terrorists and recruiters."

Becirevic noted that "research in Bosnia and Herzegovina showed a remarkably strong association between support for

women's empowerment and resilience to extremism. This may indicate that programming to prevent extremism could be particularly effective by incorporating some elements aimed at empowerment and encouraging respect for women. Increasing participation of women in politics might be [part of] a solution."

Sutarov pointed to opportunities for cooperation with religious leaders. "Only in Bosnia and Herzegovina [have researchers] conducted workshops and analyses and meetings with imams. Unfortunately, the religious communities remain [disengaged] on CVE," he said. Governments and civil society need to help religious communities "recognize their role" and develop cooperative approaches to P/CVE.



*Elvira Hadzibegovic Bubanja, Executive Director of Forum MNE, Montenegro*



*Vlado Azinovic from the University of Sarajevo discusses returnees and reintegration processes in the Western Balkans*

## Country Priorities Identified by Working Groups

During two sessions of the forum, participants broke into small groups by country. These working groups discussed CVE efforts in their countries, and identified the following priorities for P/CVE by country.

### Albania



- Working at the local level and having specific city risk assessments is critical.
- Action plans for preventative measures should be subdivided and prepared as small, local action plans.
- Working with marginalized communities, particularly youth and women, in specific municipalities is crucial.
- Civic activism should be improved through concrete actions, not workshops and trainings, but instead activities that go beyond capacity building, such as building centers and programs for youth and women.
- There is a need for cross-border cooperation and exchange of best practices with other municipalities at the local level.
- Pilot initiatives at specific municipalities like Cerrik, Librazhd, Burrel.

- Joint interventions and actions addressing hate speech as a factor leading to extremism are needed.

### Bosnia and Herzegovina



- The focus of activities in local communities should be on addressing the causes, not only on dealing with consequences. Prevention should be a prerogative, before reaction/ recovery/repression.
- Consequently, working directly with both youth and stakeholders dedicated to youth on raising awareness is a key priority.
- Enhanced focus on work in multi-ethnic areas and areas with noticeable isolation (or self-isolation) of minorities/returnee communities.
- Understand the potential of social media as a key tool for work with youth.

### Kosovo



- Strengthen youth programs for prevention of radicalization and violent extremism in local communities.
  - Enable the reintegration of female and under-aged returnees.
  - Strengthen and improve rehabilitation programs (including vocational educational programs) for convicts during their terms in prison and after their release.
- Promote cross-sector cooperation with the aim of involving the private sector in supporting and integrating returnees at the local level.

### North Macedonia



- P/CVE action plans must be local.
- Raising awareness and improving knowledge of all relevant stakeholders at the local level (including local authorities, youth, parents, schools, sport leaders, media) on the phenomenon of radicalization that leads to ethnic, religious and/or political violent extremism.
- Prevention of violence at the local level through regular information sharing between key actors: regular monthly informative meetings initiated by the mayor for sharing information on security issues (police and army representatives,

ombudsman, hospital director, directors of public enterprises).

- Capacity building for members of the Local Prevention Councils/Community Action Teams.
- Sharing experiences of victims of violence (testimonials) and sharing data obtained through previously developed research methodologies among parents as a PVE tool.
- Building connections between local and national level PVE and CVE coordinators.

### Montenegro



- Invest in capacity building for Montenegro's Islamic community in the field of P/CVE.
- Implement a variety of activities to improve interreligious dialogue.
- Improve youth infrastructure at the local level, including clubs, youth centers.
- Anticipation of counter narratives applicable to Montenegro's circumstances.
- The Health Department should invest in building the capacities of the Medical Chamber to improve its P/CVE potential in connection with mental health services.
- On the national level, RAN7 working groups are already open for collaboration with NGOs, individuals, academia representatives, etc.

## Serbia



- Appointment of a national CVE coordinator for Serbia.
- Improve mechanisms of law enforcement and synchronize structures within the mechanisms.
- Improve minority representation in security and justice sectors, focusing specifically on judges, prosecutors, and police.
- Improve the skills of local prosecutors for CVE-based cases.
- Improve the curricula of civic and religious education in schools and improve teachers' education.
- Form local cross-sector teams that include government, civil society, and others to build local community resilience.

## Regional Conclusions and Recommendations

From these priorities and discussions, IRI developed the following 12 conclusions and recommendations for the region.

### Who must be involved?

1. Violent extremism is a global, regional, and local problem. Since violent extremism crosses borders, no state can address it unilaterally.
2. It is important to establish local institutions/teams/councils capable of recognizing and reacting to local challenges in P/CVE, in line with national CVE strategies.
3. It is necessary to encourage cooperation between local NGOs, media, law enforcement authorities, and other local stakeholders, through education and capacity building. This cooperation should improve resilience on the local level and support the implementation of adopted P/CVE strategies on national levels.
4. Work with political partners in the region, including political parties and other political actors, is necessary to build political will for resilience.
5. A stable civil sector is crucial for P/CVE in the Western Balkans. Support, financial and otherwise, and cooperation and coordination between civil society, local and international donors, and other actors would contribute to this.

## **What approaches should be prioritized?**

6. "Soft" educational and preventive policies, rather than policies that could be seen as repressive, should be the key prerogatives for P/CVE actions. These must include a wide range of stakeholders at the local level, with a special role for leaders of religious communities.
7. Economic and political stability are key preconditions for P/CVE, both regionally and locally. Therefore, local and national political and religious leaders can significantly contribute in P/CVE by promoting positive counter-narratives in their public speeches and appearances. Reforms advancing the Euro-Atlantic integration of Western Balkans countries also contribute to long-term P/CVE efforts by promoting economic and political stability.
8. Extremist propaganda targets specific audiences. Counter narratives must account for the diversity, history, and local context of the Western Balkans. Counter-narratives must also target the specific audiences to whom extremist narratives are being sent. These audiences may vary, and may include people in educational facilities, religious communities, prisons, or recipients of social services, as a few examples. They should respond to and counter recruiters' emotional appeal with counter-narratives based similarly on emotion and identity.
9. Sharing research and data is critical for identifying networks for radicalization and recruitment, and for understanding financial resources, trends, and useful statistics. Cooperation among intelligence institutions, the judiciary, and

investigative institutions is necessary for the improvement and advancement of P/CVE activities.

10. Currently available tools and resources are useful but not enough; new projects and innovation are needed as well.

## **What risk factors affect violent extremism in the Western Balkans?**

11. Certain regional events or factors could encourage further radicalization, such as demarcation questions, slow transition of post-conflict societies, failure of political and interethnic reconciliation, impunity for war crimes and failure to address the legacies of the 1990s, collective and individual identity crises, lack of trust in institutions, lack of rule of law, and lack of diversity.
12. Cyberspace remains a significant medium for radicalization, recruitment, propaganda, communication, and training for terrorists and extremists. The decentralized nature of the Internet as a tool has made it difficult for governments to respond to threats emerging from it. Government capacities to address cyber aspects of VE remain very weak.

## Next Steps

In addition to the priorities above that were identified by the working groups, IRI recommends the following steps forward on violent extremism in the Western Balkans.

### **I. Support and Connectivity for Local-Level Government Officials**

The WBRF brought together 28 officials from Western Balkans local governments. This was a strong first step and one of the largest gatherings of local officials in the Western Balkans for any purpose in years. Holding a second WBRF and making it an annual event could facilitate greater connectivity and further cooperation. A smaller regional meeting focused on local government officials may also be appropriate; a more targeted meeting could allow for a targeted approach to strategic P/CVE planning for their communities. A series of workshops for local government officials may also assist municipal governments in P/CVE planning and strategies.

### **II. Interfaith Cooperation on Resilience**

For a number of reasons, the WBRF did not include a large number of religious leaders. Their perspectives are essential not only because of religious leaders' inherent roles as leaders in local communities, but also because perpetrators of violent extremism often attempt to justify their actions in terms of religion. There is room for greater interfaith cooperation on resilience to violent extremism in the Balkans; international organizations or donors are best positioned to convene religious leaders for this purpose.

### **III. Improving Coordination and Outreach**

Several WBRF participants noted the crucial role that coordination on P/CVE plays in the Balkans, and the waste of resources and effort that occurs without coordination. Regular meetings between local governments, local stakeholders, and national governments would help coordinate strategies. This would also likely involve outreach programs to ensure that the intended beneficiaries know about the resources and support available to them.

### **IV. Integration of Female and Under-Aged Returnees**

As some WBRF participants brought up, many FTFs who fought in Iraq and Syria had families, including children of Western Balkans nationals born in territory held at the time by the self-proclaimed "Islamic State." Aside from these children, whose legal status remains in question, women and children involved in FTF activities face other legal issues, as well as stigma and isolation. There is a need for research, changes to legal frameworks, and support to local governments for the reintegration of female and under-aged returnees.

### **V. Highlighting Resilience**

Much of the coverage of P/CVE focuses, understandably, on negatives. To counter extremist narratives and to help break the cycle of reciprocal radicalization, we should encourage the promotion of positive stories of resilience. IRI has found through its re:Generation project that film is a particularly powerful medium for communicating complex stories involving reconciliation.

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## Western Balkans Resilience Forum

*Collaborative Approaches to Confronting Extremism through Action*

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## Western Balkans Resilience Forum

*Collaborative Approaches to Confronting Extremism through Action*

November 14-16, 2018

Budva, Montenegro

Hotel Splendid

### **Wednesday, November 14, 2018**

Arrival of participants

7:00pm Welcome Dinner – *Hotel Splendid, Main restaurant, Second floor*

### **Thursday, November 15, 2018**

8:45am **Participant registration** – *“Petrovic” Conference Room, Third floor*

9:00am **Opening remarks**

- **Scott Mastic**, Vice President for Programs, International Republican Institute
- **Pete Marocco**, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations, U.S. Department of State
- **Christopher Harnisch**, Deputy Coordinator for Countering Violent Extremism, Bureau of Counterterrorism and Countering Violent Extremism, U.S. Department of State

9:30 – 10:15am **Regional Security Challenges and Cooperation in the Western Balkans**

- *Overview of regional challenges related to all forms of extremism (Legacy of ethno-nationalist conflict)*
- *Regional coordination between ministries and future prospects*
- *Reflections on cooperation between national and local levels*

Panelists:

- **Mevludin Nuhodzic**, Minister of Interior, Montenegro
- **Besfort Lamallari**, Deputy Minister of Interior, Albania
- **Dragan Mektic**, Minister of Security, BiH
- **Ekrem Mustafa**, Minister of Interior, Kosovo
- **Oliver Spasovski**, Minister of Interior, Macedonia

Moderator: **Adnan Rondic**, Journalist, BiH

10:15 – 11am *Discussion – “Regional Security Challenges and Cooperation in the Western Balkans”*

11am **Press statements** – *Media Center, Third floor*

11 – 11:30am **Coffee break**

11:30 – 12:15pm **Reviewing National CVE Strategies and Action Plans – National CVE Coordinators**

- *Status of Action Plans: Updates from each CVE coordinator/lead on progress on developing national CVE strategies and action plans*
- *Coordination between national and local level on CVE related issues/activities*

Panelists:

- **Agron Sojati**, National CVE Coordinator, Albania
- **Samir Rizvo**, National CVE Coordinator, BiH
- **Lulzim Fushtica**, National CVE Coordinator, Kosovo
- **Xheladin Ajvazi**, Deputy National CVE Coordinator, Macedonia
- **Dragan Pejanovic**, National CVE Coordinator, Montenegro

Moderator: **Daniel Hooton**, Project Manager, Strong Cities Network, United Kingdom

12:15 – 1pm *Discussion – “Reviewing National CVE Strategies and Action Plans”*  
First respondents: local mayors and practitioners.

1 – 2pm **Lunch** – *Main restaurant, Second floor*

2 – 2:30pm **Remarks on global approaches toward CVE**

- **Col. Steven F. Egan**, Director of the Joint Interagency Counter Trafficking Center, EUCOM

2:30 – 4pm **Regional Overview: Reciprocal Radicalization and Cumulative Extremism**

- *Nature and Drivers of Violent Extremism and Ethno-Nationalist Extremism*
- *External Actors and Influencers*
- *Religious vs. Far Right Extremism*
- *CSO Regional and National Actions in the Western Balkans*

Panelists:

- **Edina Becirevic**, Researcher, University of Sarajevo, BiH
- **Elvira Hadzibegovic Bubanja**, Executive Director, Forum MNE, Montenegro
- **Izabela Kistic**, Executive Director, Helsinki Committee for Human Rights, Serbia
- **Erik Larson**, INL Resident Legal Advisor, U.S. Embassy, Montenegro
- **Afrodita Musliu**, A.C. Nexus – Civil Concept, Macedonia
- **Vasko Sutarov**, Researcher, Marshall Center Alumni Scholar, Macedonia

Moderator: **Paul McCarthy**, Regional Director, Europe, IRI

4 – 5pm **Working Group Session** – *“Balsic” Conference Room (Coffee and pastries provided)*

- **Small Grants Announcement**
- *Direct consultations - by country: National CVE Coordinators convene with local government representatives and local civil society organizations from their respective countries*

7pm

**Reception and Dinner – Pool Bar Area, Hotel Splendid**

**Friday, November 16, 2018**

9 – 10:45am **Breakout Sessions**

**Session A: Cross-Sector Approaches and Collaborative Models – “Petrovic” Conference Room**

**Note: Translation provided**

*Participants: National CVE coordinators, members of parliament, local government officials and local civil society representatives*

9 – 9:45am **Presentations of best practices**

*Daniel Hooton - Institute for Strategic Dialogue*

*Megan Loney and Kateira Aryaeinejad – U.S. Institute of Peace, RESOLVE Network*

9:45 – 10:45am **Working group session – Participants split into groups by country**

- *Identifying CVE priorities by country*
- *Identifying opportunities for local government – civil society collaboration*

**Session B: Strategic Communications and Counter-Messaging – “Balsic” Conference Room**

**Note: No translation provided – English-speaking panel**

*Participants: Journalists, researchers, international organizations*

- **Strategic communications approaches in CVE - best practice models:**  
*Harry Holcroft - Project Manager, International Communications Programs, ISD*
- **Counter-messaging: understanding audiences, narratives, and credible messengers**  
*Adrian Shtuni - Specialist and CEO of Shtuni Consulting*
- **Local counter-messaging efforts: Cross-cutting approaches from the Western Balkans**  
*Leslie Woodward - Vice-President, Post-Conflict Research Center, BiH*

*Moderator: Henry Tuck - Senior Development Manager, ISD*

10:45 – 11:30am **Coffee Break**

11:30 – 1pm **Returnees and Reintegration – “Petrovic” Conference Room**

- *Exit systems from prisons*
- *Reintegration programs: informal and formal programs*

*Panelists:*

- **Kujtim Bytyqi**, Senior Security Policy Official, Kosovo Security Council, Kosovo
- **Sergej Augustin Erdelja**, Radicalization Awareness Network, Croatia
- **Redzo Kahric**, Prison Warden/Director, Zenica Prison, BiH
- **Rasim Selmani**, Prison Warden/Director, High-Security Prison, Kosovo
- **Ebi Spahiu**, Researcher, George C. Marshall Center, Albania

*Moderator: Vlado Azinovic – Researcher, University of Sarajevo, BiH*

1 – 1:30pm **Closing Session – Working Group Readouts, Conclusions, Recommendations**

1:30 – 3pm     **Lunch** – *Main restaurant, Second floor, Hotel Splendid*

Departure (Friday afternoon/evening or Saturday morning)