



## Capacity Building guidelines for CSOs on Combating Violent Extremism

This guideline will provide useful information for CSOs working in the field of prevention of violent extremism among young people in different communities in North Macedonia. The information provided are extracted from the programme of a capacity building training for organizations that are members of Youth Counter Platform.

For organizations that are interested in developing activities and actions with young people in the topic of preventing violent extremism it is important to build their organizational capacities. We will try to provide you with directions that will support your process of development

### Step 1: Understand the Terminology

Prior to introducing young people to introduce the young people and the community you are working with it is important to understand the current trends on how prevention work is understood locally and in an international context.

Here are some short definitions of key terms used when dealing with prevention work on the field.

#### Violent Extremism

There are different international actors such as the UN and other security organizations that provide their own definition on the terms of what defines violent extremism. For example, OSCE refers to violent extremism as “acts of violence that are justified by, or associated with, an extreme religious, social or political ideology” while USAID defines violent extremist activities as the "advocating, engaging in, preparing, or otherwise supporting ideologically motivated or justified violence to further social, economic or political objectives".

The National Strategy on countering Violent Extremism describes the actions of violent extremism as “the beliefs and actions of people who support or use ideologically motivated violence to realize radical ideological, religious or political views”.

#### Radicalization

The OSCE defines radicalization in its own specific way as a dynamic process where an individual comes to accept terrorist violence as possible or even a legitimate course of actions. radicalization that leads to terrorism. On the other hand, USAID as an important international actor defines it as “a process by which a person or group adopts extreme ideas or beliefs and comes to view violence as a justified means to advance them. While most people who adopt radical views will never use





violence, those who do often adopt ideologies that rationalize their actions.” At a National context the National Strategy does not provide a clear concept on how it defines this phenomenon.

### **Prevention of Violent Extremism**

This is a long-term process that involves a variety of actors at a different level starting from the community up to the international partners and policy makers. As this work requires a multi stakeholder approach it is important to understand the different strategies and approaches that are developed for certain areas, regional, national, etc.

The North Macedonian Government has established a committee that will deal with this issue alongside with a strategy which will be later referred to as ‘National Strategy’ and an action plan which foresees how the different actors and stakeholders will be involved in the development of such activities.

The National Strategy on North Macedonia provides a unique focus on prevention activities and it defines it under 4 strategic priorities:

- I. PREVENT - flows of FTF and militants and root causes of radicalization and extremism;
- II. PROTECT our people, their property, key and critical infrastructure from all threats, that are clear and present as well as potential and growing;
- III. PURSUE threats of Violent Extremism and Terrorism at their root in safe havens and where ever they pose clear danger to people and infrastructure; prosecute these threats actively, but fairly and transparently, and consistent with the rule of law;
- IV. RESPOND actively, aggressively, but always in ways that are transparent and consistent to the rule of law, in the spirit of solidarity and in ways that manage and minimize the consequences of a terrorist attack, by improving capabilities to deal with the aftermath, the coordination of the response and the needs of victims.

It is important to understand the national perspective as this reflects how you as an organization will be collaborating and developing actions and activities.

### **Push and Pull factors**

According to Nanes and Lau (2018) ‘push factors’ refer to structural factors within a society, whilst ‘pull factors’ to psychological ones that can render an individual more susceptible to undertaking violent extremist behavior.

According to the National Strategy the following push and pull factors have been identified:

Push Factors:

*Regional level*

- External influences, including money from other parties who reside mainly in the Arabian





Gulf;

- Incapacity to handle criminal groups that cross borders easily, inadequate police action in vulnerable communities or regional areas in the North Macedonia;

#### *National Level*

- Tendency to unfoundedly blame ethnic communities or religious groups;
- Government rhetoric which puts the blame for certain situations in society, instead of focusing on the real factors and indicators;
- There is no comprehensive mission for countering all types of radicalization, violent extremism and countering terrorism;

#### *Local Level*

- Pressure from religious leaders (internal or foreign influence);
- Marginalization of ethnic/religious groups;
- Lack of possibilities, denied citizenship for certain categories, impossibility to integrate and receive governmental protection and services, including police protection, health protection, etc.;

Pull Factors:

#### *Regional Level*

- Education in countries that promote extremism;
- The country is surrounded by weak states with post conflict instability, inherited policies that impact the quality of building socially sustainable systems, especially the relations to the neighboring countries to strengthen ethnic religious harmony & national unity;

#### *National Level*

- The country continues to struggle in building and fostering a strong unified national identity;
- The country still suffers from a relatively high degree of disaffection and lack of trust between communities and state and local government authorities;
- Lack of state and municipal government institutional capacities and capabilities and persistent challenges with corruption;

#### *Local Level*

- Chronic unemployment and underemployment, particularly within ethnocultural and religious minority communities;
- Weak trust-bonds between local police and local authorities, as regards the rule of law;
- Lack of and weakness of “legitimate” authority creates leadership vacuums easily filled by radical extremist leaders with violent anti-state and anti-nation vision and intentions.

In order to further explore the concepts, approaches and policies please refer to:

National Strategy of The Republic of North Macedonia for Countering Violent Extremism (2018-2022)





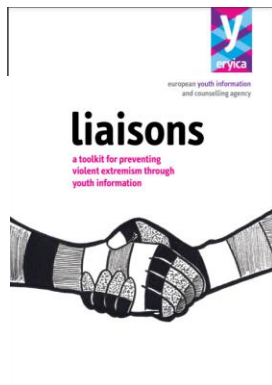
## Step 2: Assess the capacities and define the priorities of your organization

Once you understand the social dynamics in the country and your local community define the area of the intervention that you are planning to conduct. Most of the activities that are supported by the international community organization provide a top - down coordinated approach which means that most of the activities that will be supported should be in line with the national strategy's objectives.

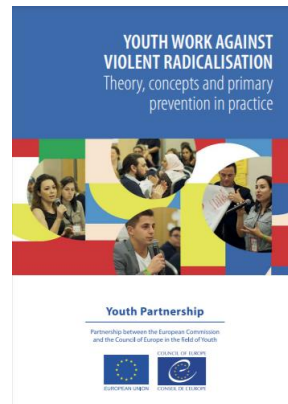
Another key document when defining the areas of intervention is the National Action plan that derives from the National Strategy.

## Step 3: Identify the extremist narrative develop a counter or alternative one

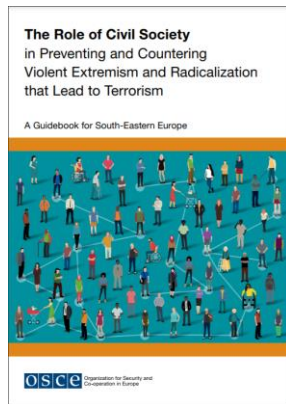
For identifying the different narratives in your community and developing actions and activities that will counter them here are some useful tools:



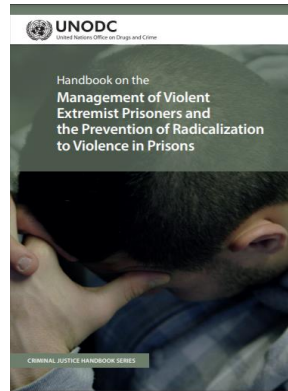
[Liaisons a toolkit for preventing violent extremism through youth information](#)



[Youth Work Against Violent Radicalisation - Theory, concepts and primary prevention in practice](#)



[The Role of Civil Society in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization that Lead to Terrorism A Guidebook for South-Eastern Europe](#)



[Handbook on the Management of Violent Extremist Prisoners and the Prevention of Radicalization to Violence in Prisons](#)



[WE CAN! Taking Action against Hate Speech through Counter and Alternative Narratives](#)

## Bibliography

*“The Role of Civil Society in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization that Lead to Terrorism A Guidebook for South-Eastern Europe”* - Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Vienna, August 2018

*“U.S. Agency for International Development Policy for Countering Violent Extremism Through Development Assistance”* - USAID, April 2020

*“National Strategy of The Republic of North Macedonia for Countering Violent Extremism (2018-2022)”* Government of the Republic of North Macedonia National Committee for Countering Violent Extremism and Countering Terrorism

