

PAVE

Preventing and Addressing Violent Extremism
through Community Resilience

Policy Guidelines and Recommendations for Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration for Community Resilience Against Violent Extremism



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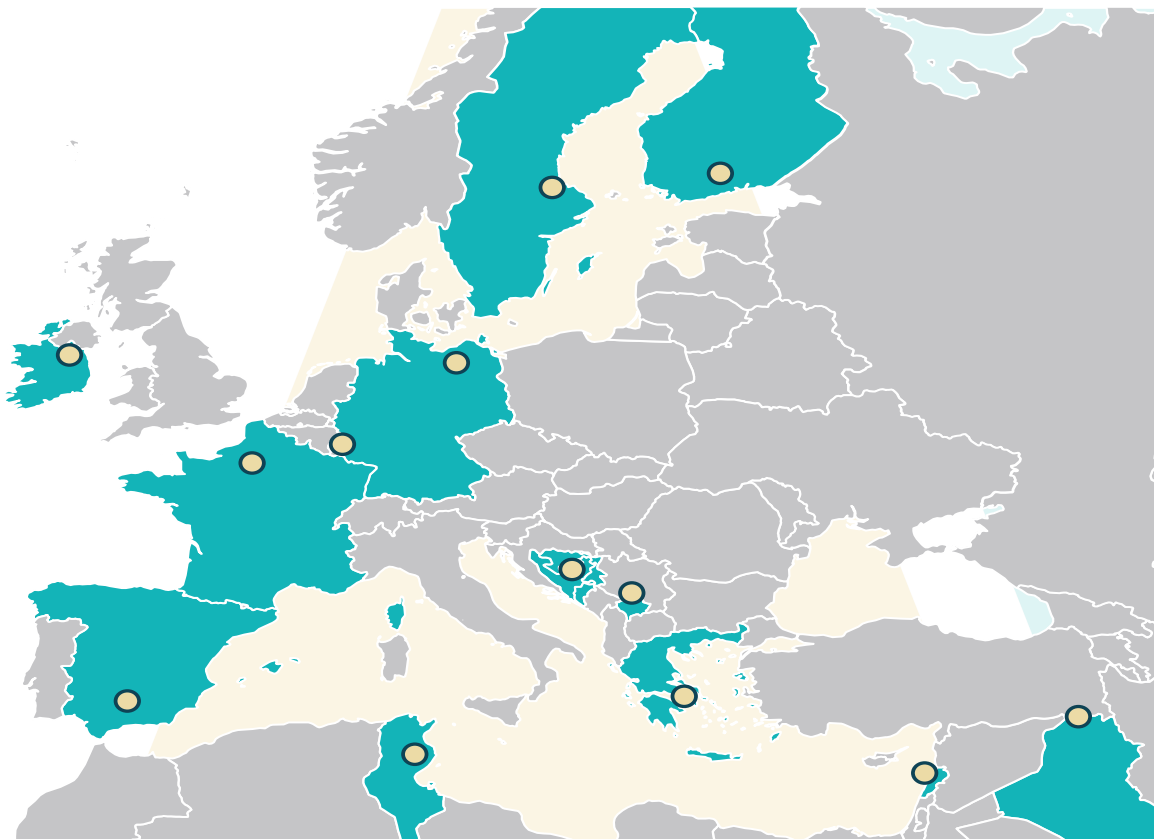
Introduction to the PAVE Project

The European Union funded 'Preventing and Addressing Violent Extremism through Community Resilience in the Western Balkans and the MENA (PAVE) research project (2020-23) tackles the global issue of radicalisation by examining its root causes and driving factors with focus on community level resilience and vulnerability analysis.

Research conducted in selected municipalities of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Tunisia, North Macedonia, Iraq, Serbia, and Lebanon, revealed that the integration of multi-stakeholder approaches within community and national policies and programs to prevent and counter violent extremism (P/CVE) strengthens community resilience to violent extremist radicalization and recruitment. **The following policy guidelines outline concrete recommendations for multi-stakeholder collaboration to strengthen community resilience against violent extremism based on findings from the PAVE research project.**

Structural and individual drivers of violent extremism are already well-researched; hence the PAVE project focused on enhancing knowledge on the meso-level of society:

What are the roles of communities and especially what factors make them resilient to violent extremism? Following recommendations and guidelines are intended as a tool for policy-makers, practitioners and community actors who are designing and implementing coordinated multi-stakeholder approaches to prevention of violent extremism in all forms on a local level.





1. Identify and Promote Inclusive Local Ownership and Coordination

P/CVE is a multi-faceted effort that requires a whole-of-society approach with multiple sectors, institutions and civil society actors playing equally important roles in prevention, intervention, and deradicalization/disengagement rehabilitation programmes¹. Nearly every stakeholder in a community holds different knowledge, skills and resources. When integrated together in a holistic approach, these stakeholders can support a comprehensive understanding of local contexts and cultures and identify gaps, challenges and opportunities related to vulnerability and resilience factors.

Recommendations:

- Conduct a local conflict analysis and stakeholder mapping to identify who should be involved within your multi-stakeholder efforts for formulating a community level prevention strategy. This will help you to map out local issues and potential solutions and partners. Understanding community perspectives and incorporating these to prevention measures will help to facilitate community acceptance and ownership.
- Ensure there is a diverse representation from all sectors within your multi-stakeholder efforts, including but not limited to policymakers, civil society organisations, faith actors and institutions, and international and regional organisations. Ensure there is gender parity within your decision-making structure.
- Be aware of, and address community power dynamics. Empower the voices of marginalised groups and consider the specificity of threats for at-risk groups, such as women, youth, religious and ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, and LGBTQIA.
- Ensure coordination efforts are accessible and flexible for diverse groups to attend, participate and lead.



2. Apply Conflict Sensitive Lens and a Peacebuilding Approach to C/PVE Measures

PAVE research reveals that communities in post-conflict societies are largely affected by the legacy of violence and lack of meaningful reconciliation efforts, absence of transitional justice and comprehensive strategies to address the injustices and war crimes of the past. The research identifies that unresolved conflicts and inter-community tensions are a significant community level vulnerability factor to different and often co-existing forms of violent extremism. Particularly, in contexts that inter-community tensions are high and political spectrum is highly polarised there is a higher level of cumulative extremism meaning existence and reinforcing dynamics between different forms of violent extremism, and groups attached to these. This suggests that a coherent approach combining peacebuilding approaches to resolve the underlying grievances that create ground for extremism in a community is needed coupled with specific P/CVE interventions, such as EXIT programmes that support disengagement from these groups.

“Conflict-sensitivity for PVE initiatives is not just a technicality to tinker with the programmatic details of an intervention. It forces policy makers, senior managers, strategic planners and program implementers to ask fundamental questions about how PVE interventions interact with the context

¹ The Role of Civil Society in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization that Lead to Terrorism: A Focus on South-Eastern Europe, OSCE publication: 2018

and related conflict dynamics, challenges them to reflect on the implications of policy coherence (or lack thereof) on the effectiveness of PVE and other types of development and peacebuilding approaches, and poses significant demands on implementers and donors alike to practice adaptive programming given the many unintended impacts PVE interventions can have.”²

Recommendations:

- Build capacity and learn about the key concepts of the conflict sensitive approach, do no harm, on how to apply these key principles to P/CVE efforts and how to integrate them on all stages of policy and programming.
- There are specific resources available for this. Here are few to get started:
 - Conflict Sensitivity in Approaches to Preventing Violent Extremism: Good intentions are not enough. A reflection paper by Anita Ernstorfer, 2019. [Link](#)³ to report.
 - Preventing Violent Extremism While Promoting Human Rights: Toward a Clarified UN Approach. The International Peace Institute (IPI), 2019. [Link](#)⁴ to resource.



3. Design Inclusive and Context-Sensitive Policymaking Approaches and Processes on the Prevention of Violent Extremism

Research has identified that the trust deficit between key stakeholders, civil society and authorities and public institutions can hinder coordination and collaboration needed to build community resilience and effective coordinated responses to violent extremism. Effective multi-stakeholder approaches require robust policymaking and locally contextualised programming that enable stakeholders to establish trust and define shared goals and principles for collaboration that take into account local resources and context.

Recommendations:

- Design policymaking processes that are inclusive and involve the leadership of local key stakeholders across all sectors at an early stage, from problem definition to designing measures for addressing the issues. Diverse set of stakeholders bring different knowledge, tools, and access to resources and this will contribute to a more comprehensive analysis and locally tailored responses.
- Establish platforms for communication, information sharing, and coordination among all stakeholders. Open, transparent and timely communication about issues and open processes will facilitate trust building.
- Build on existing resources and incorporate locally rooted best practices for prevention measures for violent extremism. Many times, local communities already have existing platforms, networks and practices for collaboration.

Standardise and Formalise Practices for Local Cooperation:

- After mapping your local actors and potential partners it is important to establish common goals for collaboration and invest time in the process of creating long-lasting partnerships.
- Invest in the process of defining common goals. Setting common goals, priorities and principles to guide collaboration can be facilitated via workshops or other kinds of consultative processes where all are invited to be part of defining common goals and values for collaboration, and

² Conflict Sensitivity in Approaches to Preventing Violent Extremism: Good intentions are not enough. A reflection paper by Anita Ernstorfer, 2019. [Link](#) to report (<http://www.pvetoolkit.org/media/1216/conflict-sensitivity-in-approaches-to-pve.pdf>).

³ <http://www.pvetoolkit.org/media/1216/conflict-sensitivity-in-approaches-to-pve.pdf>

⁴ https://www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/1907_PVE-While-Promoting-Human-Rights.pdf

roles that each actor has in achieving them. This process will allow also to identify expectations and priorities of local actors and potential challenges or trust deficits between stakeholders.

- Formalise collaboration. After formulating the principles, goals and roles of collaboration is helpful also to formalise these. This can be done in various ways from creating a common agenda, action plan or creating a memorandum of understanding for collaboration. Formalising collaboration can be a powerful tool for communication internally and can serve as a common reference point in case of disagreements. Furthermore, open communication about the collaboration can raise community awareness and engagement from the wider community.
- Promote transparent communication and establish practices to support and sustain collaboration among collaboration partners. Do not avoid discussion on hard topics or challenges in collaboration. It is natural that different actors such as the security sector and public institutions engaged in prevention have differing mandates and legal frameworks that regulate how they can collaborate with each other and actors such as civil society organisations and how much information can be shared. Therefore, it is crucial to openly discuss the procedures of collaboration, principles and areas of cooperation.



4. Address the Online/Offline Divide Within P/CVE Efforts

Interviews from the PAVE research suggest that social media is overwhelmingly considered as a driver of vulnerability, with public institutions yet to formulate an effective policy or approach to addressing online radicalisation. Countering online extremism will require a whole-of-society approach with diverse stakeholders each having a significant role to play in coordination with one another. While online extremist activity needs online measures to counter it, it is important to remember that people engaged in these activities are always in some specific locality. Therefore, online activities can result in offline implications within communities. This means that online-offline dimensions both need to be incorporated into local prevention efforts.

Recommendations:

- Establish multi-stakeholder community workshops to develop skills in civic engagement, critical thinking and media literacy among community members and work with schools to incorporate media literacy as part of the school curricula in order to enhance the critical thinking of young people. Raise awareness in the community about how these approaches also target and impact women and young women differently in the radicalization process.
- Establish multi-stakeholder groups to monitor and respond to potential online threats. Ensure these individuals are diverse in representation and trained in best practices in identifying hate speech, disinformation and radical online behaviour, as well as helping to promote the online safety of their community.
- Encourage political, community and faith leaders to promote messages of inter-ethnic, interreligious unity, as well as messages promoting gender equality and peace within both online and offline spaces.
- Increase the funding and capacity of community police and technology entities to address and curtail online radicalization, notably with chat rooms, gaming platforms, and other open and dark online spaces which enable extremist groups to radicalise individuals.



5. Support and Promote Sustainable Community Ownership Within Deradicalisation and Reintegration Efforts

Successful reintegration of individuals and families into society through a ‘whole-of-society’ approach has demonstrated to decrease chances of recidivism. It is crucial to involve civil society organisations and faith communities in these efforts, as these actors have necessary networks, resources and trust to support persons looking to reintegrate into society. In addition, these groups can play a key role in building community acceptance and harmonisation, thus mitigating the community members' fear and stigma for former extremists.

Recommendations:

- Design or reformulate rehabilitation strategies to enhance cooperation with diverse stakeholders to address the complexity of needs of those reintegrating back into the community.
- Review and modify existing policies and regulations to ensure structured opportunities in prisons to help radicalised individuals re-engage with their family and disengage from radical ideals, ensuring that the prison visits are a positive experience for both the prisoners and their visitors.
- Partner with civil society organisations and the private sector to provide educational or rehabilitation initiatives in prisons which aim to prepare inmates for life post-release by introducing vocational training or socio-economic opportunities to support social inclusion or build job related skills.
- Provide psychosocial and mental health support for those individuals reintegrating back into the community, including access to resources for those affected by sexual violence and abuse.
- Support relatives and friends of young people affected by radicalisation and violence by offering counselling and training on prevention of radicalisation and deradicalisation.
- Hold community dialogue sessions with the media and related stakeholders to encourage accurate and sensitive reporting.



6. Foster Community Harmonisation and Social Cohesion

Social bonding within communities and social bridging between communities were found to play an essential role in building community resilience against violent extremism. Community building programs should facilitate safe contact and dialogue between community groups and challenge discourses that are based on dehumanising the other in order to foster social cohesion.

Recommendations:

- Support collaboration between civil society organisations, faith institutions and government ministries or departments to provide arts and cultural activities that cultivate citizenship, universal values, and respect for others.
- Host inter-faith and other community dialogues to address grievances and promote cooperation and mutual understanding among all members of society, including but not limited to faith and community leaders, women, youth, state and non-state security actors.
- Host community workshops to train community members on how to depolarize local discourse and utilise nonviolent communication skills.