

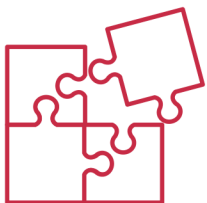
Education in Preventing & Countering Violent Extremism

Considerations for the Western Balkans

Recent research on violent extremism in the Western Balkans, and North Macedonia specifically, suggests that education may be an important tool in addressing violent extremism in the region. Some have suggested educational initiatives may assist in addressing online and offline disinformation and extremist narratives. Furthermore, addressing ongoing issues within ethnically divided educational systems may play an important role in working to address some of the ethnic-based divisions that can contribute to “othering” dynamics. Others have further suggested that education and other support services can play a role in aiding the transition of those imprisoned on charges related to violent extremism and returning families back into society.

As countries throughout the Western Balkans continue to update and revise their national action plans and policies to address violent extremism, greater consideration of the role of education and how it might be integrated into these policies is needed. This publication, based on findings from a large-scale literature review mapping the state of research on education in P/CVE in the Western Balkans and beyond, offers a series of considerations for policymakers and practitioners looking to incorporate education in future efforts to address drivers, both real and potential, of violent extremism in Western Balkan states.

For more, see: Besa Arifi, [*Education in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism: Considerations for the Western Balkans*](#), RESOLVE Network, 2022.



Adopt clearer guidance on how education fits into larger P/CVE goals and broader social initiatives

While education is included to some degree in many of the P/CVE strategies in the Western Balkans, what this looks like in practice is somewhat unclear. In future iterations of the documents, clearly delineating the strategy behind its inclusion and the specific roles and responsibilities and coordinated efforts to be taken to implement P/CVE educational initiatives may help address this issue.



Consider incorporating curriculum on hate speech & enhancing critical thinking & media literacy

An important gap in approaching P/CVE is the further study of the relation between hate speech, hate crimes, and violent extremism. Policymakers should consider incorporating educational efforts aimed at developing critical thinking and media literacy skills.



Look for avenues to better coordinate a whole of society approach

Policymakers should consider incorporating mechanisms into future P/CVE guidelines that enable civil society to better coordinate with formal educational institutions in raising awareness and resilience to violent extremism.



Explore education for disengagement & reintegration

Future iterations of national P/CVE plans in the Western Balkans should consider how education might be used not only as a means to prevent violent extremism, but also as a means to facilitate the successful reintegration of returning foreign fighters and their family members, and what that might entail in terms of addressing ongoing issues within current education systems and schools in the region.



Further research, monitoring, & evaluation exploring the role of education in P/CVE initiatives

There are very few contributions to exploring the link between education and P/CVE in Western Balkans. This remains a vast area where different topics of research can develop.



Consider efforts to promote peace, diversity & tolerance in education systems, but avoid overly-securitizing education systems

Governments should consider potential overlaps between P/CVE and non-P/CVE projects that may produce shared outcomes or provide instructive lessons of P/CVE educational initiatives, but also understand that labeling initiatives that seek to promote peace, diversity, and tolerance through education as P/CVE writ large may reduce their acceptance and impact.

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