

Project Backgrounder | 2018-19

Western Balkans

Exploring dynamics of violent extremism and opportunities to increase resilience



Context

Amidst the evolving threat of violent extremism worldwide, the Western Balkans faces substantial challenges to social cohesion and stability. Narratives of religious, far-right, and nationalist militancy resonate profoundly with vulnerable youth populations in Western Balkan countries where a history of ethnic, religious, and civil strife has created a situation vulnerable to terrorist recruitment at home and abroad. Individuals that traveled to fight alongside violent extremist organizations abroad are returning to their home countries following the territorial losses of extremist groups in Syria and Iraq. Home-grown extremist threats continue to gain traction and grow. A greater evidence-based understanding of the evolving dynamics in the Western Balkans is needed to design proactive, collaborative, and effective policy and practice aimed at preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE) across the region.

Project Scope and Purpose

The primary purpose of the RESOLVE Network Western Balkans Initiative is to provide stakeholders new insights from the expanse of existing research and from new locally-sourced analysis on the dynamics of violent extremism. The outputs and outcomes of this project will be tailored to inform P/CVE policy and programming based on nuanced and contextual analysis of previous, ongoing, and emerging trends. The project aims to increase collaboration and elevate regional understandings of violent extremist threats and vulnerabilities, building upon existing networks and initiatives already active in the region.

Goals and Activities

In partnership with the U.S. Department of State's Bureau for Conflict and Stabilization Operations and through collaboration with regional organizations, RESOLVE will work to:

- Produce a series of analytic research publications that address key questions critical to understanding the dynamics of violent extremism in the region, providing locally-informed insight and nuanced recommendations for policymakers and practitioners.
- Convene a regional working group with RESOLVE Network Partners as well as policymakers, practitioners, and researchers. This working group will support the development of a regionally-informed research agenda.
- Build the capacity of local researchers through the development and implementation of research training modules tailored to the regional context.
- Foster the establishment of a sustainable community of practice connecting regional and international researchers, policymakers, and practitioners to continue collaboration.

These combined efforts will contribute to identifying important trends and filling gaps in knowledge with new, locally-informed insights on regional dynamics related to violent extremism in the Western Balkans. The efforts are specifically calibrated to identify potential opportunities for interventions in policy and practice to address continued and emerging issues related to violent extremism in the region.

Contact

For more information about the RESOLVE Network's work in the Western Balkans and how to collaborate with or support the network please contact our research coordination team at: research@resolvenet.org. Additional information about the RESOLVE Network and its partners can be found on our website: www.resolvenet.org.

