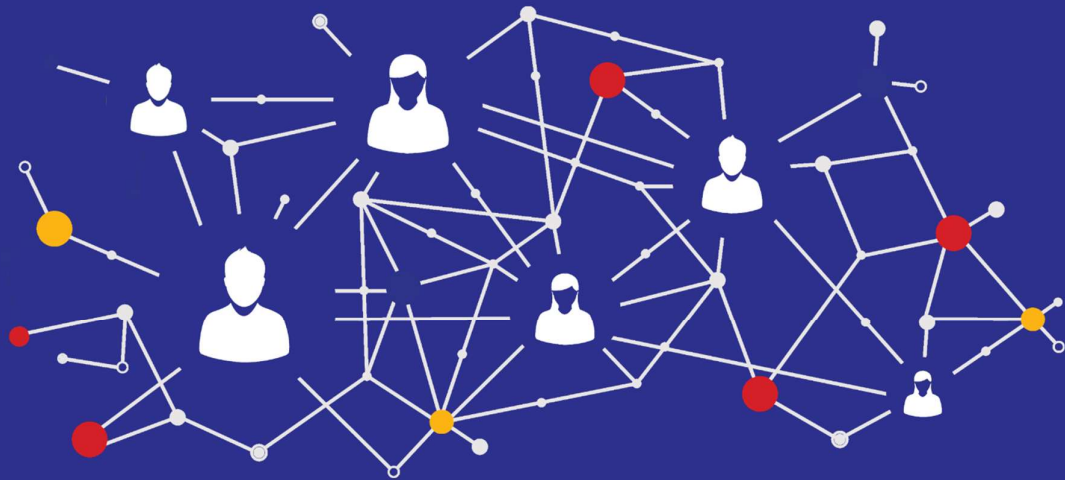




# Stakeholder Engagement Analysis

## Strengthening the multistakeholder approach to prevent youth violence and build resilience



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Prepared by Counselling Line for Women and Girls



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## List of Acronyms

- AIIS – Albanian Institute for International Studies
- AKSHI - National Agency for Information Society
- ATRC – Advocacy Training and Resource Center
- CSOs – Civil Society Organizations
- CLWG – Counseling Line for Women and Girls
- CVE – Countering Violent Extremism
- QKEDH – CVE Center/ Center for the Coordination of Countering Violent Extremism
- EU – European Union
- GCERF – Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund
- ICT – Information and Communication Technology
- IDM – Institute for Democracy and Mediation
- IOM – International Organization for Migration
- IRCA – Interreligious Council of Albania
- NATO – North Atlantic Treaty Organization
- NYA – National Youth Agency
- NGOs – Non-governmental organizations
- OSCE – Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
- P/CVE – Prevention and Countering of Violent Extremism
- R&R – Rehabilitation and Reintegration
- UNDP – United Nations Development Programme
- UNODC – United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Background on P/CVE and R&R in Albania

### **Historical Context**

Albania has a complex history of dealing with violent extremism, influenced by a range of socio-political and economic factors. The country, like others in the Balkans, has faced challenges stemming from the dissolution of Yugoslavia, the collapse of communism, the Kosovo conflict, and the broader impact of radical ideologies spreading from the Middle East. In the 1990s, Albania experienced significant political instability, which, coupled with economic hardship, created a fertile ground for radicalization. The rise of extremist groups in neighboring countries also contributed to the spread of radical ideologies within Albania, especially in marginalized and impoverished communities. While a majority of Albanians today oppose engagement in foreign armed conflicts, concerns linger about political corruption, foreign religious influences, and dissatisfaction with government integrity. Furthermore, a segment of the population views international political and economic structures as tools for Western dominance over Muslim countries, highlighting ongoing scepticism about global engagement. These historical and political grievances underscore the importance of addressing not just radical ideologies, but also broader socio-political factors that contribute to extremism in Albania.

### **Current Landscape**

In recent years, Albania has made substantial efforts to combat violent extremism and support the reintegration of returnees. The government has developed a comprehensive strategy for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE), which includes legislative measures, capacity building for law enforcement, and community-based initiatives. In alignment with the 2023-2025 Action Plan, initiatives aimed at preventing and countering violent extremism, notably in the context of addressing the needs of 37 individuals returning from conflict zones. These efforts have been supported by the strategic partnership with the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF) to ensure a multi-disciplinary approach, which includes plans to establish a dedicated centre in Tirana to offer specialized services for children and families affected by extremism.

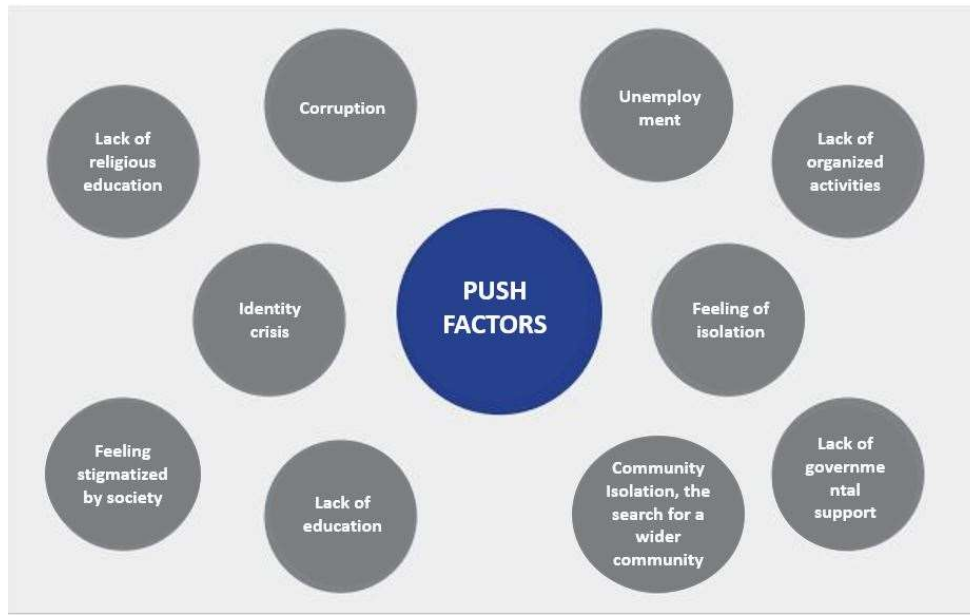


Figure 1. CVE Center

Additionally, the implementation of the Joint Action Plan on Counter-Terrorism between the European Union and Albania has involved training and capacity-building activities for frontline workers, including prison staff and social workers, to manage cases of individuals at risk of radicalization. Local coordination structures, such as regional committees to prevent radicalization, have also been strengthened under recent mandates. However, challenges remain, particularly in addressing the root causes of radicalization and ensuring the successful reintegration of returnees, especially women and children.

**Reintegration Challenges**

Reintegration of returnees, particularly those returning from conflict zones in the Middle East, poses significant challenges. Many returnees, especially women and children, face stigmatization, psychological trauma, and a lack of economic opportunities. This issue is compounded by the broader distrust in government integrity and the limited optimism toward the political opposition as a viable alternative, suggesting that disillusionment with political structures may hinder reintegration efforts. While the government, with international support, has launched programs offering psychosocial support and vocational training, the effectiveness of these initiatives is impacted by the wider socio-political landscape. However, the success of these programs largely depends on the effective coordination among various stakeholders.

**1.2 Purpose and Scope of the Stakeholder Mapping**

**Purpose**

The purpose of this stakeholder mapping is to provide a comprehensive overview of the key stakeholders involved in P/CVE and Reintegration and Rehabilitation (R&R) efforts in Albania. This document aims to identify the roles, influence, and interests of these stakeholders, and assess how they contribute to or hinder the success of P/CVE and R&R

initiatives. By understanding the stakeholder landscape, this document seeks to inform the development of tailored engagement strategies that enhance collaboration and maximize the impact of these efforts.

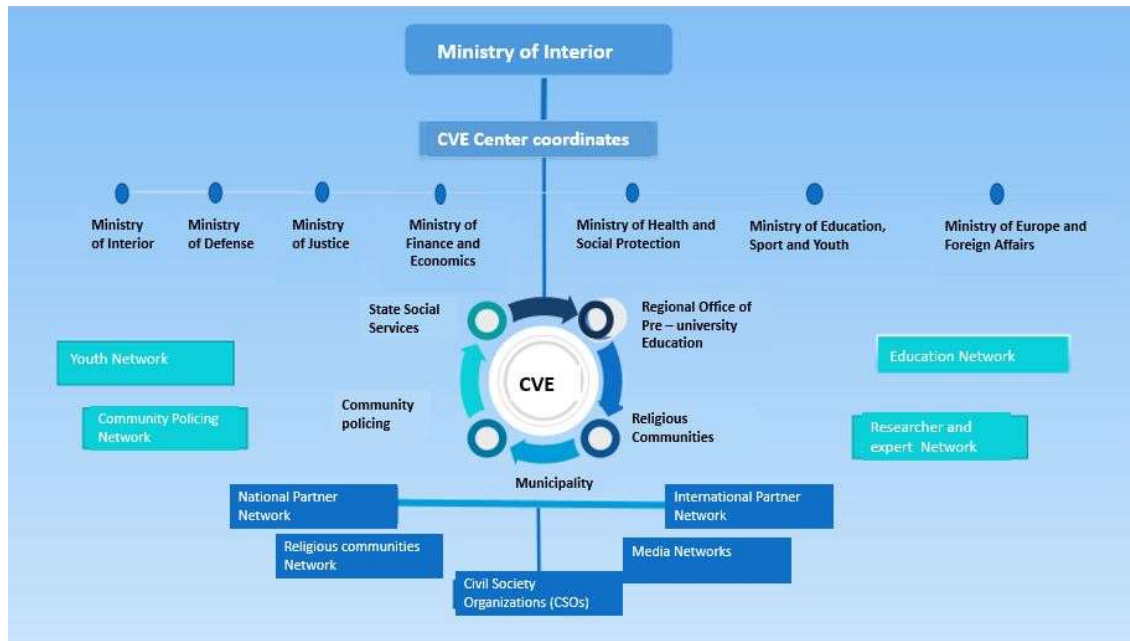


Figure 2. CVE Center

### 1.3 Methodology

#### Approach

The stakeholder mapping process for the Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE) and Reintegration and Rehabilitation (R&R) efforts in Albania is designed to identify key actors, their roles, influence, and interest levels. This structured approach allows for a comprehensive understanding of how stakeholders impact the success of P/CVE and R&R initiatives, and enables the development of targeted strategies to foster collaboration and address challenges.

#### Stakeholder Identification

The first step in the mapping process involves identifying all relevant stakeholders involved in P/CVE and R&R activities. Stakeholders include government bodies, international organizations, civil society, religious groups, the private sector, and community leaders. This identification will focus on the following categories:

- **Government Institutions:** Ministries such as the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Social Welfare, and the National Counterterrorism Agency.
- **International Organizations:** Partners like the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF), the European Union, and the United Nations.
- **Civil Society:** Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) involved in reintegration, human rights, and P/CVE efforts, particularly those focusing on marginalized communities.

- **Local Authorities:** Regional and municipal committees coordinating local P/CVE and R&R efforts, frontline workers, and law enforcement personnel.
- **Religious and Community Leaders:** Influential local leaders and religious groups, particularly in areas with heightened vulnerability to radicalization.
- **Media:** Outlets shaping public opinion on extremism, reintegration, and government initiatives.

### **Stakeholder Analysis:**

Once stakeholders are identified, an analysis is conducted to assess their:

- **Roles:** Determining the specific responsibilities each stakeholder has in P/CVE and R&R efforts.
- **Influence:** Assessing the level of power or influence the stakeholder has on decision-making and policy implementation.
- **Interest:** Evaluating the degree of interest or commitment each stakeholder has toward addressing violent extremism and the reintegration of returnees.
- **Positioning:** Classifying stakeholders based on their level of support or opposition to P/CVE and R&R programs.

This analysis helps to understand the dynamics between stakeholders and to identify potential champions or blockers within the system.

### **Data Collection Methods:**

Information was gathered through the following channels:

- **Document Review:** A review of national policies, action plans (such as the 2023-2025 P/CVE Action Plan), and reports from government and international partners to understand formal stakeholder roles.
- **Interviews and Surveys:** Conducting semi-structured interviews and surveys with key stakeholders to capture insights on their perspectives, interests, and influence.
- **Focus Groups:** Engaging relevant stakeholders in focus group discussions, particularly at the local level, to gain in-depth understanding of their involvement and views on P/CVE and R&R efforts.

### **Stakeholder Mapping**

Following data collection and analysis, stakeholders was visually mapped using a matrix that categorizes them based on their level of influence and interest:

- **High Influence, High Interest:** These stakeholders are crucial partners and should be engaged closely in all stages of P/CVE and R&R efforts.
- **High Influence, Low Interest:** These stakeholders may have significant power but less motivation. Targeted engagement is needed to increase their commitment.
- **Low Influence, High Interest:** These stakeholders are advocates or beneficiaries and should be supported to increase their influence within the initiative.

- **Low Influence, Low Interest:** Engagement with these stakeholders may require minimal efforts unless their interest or influence changes.

#### **Engagement Strategy Development:**

Based on the mapping, tailored engagement strategies will be developed to enhance collaboration among stakeholders. This includes:

- **Strategic Communication:** Designing communication strategies to increase awareness and alignment of goals, especially among less-engaged or resistant stakeholders.
- **Capacity Building:** Offering training and resources to empower stakeholders with lower influence but high interest to play a more active role in P/CVE and R&R efforts.
- **Partnership Development:** Facilitating partnerships between high-influence stakeholders, such as government institutions and international organizations, to ensure sustainable collaboration.
- **Advocacy and Support:** Engaging community leaders and religious groups through advocacy efforts that align P/CVE and R&R goals with local cultural values.

#### **Monitoring and Updating the Stakeholder Map:**

The stakeholder mapping process is dynamic and will be reviewed regularly to account for changes in stakeholder positions, influence, or interests as P/CVE and R&R efforts evolve. Continuous feedback loops will be integrated through periodic stakeholder consultations, ensuring that the engagement strategy remains relevant and effective.

This methodology will result in a comprehensive understanding of the stakeholder landscape, fostering improved coordination and greater success in addressing violent extremism and reintegrating returnees in Albania.

## **2. Objectives of Stakeholder Mapping**

### **Objective 1**

To systematically identify all relevant stakeholders involved in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE) and Reintegration and Rehabilitation (R&R) efforts in Albania, understanding their specific roles, responsibilities, and contributions.

### **Objective 2**

To evaluate each stakeholder's level of influence, interest, and commitment toward P/CVE and R&R initiatives, determining how they can either support or hinder the success of these programs.

### **Objective 3**

To design tailored strategies that enhance collaboration, address challenges, and maximize the positive impact of stakeholders, ensuring alignment with the overall goals of P/CVE and R&R efforts in Albania.



## 3. Stakeholder Identification

### 3.1 Government Actors

#### **Ministry of Interior**

The Ministry of Interior plays a central role in Albania's counter-terrorism efforts, including the development and implementation of P/CVE policies. The Ministry coordinates with law enforcement agencies to monitor and prevent extremist activities, and works closely with international partners to align Albania's policies with global standards.

*Case Study:* One notable initiative led by the Ministry of Interior is the establishment of a counter-terrorism task force that focuses on monitoring and disrupting extremist networks. This task force has successfully thwarted several plots, showcasing the importance of inter-agency cooperation.

#### **Ministry of Justice**

The Ministry of Justice is responsible for legal reforms related to P/CVE and the management of offenders, including returnees from conflict zones. The Ministry also oversees the rehabilitation of individuals convicted of terrorism-related offenses, ensuring that they are reintegrated into society in a manner that reduces the risk of recidivism.

*Case Study:* A significant judicial initiative is the establishment of specialized courts to handle terrorism-related cases. This has led to more efficient legal processes and better rehabilitation outcomes for convicted individuals.

#### **Ministry of Defence**

The Ministry of Defence is vital in enhancing Albania's counter-terrorism capabilities through various means, including international collaboration, protection of critical infrastructure, and maintaining military readiness. It ensures that Albania is well-prepared to respond to and manage extremist threats effectively.

*Case Study:* Participation in joint military exercises with NATO to improve responses to extremist threats and secure critical infrastructure.

#### **Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs**

Manages Albania's international relations and represents the country in European and global forums. It plays a key role in aligning national CVE policies with international standards and securing international support.

*Case study:* Enhanced alignment with EU CVE standards and increased international support, improving the effectiveness of Albania's counter-extremism efforts and providing additional resources for local programs.

### **Ministry of Health and Social Protection**

The Ministry of Health and Social Protection plays a key role in Albania's Preventing Violent Extremism (P/CVE) efforts by addressing the underlying social and psychological factors that contribute to radicalization. The Ministry focuses on improving mental health services, promoting social inclusion, and providing support to vulnerable populations at risk of being influenced by extremist ideologies.

*Case Study:* An initiative under the Ministry of Health and Social Protection is the launch of community-based mental health programs aimed at early detection of radicalization risk factors. These programs work closely with schools, social workers, and psychologists to identify individuals displaying signs of social isolation or trauma.

### **Ministry of Education**

The Ministry of Education plays a crucial role in incorporating P/CVE themes into the national curriculum. This involves developing educational materials that promote critical thinking, tolerance, and civic responsibility among students.

*Case Study:* A pilot project launched by the Ministry successfully integrated P/CVE themes into history and social studies curricula, receiving positive feedback from educators and students alike.

### **Ministry of Youth and Children**

Provides policies and programs that focus on youth engagement, empowerment, and inclusion to prevent radicalization. Focuses on outreach to youth in vulnerable municipalities like Kukes.

*Case Study:* The Ministry launched a youth engagement initiative in Kukes, providing leadership training and community engagement opportunities aimed at preventing radicalization.

### **General Directorate of Prisons**

Manages the incarceration and rehabilitation of individuals convicted of terrorism-related offenses. Implements deradicalization programs within prisons.

*Case Study:* Introduction of a comprehensive deradicalization program within prisons that includes religious counselling and vocational training.

### **Probation Service**

Monitors and supports the reintegration of offenders, including those convicted of terrorism-related crimes, providing supervision and support during reintegration.

*Case Study:* Implementation of a tailored reintegration program offering counseling, job placement, and community engagement for offenders.

### **Center for the Coordination of Countering Violent Extremism (CVE CENTER/QKEDH)**

Center for the Coordination of Countering Violent Extremism (CVE CENTER) is responsible for overseeing and managing Albania's comprehensive strategy to prevent and counter violent extremism. It serves as the central hub for policy coordination, inter-

agency collaboration, and the implementation of national CVE (Countering Violent Extremism) initiatives.

*Case study:* CVE CENTER facilitated the establishment of 12 Regional Committees in various districts. This involved organizing meetings, setting up regulatory frameworks, and coordinating with local stakeholders to ensure that each committee could address local CVE challenges effectively.

### **National Agency for Information Society (AKSHI)**

Manages and oversees Albania's information and communication technology (ICT) infrastructure and initiatives. It plays a key role in implementing digital solutions for governance and public services, including those related to countering violent extremism (CVE).

*Case study:* AKSHI developed and implemented a secure, centralized database system to track cases related to violent extremism. This system facilitates information sharing among government agencies and stakeholders involved in CVE efforts

### **National Youth Agency and Youth Councils in Albania**

The National Youth Agency and Youth Councils across Albania are key governmental agencies focusing on youth development and empowerment. These entities coordinate youth-oriented programs that encourage civic engagement, education, and leadership development while promoting dialogue on critical social issues, including violent extremism. By connecting young people with positive role models and resources, they help reduce the vulnerability of youth to extremist influences. NYC also facilitates collaboration between municipalities, educational institutions, and NGOs, ensuring that national youth policies are reflected in local P/CVE initiatives.

*Case Study:* NYA has worked closely with most municipalities in Albania to integrate their efforts into broader youth empowerment strategies. For instance, NYA coordinated a national youth campaign promoting tolerance, cultural understanding, and community participation, which was rolled out in schools and youth centers. Youth Councils in Tirana organized peer-led discussions on the dangers of extremist ideologies, promoting social cohesion and resilience. These efforts were further bolstered by NYA's support for entrepreneurship and vocational training programs, providing young people with economic opportunities and reducing the socio-economic drivers of radicalization.

### **Local Government Units (Municipalities)**

Municipalities in Tirana, Kukes and Kamza play a vital role in implementing localized P/CVE initiatives, particularly by working closely with schools, youth centers, community leaders, and local civil society organizations. These municipalities lead efforts to engage at-risk youth and promote community resilience by fostering inclusive environments and providing resources aimed at preventing radicalization. Their involvement is crucial as they have an intimate understanding of local needs and challenges, enabling them to tailor their interventions effectively. They also serve as a bridge between national policies and grassroots efforts, ensuring that P/CVE strategies are both locally relevant and sustainably implemented.

*Case Study:* In Tirana, the municipality partnered with local NGOs and youth organizations to establish safe spaces for young people, creating an environment where they could access support services, engage in dialogue, and develop digital literacy skills. One notable initiative was a series of workshops aimed at countering online extremist content. These workshops provided participants with the tools to critically assess the information they encountered online, recognize extremist propaganda, and respond with positive, alternative narratives. This initiative not only helped reduce the risk of online radicalization but also empowered the youth to become active participants in promoting peace and tolerance within their communities.

In Kukes, the municipality collaborated with educational institutions and community centers to organize vocational training and mentorship programs for vulnerable youth. These programs were designed to reduce the appeal of extremist ideologies by offering young people viable economic opportunities and fostering social inclusion. By addressing the underlying socio-economic factors contributing to radicalization, these efforts helped to build stronger community bonds and promote long-term resilience.

In Kamza, the municipality, led by Mayor Rakip Suli, has prioritized engaging youth to prevent violent extremism (P/CVE). By partnering with the Kamza Youth Council and USAID, the municipality signed a Cooperation Agreement aimed at addressing youth issues and fostering social inclusion. Key initiatives include reducing fees for youth-led businesses and improving services in education and infrastructure. These efforts not only provide economic opportunities but also empower young people to be active in their community, reducing the appeal of extremist ideologies and promoting long-term resilience.

### **3.2 International Organizations**

#### **United Nations (UNDP, UNODC)**

The United Nations, through agencies like UNDP and UNODC, provides technical assistance, funding, and policy guidance to support Albania's P/CVE and R&R efforts. UNDP, for example, has been instrumental in developing community-based approaches to counter violent extremism, while UNODC focuses on legal and law enforcement capacity building.

*Case Study:* A UNDP-led project aimed at building community resilience to extremism in rural areas has had significant success, leading to a decrease in recruitment by extremist groups.

#### **European Union (EU)**

The EU supports Albania's alignment with European standards in P/CVE through funding and capacity-building initiatives. The EU's involvement also includes monitoring Albania's progress and providing policy recommendations.

*Case Study:* An EU-funded program focused on the rehabilitation of female returnees provided comprehensive support, including psychological counseling, vocational training, and legal aid.

### **OSCE (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe)**

OSCE plays a key role in facilitating dialogue among various stakeholders, providing capacity-building support, and monitoring Albania's P/CVE efforts. Their initiatives often focus on promoting interfaith dialogue and community engagement.

*Case Study:* An OSCE initiative successfully brought together religious leaders from different faiths to promote peace and counter extremist narratives, which contributed to stronger community bonds.

### **European Commission**

The European Commission supports and funds initiatives aimed at countering violent extremism (CVE) and promoting security across member and candidate states. It provides financial assistance, policy guidance, and technical support to enhance national and regional CVE strategies.

*Case study:* The European Commission launched a funding program to support projects focused on preventing radicalization, improving community resilience, and enhancing cooperation among member states. This program provided grants for various CVE activities, including community outreach, educational programs, and research on radicalization trends.

### **International Organization for Migration (IOM)**

IOM supports migration-related initiatives, focusing on the safe and humane management of migration. It plays a significant role in the reintegration of returnees, including those at risk of radicalization. IOM also provides technical assistance and capacity-building to governments and organizations involved in migration and CVE efforts.

*Case study:* IOM implemented a comprehensive reintegration program for returnees, including vocational training, psychosocial support, and community engagement activities. The program aimed to provide returnees with the skills and support needed to rebuild their lives and reduce the risk of re-radicalization.

### **Terres des Hommes Albania**

Terres des Hommes focuses on child protection, including addressing issues related to radicalization and violence. The organization works to safeguard children's rights and provide support services to vulnerable children and families.

*Case study:* Terres des Hommes Albania implemented programs providing psychosocial support, educational opportunities, and family counselling for children at risk. These programs included community-based interventions and partnerships with local authorities and other organizations.

## **3.3 Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)**

### **Institute for Democracy and Mediation (IDM)**

IDM is a leading CSO in Albania, focusing on research, advocacy, and capacity building in the field of P/CVE. IDM collaborates with government agencies, international organizations, and other CSOs to develop evidence-based policies and programs.

*Case Study:* IDM conducted a research project on the drivers of radicalization in Albania, which provided valuable insights for policymakers and led to the development of targeted intervention programs.

#### **Albanian Helsinki Committee**

The Albanian Helsinki Committee monitors human rights and provides legal assistance, particularly in the context of P/CVE. The Committee advocates for the rights of vulnerable groups, including returnees, ensuring that their human rights are protected.

*Case Study:* The Committee's initiative to monitor the treatment of returnees in detention centers led to significant improvements in their conditions and access to legal representation.

#### **Women's Rights Organizations (e.g. CLWG)**

Women's rights organizations play a critical role in supporting the reintegration of women and children returnees. They advocate for gender-sensitive approaches to P/CVE and provide specialized services such as psychosocial support and legal aid.

*Case Study:* A CLWG-led initiative provided comprehensive support to female returnees, helping them rebuild their lives and reintegrate into their communities despite significant challenges.

### **3.4 Religious Institutions**

#### **Muslim Community of Albania**

The Muslim Community of Albania is a key player in providing religious guidance and promoting peace. They work to counter extremist ideologies by promoting moderate interpretations of Islam and engaging with vulnerable communities.

*Case Study:* The Muslim Community's initiative to integrate religious education into P/CVE efforts has been successful in reducing the appeal of extremist ideologies among youth.

#### **Interreligious Council of Albania (IRCA)**

The Interfaith Council promotes dialogue and cooperation among different religious communities in Albania. Their work is essential in fostering tolerance and preventing radicalization by promoting interfaith understanding.

*Case Study:* An interfaith dialogue initiative led by the Council brought together leaders from various religious groups to address common concerns related to extremism, which significantly strengthened community resilience.

### **3.5 Academic Institutions**

### **University of Tirana**

The University of Tirana contributes to P/CVE efforts through research and education. The University has developed academic programs focused on the social sciences, which include courses on countering violent extremism and promoting social cohesion.

*Case Study:* A research project by the University on the social factors contributing to radicalization in Albania provided critical data that informed national P/CVE strategies.

### **Albanian Institute for International Studies (AIIS)**

AIIS is a leading think tank in Albania, focusing on security issues, including P/CVE. AIIS conducts research and provides policy analysis that shapes national and regional security policies.

*Case Study:* AIIS's report on the effectiveness of P/CVE initiatives in Albania offered key recommendations for improving stakeholder collaboration and program implementation.

## **3.6 Media**

### **National Media Outlets**

National media outlets play a crucial role in shaping public opinion and raising awareness about P/CVE efforts. However, the coverage of sensitive issues like extremism can sometimes be challenging, requiring responsible journalism and balanced reporting.

*Case Study:* The media's coverage of a high-profile P/CVE initiative significantly raised public awareness and contributed to a broader understanding of the government's efforts.

### **Social Media Platforms**

Social media is increasingly important in monitoring and countering online radicalization. While these platforms provide opportunities for positive engagement, they also pose challenges, such as the spread of extremist content.

*Case Study:* A social media campaign aimed at promoting P/CVE narratives reached thousands of young people, successfully countering extremist messages and promoting positive alternatives.

## **4. Stakeholder Analysis**

### **4.1 Detailed Analysis**

#### **1. Center for the Coordination of Countering Violent Extremism (CVE CENTER)**

The CVE CENTER is the primary actor overseeing Albania's national strategy on P/CVE. Tasked with managing and coordinating inter-agency collaboration, CVE CENTER plays a crucial role in ensuring the implementation of national strategies through a cohesive framework. It facilitates cooperation between central and local government bodies,

CSOs, and international partners. Additionally, CVE CENTER has spearheaded the establishment of 12 Regional Committees tasked with addressing local-level CVE challenges, thereby decentralizing the efforts and strengthening local capacity for early intervention and engagement with communities vulnerable to extremism.

The CVE CENTER's efforts in strategy development, coordination, and local empowerment make it a cornerstone in Albania's P/CVE landscape. However, its reliance on multi-stakeholder collaboration presents challenges in maintaining continuous and effective coordination across diverse agencies, which can be hampered by bureaucratic inefficiencies or fluctuating political support. Ensuring sustained, long-term engagement from all levels of government and international actors is vital for the center's ongoing success.

## **2. National Government Ministries (Interior, Justice, Health, Education)**

Several national government ministries play a critical role in the Albanian P/CVE and R&R efforts, with specific focuses on their respective areas of expertise.

- **Ministry of the Interior:** This ministry leads law enforcement and security efforts against violent extremism. It works closely with CVE CENTER to implement policies, including community policing, to prevent radicalization. However, capacity limitations and competing priorities within the ministry often challenge its ability to fully support localized prevention efforts.
- **Ministry of Justice:** The Ministry of Justice is key in supporting judicial reforms aimed at preventing radicalization within the prison system. It cooperates with CVE CENTER to ensure that rehabilitation programs for returnees and convicted extremists are in place. The success of the Ministry's role is contingent on the adequate resourcing and training of judicial and correctional personnel to handle cases related to violent extremism effectively.
- **Ministry of Health and Social Protection:** This ministry is responsible for providing psycho-social support to individuals vulnerable to radicalization and extremism, including returnees and their families. Its role is essential in delivering health and welfare services aimed at reintegration and rehabilitation. Given the complex nature of radicalization, the ministry's capacity to provide specialized psychological support and social services is a crucial factor in the success of R&R efforts.
- **Ministry of Education:** The Ministry of Education plays a preventive role by promoting education initiatives that build resilience against violent extremist ideologies among young people. These efforts focus on awareness-raising, counter-narrative development, and the integration of CVE topics into school curricula. The success of these initiatives hinges on the Ministry's ability to collaborate with local educational institutions and ensure the proper training of teachers and administrators.

## **3. Local Government Units (Municipalities and Prefectures)**

Local government units are pivotal in implementing and supporting P/CVE and R&R strategies at the community level. Their proximity to at-risk communities enables them to tailor responses that address specific vulnerabilities related to violent extremism.



Municipalities, in particular, are vital for delivering services, mobilizing communities, and engaging in early detection efforts. Their cooperation with the CVE CENTER and the Regional Committees provides a direct link between national strategies and grassroots implementation. However, many local government units face challenges related to insufficient resources, lack of capacity, and varying levels of political will, which can hinder their ability to effectively address CVE and R&R concerns.

#### **4. Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)**

CSOs have become key actors in Albania's P/CVE and R&R landscape, offering services and expertise that complement government efforts. Organizations like CLWG (Counseling Line for Women and Girls) and other CSOs supported by international donors, such as GCERF, are heavily involved in providing rehabilitation, reintegration, and psycho-social support services to returnees and their families. They also engage in advocacy, awareness-raising, and community outreach initiatives aimed at preventing radicalization.

Despite their critical role, CSOs often face challenges related to funding sustainability, capacity-building, and navigating the often-complicated relationship with governmental entities. Strengthening partnerships between CSOs and government actors, ensuring consistent funding streams, and enhancing CSO capacities are crucial for the success of their work in P/CVE and R&R.

#### **5. International Partners (GCERF, EU, UN)**

International organizations and donors, including GCERF, the European Union, and the United Nations, are major contributors to Albania's P/CVE and R&R efforts. They provide financial support, technical assistance, and policy guidance, bolstering national and local efforts to combat violent extremism.

GCERF's support for CSO-led initiatives in Albania has been particularly impactful in building resilience within communities and providing reintegration services for returnees. However, the reliance on international funding raises concerns about the long-term sustainability of P/CVE programs in Albania, especially in the absence of strong domestic funding mechanisms or political will to maintain these efforts independently.

The role of international partners also extends to fostering regional cooperation, ensuring that Albania's efforts align with broader Balkan and European strategies for preventing violent extremism. Continued support from these international partners remains critical for the success of Albania's P/CVE and R&R initiatives, though the challenge remains to strengthen local ownership and ensure the sustainability of these efforts beyond international funding cycles.

#### **6. Religious Institutions**

Religious institutions in Albania play a dual role in P/CVE efforts: they act as both influencers and facilitators of counter-narratives to extremist ideologies. Religious leaders, particularly in the Muslim community, are engaged in promoting moderate

interpretations of religious texts and in countering radical ideologies that exploit religious sentiment.

Their role is essential in community-based efforts to prevent radicalization and support reintegration, particularly in regions where religious sentiment is strong. However, their effectiveness is dependent on their ability to maintain trust within the community and resist politicization or co-optation by extremist elements.

#### 4.2 Stakeholder Mapping Matrix

The following matrix categorizes stakeholders based on their role, power, and interest in Albania’s P/CVE and R&R efforts.

Stakeholder	Power	Interest	Role
Center for the Coordination of CVE (QKEDH)	High	High	Oversees national P/CVE strategy, coordinates inter-agency collaboration, supports regional committees.
Ministry of the Interior	High	High	Leads law enforcement efforts, community policing, prevention of radicalization.
Ministry of Justice	Medium	High	Oversees judicial reforms, rehabilitation programs for extremists, and reintegration efforts.
Ministry of Health and Social Protection	Medium	High	Provides psycho-social support and welfare services to vulnerable individuals and returnees.
Ministry of Education	Medium	High	Implements preventive education programs, promotes counter-narratives in school curricula.
Local Government Units (Municipalities)	Medium	High	Implement P/CVE strategies at the community level, provide services to at-risk populations.
Regional Committees (12 established)	Medium	High	Coordinate local P/CVE efforts, engage communities and vulnerable populations in early intervention.
Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)	Medium	High	Provide support services, community outreach, advocacy, and rehabilitation programs.
International Partners (GCERF, EU, UN)	High	High	Provide financial and technical support, regional and policy coordination.
Religious Institutions	Medium	Medium	Promote moderate religious teachings, counter radical narratives, engage with communities.
Media	Medium	Medium	Raise awareness about CVE and R&R, promote counter-narratives.
Ministry of the Interior	High	High	Leads law enforcement efforts, community policing, prevention of radicalization.
Ministry of Justice	Medium	High	Oversees judicial reforms, rehabilitation programs for extremists, and reintegration efforts.
Ministry of Health and Social Protection	Medium	High	Provides psycho-social support and welfare services to vulnerable individuals and returnees.

#### 4.3 Analysis of Stakeholder Roles and Influence

**Center for the Coordination of Countering Violent Extremism (CVE CENTER):** CVE CENTER is the most critical stakeholder in Albania’s P/CVE framework. It coordinates the national strategy, facilitates inter-agency collaboration, and ensures that local efforts are aligned with national policies. Its role in establishing 12 Regional

Committees across Albania demonstrates its capacity to address localized CVE challenges, ensuring comprehensive and region-specific responses.

**United Nations (UNDP, UNODC):**

UN agencies support Albania by providing financial assistance and technical expertise in CVE. Their ability to implement best practices globally and shape policy direction gives them high influence in Albania's CVE framework. Through community-based approaches, they enhance grassroots prevention efforts.

**European Union (EU):**

The EU plays a significant role in providing financial support and ensuring that Albania's P/CVE measures meet European standards. The EU's involvement in reintegration programs, such as rehabilitating female returnees, underscores its commitment to addressing socio-economic drivers of extremism.

**Ministry of the Interior:**

This ministry coordinates national security responses and ensures the proper implementation of CVE strategies. It is responsible for law enforcement and operational elements of the national CVE program, collaborating closely with other ministries and agencies under CVE CENTER's guidance.

**Ministry of Justice:**

As the authority responsible for legal frameworks and the prosecution of individuals involved in extremism, the Ministry of Justice is a central actor in the R&R process. It works in coordination with CVE CENTER and other government bodies to ensure legal alignment with international norms and support rehabilitation efforts.

**Ministry of Health and Social Protection:**

This ministry provides the necessary health and welfare services for returnees, addressing the mental health challenges they face. It works alongside CVE CENTER and IOM to ensure that reintegration efforts are holistic, focusing on both physical and psychosocial well-being.

**International Organization for Migration (IOM):**

IOM is a key actor in reintegrating returnees, particularly those at risk of re-radicalization. IOM's programs focus on vocational training, psychosocial support, and community reintegration, reducing vulnerability to extremist ideologies.

**Muslim Community of Albania:**

The Muslim Community has a critical role in countering extremist narratives, particularly through promoting moderate interpretations of religious beliefs. Its influence within communities, especially among youth, makes it an essential actor in preventing radicalization.

**National Media Outlets:**

Media outlets wield significant power in shaping public perception of CVE efforts. However, their interest varies, often depending on the specific outlet's editorial stance.

Responsible reporting can foster greater awareness, while sensationalism may hinder public understanding.

**OSCE:**

The OSCE's influence comes from its ability to bring together diverse stakeholders, including religious leaders and community groups. It supports dialogue that helps prevent radicalization, though its focus is often more situational than continuous.

This analysis illustrates the complex landscape of actors in Albania's P/CVE and R&R efforts, highlighting the need for effective coordination and collaboration among all stakeholders, led by the pivotal role of CVE CENTER.

**4.4 Stakeholder Analysis with a focus on Municipality of Tirana, Kukës and Kamëz**

In the context of the project aimed at preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE) and facilitating reintegration and rehabilitation (R&R) of youth in Albania, the municipalities of Tirana, Kukës and Kamëz play pivotal roles. These municipalities serve as critical arenas for implementing local strategies, engaging with communities, and addressing the specific needs of youth at risk of radicalization and violence. This stakeholder analysis identifies key stakeholders within these municipalities, evaluates their influence and interest in P/CVE and R&R efforts, and determines appropriate engagement strategies.

**Tirana Municipality**

*Influence:* High

*Interest:* High

*Role:* As the capital and largest municipality in Albania, Tirana is central to national policy-making and implementation. The municipality is responsible for delivering social services, educational programs, and community engagement initiatives. In 2019, Tirana adopted the "Strategy for Youth 2019-2025," which aims to create a more inclusive environment for youth and to address issues related to social cohesion and security, making it crucial for fostering resilience against radicalization and violence. Additionally, the city has been involved in several international initiatives, such as the "Regional Action Plan for the Prevention of Violent Extremism" developed in collaboration with UNDP and the EU.

*Engagement Strategy:* Collaborate closely with municipal officials to align P/CVE initiatives with local development plans. Provide capacity-building workshops focused on integrating P/CVE principles into existing youth programs and services. Engage with the Youth Council of Tirana to ensure that youth voices are heard in decision-making processes.

**Kukës Municipality**

*Influence:* Medium

*Interest:* High

*Role:* Kukës faces unique socio-economic challenges, including high unemployment rates and limited access to educational and social services. The municipality has been proactive in addressing these challenges through local initiatives, such as the "Local Development Strategy 2016-2020," which emphasizes the importance of community engagement and youth development. This makes it essential for P/CVE efforts to address local vulnerabilities among youth and implement tailored programs aimed at preventing radicalization. Kukës has also benefited from regional cooperation in P/CVE through initiatives funded by international organizations.

*Engagement Strategy:* Work with Kukës officials to identify specific needs and develop programs that cater to the local youth demographic. Establish partnerships with local organizations to create comprehensive support systems for at-risk youth, such as vocational training and community service programs. Facilitate dialogues between local authorities and youth to empower them to take an active role in their communities.

### **Kamëz Municipality**

*Influence:* High

*Interest:* High

*Role:* Kamza Municipality, with a population between 100,000 and 150,000, faces significant challenges in providing social care services due to limited local revenues, a high number of informal residents, and a complex social structure. The municipality struggles with effective planning, budgeting, and delivering social services. Building its capacity to address these challenges is critical, particularly in fostering resilience and preventing violent extremism (P/CVE). Kamza has taken initial steps, such as supporting youth-led businesses and collaborating with the Kamza Youth Council to improve services and address youth-related issues.

*Engagement Strategy:* Collaborate closely with Kamza municipal officials to strengthen their capacity for social service provision, aligning P/CVE efforts with their development plans. Offer capacity-building workshops to integrate P/CVE principles into their existing youth and social programs. Work with the active Kamza Youth Council to engage young people in decision-making processes and ensure their role in promoting community resilience.

### **Local Youth Organizations**

*Influence:* Medium

*Interest:* High

*Role:* Youth organizations in both municipalities serve as grassroots movements that can mobilize young people, facilitate discussions on P/CVE issues, and implement community-led initiatives. Organizations such as the "Youth Center Kukës", "Tirana Youth Center" and the "Kamza Local Youth Council" play significant roles in empowering youth and addressing local challenges. Their engagement is vital for ensuring that programs resonate with youth.

*Engagement Strategy:* Foster partnerships with local youth organizations to co-create initiatives that empower youth and promote counter-narratives to violence. Provide training and resources to enhance their capacity in outreach and engagement. Leverage their networks to promote awareness of P/CVE issues and involve them in project planning and implementation.

### **Schools and Educational Institutions**

*Influence:* High

*Interest:* High

*Role:* Schools are crucial settings for promoting awareness of P/CVE issues among youth. They provide opportunities for integrating educational curricula that emphasize critical thinking, tolerance, and conflict resolution. In both Tirana and Kukës, schools have been engaged in national programs aimed at promoting peace education and civic responsibility. For example, the Albanian Ministry of Education has initiated programs focused on enhancing students' understanding of democracy and human rights, which are integral to preventing radicalization.

*Engagement Strategy:* Collaborate with educational institutions to develop training modules for teachers and students on P/CVE topics. Incorporate extracurricular activities that promote civic engagement and community service. Establish school-based clubs or activities that foster dialogue among students about issues related to tolerance and diversity.

### **Community Leaders and Elders**

*Influence:* Medium

*Interest:* Medium

*Role:* Local community leaders and elders hold significant sway in shaping youth attitudes and behaviors. In Kukës, where tribal and familial ties can influence social dynamics, these leaders can act as intermediaries between the youth and local authorities, fostering dialogue and community cohesion. Their involvement in P/CVE initiatives can enhance community acceptance and participation.

*Engagement Strategy:* Engage community leaders through forums and workshops to raise awareness about the risks of radicalization. Encourage their involvement in community programs aimed at fostering positive youth engagement. Leverage their influence to promote messages of peace and social cohesion within the community.

### **Local Law Enforcement Agencies**

*Influence:* High

*Interest:* Medium

*Role:* Law enforcement agencies play a crucial role in preventing and responding to incidents of violent extremism. They have been involved in national strategies to combat crime and violence, including the "National Strategy on Preventing and Combating

Violent Extremism" adopted in 2018. Their cooperation with community stakeholders can enhance trust and collaboration in addressing local safety concerns.

*Engagement Strategy:* Foster partnerships with local law enforcement to enhance their understanding of youth-related issues and the role of community engagement in preventing radicalization. Facilitate joint community initiatives that promote trust-building between police and youth.

## **Challenges and Considerations**

While the stakeholder landscape in Tirana and Kukës presents various opportunities for collaboration, it also poses challenges. Factors such as differing levels of influence, resource availability, and varying degrees of commitment to P/CVE and R&R efforts must be navigated carefully. There may also be historical tensions between authorities and local communities that can hinder cooperation. The project should prioritize building trust and fostering open communication among stakeholders to enhance collective ownership of initiatives.

The municipalities of Tirana and Kukës, along with their respective stakeholders, are integral to the success of P/CVE and R&R efforts targeting youth. By understanding the dynamics of local actors and their motivations, the project can effectively leverage resources and foster community engagement to prevent violence and support at-risk youth. Through strategic partnerships and tailored initiatives, the project can create sustainable pathways for youth, promoting resilience against radicalization and enhancing community cohesion. Engaging stakeholders in a collaborative and inclusive manner will be essential to the project's long-term impact and success.

## **5. Stakeholder Engagement Strategy**

### **5.1 Approaches to Stakeholder Engagement**

Engaging stakeholders effectively is crucial for the successful implementation of Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE) and Reintegration and Rehabilitation (R&R) initiatives in Albania. The engagement approach will be characterized by inclusivity, transparency, and collaboration. Building trust among stakeholders is paramount, as is establishing regular communication channels to facilitate ongoing dialogue. Methods such as workshops, roundtable discussions, and joint training sessions will be employed to encourage participation and feedback from all relevant actors. Furthermore, leveraging digital platforms for outreach and engagement will ensure that a broad range of stakeholders can contribute to the discourse on P/CVE and R&R.

## 5.2 Engagement Strategies for Each Stakeholder Group

**High Influence/High Interest (QKEDH, Ministry of the Interior, International Partners):** These stakeholders are key decision-makers and have both significant power and vested interest in the success of P/CVE and R&R efforts. Engage them continuously through decision-making processes, consultations, and regular updates to maintain their commitment and align efforts.

**High Influence/Medium Interest (Media, Religious Institutions):** While these stakeholders hold significant influence, their interest in P/CVE initiatives may be moderate. Engage them selectively to ensure they contribute effectively to public awareness and the promotion of counter-narratives, while also balancing their involvement with other responsibilities.

**Medium Influence/High Interest (CSOs, Ministries of Justice, Health, and Education, Local Government Units, Regional Committees):** These stakeholders are actively involved in implementing strategies but may have limited influence over national decision-making. Provide them with technical support, build their capacity, and ensure regular collaboration to maximize their contribution.

**Medium Influence/Medium Interest (Religious Institutions, Media):** These stakeholders can support P/CVE efforts through community engagement and media campaigns but may require additional motivation and coordination. Regular communication and collaboration on awareness-raising campaigns are necessary to keep them involved and effective.

## 5.3 Risk Assessment and Mitigation Strategies

Risk assessment is essential for anticipating challenges that may arise during stakeholder engagement. Key risks include potential resistance from government actors, miscommunication among stakeholders, and lack of community support for P/CVE initiatives. To mitigate these risks, the following strategies will be implemented:

- **Building Relationships:** Proactively engaging with government actors and community leaders to build trust and understanding. Establishing clear channels of communication can help address concerns before they escalate.
- **Effective Communication:** Regularly disseminating information about initiatives, successes, and challenges will keep stakeholders informed and engaged. Utilizing multiple communication channels, including social media, newsletters, and public forums, will ensure broad outreach.
- **Feedback Mechanisms:** Implementing feedback loops through surveys and focus groups will allow stakeholders to voice concerns and suggestions, fostering a sense of ownership and involvement in the P/CVE efforts.
- **Crisis Management Plans:** Developing contingency plans for potential crises, such as negative media coverage or political pushback, will enable stakeholders to respond quickly and effectively, maintaining momentum in P/CVE initiatives.



By adopting these engagement approaches and strategies, the stakeholder engagement process can be effectively navigated, enhancing collaboration and maximizing the impact of P/CVE and R&R efforts in Albania.

## **6. Case Studies**

### **6.1 Successful P/CVE and R&R Initiatives in Albania**

In Albania, several initiatives have successfully addressed the challenges of Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE) and Reintegration and Rehabilitation (R&R). One notable approach is the psychosocial and educational support provided in schools, spearheaded by organizations like the Counselling Line for Women and Girls (CLWG). This initiative recognizes the profound impact of conflict and trauma on children and youth, particularly those from conflict-affected areas. By integrating psychosocial support into educational settings, the program fosters emotional well-being, academic success, and social integration among students.

Psychosocial support helps students develop resilience, cope with stress, and express their emotions in a safe environment. Tailored educational programs address specific academic challenges faced by students, ensuring that they receive the resources and guidance needed to thrive. Additionally, the initiative promotes social integration, encouraging positive interactions and a sense of belonging within the school community. This holistic approach not only aids in preventing dropout rates but also contributes to the long-term success of returnee students, equipping them with essential skills for future opportunities.

### **6.2 Lessons Learned from other countries**

Examining P/CVE and R&R initiatives in other countries reveals valuable lessons applicable to Albania. For instance, countries like Norway and Canada have successfully implemented community-based programs that emphasize the importance of religious counseling and engagement with local educators. These programs highlight the role of teachers and school psychologists in identifying at-risk youth and providing psychosocial support.

The success of these international models underscores the necessity of integrating mental health support within educational systems, particularly for students affected by trauma. Furthermore, involving community and religious leaders in the dialogue creates a supportive environment that fosters trust and collaboration, which is crucial for addressing the root causes of radicalization.

## 6.3 Comparative Analysis of Stakeholder Involvement

### In-depth Comparison

A comparative analysis of stakeholder involvement in Albania's P/CVE and R&R initiatives reveals distinct roles and contributions across different groups. Government actors, particularly the Coordination Center for Countering Violent Extremism (CVE CENTER), play a pivotal role in policy coordination and the establishment of regional committees to address local challenges. Their leadership facilitates inter-agency collaboration, ensuring that stakeholders work cohesively towards common goals.

International organizations like UNDP and EU provide essential technical assistance and funding, while civil society organizations (CSOs), including the Institute for Democracy and Mediation and women's rights organizations, engage at the grassroots level, addressing community-specific needs. The inclusion of religious institutions further enhances the efforts, as they promote dialogue and counter extremist narratives within their communities.

In contrast, the media serves a dual role: while it can raise awareness of P/CVE initiatives, responsible reporting is essential to avoid sensationalism that could inadvertently exacerbate community tensions. Therefore, fostering strong partnerships among government actors, international organizations, CSOs, religious institutions, and the media is crucial for creating a comprehensive and effective P/CVE and R&R framework in Albania.

Overall, the integration of psychosocial support, educational initiatives, and community engagement demonstrates the potential for successful interventions, providing a robust foundation for ongoing efforts to combat violent extremism and support reintegration.

## 7. Challenges and Opportunities

### 7.1 Key Challenges in Stakeholder Engagement

Engaging stakeholders in P/CVE and R&R initiatives in Albania presents several challenges. One significant obstacle is the fragmentation of efforts among various organizations and agencies, which can lead to duplication of work and a lack of coherent strategy. Different stakeholders may have varying objectives and priorities, making it difficult to align their efforts towards a common goal. Additionally, the limited capacity of some civil society organizations to engage effectively in policymaking processes can hinder their ability to contribute meaningfully to discussions and initiatives.

Another challenge lies in building trust and effective communication between stakeholders, particularly among government agencies, international organizations, and local communities. Mistrust can arise from past experiences or perceived power imbalances, which may prevent open dialogue and collaboration. Furthermore, the sensitive nature of P/CVE work can lead to reluctance from communities to engage, particularly if they fear stigmatization or negative repercussions.

Lastly, resource constraints—both financial and human—pose a challenge to sustained engagement and capacity building. Many organizations rely on external funding, which can be unpredictable, affecting their ability to implement long-term strategies and maintain stakeholder relationships.

## **7.2 Opportunities for Strengthening Collaboration**

Despite these challenges, there are significant opportunities to strengthen collaboration among stakeholders in Albania's P/CVE and R&R efforts. One key opportunity lies in fostering multi-stakeholder platforms that encourage dialogue and partnership among government, civil society, international organizations, and community leaders. Establishing regular forums or roundtable discussions can facilitate the sharing of best practices, experiences, and insights, leading to more cohesive strategies.

Training and capacity-building initiatives can also enhance the ability of civil society organizations to engage effectively in policy advocacy and implementation. By providing resources and support, international organizations and government agencies can empower local actors to play a more significant role in decision-making processes, ensuring that their perspectives are included.

Additionally, leveraging technology and social media can enhance communication and outreach efforts, helping to bridge gaps between stakeholders and communities. Utilizing digital platforms for awareness campaigns can engage youth and vulnerable populations, fostering a sense of ownership and involvement in P/CVE initiatives.

Finally, aligning P/CVE strategies with broader development goals can create synergies and increase the sustainability of initiatives. By integrating P/CVE efforts into existing social, educational, and economic programs, stakeholders can address the root causes of radicalization more effectively while maximizing resource utilization.

In summary, while challenges in stakeholder engagement exist, the potential for strengthened collaboration presents a pathway towards more effective and sustainable P/CVE and R&R initiatives in Albania.

## **9. Conclusion**

In conclusion, the development of a comprehensive stakeholder map and engagement strategy is essential for enhancing Albania's efforts in preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE) and supporting the reintegration of returnees. This paper has outlined the diverse roles of various stakeholders, including government agencies, international organizations, civil society, religious institutions, and local communities, each contributing unique perspectives and resources to these complex challenges.

By identifying key actors and their influence, we have emphasized the importance of fostering effective collaboration and communication among these groups. The strategic and policy recommendations provided aim to strengthen stakeholder engagement,

ensuring that all voices are heard and that interventions are tailored to meet the specific needs of communities.

A focused approach to stakeholder engagement will not only enhance the effectiveness of P/CVE initiatives but also build trust and resilience within society. By leveraging the collective strengths of all stakeholders, Albania can create a sustainable framework for addressing the root causes of radicalization and promoting social cohesion, ultimately leading to a safer and more inclusive future for all.

This expanded document provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the stakeholder landscape in P/CVE and R&R efforts in Albania. It combines in-depth analysis with practical recommendations, case studies, and strategic insights to inform future initiatives and enhance stakeholder engagement.



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