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COVER NOTE

From:	European Commission
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To:	Delegations
Subject:	Joint Action Plan on Preventing and Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism for the Western Balkans

Delegations will find attached the new Joint Action Plan on Preventing and Countering of Terrorism and Violent Extremism for the Western Balkans, as signed on 30 October 2025 at the occasion of the EU-Western Balkans Ministerial Forum on Justice and Home Affairs in Sarajevo.

The new Joint Action Plan on Preventing and Countering of Terrorism and Violent Extremism for the Western Balkans

In line with the Protect EU, the European Internal Security Strategy COM/2025/148 and the upcoming new Agenda on Prevention and Countering of Terrorism and Violent Extremism the European Commission and the Western Balkan partners agree on a new Joint Action Plan on Preventing and Countering of Terrorism and Violent Extremism for the Western Balkans.

As the EU accession negotiations accelerate, it is essential that our security cooperation with the Western Balkans be further strengthened with a view to make a future enlarged EU safer and more immune to the threats of terrorism and violent extremism.

The European Union (EU) and the Western Balkan partners reaffirm their commitment to strengthen cooperation on counter terrorism and prevention and countering of violent extremism. Building on the achievements of the previous Joint Action Plan signed in 2018, this new plan aims to keep enhancing the capacities of the Western Balkan partners to fight against terrorism, prevent and counter violent extremism, and further align with the EU aquis, standards and policies in this field.

The actions set out in this plan should be non-exhaustive; adjustable according to evolving needs and developments; and subject, where appropriate, to review reflecting the evolution of EU policy and legislation in the counter terrorism area. Moreover, this plan does not, nor is it intended to, create any binding, legal or financial obligations on either side under domestic or international law.

Primary responsibility for the implementation of the actions set out in the following five objectives should rest with Western Balkan partners. The EU should endeavour to support them, as appropriate, in their efforts and participate in assessing their needs.

It is therefore without prejudice to, inter alia, the Stabilisation and Association Agreements concluded by Western Balkans partners with the EU as well as financing on behalf of the EU which remains subject to decision-making in accordance with EU law. This plan should be aligned with policy measures taken in the framework of the Stabilisation and Association Agreements and, the accession negotiations.

The new Joint Action Plan will focus on five areas, in continuity with the previous Action Plan and aim to achieve concrete results to tackle the existing security challenges and align our common efforts to new threats stemming from the internal and the international security situation.

Furthermore, addressing terrorist and violent extremism online, and emerging threats due to technological developments, are crosscutting priorities to be integrated into the different strands of work of the Joint Action Plan. The online sphere has taken an increasing importance in spreading propaganda and inspiring terrorist attacks, further exacerbated by the potential use of Artificial Intelligence. Actions included under different objectives of this document aim at stepping up the capacities of the Western Balkan partners through alignment to EU legislation, capacity building for law enforcement authorities, exchange of best practices and lessons learnt, operational cooperation with Europol and Eurojust. The EU intends to support these actions

through different financial and operational instruments that are referenced to under the respective objectives, and that target the specific needs of the Western Balkan partners. Other relevant actions related to technological development included in the Joint Action Plan aim at addressing the use of cryptocurrencies for terrorism financing and the threat for public spaces and citizens represented by misuse of civilian drones. New technologies can also represent a powerful tool for counter terrorism and prevention of violent extremism, operational tools are already at disposal of the Western Balkan partners through cooperation with Europol and should be further exploited.

This plan also aims at systematically strengthening regional cooperation among Western Balkan partners.

All Western Balkan partners and the EU intend to work towards achieving these five objectives through the actions foreseen in this plan, whose validity will extend until December 2030.

Implementation and monitoring

The Joint Action Plan will be implemented through tailor-made actions carried out at regional and national level. For the national actions the Western Balkan partners should propose national roadmaps to the Commission within three months from the signature of the Joint Action Plan. The national roadmaps will ensure ownership of the process by the Western Balkan partners. The Commission services will support the preparation of the roadmaps and will have to issue a positive opinion to validate them. The implementation of the national roadmaps should start within six months from the signature of the Joint Action Plan. The national roadmaps should include measurable indicators. The national roadmaps can be adapted – in consultation with the Commission - to reflect the evolution of the security landscape and of the policy and legal context.

In order to achieve and map timely progress towards the five objectives of this plan, the following mechanisms should be used:

- the Integrative Internal Security Governance (IISG) (or its successor), will support the regular monitoring of the implementation of the actions at regional and national level;
- the Western Balkan partners will share relevant information and submit annual reports to the European Commission and to the IISG Secretariat (or its successor) on the implementation of the national roadmaps;
- the Regional Network of Coordinators for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism, supported by the EU will discuss implementation of the Joint Action Plan at the occasion of its meetings;
- follow-up through regular exchanges, dialogues or visits between the EU and the Western Balkan partners.

Each Western Balkan partner should designate its own Contact Point for reporting on the implementation of the Joint Action Plan, based on its institutional architecture and scope of responsibility in the fight against terrorism and prevention of violent extremism.

The yearly EU-Western Balkans Ministerial Forum on Justice and Home Affairs will provide political steering to the process.

Joint objectives

Objective 1: A Robust Framework for Countering Terrorism, Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism: Institutional Set-up and Legal Alignment, Implementation and Enforcement Capacity

Each Western Balkan partner should seek to:

- Identify gaps in the current legal framework on countering and preventing terrorism and violent extremism, as well as on the rights of victims of terrorism, and continuously update it in order to keep it aligned with the EU legal framework and with international standards.
- Continue to align the national legal frameworks with the Directive (EU) 2017/541 on combating terrorism, in particular align the definitions of terrorist offences, offences related to a terrorist group and offences related to terrorist activities in their national criminal law frameworks. Establish provisions on the protection of, support to and rights of victims of terrorism in alignment with the requirements of the Directive.
- Align with the Victims' Rights Directive (2012/29/EU) recognizing that victims of terrorism – a designation that includes both people who have been targets of an attack and those who have lost a relative to one – may need special attention owing to the specific nature of the crime they have endured.
- Align with the Regulation (EU) 2021/784 on addressing the dissemination of terrorist content online. In light of the raising importance of this phenomenon the Western Balkan partners should take swift measures to reinforce their legal framework and build up their capacities to address it.
- Ratify the amending protocol of the Council of Europe Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism (CETS No. 196) that sets a pan-european definition of terrorism offence.
- Coordinate their position with the EU in the framework of the negotiations on the review of the United Nations Global Counter Terrorism Strategy that should take place in 2026.
- Align with Regulation (EU) 2025/13 and with Directive (EU) 2016/681 on the collection, transfer and processing of Advance Passenger Information (API) and Passenger Name Records (PNR) with a view to strengthen its capabilities to prevent and detect persons travelling to or from their territory with the intent to carry out terrorist activities, or to effectively investigate and prosecute perpetrators.
- Keep updated the strategic frameworks on counter terrorism and prevention and countering of violent extremism to be able to face new threats and challenges, but also to integrate new instruments that can support the fight against terrorism and violent extremism. Ensure consistency and coherence with EU's strategic framework on counter terrorism and prevention and countering of violent extremism, notably the upcoming EU Agenda on prevention and countering terrorism and violent extremism. Establish a robust methodology for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of these strategic frameworks.
- Continue reinforcing and consolidating the coordination bodies established to follow up on the implementation of the first Joint Action Plan, or establishing a new body where needed, ensuring that they can effectively play their role. Where necessary include also other actors in these coordination bodies, to ensure a whole of government and whole

of society approach. This should extend to prison services, migration, health, education and welfare agencies or ministries, representatives of local governments, civil society organisations, and religious communities.

- Ensure that adequate national financial and human resources are allocated for the implementation of the strategic and legal framework and the effective functioning of the relevant bodies. The level of funding needs to be consistent with policy objectives.
- Step up regional level cooperation in order to pool resources and share best practises and optimise the information sharing. This increased cooperation should be achieved through existing instruments and mechanisms like for example the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC). Existing platforms should be used to enhance regional cooperation on counter terrorism both at strategic and operational level.
- Establish comprehensive national terrorism threat assessment mechanisms or bodies involving all government bodies and agencies that can effectively contribute to the production of a unified threat analysis. This will contribute to anticipation of threats, which is an essential pillar for an effective approach to counter terrorism and prevention of violent extremism, and to a common understanding of the terrorist and violent extremism threat, leading to strengthened evidence based responses.
- Establish a regional network of analysts that will aim at fostering collaboration on anticipation of threats, facilitating information sharing, building analytical capacity, improve threat analysis, and develop common analytical methodologies for threat assessment. Develop an annual regional Terrorist Situation and Trends Report on the model of the TE-SAT published by Europol for the European Union.
- Continue strengthening the capacities of the law enforcement and of the judicial authorities to prevent, detect, investigate and prosecute acts of terrorism and violent extremism. This should include allocating the necessary human resources, ensure training and capacity building at national and regional level, including with the support of Cepol, Europol and Eurojust. Among other things Western Balkan partners should improve their capacity to access and use battlefield evidence to prosecute foreign terrorist fighters, including with the support of international partners. This should include proactive engagement with international partners, leveraging their expertise and resources to build a more robust framework for gathering, analysing, and presenting such evidence in legal proceedings. Further outreach to secure the necessary evidence and improve overall capacity in this area should be envisaged.
- Mainstream human rights and gender issues in counterterrorism policies and strategies, including, but not limited to, the prosecution of women returning from conflict zones, data protection, and safeguarding imprisoned persons' rights. Prosecution should involve gender-sensitive assessments to differentiate between victims of coercion and active perpetrators, fair trials, legal representation and reintegration programmes addressing trauma and economic opportunities. Data protection must ensure the protection of personal data of individuals involved in criminal proceedings, be it as witnesses, victims, or suspects, and provide redress mechanisms. Detention policies should ensure gender-sensitive conditions, protection from abuse, access to healthcare, legal aid, and independent oversight. Institutional reforms should train law enforcement on gender-sensitive counter terrorism approaches, integrate women’s roles in counter terrorism and prevention of violent extremism, and align with the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. Embedding gender mainstreaming and human

rights in counter terrorism strategies ensures fairness, effectiveness, and legal compliance.

- The EU should seek to:
  - Enable each WB partner to lawfully receive and process PNR data on flights operated by airlines flying to and from the EU; and for that purpose, by means of concluding PNR agreements.
  - Support the Western Balkans with the set-up of a regional network of analysts notably with the support of CEPOL and Europol (in the framework of the EU-funded Western Balkan PACT II project or its successor). Europol should support the development of the necessary knowledge and capacities on the TE-SAT methodology by means of targeted workshop (s).
  - Foster collaboration through the agreed structures with Horizon Europe associated States on research and innovation relevant to the anticipation and response to terrorist threats and attacks, in particular, analysis of big datasets and detection of terrorist content online, including through the use of artificial intelligence.
  - Support the strengthening of the law enforcement capacities to address terrorist content online.
  - Advise the Western Balkans on their related legal frameworks, strategies and action plans, including through the Knowledge Hub on the Prevention of Radicalisation.
  - Continue to support the regular meetings of the Regional Network of Coordinators for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism, as a bi-annual forum of exchanges.

Objective 2: Effective Prevention and Countering of Violent Extremism (PCVE)

Each Western Balkan partner should seek to:

- Enhance its capacities to effectively address all types of violent extremism and radicalisation, promoting peaceful cohabitation amongst communities and fighting polarisation of society. To this aim it is paramount to adopt a whole of society approach, involving different governmental and community actors at national and local level.
- Create or develop the existing structures to ensure the national-local coordination, guaranteeing that local authorities and civil society organisations are effectively involved in preventing and detecting violent extremism and radicalisation. These structures and mechanisms should be specifically mentioned in future PCVE strategy updates and detailed in their corresponding implementation action plans. Subnational actors, both at regional and local level, should be included into the decision-making process when drafting these documents and related policies.
- National PCVE coordinators should act as bridge-builders between the national strategies and local and regional realities, facilitating the information flow efficiently.
- Increase voluntary cooperation between the authorities and the tech industry, in order to improve the referral and removal mechanisms of violent extremist and terrorist content online. To this aim, specific monitoring and referral Units should be created and developed within the Law Enforcement agencies, sufficiently equipped and staffed.

- Invest in and support government and civil society-led prevention programmes online and/or add digital aspects to existing preventing and countering radicalisation and violent extremism programmes.
- Establish the necessary mechanisms and measures to ensure the effectiveness of detection, prevention and reintegration programs while in prison and post-release of violent extremists, radicalised inmates, and terrorist offenders.
- Utilise strategic communication to influence behaviours away from radicalisation, violent extremism, and terrorism by proactively promoting counter and alternative narratives adapted to the regional, national and local contexts, to challenge harmful messages and build relationships with credible partners. This includes addressing, disinformation and misinformation which drive polarisation and violent extremism. Communication activities should also target at diaspora audiences.
- Promote activities aimed to avoid the radicalisation of the young generations, in particular: pay due consideration to the dangers deriving from online radicalisation and new technologies and to the importance to improve media literacy and resilience to disinformation among the population; promote critical thinking and build resilience against any form of violent behaviour with support of the educational institutions and other organisations that are engaging with young people like youth cultural and sport organisations.
- Improve early warning mechanisms to detect possible cases of radicalisation, including by raising awareness and promoting cooperation between the community and the public sector, especially the health sector.
- Ensure that appropriate monitoring mechanisms are in place to ensure the disengagement, rehabilitation and reintegration of the foreign terrorist fighters and their families, as well as of other terrorist offenders; give due consideration to possible cases of recidivism. Robust risk assessment mechanisms and tools should be included in the disengagement, reintegration and rehabilitation programs to duly address possible cases of re-radicalisation and false compliance. To this aim multiagency platforms should be created and/or enhanced taking in due consideration the role of local communities.
- Develop streamlined and cohesive best practices at regional level for the management of foreign terrorist fighters and their families.
- Address the drivers of ethnonationalist radicalization and its connections with Violent Right-Wing Extremism, hooliganism and organized crime, with a special focus on recruitment of young generations.
- Allocate the necessary human and financial resources, including specific budgets lines to implement the needs underlined under this objective and ensure sustainability.
- Explore connections between organised crime and violent extremism, with a special focus on recruitment of young generations.

The EU should seek to:

- Provide support to this objective including through the EU Knowledge Hub on Prevention of Radicalisation and other EU funded programs or initiatives. The EU should invite the Hub to provide expertise, counselling and knowledge exchange, while serving as a link on PCVE between policy makers, researchers and practitioners.

Western Balkan experts would be included into the EU Knowledge Hub Thematic panels for the prevention of radicalization, as relevant.

- Provide support to the development of the national-local structures in Prevention of Radicalization, through the EU Knowledge Hub activities. This includes support to local dimension through the Strong Cities Network Western Balkans regional Hub during the duration of the project. These exchanges will promote the building of trust, sharing of knowledge and the interlink of well-structured local networks.
- Provide support for the progressive legal alignment with the EU Terrorist Content Online Regulation, and to build and enhance the monitoring capacities of law enforcement authorities. Additionally, in cooperation with the EU Internet Forum, Europol and Western Balkan authorities, the EU Knowledge Hub should be invited to support the development of a handbook to guide Western Balkans partners in the detection of violent extremist and borderline content online.
- Provide specific support on Strategic Communications to develop neutral and detailed strategies for prevention interventions and tools to measure their effectiveness.
- Contribute to the mapping and coordination of regional PCVE initiatives through the IISG (or its successor).
- Provide support to develop the prisons and probation structures for prevention, monitoring and rehabilitation of extremist inmates through the EU-Council of Europe Horizontal Facility.

Objective 3: Effective Information Exchange and Operational Cooperation

On law enforcement cooperation each Western Balkan partner should seek to:

- Make a proactive use of information channels and analytical tools offered by Europol. Following the establishment of Europol National Contact Points in the whole region, and the posting of Liaison officers to the Europol headquarters, Western Balkans partners should increase the proactive exchange information with Europol, and regionally with the other Western Balkan partners. This includes, among others, periodical exchange of information and personal data on foreign terrorist fighters returned from conflict zones, or still in conflict zones; systematically transmitting information related to investigations on terrorist suspects and terrorist offences, or flag threats to EU's security; transmit information about potential terrorist travellers intercepted on their national territory.
- Preferably use (CT) SIENA for the bilateral or multilateral exchange of counter terrorism related information with EU MS and all third parties where SIENA channel is rolled-out; and involving the Europol European Counter Terrorism Centre (ECTC) in information exchange whenever is possible.
- Make proactive use of support and tools offered by Europol to address terrorist and violent extremist content online to address dissemination of the content and upgrade skills and capabilities of national law enforcement agencies. Engage with Europol to analyse trends related to online propaganda stemming from the region, and involvement of residents with dual citizenship in the EU in terrorism and violent extremism investigations.

- Increase cooperation between national law enforcement authorities and Europol, in particular the ECTC - EU Internet Referral Unit (EU IRU), in order to improve operational cooperation and referral and removal mechanisms by enhancing their capabilities through knowledge transfer by the EU IRU and using available resources like Check the Web (CtW), Europol' Sirius Project on the Europol Platform for Experts (EPE).
- Increase cooperation between law enforcement authorities and Europol by participating in dedicated Referral Action Days (RADs) on violent extremist and terrorist content online in Western Balkan languages and/or targeting Western Balkan and diaspora audiences.
- Increase cooperation with the EU IRU to support the detection of violent extremist and terrorist content online in Western Balkan languages and/or targeting Western Balkan and diaspora audiences.
- Put in place a mechanism that allow for structural real time exchange between national agencies, both law enforcement and national security agencies to avoid fragmentation of information, so that national authorities have at all time a clear picture about terrorist threats and situation. This will facilitate also the production of national unified threat assessments as mentioned in objective 1.
- Enhance exchange of information and operational cooperation at the regional level, also through the use of regional mechanisms mentioned under objective 1. This should include also sharing of information on the movements of returned foreign terrorist fighters. Where relevant and useful joint investigation teams with the support of Europol, Eurojust or EU Member States should be set up.
- Exchange any relevant information about persons traveling between their territory and the EU, collected through the use of API and PNR, once in place, with the competent authorities of the EU Member States, as well as with Europol, with a view to help combatting terrorism.

On the side of the EU,

Europol should, subject to its mandate and legal framework, seek to:

- Provide support through strategic, operational and analytical capacities, notably through secure exchange of information via SIENA, analysis of large datasets, support of financial investigations, expertise on CBRN threats, establishment of operational task forces, mobile office support, travel intelligence-related services, participation in Joint Action Days (JADs), forensic and technical support, detection of terrorist content online, social media analysis, strategic analysis, situational and ad hoc reports.
- Systematically involve the Western Balkan partners in Terrorism Identification Task Force (TITF) days, dedicated to specific topics.
- Systematically involve the Western Balkan partners in Referral Action Days (RAD), dedicated to counter terrorism or violent extremism, including their online dimension, especially RADs focused on violent extremist and terrorist content online in Western Balkan languages and/or targeting Western Balkan and diaspora audiences.
- Facilitate, where requested, contacts with online service providers for the referral and removal of violent extremist and terrorist content online. The Western Balkans partners are invited to make full use of the opportunities offered by the Sirius project, such as trainings, tools and guidelines that support law enforcement and judicial authorities in

accessing cross-border electronic evidence in the context of criminal investigations and proceedings.

- Support, upon request, transfer of its know-how and expertise and organise targeted awareness-raising events to Western Balkans partners on products, services and capabilities of ECTC, in particular by developing capacities to fight terrorist content online.

The EU should seek to:

- Support each Western Balkan partner in the development of its capability to collect and use Advance Passenger Information with a view to help combating terrorism.

On judicial cooperation, each Western Balkan partner should seek to:

- Raise awareness of the judicial system on the need to ensure effective prosecution of violent extremists and terrorist offenders, including foreign terrorist fighters. Ensure consistent prosecutorial practices also for what it concerns prosecution and sentencing of women that returned from conflict zones, in order to ascertain their possible involvement in the perpetration of terrorist offences or other typologies of offences that might have been perpetrated in conflict zones. This can include the use of cumulative prosecution practises.
- Make sure that the data protection standards necessary to enable operational cooperation with Eurojust are effectively implemented, including by adopting or maintaining relevant legislation in line with the EU acquis.
- Develop and implement specialised training programs focused on counterterrorism law, international legal standards, human rights and advanced judicial practises.
- Increase cooperation on counter terrorism investigations and prosecutions supported by Eurojust.
- Increase cooperation, and when relevant share information, with Eurojust on counter terrorism related cases.
- Continue to make use of the assistance provided by Eurojust in facilitating judicial cooperation requests, including by making effective use of the Eurojust Contact Points and Liaison Prosecutors.
- Strengthen cooperation at regional level, including by exploring regional connections related to terrorism and violent extremism cases, and setting up joint investigation teams and exploring regional connections related to terrorism and violent extremism cases.

On the side of the EU,

Eurojust should, subject to its legal framework and mandate, seek to:

- Continue to support the investigation and prosecution of terrorism related cases involving Western Balkan partners and EU Member States.
- Continue to support use of judicial cooperation tools and instruments, including joint investigation teams set-up at regional level and with EU Member States.

- Continue to engage with the national correspondents for terrorism matters from the Western Balkan partners which have concluded a cooperation agreement with Eurojust.
- Promote the exchange of experience and best practices among EU and Western Balkans judges and prosecutors to deal with complex cases related to terrorism, notably through the EU funded CRIM JUST project.

Objective 4: Address Terrorism Financing, and Undesirable Foreign Funding

Each Western Balkan partner should seek to:

- Keep their legislative framework updated with the relevant EU acquis on Anti Money Laundering and Terrorism Financing and Asset recovery and Confiscation and ensure that it is duly implemented in order to deprive terrorist groups of their means to act, in particular:
    - Directive (EU) 2015/849 on the prevention of the use of the financial system for the purposes of money laundering or terrorist financing, as amended.
    - Directive (EU) 2018/1673 on combatting money laundering by criminal law.
    - Regulation (EU) 2023/1113 on information accompanying transfers of funds and certain crypto assets.
    - Directive (EU) 2024/1260 on asset recovery and confiscation
- Ensure effective use and implementation of targeted sanctions related to countering terrorism, as required under United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1267 (1999), 1373 (2001), 1989 (2011), 2253 (2015) and all other relevant resolutions, as well as in accordance with the restrictive measures adopted autonomously by the EU to combat terrorism.
- Ensure that terrorist financing risks are understood and, where appropriate, co-ordinated actions at national level are taken to combat the financing of terrorism. This should be reflected in the respective National Risk Assessment.
- Continue strengthening the capacities of the financial intelligence units (FIUs), law enforcement authorities and other competent authorities to detect, investigate and prosecute terrorism financing. This includes the increase of these units' human, IT and financial resources to ensure that they can carry out their tasks. Staff should receive training related to emerging threats, in particular related to new technologies, e.g. the use of cryptocurrencies.
- Enhance the track record of investigations, prosecutions and convictions of terrorism financing cases. Law enforcement should systematically look into the financing aspects of the terrorism cases and have an autonomous capacity to conduct criminal investigations on terrorism financing.
- Support non-profit organisations in adopting risk mitigation measures against terrorism financing. Monitor and where relevant appropriately investigate the abuse of non-profit organisations for terrorism financing. In particular the risk represented by non-profit organisations receiving funding from high-risk jurisdictions or unverifiable sources in line with the national risk assessments and the recommendations of the Council of

Europe "Regional terrorism financing risk assessment of the not-for-profit (NPO) sector in the Western Balkans and Türkiye 2020-2021"[1]. Measures targeting abuse of NPOs for terrorist financing should be implemented consistently with the FATF standards, in order not to produce unintended consequences that would hamper the operations of NPOs with a legitimate purpose.

- Raise awareness of the Financial Intelligence Units and of security services on the risks associated to Undesirable Foreign Funding[2] originating from third countries. Undesirable Foreign Funding may foster radicalisation in the Western Balkans, through the financing of extremist ideologies and radical groups as hotbeds for radicalisation, engendering an environment that intensifies existing social, political, and economic grievances. Encourage the implementation of stricter regulations on foreign financial flows to the Western Balkans to increase transparency and identify sources of Undesirable Foreign Funding.

The EU should seek to:

- Support capacity building for FIUs, law enforcement and judicial authorities on terrorism financing through EU programs.
- Promote exchange of best practises with EU Member States on Undesirable Foreign Funding, for what concerns the monitoring of financial flows and the adoption of related regulations

On the side of the EU,

CEPOL should, subject to its legal framework and mandate, seek to:

- Continue supporting training for law enforcement on terrorism financing, including through the European Union Training Hub and the International Cooperation Unit and the Counter Terrorism Support Network (CTSN) of the WB PACT II project with priority focus on new technologies (e.g. the use of cryptocurrencies) and updating and developing the Counter Terrorism Financing guidelines for investigators developed under the previous edition of the project.

Europol should, subject to its legal framework and mandate, seek to:

- Support investigations on terrorism financing, upon request of the Western Balkan partners.

Eurojust should, subject to its legal framework and mandate, seek to:

- Provide training and support to prosecutors and judges on terrorism financing.

[1] https://www.coe.int/en/web/corruption/deliverables-aec-regional-phase-ii

[2] According to the Project Based Collaboration study conducted in the EU, Undesirable Foreign Funding refers to direct or indirect financial flows or donations from foreign state or non-state actors to natural or legal persons operating in the EU exerting or intending to exert malign influence on European societies by facilitating activities that challenge EU values, including its democratic principles, fundamental rights, and the rule of law. Such activities may lead to mistrust of governments and democratic institutions as well as incite discrimination, hatred, polarisation, segregation, and all forms of extremism.

Objective 5: Strengthen the Protection of Citizens and Critical Infrastructure

Each Western Balkan partner should seek to:

- Enhance the protection of critical infrastructure and the resilience of critical entities by:
    - Prioritising and aligning their legal framework to the new EU legislation in this area: the Directive on the resilience of critical entities (EU/2022/2557), and starting the implementation of the new legal framework, especially as regards developing a strategy for the resilience of critical entities, carrying out risk assessments on the essential services provided in the eleven sectors and subsectors covered by the Directive, and identifying their critical entities.
    - Adopting measures to enhance the protection of critical infrastructure, in particular by having in place the relevant bylaws and designating national critical infrastructure. This would represent a solid basis for the subsequent alignment with the new EU legal framework.
    - Enhance human resource capacities to strengthen the protection of critical infrastructure and the resilience of critical entities, in particular by promoting the sharing of information, acquiring expertise in this area by organising trainings for professionals, in particular civil servants and personnel working for operators of critical infrastructure and by sharing good practices on legal, economic, technical and security aspects. This should foster, among others, the creation, at national level, of a community of professionals in the area of protection of critical infrastructure and the resilience of critical entities.
    - Improve the cooperation at regional level by sharing information and best practices among competent authorities dealing with critical infrastructure, law enforcement practitioners and operators of critical infrastructure regarding critical infrastructure of cross-border or regional relevance that require common actions in order to ensure their protection and resilience.
- Enhance protection of public spaces in line with the EU Action Plan to support the protection of public spaces (COM (2017) 612). This calls for both stronger physical protection of such places and adequate detection systems, without undermining citizens' freedoms. It is important to increase the awareness of managing authorities, local authorities and citizens on the vulnerability of public spaces, as well as enhancing knowledge and the spread of good practices in promoting security by design. Partners in the region should enhance public-private cooperation for the protection of public spaces, including through the exchange of experience, lessons learned, practical exercises and good practices. An important aspect to reflect is the fact that minorities and vulnerable individuals can be disproportionately affected including persons targeted because of their ethnicity, religion, gender, or sexual orientation and therefore require particular attention. Foster multi-agency coordination and response mechanisms to a possible terrorist attack, including by updating dedicated protocols and standard operating procedures.
- Improve the capacities to protect public spaces from threats represented by misuse of civilian Unmanned Aerial System, in line with the Communication of the European Commission on countering potential threats posed by drones[3].

[3] COM/2023/659

- Continue to address the issue of illicit trafficking of firearms, mainly by pursuing the goals of the 2nd phase of the roadmap (2025-2030) for a sustainable solution to the illegal possession, misuse and trafficking of small arms and light weapons, their ammunition and explosives in the Western Balkans (SALW Roadmap).
- Continue the active involvement of Western Balkans partners in the operational actions of the European Multidisciplinary Platform against Criminal Threats (EMPACT) on firearms trafficking.
- Adopt legislation and put in place measures to align with the EU legal framework on explosive precursors, in particular with Regulation (EU) 2019/1148 on the marketing and use of explosives precursors.

The EU should seek to:

- Support capacity building in the area of critical entities resilience and protection of public spaces, notably through the regional programme "Enhancing protection of public spaces and critical infrastructures in the Western Balkans" and its successor, through regional exchanges, tailor made trainings and capacity building at national level.
- Support specific actions, within the new EU Action Plan in firearms trafficking 2026-2030, aligned with the goals of the second phase of the SALW roadmap (2025-2030).
- Continue providing support for the implementation of the actions/goals, of the SALW roadmap, including the inclusion of Western Balkans partners as beneficiaries of Internal Security Fund, focus on operational dimension, the creation and full development of national firearms focal points (NFFP) and the connexion with the EU firearms hub in Europol.
- Explore the progressive participation of Western Balkans partners in Commission Expert Groups, as the one on firearms policy and the implementation of Firearms Directive.
- Offer opportunities to share best practises with EU Member States and progressively integrating the Western Balkans in the existing network at European level on protection of critical infrastructure, protection of public spaces, counter-UAS, explosive precursors.
- Coordinate with other international partners (in particular NATO, OSCE and UNDP SEESAC) on delivery of support in the domains covered by objective 5. In particular the South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearing House for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SEESAC), under a joint mandate from the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and with considerable EU funding, has been fighting illicit arms trafficking in the Western Balkans since 2002.