

# **ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF LOCAL PUBLIC SAFETY COUNCILS IN P/CVE**

Case management and local referral  
systems in P/CVE:

*Good practices and lessons learned*

This document was drafted as part of the project “Supporting Local Safety and Security Actors/Services in Performing Their Roles in the National P/CVE Referral System in Albania.” This initiative is being implemented by the ASSIST Centre in collaboration with the Institute for Activism and Social Change, under the coordination of the National Coordination Centre on Countering Violent Extremism. The project is funded by HEDAYAH – the International Centre of Excellence for Countering Extremism and Violent Extremism – and the European Union through the second phase of the STRIVE Global Program (Strengthening Resilience to Violent Extremism).

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## Abbreviations

DCM	Decision of the Council of Ministers
CoE	Council of Europe
CPU	Child Protection Unit
CSO	Civil Society Organization
P/CVE	Preventing/Countering Violent Extremism
EU	European Union
IANS	Institute for Activism and Social Change
ISP	Individual Support Plan
FTF	Foreign Terrorist Fighters
LPSC	Local Public Safety Council
MES	Ministry of Education and Sport
MHSP	Ministry of Health and Social Protection
MoI	Ministry of Interior
NCCS	National Committee on Community Safety
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
PTSD	Post-traumatic stress disorder
P/CVE	Preventing/ Countering Violent Extremism
R&R	Rehabilitation and Reintegration
VE	Violent Extremism
VERLT	Violent Extremism and Radicalism that Leads to Terrorism
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
KII	Key Informant Interview
CVE Center	National Coordination Center for Countering Violent Extremism



Dear Reader!

This report represents a significant milestone in enhancing Albania's approach to combating radicalization and violent extremism. From policy perspective it provides evidence-based insights to strengthen Local Public Safety Councils as key local mechanisms for preventing violent extremism through coordinated, multi-sectorial approaches. By highlighting best practices and gaps, it supports the development of policies that promote sustainable, inclusive, and internationally aligned models of local security governance and case management system.

A cornerstone of the success of this approach is collaboration with non-governmental organizations, whose involvement is essential in providing diverse perspectives, resources, and specialized expertise. This collaborative foundation fosters comprehensive efforts in prevention, intervention, and rehabilitation, promoting a holistic approach that unites public institutions with community-driven initiatives to address and mitigate the risks of extremism.

As National CVE Coordinator, I am confident that by continuing to invest in this collaborative, community-centred approach, we will not only prevent violence and extremism but also reinforce Albania's democratic values, social cohesion, and commitment to the rule of law.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the HEDAYAH – the International Centre of Excellence for Countering Extremism and Violent Extremism – and the European Union for their invaluable support for such contextualized interventions in Albania. Their financial support and unwavering commitment have been instrumental in achieving our shared goals, underscoring the importance of international cooperation in strengthening public safety and combating extremism. This report is part of our collective effort to assess, learn, and strengthen these mechanisms. It provides practical insights, evidence-based recommendations, and good practices to support local governments, practitioners, and policymakers in enhancing the effectiveness and sustainability of LPSCs.

Through the collective efforts of our local and regional stakeholders, we have the opportunity to build a safer, more inclusive society, where resilience to radicalization is reinforced at every level.

Mrs. Lejdi Dervishi  
National Coordinator on Countering Violent Extremism  
Director of the National Coordination Centre on Countering Radicalization and Violent Extremism

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## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1. Background and context**

Albania’s first formal efforts to address the threat of radicalisation and violent extremism (VE) began in 2014, when amendments to the Criminal Code introduced specific provisions criminalizing foreign fighting and terrorist-related activities. These legal reforms marked the beginning of a strong “hard approach” to countering the increasing number of Albanian citizens traveling to conflict zones—particularly Syria and Iraq—and the security risks posed upon their return.

In 2015, the adoption of the National Strategy on Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalisation laid the groundwork for a more structured national response. This shift was deepened with the creation of the Coordination Centre for Countering Violent Extremism (hereinafter referred to as *the CVE Centre*) in 2018, initially under the auspices of the Prime Minister Office. The CVE Centre marked a significant evolution toward a “soft approach,” emphasizing prevention through rehabilitation and reintegration of returnees<sup>1</sup>—Foreign Terrorist Fighters (FTFs), their spouses, and children.

The CVE Centre adopted a multidisciplinary model, involving professionals from law enforcement, health, education, social services, child protection, human rights, and psychology. It became the national hub for coordinating P/CVE efforts, managing Albania’s repatriation missions, and guiding the reintegration of returnees. These “case-by-case” efforts exposed a critical need for structured, local-level mechanisms capable of supporting early detection, risk assessment, coordinated response, and long-term case management.

This need was particularly acute in so-called “hotspot” communities—such as Tirana, Elbasan, Cerrik, Librazhd, Pogradec, and Korça—where returnees resettled and where institutional capacity was often limited. The reintegration process revealed a range of complex needs among returnees, including trauma, housing insecurity, language and education gaps, and mental health issues. These challenges underscored the necessity of locally rooted, cross-sectorial interventions that could sustain prevention and reintegration.

In response, Local Public Safety Councils (LPSCs) were introduced in 2018 in several municipalities as voluntary, ad hoc bodies to coordinate local responses to safety and radicalisation risks. While well-intentioned, these early LPSCs operated inconsistently, without a standardized model, formal mandate, or clear accountability. Their composition varied widely, meetings were

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<sup>1</sup> The concept of “returnees” is referred to Albanian citizens returning to the country, voluntarily and/or through Government led missions

irregular, and their engagement was often reactive—triggered by intelligence alerts or specific incidents—rather than based on preventive planning or structured case management<sup>2</sup>.

The country’s repatriation processes required a **formalized, bottom-up system** of early identification, local coordination, and multi-agency response. To address this gap, the government introduced two key legal instruments: Order No. 185 of the Prime Minister (dated 31.10.2023), assigning Prefects as Regional Coordinators for local public safety, and Decision No. 678 of the Council of Ministers (dated 30.11.2024), and the Decision of the Council of Ministers No.678 (dated 30.11.2024), mandating the permanent status of LPSC (hereinafter referred to as *the Normative Act*)<sup>3</sup>.

The *Normative Act* transformed LPSCs from informal into institutionalized, permanent, multi-sectoral mechanisms, with a unified composition, defined responsibilities, and legal accountability. Under such Normative Act, LPSCs are now composed of representatives from key sectors—law enforcement, education, health, child protection, social services, emergency response, and local government—and are tasked with identifying risks, coordinating early referrals, and managing multi-agency responses to threats, including radicalisation and VE. The Normative Act also consolidated the CVE Centre’s mandate, designating it as the *National CVE Coordinator* and the primary liaison between local, regional (in this case, referring to the Prefect), and central structures.

To support the implementation of this formal framework, the project “Supporting Local Safety and Security Actors/Services in Performing Their Roles in the National P/CVE Referral System in Albania” was launched. The initiative is implemented by the ASSIST Centre and the Institute for Activism and Social Change, under the coordination of the National CVE Centre, and is funded by HEDAYAH – the International Centre of Excellence for Countering Extremism and Violent Extremism and the European Union through the second phase of the STRIVE Global Programme.

The project targeted five “hotspot” municipalities to operationalize the new legal framework. Its key contributions included:

- Supporting municipalities to recompose LPSCs in line with the legal requirements;
- Developing a unified Case Management and Referrals Methodology, in close collaboration with the CVE Centre, (hereinafter, referred to as *the Methodology Guide*)<sup>4</sup>;
- Training over 120 LPSC permanent members in applying *the Methodology Guide*, including coordination, documentation, and referral procedures;

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<sup>2</sup> Xhaho, A., & Bllaca, E. (2023). *Study report: Experiences and opportunities for the functioning of Local Public Safety Councils (LPSCs)*. Institute for Democracy and Mediation (IDM). <https://idmalbania.org/sq/raport-studimor-pervojaja-dhe-mundesite-per-funksionimin-e-keshillave-vendore-te-sigurise-publike-kvsp/>

<sup>3</sup> DCM 678. dt.30.10.2024, “On the Composition, Detailed Organizational Rules, and Functioning of Local Public Safety Councils and the National Council for Community Safety”. <https://www.kryeministria.al/newsroom/vendime-te-miratuara-ne-mbledhjen-e-keshillit-te-ministrave-date-30-tetor-2024/>

<sup>4</sup> Case Management and referral methodology Guide for Local Public Safety Councils and regional Coordinators to prevent and counter radicalism and violent extremism. <https://ians-albania.org/content/case-management-and-referral-methodology-lpsc>

- Facilitating local action planning, supporting municipalities in setting public security priorities and implementing targeted, community-specific responses.

From April 2024 to August 2025, the project provided an important opportunity for both state and non-state actors to prioritize efforts towards public safety, security, and prevent radicalization and violent extremism. Focusing on five municipalities that represent key travel corridors toward conflict zones, activities aimed to strengthen local capacities in preventing and responding to such threats, including training for all involved local actors on the use of regulatory frameworks, use of Case Methodology Guide for detecting and referring cases, and prioritise coordinated response when dealing with radicalized individuals, their close relatives, and families. Refresher trainings not only reinforced existing knowledge but also actively engaged participants in the development of local action plans, by mapping community-specific concerns under the mandate of the Local Public Safety Councils (LPSCs). These activities were carefully adapted to reflect local needs and contexts.

A final component of the project was the performance assessment of LPSCs in five municipalities: Elbasan, Korça, Pogradec, Librazhd, and Cerrik. Conducted by a team of external consultants and project staff experts from ASSIST and IANS, the assessment evaluated the performance of these councils using the Case Methodology Guide. The evaluation focused on three key areas: operational effectiveness, institutional coordination, and governance practices.

By addressing these dimensions, this evaluation provides for a model - able to identify, coordinate and refer any potential threat/ case that threatens the public security.

This report can be a baseline for follow up. It supports the objectives of the “Intersectorial Strategy for the Prevention of Violent Extremism and Counter-Terrorism 2022-2025”, for early detection, referrals and multi-agency collaboration— central to the LPSCs’ mandate.

## **1.2. An overview on the establishment and functioning of LPSC**

The evolution of Local Public Safety Councils (LPSCs) in Albania highlights a critical intersection between decentralization reforms and the growing need for structured, multi-stakeholder mechanisms to address community safety and challenges of violent extremism.

LPSCs were first envisioned in the context of Albania’s decentralization and public safety reforms, with their legal foundation rooted in the *Law No. 139/2015 “On Local Self-Governance.”* This law provided municipalities- so called local government entities- with the responsibility to coordinate public safety and security efforts at the local level.

In line with this mandate, LPSCs were firstly introduced in **2018** as voluntary, multi-stakeholder mechanisms designed to enhance public safety through inter-institutional coordination, civic engagement, and improved service delivery. Their roles in public safety became evident when the first rehabilitation and reintegration programs targeted voluntarily returned individuals, as part of the P/CVE country’s efforts. In early **2019**, after the approval of the second *National Strategy on*

*Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalisation*<sup>5</sup> (2018), addressing “community engagement” as an indicator to outline key drivers of violent extremism. Such indicator helped shape the “whole-of-society” approach, led by the recently established national CVE Centre<sup>6</sup> which brought together civil society actors and reconceptualized prevention efforts through voluntary returns and government led missions.

The *Cross-Sectorial Community Security Strategy (2021–2026)* noted that the formal establishment of Local Public Safety Councils (LPSCs) did not result in coherent or coordinated action. In many cases, councils lacked a standardized regulatory framework to clearly define their structure, roles, and functions—leading to fragmented practices and weak institutional accountability (Ministry of Interior, 2021). Over time, several LPSCs highlighted the need for a coordinated system of information sharing, as well as tools for risk and needs assessment, particularly in cases involving returnees from conflict zones or individuals convicted of terrorism-related offenses upon their release<sup>7</sup>.

Furthermore, in **2022**, during the CVE Centre’s complex rehabilitation and reintegration interventions—targeting 37 repatriated mothers and children—several municipalities were assessed for institutional readiness and coordination capacities.

Reflecting upon created practices, the National CVE Centre, in its **2023** Cross-Sectorial CVE Strategy and Action Plan (2023-2025) introduced a Specific Objective and several measures aiming towards more coordinated approach, emphasizing clear governmental ownership<sup>8</sup>. This strategic shift aimed at fostering R&R practices to replicate and clear roles for LPSCs. It also included measures to accelerate trust-building with returnees, encouraging them to seek solutions through institutional channels.

Recognizing these limitations, Albania adopted a more coherent and centralized approach through the 2023 Cross-Sectorial CVE Strategy and subsequent legal reforms. The Prime Minister’s Order No. 185 (**2023**) and the Council of Ministers Decision No. 678 (**2024**)—known as *the Normative Act*<sup>9</sup>—formalized the status of LPSCs, clarified their composition and responsibilities, and integrated them into the national CVE framework. While the chairmanship of the LPSC is the Mayor, the District’ Prefect serves as the Regional Coordinator for the Prevention and Countering of Radicalism and Violent Extremism. The Normative Act also extended participation for more regional level representatives, such as the Head of the Municipal Police, the Head of the Civil Emergencies Sector in the Prefecture, the Directors of the Regional Directorates of the State Social Service, Public Health, Environment, and the National Food Authority, the Director of the

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<sup>5</sup> Text of the Strategy is accessible: <https://cve.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/strategjia-2018-me-ndryshime.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Idem

<sup>7</sup> This was the case of pilot interventions in Cerrik, where 9 family units (43 individuals) were involved in R&R programs.

<sup>8</sup> DCM 81, dt.14.2.2023 “On the approval of the Cross-Sectorial CVE Strategy and its Action Plans”. <https://cve.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Strategjia-CT-CVE-2023-2025-vkm-81-14-02-2023.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> DCM 678, dt.30.10.2024, “On the Composition, Detailed Organizational Rules, and Functioning of Local Public Safety Councils and the National Council for Community Safety”. <https://www.kryeministria.al/newsroom/vendime-te-miratuar-ne-mbledhjen-e-keshillit-te-ministrave-date-30-tetor-2024/>

Regional Forestry Agency, the Chief Inspector of the Territory Protection Inspectorate, representatives from the Consumer Protection Agency and the State Inspectorate of Market Supervision, as well as representatives from associations of local self-government units and consumer protection associations etc. The Normative Act paved the way for reporting and monitoring of performance of the local mechanism. It also clearly states the formal roles of coordination and consultation mechanisms that assess, address, and propose solutions to safety-related challenges within communities. It provides for a unified performance, indirectly recognizing the gaps prior to the Normative Act.

The Councils can invite non-permanent participants, including representatives of Judiciary (i.e., judges and prosecutors), Legislative (parliamentarians), independent human rights institutions (i.e. Ombudsperson) or local community leaders and civil society actors, businesses or media (depending on the subjects and public interest).

The Act included new administrative processes which are covered by a Technical Secretariat. The Act, in its Point 8, explicitly defines the composition and responsibilities of the Technical Secretariat. It stipulates that the Secretariat is to be composed of municipal staff and is responsible for ensuring the smooth logistical and administrative functioning of the Council. Key duties of the Technical Secretariat, as outlined in the Act, include organizing and coordinating Council meetings, maintaining contact lists, preparing meeting materials, recording minutes, managing the council's documentation archive, and facilitating internal communication among Council members. Additionally, the Secretariat is responsible for drafting reports, updating participation lists, and handling public communication materials.

In the five municipalities involved in the program (Elbasan, Korça, Pogradec, Librazhd, and Cerrik), the implementation followed this mandate, with Technical Secretariats being composed entirely of designated municipal staff, as specified by the Normative Act<sup>10</sup>.

The Normative Act complemented the amended Article 12/1 of the *Law 17/2016 "On the Prefects" (2024)*<sup>11</sup>, which designated the Prefect as the authority that can propose the council's composition and mandate at the municipal level. This position enables a system of referrals regarding issues that concern public order and community safety.

Such a system of coordination and response is overseen by the National CVE Centre and, at the central government level; by the National Council for Community Safety (NCCS), chaired by the Deputy Minister of Interior and composed of high-level representatives from relevant line ministries such as Health, Education, Justice, Infrastructure, Environment, and Social Affairs.

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<sup>10</sup> Focus Group Discussions in 5 Municipalities: Elbasan, Cerrik, Librazhd, Pogradec and Korca

<sup>11</sup> Law on Prefect. <https://prefektifier.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Ligji-per-Prefektin-i-azhornuar-2024.pdf>

In conclusion, the institutionalization of LPSCs through the *Normative Act* represents a turning point in Albania's approach to community safety and CVE. It acknowledges past shortcomings while setting the foundation for sustainable and evidence-based local safety governance system.

## 2. Methodology

The major objective of this assessment is to assess the performance of Local Public Safety Councils (LPSCs) in P/CVE case management process in the five areas Elbasan, Cerrik, Librazhd, Pogradec and Korça which received support from the ASSIST/IAN 'Supporting LPSCs in their roles in the referral mechanism' project which run between 2024-2025. The assessment will examine their operational effectiveness, institutional coordination, and governance practices. It aims to identify key legal, structural, and procedural gaps, and proposing evidence-based recommendations. By assessing the LPSCs in the five supported municipalities, the report seeks to make recommendations for future capacity building and support to the LPSCs operating in other municipalities to enhance their functionality, accountability, and impact at the local level.

The assessment employs a qualitative methodological approach designed to triangulate data sources and generate a comprehensive understanding of the functioning of Local Public Safety Councils (LPSCs) and their role in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE) in Albania. This approach ensures comprehensive empirical evidence on institutional practices, challenges, and enabling conditions. By capturing the lived experiences of key stakeholders involved in this mechanism, the methodology helps identify systemic barriers and highlight replicable good practices in diverse local contexts.

Data collection was organized into four interrelated phases: secondary data review, 5 focus group discussions (FGDs), 8 key informant interviews (KIIs), and 20 case study documentation (see annex 5). The desk review analysed primary documents, legal, policy, and strategic documents relevant to LPSCs, providing a foundational understanding that informed the design of the primary data collection tools. 5 FGDs were conducted with purposefully selected participants from law enforcement, local government, civil society, and social services across five regions. The focus group discussions in 5 LPSCs aimed to assess the effectiveness and challenges of local referral systems and case management in P/CVE, while also examining inter-agency coordination, role clarity, and community engagement practices. Designed as a qualitative method, the FGDs sought to gather in-depth insights from local practitioners to identify gaps, good practices, and training needs, ultimately informing strategies to enhance institutional collaboration and responsiveness. These discussions explored themes such as institutional roles, regulatory frameworks, inter-agency coordination, and the use of unified case management and referrals system. Each FGD was gender-balanced and facilitated using a semi-structured guide to ensure consistent yet flexible inquiry.

KIIs complemented the FGDs by engaging 8 senior institutional stakeholders from central and local level who possessed deep knowledge of referral systems and case management processes but could not be reached through group discussions. The semi-structured Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) aimed to obtain in-depth perspectives from senior institutional stakeholders on the effectiveness, gaps, and strengths of local P/CVE referral and case management systems. They also explored inter-agency coordination practices, challenges, and success factors, using human

story examples to inform future policy, training, and procedural improvements. These interviews focused on inter-agency cooperation, policy implementation, and institutional dynamics.

The case analysis initially focused on the process of referring cases to the Local Public Safety Councils (LPSCs), resulting in only four cases formally referred by case managers and Technical Secretariats, which were cross-checked with the CVE Centre. To enable a more meaningful review and to better identify the types of cases that LPSCs might work on in the future, evaluation experts included 20 representative cases that case managers had handled prior to the permanent establishment and re-composition of the LPSCs.

Although these cases were not formally referred under the newly established structure, they were used to illustrate typical P/CVE scenarios and support practical learning. The selected cases reflected a range of factors, including relevance, geographic diversity, evidence of multi-agency collaboration, and the prior experience of the case managers. This approach provided a valuable framework for understanding local P/CVE dynamics and contributed to more informed discussions on early detection, referral mechanisms, and the evolving role of LPSCs.

### **3. Main findings and discussions**

#### **3.1. The 2024 Normative Act governing the functioning and re-composition of the LPSCs**

Across the five municipalities—Cërrik, Elbasan, Librazhd, Pogradec, and Korça—Local Public Safety Councils (LPSCs) are recognized as multi-sectoral coordination mechanisms for addressing complex safety and security challenges. These municipalities were previously designated as “hotspots” under the National Strategy for Countering Violent Extremism (CVE), based on identified patterns of foreign fighter travel to conflict zones. In addition to this risk profile, all five had some prior experience with LPSC structures before the adoption of the Normative Act.

The Normative Act No. 678 (2024) required a process of recomposing and formalizing the representation and responsibilities of Local Public Safety Councils. Key informants from the five municipalities confirmed that the re-composition process began in early 2025—Pogradec (Order No. 162, dated 14.02.2025), Librazhd (Order No. 177, dated 17.02.2025), Cërrik (Order No. 59, dated 25.02.2025), Elbasan (Order No. 281, dated 06.05.2025), and Korça (Order dated 10.05.2025). These administrative orders issued by the Mayors also included the designation of technical secretariats within each municipality.

In accordance with the re-composition orders, municipalities assigned both existing structures and new representatives to the LPSCs—such as regional civil emergency officers, environmental specialists, municipal police, protected area specialists, and food safety inspectors. Introductory and refresher training sessions on case management and referral procedures (the LPSC Methodological Guide) facilitated with the support of the project have improved participants’ knowledge of the legal framework, institutional roles, reporting lines, and referral mechanisms.

This progress is documented by evidence-based training reports and pre- and post-training assessments filled by LPSC members across the five municipalities. The results showed significant knowledge improvement, with approximately 75% of participants demonstrating a gain of more than 20% from pre- to post-training assessments. Participants emphasized that the trainings were particularly beneficial for strengthening professional relationships among LPSC members and for enhancing their understanding and capacity to implement the Case Methodological Guide:

*“Before the trainings there was an uncertainty about their role, primarily due to the absence of a clearly defined job description. Without formal guidance outlining their responsibilities and expectations, it is difficult to ensure consistency, accountability, and effective performance. Establishing clear, standardized job descriptions is essential for clarifying roles, enhancing coordination among stakeholders, and supporting the successful implementation of policies and programs. (Interview No.1, Female, Key informant from CSO sector)*

Pursuant to the Law on Local Self-Governance, and roles assigned from the Normative Act, the regional directorates may operate within large municipalities or be assigned to serve multiple LPSCs within a specific district. For example, a comparison of Mayor’s re-composition orders in Elbasan and Cërrik shows that at least two members—representatives from the State Social Services and the Regional Health Units—serve on both LPSCs. This structural shortcoming, where a single representative serves on multiple councils, may reduce their ability to fully engage and dedicate sufficient time to each LPSC.

*“A key challenge identified involves the structure of the technical secretariat, which reports to the Mayor but includes regional directors from multiple emergency services, leading to significant role overlap. This overlap arises because a single director may be assigned to several committees, creating conflicts and inefficiencies in participation. Regional directors are responsible for covering multiple municipalities within the county, meaning they would need to be available for every committee meeting across all jurisdictions—a requirement that is often unrealistic. To address this, plans have been proposed to formalize an internal order allowing directors to delegate responsibilities to their staff, ensuring consistent representation and improving the overall efficiency and coordination of committee work. Interview No.6, Female, Key informant from LSGU*

While the Law “On the Prefect” and the Normative Act assign coordination roles and responsibilities to regional and local actors, no additional financial or human resources have been allocated to support the effective performance of Local Public Safety Councils (LPSCs). However, the performance and sustainability of LPSCs largely depend on structured planning and dedicated financial support.. While the 5 municipalities evaluated in this assessment complied with this guidance in the Normative Act, some interviewees expressed concern that not providing additional compensation or resources for the performance of the LPSC (in terms of implementation of local action plans, organizing regular meetings, and sustaining multi-agency coordination) could result in challenges and suggested a different approach:

*‘Members of LPSC should receive appropriate compensation to reflect their commitment and expertise. A professional, well-resourced approach is necessary to deliver reliable, high-quality services and achieve lasting impact’. (Interview No.1, Female, Key informant from CSO sector)*

To ensure the full operational effectiveness of the Local Public Safety Councils (LPSCs), a key gap in the Normative Act was addressed through the ASSIST/IANS project support activities by developing a dedicated Case Management and Referral Methodology (which will now be referred to as *the* ‘Case Methodology Guide’) in close coordination with the National Centre for Countering Violent Extremism (CVE). This methodology serves as a guiding tool for the five supported LPSCs and their members and relevant stakeholders—including law enforcement, frontline practitioners, educators, health professionals, and criminal justice actors such as probation and prison services—tasked with preventing and countering radicalization and violent extremism, while also enhancing public safety and community resilience.

The Case Methodology Guide introduces a structured, multi-agency approach to early intervention and case management for individuals at risk. It supports coordinated responses for those already engaged in radicalism or violent extremism, facilitating their disengagement and reintegration. It includes clearly defined steps, guidance on stakeholder coordination, and practical templates to support implementation. The methodology was introduced through introductory and refresher trainings all 5 municipalities, paving the way for more unified and professional practices across local councils with practical tools and approaches:

*I reviewed the Methodology and participated in the training sessions, and I must say it is a very useful document. It includes formats we’ve always lacked—especially for reporting, referrals, and ensuring data confidentiality, which remains a constant concern in our cases. What I would like to see more of in the future are practical instruments for case documentation and additional training focused on data protection.”* Interview with Key informant from LPSC Pogradec

### **3.2. Participation dynamics within Local Public Safety Councils (LPSCs)**

Building on the regulatory context, this section examines the participation dynamics within LPSCs. It focuses on the effectiveness of notification procedures and meeting facilitation, assesses the degree of institutional engagement, and evaluates how clearly roles and responsibilities were defined and understood among council members.

#### **3.2.1 Effectiveness of Notification & Facilitation**

The Case Methodology Guide has contributed to the standardization of formats for notifying and facilitating LPSC meetings. The availability of standardized formats not only improved coordination but also helped consolidate accountability in service delivery:

*“[Prior to the Case Methodology Guide]...There was a clear need for a well-defined regulation or the adaptation of an existing framework to guide these processes effectively. [Now]We use the Guide to orient our work; we started with the notification of the members after Mayor signed the Order of LPSC Re-composition. Such practice addresses a gap and such gap left practitioners without a clear reference point, impacting efficiency and accountability in service delivery. (Interview No.5, Female, Key informant from LSGU)*

The developed, validated, and disseminated *Case Methodological Guide* has been instrumental in enhancing the consistency and structure of Local Public Safety Council (LPSC) practices. It now serves as a benchmark for comparing operational approaches before and after the adoption of the Normative Act. For example, a key informant reported that prior to the Normative Act, the functioning of LPSCs was inconsistent.

For example, in the municipality of Cërrik—despite a considerable number of voluntary returns and a clear need for tailored support—prior to the start of this project the last recorded LPSC meetings dated back to early 2019. Meaning between 2019-2024, no formal council sessions were held, even though the community faced pressing concerns related to the reintegration of returned foreign terrorist fighters and individuals released after serving terrorism-related sentences.

In the absence of active LPSC engagement, responses were coordinated through needs-oriented, multi-agency reintegration and resocialization (R&R) programs, led and vetted by the National CVE Centre. These efforts involved individualized treatment plans and multidisciplinary teams, who monitored progress and reported regularly on case developments.

Prior to the issuance of the Normative Act, LPSCs operated through an ad hoc system that lacked clarity and structure. Responsibilities for initiating and coordinating meetings were often undefined, with no standard procedures for notifying participants, confirming attendance, or documenting outcomes:

*“The local public safety council in the [Cerrik] municipality was first established in 2018<sup>12</sup>. However, since its creation, it has lacked consistent development and regular meetings, with only one or two sessions reportedly held through 2018 and 2019. Activities were effectively halted with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, which introduced operational confusion and led to the suspension of all committee meetings. ”. Interview No.6, Female, Key informant from LPSC*

*‘[Prior to this project], there was a clear need to develop an effective communication system to address existing gaps in coordination and information sharing. Also there was no unified mechanism for sending or receiving notifications, leading to fragmented and inconsistent communication among stakeholders. Additionally, there was no dedicated platform for systematically storing and accessing decisions, nor was there a comprehensive data management system to support planning, monitoring, and evaluation. ’ (Interview No.1, Female, Key informant from CSO sector)*

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<sup>12</sup> The interview is likely mistaken because the Cerrick municipality gave a different number of LPSC meetings.

With the **Normative Act**, and later, with the Case Methodology Guide, the notification and facilitation processes for LPSC meetings are referring to specific formats which help documentation. This was evident during KIIs in five municipalities examined—Cërrik, Librazhd, Elbasan, Pogradec, and Korçë<sup>13</sup>:

*“Clear procedures for communication and notification have recently been formalized through the use of a detailed manual developed by IANS. This manual specifies how notifications should be sent, including the required lead time, the format for responses, and the need for written explanations if participants cannot attend meetings. Such guide is designed to ensure transparent, well-documented communication.”* Interview No.6, Female, Key informant from LSGU

Similarly, use of Case Methodology Guide is used when preparing invitations to non-permanent members or other invited stakeholders for their participation in the LPSC meetings. This was shared in Pogradec:

*“We started using the case methodology to make sure all key voices are at the table. This was particularly evident when we invited youth representatives to share their views about the school security.”* Interview with key informant from Municipality of Pogradec.

*“[Prior to this project], the absence of a unified regulation or standardized procedures has been widely recognized as a key obstacle to effective institutional response. When a government decision (DCM) is issued, frontline institutions and practitioners often expect it to be accompanied by a methodological guide or explanatory framework to support implementation. However, this is not always the case—resulting in fragmented and inconsistent actions across sectors. This gap was particularly evident in the regulatory framework governing Local Public Safety Councils (LPSCs). Despite significant investments since 2016 in human resources and technical support—particularly in the municipality of Elbasan—there remained no formal, standardized framework to guide consistent and coordinated LPSC operations..”* FGD No.1, Members of LPSC, Elbasan

However, while the Case Methodology Guide outlines how the 5 LPSCs should communicate about and facilitate LPSC meetings, this evaluation found that the Guide is not always followed. For example, the same interviewee followed-up on their previous comment to say:

*However, these [new Case Management Guide] procedures are not always consistently followed. For example, when responsibilities are delegated, there should be an internal written note confirming the assignment of a specialist to manage the task. It is important to note that these formalized practices are relatively new, as previously there were no standardized procedures in place for managing notifications or delegation of duties within the LPCS”* Interview No.6, Female, Key informant from LSGU

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<sup>13</sup> Focus Group discussions, Members of LPSC in Elbasan, Korce, Librazhd, Cerrik, Pogradec

### 3.2.2 Level of Institutional Participation

The Normative Act has introduced assigned institutional representation within LPSCs. Upon the proposal of the Prefect of the region, LPSCs are chaired by the Mayor, with representation from the following institutions<sup>14</sup>:

1. Head of the Regional Police Directorate (State Police)
2. Head of the Municipal Police
3. Head of the Regional Education Directorate
4. Head of Civil Emergencies in the municipality
5. Head of the Regional Directorate of State Social Services
6. Head of the Regional Health Directorate
7. Representative of the Local Health Care Unit
8. Representative of the Regional Environmental Agency
9. Representative of the Regional Directorate of the National Food Authority
10. Representative of the Regional Administration of Protected Areas
11. Local Coordinator for Referral and Case Management of Domestic Violence
12. Representative of the Child Protection Unit
13. Chief Inspector of the Territorial Protection Inspectorate
14. Representative of the Consumer Protection Agency

Furthermore, the Normative Act takes a different approach to the previous LPSC attendees because it limited the attendance of community representatives and organisations to by invitation only.

*“Back then, we still had the community and informal groups involved, but now the community is completely absent. The discussion suggests that the selection process led by local governments often excludes certain groups, especially marginalized communities. This lack of inclusive representation can lead to decisions that ignore the diverse needs of the population. (Interview No.1, Female, Key informant from CSO sector)*

The Normative Act introduced a new approach to participation based on formal invitation. This shift was interpreted by interviewed public officials as a more consolidated, government-led model—viewed as an opportunity to channel case support primarily through state structures. However, this approach has drawn criticism from community actors, particularly due to the often ad hoc and selective nature of their involvement. Concerns have been raised about the diminished role of civil society organizations (CSOs), whose prior contributions—grounded in community trust and professional expertise—were instrumental in the successful piloting of interventions for

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<sup>14</sup> This list of job titles is an approximation because titles vary by municipality, especially for smaller municipalities where government institutions may have restructured jobs according to their structures and available services. The issue is reflected in the Mayoral Act.

returned individuals. This shift is seen by some interviewees as limiting the autonomy of CSOs and reducing their capacity to meaningfully influence decision-making processes.

*“I have expressed some skepticism regarding the role of civil society in this process. Their participation is described only in general terms. In larger municipalities with a more established civil society, meaningful participation may be possible. However, in smaller municipalities, where there may be only one or two civil society organizations—or none at all—the question arises as to who these representatives actually are and how much influence they truly have on decisions...Where that willingness is lacking, especially in smaller or more marginalized communities, there is a real risk that local needs will be overlooked in decision-making, undermining good governance and public trust. (Interview No.1, Female, Key informant from CSO sector)”*

The concept of participation by invitation has been extended to include additional actors such as the Prosecutor’s Office and other judicial authorities. This model was previously practiced in the Municipality of Elbasan. Although the Normative Act does not grant permanent membership to the General Prosecutor’s Office, it permits participation through invitation by the Chair of the National Council for Community Safety. This also applies to other institutions such as the Ombudsperson, the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination, the Commissioner for the Right to Information and Protection of Personal Data, religious communities, and civil society organizations. Such an approach—particularly in the case of the Prosecutor’s Office—was augmented by the ongoing reorganization of the judicial system in Albania, including changes to the structure of prosecution offices, first instance courts, and courts of appeal, while their proactive participation could influence the extent and nature of judicial actors’ participation in LPSC structures:

*“[Prior to this project], in our municipality, a family identified by the Local Public Safety Council sought support following concerns of domestic violence. Although the case was properly flagged and referred to the relevant authorities, the family faced prolonged delays at every stage. Filing the initial complaint took several weeks due to unclear procedures and multiple bureaucratic hurdles. Subsequent court hearings were repeatedly postponed, largely due to overloaded judicial calendars and administrative backlogs.*

*As months passed without resolution, the family’s trust in the system eroded. The victim, overwhelmed by the slow pace and complexity of the legal process, ultimately chose to withdraw from formal proceedings—fearing further emotional and financial strain. Meanwhile, support services struggled to maintain consistent engagement due to the extended timeline and limited information-sharing with judicial actors.*

*Had a prosecutor been involved as part of the Local Public Safety Council, the process could have been expedited. Their presence could have facilitated better coordination, reduced delays, and ultimately improved outcomes for the family.” (Interview No.5, Female, Key informant from LSGU)*

### 3.3 Role Clarity in LPSC

The Normative Act clearly outlines the roles and institutional responsibilities of permanent LPSC members. However, in practice, both municipal staff and representatives of certain regional agencies often hold overlapping roles across multiple local coordination mechanisms.

These include the Coordination Mechanism for Domestic Violence Cases, the Multidisciplinary Technical Team (MDT) for victims of trafficking, and the Intersectoral Technical Group (ITG) for child protection cases. This mutual participation reflects a practical approach to resource use, but it may also raise concerns about workload distribution, role clarity, and the consistent performance of each mechanism. One interviewee said that despite Normative Act combined with this project and the output of the Case Management Guide,

*“key challenge identified in the social sector is the overlap and lack of coordination among different referral mechanisms for cases of domestic violence and trafficking. Stakeholders noted that the requirement for regional directors to participate in municipal-level referral meetings often leads to some confusion. Invitations to meetings are sometimes declined on the grounds that similar discussions have already occurred in other committees, even though those sessions may have had different purposes. This overlap creates operational conflicts and overburdens frontline actors who must navigate multiple, sometimes competing structures. Regional directorates, such as public health, education and employment offices, cover multiple municipalities, making it difficult for the same staff to attend all required local meetings.”* Interview No.6, Female, Key informant from LSGU

To help members better understand their roles and responsibilities within the LPSC, the Case Methodology Guide outlines the purpose and expected contributions of each Council member. Such clarifications may be beneficial to be introduced perhaps among other local mechanisms. .

*“The section [in the Case Management Guide] outlining roles helped us understand who takes the lead in specific types of cases—it prevents delays, which are sometimes caused by not well understood roles. In our case, being also previously involved with returnees, seems to be easier and more clear.”* Interview with key informant from the LPSC Cerrik.

*“We went through an exercise using the case methodology to prepare our local action plans. It was a long process, with many discussions, but ultimately beneficial for each member. Every member represents an institution, and from that perspective, each one needs to be able to report on their roles and actions during the implementation period. This was emphasized during the training—and it's now also a legal requirement. We expect full participation from each member in the reporting process.”* Interview No.8, Female, Key informant from LPSC

Formalizing the Case Management Methodology as a standard operational tool is essential, especially regarding referral systems and inter-agency cooperation. This evaluation indicated that in some municipalities, inter-agency coordination needs to be strengthened. For example, in Cërrik, a recent case involving school abandonment and frequent visits to an internet café by the son of a former foreign terrorist fighter (FTF) who was under social protection services, and in the same time under police surveillance, but no information had been shared between institutions.<sup>15</sup>

*“When a case is addressed in the LPSC, we ensure each actor takes responsibility—legal, social, psychological—and no detail is lost. We don’t just react, we follow through.”—KII with key informant, LPSC case manager*

*Ensuring the effectiveness of the Public Safety Council (PSC) requires a high level of seriousness and commitment from all members during meetings. Active participation, clear communication, and the sharing of essential information are critical to achieving meaningful outcomes. Every member must have a clear understanding of their specific role and responsibilities within the Council. While experienced members may already have the necessary institutional knowledge, it is vital to provide clear guidance for new members to ensure consistent, informed participation. Notably, previous youth representatives made a strong contribution by voicing their concerns effectively in meetings and ensuring that the challenges faced by young people citywide were properly addressed. Institutionalizing such inclusive practices will strengthen the Council’s capacity to identify issues, develop targeted solutions, and serve the entire community more effectively. FGD No.1, Members of LPSC, Elbasan<sup>16</sup>*

### **3.4 LPSC Performance – Analytical Narrative**

This section focuses on the operational dimension of the LPSC, examining the existence and functionality of its local action plan as well as the availability and allocation of financial resources to support planned activities. Despite notable progress in the re-composition of Local Public Safety Councils (LPSCs) across the five municipalities—driven by national policy reforms and capacity-building efforts—challenges remain. Persistent issues include operational effectiveness, inadequate resource allocation, and inconsistent regulatory frameworks.

#### **3.4.1 Discussions and preparation of the LPSC Action Plan Preparation**

The creation and implementation of LPSC action plans have emerged as a crucial activity across all 5 municipalities reflect local and thematic priorities. These priorities include countering emerging forms of violence and youth vulnerability that could influence radicalization, gang-related narcotics use, mental health, urban aging, domestic violence, civil emergencies.

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<sup>15</sup> Interview with key informant from the LPSC Cërrik.

<sup>16</sup> Focus Group discussions, Members of LPSC in Elbasan, Korce, Librazhd, Cërrik, Pogradec

For example, developing an effective action plan for Elbasan, it is essential to address the complex and interconnected challenges threatening community safety and child protection.

*The significant rise in bullying, the expansion of trafficking networks, and the increase in drug use represent pressing and complex challenges for communities. Effectively addressing these issues requires proactive, targeted efforts focused on children and youth, with the goal of preventing their involvement in harmful activities and ensuring safe, supportive school environments. This strategy adopts a macro-level approach, emphasizing systemic solutions and broad, preventive measures rather than reactive responses to individual cases. The action plan outlines several key components, each requiring dedicated resources and funding. By prioritizing comprehensive, community-wide interventions over isolated, case-by-case responses, the strategy seeks to maximize impact, strengthen coordination across sectors, and ensure sustainable improvements in public safety and child protection. (Interview No.1, Female, Key informant from CSO sector)*

The methodology for action plan development has been largely influenced by training programs and technical assistance provided by implementing actors, in cooperation with the National CVE Center. This support emphasizes practical case management steps, institutional referral processes, and cross-sectoral coordination. In Pogradec, for example, the action plan was product of a robust participatory process and includes the regular input of schools, civil society, Local Youth Council' representatives, which has led to greater community ownership. In Librazhd, the structured involvement of police, health, education, social services and religious community in both action plan and case management highlights an adaptive, culturally sensitive model that could serve as a best practice, as there were 3 cases of coordinated interventions of preventing school violence in the city's high school.

### **3.4.2 Budgeting Challenges**

Although the Normative Act promotes a “no-cost” approach, all five municipalities involved in the program have expressed funding needs to support the implementation of potential activities which are included in the Local Action Plans. While the activities suggested by the LPSCs will not be directly overseen by the LPSC, increasing activities and facilities in the community will improve the variety and quality of referral services, resulting in successful referral outcomes and overall community safety. For instance, Elbasan has proactively allocated dedicated municipal funding to support the services LPSC recommend to improve the support for received cases of vulnerable individuals<sup>17</sup>. In contrast, Librazhd has not yet established a dedicated budget line to support its LPSC activities. Similarly, Cërrik has previously benefited from regional coordination and proactive planning efforts; being unable to continue support due to lack of adequate resources.:

*“The local action plan was developed in consultation with council members and covers critical areas such as aging and elderly care, disability and accessibility*

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<sup>17</sup> The funding was linked to a previous Local Action Plan developed prior to this project but the linkage between the Local Action Plan and the budgetting will continue.

*issues, domestic violence, violent extremism, civil emergencies, and public safety. Each of these priorities is tied to specific actions that often require financial investment. However, securing adequate funding has consistently been a barrier to full implementation, highlighting the need to allocate municipal funding for the LPSC's action plan.” (Interview No. 4, Male, Key Informant from LSGU)*

This demonstrates a challenge in translating action plans into practice, especially when municipalities lack the financial capacities or long-term planning to sustain interventions beyond external funding cycles. For example, funding by HEDAYAH, MATRA, GCERF helped municipalities to progress with the process of re-composition and case management for the LPSCs. Yet, the sustainability of LPSCs remains a challenge because members may need more training in the future, especially because of issues of staff turnover. Training on fundraising capacities could be a sustainable solution.

### 3.5 Local and External Monitoring & Oversight Responsibility

Monitoring is a key tool to ensure legal compliance, strengthen institutional performance, and provide professional support to local and regional authorities involved in LPSC operations. Regular data exchange and documentation enhance the quality of information and enable evidence-based decision-making on referrals, actions, and implementation challenges.

The Normative Act outlines the following two types of monitoring although details are still being drafted: The monitoring system operates on two levels:

- **Local Monitoring** focuses on improving the effectiveness of LPSC activities. The Chair submits annual reports to the National CVE Coordination Centre and the NCCS, while case managers report monthly and quarterly to the Prefect. Progress is reviewed quarterly to track implementation and address gaps.
- **External Monitoring** is led by the Ministry of Interior through the National CVE Centre and NCCS, including direct participation in LPSC meetings. It ensures LPSCs operate in line with legal mandates and may involve requests for additional data on performance or case management

5 LPSCs engaged in the program are still in the early stages of understanding and operationalizing these functions within their local governance structures while awaiting official guidance on reporting.

Local and external monitoring should consolidate day-to-day functionality, performance tracking, and alignment with municipal priorities; while external monitoring provide accountability, learning, and alignment with national strategies.

### 3.6 Case Management and referrals methodology

#### 3.6.1 The Process of Case Management and referrals

Prior approval of Normative Act, , the performance of LPSCs was largely ad hoc, with cases discussed and decisions made without the use of unified case management tools. In some municipalities, referrals were mainly recorded by numbering cases within the existing system

dedicated to child protection. However, there were no formalized procedures or standard formats to follow. was ds ).

### 3.6.1 Referral and Screening

The LPSC referral mechanism relies on community members to identify and refer vulnerable individuals to the mechanism. Some participants in FGD point out some **barriers in early identification** of at-risk individuals. These include a lack of awareness among community actors, fears of stigmatization, or weak ties between institutions and grassroots networks. As a result, early warning signs are often missed or reported too late. Additionally, the evolving nature of radicalization presents new challenges for timely and accurate identification

*Delivering educational sessions on recognizing early signs of radicalization is essential for effective prevention work among high school students. Such initiatives not only raise awareness among youth but also create opportunities to build local capacity by training selected young people to become peer educators. By equipping them with the skills and knowledge to conduct further training with their peers, this approach promotes sustainable, youth-led education efforts that strengthen community resilience and foster a culture of shared responsibility and empowerment. FGD No.1, Members of LPSC, Elbasan*

Municipalities like Librazhd and Elbasan have adopted other separate, from the LPSC, frameworks for case management, particularly in addressing complex scenarios of violent extremism combined with family abuse and violence. These tools typically include standardized forms, referral flowcharts, and inter-agency coordination tables, often discussed and refined during capacity-building sessions. However, disparities exist. In order to support a unified approach to case management and referrals, the ASSIST/IANS project developed a Case Methodology Guide as a practical guide outlining procedures for case notification, meeting facilitation, and response timelines. While it was trialed in 5 municipalities not all responded similarly on the use the Case Methodology. For example, Cërrik, Pogradec, and Librazhd reveal notable preparedness with Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE) case management. Cërrik and Librazhd stand out for their prior involvement in managing P/CVE-related cases, which helped them develop a degree of institutional maturity in handling sensitive referrals, facilitating cross-sectoral coordination, and applying elements of the national case management methodology.

*“The referral process is supported by a clear, user-friendly manual that outlines the necessary steps in a straightforward manner. This resource has proven highly effective in standardizing procedures and ensuring consistency, even for staff with limited prior experience. By offering step-by-step guidance and clear instructions for completing required forms, the manual enables faster, more accurate referrals and supports improved outcomes across service delivery.” Interview No.6, Female, Key informant from LPSC*

Elbasan and Korçë—two big municipalities—share similar past cases of recruitment and travel to conflict zones while their responses have primarily relied on top-down referrals from anti-terrorism units, intelligence services, or the prison system, rather than being driven by proactive local mechanisms.

For instance, LPSC members in Korçë tend to adopt a reactive position—particularly when confronted with high-profile cases or the unauthorized operation of religious structures (e.g., informal mosques) in the area. At the same time, smaller villages located between Korçë and Pogradec have raised community concerns about the presence of radicalized individuals and illegal activities, highlighting the need for more grassroots engagement.

Recent training sessions held in these two municipalities have been instrumental in addressing such positions. The training also clarified institutional roles and emphasized data protection responsibilities.

*Before the trainings there was an uncertainty about their role, primarily due to the absence of a clearly defined job description. Without formal guidance outlining their responsibilities and expectations, it is difficult to ensure consistency, accountability, and effective performance. Establishing clear, standardized job descriptions is essential for clarifying roles, enhancing coordination among stakeholders, and supporting the successful implementation of policies and programs. . (Interview No.1, Female, Key informant from CSO sector)*

### **3.6.2 Case Methodology in Daily Work**

Using the Case Methodology has helped the five municipalities consolidate the formal functioning of their LPSCs. For example, during the drafting of local action plans in Cërrik and Librazhd, the standard template for the Local Action Plans developed by this project and included in the Case Methodology Guide enabled the collection of consistent data, facilitating a comparative approach across municipalities. Furthermore, as required by the Normative Act, LPSCs must submit an annual activity report at the end of each year. However, this process has not yet begun, and 2025 will be the first year for which annual reporting is required by LPSCs under the Normative Act. Given that most municipalities have no prior experience with such reporting, the templates and tools included in the Case Methodology are expected to play an important role in guiding this process.

### **3.6.3 Referrals & Inter-agency Coordination**

Referrals function as the backbone of case management systems, and their effectiveness depends heavily on the strength of inter-agency coordination. Municipalities such as Librazhd, Cërrik provide compelling examples of referral networks, where local schools, religious leaders, police, health and social services cooperate within an established framework.

*Addressing early-stage radicalization and extremism requires timely intervention, built on effective identification and referral to appropriate response mechanisms. Prevention efforts must include targeted awareness campaigns, counseling services, and local capacity-building initiatives to detect warning signs and intervene before radicalization deepens, particularly among youth. Trained professionals play a crucial role in recognizing and signaling potential cases, ensuring that risks are managed proactively. Through a well-coordinated, multi-agency approach—and with especially strong support from the municipality of Elbasan—we have successfully delivered activities and campaigns*

*that promote community resilience and contribute to a safer, more secure environment for all residents. FGD No.1, Members of LPSC, Elbasan*

This is also the case of Librazhd demonstrating an advanced level of coordination, by integrating institutional actors and community administrators into the referral process.

*In Librazhd a case involving a radicalized father who prevented his daughters from attending school was identified through coordination between the local school, social services, and the LPSC. The school first raised the alarm, which led to a joint intervention involving municipal social workers, the LPSC's technical secretariat, and a local civil society organization specializing in family counseling. This coordinated response ensured the immediate protection of the children, while also triggering a longer-term support plan for the family. (Interview No.6, Male, Key informant from LSGU)*

*Although referral mechanisms are a legal obligation, ensuring their effective implementation requires active coordination and sustained commitment from all stakeholders. In this regard, the prosecution office in Elbasan has demonstrated a notably proactive role by participating in targeted meetings, including sessions with the Local Public Safety Council and with psycho-social service providers in schools. This level of engagement highlights the importance of prosecutorial authority in re-establishing a culture of inter-institutional collaboration, especially in areas where such coordination has historically been weak. Maintaining open channels of communication between the prosecution, local police stations, and schools not only strengthens early intervention efforts. FGD No.1, Members of LPSC, Elbasan*

Referrals are processes that can be initiated by anyone aware of a concern, threat, or case of radicalized behavior. Creating the right conditions for individuals, services to approach the LPSC—or for institutions to follow up on cases referred by the LPSC—is fundamental.

The assessment of Local Public Safety Councils (LPSCs) across five municipalities reveals diverse approaches and experiences that collectively mention the pathways to strengthening community safety and violent extremism prevention at the local level.

**Librazhd** presents the challenges of a small, geographically dispersed municipality where structural reforms and consistent multi-sector coordination have enhanced institutional functioning since its formal recomposition in 2024. Despite regular meetings and a locally adapted case management approach aligned with national frameworks, geographic isolation and social fragmentation limit early identification of at-risk individuals. The council's experience underscores the need for tailored outreach and improved access to services to ensure equitable participation in rural settings.

In **Pogradec**, strong local ownership and inclusive coordination characterize the LPSC's success. Proactive leadership and the active engagement of law enforcement, social services, education, and civil society have fostered a culture of shared responsibility. The development of a locally tailored action plan prioritizing crime prevention and radicalization mitigation reflects the city's

identity as a safe tourist destination. Informal yet effective referral mechanisms and the meaningful inclusion of civil society actors enhance community trust and resilience, providing a replicable model for other municipalities.

The **Elbasan** LPSC exemplifies a mature multi-agency coordination model grounded in the “institutional triangle” of the municipality, police, and prosecution, complemented by a community liaison role that fosters participatory governance. This horizontal, trust-based collaboration enables transparent, inclusive decision-making processes that incorporate citizen voices into safety planning. The council’s emphasis on capacity-building and continuous adaptation supports its role as a trusted platform for managing complex community safety challenges, including radicalization risks.

**Korça’s** LPSC, despite delays in establishing a formal referral mechanism, operates within one of the largest municipalities in the country. The municipality includes several remote areas where “red flag” cases have been identified, indicating higher risks or vulnerabilities related to public safety and radicalization. Additionally, Korça hosts one of Albania’s high-security prisons, which accommodates individuals convicted of terrorism-related offenses. This context underscores the strategic importance of a functional LPSC and the urgent need to strengthen coordination and early detection mechanisms in the region.

Finally, **Cërrik** LPSC offers a compelling example of multi-actor collaboration centered on the rehabilitation and reintegration of returnees from conflict zones, when during 2019-2020 implemented a pilot reintegration program providing individualized medical, psychological, and social support.

The cases of the five municipalities reveal that while structural compliance and inter-institutional coordination are foundational, the meaningful impact of LPSCs hinges on their ability to adapt to local contexts. Emphasizing community participation, inclusiveness, tailored outreach, and robust follow-up mechanisms is essential to advancing safety and resilience across Albania’s municipalities.

KPI Indicator	Target	Librazhd	Pograde c	Elbasan	Korça	Cërrik	Notes
<b>Project overview indicators</b>							
<b>Number of LPSC meetings annually</b>	≥4	4	5	3	3	4	Meetings minutes and correspondence with the Prefect in his position as

							Regional CVE Coordinator
<b>Project trainee knowledge increase (%)</b>	≥75%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	pre-and-post tests show
<b>Action plan development and adoption</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	5 Municipalities have developed their action plans.
<b>Formal referral procedures (outlined in the Case Methodology Guide) were acknowledged by the LPSC</b>	Yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	LPSCs use Case Methodology Each LPSC is referring to formats in various stages (notification, documentation, case referral, reporting, local action plans)
<b>(Basic and refresher) Training sessions conducted</b>	≥2	2	2	2	2	2	Training assessments indicate significant knowledge improvements, with approximately 75% of participants demonstrating significant improvements after completing the training sessions (i.e. >20%

							improvement from pre to post-test)Plus technical mentorship provided to all 5 municipalities on follow up
<b>Number of referrals to LPSCs</b>	$\geq 20^{18}$	2	3	1	0	2	There are at least 8 cases that were referred to LPSC: 2 cases (1 domestic violence and 1 mental health) in Librazhd; 3 cases (1 domestic violence, 1 child protection; 1 school bullying) in Pogradec; 1 case (child protection) in Elbasan and, 2 cases (P/CVE and child protection) in Cerrik. Korca has not reported specific cases due to some delays in recomposing the LPSC. Lack of unified data management

<sup>18</sup> The target indicator of 20 cases was not possible to reach owing to the delays the project faced which was namely the slow recomposing of the LPSC members.

							system. LPSCs and case managers refer to paper based practices.
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### 3.6.4 Case Documentation & Tracking

Effective documentation and case tracking are essential for coordinated response, and accountability in managing P/CVE cases. Municipalities like Cërrik and Librazhd, with prior experience in R&R for voluntary returnees and former terrorist prisoners, have developed awareness on importance of regular reporting and follow-up mechanisms.

*Municipalities like Cërrik and Librazhd show stronger practices, with systematic archiving and regular reporting that enable structured follow-up. We have used the documents to follow cases that were previously reported or discussed as a concern” (Interview No. 2, Male, Key Informant from LSGU)*

The Normative Act assigns this responsibility to the technical secretariat, which is also in charge of coordinating and managing all LPSC documentation. It also recommends **standardized case tracking system**, which may reduce underreporting, misclassification, and fragmented recordkeeping. In reality, the actual practice often relies on paper files, emails, or meeting minutes, making it difficult to monitor progress or ensure continuity of care—especially when cases are transferred between institutions or over time.

*Ideally, a case management system where we provide information about the referrals might help central government in orienting policies. Also, for municipalities, it may help provide for security threats, but also it may help all of us in information to be provided. And most importantly in protection the classified information. By formalizing these processes, institutions can strengthen collaboration, improve accountability, and enhance the overall effectiveness of service delivery and decision-making. FGD No.1, Members of LPSC, Elbasan*

*“Naturally, the first thing you expect is confidentiality. The procedural code requires us to maintain confidentiality, but there was a case where only two people at the school were supposed to know, yet the entire school ended up knowing about it. We understand how difficult this is, especially in terms of child well-being, and the whole aspect of information-sharing and awareness-raising. The cases are not digitalized and as such sharing of information have its own challenges” Interview No.8, Female, Key informant from CSO sector*

According to the Normative Act, LPSCs are required to report “red flag” cases to the Regional CVE Coordinators and, subsequently, to the National CVE Coordinator. The end of 2025 marks the first time LPSCs will be expected to submit an annual activity report. While formal reporting

templates were introduced through the Case Methodology to support this process, it remains to be seen how effectively LPSCs will prepare these reports, given their lack of prior experience.

*“We went through an exercise using the case methodology to prepare our local action plans. It was a long process, with many discussions, but ultimately beneficial for each member. Every member represents an institution, and from that perspective, each one needs to be able to report on their roles and actions during the implementation period. This was emphasized during the training—and it's now also a legal requirement. We expect full participation from each member in the reporting process.”*

Interview No.8, Female, Key informant from LPSC

### **3.6.5 Confidentiality & Data Protection**

The right to confidentiality is protected by a comprehensive legal framework in Albania, which applies to all practices involving personal data of individual citizens. The Case Methodology introduced standardized templates that help safeguard this fundamental right, including a confidentiality declaration that is incorporated into every LPSC meeting. The importance of confidentiality was acknowledged in all meetings and raised consistently by participants<sup>19</sup>. However, ensuring full and consistent implementation of confidentiality standards in practice remains a challenge.

*During earlier discussions, it was emphasized that highly sensitive information—especially in the context of gang activity in Elbasan—should not be directly submitted to LPSC members without appropriate safeguards. While open communication and coordination are essential, it is equally important to recognize the security risks associated with sharing classified or sensitive intelligence. Such information should be managed carefully, with clear protocols and, where necessary, proper security clearances to ensure it is handled responsibly and does not compromise investigations or public safety. (Interview No.1, Female, Key informant from CSO sector)*

Another argument raised by public officials concerned the sensitivity of information discussed in closed-door meetings, alongside an increased awareness among members regarding data protection

*“Naturally, the first thing you expect is confidentiality. Legislation on personal data protection requires us to maintain confidentiality, but there was a case where only two people at the school were supposed to know, yet the entire school ended up knowing about it, which was truly regrettable. We understand how difficult this is, especially in terms of child’s well-being, and the whole aspect of information-sharing and awareness-raising.”*  
FGD No.1, Members of LPSC, Elbasan

In the absence of institutional safeguards, LPSCs often rely on the personal discretion of individual caseworkers or council members—a practice that, while well-intentioned, leaves room for error or misuse.

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<sup>19</sup> Focus Group discussions, Members of LPSC in Elbasan, Korce, Librazhd, Cerrik, Pogradec

*I recognize there are significant risks and opportunities associated with sharing sensitive statements. We have often observed instances of information leakage from institutional structures. The media, as you know, has extensive access to such information, particularly concerning issues like trafficking and vulnerable populations. With the rise of digitalization, these challenges have become even more pronounced, underscoring the need for robust safeguards and careful communication protocols. FGD No.1, Members of LPSC, Elbasan*

An actionable recommendation to ensure confidentiality among LPSC members relates to tailored training on data protection legislation and consequences upon breach of confidentiality.

### **3.6.6 Community Engagement & Trust**

Emphasizing the role of each actor within the LPSC framework is essential for ensuring meaningful representation and genuine participation.

Participants in the discussions emphasized that building trust with communities requires broad and inclusive representation within Local Public Safety Councils (LPSCs), and a commitment to recognizing diverse forms of civil society engagement.<sup>20</sup>

*Being engaged with Local Public Safety Councils means having close ties with communities—not just in terms of providing services, but also in working on their behalf. It’s important to emphasize that LPSCs should not be seen merely as municipal mechanisms, but rather as community structures that represent all groups and genuinely care about their well-being. That’s why representation matters to us.” FGD No.1, Members of LPSC, Elbasan*

Communities are unlikely to share concerns, report early warning signs, or participate in prevention initiatives unless they feel respected, heard, and protected. Trust is built over time—through transparency, consistent communication, and inclusive decision-making. Without it, even the most well-structured LPSC will struggle to function effectively.

Key informants emphasized that there is an insufficient number of informational, educational, and awareness-raising meetings to explain the role and functioning of Local Public Safety Councils (LPSC) or to foster broader community awareness within the municipality’s territory.

*Greater efforts are needed to raise citizens’ awareness of the importance of reporting disputes or conflicts that could escalate into more serious crimes, while local institutions should also demonstrate stronger proactive engagement in prevention. Communities often remain passive, both in reporting criminal incidents and in actively participating in local decision-making processes. Meetings with community help build closer relationships between institutions and citizens, allowing for more responsive and community-driven solutions to local challenges. This approach not only makes the process multi-stakeholder*

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<sup>20</sup> Focus Group discussions, Members of LPSC in Elbasan, Korce, Librazhd, Cerrik, Pogradec

*and inclusive, but also reinforces institutional accountability towards citizens. Interview No.8, Female, Key informant from CSO sector*

Active citizen participation of citizens supports the institutionalization of a culture of accountability at the local level, thereby fostering collective awareness. Such accountability can stimulate local-level debate on safety issues, which in turn helps shift social attitudes towards shared responsibility and stronger collaboration between institutions, law enforcement and citizens.

*Enhancing civic participation and community engagement within the LPSC contributes not only to identifying and preventing criminal incidents but also empowers citizens to act as key partners in transforming local safety ecosystems and building more effective and functional systems for community well-being and security Interview No.3, Male, key informant from law enforcement sector from central level government*

Despite the recognized benefits of open and participatory community forums for strengthening local safety governance, existing practices and legal provisions still pose barriers to full and meaningful citizen engagement:

*Evidence shows that regularly organizing open community meetings strengthens local law enforcement, improves communication between institutions and the public, enhances public trust, and promotes institutional accountability. However, the current normative framework excludes citizens and informal groups from active participation, as their involvement is invitation-based and left to the discretion of the LPSC chairperson. This limitation risks undermining citizens' trust in the process. Interview No.3, Male, key informant from law enforcement sector from central level government*

Finally, fostering meaningful and inclusive community engagement in local safety structures is essential to building trust, enhancing institutional accountability, and ensuring sustainable, community-driven solutions to public safety challenges.

### **3.6.7 Training & Capacity building across 5 municipalities**

In 5 targeted municipalities, training has been delivered through structured cycles in line with local identified needs and in compliance with national P/CVE mandates. However, these gains are vulnerable to staff turnover, new staff and the absence of a system for regular, mandatory refresher training. The need for regular training, tailored to LPSC needs to be consistent. Training may be both introductory and more profiled/ thematic<sup>21</sup>.

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<sup>21</sup> Focus Group discussions, Members of LPSC in Elbasan, Korce, Librazhd, Cerrik, Pogradec

*It is essential to periodically and consistently invest in training and resources to enhance the effectiveness of interventions, considering the emerging hybrid security threats. (Interview No.1, Female, Key informant from CSO sector)*

*Continuous training is essential to maintain an effective and well-informed workforce, particularly given the regular turnover and movement of staff. Training can never truly be “enough,” as new personnel must be equipped with the knowledge and skills to seamlessly continue critical work. Periodic training sessions are therefore necessary to ensure that all staff remain current with evolving procedures, policies, and best practices. This includes clear guidance on proper referral processes and effective case management, helping to maintain quality services despite staff transitions. Interview No.6, Female, Key informant from LPSC*

In this project, pre and posttests were done to measure the impact of the training. This training assessment data indicate significant knowledge improvements. Approximately 75% of participants demonstrating significant improvements after completing the training sessions (i.e. >20% improvement from pre to post-test) on the new Case Methodology Guide. Participants highlighted training was beneficial in terms of strengthening professional relationships between LPSC members and building their understanding and capacity to implement the Case Methodological Guide. Supporting training participation contributes directly to the effectiveness and sustainability of LPSC performance.

*Before the trainings there was an uncertainty about their role, primarily due to the absence of a clearly defined job description. Without formal guidance outlining their responsibilities and expectations, it is difficult to ensure consistency, accountability, and effective performance. Establishing clear, standardized job descriptions is essential for clarifying roles, enhancing coordination among stakeholders, and supporting the successful implementation of policies and programs. (Interview No.1, Female, Key informant from CSO sector)*

### **3.7 Effectiveness of LPSC and Good Practices**

Following the re-composition of LPSCs in five municipalities after the approval of the Normative Act, there are some initial signs of impact in the LPSC performance and public safety perception:

- The increased number of public meetings on quarterly basis, signaling enhanced council activity and visibility.
- The improved attendance and level of participation from municipal and regional actors.
- Interagency cooperation has been revitalized, leading to more discussion on what are local priorities and needs.
- Improved reporting frequency, facilitating for more follow up on cases.

Together, these operational improvements suggest a growing recognition of public safety as a priority at the local level, and a renewed focus on supporting LPSCs in achieving their intended impact at the local level.

### **3.7.1. Increased number of public meetings enhancing visibility and activity**

Following the approval of the 2024 Normative Act and the signing of **five Mayor's Orders** requiring the re-composition of LPSCs, all five target municipalities—Cërrik, Elbasan, Librazhd, Pogradec, and Korça—successfully revitalized their local councils.

From **February to July 2025**, a total of **10 LPSC meetings** were held. These quarterly meetings signal a return to consistent institutional engagement and have significantly increased the councils' visibility in their communities.

Support from the CVE National Coordinator played a key role in reactivating these platforms. Regular meetings have helped normalize the practice of collective problem-solving, ensuring that safety and prevention are no longer sporadic or reactive, but part of an ongoing governance cycle:

*“Before, meetings happened only if there was a crisis. Now, they happen because safety is everyone’s job—and that message is finally sticking.” Interview No.6, Female, Key informant from LPSC*

### **3.7.2. Improved Attendance and Institutional Participation**

The re-composed LPSCs reflected more structured participation from both municipal technical-level staff and other authorities operating at regional levels (i.e., child protection, education, health, housing services, consumer protection, police, civil emergencies, etc); gathering over 120 nominally assigned members attending meetings so far in 2025. The involvement of the Prefect has also led to more monitoring on LPSC activity.

Such shift has proven essential for prompt follow-up and integrated case management.

*“When a case is addressed in the LPSC, we ensure each actor takes responsibility—legal, social, psychological—and no detail is lost. We don’t just react, we follow through.” Interview with a case manager, LPSC*

### **3.7.3. Revitalized Interagency Cooperation**

LPSCs have showed in 8 cases that the mechanism can work effectively as multi-sectoral teams, referring to the Case Methodological Guide to coordinate responses for identified concerns, ranging from radicalization and returnees to school bullying and violence, mental health concerns, or cases of domestic violence that concern not only families but also community at large.

#### **Case 1: Domestic Violence and Radicalization Risk**

##### **Situation**

A single mother reported domestic violence and signs of radicalization in her partner. The case referral was brought to the attention of the authorities by another community member.

##### **Actions Taken**

Following the assessment of the situation and the victim's psychosocial conditions, intervention was carried out in cooperation with police officers. During the interview with the perpetrator, the presence of a psychologist was requested, and it was subsequently deemed necessary to refer the case for psychiatric evaluation.

##### **Coordination**

Police, social services, and health care teams responded jointly. A mental health evaluation was conducted, with family safety prioritized.

##### **Outcome**

The LPSC monitored the safety plan, which resulted in a successful referral to the national-level support network for continued follow-up and care.

#### **Case 2: Aggressive Behavior and Social Isolation in School-Aged Youth Situation**

A teenage boy exhibiting signs of extreme isolation and aggression at school was flagged by educators.

##### **Actions Taken**

The Municipal Technical Working Group raised the concern and escalated the case to the LPSC. A multi-stakeholder plan was developed, including an assessment of the causes of his isolation and aggressive behavior.

##### **Coordination**

Social services, education staff, and a psychologist were mobilized. The case was addressed in real time using the risk assessment and early warning signs identification tool.

##### **Outcome**

An individual care plan was drafted and monitored over a three-month period. No extremist intent was confirmed, and the case was closed and archived as resolved.

### **3.7.4. Enhanced Reporting and Case Management Capacity**

The use of structured tools—such as referral templates, tracking forms, and meeting summaries—has helped professionalize LPSC processes. These were developed and disseminated as part of the Case Methodological Guide and are now being used by technical secretariats to document decisions, monitor implementation, and report the follow-up.

Between February and May 2025, at least eight cases were successfully managed through the LPSC mechanism. These included referrals involving child protection, domestic violence, mental health concerns, and P/CVE-related risks. Each case benefited from multi-agency coordination and was monitored through standardized documentation practices. Regular reporting has enabled higher-level institutions, such as the CVE National Coordinator to track progress and offer guidance where needed.

Parallely, all 5 LPSCs through program’ mentorship activities drafted Annual Action Plans based on identified local concerns:

*“We went through an exercise using the case methodology to prepare our Local Action Plans. It was a long process, with many discussions, but ultimately beneficial for each member. Every member represents an institution, and from that perspective, each one needs to be able to report on their roles and actions during the implementation period.”*  
Interview No.8, Female, Key informant from LPSC

## **4 Conclusions and Actionable Recommendations**

Albania’s institutional response to radicalization and violent extremism has undergone a significant transformation, evolving from reactive, top-down measures to locally rooted, preventive approaches. The formalization of Local Public Safety Councils (LPSCs) through the 2024 Normative Act marks a pivotal advancement in this shift. These multi-sectoral mechanisms now have a clear legal mandate, coherent structure, and improved capacity to address complex public safety risks, including challenges related to returnees and radicalization.

The assessment demonstrates that the methodology was well-received and training results show that it was well understood. There is evidence that people are starting to apply the methodology. By integrating law enforcement, health, education, and social protection actors into a shared governance model, LPSCs enhance Albania’s ability to prevent and respond to violent extremism at its roots—within local communities.

This project’s alignment of local practices with national policy has laid a foundation for sustainable, community-driven security governance. The adoption of unified procedures, joint action planning, and consistent institutional engagement highlights that cross-sector collaboration is both feasible and impactful when supported by legal authority, technical assistance, and political commitment.

The formalization of LPSCs under the 2023–2024 legal reforms represents a critical milestone. Once voluntary and ad hoc, LPSCs have transitioned into permanent, institutionalized bodies with defined mandates and level of representation. Such changes have the potential to improve inconsistent coordination, and accountability in terms of activities and local priorities .

Anchored in Albania’s decentralization framework and reinforced by the Normative Act, LPSCs are multi-sectoral mechanisms enabling early detection and coordinated response. Expanded participation of regional actors, enhanced coordination between municipalities and prefectures, and oversight by the National CVE Coordinator and National Council for Community Safety exemplify a systemic preventive approach on P/CVE and public safety.

Despite this progress, practical implementation varies across municipalities. **Challenges include:**

- **Resource Constraints:**

LPSCs face two distinct but interconnected resource challenges that hinder their effectiveness and sustainability.

**First**, most municipalities lack a dedicated budget for the services and facilities needed by vulnerable individuals referred through the LPSC mechanism. This means that even when the LPSC functions well in identifying needs and referring cases, the broader system often lacks the necessary resources—such as shelters, psychosocial support, or reintegration services—to respond effectively. As a result, the mechanism’s potential impact is limited, and vulnerable individuals may not receive the support they require.

**Second**, there is rarely a specific budget allocated for the operation of the LPSCs themselves. This includes budget for basic administrative costs, regular meetings, training for members, or dedicated personnel to coordinate the mechanism. Without these resources, LPSCs struggle to function consistently. Frequent staff turnover within municipal administrations and among LPSC

members further undermines continuity and institutional knowledge, especially in smaller municipalities where human resources are already stretched and members often juggle multiple responsibilities across institutions.

- **Coordination Challenges and Delayed Support:**

While the LPSC mechanism holds significant promise, conversations with stakeholders revealed several operational challenges. A key concern is the slow coordination between institutions, which often results in delayed support for vulnerable individuals. Even when needs are identified in a timely manner, the referral process can stall due to unclear institutional roles, insufficient follow-up, or gaps in communication—particularly in urgent cases involving violence, homelessness, or acute mental health needs.

Other recurring issues include:

- **Lack of clarity around institutional roles and responsibilities**, especially when multiple actors are involved in a single case.
- **Inconsistent attendance** at LPSC meetings, leading to communication gaps and repetitive case reviews.
- **Limited information-sharing protocols**, which restrict the flow of relevant data between institutions, often due to concerns about privacy or unclear guidelines.

These operational weaknesses mean that, while the LPSC structure exists in many places on paper, its **real-world functionality is uneven**. Strengthening inter-institutional coordination—especially in time-sensitive cases—is essential to improving the model's effectiveness and ensuring that it delivers tangible benefits to the vulnerable populations it is intended to serve

- **LPSC Roles and Responsibilities**

The Case Methodology Guide was produced prior to the finalisation of the Normative Act and the expanded list of participants. Therefore, the Guide should be updated to give these new members clarity on their roles. This is important for the new members who are unfamiliar with complex public safety issues do not see the link between public safety and their area of expertise.

Separately, each municipality has a designated a technical secretariat function, typically assigned to an existing staff member, which has served as a practical coordination mechanism. The Normative Act states that 3 people should be assigned to the Technical Secretariat for each LPSC. However, in the five pilot areas, this level of staffing was not available. It is therefore recommended that the DCM provide further guidance on the functions and responsibilities of the Technical Secretariat, to assist municipalities in appropriately assigning staff to these roles.

Moreover, engagement of civil society organizations (CSOs) continues to differ widely. The Normative Act provides for CSO participation primarily through invitations, either during LPSC meetings or in broader national-level discussions around annual performance. In some

municipalities, CSOs play an active role in case discussions and prevention strategies, while in others their involvement is limited or ad hoc. CSO presence and activities vary by municipality but the interviewees engaged in this report largely believed that CSOs should be more actively engaged in the LPSC model. A standard metric and process should be developed so there is clarity on CSO criteria for LPSC attendance.

- **LPSC members and their expertise**

The LPSC model is built to deal with a wide range of complex cases, including the prevention of violent extremism (P/CVE). However, not all participants have the same or minimum level of understanding of the variety issues that can be referred through the mechanism. Therefore, the Guide should be expanded to include more detailed information on key concepts identifiers of vulnerable individuals, such as a radicalised case detection.

- **Monitoring and Reporting**

The monitoring and reporting functions of Local Public Safety Councils (LPSCs) remain underdeveloped. While the Normative Act requires annual reporting to the National CVE Coordinator beginning in 2025, there is currently no sub-regulatory framework to guide consistent monitoring of case management and overall LPSC performance.

In terms of capturing data and storing it safely, most LPSCs continue to rely on paper-based systems for case tracking and council records. This limits their ability to consolidate information, assess trends, or follow up systematically on ongoing cases. To meet national reporting obligations, LPSCs will likely require technical support to develop capacity in data collection, analysis, and presentation.

Additionally, concerns were raised about **data protection**, with some stakeholders expressing fear that sensitive case information could be leaked to the media, potentially putting vulnerable individuals at further risk and undermining trust in the mechanism.

*“Effective documentation and case tracking are key for accountability and coordinated P/CVE responses. Municipalities like Cërrik and Librazhd show stronger practices, with systematic archiving and regular reporting that enable structured follow-up. We have used the documents to follow cases that were previously reported or discussed as a concern” (Interview No. 2, Male, Key Informant from LSGU)*

## **Actionable Recommendations**

### **1. Standardize Procedures and Tools for Case management and documentation**

- Update the Case Methodology Guide with formats regarding the case management phases, documentation, and reporting to reduce inconsistencies and administrative burdens.

## **2. Formalize Technical Secretariats with staff, mandates and resources**

- Formalize technical secretariats within municipal structures with dedicated staff and clear mandates to coordinate council activities, monitor follow-ups, and maintain documentation.
- Allocate adequate financial and human resources to support secretariats, enabling sustained and effective council operations.

## **3. Ensure Sustainable Funding for LPSC operation**

- € Establish dedicated budget lines within municipal and national budgets to fund LPSC activities, including training, community outreach, case management, and emergency responses.

## **4. Enhance Training and Capacity Building for LPSC members**

- Implement a standardized training curriculum for LPSC members, incorporating legislation, practical exercises, and scenario-based learning to improve case management skills.
- Ensure continuous learning through regular refresher courses and programs for new members to address staff turnover and maintain institutional memory.

## **5. Improve Data Protection and introduce a secure digital case platform**

- Work for a secure, centralized digital case management platform with role-based access controls to document, track, and coordinate referrals in real time.
- Develop clear confidentiality instruments, and provide for periodic ethical training on handling sensitive information.

## **6. Boost Community Engagement via CSOs, youth, and religious leaders**

- Formalize civic engagement with civil society, youth groups, religious leaders, and community representatives as active members of LPSCs with regards to P/CVE.
- Promote ongoing community outreach and awareness campaigns to build trust, encourage early reporting of risks, and foster local support for preventive initiatives.
- Advocacy and awareness initiatives/campaigns targeting local communities, high school and university students, and vulnerable groups can help shift attitudes and behaviors regarding safety and security issues and promote a culture of shared responsibility.

## **7. Develop a monitoring & evaluation framework with clear indicators**

- Establish clear performance indicators—such as referral numbers, response times, and beneficiary satisfaction—to regularly assess LPSC effectiveness.
- Standardise the conduct of periodic quality reviews and report on implementation progress, feeding data into a national monitoring system for informed policy adjustments.
- Operationalize annual reporting and municipality data review

## **8. Clarify roles & interagency mechanisms**

- Define explicit roles and responsibilities for all institutions involved in LPSC operations to prevent overlap, confusion, and accountability gaps.
- Formalize communication channels and information-sharing agreements to facilitate timely, coordinated responses to complex cases.

## **9. Promote early risk identification via trained frontline actors**

- Train frontline actors—teachers, healthcare workers, social services, and community leaders—to recognize early signs of radicalization, vulnerability, and social risk.
- Establish community liaison roles or focal points to bridge formal institutions and local populations, enhancing trust and proactive referrals.

## **10. Support Support policy alignment with legal policy alignment with legal sub-regulations and local needs**

- Review and update relevant legislation to integrate sub-regulatory instruments that support LPSC operations, including monitoring frameworks and data protection standards.
- Encourage ongoing dialogue between national and local authorities to align policy developments with on-the-ground realities and emerging challenges.

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## 6 Annexes

Annex 1: Guide for Semi-Structured Key Informant Interviews

Annex 2: Guide for Focus Groups Discussions

Annex 3: Key Performance Indicators Checklist for Case Management

Annex 4. Case Descriptions

Annex 5. List of Interviews/ FGD

## **Annex 1: Guide for Semi-Structured Key Informant Interviews**

### **Dear Participant,**

You are invited to take part in a key informant interview conducted as part of a performance assessment of local referral systems and case management mechanisms related to Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE) in Albania. This assessment, commissioned by ASSIST, seeks to strengthen the coordination and responsiveness of Local Safety Councils (LPSCs) and other regional actors involved in P/CVE case management across five regions in Albania.

As a selected expert with specialized knowledge and experience in this field, your insights are invaluable for understanding how local institutions identify, refer, and manage P/CVE-related cases, as well as for exploring opportunities to improve inter-agency cooperation, institutional roles, case management practices, and community engagement.

The interview will last approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour and will be conducted on a one-to-one basis. Your participation is entirely voluntary. You may decline to answer any question or end the interview at any time without any consequences. All information you provide will be treated with strict confidentiality and anonymity. No personal identifying information will be recorded or shared, and data will be used exclusively for research and program improvement purposes.

There are no direct risks or material benefits to your participation. However, your contribution will play a critical role in enhancing local referral systems and improving P/CVE prevention efforts at the community and national levels.

If you have any questions or concerns before or after the interview, please feel free to contact the research team.

By agreeing to participate, you confirm that you understand the purpose of this interview and voluntarily consent to take part, with full assurance of confidentiality and anonymity.

Thank you sincerely for your time and valuable expertise.

Sincerely,

### **Semi-Structured Key Informant Interviews (KIIs):**

#### **Background Information**

Profile and experience with LPSC: Could you please describe your experience and role within the Local Public Safety Council (LPSC)?

## Main questions

1. How effective is the LPSC in facilitating coordination and participation among different institutions involved in referrals?
2. What are the main strengths and gaps in the policies, regulations, or Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) guiding your referral work?
3. How would you assess the processes and tools used for identifying, referring, documenting, and tracking at-risk cases?
4. What challenges do you face in applying case management tools or SOPs, and what improvements do you think are necessary?
5. How would you describe the communication and cooperation between institutions involved in referral and case management?
6. Can you share an example of a successful case handled through inter-agency collaboration, as well as a case where lack of coordination had a negative impact?
7. How do institutional dynamics, such as leadership styles or power hierarchies, affect referral processes and decision-making?

## Recommendations

1. What recommendations do you have for strengthening the functionality of the LPSC, improving inter-agency cooperation, and supporting effective case management?
2. What recommendations can be made to strengthen the prevention mandate of local actors in terms of performance indicators, quality of work (including completion, accuracy, professionalism, communication, and efficiency), and effectiveness in responding to public initiatives?
3. How can local units improve their resourcefulness, innovation, application of safety prevention techniques, and overall ability to design and implement performance improvements while ensuring operational safety?

## Annex 2: Guide for **Focus Group Discussion (FGD) Template**

### **Title: Exploring Local Referral Systems and Case Management in P/CVE**

#### **Dear Participant,**

You are invited to participate in a focus group discussion organized as part of a performance assessment of local referral systems and case management mechanisms related to Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE) in Albania. This assessment is commissioned by ASSIST and aims to strengthen the coordination and responsiveness of Local Safety Councils (LPSCs) and other regional actors involved in P/CVE case management across five regions in Albania.

The focus group discussion will explore how local institutions identify, refer, and manage P/CVE-related cases and how inter-agency cooperation can be improved. Key topics will include institutional roles and coordination, case management tools and procedures, referral pathways, confidentiality, community engagement, and training needs. Your insights and experiences are essential for identifying good practices, challenges, and opportunities for improvement.

The discussion will last approximately 1 to 1.5 hours and will take place in a group setting. Your participation is entirely voluntary. You may choose to skip any question or withdraw from the discussion at any time without any consequences. All information you provide will be treated confidentially and anonymously. No personal identifying details will be recorded or shared, and data will be used solely for research and program development purposes.

There are no direct risks or material benefits associated with participation. However, your contributions will help improve local referral systems and enhance the effectiveness of P/CVE prevention efforts in your community and beyond.

If you have any questions or concerns before or after the session, please feel free to contact the research team at [armelaxhaho@yahoo.com](mailto:armelaxhaho@yahoo.com)

By joining this discussion, you confirm that you understand the purpose of this assessment and agree to participate voluntarily, with the assurance of confidentiality and anonymity.

Thank you very much for your time and valuable input.

Sincerely,

#### **Introduction**

- Welcome participants and introduce facilitators.
- Explain the purpose of the FGD: *To explore how local systems work in identifying, referring, and managing P/CVE-related cases, and how inter-agency cooperation can be improved.*
- Ensure confidentiality and informed consent.

#### **Section 1: Background Information**

- Institution/Organization
- Role/Function

- Years of experience

## **Section 2: Regulation Knowledge and Implementation**

1. Introductory question: What has been your experience as a member of the Local Public Safety Council (LPSC)?
2. What is your understanding of the policy document / regulation governing the functioning of the LPSC in your municipality?
3. Who do you think should be responsible for approving and overseeing the LPSC regulation, and why?
4. Where do you see gaps in the current regulatory or procedural framework?

## **Section 3: Participation and Institutional Roles**

1. **How effective do you find the notification and facilitation process of LPSC meetings?** Can you provide examples?
2. **How would you describe the level of participation by different institutions in LPSC meetings?** What factors encourage or hinder participation? Do you think key sectors are adequately represented in the LPSC?
3. **In your opinion, are the roles of LPSC members clearly defined?** How does this clarity (or lack thereof) affect coordination and decision-making?
4. What policies and practices guides the referral mechanism and your role, the formal policies and SOPs or informal practices?

## **Section 4: Activity of LPSC**

1. **Can you describe the process for developing and approving the LPSC work calendar?**
2. How is the budgeting for LPSC activities handled, and how does it influence the effectiveness of your work?

## **Section 5: Case Management and Tools Case Management Tools:**

What case management documents or tools (such as plans, guides, protocols, or referral systems) do you use regularly, and how familiar are you with them? > ?

1. **Application of case methodology :**  
**How often do you apply the case methodology in your daily work?**

Can you share examples of situations where these procedures were particularly helpful or where you faced difficulties using them?

2. **Challenges & Improvements:**  
**What challenges do you encounter when using SOPs or other case management tools?** Are there any tools or documents that you feel are missing or could be improved to better support your work?

## Section 6

### Referral Pathways and Inter-agency Cooperation and Communication

#### 3. What policies and practices guides the referral mechanism and your role, the formal policies and SOPs or informal practices?

Prompts: Why do SOPs not guide the mechanism and your work? Are there gaps in the SOPs? What advantages do the informal practices have over the SOPs?

#### 4. Identifying At-Risk Cases:

**How effective is LPSC/ Your institutions at identifying at-risk cases?** What factors or circumstances support this effectiveness, and what barriers limit it?

#### 5. Documentation & Tracking:

**How is case documentation and tracking managed in your work?** What improvements do you think are needed to make this process more efficient or reliable?

### Confidentiality & Data Protection:

How are confidentiality guidelines communicated and enforced in your institution? 6. How would you describe the communication and coordination between institutions involved in referral and case management? What mechanisms exist for joint case handling? Are they used consistently?

## Section 7 Community Engagement and Perceptions

1. Are there barriers that prevent the early identification of at-risk individuals by community actors?
2. What would improve trust and responsiveness at the community level?

### F. Training and Capacity

1. Have you received adequate training related to LPSC functioning or case management?
2. What additional skills or knowledge do you feel are needed for effective referrals?

## Section 8. Effectiveness and Good Practices

#### 1. In your view, what are the most effective practices currently used in your municipality for managing referrals or P/CVE cases?

2. Can you describe a referral case that was handled particularly well? What made it successful? What worked well? What challenges did you face?
3. Are there elements of this case that could be replicated elsewhere?

## Section 9. Recommendations

1. What would you recommend to improve the functionality of the LPSC?
2. What changes could enhance inter-agency cooperation and case management ?

## Annex 3: Key Performance Indicators Checklist for Case Management

### Quantitative Performance Indicators

#### I. Referral and Screening

- % of referrals with complete and properly filled forms (Annex 1)
- Average time from referral receipt to case registration
- % of referrals screened and triaged within 5 working days
- % of referrals involving emergency escalation addressed within 24 hours
- % of referrals shared with appropriate entities (LPSC, CVE, Police)

#### II. Risk Assessment & Information Gathering

- % of cases with complete risk assessments using Annex 2
- % of referred cases with multi-sectoral data collection completed (Annex 3.a)
- % of assessments incorporating information from at least 3 sectors
- % of cases where risk is classified and recorded with rationale
- % of case files containing evidence of community/contextual factors

#### III. Case Planning and Individual Support Plan (ISP)

- % of eligible cases with ISP prepared and signed (Annex 4.b)
- % of cases with explicit informed consent (Annex 4.e)
- % of ISPs reviewed and updated within the agreed timeframe (6–12 months)
- % of ISPs with multi-agency contributions clearly defined

#### IV. Case Management and Monitoring

- % of cases assigned to a case manager within 3 days of ISP approval
- % of monthly follow-ups conducted per case (as required)
- % of progress reports completed and submitted on time (Annex 3)
- % of cases with documented face-to-face contact as per guidelines

- % of LPSC meetings held quarterly with case updates on agenda
- % of cases receiving cross-sector support (e.g., education + health + CSO)
- % of cases with clear action logs and decision rationales (Annex 4 Meeting Minutes)

#### V. Inter-Institutional Coordination and Communication

- % of LPSC members participating in scheduled meetings
- % of cases receiving input from all relevant sectors during deliberation
- % of external expert consultations arranged where required (Annex 4.f)
- % of cases where virtual attendance or input was properly recorded (Annex 4.c)

#### VI. Outcomes and Case Closure

- % of cases achieving intended goals outlined in ISP
- % of case closure reports completed and documented (Annex 4.h, 4.j)
- % of closed cases with confirmation of continued mainstream service support
- % of cases re-opened due to recurring concerns within 6–12 months
- % of exit notifications properly communicated to individuals/families (Annex 4.j)

#### VII. Data Protection and Documentation

- % of LPSC members signed confidentiality declarations (Annex 6)
- % of case files stored in line with data protection law
- % of documentation stored digitally with secure access protocols
- % of minutes submitted to national CVE and NCCS structures (Annex 4.g)

#### VIII. Transfers and Continuity

- % of relocated cases transferred appropriately to new LPSC (Annex 4.k)
- % of transferred cases with full documentation included

#### IX. Review and Learning

- % of cases reviewed at 6- and 12-month intervals

- % of reviewed cases triggering adjustments in ISP or service provision
- % of lessons learned captured and integrated into LPSC practice
- Annual review meeting held and report submitted (Annex 5.b)

### Qualitative Performance Indicators

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Assessment Method</b>
<b>1. Quality of Case Reports</b>	Completeness, clarity, and relevance of case documentation	Desk review and scoring rubric
<b>2. Interagency Collaboration Effectiveness</b>	Quality and timeliness of communication and coordination between institutions	Stakeholder interviews or focus groups
<b>3. Risk Assessment Appropriateness</b>	Depth, relevance, and justification of threat/risk evaluations	Expert peer review
<b>4. Stakeholder Satisfaction</b>	Perceived usefulness and efficiency of the LPSC process by members	Surveys or key informant interviews
<b>5. Beneficiary Satisfaction</b>	Feedback from supported individuals/families on the quality of engagement and support	Structured interviews or feedback forms
<b>6. Data Protection Compliance</b>	Adherence to confidentiality protocols and informed consent procedures	Compliance audit/ Confidentiality agreements
<b>7. Quality of ISP Design</b>	Alignment of support plans with identified needs, and SMART goal application	ISP content review checklist
<b>8. Meeting Effectiveness</b>	Quality of deliberations, action-oriented discussions, and follow-up on meeting minutes	Meeting observations and member surveys
<b>9. Inclusivity in Case Discussion</b>	Extent to which vulnerable populations (are considered in case deliberations	Qualitative review of meeting notes and case files

<b>10. Adaptability of Support Plans</b>	Ability to adjust ISP based on case review or changed circumstances	Case file review over time
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#### Annex 4. Case Descriptions

- **Case 1: Reintegration and Rehabilitation of A.G., a Returnee from Conflict Areas**

A.G. returned to Albania after spending several years in conflict zones in Syria, where she and her family endured severe hardship, including displacement in harsh makeshift camps. She came back with her children and was identified as highly vulnerable due to prolonged exposure to violence, loss of family members, and deep psychological trauma. Upon return, A.G. faced complex challenges involving accumulated trauma, grief, guilt, caregiving responsibilities for her grandchildren, and the difficulty of readjusting to a society that had changed significantly during her absence. The case was managed by a coordinated multi-agency team including local administrative units responsible for identification and case management, municipal child protection teams safeguarding the children, specialized psychosocial service providers delivering trauma-informed care, and health professionals addressing psychosomatic symptoms like hypertension and gastrointestinal issues linked to unprocessed trauma. The intervention aimed to promote A.G.’s psychological recovery, emotional resilience, and the well-being of her family through a holistic and culturally sensitive approach. This was done by building trust and conducting thorough psychological assessments, followed by individualized therapeutic sessions that combined psychological counselling, psychoeducation, psychodrama, psychoanalytic techniques, and relaxation exercises. Continuous monitoring allowed adaptation of the intervention to her evolving needs. Despite initial skepticism and rigid religious beliefs that sometimes hindered emotional expression, A.G. gradually moved toward more open communication about her grief and anxiety, improved self-awareness, and adopted healthier caregiving practices. The multi-agency collaboration ensured consistent referral, monitoring, and care, although the case highlighted gaps in community-level social support and stigma reduction. Follow-up involved regular coordination meetings, combining psychological therapy with practical support in caregiving and child protection monitoring. The sustained, trauma-informed, and flexible intervention approach enabled significant progress toward A.G.’s emotional healing and social reintegration, while also revealing the importance of strengthening community-based peer support and culturally sensitive training for frontline workers.

- **Case 2: Reintegration Challenges of a Returnee: Trauma, Parenting, and Cultural Adjustment**

S.L. is a returnee to Albania who spent an extended period in conflict zones and returned with significant psychological and social challenges. She faced complex needs typical of returnees, including trauma exposure, identity conflict, and pressures linked to reintegration. As a single parent, S.L. struggled with managing her children while navigating the influence of rigid or radical religious interpretations that shaped family dynamics—such as enforcing strict religious boundaries and rejecting mainstream cultural practices like secular celebrations. Recognizing her heightened vulnerability to social exclusion, mental health risks, and the potential intergenerational transmission of extremist views, local institutions intervened with a coordinated multi-agency response. This included the municipality overseeing case management and therapy delivery, local social work services providing family monitoring and

coordination, specialized psychosocial providers trained in trauma-focused therapies, and community actors supporting reintegration and inclusion efforts.

The rehabilitation plan focused on delivering comprehensive psychological and emotional support tailored to S.L.'s needs, with goals to build self-awareness, promote self-confidence, encourage acceptance of parental responsibility, and foster healthier communication with her children. Critically, the approach respected her faith while providing a safe therapeutic space to examine and gently challenge rigid religious beliefs that could impede social integration. Therapeutic delivery involved monthly individual sessions using evidence-based trauma-focused methods such as modern psychoanalysis, BWRT, and EMDR. Therapy emphasized trust-building, exploring personal and cultural dynamics, psychoeducation on parenting, and reflection on restrictive interpretations, addressing daily stressors, parenting challenges, and attitudes toward employment and inclusion.

Regular assessments ensured the intervention adapted to her evolving cognitive, social, and emotional state while maintaining a respectful therapeutic alliance. Success factors included the culturally sensitive, individualized approach that balanced respect for her faith with a gradual challenge to harmful beliefs. Over time, S.L. showed increased openness, demonstrated by changes such as wearing brighter clothing and engaging in new activities. However, persistent rigid thinking and rejection of secular practices limited her children's broader social integration. Economic vulnerability and reluctance to pursue employment remained additional barriers.

Inter-agency collaboration between municipal units, social workers, and therapists provided coordinated case management and responsive care, though gaps in community inclusion initiatives and employment support remained. Ongoing follow-up highlighted the need for strengthened peer support, group therapy to normalize shared experiences, specialized parenting courses for single parents, and employment facilitation in inclusive environments to promote confidence and social ties.

Overall, S.L.'s case highlights the complexity of post-conflict reintegration and the effectiveness of sustained, culturally adapted multi-agency interventions. It provides valuable lessons on the importance of integrating trauma-informed care with community support systems and socio-economic empowerment to foster meaningful social inclusion.

- *Case 3: Rebuilding After Conflict: A.A.'s Reintegration Pathway*

A.A. is a widowed mother who was displaced from Albania when her husband moved the family to an Islamic country alongside an extended family network. During their time there, they experienced violent conflict, resulting in the deaths of several close relatives and prolonged displacement in camps under traumatic conditions. These experiences left A.A. with deep psychological scars and significant challenges upon her return to Albania, including trauma symptoms, caregiving pressures for her children, social stigma, and difficulties readjusting culturally. Her case was identified through national returnee monitoring systems and referred to a coordinated multi-agency response involving local administrative units, child protection services, and psychosocial health teams, reflecting a national strategy to support returnees facing complex needs.

The intervention involved a structured therapy plan over five months, using evidence-based trauma-focused methods such as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), BWRT, and EMDR, carefully adapted to A.A.'s cultural and trauma background. Initially skeptical and defensive, A.A. gradually engaged with therapy through trust-building, psychoeducation, and exploration of parenting and personal beliefs.

Therapy sessions were delivered in a formal setting to provide safety and professional boundaries while respecting her cultural and religious identity. Regular monitoring ensured that interventions were adapted to her evolving needs. The sustained, individualized, trauma-informed approach enabled A.A. to move from guardedness to more open discussion of grief, guilt, and personal challenges, alongside increased self-awareness and evolving views on women's roles. However, persistent rigid and radical religious interpretations, normalization of violence, resistance to secular cultural practices, and limited interest in economic independence posed ongoing barriers to emotional processing and reintegration.

Inter-agency collaboration between administrative units, child protection, and psychosocial providers was key to ensuring coordinated referral, monitoring, and consistent care. Despite these efforts, gaps in community-level integration and experiences of stigma and discrimination in education, healthcare, and law enforcement persisted, contributing to A.A.'s sense of exclusion. Ongoing multi-agency follow-up maintained a holistic view of her progress, though deep-seated cognitive frameworks and social isolation underscored the need for stronger community support and employment opportunities. This case highlights the importance of culturally sensitive, individualized trauma care combined with broader social inclusion efforts, legal education, group therapy, and employment facilitation to support sustainable reintegration for returnees with complex trauma histories.

- *Case 4: Building Foundations: A.Z.'s Personal and Professional Growth Plan*

A.Z. was referred for individualized and family-based psychosocial support aimed at fostering his holistic development across academic learning, professional skills, self-image, and future vision. Identified by local social services and psychosocial teams as a youth preparing for employment, A.Z. needed targeted guidance to strengthen both his vocational readiness and personal maturity. Key institutions involved included municipal social services, family support workers, and clinical psychological services specializing in adolescent development. The intervention was designed recognizing that A.Z.'s transition to adulthood required more than technical skills; it needed to build self-awareness, encourage healthy social connections, promote realistic career planning, and reinforce personal responsibility and emotional regulation. His relationship with his mother was also a significant focus due to its impact on his motivation and emotional development.

The case was identified through community monitoring and family engagement sessions, leading to a referral for structured clinical intervention combining individual and joint sessions with A.Z. and his mother. The therapeutic process involved monthly sessions featuring clinical discussions, psychoeducation, observation of mother-child interactions, and academic-style training in core electrician trade concepts. Attention to personal development included self-care practices like sports safety. Regular monitoring tracked A.Z.'s emotional state, engagement, and goal articulation, with clinicians adapting session content to his evolving readiness.

A.Z.'s high cooperation, openness, and growing self-awareness were key to the intervention's success. He showed emotional maturity by prioritizing meaningful friendships over quantity and demonstrated enthusiasm for employment despite internship delays, managing frustration constructively with therapeutic support. Inter-agency collaboration among social services, psychologists, and family support workers ensured a unified approach, with his mother's active encouragement reinforcing A.Z.'s professional commitment. Follow-up monitoring documented his progress and family dynamics, with ongoing adjustment of psychoeducational content to reinforce practical planning and emotional regulation. The case illustrates the effectiveness of tailored, holistic interventions that combine vocational

training with family engagement, and it highlights the importance of adapting to real-world challenges like internship delays to build resilience and patience. This approach offers transferable lessons for youth development programs aiming to support successful transitions to adulthood and employment readiness.

- *Case 5: Frontline Practitioner Capacity Building for Supporting Returnee Families (Andia's Experience)*

Andia is a frontline practitioner in Albania who faced the unprecedented challenge of supporting families repatriated from conflict zones. Early in the repatriation process, she and her colleagues lacked practical experience and formal training to address the complex needs of returnee families, who had endured years of violence, loss, and displacement resulting in severe psychological trauma and reintegration challenges. The multi-agency response involved central government, local municipalities, social services, child protection teams, education authorities, and health providers, all coordinating to help returnees access education, healthcare, psychosocial support, housing, and community services. Recognizing the difficulty of this task, the Albanian government and partners implemented specialized Reintegration and Rehabilitation (R&R) training programs for frontline workers like Andia, which proved transformative by providing trauma-informed care knowledge, case management skills, and collaborative problem-solving tailored to these families' realities.

Initially, Andia's team lacked systematic assessment and intervention approaches, but after completing R&R training, they adopted a more effective, coordinated process. This included sensitive interviews to understand each family's unique history and needs, streamlined referral pathways for timely access to psychological, educational, health, and social support, and structured monitoring with regular check-ins and inter-agency communication. Reintegration was treated as an ongoing dynamic process rather than a one-time fix. The success of this approach hinged on human-centered, flexible interventions that built trust and addressed whole-family needs, which especially helped children adapt quickly when feeling safe and supported. Early bottlenecks involved fragmented institutional responses and lack of standardized tools, risking retraumatization, but training and improved coordination progressively overcame these barriers.

The multi-agency collaboration was critical in reducing service gaps, ensuring real-time responsiveness, and maintaining momentum. Andia emphasized the importance of daily availability and responsiveness to families, which fostered trust and a sense of security. Monitoring adapted to families' evolving needs to prevent anyone from falling through the cracks. Key good practices identified include structured targeted training for frontline workers, empathetic, trust-based case management, and flexible, family-centered planning. Transferable innovations involve embedding joint training across agencies, developing shared referral systems, and creating adaptable case management models that prioritize empathy and sustained follow-up. These approaches offer lessons for improving outcomes not only for returnees but also for other vulnerable populations requiring coordinated multi-dimensional support.

- *Case 6: Educational Reintegration and Support for Returnee Children (N.S.'s Role)*

N.S. is a teacher assistant working within a specialized rehabilitation and reintegration program designed to support children returning from conflict zones in Albania. These children often faced disrupted schooling, emotional distress, social withdrawal, and cultural disconnection after spending crucial formative years in war-affected areas, many without any prior formal education despite their age. The program, part of a multi-agency national effort involving local schools, the Ministry of Education,

municipal authorities, child protection units, psychosocial services, and NGOs, aimed to help returnee children catch up academically and foster their broader social reintegration. N.S.'s role was pivotal in providing personalized, student-centered teaching strategies, adapting lesson plans to each child's starting point, and building trust to encourage engagement from children initially withdrawn and wary of structured learning. The approach extended beyond academics to developing social and cultural competencies and creating a sense of belonging through participation in cultural programs and peer activities.

The intervention process began with formal identification and referral coordinated through municipal social services and child protection teams, allowing schools to prepare targeted responses. Ongoing monitoring was critical, with continuous assessment of progress and flexibility in teaching methods to meet evolving needs. Coordination meetings ensured alignment on educational and psychosocial goals, involving school leadership and social workers. The success of the program rested on N.S.'s persistent, empathetic, and individualized approach, which fostered intrinsic motivation and cooperation among traumatized children. Many students achieved notable educational gains, progressing from no literacy to competitive academic performance, while social integration improved markedly as children became active participants in classroom and community life. Challenges included initial staff unfamiliarity with returnee children's complex needs and significant remedial requirements, which were addressed through professional development and time.

Inter-agency collaboration was essential to the program's success, ensuring that academic support was integrated with psychosocial care and material assistance, reducing risks of vulnerability. Follow-up included sustained school-based monitoring, regular teacher meetings, and coordination with social workers and psychologists to respond rapidly to setbacks or emerging needs. Family engagement was also prioritized to extend support beyond the classroom and encourage parental involvement. Good practices identified include trauma-informed, individualized teaching methods centered on building trust, and seamless multi-sectoral collaboration to address children's holistic needs. Transferable lessons emphasize routine cross-sector planning, trauma-sensitive teacher training, and embedding social and cultural integration into education programs. This case demonstrates that with compassionate, coordinated effort, even severely disadvantaged children can overcome educational gaps, reconnect socially, and build hopeful futures, thereby reducing their vulnerability to radicalization and supporting social cohesion.

- *Case 7: Supporting E.N.'s Transition to Independent Adulthood*

E.N. is a young man referred to a rehabilitation program aimed at supporting youth development and preventing social vulnerability, including risks of marginalization and limited employment prospects. Identified by local municipal social services and youth development offices, E.N. was recognized as needing structured support to transition from adolescence to independent adulthood. His challenges included forming realistic career goals, developing self-image, and understanding his role within family and community expectations. The program sought to build his capacity across academic knowledge, professional skills as an aspiring electrician, self-awareness, and future planning. Multiple stakeholders were involved, including clinical social workers, educational counselors, and family support teams. Family engagement, particularly his mother's active involvement, was crucial for motivation and validation. The intervention also addressed cultural and social expectations around masculinity and responsibility, framing them as opportunities for positive growth. E.N. engaged with this process, using the sessions to reflect on his emerging identity and responsibility, with the goal of fostering his success in both work and social environments as a self-reliant community member.

E.N. was identified through routine youth services monitoring and referred via municipal social services for coordinated intake. A structured assessment evaluated his personal goals, family context, and professional interests. Regular clinical sessions, both individual and family-based, focused on goal setting, self-concept exploration, and training in electrician skills. Observations of interactions with his mother helped strengthen communication and alignment on objectives. Monitoring was ongoing, with adaptive session content reflecting his progress and responses.

Success factors included E.N.'s strong engagement, openness to reflection, and consistent attendance. He developed nuanced self-awareness, especially valuing meaningful social relationships. His mother's support reinforced his motivation to pursue employment. Administrative bottlenecks, such as delays in paperwork and employer scheduling, caused frustration, but E.N. maintained resilience and enthusiasm. Inter-agency collaboration among municipal services, clinical teams, and family members ensured holistic support, addressing technical skill development alongside emotional and social readiness, reducing dropout risks.

Post-referral, coordinated multi-agency engagement remained consistent with regular communication tracking employment opportunities and providing family support. Progress was documented and shared to maintain alignment, reflecting an effective integrated youth support model. Good practices included individualized goal setting promoting buy-in, family engagement bridging therapy and home life, emphasizing economic independence as both responsibility and opportunity, holistic skill development combining professional and socio-emotional learning, and collaborative monitoring preventing service gaps. Lessons learned highlight the value of flexibility, relationship-building, and culturally sensitive, practical interventions. This approach offers a replicable model to assist other youth facing complex transitions, helping to reduce disengagement and marginalization.

- *Case 8: Trauma-Informed Care for Returnee Mothers: N.I.'s Reintegration and Recovery Plan*

N.I. is a mother referred to Albania's rehabilitation services as part of a national strategy supporting vulnerable returnees from conflict zones, particularly women and mothers. Her case was identified through local social service networks involved in returnee monitoring and reintegration. The coordinated response involved municipal social workers, psychological service providers, child protection teams, and employment support agencies, reflecting the complex challenges she faced. N.I.'s background included limited education, severe poverty, chronic health conditions, and traumatic experiences of displacement in harsh conflict camps. Early life hardship, including a prolonged childhood hospitalization and the early death of her mother, contributed to a sense of inadequacy and frustration. Her marriage partially provided stability and access to medical care, while displacement deepened her trauma, creating specific fears such as terror of thunderstorms and fires linked to unsafe camp conditions, which shaped her anxiety, parenting style, and coping mechanisms.

Upon identification, N.I.'s case was referred to a multidisciplinary rehabilitation team that prioritized trust-building through individual and family clinical sessions, conducted with empathy and cultural sensitivity. Therapy incorporated psychoeducation, detailed analysis of mother-child interactions, and exploration of her personal history to tailor parenting support. Ongoing monitoring involved shared case notes and inter-agency communication to ensure adaptive care and sustained engagement.

Success factors included N.I.'s consistent participation and openness to psychological exploration, which allowed therapists to effectively address her complex trauma and parenting challenges. While there were no major behavioral barriers, the depth of her fears and history required significant patience and careful pacing of interventions. Strong inter-agency collaboration among social services, clinical teams, and child protection ensured a holistic approach with seamless referral, assessment, and therapy processes.

Post-referral, agencies maintained regular consultations to monitor N.I.'s progress, her children's well-being, and potential opportunities for employment or further training. This collaborative monitoring facilitated flexible adjustment of goals and methods, reinforcing trust and sustaining therapeutic gains.

Key good practices included trauma-informed, patient-centered care that built trust through culturally sensitive engagement, integrated family support through observation of mother-child dynamics, and holistic life analysis addressing health, employment readiness, and parenting simultaneously. Effective inter-agency coordination reduced service gaps and promoted continuity of care, while empowering psychoeducation enhanced N.I.'s capacity for long-term change beyond formal therapy. The case highlighted that successful reintegration for returnee mothers requires time, empathy, structured but flexible planning, and strong multi-agency commitment, emphasizing not only crisis intervention but ongoing empowerment and resilience-building.

- *Case 9: The Radicalization, Recruitment, and Prosecution of Almir Daci—Challenges and Lessons for Counterterrorism and Reintegration Policy*

Almir Daci was a prominent foreign terrorist fighter and recruiter from the village of Leshnica, Albania, who between 2012 and 2015 played a central role in radicalizing and recruiting over 90 Albanian citizens to fight alongside ISIS in Syria. His recruitment efforts were primarily carried out through extremist preaching in local mosques, working in coordination with other radical figures, including Genci Balla from Tirana. The Albanian State Intelligence Service (SHISH), the Anti-Terror Directorate of the State Police, and the Prosecutor's Office were the main institutions involved in monitoring, investigating, and prosecuting Daci's activities. Evidence gathered included a 2015 ISIS propaganda video showing Daci with Kosovo-Albanian militant Lavdrim Muhaxheri threatening attacks in the Balkans, as well as testimonies and financial investigations. Daci's rise within ISIS involved commanding Albanian fighters and participating in violent crimes, including murder and theft. His radical activities left behind a legacy of vulnerable returnees, including orphaned children, who became a focus for repatriation and reintegration efforts.

The case was handled through sustained surveillance and intelligence-sharing among national security agencies, which tracked recruitment patterns and communications linked to Daci and his network. Prosecutors built criminal cases based on a combination of video evidence, witness testimonies, and financial tracing. Arrests of associated figures such as Genci Balla were part of coordinated efforts to dismantle recruitment cells within Albania. However, Daci's presence and eventual death in Syria complicated direct law enforcement actions and prosecution, requiring trials in absentia. Despite these challenges, authorities maintained public deterrence through ongoing criminal proceedings.

Success in this case was largely due to effective inter-agency intelligence coordination, use of multimedia evidence for prosecution, and sustained legal efforts. Bottlenecks included difficulties arising from cross-border jurisdiction limitations, witness intimidation, and the challenge of holding individuals accountable

post-mortem. The orphaned and radicalized children connected to Daci's activities presented a complex, long-term reintegration challenge for social services.

Following referral, multi-agency collaboration remained vital in monitoring returnees, assessing radicalization risks within affected families, and delivering trauma-informed reintegration support, particularly for children orphaned or influenced by extremist ideologies. While collaboration between intelligence and law enforcement agencies was strong, gaps persisted in cross-border cooperation and comprehensive deradicalization programming. The case underlined the necessity for improved regional data-sharing, extradition frameworks, and community-based prevention programs to address recruitment vulnerabilities effectively.

Key lessons included the importance of inter-agency intelligence sharing to identify and dismantle recruitment networks, the value of open-source multimedia in prosecutions, and the critical role of child protection and reintegration services for affected families. It also highlighted the need for continued prosecution efforts, even in absentia, and the development of coordinated cross-border approaches to monitoring, reintegration, and deradicalization to strengthen counterterrorism responses.

- *Case 10: Dealing with Violent Extremism in Dragostunj, Librazhd – Case Analysis*

In early 2025, the Local Public Safety Council (LPSC) in Dragostunj, Librazhd, was alerted to a serious crisis involving a radicalized father who threatened his two fourth-grade daughters with violence to prevent them from attending school. The father insisted that “God does not want girls educated” and warned that the girls would leave the house “only as dead bodies” if they tried to go to class. Recognizing the immediate risk to the children's safety and education, the LPSC's Technical Secretariat swiftly activated an emergency response involving police, child protection specialists, social workers, school officials, health representatives, community elders, and the local imam.

The multi-agency team conducted a joint home visit within 24 hours. The imam addressed the father's extremist views with respectful but firm religious counsel, affirming the girls' right to education. Meanwhile, police secured an interim protection order and arranged for the mother and daughters to be moved to temporary shelter. To prevent educational disruption, the council established a distance-learning program and after-school tutoring. Psychosocial support was provided to the entire family to address trauma and help restore stability. When the father initially refused voluntary counseling, legal measures were enforced through police summonses and fines under compulsory-education laws to uphold the children's right to attend school.

Recognizing that ideological resistance was central to the case, the father's continued access to social and family services was made conditional on participation in a structured deradicalization and family counseling program operated by the national CVE Centre. Over the following month, the girls were gradually reintegrated into school with close monitoring by education and health authorities. Bi-weekly check-ins were instituted to track attendance, wellbeing, and any signs of relapse, allowing for adaptive support as needed.

This coordinated, culturally sensitive, and community-rooted approach successfully resolved an acute family crisis while establishing ongoing protective and supportive mechanisms to sustain the children's education and safety. The case illustrates how combining legal enforcement, religious engagement, educational continuity, and psychosocial care can effectively challenge harmful ideologies and protect vulnerable children.

Annex 5.List of Key informants Interviews and FGD

Interview No	Level (National, regional, municipal, etc.)	Location/ LPSC	Professional Role/Title of Interviewee	Gender of Interviewee
1	Municipal	Elbasan	Representative from CSO sector	Female
2	Municipal	Elbasan	Senior local government official	Male
3	Central level government	National	Senior official from law enforcement sector	Male
4	Municipal	Librazhd	Senior local government official	Male
5	Municipal	Pogradec	Senior local government official	Female
6	Municipal	Cerrik	Senior local government official	Female
7	Municipal	Korca	Senior local government official	Male
8	National	National	Representative from CSO sector	Male

<b>No of interviews</b>	<b>Level (National, regional, municipal, etc.)</b>	<b>Location/L PSC</b>	<b>Professional Role/Title of Interviewees</b>	<b>Gender of Interviewees</b>
1	Regional/ Municipal	Elbasan	Members of LPSC	Mix
2	Regional/ Municipal	Korce	Members of LPSC	Mix
3	Regional/ Municipal	Librazhd	Members of LPSC	Mix
4	Regional/ Municipal	Cerrik	Members of LPSC	Mix
5	Regional/ Municipal	Pogradec	Members of LPSC	Mix