



Resilience and Security

CONCEPT NOTE

CONTEXT:

Since the Arab spring, the issues of security and societal resilience, or the capacity to respond and adapt to significant challenge, have become central, and even overriding, in the MENA region. Whether it is the rise of violent extremism in many countries, or the response of state authorities and their treatment of citizens, or civil strife, conflict and war, the lack of security, and excessive actions by security forces have come to define much of the region, with significant consequences for it and surrounding regions, including Europe.

The number of issues related to this problem range from: prevention of violent extremism, security sector reform, greater transparency in the security sector, protection of victims and infusing human rights into legal and institutional processes related to security actions, among others. So far, the role of civil society has taken a far second to that of security forces, their reactions and the consequences thereof.

The ability to include an effective role of civil society in the management of the root causes of security challenges, and the reactions to them, may be essential in order to develop societal resilience in the longer term. Whether it is in the development of greater community resilience, the inclusion of marginalized communities and gender specificities, or ensuring greater transparency and accountability in the security sector, civil society can play a greater role. Integration of the various sectors of society in plans of action can only make the response more effective.

These discussions will take place in the context of the implementation of the relevant proposals included under the 'Security sector reform' (SSR) priority in the revised European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). The ENP's stated objective is a strengthened dialogue with civil society in order to broaden and strengthen participation of CSOs across all elements of the ENP. Therefore the question of supporting capacity development and strengthening the role of civil society in delivering, monitoring and evaluating EU assistance related to security and resilience, and the ENP's emphasis on community security, is critical.

This preparatory meeting will focus on **four key aspects** of this issue:

- **Countering and prevention of violent extremism - root causes**
- **Countering and prevention of violent extremism - developing resilience, especially at the community level, and with regard to youth.**
- **Civil society's role in improving and balancing the role of the security sector**
- **Creating and managing the 'space' for CSOs to operate in a very difficult environment.**

The latter is an important consideration, given that without that space, CSOs will not be able to pursue their agenda with any purposeful intent.

PROPOSED AGENDA

Theme I - Countering Violent Extremism - Root Causes:

Root Causes (Inequality? Corruption? Other factors?) and monitoring the drivers of violent extremism. Are the current assumptions correct?

How do we translate a better understanding of root causes into policy?

The Issue of Narratives - Are there effective counter narratives?

Theme II - Countering Violent Extremism - Developing Resilience:

What are the main factors and sources of resilience at the societal and local level?

Given the ENP's emphasis on community security, what is civil society's role in fostering accountability, integrity, impartiality and effectiveness of the police, leading to more legitimacy for the police, which can translate into better security and also more cohesiveness of the social fabric?

What are strategies for dealing with vulnerable youth and reinforcing the role of youth as actors for change?

How can the EU support the engagement of local civil society actors in activities aimed at CVE?

Given that resilience applies to both the state and society, how can the accountability relationship between the two be improved in order to diminish some drivers of radicalization, and develop trust in institutions and political inclusiveness?

Theme III - The Security Sector:

The Inclusion and Role of Civil Society in SSR processes

The Inclusion of Human Rights in Counter Terror Laws and other legal and institutional processes

What is the role of CSOs in National Integrative Plans of Action?

Non State actors: What is the role of CSOs in dealing with them? Can the EU better reach out either directly or indirectly to radical and/or extremist actors?

What role can local people and grassroots organisations play as security providers for their communities?

Theme IV - The Context: the Space for CSOs to operate:

What are the major security challenges that CSOs face in operating today?

What are the best ways of building trust between civil society actors and partner governments so that they can work together on counter-terrorism and preventing/countering violent extremism (P/CVE)?

What can be done at the local level to ensure effective operations of CSOs?

How can the EU contribute to building trust between state security actors, especially police forces, and local people? Relatedly, how can the EU that its engagement under this priority is conflict-sensitive and compliant with rule of law and human rights?

Gender specificities and the protection of victims will also be priority issues for discussion and consideration.

METHODOLOGY:

As this is a new theme in this process, and an overriding one in the region, it will be key in Tunis to have as broad a discussion as possible in order to understand and highlight the major factors that will need to be addressed at the Brussels meeting in July. Although there will be a tendency to attend to all issues, some degree of prioritization will be attempted.

As such, what is proposed is three steps or sessions for each of the themes above: 1) an open discussion of each issue 2) Identification of what is working/not working 3) Discussion of priority areas for discussion in Brussels

In Step 3), the emphasis will be in putting forward concrete plans and actions supported by the CSOs for discussion and dialogue with the EU in July, 2017.

Consideration might be given to having one expert on countering violent extremism to provide a presentation to the group. Another consideration during the meeting will be to consider at the utility of looking at successful examples of the role of CSOs in developing community and societal resilience, especially regarding CVE, for the Brussels meeting in July.