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Integrating external assistance and security policy development in the Western Balkans – ‘Integrative Internal Security Governance’ (IISG)

Context

The security of Europe and the Western Balkans (WB) are said to have never been as closely intertwined as today. For this reason, European leaders have recognized the need for consistent action in terms of security cooperation with the key neighboring region. The Western Balkan Counter-Terrorism Initiative (WBCTi) was initiated within the EU in 2015 as **an effort of coordination and alignment of EU and other external assistance** targeting policy reform in the WB region and gained wide and unprecedented support on part of international partners and donors. In late 2016, the momentum was used to extend this approach to the entire Internal Security policy field, endorsing the ‘Integrative Internal Security Governance’ concept at the EU level.

Main objectives

- a. To integrate donor assistance efforts and activities, preventing duplication and creating synergies, aided by joint multi-annual Integrated Plans of Action for each respective IISG pillar;**
- b. To align policies directed to the WB region and capacity-building efforts with regional needs and priorities in the area of internal security based on widely received support and commitment.**

It aims to enable Western Balkan countries’ capabilities to cope with internal security challenges, with solutions of long-term relevance (also post-EU membership) and of long-term sustainability. In terms of scope, the IISG covers internal security via **three most prominent policy fields/Pillars: i. Preventing and Countering terrorism, and violent extremism and radicalization leading to terrorism (WBCTi), ii. Serious crime (WBCSi), and iii. Border Security (WBBSi).**

The IISG should not be interpreted as merely a project/initiative – it is rather a policy process integrating all forms of external assistance (incl. projects and initiatives) to the WB beneficiaries Albania, BiH, Kosovo*, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia.

Ownership and structure

The IISG is EU-initiated, but this **does not limit ownership to the EU**. It is namely primarily owned by its beneficiaries, who are in charge of monitoring and participate their needs in all crucial phases of planning. It is also a process owned by **all international and regional state and non-state actors/donors** (incl. the United Nations agencies, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, Council of Europe and all country donors) who support the process in order to maximize the sustainability of their efforts.

EU policy makers in relevant sectors, international donors and regional initiatives submitted their efforts to coordination under the IISG umbrella. This commitment, along with a constant overview, allow the IISG Support Group to advance the policy solutions delivered (in areas such as intelligence policing or P-CVE) in order to achieve cost-effective, efficient and sustainable investments.

On 8th September 2017, the ministers of interior/security of the WB beneficiaries **launched IISG policy implementation** and divided the leading roles – DCAF Ljubljana, Austria and Slovenia for Pillar I, the PCC SEE Secretariat for Pillar II, and DCAF Ljubljana and Austria for Pillar III. Ministers established the **‘IISG Support Group’ and ‘IISG Chairmanship’**, both operating out of DCAF Ljubljana. The membership in this structure, involving relevant existing structures/initiatives, is **open to all Partners/countries** who wish to contribute expertise and support. Funding via the EU IPA II (Pre-Accession Assistance Fund) was devoted to set up the grounds for IISG implementation mechanism and to implement core actions in the next multi-annual period.

All IISG partners (EU entities, international actors, 3rd state donors) are invited participate in the IISG process and contribute expertise and support to policy development in the 3 Pillars.

You are most welcome to consult www.wb-iisg.com for more information, or contact Mr Rajko Kozmelj, IISG Chair, directly at r.kozmelj@dcaf.ch and iisg@dcaf.ch.