

Vergaderjaar 2018–2019

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JBZ-Raad

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BRIEF VAN DE EUROCOMMISSARIS VEILIGHEIDSUNIE, DE HEER J. KING

Aan de voorzitters van de vaste commissies voor Immigratie en Asiel / JBZ-Raad en voor Justitie en Veiligheid

Brussel, 29 april 2019

Questions about the Eighth Progress report of the European Commission on Implementation of the European Agenda on Security

I would like to thank you for your letter of 1 February and your interest in the Eighth progress report towards an effective and genuine Security Union¹ and specifically the actions taken by the EU to support Western Balkan partners in the fight against terrorism.

Please note that the Commission received a similar parliamentary question (E-6367/18) from Mr Auke Zijlstra (Member of the European Parliament). The Commission's reply is available on the website of the European Parliament².

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, as noted in the above-mentioned progress report, initiatives to focus EU's external financing instruments on the prevention of violent radicalisation have included an action on youth and community engagement in partnership with the Islamic Community in Bosnia and Herzegovina, an official faith organisation in the country. These actions do not endorse any particular religious school, thought or worldview.

The latter action allowed increasing the resilience and social cohesion of rural and suburban communities at risk, by providing trainings to 25 religious leaders, 431 parents and 422 young people (16–21 years old) on how to improve their parental and life skills and how to recognise and react to early signs of radicalisation and violent extremism. Two manuals

¹ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1502443922769&uri=CELEX%3A52017DC0354>

² http://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-8-2018-006367_EN.html

and a brochure for adolescents were also developed and disseminated among participants. The manuals are publically available. The high number of participants in the pilot project and the interest of other donors to fund similar activities in the region are proof of the project's positive outcomes.

The project's implementation was closely monitored by the EU Special Representative Office in order to guarantee that standards were met. Additionally, initial reports and final reports were submitted by the implementing partner in line with the Terms of Reference of the project, which made reference to the evaluation of the participants to the trainings in order to ensure quality review. Evaluation and quality-ensuring procedures are already in place.

Preventing and countering of violent extremism constitutes a key pillar of the *Joint Action Plan on Counter-Terrorism for the Western Balkans*³, which was signed at the EU-Western Balkans Ministerial Forum on Justice and Home Affairs on 5 October 2018. In this framework, the EU is encouraging effective measures to prevent and address violent extremism and enhance local communities' resilience through a «whole of society» approach as well as to promote tolerance, social cohesion and inclusive and resilient societies to address the root causes of religious, political and ethno-nationalist radicalisation in the region.

Yours sincerely,
Julian King

³ https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/news/docs/20181005_joint-action-plan-counter-terrorism-western-balkans.pdf