

**Question for written answer E-000132/2024
to the Commission**
Rule 138
Dominique Bilde (ID)

Subject: Return of jihadis and radicalisation in the Western Balkans

In 2014, the first images of a Kosovan jihadist allegedly carrying out terrible acts alongside extremist groups in Syria and Iraq were extremely shocking¹.

According to a study by Adrian Shtuni, the Western Balkans is the European region with the highest concentration of foreign fighters returning from Syria and Iraq².

According to the Janes intelligence website (2020), 'as of July 2020, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and North Macedonia have repatriated a total of 19 Islamic State militants from Syria. They are the only European countries to have publicly and voluntarily repatriated adult male citizens affiliated to the Islamic State who had been detained by Kurdish-led forces'³.

In its 2023 report, Europol refers to 'the threat posed by released terrorist convicts as well as that of radicalisation'⁴. Adrian Shtuni further stresses that the leniency of sentences handed down in the Western Balkans for terrorism-related offences represents another noteworthy concern⁵.

In the context of the Stabilisation and Association Agreements, does the Commission intend to enquire about the repatriations of people who have travelled to Syria or Iraq, judicial treatment and deradicalisation programmes in prisons?

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¹ Stakeholders of (De)-Radicalisation in Kosovo, Teuta Avdimetaj, April 2021.

² <https://www.lastampa.it/esteri/2020/11/03/news/i-balcani-occidentali-sono-diventati-la-mecca-europea-dei-jihadisti-1.39495872#:~:text=Il%20Balcani%20Occidentali%2C%20le%20Repubbliche,dalla%20Siria%20e%20dall%27Iraq.&text=Il%20flusso%20di%20jihadisti%20balcanici,recedere%20e%20fermarsi%20nel%202016>

³ <https://www.janes.com/defence-news/prison-terms-for-repatriated-islamic-state-militants-suggest-lenient-treatment-by-west-balkan-courts/>

⁴ <https://www.europol.europa.eu/cms/sites/default/files/documents/European%20Union%20Terrorism%20Situation%20and%20Trend%20report%202023.pdf>

⁵ <https://www.ispionline.it/en/publication/returning-western-balkans-foreign-fighters-long-term-challenge-24762>