

31st Session of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities – 19-21 October 2016, Strasbourg, France

19 October 2016

Follow-up to the Congress strategy to combat radicalisation at grass-roots level

**Presentation by Josef Neumann (Germany, SOC),
corapporteur**

Dear Colleagues,

As my colleague has just explained, besides proposing a review or re-reading of the relevant Congress texts, we have been tasked with monitoring the implementation of the Congress strategy to combat radicalisation at grass-roots level.

The Strategy proposed a series of activities to be carried out in the short, medium and long term at local and regional levels.

The Congress started developing awareness raising activities with the adoption, at the 29th session in October 2015, of the "guidelines for local and regional authorities on preventing radicalisation and manifestations of hate at grass-roots level".

In the face of radicalisation and violent extremism, repression alone is not the solution. To combat these phenomena, it is essential to take preventive action. This is the area of action par excellence of local authorities, where they can be most effective and where their competences and mandates are most relevant. That is why the Congress decided to adopt guidelines for practical action.

You have in your file the result of the second activity undertaken by the Congress under the pillar "awareness-raising": the toolkit for local elected representatives on intercultural and interreligious dialogue.

Mr. Bouwmeester and I were also co-rapporteurs on this subject. The first thing we did when we were appointed was to prepare a report which was adopted last March, as a background document.

The report underlines the importance of local authorities in facilitating dialogue between cultural and religious communities. It shows that intercultural and interreligious dialogue offers varied and enriching opportunities for community building. It enables action to prevent and resolve conflicts. It allows the reflection on common values and differences. It encourages a sense of community and builds mutual knowledge about the apparent other. In the end, it allows us to break down prejudices and strengthen our "living together" in diversity. It is therefore one of the most effective tools in the fight against intolerance and radicalisation.

However, our report also found that local and regional authorities might not be equipped or might fear that they are not sufficiently equipped to deal with this issue.

With this in mind, we have prepared a toolkit to give them easy access to the available information and knowledge on the subject.

This toolkit includes three types of documents:

1. The first is the Guidelines for local and regional authorities on preventing radicalisation, I have just mentioned.

2. The second is the 12 principles for interfaith dialogue at local level which can help improving understanding of local authorities in this area.
3. The third is the website that we have named "[congress-intercultural](#)". This website is a comprehensive online database on intercultural and interreligious dialogue and the fight against radicalisation. In there, we have listed resources to meet the needs of local elected officials as fully as possible. You can access best practice, education and training program, literature resources and legal resources, by flashing the QR code at the back of these sheets.

Finally, the Congress has developed synergies, within the Council of Europe and with other bodies and institution, our main achievement being the launch of the "Alliance of European cities against violent extremism".

The Alliance came into being further to the conference the Congress and EFUS organised last year in Aarhus. It aims to provide local elected representatives with a space to exchange experiences and information on promising practices and tools to tackle radicalisation and violent extremism.

On 9 November, the Congress and EFUS will organise in Rotterdam a Summit of Mayors to take forward this work and to facilitate inter-city cooperation on the prevention of radicalisation leading to violent extremism. This major conference will give European mayors an opportunity to discuss the important developments that have had an impact at the local level in their countries in the past years, and to exchange good practices.

Dear colleagues, as you can see, the Congress has been really busy in the past 18 months. But more needs to be done!

To this end, the draft resolution that we are introducing today suggests that the Congress should commits itself:

- To adopt, with respect to its future texts, a consistent methodology for promoting inclusive, pluralist and culturally diverse societies in Europe;
- To introduce and develop the concept of "Interconvictional" dialogue in its future texts on intercultural and interfaith dialogue;
- To disseminate the toolkit "Organising intercultural and interreligious activities" as widely as possible;
- And to support the proposed "Alliance of European cities against violent extremism."

Moreover, the Congress invites local and regional authorities to:

- Promote and support intercultural and interreligious dialogue and initiatives, in particular through the use of the resources provided in our toolkit ;
- And to join the "Alliance of European cities against violent extremism" to exchange knowledge and best practices, existing programmes and tools to tackle radicalisation and violent extremism.

Colleagues, I invite you to adopt the draft resolution and thank you for your attention.