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

(Joint reflexion document of the Current Affairs and Governance Committees)

Current Affairs Committee / Governance committee

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### Summary

The report examines the implementation of the three pillars of action developed in the Congress strategy to combat radicalisation at grassroots level, namely awareness-raising, synergies with Council of Europe bodies and synergies with other institutions. It also proposes a re-reading of the Congress' relevant legal texts as regards citizen participation, living together in diversity, social inclusion and cohesion, and intercultural and interfaith dialogue, focusing on the fact that living in Europe requires learning about the foundations of democracy.

The report recommends that the Congress commits itself to adopting a consistent methodology for promoting inclusive, pluralist and culturally diverse societies in Europe, and introduce and develop the concept of "interconvictional" dialogue. The report calls on local and regional authorities to promote and support intercultural and interreligious dialogue and initiatives, in particular through the use of the resources provided in the toolkit "Organising intercultural and interreligious activities". They are also invited to join the "Alliance of European cities against violent extremism" and exchange knowledge and best practices at both the political and the administrative levels, through events, training programmes and other initiatives.

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1 L: Chamber of Local Authorities / R: Chamber of Regions  
EPP/CCE: European People's Party Group in the Congress  
SOC: Socialist Group  
ILDG: Independent and Liberal Democrat Group  
ECR: European Conservatives and Reformists Group  
NR: Members not belonging to a political group of the Congress

## RESOLUTION 400 (2016)<sup>2</sup>

1. Events in 2015 and the current tense European climate - characterised by growing radicalisation, stigmatisation of some of our communities, the dissemination of hate speech and the rise of xenophobic social and political movements - have reminded the Congress that violent extremism is still a threat to peace and security, undermining democracy and its institutions and fundamental values.

2. Responding to the invitation from the Secretary General of the Council of Europe to contribute to the Council of Europe effort in this field, the Congress Bureau adopted, on 2 February 2015, a “Strategy to combat radicalisation at grassroots level”.

3. Since then, the Congress has been developing synergies and partnerships with other entities of the Council of Europe and external institutions, as well as awareness raising activities, notably with a view to combating religious radicalisation and radicalisation leading to violent extremism, and to stimulating and encouraging the development of intercultural and interreligious activities at local level.

4. One of the priorities set out in the Congress Strategy to combat radicalisation at grassroots level is to compile and reread the texts adopted by the Congress on citizen participation, living together in diversity, social inclusion and cohesion, and intercultural and interfaith dialogue in the last decade.

5. Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights provides a right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, subject to certain restrictions that are in accordance with law and necessary in a democratic society. Citizenship in Europe requires knowledge and understanding of this philosophical, moral and political position. This concerns everyone born in Europe, whatever their origins, and everyone wishing to settle here.

6. The hallmark of democratic societies is that they allow and protect religious convictions and their manifestations within the limits of the law. However, another hallmark of democratic societies is that they protect the freedom of conscience of those who have no religious convictions or convictions that are atheistic. Those beliefs, however, are not necessarily devoid of philosophical, moral or spiritual convictions. Therefore it is appropriate to widen the concept of “interfaith dialogue” to one of “interconvictional dialogue”.

7. The Congress therefore:

a. taking note of:

i. Congress Resolution 381 (2015) on “Combatting radicalisation at grassroots level: the role of local and regional authorities” adopted at its 28th Session, on 25 March 2015;

ii. Congress Resolution 384 (2015) on “Guidelines for local and regional authorities on preventing radicalisation and manifestations of hate at the grassroots level” adopted at its 29th Session, on 20 October 2015;

iii. Congress Resolution 397(2016) on “Organising intercultural and interreligious activities: a toolkit for local authorities” adopted at its 30th Session, on 22 March 2016;

iv. The appointment of a Congress thematic spokesperson on radicalisation by its Bureau on 24 March 2016;

v. The Aarhus Declaration, adopted at the Conference of Local Authorities on the Prevention of Radicalisation Leading to Violent Extremism organised in co-operation with the European Forum for Urban Security (EFUS) in Aarhus, Denmark, on 18 November 2015;

b. commits itself to:

i. adopting, with respect to its future texts on citizen participation, living together in diversity and social inclusion and cohesion, a consistent methodology for promoting inclusive, pluralist and culturally diverse societies in Europe;

ii. introducing and developing the concept of “Interconvictional” dialogue in its future texts on intercultural and interfaith dialogue;

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<sup>2</sup> Debated and adopted by the Congress on 19 October 2016, 1st sitting (see Document [CG31\(2016\)15final](#), corapporteurs: Josef NEUMANN, Germany (R, SOC) and Bert BOUWMEESTER, the Netherlands (L, ILDG)).

- iii. disseminating the toolkit “Organising intercultural and interreligious activities” intended for the use of local elected representatives as widely as possible, and regularly updating the associated online database;
  - iv. strengthening its existing co-operation established with networks such as the European Forum for Urban Security, and seeking new partnerships with relevant networks and institutions;
  - v. supporting the proposed “Alliance of European cities against violent extremism”, including the digital platform that will underpin it;
- c. tasks the Congress Spokesperson on Radicalisation with:
- i. representing the Congress in all major events organised by the Council of Europe intergovernmental sector and external partners on the issue of radicalisation and violent extremism, presenting its activities in this matter, reporting to both the Governance and the Current Affairs Committees on these events and suggesting new developments as necessary;
  - ii. raising awareness of the toolkit “Organising intercultural and interreligious activities”, through meetings with different stakeholders;
- d. invites the local and regional authorities of Council of Europe member States to:
- i. promote and support intercultural and interreligious dialogue and initiatives, in particular through the use of the resources provided in the toolkit “Organising intercultural and interreligious activities”;
  - ii. join the “Alliance of European cities against violent extremism” and exchange knowledge and best practices, existing programmes and tools to tackle radicalisation and violent extremism, at both the political and the administrative levels, through events, training programmes and other initiatives.

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**1. Introduction**

1. The aspiration to build a democratic and inclusive society capable of ensuring cultural and religious pluralism is nothing new and has long been the focus of the Council of Europe’s concerns. However, events in 2015 and 2016 have compelled the Congress to re-open the debate in this area. We are now living in a tense European climate, distinguished by the following features:

- a. Islamist terrorism that is dealing Europe a heavy blow *via* people born in Europe and individuals leaving to support the war being conducted by Daesh;
- b. a significant level of uncontrolled immigration;
- c. the rise of xenophobic social and political movements.

2. The Congress has been working for the last two decades on subjects aiming at establishing inclusive and resilient communities as a protective shield to prevent and fight radicalisation at local and regional level. In this context, it has produced recommendations on tackling terrorism, the integration and participation of people of immigrant origin, intercultural and interfaith dialogue as well as resolutions on urban crime prevention, on the fight against racism at local and regional level and on education for democratic citizenship.

3. Following upon the Council of Europe policies to combat radicalisation, the Congress Bureau adopted on 2 February 2015 a “Strategy to combat radicalisation at grassroots level”, proposing a series of activities to be carried out in the short, medium and long term at local and regional level, based on three pillars of action, namely awareness raising, synergies with Council of Europe bodies and synergies with other institutions. To implement this strategy, the Congress adopted at its 28th

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<sup>3</sup> This explanatory memorandum is based on the contribution of the consultant Philippe Gaudin, Deputy Director of IESR-EPHE, Paris (France) which is available from the Secretariat upon request.

session the Resolution 381 (2015) on “Combatting radicalisation at grassroots level: the role of local and regional authorities” setting out its work programme in this respect<sup>4</sup>.

4. The Congress mandated its Current Affairs and Governance Committees with the preparation of guidelines for local and regional authorities on preventing radicalisation and manifestations of hate at the grassroots level. It also adopted the terms of reference for the creation of a pedagogical toolkit for use by local elected representatives when organising intercultural and interreligious activities.

5. The Congress adopted the Resolution 384(2015)<sup>5</sup> on “Guidelines for local and regional authorities on preventing radicalisation and manifestations of hate at the grassroots level” at its 29<sup>th</sup> session on 20 October 2015. It then adopted Resolution 397(2016)<sup>6</sup> on “Organising intercultural and interreligious activities: a toolkit for local authorities” at its 30<sup>th</sup> session, on 22 March 2016.

6. The present report, prepared by co-rapporteurs Bert Bouwmeester and Josef Neumann is a joint reflection document, which aims to follow up on the Congress Strategy to combat radicalisation at grassroots level, and notably to propose a re-reading of the Congress’ relevant legal texts as regards citizen participation, living together in diversity, social inclusion and cohesion, and intercultural and interfaith dialogue.

## **2. A tense European climate**

### **a. Islamist terrorism in Europe**

7. Islamist terrorism has struck Europe via people born in Europe and individuals leaving to support the war in Syria and Iraq being conducted by Daesh. It is difficult to establish a “standard profile” of those who have been radicalised. The only data available at present are based on the calls received from families worried that their child or relative will leave them or reporting that he/she is already gone or missing. What is striking and deserves to be mentioned is that the prime characteristic of most of those who have been radicalised is that they are born in Europe. Moreover, the proportion of both converts and women is sizeable and increases as the age decreases.

8. In France, the Ministry of the Interior set up in 2014 a hotline for reporting cases of radicalisation<sup>7</sup> and has framed a strategy to combat the phenomenon. Calls have multiplied, reaching a 40% increase since April 2015. They peaked in November 2015, following the attacks in Paris. Of the 4,576 persons reported since April 2014, 61% were men, most of who were aged 26 and over. As for the women reported, they were mostly aged 18 to 25 years old. The proportion of converts among all people reported was 48%. One out of five cases related to a minor, and one out of ten cases to a suspected departure to Syria.

9. In the Netherlands, volunteers launched in January 2015 the Dutch Radicalization Hotline. This hotline serves as a resource centre for the parents and relatives of those who might become/have become radicalised and connects them with social and religious services. Since 2010, the German government has operated similar lines, referring callers to local community services or the authorities as needed. Similarly, in Germany, the BfV (Federal Bureau for the Protection of the Constitution) has been running since July 2010 the nationwide HATIF phone hotline, designed to help individuals break with their violent jihadist environment. The BAMF (Federal Office for Migration and Refugees) began offering a second crisis hotline, called Counseling Center Radicalization (Beratungsstelle Radikalisierung), in January 2012. Similar to the HATIF service run by the BfV, this help line encourages family members, friends, relatives, and teachers to come forward about friends or relatives who have recently become radicalised<sup>8</sup>.

10. We must be careful not to make sweeping and definitive conclusions from the figures gathered from these hotlines for numerous reasons: they apply only to these specific countries; they have been gathered in the space of a few months; they are based solely on cases of voluntary reporting, etc. However, they do have the merit of existing and reveal a number of realities that will not change in qualitative terms, even though their quantitative value must be treated with caution.

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4 Resolution 381 (2015) on “Combatting radicalisation at grassroots level: the role of local and regional authorities”, <http://tinyurl.com/hu3szpz>

5 Resolution 384 (2015) on “Guidelines for local and regional authorities on preventing radicalisation and manifestations of hate at the grassroots level”, <https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?p=&id=2376551&Site=COE&direct=true>

6 Resolution 397(2016)<sup>1</sup> on “Organising intercultural and interreligious activities: a toolkit for local authorities”, <http://tinyurl.com/jxj2jgw>

7 [www.stop-djihadisme.gouv.fr/](http://www.stop-djihadisme.gouv.fr/)

8 Dorle Hellmuth, Countering Islamist Radicalisation in Germany, January 14, 2013, <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/countering-islamist-radicalization-in-germany>

11. Finally, there are no official figures with regard to the total numbers of European fighters that either died, or returned to Europe in the past years. However, the volume of returnees has been reported as increasing in some European states, including Finland, France, Italy and the United Kingdom. European states report that the increasing number of travellers and returnees represents a significant threat to security<sup>9</sup>.

### **b. Uncontrolled immigration**

12. Irregular migration and refugee flows are also a complex and worrying phenomenon that has put huge pressure on national, regional and local authorities in all countries in the Euro-Mediterranean region. The scale of the problem is vast. Tens of thousands of largely undocumented migrants from conflict-torn societies in the Middle East and North Africa region have arrived in European states. One problem that this causes is a popular perception that new arrivals are given preferential access to taxpayer funded national welfare programs. Budgetary austerity combined with tightening domestic job markets, higher domestic unemployment rates and the rising cost of living, drives this negative perception<sup>10</sup>.

### **c. Rise of xenophobic social and political movements**

13. Finally, although being two very distinct problems, the growing Islamist radicalisation of people born in Europe and the refugee crisis that Europe is currently facing have one common consequence, which is the rise of xenophobic social and political movements. As the Secretary General of the Council of Europe put it in his 2016 Report on the State of democracy, human rights and the rule of Law, "[in] a climate of growing insecurity and fear, the association of terrorism with migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in populist propaganda, as well as more generally the rise of intolerance, hate crime and hate speech, are of increasing concern."<sup>11</sup>

14. Indeed, the past few years have witnessed a worrying shift towards the far-right and ideologies scapegoating minorities and immigrants across much of Europe and the world. "Whereas 30 years ago most xenophobic parties failed to pass the 5% minimum voter threshold that is typically required to participate in government, extreme right-wing populist movements now constitute a considerable percentage of the vote in some European countries."<sup>12</sup>, such as Jobbik (the Movement for a Better Hungary) in Hungary or the Danish People's Party (DPP) in Denmark. In Austria, extremist politicians have also benefited from a surge in support largely due to the ongoing migrant crisis. The far-right Freedom Party (FPÖ) has stepped into the chaotic political vacuum that has ensued, quietly but confidently positioning itself as a protector of Austria's heritage and borders against the tide of refugees.

15. Social movements, such as the German PEGIDA (Patriotic Europeans against the Islamisation of the West) also arise and spread among Europe. Muslims are increasingly regarded as an imagined collective with certain inherent features held to be alien to 'our national culture'.<sup>13</sup>

16. The rise of xenophobic social and political movements is troubling. To quote the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, "if we don't stand by our democratic principles and tackle our problems while fully respecting human rights, then the situation will only get worse."<sup>14</sup>

## **3. Universality of Human Rights in Europe**

17. The major theoretical issue today concerning the universality of human rights has become a matter of direct practical and political relevance in Europe. Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights<sup>15</sup> provides a right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, subject to certain restrictions that are "in accordance with law" and "necessary in a democratic society".

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9 The EU Terrorism Situation and Trend Report (TE-SAT), Europol 2015, <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/countering-islamist-radicalization-in-germany>

10 [www.policyforum.net/events/uncontrolled-migration-world-summit/#sthash.ce40vKIG.dpuf](http://www.policyforum.net/events/uncontrolled-migration-world-summit/#sthash.ce40vKIG.dpuf)

11 State of democracy, human rights and the rule of law, a security imperative for Europe, Report by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Thorbjørn Jagland, 126th Session of the Committee of Ministers, Sofia, 18 May 2016, <http://tinyurl.com/zwh2phs>

12 Ibid.

13 Cathrine Thorleifsson, Europe's thriving xenophobia, 2 February 2015, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/can-europe-make-it/cathrine-thorleifsson/europe-s-thriving-xenophobia>

14 Press release - DC077(2016), Thorbjørn Jagland: Europe's human rights and security at risk through populist nationalism, <http://tinyurl.com/j2f42je>

15 Article 9 of the of the European Convention on Human Rights – Freedom of thought, conscience and religion

1. Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief, in worship, teaching, practice and observance.

18. There are therefore three types of freedom that are interlinked. Freedom of thought is, of course, a form of freedom of opinion but it is also freedom to think for oneself. This freedom is not a mere fantasy: it depends on everything that humanity has produced in the fields of philosophy, the sciences and the arts. While religions have often been major resources for culture, freedom of thought/freedom to think for oneself has also had to assert itself against religious dogmatism wishing to curtail it. Freedom of conscience is the freedom to believe or not to believe as well as freedom to have different beliefs. Freedom of religion is a public freedom to demonstrate one's beliefs and practices.

19. It is, however, important to add that there is no such thing as absolute freedom and that these freedoms are both protected and circumscribed by law. In a democracy, this law is the expression of the will of the people and must respect fundamental rights, which are subject to the supervision of the courts. This philosophical, moral and political position is the foundation of democracy.

20. Citizenship in Europe requires knowledge and understanding of this philosophical, moral and political position. This concerns everyone born in Europe, whatever their origins, and everyone wishing to settle here. While it is necessary to combat prejudices in Europe vis-à-vis cultural and religious minorities, there is also a need to combat the prejudices of people of non-European origin vis-à-vis the cultures of their host countries.

#### **4. Re-reading the relevant Congress texts**

##### **a. Methodology used**

21. The rereading of the Congress' reference texts focuses on the fact that living in Europe requires learning about the foundations of democracy. This involves everyone born in Europe, whatever their origins, and everyone wishing to settle here. A critical analysis of Congress Resolution 318 (2010) on the Cultural Integration of Muslim Women in European Cities is a good starting point for this exercise (see the Appendix for the complete text). The text is representative of the general spirit of the resolutions to be reread, and brings into focus the main difficulties we face. The implications for all the other texts follow on from this first critical reading.

##### **b. Relevant recommendations and resolutions**

22. The texts are those relating to intercultural and interfaith dialogue adopted by the Congress over the last ten years:

- Resolution 318 (2010) on "Cultural Integration of Muslim Women in European Cities" which invites local and regional authorities to encourage, stimulate and promote specific measures to facilitate the integration of immigrant Muslim women into their communities. It also calls on local and regional authorities to encourage, stimulate and promote specific measures to facilitate their into the communities, to take measures to combat media stereotyping of Muslim women and to promote awareness of employment opportunities and public employment services.

- Resolution 301 and Recommendation 286 (2010) on "Minority languages – an asset for regional development", which highlights that language is a key aspect of cultural identity and recognises that when linguistic minorities are accorded full recognition of their languages, and are able to express themselves in the public sphere as in the private, the resulting self-confidence has a knock-on effect both in terms of economic activity and cultural creativity.

- Recommendation 365 (2014) on "Promoting diversity through intercultural education and communication strategies", which calls for the establishment of "local partnerships for diversity" with different stakeholders such as educational institutions, the media, civil society and the private sector, in order to produce an overall vision on this subject, develop local and regional policies promoting interculturalism, re-examine administrative functions through an "intercultural prism" and set up governance structures and mediation systems.

- Resolution 323 and Recommendation 304 (2011) on "Meeting the challenge of inter-faith and intercultural tensions at local level", which invites local authorities and national authorities to keep regular formal and informal contact with religious organisations, including regular meetings and through common projects.

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2. Freedom to manifest one's religion or beliefs shall be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of public safety, for the protection of public order, health or morals, or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.

- Recommendation 261 and Resolution 280 (2009) on “Intercultural cities”, which calls for a pro-active intercultural integration policy prioritising professional integration, housing and citizenship and encourage the development of a culturally inclusive identity through public debate, cultural events and work with the media.

- Recommendation 245 (2008) on “Intercultural and interreligious dialogue: an opportunity for local democracy”, which invites local authorities to provide active support, including financial assistance for non-governmental organisations, so as to encourage them to facilitate communication about the way the majority culture relating to the religion(s) historically present in a given area operates and is transmitted, while enabling new cultural or religious communities to enter into contact with representatives of the majority culture and thereby facilitate mutual understanding; it also encourages them to pay particular attention to the involvement of young people in intercultural dialogue.

- Recommendation 170 and Resolution 202 (2005) on “Intercultural and inter-faith dialogue: initiatives and responsibilities of local authorities”, which invites local and regional authorities to commit themselves publicly and determinedly, to promoting intercultural and inter-faith dialogue and reflect that stance in all areas of local policy.

### **c. A critical reading of Resolution 318 (2010) on “The cultural integration of muslim women in european cities”**

23. The preamble of Resolution 318 places the emphasis on the difficulties often faced by Muslim women in European cities, who find themselves between two cultures, that of the country of origin and that of the host country. It highlights that this group of “Muslim women” is not homogenous and that religion is only one factor among others by means of which women define themselves (family, country of origin, occupation).

24. It is acknowledged that these women can face significant restrictions on their freedom imposed by their culture of origin. This remark should not be misunderstood: it simply has to be recognised that, still today, Islam as interpreted and lived by a large majority assigns women a role and a status that are not the same as those assigned to women in contemporary democratic European countries. It also states that Muslim women often have a poor command of the host country’s language and that their participation in sports is often low.

25. “Islamophobia” is cited as being responsible for the difficulties in integrating these women. This is a sensitive issue that determines the entire assessment that may be made of the situation of these women living in a European country. It cannot be denied that some Europeans may have particularly stereotyped perceptions of otherness but it is also true that there is a large majority of citizens in Europe today who are very open to the world outside and its many different cultures.

26. Reference is also made to the failure of European societies to understand the complexity of the situation. In fact, the minimisation of religious and cultural differences might have prevented ambitious policies to promote the host country’s values and teach its culture and has accordingly left the field open to fundamentalist preachers. In this respect, one could criticise the reluctance on the part of host countries to commit resources to tackling the religious and cultural challenge.

27. The resolution states that “there needs to be an emphasis on dialogue rather than assimilation” and that “host communities have much to learn about the heritage and diversity of Islam”. Here, the question has to be asked to what extent “good intentions” conceal errors of assessment. The term “assimilation” is in fact ambivalent. To assimilate designates something to do with “absorption”, involving the destruction of specific identities to obtain a kind of society in the form of an undifferentiated mass, or quite simply it means “to make similar”. The first meaning is in complete contradiction to the very idea of society, which presupposes diversity. The second meaning is perfectly compatible with the concept of human rights, a concept based on the deep-rooted similarity between individuals and the fact that they are nonetheless not identical.

28. The resolution quite rightly emphasises the role that can be played by local authorities in these activities. On this point, the Congress points to numerous measures at local level to encourage the integration of Muslim women. Anything that fosters meetings and discussions is a good thing, and this applies in particular when it comes to meeting women from the host countries or women from a Muslim cultural background that are fully “integrated” into the host country. Anything that promotes learning the host country’s language is essential. However, one may have reservations about encouraging women-only activities. Even though no details are given in the resolution, it is hard not to think about the refusal to go swimming in public pools at times when both sexes are present.

29. The last two provisions of the resolution calls on local and regional authorities to adopt measures to, on the one hand, combat to combat about the media stereotyping of Muslim women and, on the



other hand, promote access by Muslim women to employment in general and to public-service jobs in particular. These types of measures are naturally welcomed.

30. The following remarks should be added to the above comments. It is no doubt well-advised to “target” Muslim women insofar as they may experience particular difficulties as immigrants. This applies above all if they have recently immigrated, but it seems that girls from immigrant Muslim families find it easier than boys to adapt to the school system and accordingly show a better ability to integrate. The case of “young Muslim boys” also deserves particular attention, especially if they are brought up in families in which the father may, for all sorts of reasons, be absent or experiencing failure on the psychological and social front. Insufficient attention is therefore being paid to this aspect and to advocating particular support for Muslim women who are bringing up their children – especially their sons – alone.

31. It should also be pointed out that no mention is made of the possibility of “mixed marriages” for Muslim women, which is a very strong real and symbolic factor for integration into the society of the host country, especially via the children born of these unions. Perhaps the local authorities should provide particular assistance to these families, which are living signs of optimism with regard to “living together”.

#### **d. Implications for the interpretation of all relevant Congress recommendations or resolutions**

32. All the relevant Congress resolutions and recommendations advocate a general policy of enhancing the status of specific identities and cultures, whether it be in the linguistic field (Resolution 301, 2010); in the field of education and communication strategies (Recommendations 365, 2014); or as far as intercultural and inter-faith relations are concerned (Recommendation 170, 2005; Resolution 202, 2005; Recommendation 245, 2008; Recommendation 261, 2009; and Recommendation 323, 2011). Although this policy is good in itself, the question is whether the methods advocated are always the most suitable.

33. In light of the above, the policies related to language seem of particular interest. Multilingualism is obviously a good thing and a factor for economic development. A language is not only a communication tool; it is also the basis of a relationship with the world, a culture (especially a literary culture) and a way of being. Neurologists, cognitivists and linguists are divided on whether multilingualism is a factor that enables a person to acquire a better knowledge of his or her own language or mother tongue, and vice versa.

34. The French ELCO programme (enseignement de langues et cultures d'origine – teaching the languages and cultures of origin), built on the 1977 European Directive on the education of the Children of Migrant workers,<sup>16</sup> is a good example of a public policy aiming at enhancing multilingualism. This programme is based on the principle that improving the command of the mother tongue of the country of origin will also improve the learning of the adopted language and that acquiring a better knowledge of the culture of origin will improve the appropriation of the adopted culture. Yet, although this idea has something appealing about it, it is not at all certain that it holds water. Since it fosters the idea of groups keeping to themselves in separate communities, it seems to be going in the opposite direction to its very purpose.

35. As regards the recommendations and resolutions adopted by the Congress in the past years on intercultural and interfaith dialogue, they are soundly based. There is, however, also a need to introduce the concept of “interconvictional” dialogue. The hallmark of democratic societies is that they allow and protect religious convictions and their manifestations within the limits of the law. In this connection, the history of Europe has been sufficiently scarred by religious conflicts to foster the desire to make religions a vehicle for dialogue. However, another hallmark of democratic societies is that they protect the freedom of conscience of those who have no religious convictions or convictions that are decidedly atheistic. Those beliefs, however, are not devoid of philosophical, moral or spiritual convictions.

#### **e. Evaluation and implications for the future texts of the Congress**

36. Is it possible to formalise, summarise and shape a critical reading of the Congress texts in the light of the tragic events that have occurred since 2015? In the light of this new situation, in which Europe is experiencing a new cultural and religious plurality, the main role of the Council's Congress of Local and Regional Authorities is to support cultural policies and the promotion of democratic

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16 Council Directive 77/486/EEC on the education of the children of migrant workers, adopted by the then European Community on 25 July 1977, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/FR/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:31977L0486&from=EN>

values on the basis of human rights. Once the key issues and the objectives are understood, all that remains is to determine a method, a coherent philosophy that will give rise to resolutions and recommendations.

37. The approach taken so far can be described as proceeding from the centre towards the periphery, from the majority to minorities. While this method has every appearance of being the obvious approach and of demonstrating openness and generosity, the Congress could develop a new method to shape its role.

38. As far as cultural recommendations are concerned, it shall henceforth be necessary to begin with the minorities in order to get them to understand the basis of the majority culture, which does not ask them to abandon everything they are but nonetheless adapt to a new moral and political situation. To this end, it is necessary to have a minimum knowledge of these different cultures, which is a form of showing respect, in order subsequently to imagine how to ensure they can adapt to the majority European culture. All the Congress resolutions or recommendations that advocate meetings, discussions, getting to know one another, etc. are clearly to be welcomed, but it is essential to reiterate their actual purpose.

39. If the aim is to promote pluralist and inclusive European societies, the objective is therefore *practical* in nature, which means that enhancing the status of cultures of origin is not an end in itself but a means of fostering their ability to adapt to the particular type of society in question.

## 5. Follow-up to the Strategy

40. Along with the updating of the relevant texts of the Congress which promote citizen participation, living together in diversity, social inclusion and cohesion, intercultural and interfaith dialogue, the Congress "Strategy to combat radicalisation at grassroots level" which was adopted at the Congress session in March 2015 also proposed a series of activities to be carried out in the short, medium and long term at local and regional level, based on three pillars of action, namely awareness raising, synergies with Council of Europe bodies and synergies with other institutions.<sup>17</sup> To implement this strategy, the Congress adopted at its 28th session the resolution "Combatting radicalisation at grassroots level: the role of local and regional authorities" which details its work programme.

### a. Awareness raising activities

#### *i. Guidelines for local and regional authorities on preventing radicalisation and manifestations of hate at the grassroots level*

41. Under Resolution 381 (2015), the Congress committed itself to "establishing guidelines for local and regional authorities on preventing radicalisation and manifestations of hate at grass-roots level, to be adopted at its 29th Session in October 2015"<sup>18</sup>. As highlighted by the rapporteur when the guidelines have been adopted on 20 October 2015, "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",<sup>19</sup> where they can be most effective and where their competences and mandates are most relevant".

42. The explanatory memorandum<sup>20</sup> underlines that it is critical, for the respect of human rights, to approach the issue in a balanced manner, weighing the necessity and proportionality of each action. When introducing any measures that might jeopardise individual rights, public authorities must keep in mind that not only the rule of law but also the strategic aim to build an inclusive society must guide their actions.

43. Recognising that cities can act as an interface between the different levels of governments, Resolution 384 (2015) calls on them to design holistic local multi-agency strategies involving local partners and civil society. They are invited to develop plans of actions mapping the local situation, setting up coordinating bodies and allocating the necessary resources to combat radicalisation.

44. The resolution also puts the emphasis on the importance of the political discourse and calls on local and regional authorities to communicate their strategies and actions to the general public in a

17 CG/BUR/2015(27)22, Congress strategy to combat radicalisation at grass-roots level, adopted by the Congress Bureau on 2 February 2015, <http://tinyurl.com/jsemexa>

18 Resolution 381 (2015) on "Combatting radicalisation at grassroots level: the role of local and regional authorities", <http://tinyurl.com/hu3szpz>

19 Congress press release - CG043(2015), "Congress adopts guidelines on preventing radicalisation and manifestations of hate at the grassroots level", <http://tinyurl.com/hjh7hka>

20 CG/2015(29)5FIN "Guidelines for local and regional authorities on preventing radicalisation and manifestations of hate at the grassroots level", <http://tinyurl.com/gqfq5s>

balanced and responsible way, with a particular emphasis on a cohesive discourse, and ensuring that security concerns do not overshadow the duty of respect for human rights and the rule of law.

45. Besides, they are encouraged to set up local safety partnerships and to provide providing adequate training to the different actors involved in the prevention and the fight against radicalisation, in order to develop their understanding of the radicalisation process and how to respond to it. This includes prison staff, social workers, teachers and healthcare workers.

46. The resolution dwells on the important role of education, and of the relevance of raising awareness on existing good practice to show that many cities throughout Europe have significant experience in projects which can serve as a good resource in the battle against extremism. Finally, it stresses the fact that the fight against radicalisation is a lengthy process that requires concrete measures. It needs to be managed on a long-term basis and become an ordinary budget item with stable long-term financing.<sup>21</sup>

*ii. Organising intercultural and interreligious activities: a toolkit for local authorities*

47. In Resolution 381 (2015), the Congress committed itself to “creating a toolkit for use by local elected representatives when organising intercultural and inter-faith activities”.<sup>22</sup> The Current Affairs and Governance Committees have therefore set up a reflection group consisting of two co-rapporteurs, two experts and three members of the Congress Secretariat, in May 2015. The ensuing report on “Organising intercultural and interreligious activities: a toolkit for local authorities”<sup>23</sup>, approved by Governance committee on 20 October 2015 and adopted by the Congress at its 30th session on 22 March 2016, underlines the importance of local authorities in facilitating dialogue between cultural and religious communities.

48. The report states that intercultural dialogue, understood as “an open and respectful exchange of views between individuals and groups belonging to different cultures that leads to a deeper understanding of the other’s global perception”<sup>24</sup>, enables action to prevent and resolve conflicts, allows the reflection of common values and differences, encourages a sense of community and builds mutual knowledge about the apparent other.

49. By facilitating and mediating a sustainable and fruitful intercultural and interreligious dialogue, local and regional authorities can foster conflict resolution in everyday encounters in neighbourhoods and establish a context wherein citizens can embrace cultural and religious diversity. However, the report also found that local and regional authorities may fear often that they are not equipped thoroughly to promote intercultural and interreligious dialogue and activities. Acting on this premise, the Congress has prepared a toolkit to give them direct access to the available information and knowledge on the subject.

50. Central to the toolkit is the website <http://www.coe.int/congress-intercultural> that the Congress has launched. This website has been set up so that local and regional authorities can easily access relevant information and resources available on the promotion of intercultural and interreligious dialogue, the fight against radicalisation, democratic citizenship and the building of inclusive societies. The website <http://www.coe.int/congress-intercultural> aims to be a comprehensive database on the subject. Available resources are identified, organised on a country-by-country or thematic basis and regularly updated, under four categories: Council of Europe legal texts, key academic work, university curricula and trainings, and good practices. This also includes the reference texts of the Congress, namely the above-mentioned “Guidelines for local and regional authorities on preventing radicalisation and manifestations of hate at the grassroots level”, and the 12 Principles for interfaith dialogue at local level.<sup>25</sup>

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21 Resolution 384 (2015) on “Guidelines for local and regional authorities on preventing radicalisation and manifestations of hate at the grassroots level”, <http://tinyurl.com/zpplz8y>

22 Resolution 381 (2015) on “Combatting radicalisation at grassroots level: the role of local and regional authorities”, <http://tinyurl.com/hu3szpz>

23 CG30(2016)04-Final “Organising intercultural and interreligious activities: a toolkit for local authorities” 30th session, 22 March 2016, <http://tinyurl.com/hzzgc4m>

24 “Open and respectful” means “based on the equal value of the partners”; “exchange of views” stands for every type of interaction that reveals cultural characteristics; “groups” stands for every type of collective that can act through its representatives (family, community, associations, peoples); “culture” includes everything relating to ways of life, customs, beliefs and other things that have been passed on to us for generations, as well as the various forms of artistic creation; “world perception” stands for values and ways of thinking; Available at: [http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/intercultural/concept\\_EN.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/intercultural/concept_EN.asp) (consulted on: 28 September 2015).

25 In order to better understand the role of local and regional authorities, the Congress organised two conferences gathering local government representatives, academics as well as international organisations and religious leaders, in Montchanin, France, in 2006 and 2010. The 12 principles identified following these conferences are built around four axes: 1) knowledge

51. The toolkit is now available online and in paper format and has been translated into the six working languages of the Council of Europe (English, French, German, Italian, Russian and Turkish), and into 30 other European languages. As set out in Resolution 397(2016)<sup>26</sup>, the printed form of the toolkit has been produced and put together by an external agency into a package that the Congress has made available and resolves to disseminate as widely as possible.

*iii. Conference of Local Authorities on the Prevention of Radicalisation Leading to Violent Extremism*

52. As part of its awareness-raising activities, the Congress also organised, in collaboration with the European Forum for Urban Security (EFUS), a one-day conference of Local Authorities on the Prevention of Radicalisation Leading to Violent Extremism in Aarhus, Denmark, on 18 November 2015. The event, entitled “Towards an alliance of European cities against violent extremism”, gathered mayors and representatives of cities and regions from 22 European countries. It aimed to raise awareness, give voice to local and regional authorities and strengthen their capacity to prevent and deal with all forms of radicalisation leading to violent extremism. The initiative sought to provide a European space to exchange experiences and information on promising practices, existing programmes and tools.

53. At the end of the debates, the participants adopted the “Aarhus declaration”, emphasising that European local authorities have a key role to play in the fight against radicalisation leading to violent extremism. Their unique network of millions of local elected representatives can contribute, through its members’ knowledge of their area and population, to an early warning system for any drift towards radicalisation. They also decided to pursue the initiative and to meet again in the context of a European summit of mayors, to be co-organised by the Congress and EFUS in November 2016 in Rotterdam, the Netherlands.

*iv. Congress Spokesperson on Radicalisation*

54. Finally, the Congress Bureau appointed a Congress Spokesperson on Radicalisation (on 24 March 2016), in charge of, on the one hand, representing the Congress in all major events organised by the Council of Europe intergovernmental sector and external partners on the issue of radicalisation and violent extremism, presenting its activities in this matter, and suggesting new developments as necessary; and, on the other hand, of raising visibility of the toolkit for use by local elected representatives when organising intercultural and interreligious activities.

**b. Synergies and partnerships with other Council of Europe bodies**

55. The second pillar of action identified by the Congress “Strategy to combat radicalisation at grassroots level” relates to synergies with Council of Europe bodies.<sup>27</sup> Thereupon, the Congress will participate to the Platform of dialogue between the Council of Europe and high representatives of religions and non-confessional organisations, established on the initiative of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe following its Recommendation 2080 (2015) on “Freedom of religion and living together in a democratic society”.<sup>28</sup>

**c. Synergies and partnerships with other institutions/bodies**

56. In its Resolution 381 (2015), the Congress committed itself to “building on existing co-operation established with relevant networks such as the European Forum for Urban Security (EFUS)”.<sup>29</sup>

*i. Co-operation with the European Forum for Urban Security (EFUS)*

57. EFUS is a European network of 250 local authorities from 16 countries which aims to strengthen crime prevention policies and to promote the role of local authorities in national and European policies in this respect. While working on issues relating to safety and security, it shares the concern of the Council of Europe for the respect for human rights and affirms that the implementation of safety policies must not lead to the exclusion and repression of vulnerable groups. EFUS works on all major

and understanding of the local religious situation; 2) promoting understanding between participants in the dialogue; 3) establishing partnership; and 4) evaluation Available at: [http://www.coe.int/t/congress/files/topics/interfaith/guidelines\\_en.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/congress/files/topics/interfaith/guidelines_en.asp)  
 26 Resolution 397(2016) on “Organising intercultural and interreligious activities: a toolkit for local authorities”, <http://tinyurl.com/hqb6tvj>

27CG/BUR/2015(27)22 Congress strategy to combat radicalisation at grass-roots level, <http://tinyurl.com/jsemexa>

28 Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 2080 (2015) Freedom of religion and living together in a democratic society <http://tinyurl.com/gpjtxvj>

29 Resolution 381 (2015) on “Combatting radicalisation at grassroots level: the role of local and regional authorities”, <http://tinyurl.com/hu3szpz>

issues relating to urban safety and security, by developing links between European local authorities and with international bodies, encouraging debates with citizens across Europe and exchanging practices and information, through support and training, publications and research.

58. On 14 September 2015, the Congress and EFUS signed a “Memorandum of understanding on cooperation with a view to implementing the Congress Strategy to combat radicalisation, and on issues related to urban violence”, to combine the political action of the Congress and the technical expertise of EFUS.

59. Since the signature of this memorandum of understanding, EFUS has contributed to the preparation of the “Guidelines for local and regional authorities on preventing radicalisation and manifestations of hate at the grassroots level”. The Congress and EFUS also worked together in organising the above-mentioned Aarhus Conference in 2015. This event will be followed in November 2016 by a Summit of European Mayors for the Prevention of Radicalisation Leading to Violent Extremism co-organised by the two organisations in Rotterdam, the Netherlands.

*ii. Alliance of European cities against violent extremism*

60. As indicated above, the mayors and representatives of cities and regions of 22 European countries participated in the Aarhus Conference on 18 November 2015. Calling on participants of the conference and the members of the Congress to continue their work against violent extremism by creating an alliance of European local authorities, the Vice-President of the Congress indicated that this alliance will aim to “be a platform to facilitate inter-city cooperation on the prevention of radicalization leading to violent extremism”.<sup>30</sup> The Aarhus declaration adopted at the end of the conference endorsed the proposal to launch an alliance of cities against violent extremism.<sup>31</sup>

61. Set up at the initiative of the Congress and EFUS, the Alliance is a European network that seeks to provide to local elected representatives a space to exchange experiences and information on promising practices, existing programmes and tools to tackle radicalisation and violent extremism. It also aims to undertake capacity-building activities in the field of urban security and “living together”. In this respect, the training of local elected officials has been chosen as a priority area for the Alliance. The Congress and EFUS will join their expertise and understanding of the local level to provide training on issues such as the use of video-surveillance, the prevention of radicalisation, and the promotion of intercultural and interreligious dialogue.

62. It is proposed to recruit a full-time dedicated staff member to work with the Congress secretariat in developing and running this network, including the digital platform that would underpin it.

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30 Prevention of home-grown terrorism and extremism: The alliance of European cities and the Aarhus model, [Fatma Genç Ünay, 16 December 2015](http://www.dailysabah.com/op-ed/2015/12/16/prevention-of-home-grown-terrorism-and-extremism-the-alliance-of-european-cities-and-the-aarhus-model), <http://www.dailysabah.com/op-ed/2015/12/16/prevention-of-home-grown-terrorism-and-extremism-the-alliance-of-european-cities-and-the-aarhus-model>

31 Aarhus final declaration, adopted in Aarhus on 18 November 2015: “We, mayors and representatives of cities and regions from 22 European countries meeting in Aarhus, Denmark, [...]”

Convinced that the fight against these threats must be conducted at all levels of government be they European, national, regional or local: [...]”

- emphasise that local authorities have a key role to play, through their huge network of millions of local elected representatives; [...]
- endorse the proposal to launch an alliance of cities for the prevention of radicalisation leading to violent extremism;”

**APPENDIX: Resolution 318 (2010) on “The cultural integration of muslim women in european cities”**

1. In Europe today, particularly in those countries where Muslims are in a minority, immigrant Muslim women can face multiple challenges. Many of these have to do with culture, the dominant culture of the country of origin and the dominant culture of the host country, as well as differences of cultural sensitivities among different groups in each society. Muslim women often suffer from double cultural disaffiliation, disconnected from their culture of origin and unable to identify with the dominant culture of the host country. Their lack of integration is an area where local authorities can make a substantial difference.

2. Muslim women are not a homogenous group: their social, educational, and cultural backgrounds, family and occupational situations differ significantly and determine to a large extent their integration and relationship with the host community. The label “Muslim”, used here to categorize a group of immigrants, needs to be qualified. In practice these women are individuals with individual needs and circumstances and need to be treated as such. In many cases they will prefer to identify themselves in relation to family, country of origin or occupation rather than any religious affiliation.

3. The cultural difficulties facing many Muslim women whom have recently emigrated to Europe are of several types: they have to negotiate the restrictions of their traditional cultural backgrounds and come to terms with increasing divergences of outlook that their children may acquire through being educated in the host country. Many of them come from countries, regions or communities which do not have the same traditions of gender equality as their host countries and communities. This can result in a relatively high degree of isolation, emotional insecurity and social exclusion. Muslim women are also more at risk of unemployment and domestic violence.

4. Language and education are key elements in the integration process. Prejudice and suspicion thrive on ignorance. Women are often isolated by their poor command of the language of the host country. At the same time they are the key persons for the transmission of their mother tongue to their children.

5. The low participation of Muslim women in many sports deprives them of activities which present important opportunities for integration.

6. These obstacles to integration are exacerbated by the recent growth of Islamophobia and media stereotyping, which can contribute to a sense of being unwelcome and not at home in the host country.

7. The failure of European societies to understand the complexity of the circumstances of this important and vulnerable group within their midst is a loss for these societies as a whole. Not only are they failing to benefit from the experience, skills and creative potential of the people concerned, but the presence of a large group who are somehow perceived as being outside of the host culture can have serious adverse effects on the host communities, who are in danger of retreating into a fortress mentality.

8. This situation is not inevitable, it can be addressed. Intelligent measures and policies can go a long way to helping new waves of immigrants to adapt and find their place in the host societies, as previous immigrants have done.

9. There needs to be an emphasis on dialogue rather than assimilation. Host communities have much to learn about the heritage and diversity of the Islamic world, which is too often obscured by the rhetoric of Islamisation and Islamophobia.

10. There should also be an emphasis on empowering and enabling rather than proscribing. Given the right opportunities, immigrant Muslim women will ensure their own development and find their own place in the host communities.

11. The Islamic world has an enormous wealth of cultural diversity and heritage which can provide material for many shared cultural activities in host communities.

12. Since it is the local arena where most activities which facilitate integration are organised, local authorities are strategically positioned to help.

13. The Congress therefore invites local and regional authorities to encourage, stimulate and promote specific measures to facilitate the integration of immigrant Muslim women into their communities, notably by:

a. offering suitable language courses for the language of the host country;

- b.* offering targeted crèche services and mother-tongue language support for young children;
- c.* raising the awareness of municipal employees about integration issues specific to Muslim women;
- d.* providing special reception services for recent immigrants, providing information on cultural differences and giving advice and information on public services;
- e.* providing opportunities to meet and mix with women from the host community;
- f.* creating spaces to meet and communicate with other women and to discuss issues of common interest, such as differences in culture, child-rearing, marriage traditions and domestic violence;
- g.* providing opportunities to meet and exchange with Muslim women role models who have successfully developed their professions and careers;
- h.* providing help in setting up and running associations;
- i.* taking measures to promote full participation of Muslim women in sporting activities, such as educational campaigns and ensuring more women-only activities;
- j.* providing opportunities to affirm and explore their cultural identities; through cultural and educational activities and associations; by marking and celebrating the various cultural agendas of countries of origin, affirming the cultural heritage of these ethnic groups; through performing arts, exploration of cultural heritage and through popular culture and arts;
- k.* providing special services for elderly immigrants, such as contact centres and special cultural activities.

14. The Congress asks local and regional authorities to take measures to combat media stereotyping of Muslim women, such as by:

- a.* using their own media and engage with other local media to project realistic and in-depth features of local groups and populations and thus develop confidence and contacts within the communities concerned;
- b.* promoting awareness of the diversity and differences in the origins and outlook of immigrant communities;
- c.* encouraging debate of cultural differences and value differences, divergences between traditional cultures and the values of liberal democracies; discuss pluralism and tolerance in relation to religion, politics and personal values.

15. Bearing in mind that one of the keys to successful integration is through finding gainful employment, local authorities are asked to make use of educational services and local events to promote awareness of employment opportunities and public employment services.