



NSC EC (2016) 3
28 January 2016
Lisbon Forum 2015

How to combat radicalisation and terrorism: prevention tools and shared knowledge in the Mediterranean and European space

Ismaili Centre, Lisbon, 3-4 December 2015



Conclusions

Building on the expertise and the core mission of the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe to promote dialogue between North and South, foster solidarity and promote global interdependence, the stated objectives of the Lisbon Forum were to:

- Share tools and knowledge to prevent and combat radicalisation and terrorism contributing to reinforcement of a common legal framework
- Identify concrete measures to promote democratic citizenship and inclusive societies
- Raise awareness of the Council of Europe legal framework against terrorism

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General observations:

In the course of exchanges, expert panellists from parliaments, governments, local authorities and civil society from across Europe, the Southern Mediterranean and beyond agreed that preventing and combatting radicalisation and recruitment to terrorism requires a balanced approach.

Promoting trust in democratic institutions and the construction of really inclusive societies can be an antidote against fear and a pre-condition of democratic security. Therefore **strengthening democratic governance** is an essential component of any effort to prevent and combat radicalisation and terrorism.

A **comprehensive legal framework** is necessary, but **respect for human rights and the rule of law** should not be undermined in the rush to adopt legal measures to promote security. The value of security and its inherent imperatives may be incorporated into the international legal framework, but it should always be underpinned by principles of **legality, necessity and proportionality**.

The work done at grassroots level bridging cultural and social divides, building trust, creating inclusive communities, fighting discrimination and cultivating civic engagement is fundamental.

Rule of law and democratic responses: legal framework to prevent and combat radicalisation

In several respects, the legal framework exists in texts such as the **Council of Europe Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism** and its new Additional protocol and in the **Budapest Convention**. Governments and Parliaments are invited to sign / ratify these conventions to further promote a common legal space in the European and Mediterranean space. **The Arab Convention on the Suppression of Terrorism** can also be a useful tool if implemented in respect of human rights.

Cooperation at regional and international level to combat organised crime can help prevent radicalisation and terrorism. Organised crime is often perceived primarily as a domestic problem, while terrorism is increasingly considered as a global challenge.

Measures taken to **strengthen democratic governance** and to promote confidence in democratic institutions through **participation of citizens** at local and national level can offer opportunities for engagement.

Legal responses should seek to offer assurances to civil society to promote their participation in decision-making and ensure their protection on the ground. Accurate information, knowledge and facts are the only grounds on which legal responses can stand on.

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Preventing radicalisation through education and dialogue

Radicalisation is not an ideology but a posture stemming from an identity crisis and perceived social or economic inequalities. Radicalisation can be seen as a failure of the educational system as well as a by-product of society's inability to integrate its citizens.

Education can play a key role in developing and maintaining intercultural values in democracy – no democracy can be built on ignorance, therefore education should seek to promote **democratic, active and responsible citizenship**.

In this respect, the Council of Europe **Competences for Democratic Culture Project**, which seeks to describe the main competences citizens require for effective participation in democratic society, can contribute to identifying guidelines to promote intercultural dialogue through formal education.

In broad terms, access to **education for all** is important to ensure that people participate as active and engaged members of a society

Community-based approaches to counter radicalisation

Community-based approaches to prevent and combat radicalisation involve a wide range of stakeholders, civil society, local authorities, schools, religious bodies, media and community centers. The local level is the appropriate level at which to tackle these questions as, in a globalised world, what happens at local level can have repercussions at national and international level.

Local and regional authorities have a key role to play by promoting exit programs using a **multi-agency approach** including partnerships with schools, civil society and other local stakeholders

Social exclusion can be a cause of frustration leading to radicalisation and is best countered working with the local population to **promote participation and sustainable development**. Resilient communities can serve as a protective shield to prevent radicalisation at grassroots' level.

The "Strategy to combat radicalisation at grassroots level" and the "Guidelines for Local and Regional Authorities on Preventing Radicalisation and Manifestation of Hate at Grass-root Level" adopted by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe can serve as useful frameworks to guide a community-based response.

Initiatives such as Alliance of European Cities Against Violent Extremism and the Intercultural Cities project should be extended to offer **further networking opportunities** between Europe and the countries of the Southern Mediterranean

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Empowering young people and women to prevent and combat radicalisation

Young people and women have an essential role to play in promoting peace and conflict management. National and international authorities must **engage young people and women** as partners for peace recognising their potential as positive actors and supporting their efforts as outlined in the [Amman Youth Declaration](#).

Participation of young people and women in policy and decision-making processes must become a reality and **equality** between women and men must also be promoted in religious bodies.

A **gender perspective** is a very important aspect in any prevention and distancing methodology for all types of extremism motivated by prejudice and prone to violence.

Policies to ensure participation and integration of senior citizens can remove some of the causes of alienation and frustration that leave younger generations vulnerable to radicalisation.

Building inclusive societies through intercultural dialogue and inter-faith dialogue

Building inclusive societies is a shared endeavour which must **engage all levels of government**, in particular local and regional authorities, civil society, religious and faith-based institutions, cultural organisations and the private sector. To work together effectively we need to recognise and emphasise the role of these different actors in promoting human rights and cultural understanding.

Instrumentalisation of religion is a permanent risk which should be countered by reclaiming our religions and convictions from extremists. Inter-religious dialogue, though important, is not sufficient, each religion must also facilitate reappropriation by each of “our” religion.

Inclusive societies must fully involve women in interfaith dialogue and decision-making.

A platform of equal rights and equality before the law is needed to build inclusive societies, where individuals maintain their own identities while respecting each other’s differences, united by a set of shared, democratic values.

General conclusions

In order to prevent and combat radicalisation, we must go beyond a binary reading of the current situation and accept collective responsibility for mistakes that have been made

Culture can serve as a lever to promote understanding, respect and interdependence and should be central to any reflection by governments and international organisations.

A network of participants and stakeholders of Lisbon Forum 2015 should serve as a database of contacts for further initiatives in this field and as a vehicle to promote common tools to prevent and combat radicalisation in the Mediterranean and European Space.

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