

THE CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

Resolution 384 (2015)¹ Guidelines for local and regional authorities on preventing radicalisation and manifestations of hate at the grassroots level

1. The terrorist attacks in Paris and Copenhagen, involving armed jihadists and leaving a total of 14 people dead and 10 wounded, highlighted the need for cities to do more in order to effectively tackle extremism. These attacks have thrown the spotlight on the issues at stake: growing radicalisation leading to violent extremism and sectarianism within cities, the risk of increased polarisation in society and stigmatisation of some communities, and hate speech in the social media, as well as the risk of censorship and self-censorship are all current dangers facing cities.

2. In its Resolution 381 (2015) on combatting radicalisation at grassroots level: the role of local and regional authorities, adopted at its March 2015 session, the Congress committed itself to updating the relevant texts of the Congress which promote citizen participation, living together in diversity, social inclusion and cohesion, intercultural and interfaith dialogue, to establishing guidelines for local and regional authorities on preventing radicalisation and manifestations of hate at grassroots level, and to creating a pedagogical toolkit for use by local elected representatives when organising intercultural and interfaith activities.

3. Individuals can become radicalised for a multitude of reasons, such as a lack of integration into society, political disengagement or exposure to extremist individuals, groups or organisations. The local, cultural and social context affects the radicalisation process, which is reflected in the public authorities' response. Among these, prevention and de-radicalisation (that is, action directed at reintegrating into society individuals who have become radicalised) rather than repression are actions that coincide with the scope and competences of local and regional authorities.

4. Tackling radicalisation requires carefully thought-out preventive measures. In the long run, prevention is more rational and cost-effective than combatting symptoms or full-blown crises. It is also the area of action *par excellence* for local authorities, where they can be most effective and where their competences and mandates are most relevant. At the same time, recognition of this important role leads to the empowerment of local governments and enables them to better anticipate these challenges and opportunities.

5. It is critical, for the respect of human rights, to approach the issue of safety and security of citizens 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.

6. Recognising that radicalisation can be best contained at a level closest to the vulnerable individuals in the most affected communities, the Congress calls on the local and regional authorities of the Council of Europe to:

a. design local multi-agency strategies involving local partners, in co-ordination with different levels of government, and develop a plan of action mapping the local situation, setting up coordinating bodies and allocating the necessary resources to combat radicalisation, and take concrete measures that can be followed up;

b. communicate their strategies and actions to the general public in a balanced and responsible way, with a particular emphasis on a cohesive discourse, aiming for a clear presentation of the message, without stigmatising specific groups, and ensuring that security concerns do not overshadow the duty of respect for human rights and the rule of law;

c. encourage the setting up of local safety partnerships, providing adequate training to the different actors involved, including front-line practitioners working with individuals or groups at risk, prison staff, social workers, teachers, and health-care workers, in order to develop their understanding of the radicalisation process and how to respond to it;

d. raise awareness of existing good practice among local authorities to show those authorities who may fear that they are not equipped to deal with such situations or that radicalisation is not their priority, that many cities throughout Europe have significant experience in projects which can serve as a good resource in the battle against extremism, and exchange knowledge and best practices with other European cities, at both the political and the administrative levels, through regular meetings bringing together the different European local actors;

e. highlight the important role of education, especially regarding families and schools, paying particular attention to topics such as respect for cultural diversity, human rights and the harmfulness of hate speech, acknowledging that young people, although particularly vulnerable to discourses inciting hate and violence since they are in a formative period of their lives involving a struggle to shape their identity, are also strong allies in combating manifestations of hate due to their strong social media ties;

f. involve civil society in their work against radicalisation and extremism in all its manifestations, including hate speech, anti-Semitism and Islamophobia, by setting up partnerships with NGOs, religious community leaders, and, at the individual level, with former extremists;

g. support exit programmes for individuals willing to free themselves from extremism, especially extremism of a religious nature, in co-operation with civil society organisations;

h. allocate the necessary funds to their activities in this sphere, cognisant of the fact that preventive work must be

considered as an ordinary budget item with stable long-term financing;

i. build alliances with credible partners, striving for well-established routines for transparency as to how allocated resources are spent in their dealings with ethnic or religious associations when granting them financial support, and coordinate activities with the regional and, when appropriate, the national level of government;

j. develop co-operation with international bodies that share the values and concerns of the Congress and who are currently working on topics relevant to the aim of combatting

radicalisation, such as the European Forum for Urban Security.

7. Aware that the work against radicalisation is a lengthy process that needs to be managed on a long-term basis, the Congress reiterates its determination to keep this issue on its agenda and to follow up its resolutions and activities through regular assessments of progress in the member States.

1. Debated and adopted by the Congress on 20 October 2015, 1st Sitting (see Document [CG/2015\(29\)5FINAL](#), explanatory memorandum), rapporteur: Leen Verbeek, Netherlands (R, SOC).