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Organising intercultural and interreligious activities: a toolkit for local authorities

Governance Committee
Current Affairs Committee
Joint Report

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Summary

The report focuses on the promotion of intercultural and interreligious dialogue as a means to prevent radicalisation within the current context of rising extremism and the strategy developed by the Congress to combat radicalisation at grassroots' level. For this purpose the rapporteurs propose a range of tools for use by local authorities and their national and regional associations when organising intercultural and interreligious activities, including a toolkit, which will comprise digital information resources and will be made available in 36 languages through a dedicated website.

The rapporteurs recommend that local governments, as public authorities closest to the citizens, reflect their commitment to bring different communities together in their social, educational, sports and cultural policies. Awareness-raising, prevention and educational activities such as training programs for local officials, "anti-rumour" campaigns, debates and cultural events on intercultural and interreligious issues are recommended for local authorities. Cities and regions are encouraged to exchange good practices on existing initiatives.

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 397(2016)²

1. One of the priorities set out in the Congress Strategy to Combat Radicalisation at Grassroots Level adopted in February 2015 is to combat religious radicalisation and to stimulate and encourage the development of intercultural and interreligious activities at the local level. The aim is to promote the values of the Council of Europe and especially the need to respect cultural and religious pluralism and diversity, and to be aware of their value for social cohesion.
2. The Congress has committed itself to developing a toolkit for local authorities that will equip them to organise such activities.
3. To this end the Congress:
 - a. instructs its secretariat to produce such a toolkit based on the elements set out in the explanatory memorandum to this resolution;
 - b. resolves to disseminate this toolkit as widely as possible;
 - c. asks the national (and regional) associations of local and regional authorities to support this initiative, in particular by providing translations in their language and disseminating the toolkit;
 - d. invites the Congress Spokesperson on Human Rights to include this dimension and the toolkit in his work to raise awareness among local authorities on human rights.

² Debated and adopted by the Congress on 22 March 2016, 1st sitting (see Document CG30(2016)04-final, explanatory memorandum), co- rapporteurs: Bert BOUWMEESTER, Netherlands (L, ILDG) and Josef NEUMANN, Germany (R, SOC)

EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM³

A. INTRODUCTION

1. Our societies are becoming increasingly polarised, a fact highlighted by the terrorist attacks carried out by jihadists in Europe in 2015, bringing to the fore issues related to growing radicalisation which are accompanied by a surge in violent extremism and sectarianism within cities. The stigmatisation of some communities, the increase of hate speech in social media as well as the risk of censorship and self-censorship are all current dangers facing cities.

2. Following upon Council of Europe policies developed to combat radicalisation leading to terrorism, the Congress Bureau adopted, on 2 February 2015, a “Strategy to combat radicalisation at grassroots level” and followed it by its Resolution 381(2015)⁴ adopted at the Congress session in March 2015, which proposes 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. 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 toolkit for use by local elected representatives when organising intercultural and interreligious activities.

3. The Current Affairs Committee of the Congress approved a resolution on 1 July 2015 on “Guidelines for local and regional authorities on preventing radicalisation and manifestations of hate at the grassroots level”. They were adopted at the 29th session of the Congress on 20 October 2015.

4. The present report, prepared by co-rapporteurs Bert Bouwmeester and Josef Neumann focuses on one of the aspects of the fight against radicalisation which underlines the importance of local authorities in facilitating dialogue between cultural and religious communities. The subject of intercultural and interreligious dialogue is not a new one, either for the Council of Europe or for the Congress. The recommendations (see section 1.1), publications (e.g. “Gods in the City” published by the Congress in 2007) and meetings (Council of Europe annual meetings on the religious dimension of intercultural dialogue) on this issue are evidence of the prominence given to it in the Council of Europe.

5. The present report does not deal directly with radicalisation as such but it cannot be denied that the recent attacks in Europe, heavily influenced by the rise of religious fundamentalist extremism in the Middle East have been a major factor in the decision to return to this issue. Dialogue between religious communities for conflict prevention has become an urgent need in this context but, when engaging in dialogue, the current links being made between radicalisation and a certain interpretation of Islam should be seen in context. Europe has been the battleground for many kinds of violent extremism in the past which have had at their core not religious but national, ideological or ethnic differences. That the latest manifestation of radicalisation is a religious one should not blind us to the fact that religion is only one of many areas where social groups can clash. Nor should we allow the fact that Islam is at the centre of today’s religious violence, to make us forget about recent European history when the Christian faith was instrumentalised to reject and annihilate those of the Jewish faith.

6. The situation in Europe today risks being exacerbated by the humanitarian crisis due to the arrival of refugees from Syria, Iraq and other war zones, fleeing terrorism and violations of human rights, the rule of law and democratic standards in their countries of origin. The integration of the newcomers is not going to be easy on any front, but the acceptance by the public of people from other religious backgrounds will probably be one of the more challenging aspects of the process. The recent warning in Germany by the president of the Federal Office for Constitutional Protection against the radicalisation of refugees (particularly of young, unaccompanied ones) living in Germany by proselytising Islamists gives an inkling of what is to come, even before the 120,000 refugees waiting at Europe’s doors have been settled.⁵ Against this background of divisive discord, the authorities in member States have to address, quickly and effectively, both actual risks and any perceived threat by the already anxious public. This

³ This explanatory memorandum is based on the contribution of Council of Europe consultant Dr Philip Gaudin, head of research and training at the European Institute of Religious Sciences, Ecole pratique des hautes études (EPHE), Paris, available from the secretariat on demand.

⁴ https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?Ref=CG/2015%2828%2914PROV&Language=lanEnglish&Ver=original&Site=COE&BackColorIntranet=C3C3C3&BackColorIntranet=CACC9A&BackColorLogged=EFEA9C#P41_2342

⁵ http://diepresse.com/home/politik/aussenpolitik/4826651/Deutschland_Radikalisierung-von-Fluchtlingen-droht-?from=newsletter

requires the exertion of special efforts to convince citizens of the necessity to opt for communication rather than rejection.

7. The conception of a range of tools including definitions, reference texts, practical solutions and good practice examples is more than timely. To be meaningful, these should be relevant for all Council of Europe member States, and usable in different conflict situations which call for an intervention by local elected representatives to bring people together. In order to promote intercultural and interreligious dialogue for conflict prevention, we need to be clear about what we mean by these concepts and how we plan to counter radicalised attitudes by using such dialogue.

Adopted texts of the Council of Europe and the Congress

8. The Council of Europe promotes efforts and activities geared to the building of inclusive societies in order to avoid social fragmentation, conflict and the risk of undermining fundamental rights and freedoms. It underlines the importance of taking into account the religious dimension of intercultural education in order to promote mutual understanding, tolerance and a culture of “living together. The Council of Europe has produced during the last two decades a series of recommendations and documents that focus on the religious aspect of intercultural education and interreligious dialogue:

- White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue “Living together as equals in dignity” (2008), which recalls that the vision of our cultural diversity should be based on the knowledge and understanding of the main religions and non-religious convictions of the world and of their role in society;
- Recommendation 1805 (2007) of the Parliamentary Assembly on “Blasphemy, religious insults and hate speech against persons on grounds of their religion” with a view to producing guidelines for national ministries of education, intended to raise understanding and tolerance among students with different religions;
- Recommendation 1720 (2005) of the Parliamentary Assembly on “Education and Religion” which declares that education is essential for combating ignorance, stereotypes and misunderstanding of religions;
- Wroclaw Declaration on fifty years of European cultural co-operation (10 December 2004) which underlined the importance of systematically encouraging intercultural and inter-religious dialogue based on the primacy of common values, as a means of promoting awareness and understanding of each other, preventing conflicts, promoting reconciliation and ensuring the cohesion of society, through formal and non-formal education
- Recommendation 1396 (1999) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on “Religion and democracy” which invites member States to promote better relations with and between religions and ensure freedom and equal rights of education to all citizens regardless of religious belief, customs and rites.

The Congress has followed with texts specifically oriented towards local and regional authorities:

- Resolution 323 (2011) on “Meeting the challenge of inter-faith and intercultural tensions at local level” which invites local authorities to keep regular formal and informal contact with religious organisations, including regular meetings and through common projects;
- Resolution 318 (2010) on the “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;
- Recommendation 245 (2008) on “Intercultural and inter-religious 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;
- 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.

9. The intention of these texts is to address society as a whole, regardless of whether they are believers and non-believers, and invite individuals and groups to listen to, understand and talk to each other about living together. The endeavour is a difficult one: it requires a balancing act which consists of setting up bridges between groups of people whose proclaimed or perceived identities separate them, in order to promote "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"⁶ and at the same time calling attention to the necessity of respecting everyone's human rights even when those rights might go against and might even be rejected by the belief systems of some members of these groups. Nonetheless - and whatever the difficulties - the attempt must be made.

B. RADICALISM AND RELIGION: THE THEOLOGICAL, POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF A COMPLEX PHENOMENON

10. Extreme violence driven by ideological and/or religious motives has been almost a constant throughout history. The contemporary resurgence of violent fundamentalisms does not date from yesterday but from the 1980s. The IS phenomenon, with young Europeans going off to fight "jihad" and the terrorist attacks of early 2015 urges us to rethink how we identify the problem we are facing and review the strategies and tactics deployed against it for the last thirty years for a more successful outcome.

11. The most common expert analyses in this field usually draw on economics or sociology and quite naturally approach these phenomena from an economic and/or sociological viewpoint (or psychological or even psychiatric analysis). It goes without saying that these approaches remain perfectly valid and necessary. But there is a risk that we will go on analysing human phenomena using grids to find the common denominators that ultimately fail to shed real light on certain types of extreme behaviour which seems beyond all reasonable or rational explanation. These approaches remain valid to an extent for dissecting complex human behaviours that people readily put down to "multiple factors". When religion is factored in, there is a great temptation to always seek to distil it down from what it really is, quite simply because we try to understand by using the instruments commonly at our disposal. We all know the story of the man who looked and looked for his keys under a street-light, not because he lost them there but because it was the only place well-lit enough to see.

12. So we must dwell on the specific nature of this "radicalisation"; try to understand whether it is a reflection of the failure (and if yes, in what respect) of our European societies to foresee and forestall the phenomenon.

13. In the case of religious radicalism, one of the key questions, usually completely ignored, is of a theological nature. How can the correlation be made between this specific psychological vulnerability and a religious content? We would certainly have to look for it in a representation of God that is uncompromisingly male and "all-powerful". Obviously, this theological tendency is not exclusive to Islam and can also be found in Judaism and Christianity and, indeed, in non-monotheistic religions such as the religions of antiquity, which had plenty to say about "*Jupiter omnipotens*". This makes religion the gateway to restoring one's dignity. There will also be a key substitution: the judgement of society (often difficulties at school, time spent on the defendant's bench) and the judgement of oneself (low self-esteem) will be replaced by the judgement of a god deemed infinitely superior and capable of refuting the judgement of society and men. Ultimately, what does extreme radicalisation, culminating in particularly resonant violent acts in a symbolic last stand, express other than, in a form more pathetic than pathological, the life and death instincts? To assert oneself by taking others' lives, to be a martyr, of course, but having martyred others first.

14. There are also other profiles of "radicalised" youth, notably those who leave for Syria with a beginner's guide to Islam in their suitcase, of which they know next to nothing, not even through some kind of cultural osmosis. It is very difficult to tell what proportion these new converts represent. The only data available at present, in France for example, are based on the calls received from families worried that their child will leave them or reporting that he is already gone or missing. These are young people with no or very little history of petty offending, often a "normal" school record, not from a background of poverty or social exclusion. They are seduced by recruitment sites that "speak" to these young people even if the reality encountered on the battlefield will be not nearly as "soft". Moreover, those who have been radicalised are either "born-and-bred" Europeans or second generation migrants

⁶ White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue of the Council of Europe, http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/intercultural/whitepaper_EN.asp#TopOfPage

who have gone through European education systems and more often than not beneficiaries of European social policies. This being said, we must not become fixated by these borderline cases and forget about the huge number of young people who are not supporters of extremist violence, irrespective of their social, cultural or religious background.

15. The migration policies prevalent in Europe since the 1980s have led to the formation of zones or ghettos, particularly present in the industrial areas as the former inhabitants fled these zones. According to some interpretations of this "ghettoisation" phenomenon, the racism and discrimination suffered by these communities in the absence of energetic and generous public policies in their favour played an important role. An opposing view sees it as proof of incompatibility between cultures that are too different. Unfortunately, the phenomenon invalidates any simplistic statements regarding the scale of the presence of Islam in Europe and these "communitarian" effects. The risk is either to lurch into unjustified alarmism which cranks up tensions despite the fact that the majority of towns, schools and hospitals enjoy a peaceful existence, or to fail to address situations in which intolerant minorities take control over underprivileged communities overwhelmingly made up of people of Muslim faith in certain districts.

16. Since the 1980s, our societies seem to have been caught up in a kind of vicious circle passing through the four main points of a listless economy generating high endemic unemployment in a great many European countries, a turbulent international context, assertions of identity with religious overtones being made in public services or in corporate enterprises and, finally, the rise of "populist" movements all over Europe, pointing the finger at immigrants as the root of all evil. On top of this comes the recent trauma of European "jihadis" leaving for Syria. It is a vicious circle that goes on turning, since condemning excesses or violence committed in the name of Islam – which is a basic duty – appears to be a condemnation of Islam in general and all Muslims with it and a stance that plays into the hands of identity-based populist parties.

17. The problem cannot solely be explained or tackled in economic terms or by claiming that our democracies and economies are not inclusive enough. Neither does political guilt based on the belief that, if we are so hated by some it is certainly for a reason, help. The education system, the public authorities and the media do not sufficiently address the importance of spreading knowledge on non-majority religions and non-religious convictions on the one hand and on the philosophical foundations of democracy and human rights on the other. This negligence in forming citizens from a young age in acquiring the basic tenets of democratic citizenship has consequences: we stand before a phenomenon that indicates a failure to produce counter narratives and political and social action powerful enough to prevent certain groups from rejecting society with violence. Similarly, not sufficient attention is given to the great number of success stories in this field so as to avoid plunging into a state of alarmism. It is the duty of all public authorities to promote the virtues of democratic societies, where criticism and self-criticism are permanent fixtures, so that everyone can fit in and contribute what they have to offer, creating a virtuous circle.⁷

18. Citizen participation is a key factor in promoting dialogue. Admittedly, there are pitfalls which must be addressed when bringing individuals or groups of different backgrounds together: discriminatory attitudes, prejudice, mis-information. Local and regional authorities have an important role in making their inhabitants aware of these pitfalls but also in giving them the means to get together for discussion and sharing experiences in physical or virtual spaces. They also have a crucial role as political leaders in giving legitimacy to all activity oriented towards publicly discussing religious beliefs, cultural specificities and social differences so that these do not remain incomprehensible or untouchable taboos which it would be politically incorrect to address.

⁷ "A broad education about religions is a desirable activity for all school students, regardless of religious or non-religious background, to combat prejudice or intolerance and to promote mutual understanding and democratic citizenship", Council of Europe", Signposts, Policy and Practice for teaching about religions and non-religious world views in intercultural education, Robert Jackson, Council of Europe publication, 2014.

C. INTERCULTURAL AND INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE: A USEFUL FRAMEWORK CONCEPT FOR COMMON ACTIVITIES

19. While this report does not seek to provide an absolute and watertight definition of intercultural dialogue, the following preliminary formulation is nevertheless helpful, to make the concept more accessible: “Intercultural dialogue is 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.”⁸ As such, it 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. It establishes a context wherein citizens can embrace cultural diversity. Experience has shown that genuine intercultural dialogue leads not to a loss of identity, but rather deepens the understanding of one’s own identity. It also enables all members of society to enjoy their fundamental rights.

20. Religion plays a key role in public life in the 21st century and is often an important aspect of people’s identity. In our increasingly pluralist societies, inter-faith dialogue and co-operation are essential to avoid conflict. It offers a forum for bringing together not only religious of different communities to exchange experiences about how to confront prejudice and rejection. Interfaith dialogue describes exchanges among religious practitioners and communities on matters of doctrine and issues of mutual concern in culture and politics. It is important to note that people with no religious faith or with other convictions should in no way be exempted from this dialogue. They are equally essential to the discussion and for building a bond between diverse identities.

21. By facilitating and mediating a sustainable and fruitful intercultural dialogue, local and regional authorities can foster conflict resolution in everyday encounters in neighbourhoods. Such a dialogue has its limits in so far as dialogue with those who refuse to participate is impossible, and it remains crucial to keep the engagement in dialogue on a voluntary basis. Further complications like language barriers or opposing values can also hamper the process.

22. In this context, the rise of hostility towards minority religious groups, such as the demonstrations of thousands of people under the banner of 'Patriotic Europeans against the Islamification of the Occident' (PEGIDA is its German acronym) is cause for serious concern, as noted in the opinion published in October 2015 by the Council of Europe's advisory committee for the protection of national minorities.⁹

23. The paradox of interreligious dialogue for local authorities is that they must sail close between “non-indifference” and “non-interference”, because in our democracies where the religious dimension is governed by the concept of freedom of conscience and of religion, it is not for the public authorities to conduct this dialogue.. Local authorities' role is essentially that of facilitators, mediators or, if necessary, regulators, on the basis of clearly defined and negotiated objectives. Nonetheless, local authorities must persevere to promote the cultural and social dimension of religions to be perceived not as a problem but as an asset and a resource. And whatever means they use, they must facilitate such dialogue by grounding their intervention in the core values that all our member States adhere to as signatories of main Council of Europe conventions: respect of human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

D. LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACTION FOR DIALOGUE: AWARENESS, EDUCATION, WORKING TOGETHER

24. The role that local authorities can play in contributing to the development of a counter narrative to radical and fundamentalist religious discourse that emphasises the rejection of violence in order to live together in peace is an important one: from opening up spaces for local groups to get together to disseminating the information about such encounters, from enabling education and training institutions to address these issues to supporting local leaders who are pro-dialogue, the possibilities open to local authorities constitute a broad panoply of action.

⁸ “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 (consulted on: 28 September 2015).

⁹ http://www.coe.int/en/web/minorities/home/-/asset_publisher/d8acUFjN14Yx/content/germany-publication-of-the-4th-advisory-committee-opinion?redirect=%2Fen%2Fweb%2Fminorities%2Fhome&inheritRedirect=true

1. Awareness and prevention

1.1. Awareness of the role religion plays in society

25. The Congress had already reflected on the tasks incumbent on local authorities in this matter when it held a symposium in Montchanin, in France, by adopting the Guidelines for interfaith dialogue at local level in 2006¹⁰ which encouraged local authorities to:

- i. be aware of the role that religion plays in the construction of individual and collective identities, and its impact on socialisation and the formation of social representations;
- ii. have a good knowledge of the relative size of local religious groups, how they are organised and whether the activities of local religious organisations are of real benefit to the public;
- iii. be aware of the latent authority exercised by the majority, who generally has a quasi-monopoly of local levers of power so as to prevent minorities being pushed, against their better judgment, into defensive postures, by paying particular attention to the role of families, and especially of mothers, who help to transmit their cultural values to the next generation, in an attitude of openness to society;
- iv. consider religious organisations not as homogeneous entities but as organisations that are themselves subject to conflicting views, as this will inform local authorities' decision as to which interlocutors will be open to dialogue;
- v. adopt an interfaith approach that gradually takes precedence over a multifaith one where local authority activities are guided by a concern to promote a shared belief in a God with many faces.

1.2. Awareness on the role of the new technologies

26. As mentioned earlier, social media and networks are often used to radicalise young people and recruit foreign fighters. Local authorities can benefit from the expertise of national intelligence service staff who have the capacity and are highly qualified to explain how specific social networks and websites work and how to understand/interpret their content. They could be asked to take charge of the training of trainers, who can then provide awareness-raising training for local authorities on how social media and networks are used to radicalise young people and to recruit foreign fighters. This kind of awareness can be useful in guiding local efforts oriented in particular towards young people.

27. Local authorities should be encouraged to use new technologies that can enhance the dissemination of information. Local authorities, in every member state of the Council of Europe, should be encouraged to put online a document identifying the national existing legislation in respect of religious freedom, not only for the public but also for the local officials; the relevant international texts and treaties; and relevant and trusted resources with regard to interreligious dialogue.

2. Education on religious practices and democratic citizenship should go hand in hand

28. Education is the solution *par excellence* to the problems of society. Sadly, we all know that this solution has the drawback of being a never-ending and complex task that is demanding in terms of qualified human resources and therefore costly in time, energy and money. But it must be done. Education about religion, training in secularism, democracy and human rights for all local and regional authorities and training for religious officials are three areas that local and regional authorities have the competence to address.

29. When education is the subject, the focus is usually on schools. However, given the challenges facing society today, particularly in the context of radicalisation, it is the whole of society - and particularly officialdom - that needs better knowledge of religion. What is needed here is not religious education *per se* but the making accessible to everyone the vast spectrum of knowledge and culture that exist in all the disciplines that cross paths with religion in one way or another (history, art history, anthropology, sociology, philology, philosophy etc.). In some European countries, the tendency is to transform the teaching of religion within the public education system into the teaching of ethics and religious culture or religious science. The arguments put forward for this kind of teaching relate both to the intellectual quality of education and to the civic education of pupils living in societies marked by pluralism of religions and beliefs, two arguments that are quite inseparable.

¹⁰ http://www.coe.int/t/congress/files/topics/interfaith/guidelines_EN.asp?; document adopted following an international symposium held in Montchanin (France), in November 2006.

30. Without knowledge of religions, there can be no proper understanding of history and civilisation or indeed of the contemporary world, or any meaningful access to the cultural heritage, be it literary, musical or in the sphere of visual arts. This form of knowledge is not a departure from secularism but, on the contrary, an extension of it, a real finishing touch, as it involves giving citizens access, whatever their religious affiliations or lack of them, to a common culture according to secular criteria of knowledge gradually constructed on the strength of critical analysis.

31. Education towards youth on broader topics such as tolerance, respect for others and human rights is also important. Schools have a role to play in building resilience and in the prevention of radicalisation regardless of ideology. Young people are particularly vulnerable to discourses inciting to hate and violence since they are in a formative period, involving a struggle in forming their identity. Such identity crises can be used by recruiters for extremist groups skilled in providing youth with clear, black and white answers to life's problems. On the other hand, vulnerable though they may be, young people are also strong allies in combating manifestations of hate (as is shown by their active participation through the social media for the Council of Europe No Hate Speech campaign).

32. In May 2015, in a political declaration adopted by the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers, the foreign ministers from across Europe called for the development and utilisation of tools for education for democratic citizenship, intercultural education and history teaching, as part of the organisation's strategy to tackle radicalisation.)¹¹

2.1. Education in secularism (freedom of conscience and religion within the framework of the law), democracy and human rights for citizens of all ages

33. Secularism, democracy and human rights form a coherent whole. Legal principles and codes of ethics are indispensable. This is an area of learning for both local authority staff and the public. Local and regional officials themselves must acquire a historical and philosophical perspective enabling them to properly understand a general state of mind and to find for and by themselves the right posture in their dealings with the public. A posture in which they are open, caring and firm with regard to principles. On the other hand local and particularly regional authorities who have a large mandate on the organisation and facilities of primary and secondary education, are well placed to use their funds and means at their disposal to supplement national education curricula with special education and training programmes adapted to different age groups where a coherent programme on religion and fundamental rights education can be delivered to their inhabitants.

2.2. Education for religious officials

34. The education and training of religious officials differs widely from one European country to another. It is clear that it would be extremely beneficial for all the representatives of the main religions present in a country to be able to share a common culture, irrespective of their own specific resources and training systems. There are certain difficulties attached to this task: in the case of Islam (and also new religions), there is a lack of training in many member States for religious officials and a lack of what some writers refer to as a "European Islam" that is stable and attractive enough in both religious and material terms, for high-quality candidates to become Muslim clergymen.

35. This particularity notwithstanding, Muslim community leaders and communities are well situated to take an active role in influencing young people who have turned to extremism and as such must be seen by local authorities as partners in prevention of violence. In the case of radical mosques, cities need to be able to put pressure when necessary and clearly defend values of freedom and democracy. Local authorities can play a role here by facilitating encounters between representatives of different religious communities to enable a transfer of information and knowledge. They can set up structures and assign officials to deal with questions of inter-faith dialogue, secularism and cultural diversity within their municipalities.

36. In any event, it is certain that there is a real need for hospital, army or prison chaplaincy services and these may be budgeted for by public authorities. For example in France, under Article 2 of the Law of 1905, the Republic does not recognise, remunerate or subsidise any religion. However, expenses related to the services of a chaplaincy and intended to ensure the free exercise of religion in public

¹¹ http://www.coe.int/en/web/edc/-/european-ministers-call-for-a-competence-framework-for-the-exercise-of-democratic-citizenship?redirect=http://www.coe.int/en/web/edc/news?p_p_id=101_INSTANCE_noRbLG3dmWqr&p_p_lifecycle=0&p_p_state=normal&p_p_mode=view&p_p_col_id=column-1&p_p_col_count=1

establishments such as upper and lower secondary schools, primary schools, hospitals, asylums and prisons, may be included in these budgets.

2.3. Education for municipal staff and security officers

37. As mentioned above in 4.2.1, local authority staff, who are called upon to interact with the inhabitants in neighbourhoods and municipal offices, need to be trained on the legal principles, and acquire a historical and philosophical perspective so that they can understand their citizens' mindset and adopt the right posture in their dealings with the public on these questions. Elected representatives should also keep in mind that the security of their own staff (in particular municipal security officers) is also an issue and include awareness-raising among councillors on this aspect of security-related training. Local authorities should plan ahead and allocate the necessary funds in their budgets for related training costs.

3. Dialogue and working together

38. Working together means bringing groups of people for implementing joint projects without sharing the same religious beliefs. It is not enough to talk about "living together" in abstract terms. Local authorities must take action for federating people's efforts from different cultures and religions. Relevant activities might include visits to different places of worship or the establishment of an annual intercultural or interfaith forum or festival. This could be accompanied by the institution of a council for intercultural and interfaith relations, as a focus for multilateral exchanges of view. All kinds of events bringing people together (shared neighbourhood meals, concerts, festivals; trips; initiatives showing solidarity with those who are isolated or in ill health; environmental protection projects) are also suitable for this purpose and, in fact, is already being implemented by associations, citizen initiatives or NGOs in all members States. There are a number of associations already operating along these lines. These initiatives deserve to be identified and supported. Local authorities can be coordinators of such activities, giving citizens support, including funds, places to meet, training programmes, teachers, etc. They must also consider these issues as ordinary budget items with stable long term financing.

39. As the Congress has already underlined in its Guidelines for combating radicalisation, the choice of credible partners in such coordination is crucial. Transparency in local authority dealings with ethnic or religious associations when granting them financial support is important. Local authorities should be careful not to build alliances with the wrong partners but with credible ones and should strive for well-established routines for transparency concerning how allocated resources are spent. There may be circumstances where cities have difficulties handling the situation themselves. In these cases, it will be useful to get help from the regional or even national level.

40. Local authorities' role in promoting dialogue and establishing partnerships will be more effective and valid in the long term if certain conditions are met from the outset: -respect for legality; promotion of equality between women and men;- religious neutrality and non-discrimination; transparency in all their activities.¹² Local authorities should reinforce their policies by including a gender dimension that takes into account the situation of women and by mainstreaming of successful practice on the ground.

4. Good practices examples: cities initiating dialogue

41. The dissemination of good practices undertaken by cities in different parts of Europe is a very important part of this exercise. Examples of local and regional initiatives are numerous: Vilvoorde in Belgium has set up structures and appointed a local official dealing exclusively with questions of inter-religious dialogue, secularism and "living together". Rotterdam in the Netherlands, where cities or regions tries to identify the issues within various communities, including the young Muslim community; Catalonia in Spain where a "Parliament of Religions" was convened in 2011 to discuss religion and modernity, North-Rhein Westphalia in Germany where the local authorities are offering counselling sessions for families of radicalised youth, Aarhus in Denmark where the city is redesigning neighbourhoods to break up ghettos or Copenhagen where a photo competition for young people on 'Religion in Copenhagen' provoked widespread positive engagement; Botkyrka in Sweden where an anti-rumour strategy is implemented by the Antirumours Network for Diversity which targets prejudices, rumours and stereotypes; Ordinary Heroes initiative in Bosnia and Herzegovina to overcome mutual distrust that is creating barriers to peaceful coexistence, to cite a few.

¹² 12 Guidelines for interfaith dialogue at local level, Gods in the City, 2007.

42. The Council of Europe Intercultural Cities (ICC) network which supports cities in reviewing their policies through an intercultural lens and developing comprehensive intercultural strategies to help them manage diversity positively and realise the diversity advantage is a source of valuable information on good practices related to diversity and intercultural, interreligious activities. The ICC thematic reports and policy briefs on the intercultural approach in different types of urban policies and the Intercultural City Step by Step – practical guide to applying the urban model of intercultural integration¹³ are very useful tools for local authorities in their related activities.

E. CONCLUSIONS

43. The rapporteurs would underline that the Council of Europe and the Congress have made available a wide range of reference texts, debate forums, information and data for the use of all levels of public authorities with regard to intercultural and interfaith activities during the last decade. It is the sad international context of the day which has once again prompted the Congress to launch a reminder of the principles that should guide the work of local and regional authorities in Council of Europe member States.

44. Local authorities' concern with religious diversity and interfaith dialogue needs to be reflected in concrete terms in local social, education, sports, planning and cultural policies and in their relations with local associations, thus giving it a transversal dimension. As such it must influence and inform all fields of activity rather than constituting a specific area.

45. Awareness needs to be raised among local authorities on existing good practice to show those local authorities which may feel that they are not equipped to organise intercultural or interreligious dialogue that cities and local associations throughout Europe have significant experience in projects which can serve as a good resource.

46. The rapporteurs propose to include in the toolkit which this report introduces, the following documents and information:

- Information on the context of the toolkit, i.e. Congress strategy to combat radicalisation;
- Guidelines to combat radicalisation at grassroots level in booklet form;
- 12 Guidelines for interfaith dialogue at local level in leaflet form;
- Main Congress and Council of Europe reference texts downloaded on a USB key including a link to the ICC webpage for good practice examples;
- Three factsheets entitled “awareness”, “education” and “dialogue and working together” which summarise the corresponding parts of this report.

47. These documents will be produced and put together by an external agency in a package that the Congress will make available on its website and seek to translate into as many European languages as resources permit, if possible through voluntary contributions of member States.

48. The rapporteurs invite the local authorities to make full use this concrete tool so that it can contribute to an issue that is a huge challenge for Europe's local authorities. They encourage local authorities to continue to develop their own tools tailored to their context and to share these with their counterparts in other countries.

¹³ <http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/cultureheritage/culture/Cities/ICCstepbystepAugust2012.pdf>;
http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/cultureheritage/culture/Cities/documents_en.asp