

## 12 GUIDELINES FOR IMPROVING UNDERSTANDING OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES IN INTERFAITH DIALOGUE

When it comes to interfaith dialogue, local authorities sometimes find it hard to strike the right balance between not interfering and not remaining indifferent. In our societies where freedom of conscience and freedom of religion are the rule, it is not for the authorities to initiate such dialogue.

To improve understanding of local authorities' role here, the Congress held two conferences in Montchanin (France) in 2006 and 2010, attended by elected representatives, academics and representatives of international and faith organisations.

The discussions and exchanges of best practices focused mainly on local authorities' role in interfaith dialogue, the principles of secularism, religious education practices, training of religious leaders and funding of places of worship.

The 12 guidelines produced following the conferences centred on the themes of:

- ▶ knowledge;
- ▶ understanding of the local religious situation;
- ▶ understanding between participants in the dialogue;
- ▶ establishing partnerships.

## ORGANISING INTERCULTURAL AND INTERRELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES

A TOOLKIT FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES

The aim of the toolkit developed by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe is to inform local elected representatives about the issues involved in combating radicalisation and promoting intercultural and interreligious dialogue, while encouraging them to be more active in this field.

**Hard copy** : English – French – German – Italian – Russian – Turkish

**Electronic version** : 36 languages covering all Council of Europe countries

The 36 language versions can be downloaded from the site:

[www.coe.int/congress-intercultural](http://www.coe.int/congress-intercultural)  
[congress.intercultural@coe.int](mailto:congress.intercultural@coe.int)



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### www.coe.int

The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It comprises 47 member states, 28 of which are members of the European Union. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities is an institution of the Council of Europe, responsible for strengthening local and regional democracy in its 47 member states. Composed of two chambers – the Chamber of Local Authorities and the Chamber of Regions – and three committees, it brings together 648 elected officials representing more than 200 000 local and regional authorities.

## WHY A TOOLKIT FOR USE BY LOCAL ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES?

The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe has been working for over 20 years to promote a more inclusive and more resilient society.

The attacks committed in Europe in recent years have highlighted the issue of the increasing radicalisation of certain sections of the population, the spread of new forms of hate speech and the stigmatisation of some of our communities. As a response to these trends and to encourage towns and regions to be more active in this area, in 2015 the Congress adopted a Strategy to Combat Radicalisation at Grassroots Level and drew up guidelines for public action.

The purpose of the toolkit developed by the Congress is to inform local and regional authorities more effectively about these new issues.

The toolkit for organising intercultural and interreligious activities includes:

- Four special files giving quick access to the online resources listed on the site [www.coe.int/congress-intercultural](http://www.coe.int/congress-intercultural);
- Guidelines for local and regional authorities on preventing radicalisation and manifestations of hate at the grassroots level;
- 12 principles for interfaith dialogue at local level.

## RESOURCES FOR GUIDING LOCAL ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES

### A database that is easy to access

The Congress has set up a website to give local and regional authorities direct access to relevant information and resources concerning the issues of combating radicalisation, intercultural and interreligious dialogue, democratic citizenship and building inclusive societies.

The site [www.coe.int/congress-intercultural](http://www.coe.int/congress-intercultural) is a database created for this purpose, where all the available resources are listed, organised and regularly updated in four categories:

- Legal resources of the Council of Europe and its entities;
- Academic resources;
- Education and training programmes;
- Best practice.

### Special files giving quick access to the Congress database

The toolkit contains four files giving quick access to the data on the website. The resources can be accessed directly via a URL or simply by flashing the QR code on each one.

Other such files will be added.

## GUIDELINES ON PREVENTING RADICALISATION AT THE GRASSROOTS LEVEL

Prevention and reintegration of radicalised individuals are the two approaches advocated in the “Guidelines on preventing radicalisation and manifestations of hate at the grassroots level” adopted by the Congress in October 2015.

In the face of radicalisation and violent extremism, repression alone is not the solution. To combat these trends, it is vital to take preventive action. This is local authorities’ area of action *par excellence*.

Through a range of practical examples, the guidelines call on local and regional authorities to promote:

- ▶ good public information sending a message of cohesion;
- ▶ training of the various players on the ground and education in families and schools, ensuring respect for cultural diversity and human rights;
- ▶ the design of local multi-agency strategies, involving local partners.

The guidelines underline the need for local and regional authorities to support deradicalisation programmes and involve civil society in their action.