



CONFERENCE OF INGOs  
OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

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CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

## **Contribution by the Conference of INGOs to the Ministers' Deputies' thematic debate**

### **“Rising extremism, radicalisation and xenophobia in the fight against terrorism: Building inclusive societies as a cure / The need for collective action”**

Firstly, on behalf of the Conference of INGOs, I would like to thank you for this opportunity to contribute to your thematic debate.

Europe is in the depths of a political crisis, reflected in the growth of populist parties, the increasing number of terrorist attacks, the humanitarian crisis prompted by the influx of refugees and, at the same time, the ongoing economic crisis and the accompanying austerity measures which affect and amplify discrimination and social exclusion. In this context, this thematic debate is highly significant as we believe that it is intended to protect the European values of diversity and inclusion.

The text I will present to you is based on the contributions of the 22 INGOs whose names are given at the end of this document.

My summary of the contributions has been arranged under three sub-headings: (1) the impact on NGOs of the fight against terrorism; (2) the fight against radicalisation; (3) building inclusive societies. This last section contains examples of specific projects which the INGOs wished to share with you.

#### **The impact on NGOs of the fight against terrorism:**

Firstly, it should be stressed that the fight against terrorism is not a specific task of the NGOs and yet I notice that more and more frequently the authorities are attempting to assign such a role to organised civil society. However, the chief role of NGOs is to create and nurture solidarity, not to fight against terrorism in the true sense of the term. Building solidarity is a challenge we share and a joint common policy to be pursued through public action and the action of associations and citizens. The question we should all be trying to answer therefore is whether the measures introduced to combat terrorism are democratic.

The INGOs note that the rhetoric and the fight against terrorism have an impact on associations. There is a major ambiguity about the situation: on the one hand, NGOs are seen by the authorities as potential arenas for radicalisation while on the other their activities are seen as means of combating radicalisation. The INGOs find this ambiguous attitude very difficult to stomach. They are subject to excessive controls and are sometimes punished with no regard for the principles of legality, necessity and proportionality which measures taken by the authorities should comply with.

Upholding the state of emergency in connection with the fight against terrorism is an example of a measure which runs counter to NGOs' rights. On this subject we can cite the words of France's Defender of Rights, Jacques Toubon, who condemned this decision at a press conference on 26 February 2016. On this occasion he said that the state of emergency permitted the implementation of administrative police measures based on suspicion and that this created an administrative police system which limited the power of judges and, on the whole, restricted freedoms and lessened guarantees. Any legal responses must provide civil

society with an assurance that its participation will be promoted, that it will be protected on the ground and that it will not be punished.

INGOs which combat Islamophobia and human rights INGOs regret and condemn the unreasonable searches and seizures and house arrests based on unfounded accusations which are being carried out, along with the desecration of mosques. The state of emergency decreed by the French Government has paved the way for a discriminatory policy against the Muslim minority in France. It has to be said that, faced with this threat, France's imams have said nothing and there has been little mobilisation from the Muslim community. INGOs are working to publicise these injustices and to assist the victims directly. Some NGOs have noted that radical Islam can lead to violence against states governed by the rule of law and that integration of individuals can only take place when they have a desire to "live together". In this connection acts of violence by groups from immigrant backgrounds against transgender persons backfire on the perpetrators and represent a threat to diversity.

We all know that public debate itself contributes to the growth of extremism. We have to pay attention and avoid singling out scapegoats which prevent us from dealing with true emergencies. Today, the true emergencies are all social and educational ones. The polarisation of debate which divides people into "good" and "bad" citizens destroys social cohesion.

### **The fight against radicalisation**

There is a consensus among INGOs that the roots of radicalisation lie in the identity crisis of young people and adults who are victims of social and economic inequalities and/or the loss of their reference points when faced with international conflicts and the associated ideologies. Young people rebel when they see their parents and grandparents suffer from exclusion. Efforts to foster the participation and integration of older people can help to eliminate some of the causes of alienation and frustration which make young people prone to radicalisation.

There is a need to take account of gender perspective in all our preventive efforts and attempts to distance people from every type of extremism, and particular attention should be paid to young girls in all of this. Our European values are completely non-negotiable, particularly those relating to the rights of women and LGBT persons. At European and international level statistics show that transgender persons are disproportionately more affected by harassment and violence.

The manipulation of religion is a constant risk. This can also be generated by populist movements which use the people's religious beliefs in their political influence strategies. The freedom of thought of believers and non-believers and their right to express their beliefs is under threat in some countries of the world, as is shown by the [report of the International Humanist and Ethical Union \(IHEU\)](http://freethoughtreport.com/download-the-report/) available here: <http://freethoughtreport.com/download-the-report/>. Even though it is still very badly regarded in religious spheres, the need to involve LGBT persons, particularly in churches, is stressed by some denominational NGOs.

However, public policies which target only minorities are stigmatising. Talking about minorities in terms of recognising their right to exist is very dangerous because this walls them into the narrowest confines of their identity. The term "minority" prompts discrimination in itself as it includes the idea of a numerical reckoning. It has therefore to be emphasised that different social and ethnic groups are not subject to the same racism or the same form of discrimination. However, there can be no question of establishing some sort of hierarchy in this respect. The suffering that people endure cannot be calculated. The fight against racism has to be universal, otherwise it may become a source of discrimination in itself.

Migrants and refugees make up this “visible minority”, vulnerable to violence and stigmatisation. Many INGOs have spoken about and described the efforts they are making, involving members of the public who have volunteered to help “newly-arrived” migrants (see the examples below). They point to an imbalance in the sharing of responsibilities at governmental level. The fact that some countries have accepted very few if any migrants in the relocation process is a major problem. The measures taken by the EU and member states do not seem to sit easily with respect for human rights. The INGOs have made public statements and issued joint press releases in which they speak out against the demise or dramatic weakening of the Schengen agreements. Governments have a responsibility to find solutions to the current “refugee crisis”, in keeping with the 1951 Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its additional protocol.

The INGOs observe that public discourse which contains the terms “radicalisation” and “extremism” has purely negative connotations and portrays migrants and refugees as high-risk individuals. It is important therefore to use non-discriminatory language when talking about radicalisation. Being radical can lead to positive change and help shape mainstream thinking without necessarily developing into extremism.

Intercultural education and training designed to develop specific skills in intercultural dialogue should be available to everyone and even compulsory, if it is part of the school curriculum. In addition to school education tailored to culturally diverse societies, education for citizenship and human rights should be part of the school culture and should involve practical and participatory learning. That would encourage youth participation and protect young people against the various forms of radicalisation.

At local level, there is a need to make greater use of social mediation and encourage the development of neighbourhood associations that run social activities for young people (sport, etc.) and families (allotments, etc.). Their role is crucial in preventing radicalisation. It is important, however, that all the actors involved maintain their professional ethics and standards. This applies even to those who work with radicalised youth. It is inconceivable that the professionals providing support for these individuals should no longer be required to observe their professional obligation to maintain confidentiality (doctors, social workers, etc.).

### **Building inclusive societies**

In the current global context, at a time when our planet is beset by challenges on the social, economic and environmental fronts, and when whole populations are having to leave their countries because of major conflicts, governmental crises, famine, natural disasters and terrorism, it is absolutely essential to channel all our energies into education and opportunities for intercultural contact. For all societies are formed through contact and the social bonds that knit those societies together.

Access to rights for all is the foundation for building inclusive societies, a process that begins at school. Every child must find his or her place in the school and feel welcome.

Without this foundation, any educational models and methods, no matter how sensitive to cultural and religious diversity, will be bound to fail. The INGOs encourage member states to plan for long-term investment in high-quality education and to ring-fence it from deficit-cutting measures.

Building inclusive societies requires collective and participatory intelligence from all the actors involved. This kind of dynamic helps generate initiatives like the ones cited below:

**International Federation for Housing and Planning (IFHP);** In August 2015 the Federation put in place the *Housing of Refugees* project in Denmark. The INGO, which is a network of professionals and experts, develops politically unbiased solutions. The INGO has identified 7 considerations that must be taken into account when turning a house into a residential centre and has linked the actual distribution of housing to the integration process. This work is presented in the report which you can download by clicking on the following

link: [http://www.ifhp.org/sites/default/files/staff/IFHP\\_ones\\_Refugees\\_final.pdf](http://www.ifhp.org/sites/default/files/staff/IFHP_ones_Refugees_final.pdf). This type of project is also being developed for various vulnerable groups: young adults, families, and elderly people at risk of exclusion. There is a blog accompanying this project: <http://housingrefugees.ifhp.org/>.

**AFS Belgium Flanders**, member of the **European Youth Forum**, is one of the 12 co-ordination youth organisations in Flanders contributing to the *Refugee Inn* project, which will commence in March 2016 and was initiated by the *Conseil national de la jeunesse flamande* (the National Flemish Youth Council) (De Ambrassade – bureau for youth affairs). In the context of this project, 100 unaccompanied young refugees will be catered for in Flanders for a period of one year. The residential centre will be set up in one of the youth centres. Young volunteers from the organisations involved will conduct activities in the centre. They will be coached by more experienced volunteers from organisations which are members of the European Youth Forum and who have experience in working with refugees. AFS' contribution to the project will concern its educational work in the field of intercultural learning.

**International Office of Allotment and Leisure Garden Societies**. In Zonhoven, in the Limbourg region, the Flemish Federation of Leisure Garden Societies has launched a project called *De Hoeve*. Following the substantial rise in the cost of foodstuffs and the lack of know-how with regard to growing and preparing fruit and vegetables, this NGO set up a community farm with ecological and sustainable gardens. Some of the gardens are also reserved for disabled persons who wish to become integrated. The project provides assistance to those interested in running such gardens to help them find permanent employment, which is an important factor in preventing poverty.

#### **Council of Europe Conference of INGOs:**

The INGO dialogue toolkit – “from polarisation to participation”. The accumulation of unsolved problems in terms of diversity and migration over the past few years has led to a high level of human rights violations in European countries. To address this situation and mitigate its negative effects, the Council of Europe Conference of INGOs has drawn up a practical guide for conducting dialogue where it is most necessary. The aim is to provide a tool that is simple to use when conducting dialogue. The chosen approach is not one of “high-level culture” but to improve social cohesion and the management of human-rights based diversity issues <http://www.coe.int/fr/web/ingo/dialogue>

**“Learning to live better together with our different convictions” training course**. In a globalised world, the co-existence of different convictions, cultures, beliefs and religious “truths” may lead to conflict. How can we move on from the “pluri-convictional” to the “inter-convictional” so as to ensure that there is social cohesion? The Conference of INGOs (through its Education and Culture and Human Rights committees) and its NGO partners are holding a training course for the heads of INGOs and national associations and for people with educational responsibilities. <https://go.coe.int/oNZQH>

#### **INGOs which have made a contribution:**

B'nai B'rith International

Council for Justice, Equality and Peace (COJEP)

European Association of Teachers (EAT)

European Council of Police Trade Unions (CESP)

European Federation for Intercultural Learning (EFIL)

European Network Churches and Freedom (EN-RE)

European Network of Teacher Training Institutes (Comenius Association)

European Youth Forum

Initiatives of Change International (IFOC)

International Association of Youth and Family Judges and Magistrates (IAYFJM)

International Alliance of Women (IAW)

International Confederation of Professional and Intellectual Workers (CITI)

International Federation of Associations of the Elderly (FIAPA)

International Federation for Housing and Planning (IFHP)

International Humanist and Ethical Union (IHEU)

International Movement for the Apostolate in the Independent Social Categories (MIAMSI)

International Office of Allotment and Leisure Garden Societies

Pax Christi – International Catholic Peace Movement

PAX ROMANA International Catholic Movement for Intellectual and Cultural Affairs

Rotary international

Soroptimist International

Transgender Europe

Anna Rurka  
President  
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