

THE CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

Resolution 381 (2015)¹ Combatting radicalisation at grass-roots level: the role of local and regional authorities

1. The recent attacks in European and other cities have brought home once again the fact that terrorism is still a threat to peace and security, undermining democracy and its institutions and the fundamental values defended by the Council of Europe. Among the responses being developed from the Council of Europe perspective, the prevention of radicalisation is one of the most relevant components of the work of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe and one which provides scope for local and regional authorities to act.

2. The Congress has been working for the last two decades on subjects aiming at establishing inclusive and resilient communities as a protective shield and element to prevent and fight radicalisation at local and regional level. In this context, it has produced recommendations on tackling terrorism, the integration and participation of people of immigrant origin, intercultural and interfaith dialogue as well as resolutions on urban crime prevention, on the fight against racism at local and regional level and on education for democratic citizenship.

3. Responding to the invitation from the Secretary General of the Council of Europe to contribute to the Organisation's effort in this field and guided by relevant Congress texts, the Congress Bureau adopted, on 2 February 2015, a Congress strategy to combat radicalisation at grass-roots level (CG/BUR/2015(27)22), 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.

4. The Congress supports the approach put forward by the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly in its Resolution 2031 (2015) on the terrorist attacks in Paris: together for a democratic response, adopted in January 2015, which proposes a concerted, democratic and measured response from all levels of governance to radicalisation leading to terrorism. The Congress also takes note of the statement made by the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe to the effect that policies which respect human rights undermine support for radicalism among potential recruits and increase public trust in the rule of law.

5. In the light of the above, the Congress commits itself to:

a. compiling and updating the relevant texts of the Council of Europe and the Congress which promote citizen

participation, living together in diversity, social inclusion and cohesion, intercultural and interfaith dialogue, in particular the Additional Protocol to the European Charter of Local Self-Government on the right to participate in the affairs of a local authority (CETS No. 207);

b. establishing guidelines for local and regional authorities on preventing radicalisation and manifestations of hate at grass-roots level, to be adopted at its 29th Session in October 2015, based on the present resolution;

c. creating a pedagogical toolkit for use by local elected representatives when organising intercultural and interfaith activities;

d. developing training modules on human rights issues tailor-made for the needs of local and regional elected representatives and to make the forum Focusing on Human Rights, the first of which will take place in Graz on 28-29 May 2015, an annual or biennial targeted event, organised in co-operation with cities, regions and relevant institutions;

e. building on existing co-operation established with relevant networks such as the European Forum for Urban Security (Efus) and the European Coalition of Cities against Racism (ECCAR);

f. drawing up a road map to carry out the Congress strategy in 2015-16, ensuring the allocation of sufficient financial resources for its implementation in collaboration with possible partners, including a pilot phase and assessment scheduled for the end of 2015 and evaluation of the strategy's implementation in 2016.

6. The Congress invites the local and regional authorities of the member States of the Council of Europe to:

a. actively participate in concerted national action against extremism and radicalisation, including the drawing up, preparation and implementation of relevant policies in the prevention of and the fight against terrorism;

b. consider drawing up and implementing urban policies to combat radicalisation, addressing both urban development and security issues, taking inspiration from its Resolution 205 (2005) on cultural identity in peripheral urban areas: the role of local and regional authorities and Congress Resolution 57 (1997) on crime and urban insecurity in Europe;

c. engage, through their associations of local and regional authorities, with primary and secondary schools in order to foster citizenship education through curricular and extra-curricular activities including mentoring programmes, taking into account Congress Resolution 332 (2011) on education for democratic citizenship: tools for cities, and by investing in youth (civil) service;

d. develop a specific strategy concerning youth and to involve young people systematically in the work of the cities and regions to fight discrimination, exclusion and to promote dialogue, tolerance and freedom of expression, online and offline, notably via the social media, drawing on its Resolution 346 (2012) on youth and democracy: the

changing face of youth political engagement, and the Council of Europe campaign on No Hate Speech (2012-2015);

e. organise events fostering intercultural and interfaith dialogue and better relations between community groups, for example in the framework of the Congress' European Local Democracy Week, taking into account Congress Resolution 323 (2011) on meeting the challenge of interfaith and intercultural tensions at local level, and to meet regularly with local religious leaders, taking inspiration from the Council of Europe Annual Exchange on the Religious Dimension of Intercultural Dialogue;

f. develop projects involving disadvantaged neighbourhoods and detention centres under local authority responsibility, and ensure that humanitarian, social and security consequences of social segregation and institutional discrimination are an integral part of the said projects;

g. encourage social cohesion and inclusion through local initiatives such as neighbourhood councils or foreign residents' councils and co-operate closely with civil society organisations in order to tackle manifestations of social exclusion, discrimination and racism in particular against

disadvantaged groups, and to transform the challenge of living together in diversity into an advantage for the entire community, taking into account Congress Resolution 375 (2014) on promoting diversity through intercultural education and communication strategies;

h. define and introduce policies to protect and enhance the value of the cultural heritage of different social groups through citizen participation, drawing on the Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society (CETS No. 199, the "Faro Convention");

i. encourage cities to develop policies against terrorist attacks while ensuring that such policies do not infringe upon citizens' fundamental rights nor hinder in any way the democratic agenda for social inclusion and cohesion;

j. share their experiences in existing or yet to be created networks in order to ensure the best possible dissemination of good practices.

1. Debated and adopted by the Congress on 25 March 2015, 2nd Sitting (see Document CG/2015(28)14FINAL), rapporteur: Leen Verbeek, Netherlands (R, SOC).