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Riots in European cities: lessons and Council of Europe response

Report
Social, Health and Family Affairs Committee
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Summary

The term “riot” has often been applied to violent events of many different kinds. It is used to describe collective violence occurring in public places and taking the form of attacks on residents who belong to a given ethnic group and/or the police, together with vandalism accompanied by looting.

The report presented shows that this is a European phenomenon since France, the United Kingdom, Spain, the Netherlands, Denmark, Belgium and the Russian Federation have each been affected by rioting over the last three years. However, it has never been regarded by governments as an overall problem but rather as a matter of sporadic, isolated incidents.

Rioting is very often the outcome of several factors in combination, such as poverty, unemployment, unsuitable and unsanitary urban development, growing discrimination, and worsening of relations between the police forces and residents. All this produces effects of injustice and community isolationism with rioting as their most obvious and violent expression.

The report advocates co-ordination of actions in the framework of a European resource centre for urban security, already suggested by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe. Furthermore, empowerment of local authorities with regard to town planning and improvement of public services, introduction of strategies to fight all forms of discrimination, and reappraisal of the state’s relations with its citizens especially through the police stand out as necessary measures in preventing riots.

Contents **Page**

A. Draft resolution 3
B. Explanatory memorandum, by Mr Roland Blum 5
1. Introduction 5
2. Stocktaking in Europe 5
2.1. Race riots 5
2.2. Social and political riots 6
3. Causes 7
3.1. Poverty and unemployment 7
3.2. Dilapidated housing 7
3.3. Discrimination and social marginalisation 8
3.4. Resentment against the police 8
3.5. Media coverage 9
3.6. Others 9
4. Contrasting European responses 9
4.1. Law enforcement 9
4.2. Social dialogue 9
4.3. Urban renewal 10
4.4. Education and employment opportunities 10
4.5. Immigration and integration debates 10
5. Lessons and responses of the Council of Europe 11
5.1. European Resource Centre for Urban Security 11
5.2. Reinforcement of local authorities 12
5.3. Anti-discrimination tactics 12
5.4. Empowerment and participation in urban renewal 12
5.5. Reforge the link between the government and the public 12
5.6. Immigration and integration strategies 13
6. Proposals aimed at preventing new riots and improving crisis management 13

A. Draft resolution

1. The phenomenon referred to as riots designates a reality taking diverse forms and stemming from a multitude of causes, often manifested by acts of violence directed against individuals and against the state represented by its institutions (police, firemen). The most recent urban riots, in the United Kingdom, France and the Netherlands, have prompted a great deal of questioning and reflection on a social situation that has changed over the last thirty years.

2. The Parliamentary Assembly reiterates its long-term concern over the issue of urban riots, as evidenced by its various efforts on security and crime prevention in cities: setting up a European observatory (Recommendation 1531 (2001)), a dynamic social policy for children and adolescents in towns and cities (Recommendation 1532 (2001)) or integration of immigrant women in Europe (Resolution 1478 (2006)).

3. The Assembly also wishes to highlight the work of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities on the integration of migrants or urban security.

4. Accordingly, the Assembly calls for real awareness of this phenomenon commonly known as rioting – frequently misunderstood and regarded as minor – and urges the member states to introduce strategies to prevent such outbreaks occurring.

5. In this connection, the Assembly believes that the setting up of a resource centre for urban security would provide a means of pooling the many pieces of information gathered with a view to framing effective policies.

6. The Assembly and the Council of Europe have always made equal opportunities and the combating of all forms of discrimination absolute priorities.

7. Fully aware that riots are often the end result of a long process that has its roots in poverty, social exclusion and the diverse forms of discrimination, the Assembly believes that evenly spread efforts must be made towards all the citizens of European cities.

8. While every riot has its own characteristics, the Assembly nevertheless believes that global, concerted solutions must be found within a cross-sectoral approach involving the different players (residents, social services, police, educational sphere).

9. For these reasons the Assembly asks the member states to:

9.1. in the area of urban planning:

9.1.1. set up urban renovation schemes as soon as possible to rehabilitate dilapidated and insalubrious housing;

9.1.2. build new social housing on a human scale;

9.1.3. step up urban planning projects in terms of facilities and services in peripheral urban zones;

9.1.4. promote social mixing in all urban districts;

9.2. in the area of combating social exclusion:

9.2.1. introduce major policies to combat precariousness;

9.2.2. combat all forms of ethnic and social discrimination both on the labour market and in the allocation of housing, through public actions or awareness-raising campaigns;

9.2.3. introduce employment policies both promoting the recruitment of residents of disadvantaged areas and encouraging companies to set up in those areas;

9.2.4. step up efforts to build awareness and understanding among communities living on housing estates with respect to state services (police, firemen, administrative services);

9.2.5. support and intensify the efforts of the social and medical services and the voluntary sector working to maintain social bonds;

9.2.6. promote educational policies providing better career guidance for the younger members of communities, notably towards highly specialised fields, including skilled self-employment;

9.2.7. increase programmes aimed at integrating immigrants;

9.3. in the area of improving the state's role:

9.3.1. improve training for the law enforcement agencies with respect to both preventing and dealing with riots;

9.3.2. entrust action against all forms of crime on housing estates to experienced police officers;

9.3.3. combat all infringements of human rights, particularly in the areas of discrimination, racism, xenophobia and above all police brutality;

9.3.4. place emphasis on mediation and conciliation;

9.3.5. condemn and punish any excessive and unjustified use of force;

9.3.6. support and reinforce the role of local authorities in taking effective action and preventing new outbreaks of rioting;

9.4. as regards the media coverage and presentation of these events, the media should be encouraged to:

9.4.1. avoid any excessive and caricatural depictions of riots in the media;

9.4.2. avoid propagating stereotypes and other prejudices regarding life on housing estates and their residents;

9.4.3. promote the representation of people from diverse backgrounds in the media.

B. Explanatory memorandum, by Mr Roland Blum

1. Introduction

1. There is no general consensus on the definition of what constitutes a riot, and the term “urban unrest” is sometimes preferred. Some people perceive riots as uprisings, a form of urban rebellion against injustice. Others prefer to view them as a series of offences perpetrated by individuals often with antecedents, if not a police record. In any event, riots are a more or less violent means of expression for certain sections of the population who have no other means of making their voices heard.

2. The term “riot” has often been applied to many different kinds of violent events. It is used to describe collective violence in public places targeting ethnic groups (race riots) and/or the police, together with vandalism (setting fire to buildings or vehicles) and looting (of shops and car salesrooms, for instance).

3. Here we propose a basic definition, which constitutes a starting point for a debate, rather than an end in itself. A riot is the concentration in space and time of aggressive, destructive behaviour. Participants’ motives (racial tensions, social discrimination, conflicts with the police, commitment to a political or religious cause) are varied and poorly known, since few studies, if any, are devoted to them.

2. Stocktaking in Europe

4. The difficulty of defining riots and the fact that they take so many different forms partly account for the slow progress in trying to understand them. According to the European Forum for Urban Safety, “these situations are often the source of misunderstandings, fears, violence and turning in on oneself, as well as a loss of confidence in institutions and their ability to provide answers”.[1] Each country has a different way of recording the offences which constitute the basic components, the “building blocks”, of a riot (thefts, arson, destruction of vehicles, attacks on the police, physical assaults, etc.). Above all, adopting a criminal justice approach to the problem (via the police and the courts) results in a situation where the focus is on determining a specific individual’s liability for the commission of a given offence. The collective aspect of rioting is accordingly disregarded, although it is crucial to any attempt to take stock of the phenomenon.

5. It should be remembered that every riot takes place in a highly specific national context and that any uniform approach to the phenomenon must be eschewed. It is, however, possible to distinguish two types of riots, “race” or “ethnic” riots, which involve conflict between ethnic, linguistic or religious communities, and social and political riots, where confrontation focuses on social demands or disparities or on contesting the government. It is possible for the two types of riot to be combined, and for the causes of one to underpin those of the other.

2.1. Race riots

6. A “race riot” is defined as a violent outbreak of civil unrest in which race or ethnicity is a key factor. Often these riots reflect anger among socio-economically deprived racial minority groups in regards to police brutality, racial profiling, institutional racism, and urban decay. Race riots usually occur in deprived urban quarters with large ethnic minority communities and in a context of tensions with the police.

7. Britain was the first country in Europe to be confronted with race riots: it experienced them twice in the early 1980s, in Bristol in 1980 and, in particular, in Brixton in 1981. That year, 30 towns were affected, followed by another four in 1982, and there were serious outbreaks in 1985 (particularly in the Tottenham district of London). In 2001 there were “mini-riots” in Bradford, and then in Oldham and Burnley. In 2005, there were violent clashes in Birmingham between rioters and the police.

8. In 1981 in Brixton, these riots resulted in 300 police injuries, 65 serious civilian injuries, over 100 vehicles burned, nearly 150 buildings damaged, and 82 arrests and were followed by the Scarman report. It identified the lack of trust and communication between police and communities in multiracial inner cities to be a major cause of the riots. In addition, it highlighted frustrations stemming from endemic racial disadvantage in British society. The parliamentary report recommended a new emphasis on community policing and for increased representation of ethnic minorities in the police force. In addition, Lord Scarman strongly advised the government to combat racial disadvantage and the disproportionately high level of unemployment[2] among young black men in Brixton though positive discrimination.

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1. Saragossa Manifesto, European Forum for Urban Safety, 2-4 November 2006.
2. As high as 50-55%.

9. Britain was not the only European country to be affected by ethnic rights. Spain (El Ejido in February 2000, clashes between young Spaniards and Latin Americans in Alcorcón in October 2007), the Netherlands (Utrecht in March 2007 and Amsterdam in October 2007), Denmark (February 2008), Belgium (Anderlecht in May 2008) and the Russian Federation (clashes between Caucasians and Russians in Kondopoga in Karelia in September 2007) also experienced riots of this kind. Despite the complexity of the various factors involved in such riots, where immigration and religion, in particular Islam, can play a more or less important part, depending on the situation, outbreaks of violence of this kind can be described as ethnic riots.

10. Beyond Europe, notably in the United States, in Los Angeles, race riots had led to the death of several people in what we called the "Rodney King" riots, named after the defenceless black motorist Rodney King. Smaller riots were sparked in other American cities, notably Las Vegas, Atlanta, and San Francisco, and to a lesser extent in Oakland, New York, Seattle, Chicago, Phoenix, Madison, and Toronto (Canada).

2.2. Social and political riots

11. Social and political riots are very often a response to discrimination and social, economic, human and/or geographical exclusion. They take the form of violent reactions against the police or representatives of the government, who are held responsible for the social problems. As immigrants and foreigners are more affected by social discrimination, these riots may look like race riots, but the transition from a social riot to a race riot is never automatic and often depends on features specific to a particular country or region. In addition, as is borne out by the example of Denmark, social exclusion, even though it is a major factor, is not systematically responsible for triggering riots. In Denmark the employment rate of immigrants has increased by 50% over the last fifteen years, and it is discrimination and stigmatisation that tend to be the main causes of rioting.

12. France has been the country hardest hit by social riots, in what has been called the crisis in the suburbs, which is the result of several decades of unsuccessful urban policy, which has led to the establishment of "ghettos" in the suburbs where the working classes, impoverished workers and, among them, the various generations of immigrant workers, particularly from North Africa, have gradually settled. The lack of a social mix has exacerbated poverty and insecurity and, in particular, turned these suburbs into targets for discrimination. By association, new forms of discrimination and a form of racism against children of immigrants are taking place against a background of housing and labour problems, among others.

13. Whereas several riots tried to alert public authorities (Vénissieux in 1981, Vaulx-en-Velin in 1990), in October 2005 France had known an unprecedented wave of urban violence.

14. On the night of 25 October 2005, in the Parisian *banlieue* of Clichy-sous-Bois, two French youths of immigrant origin were electrocuted and another seriously injured when they hid in an electricity substation, allegedly fleeing police. That evening, cars were burnt in protest and local youth attacked police and public buildings; the rioting soon spread to neighbouring towns and *départements*, increasing in severity. Tensions rose when a tear-gas grenade was rumoured to have been used on a mosque in Clichy on 30 October, although this was later disproved, and on 2 November a disabled woman was badly burned when a bus was set on fire in Sevran, Seine-Saint-Denis.

15. A rallying point for rioters were recent statements made by the French Minister of the Interior, who described some *banlieue* residents as "racaille" (scum)[3] and expressed the wish to "nettoyer au Karcher" (clean with a power hose)[4] these areas. From 3 November 2005, the riots spread across France and to other countries, with rapidly increasing numbers of vehicles burned and arrests made; schools, nurseries, police stations, public buildings, and some religious centres were also targeted.

16. Levels of violence began to diminish after the declaration of a state of emergency for a period of twelve days (later extended to three months) on 8 November and were declared to have returned to normal on 17 November. In total, approximately 8 973 vehicles were burned, 2 888 people arrested (the youngest being 10 years old), and 126 police officers injured. A preliminary estimate by the French Federation of Insurance Companies valued the damage at over €200 million.

17. Recent violence in Montfermeil at the end of May and beginning of June 2006 and in Villiers-le-Bel in November 2007 has renewed fears that further violence could erupt at any time.

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3. Pronounced by the minister during a visit on 25 October to Argenteuil (Val-d'Oise) to observe the implementation of a new strategy to combat urban violence.

4. Promised by the minister to residents of "la cité des 4 000" in La Courneuve, Seine-Saint-Denis, following the death of 11-year-old Sidi Ahmed, who was shot during a clash between rival gangs.

18. There have also been clashes between the police and rioters in Italy. On each occasion, the target was representatives of the government, who were accused of acting against the will of the people. This was the case in the Genoa on the occasion of the G8 Summit in 2001, which led to one death and in Naples in December 2007 and January 2008 during the refuse crisis, when the people of Naples violently objected to an open-air rubbish dump that was polluting their environment. The violence spread through Italy: the transfer of rubbish to other provinces sparked off numerous clashes with the police in Sardinia, Puglia and the Abruzzi. There were also youth riots in Finland in 2006 and Sweden and Greece in 2007.

3. Causes

19. The various factors that spark off urban riots are a response, in each case, to a particular situation in which one or more of the factors described above act as triggers. Sometimes, one cause can lead to another, and there are examples where all the causes are present, in which case the violence is greatly exacerbated. This was true, for example, in 1981 in Brixton, which was faced with a large number of social problems identical to those in the French suburbs: high unemployment, widespread crime, housing unfit for habitation, a lack of amenities and a highly visible minority population. This was compounded by hostility towards the police, who, the young black people felt, were unjustly targeting them.

3.1. Poverty and unemployment

20. In all of the recent European incidents and historic examples cited, rioting occurred in poor, disadvantaged areas. In the French *banlieues* for example, the unemployment rate is double the national average, as is the school drop-out rate, household incomes are generally 40% lower, medical centres are half as numerous, and delinquency rates 50% higher. The low-wage, unskilled labour jobs and temporary postings[5] that characterise much of the employment in the *banlieues* are extremely vulnerable to fluctuations in the national economy. This precariousness and poverty feeds frustration and resentment, as well as a "nothing to lose" mentality that lowers inhibitions to violence. According to Alain Bertho, "young people, immigrants and those eking out a precarious existence are to the international city what workers used to be to the factory: the underdogs in a fragmented society".[6]

3.2. Dilapidated housing

21. *Banlieues* are often defined as declining peripheral areas with high densities of degraded public housing, also described as suburban ghettos. Most of Europe's massive housing projects were well-intentioned initiatives of the 1950s-1970s for housing impoverished people and immigrant workers.[7] This policy of grouping immigrant workers together in the same districts has not been conducive to a social mix and, with rising unemployment, they have been the target of xenophobic sentiment. In the Netherlands, for instance, districts where immigrant workers and foreigners are grouped together are known as black neighbourhoods, and not because of the pollution.

22. These rapidly constructed buildings, however, were not well maintained and many have deteriorated to the point of being inhumane, unsanitary and dangerous. Most families who can afford to leave the areas do so, thereby contributing to the concentration and ever-widening segregation of the most economically disadvantaged sections of society. Political concern for improving conditions is generally reactive rather than preventative. These nationwide policies, being rough-and-ready and improvised, have been generally ineffective.

23. France and Great Britain have invested to the greatest extent in this genre of large-scale social housing, and have also, perhaps consequently, suffered the greatest amounts of urban violence in these areas. Most of the incidents have involved the youth of poor, segregated and dilapidated urban neighbourhoods and appear to have been fuelled by growing racial tensions in and around these areas. Representatives of Belgium, Denmark, and Germany have all cited the relative lack of large social housing projects in their countries as a reason why they did not suffer the severity of rioting experienced in France. But

5. According to Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin, 70% of new contracts in France are temporary and half of these last less than a month; for young people, this proportion increases to four fifths.

6. International Conference, Anthropology of Globalized Cultures: Fieldwork in Complex Situations and Disciplinary Issues, Quebec, 7-11 November 2007.

7. The French Government's Ordinance of 2 November 1945 explicitly declared the desire to compensate war losses by including "good immigration elements into French society". Many other European countries similarly opened their doors to immigration for post-war reconstruction.

the problem is not whether or not a social housing policy is needed, but how to ensure more effective implementation of a social housing policy that provides for a social mix and town planning on a human scale, with two- or three-storey blocks or individual dwellings.

3.3. Discrimination and social marginalisation

24. Although most people who participated in the rioting are European citizens, often the second or third generation of immigrant families who have lived their entire lives on the continent, they are often cited as feeling isolated from European society and victims of stigmatisation and discrimination in terms of employment. "Young people want to smash everything up, because they have had enough of being called 'foreigners' and being turned down for jobs on the pretext that they don't speak Dutch well enough, when they were born here and have grown up here," says Aicha Azzough, a social worker in Slotervaart, a district of Amsterdam where violent riots took place in October 2007.[8]

25. In political discourse and the media, *banlieue* teenagers are regularly portrayed as threats, ranging from petty thieves and sexist fundamentalists to rapists and budding terrorists. According to studies in France, among candidates with identical credentials, a Maghreb-sounding name or an address in a "sensitive" neighbourhood is sufficient to render a job applicant five times less likely to receive an interview. This discrimination in employment, housing and education further handicaps a section of the population who are already excluded from society and subjected to social discrimination, and for whom violence is the only means of expressing themselves and making their demands heard. It is symptomatic that Slotervaart school had one of the worst records for underachievement.

26. In addition to the problem of inequality of opportunity and under-representation of visible minorities in business management and government, youth in certain countries lack role models of success outside of entertainers and sports stars. While some reforms have been undertaken to facilitate access to higher education, most European governments have been hostile to the idea of positive discrimination or affirmative action in order to increase hiring and representation of visible minorities. Schemes like that introduced by Richard Descoings, Director of the Institute of Political Studies (IEP) in Paris, who introduced special arrangements to provide access to the IEP for pupils from secondary schools in the suburbs, need to become widespread.

3.4. Resentment against the police

27. The large majority of the recent and historic incidents of rioting cited in this report have involved resentment of perceived targeting of visible minorities by police and/or excessive use of force and were most often sparked by a clash with police forces. Hard-line policing tactics to repress rioting have been frequently criticised as aggravating tensions and provoking further violence. In addition, the state of emergency decreed by the cabinet and proclaimed, after a vote, by the French National Assembly has been criticised by different organisations as they considered it as a repressive reminder of the colonial era.

28. To quote the French Strategic Analysis Centre, "The inhabitants' hostility towards the presence of the police in their neighbourhood is palpable, as is their lack of confidence in the government and the authorities generally."[9] The police, for instance, are seen as representing the government – the state – and, in particular, as its armed component, and are no longer considered by those who live in these neighbourhoods to be playing their role as independent arbiters in the resolution of conflicts. Resentment against the police is all the stronger as they not only symbolise a state that is considered unjust but also, as the rioters see it, perpetrate new injustices by carrying out repeated spot checks and, in some cases, committing serious blunders.

29. The conflict-ridden relations that often exist between visible minorities and the inhabitants of disadvantaged neighbourhoods can also be put down to the inexperience and lack of training of some police officers. Police forces in these sensitive areas are often made up of young police officers with no experience and, in particular, no training in the situations and problems that occur in these suburbs. More experienced, better-trained police could come up with more appropriate solutions, particularly in terms of preventive measures.

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8. *Libération*, 24 October 2007.
9. Centre d'analyse stratégique, "Les violences urbaines: une exception française? Enseignement d'une comparaison internationale", note de veille No. 31, 23 October 2006.

3.5. Media coverage

30. The role of the media in fuelling the violence has also been debated. Media tallies of car burnings had previously been accused of encouraging destruction of property by creating competition between different urban centres; certain news sources had therefore decided to refrain from publishing daily statistics. During the rioting of October and November 2005, most French media sources provided daily updates on levels of violence, as opposed to Belgium, where the government attempted to restrict publication of events in order to reduce the incentive for copycat crimes.

31. Some sources noted that the rioting provided an opportunity to attract public and government attention to often conveniently ignored neighbourhoods and populations suffering from a lack of effective legitimate communication channels; others warned that this type of negative media attention could result in further stigmatisation. In particular, foreign coverage of events tended to sensationalise the causes and extent of rioting, especially developments within France.

3.6. Others

32. Various politicians and media sources have, when talking about immigrant communities, in particular Muslims, who live on housing estates in these suburbs, made dangerous bids to win popularity by claiming that the rioting was fuelled by Islamic extremism and terrorism, polygamy and certain rap artists. In response, several NGOs and social groups launched accusations of racism, scapegoating, and attempting to divert public attention away from the existing economic and social problems.[10]

4. Contrasting European responses

4.1. Law enforcement

33. The degree of police response and repression in European countries varied according to the severity and perception of violence. In France, which experienced the most widespread and severe rioting, a national state of emergency extended police powers, authorised house searches without warrants and empowered local prefects to impose curfews and prohibit assembly of large groups. This act was criticised by many social groups and academics as extreme and an unwarranted limitation of individual rights, and several sources predicted that police militarisation would aggravate the situation; levels of violence, however, did steadily decline following its imposition.

34. In contrast, most other European governments treated events in their countries as isolated crimes lacking widespread social mobilisation and organisation; increased police powers or deployment was therefore judged unnecessary. City officials in Belgium, the second most affected country, preferred to reinforce existing preventative measures and methods of social controls rather than employ hard-line police tactics. The German Minister of the Interior described events of violence as isolated copycat crimes and was more concerned with challenges of integration rather than law enforcement. Similarly, the Danish Prime Minister referred to events in Århus as “pranks”, dismissing claims by the Danish People’s Party that disturbances should be treated as terrorist acts under new anti-terrorism legislation and also rejecting demands by some local politicians for tougher policing and zero-tolerance measures.

35. These varied reactions reflect the lack of an overall perception of a situation that is deeper-rooted and underestimated in its complexity. Politicians are still somewhat ill-equipped to grasp the problem. Despite the work of the European Forum for Urban Safety, the subject has still not been investigated, particularly as politicians often deny its seriousness in order to avoid bringing to light their own failures on this front.

4.2. Social dialogue

36. Many governments planned to renew efforts of social dialogue in order to understand and address the underlying frustrations and motivations to violence. Danish police officials pronounced the intention of addressing the disturbances though fostering dialogue involving the young people and their parents, social workers, the police, teachers, and housing association members. Likewise, the Belgian police force wished to prevent as much as possible the opposition of police and youth by opening a dialogue with youth in sensitive neighbourhoods. Many governments of minimally affected countries, such as Britain, Germany, Italy, Spain,

10. Notably the Mouvement contre le racisme et pour l’amitié entre les peuples (MRAP), SOS Racisme, and the Ligue des droits de l’Homme.

the Netherlands and Greece, acknowledged the rioting as a warning of what could erupt in their own countries without the undertaking of preventative social outreach to address segregation, unemployment, and social alienation.

4.3. Urban renewal

37. The concentration of rioting in deteriorated *banlieues* across France renewed that government's attention on revitalising "sensitive" urban areas under the 2003 National Urban Renewal Programme;[11] emphasis has been placed on addressing architectural, economic, and social concerns through the improvement of living conditions.[12]

38. Disadvantaged sections of society and visible minorities very often live in remote districts that have been opened up on the outskirts of cities (near railway lines or airports), where one encounters a succession of dilapidated, badly maintained tower blocks 20 or so floors high. This situation is compounded by the fact that local shops have closed down and there are no social amenities (community centres, libraries, cafés or playgrounds). This is hardly an ideal setting for young people, who are also subjected to numerous forms of discrimination. As the President of a Colombian NGO in Madrid said in connection with the riots in Alcorcón, "There is a shortage of public spaces and sports facilities for all these young people... Let us try and find out why these young people, both Spaniards and foreigners, spend so much time in the street. The fact that they tend to be left to their own devices by their families is a serious cause for concern."[13]

39. In Denmark, a government panel responsible for finding strategies to prevent the formation of ghettos recommended offering economic incentives such as housing credits or tax breaks to people with full-time employment living in at-risk areas.[14] The European Union is also employing an urban development strategy that prioritises local involvement in decision making and national/ regional partnerships in order to combat ghettoisation, discrimination, and the social exclusion of immigrants in the outskirts of large European cities.[15]

4.4. Education and employment opportunities

40. The social response to the rioting by the French Government was mainly concentrated on reducing unemployment in *banlieue* areas, especially among youth, combating hiring discrimination, and fostering equality of opportunity. In terms of education, 5 000 extra teachers and assistants will be recruited for the areas concerned, 250 "education success teams" established, and public careers guidance offered at all universities.

41. As part of an employment strategy to create a more inclusive European labour market, the European Commission has designed the EQUAL initiative to test different ways of tackling discrimination and overcoming barriers to employment; innovative techniques, such as community-based micro-credit financing in the informal economy, have achieved high sustainability rates and have effectively reached traditionally marginalised populations.

4.5. Immigration and integration debates

42. Currently, most European countries have very restrictive immigration policies but continue to suffer from illegal immigration and rising racial tensions. As a result of ageing demographic and declining birth rates, most of these countries are projected to become increasingly dependent on immigration in order to maintain an economically viable ratio of active workers to total population.[16] Spain, for instance, regularised nearly 700

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11. With €5 billion designated for 2004-13, the programme includes the construction of 50 000 new subsidised rental housing units, the rehabilitation of 400 000 existing units and the demolition of 250 000 units.
12. A potential danger that has been identified, however, is that reconstructed buildings often have higher rents than those demolished, thereby ironically pushing those tenants intended as the principal beneficiaries of these improvements to other non-renovated areas and further concentrating and segregating the most impoverished sections of society.
13. *La Croix*, 24 January 2007.
14. The principal idea, based on the experience of the Vollsmose housing project in Odense, is to encourage more stable residents to move in and to discourage residents from moving out once they find employment, thereby increasing overall employment rate. Henning Kirk Kristensen, chairman of a housing association in Vollsmose, agreed that economic incentives were a good idea, but urged that they need to be part of a broader plan addressing community facilities, schools and social issues.
15. In combination with local and national co-financing, including the private sector, URBAN II will provide €1.6 billion financing to 70 programmes (covering 2.2 million inhabitants) concentrating on physical and environmental regeneration, social inclusion, training, entrepreneurship and employment.

000 undocumented immigrants in 2005. The problems and limitations of national immigration and integration strategies that were revealed by the recent urban violence have consequently renewed discussion of the effectiveness of European immigration policies and triggered varied proposals for change.

43. The Amsterdam-based Euro-Mediterranean Centre for Migration and Development (EMCEMO) is conducting several schemes to improve the integration of migrants in western societies. One of them, entitled "Multicultural migration, development and integration", is designed, *inter alia*, to highlight the contribution made by people of immigrant origin to the development of any society and to bring about a change in attitude to people of immigrant origin, so that the public are more receptive to foreigners and all they have to offer.

44. In response to the rioting, the French Government tightened existing legislation regarding family reunification and the acquisition of French nationality. The Interior Minister also reiterated his proposal of a quota-based immigration system, which has met with considerable political resistance. An alternative proposition, inspired by the Canadian system, was immigration based on the principal of human capital, with a points system determining eligibility based on a variety of qualities, such as level of education, trade skills, and language capacity.[17] On 20 June 2006, the Danish Government announced the introduction of a green card permit to attract skilled foreign workers that would similarly allocate points to potential skilled immigrants; the new system has widespread support, including the traditionally anti-immigration Danish People's Party.

45. In addition, the events may speed the trend in certain countries in Europe towards formal integration programmes of a mandatory nature. The German Ministry for Internal Affairs was particularly concerned with incidents of violence being symptomatic of current integration challenges, especially in terms of educational under-achievement and language capacity.

46. In Britain, after the 1981 Brixton riots, several measures recommended in the Scarman, Denham and Cantle reports were taken, in particular to promote dialogue between communities at local level through mediation and take more account of the community dimension in public policy (education, employment, social mix, etc.).

47. Lastly, in the Netherlands, which the rapporteur visited on 29 and 30 May 2008, they have a minister with specific responsibility for integration and improving urban neighbourhoods. The minister, Ms Elle Vogelaar, has opted for a geographical approach under which 40 "problem" neighbourhoods are covered by cross-sectoral policies (housing, employment, education, security, fight against alcoholism, etc.). The various measures are taken in consultation with local stakeholders (school heads, police, neighbourhood associations and ordinary citizens), leading to more effective implementation on the ground.

5. Lessons and responses of the Council of Europe

5.1. European Resource Centre for Urban Security

48. Considering the contagious nature of rioting and its spread across national borders, an inter-European institution is essential to facilitate co-operation and the sharing of information. The European Resource Centre for Urban Security could act as a key co-ordinator between national agencies to compare effective policing tactics for addressing urban violence and social initiatives for preventing further outbreaks of rioting.

49. It was to this end that the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, through one of its rapporteurs, Mr Jean-Marie Bockel, suggested setting up a such a centre, on the grounds that "there seemed to be an urgent need to set up a permanent structure for the development of a common methodology for collecting data, exchanging information on trends in national situations, innovative initiatives and examples of good practice".[18] The centre could help the agencies addressing various aspects of urban security to pool their efforts. In addition, it should make it possible to devise and oversee comprehensive, cross-sectoral policies and foster awareness of this major problem.

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16. For example, studies by the Institut National de la Statistique et des Études reveal a need to increase the annual positive migratory balance from 50 000 in 2000 to 250 000 in 2020 to ensure the renewal of the French labour force.

17. According to comparative studies on the effects of governmental institutions on national perceptions and responses to immigration, racial conflict in Europe may be aggravated by institutionally derived negative perceptions of immigrants as potential social burdens. In contrast, the implementation of a human-capital system in Canada over ten years ago has reduced tensions by transforming the public perception of immigrants as economic assets in a planned, carefully controlled programme of national development.

18. "Urban security in Europe", Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, rapporteur: Jean-Marie Bockel (SOC, France), March 2006.

5.2. Reinforcement of local authorities

50. The effectiveness of prevention and response tactics to social unrest and rioting depends on their relevance to local conditions. Local authorities have the greatest knowledge and sensitivity to the specific challenges and needs of their neighbourhoods and residents; the Council of Europe should therefore concentrate on reinforcing the capacity of these officials to prevent and respond to rioting. The role of inter-European agencies and national bodies should be the supporting and co-ordinating of local initiatives, promoting the integration of security, urban and youth policies into a mutually reinforcing framework, and helping to tailor and adapt global policies in response to local demands. That is the case, for example, in the district of Slotervaart in Amsterdam, where the mayor, Ahmed Marcouch, has initiated joint co-ordination arrangements for involving both the local (district and city) and national (state) levels in preventing new unrest. This shows how local approaches can defuse the escalation of violence.

51. This mutually reinforcing framework will enable local authorities to take appropriate action to get to the root of the problems that trigger riots. Towns need additional resources for preventive ends (security, effectiveness of local public services, town planning, sustainable development) and educational purposes (youth policies), in order to transform the violence and fear that so often underlie such riots into an open attitude to others.

5.3. Anti-discrimination tactics

52. As a human-rights organisation, the Council of Europe has an important role to play in the area of combating racism and discrimination. The European Urban Charter II adopted by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities provides that “our towns and cities must also be rid of all forms of stigmatisation of particular groups, which are seriously detrimental to the sense of belonging to an urban community and which, more often than not, are the root of the urban violence, antisocial behaviour and insecurity that is painfully felt by our urban citizens, particularly the most vulnerable among them”.[19] Efforts made to improve equality of opportunity will enhance social mobility and increase the relative costs of engaging in violent activity for individuals who feel that they have “nothing to lose”. Further studies should be conducted as to the effectiveness of positive discrimination and other potential policies for decreasing hiring discrimination against groups disadvantaged by ethnicity, age or place of residence.

53. Campaigns could be waged against social discrimination and discrimination in housing, work and education. They could, for example, be modelled on those conducted by the Council of Europe to combat discrimination against Roma and domestic violence.

5.4. Empowerment and participation in urban renewal

54. Political efforts for urban renewal are dramatically more successful when coupled with grass-roots desire and determination for change. By replacing state paternalism and repression with strategic empowerment and involvement of disadvantaged communities, these populations will regain a sense of control over their own destinies.

55. The Council of Europe should make a concerned effort to encourage the economic and social empowerment of local populations and foster their involvement in strategies for change and the maintenance of security, such as encouraging the formation of community policing co-operatives and renewing partnerships with police of proximity. The Council of Europe should additionally help these local bodies in persuading national governments to prioritise renovation of housing conditions and the construction of affordable and humanly viable housing spread more widely throughout cities, with an emphasis on public transport, access to educational facilities, job creation and attractive surroundings. The policies carried out in recent years to link urban renewal with the use of public spaces to foster encounters, social contacts and interaction between generations and cultures should continue.

5.5. Reforge the link between the government and the public

56. The Council of Europe should make a concerted effort to encourage the economic and social empowerment of local populations and foster their involvement in strategies for change and the maintenance of security, such as encouraging the formation of community policing co-operatives and renewing partnerships with police of proximity.

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19. Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe, European Urban Charter II, Manifesto for a new urbanity, Resolution 269 (2008).

57. A local police force composed of public servants living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods and of experienced staff would make it possible to attenuate this feeling of distrust or violence towards what is, after all, a public service. A preventive policy of this kind should therefore seek to forge a new relationship between police officers and the inhabitants of disadvantaged neighbourhoods and redefine the place of the police in 21st-century towns and cities, in particular by spreading units throughout the territory.

58. A priority of public policy must therefore be to rebuild the confidence which used to exist between the government and the public, and which mobilises voters and ensures personal security. As the sociologists Michel Kokoreff, Odile Steinauer and Pierre Barron put it, "We all too frequently forget that these neighbourhoods suffer not only from a lack of social cohesion and a dilapidated environment, but also from a democratic and political deficit."[20]

59. We therefore need to return to a preventive approach, for, according to the European Forum for Urban Safety, "recourse to conciliation, mediation and arbitration heals relationships in the framework of rules and standards which are rooted in our customs and traditions, thereby strengthening bonds of conviviality, neighbourliness and community, as well as the feeling of belonging to a communitarian and multicultural city".[21]

5.6. Immigration and integration strategies

60. Considering the projected continual rise in the need for immigrant workers in Europe, the existing tensions and challenges of integration are likely to intensify in the future and could possibly result in an even more dramatic and widespread outbreak of violence. The Council of Europe should encourage the comparative research of effective immigration and integration strategies both within and outside of Europe and promote the diffusion and implementation of findings. In particular, there is a need of effective tools for forecasting labour needs, which could potentially be addressed by the establishment of employment and migration observatories for particular professional sectors and regions.

6. Proposals aimed at preventing new riots and improving crisis management

61. Three factors (poverty, ethnic and social segregation and mutual resentment between minorities and the police) appear to be at the origin of urban riots in different European countries. Knowledge of this phenomenon throughout the European Union must gradually be improved.

62. An initial qualitative survey should be performed to determine the types of riots that occur in the member states, if any. This survey should concentrate on major conurbations, which are the main scene of rioting. A working group on quantitative measurement of the phenomenon should then be set up, with the aim of eventually allowing comparisons, or at least terms of comparison, at city level. The underlying social, demographic, economic and ethnic data should be collected and analysed in a cross-sectoral manner.

63. At the same time, police practices identified in official reports and sociological research as potentially sparking problems should be better explained and show greater respect for the law, human dignity and human rights. As the Saragossa Manifesto (November 2006) states, the police "must integrate parameters of code of ethics and quality evaluation in their acts, upholding high standards of ethics and effectiveness in the provision of the social service of safety within the community and for the community". The issue of relations between the police and minorities should therefore be addressed by the political authorities and means of improving their relations should be sought, in particular through the widespread introduction of preventive policies.

64. Better forecasting of riots could be achieved through improved statistical knowledge of local contexts and information about the lines along which cities are developing. Scales of risks (for example, a sort of "Richter scale" of the probability of rioting) could be envisaged.

Reporting committee: Social, Health and Family Affairs Committee.

Reference to committee: Doc. 10782 and Reference No. 3166 of 23 November 2007.

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20. "Les émeutes urbaines à l'épreuve des situations locales", *Sociologies, Revue scientifique internationale*, July 2007.
21. Cities' Manifesto, "Security and Democracy", Naples, December 2000.

Members of the committee: Mrs Christine **McCafferty,** (Chairperson), Mr Denis **Jacquat** (1st Vice-Chairperson), Mrs Minodora **Cliveti** (2nd Vice-Chairperson), Mrs Darinka **Stantcheva** (3rd Vice-Chairperson), Mr Francis Agius, Mr Konstantinos Aivaliotis, Mr Farkhad Akhmedov, Mr Vicenç **Alay Ferrer**, Mrs Sirpa **Asko-Seljavaara**, Mr Jorodd **Asphjell**, Mr Lokman **Ayva**, Mr Zigmantas Balčytis, Mr Miguel Barceló Pérez, Mr Andris Berzinš, Mr Jaime Blanco García, Mr Roland **Blum**, Mrs Olena Bondarenko, Mrs Monika Brüning, Mrs Bożenna **Bukiewicz**, Mrs Karmela **Caparin**, Mr Igor Chernyshenko (alternate: Mrs Tatiana **Volozhinskaya**), Mr Imre **Czinege**, Mr Karl **Donabauer**, Mrs Daniela Filipiová, Mr Ilija Filipović, Mr André Flahaut, Mr Paul **Flynn**, Mrs Pernille Frahm, Mrs Doris Frommelt, Mr Renato Galeazzi (alternate: Mr Manfred **Pinzger**), Mr Henk van Gerven, Mrs Sophia Giannaka, Mr Stepan Glăvan, Mr Marcel **Glesener**, Mr Luc Goutry, Mrs Claude Greff (alternate: Mr Laurent **Béteille**), Mr Michael **Hancock**, Mrs Olha Herasym'yuk, Mr Ali Huseynov, Mr Fazail İbrahimli, Mrs Evguenia Jivkova, Mrs Marietta Karamanli, Mr András Kelemen, Mr Peter Kelly, Baroness Knight of Collingtree (alternate: Mr Tim **Boswell**), Mr Haluk **Koç**, Mr Andrija Mandić, Mr Michal Marcinkiewicz (alternate: Mr Marek **Wikiński**), Mr Bernard **Marquet**, Mr Ruzhdi Matoshi, Mrs Liliane **Maury Pasquier**, Mr Donato Mosella, Mr Felix Müri (alternate: Mrs Doris **Stump**), Mrs Maia Nadiradzé, Mrs Carina **Ohlsson**, Mr Peter **Omtzigt**, Mrs Lajla **Pernaska**, Mrs Marietta de Pourbaix-Lundin, Mr Cezar Florin Preda, Mrs Adoración Quesada Bravo (alternate: Mrs Blanca **Fernández-Capel**), Mrs Vjerica Radeta, Mr Walter Riester, Mr Andrea Rigoni, Mr Ricardo Rodrigues, Mrs Maria de Belém Roseira, Mr Alessandro Rossi, Mrs Marlene Rupprecht, Mr Indrek **Saar**, Mr Fidias **Sarikas**, Mr Andreas Schieder, Mr Ellert B. Schram (alternate: Mrs Kristinn H. **Gunnarsson**), Mr Gianpaolo Silvestri, Mrs Anna **Sobecka**, Mrs Michaela **Šojdrová**, Mr Oleg Ţulea, Mr Alexander Ulrich, Mr Mustafa **Ünal**, Mr Milan Urbáni, Mrs Nataša Vučković, Mr Dimitry Vyatkin (alternate: Mrs Svetlana **Goryacheva**), Mr Victor Yanukovych (alternate: Mr Ivan **Popescu**), Mrs Barbara Žgajner-Tavš, Mr Vladimir Zhidkikh, Ms Naira **Zohrabyan**.

NB: The names of the members present at the meeting are printed in bold.

The draft resolution will be discussed at a later sitting.