



Resolution 1754 (2010)¹

Final version

Fight against extremism: achievements, deficiencies and failures

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Parliamentary Assembly expresses its concern at the upsurge of certain forms of extremism in Europe which, taking advantage of the framework of rights and freedoms guaranteed by European democracies, pursue objectives which contravene Europe's democratic and human rights values and, in the worst cases, condone or even promote violence.
2. Among these forms of extremism, racism and xenophobia are a major source of preoccupation, in the light of the rise in electoral support for parties inspired by racist ideas – as has been the case in a number of recent national elections, as well as in the elections to the European Parliament – and the non-negligible risk that mainstream political parties tend to rely on racist discourse in order to avoid losing part of their electorate. What is also worrying is the increasingly hostile discourse held by some public figures, which borders on and sometimes falls squarely under the category of hate speech.
3. In addition, the European public and governments have become increasingly aware of the extent of the threat posed by Islamic fundamentalism, an ideology which, although remaining marginal in Europe, exerts a growing attraction among young Muslims, finding fertile ground in their frustration caused by racism, discrimination, social exclusion and unemployment, which tend to affect them more than the rest of the population. This form of extremism has led to a number of deadly terrorist attacks, some on European soil, such as in Moscow in 2002 and 2010, in Istanbul in 2003, in Beslan and Madrid in 2004 and in London in 2005.
4. European countries are also host to a number of extremist groups, formed by foreign citizens, who are not interested in doing harm to the country where they reside but who are engaged in propaganda and fund-raising activities in order to pursue extremist objectives in their countries of origin, such as the overthrow of the authorities through violent means, political destabilisation through terrorist or guerrilla attacks, or secession. It is urgent to work out an international legal mechanism with a view to stopping all forms of financial support to extremist groups.
5. Examples of these groups include the People's Mujahedin of Iran and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), terrorist organisations which are present in many Council of Europe member states, and Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA), which has bases in France. In this context, the Assembly voices its deep concern at the resurgence of violence prompted by separatist groups in Europe, as has been the case recently in Spain and Turkey, with a number of deadly attacks perpetrated respectively by the terrorist organisations ETA and the PKK.
6. The Assembly acknowledges the complex character of extremism, its different forms and its evolving nature. Despite these differences, however, all forms of extremism which advocate or condone violence contravene the values and principles of the Council of Europe and must be countered with resolve, in full

1. *Assembly debate* on 5 October 2010 (30th Sitting) (see [Doc. 12265](#), report of the Political Affairs Committee, rapporteur: Mr Agramunt Font de Mora; and [Doc. 12337](#), opinion of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights, rapporteur: Mr Marcenaro). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 5 October 2010 (30th Sitting). See also [Recommendation 1933 \(2010\)](#).



respect of the guarantees and safeguards enshrined in the constitutions of Council of Europe member states and relevant human rights protection instruments, notably the European Convention on Human Rights (ETS No. 5 – the Convention).

7. In this context, the Assembly recalls Articles 10 and 11 of the Convention, respectively devoted to freedom of expression and freedom of peaceful assembly and association. Although these freedoms are the pillars of a pluralist democracy, their exercise can be restricted. These restrictions should always be prescribed by law, should be necessary in a democratic society and should pursue the legitimate aims mentioned in the Convention, such as prevention of disorder or crime, the protection of morals and the protection of the rights of others. Article 17 of the Convention adds that no state, group or person has the right to engage in an activity or perform any act aimed at the destruction of the rights or freedoms recognised in the Convention or at their limitation to a greater extent than is provided for in the Convention itself.

8. At the same time, the Assembly expresses doubts about the compliance of anti-extremism legislation introduced in some Council of Europe member states with international human rights instruments – such as the Convention – and stresses that a too general or vague definition of the crimes set out in such legislation can increase the risk of its arbitrary application.

9. Politically, in their fight against extremism, Council of Europe member states are confronted with a number of daunting challenges, first of all how to address the root causes of extremism. Resolute action against discrimination, emphasis on civic education and intercultural and inter-religious dialogue, involvement of civil society and non-governmental organisations – especially those representing segments of society which are excluded *de jure* or *de facto* from ordinary channels of participation – in consultation or decision-making processes are key instruments to reduce the potential attraction of extremist groups and movements.

10. As regards Islamist extremism, Council of Europe member states need to deal with this threat effectively while avoiding the stigmatisation of Islam as a religion. More efforts should be made to fight against Islamophobia and to combat the negative stereotyping of Islam and Muslims in society, along the lines set out in General Policy Recommendation No. 5 of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) on combating intolerance and discrimination against Muslims.

11. The structuring of Islamist extremist groups in dormant or active independent cells with loose international connections poses huge difficulties for domestic law enforcement and intelligence agencies and for transnational co-operation, both in prevention and detection. The need to ensure the effectiveness of these bodies, however, should not be used as a pretext to deprive parliament of its right and duty of democratic oversight.

12. Finally, the Assembly regrets that the challenge of establishing a more ethical attitude in politics, when dealing with issues related to race, ethnic and national origin, and religion, is still to be met. In this context, it recalls the Charter of European Political Parties for a Non-Racist Society, signed by its President and the President of the European Parliament in 2003, and the Declaration on the use of racist, antisemitic and xenophobic elements in political discourse, adopted by ECRI in 2005, which it commends for their relevance.

13. In the light of the above, the Assembly invites Council of Europe member states to:

13.1. address the root causes of extremism as a priority in the fight against this phenomenon by:

13.1.1. continuing to take resolute action against discrimination, in all fields;

13.1.2. setting up consultation processes involving civil society and non-governmental organisations representing a broad spectrum of society, including categories that are most at risk of radicalisation, and thus ensuring the involvement of civil society in the elaboration and implementation of anti-extremist policies;

13.1.3. putting an emphasis on education for democratic citizenship;

13.1.4. devising clear and sustainable immigration policies, accompanied by appropriate integration policies;

13.1.5. strengthening their activities in the field of intercultural and inter-religious dialogue, also by endorsing the Council of Europe White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue;

13.1.6. developing an international legal mechanism with a view to stopping all forms of financial support to extremist groups;

13.1.7. implementing socio-economic policies aimed at contributing to efforts for the eradication of racism, xenophobia and intolerance within society, including the elimination of any manifestation of discrimination on grounds of religious beliefs in access to education, in employment and at the workplace, relating to access to housing in mixed areas, in public services and also as regards democratic participation through citizenship;

13.2. continue to fight terrorism and other forms of violent extremism, while ensuring the strictest respect for human rights and the rule of law, in compliance with the Council of Europe Guidelines on human rights and the fight against terrorism, adopted by the Committee of Ministers in 2002, and ECRI's General Policy Recommendation No. 8 on combating racism while fighting terrorism;

13.3. ensure that anti-extremism legislation is applied systematically and consistently to all forms of extremism and avoid all risk of arbitrariness in its implementation;

13.4. ensure that measures limiting or prohibiting the activities of extremist political parties are consistent with the case law of the European Court of Human Rights and the 1999 Guidelines on prohibition and dissolution of political parties and analogous measures of the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission), in particular as regards the exceptional character of the dissolution of parties and the requirement to explore alternative sanctions before applying such a measure;

13.5. enforce the penalties foreseen by their legislation against public incitement to violence, racial discrimination and intolerance, including Islamophobia;

13.6. introduce in their criminal legislation provisions against incitement to racial hatred or hate speech, implement the Committee of Ministers Recommendation No. R (97) 20 on hate speech, if they have not yet done so, and endorse the good practices and recommendations laid down in the Council of Europe publication *Manual on hate speech* (2009);

13.7. step up appropriate information measures to encourage victims of extremist acts to report them to the relevant authorities;

13.8. strengthen the oversight by national parliaments of the activities of intelligence agencies, in line with the recommendations set out in Assembly [Recommendation 1713 \(2005\)](#) on the democratic oversight of the security sector in member states;

13.9. improve the analysis of the phenomenon of extremism and the collection and comparability of relevant data;

13.10. strengthen international co-operation in order to counter the spread of extremist propaganda on the Internet;

13.11. ensure full co-operation with ECRI and support its activities.

14. In addition, the Assembly asks its members, the political parties which they represent and its political groups to:

14.1. promote or endorse the Charter of European Political Parties for a Non-Racist Society;

14.2. follow the suggestions made by ECRI in its Declaration on the use of racist, antisemitic and xenophobic elements in political discourse and its General Policy Recommendation No. 5 on combating intolerance and discrimination against Muslims;

14.3. promote the setting-up of ethics committees within political parties and parliaments, with the right to sanction their members for racist, antisemitic, xenophobic or Islamophobic behaviour or discourse.

15. Finally, the Assembly encourages the Commissioner for Human Rights to devote increasing attention to all forms of extremism, including Islamophobia.