

Doc. 14025
19 April 2016

Preventing the radicalisation of children by fighting the root causes

Committee Opinion¹

Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media

Rapporteur: Sir Roger GALE, United Kingdom, European Conservatives Group

A. Conclusions of the committee

1. The Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media considered the report on “Preventing the radicalisation of children by fighting the root causes” by the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development with great interest. This report was originally triggered by the series of deadly terrorist attacks in Paris in January and in November 2015. The terrorist attacks of 22 March 2016 in Brussels confirmed that this report is relevant and timely.
2. Welcoming the general findings of this report, the committee proposes to further clarify and define the draft resolution contained in that report through a number of amendments.

B. Proposed amendments

Amendment A (to the draft resolution)

In paragraph 3, delete the words “Muslim background” and replace them with “different backgrounds”. In the same paragraph, before the word “communities”, delete the word “Muslim” and replace it with “faith”.

Amendment B (to the draft resolution)

In paragraph 4.1.2, delete the words “such as respect and tolerance”.

Amendment C (to the draft resolution)

In paragraph 4.1.2, after the word “participation”, add the words “in public and in particular school life”.

Amendment D (to the draft resolution)

After paragraph 4.1.2, add the following new paragraph:

“implement specific measures to make schools safe and free from bullying and other manifestations of prejudice, discrimination, segregation and all forms of violence;”

1. Reference to committee: [Doc. 13778](#), Reference 4134 of 22 June 2015. Reporting committee: Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development, see [Doc. 14010](#). Opinion approved by the committee on 18 April 2016.



Amendment E (to the draft resolution)

At the end of paragraph 4.3, add the following text:

“and, in particular, ensure implementation of Recommendation CM/Rec(2015)3 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the “Access of young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods to social rights;”

Amendment F (to the draft resolution)

After paragraph 4.4.2, add the following paragraph:

“support the work of the associations of victims of terrorism and of other civil society organisations aimed at raising awareness of children and young people about the danger of radicalisation;”

Amendment G (to the draft resolution)

In paragraph 4.5, before the word “Internet”, insert the words “media and”.

Amendment H (to the draft resolution)

In paragraph 4.5.1, insert “to be” after “contents and ...”.

Amendment I (to the draft resolution)

After paragraph 4.5.2, add the following paragraph:

“prohibit by law, in accordance with Article 20 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, any incitement to violence, in particular through the media;”

Amendment J (to the draft resolution)

After paragraph 5, add the following new paragraph:

“The Assembly urges religious leaders to enhance efforts to prevent young people from becoming an instrument of violence and terror.”

C. Explanatory memorandum by Sir Roger Gale, rapporteur for opinion

1. Preventing radicalisation and extremism in children and young people is certainly one of the urgent challenges our democratic societies must meet today. The deadly terrorist attacks in Paris in January and in November 2015, and those of 22 March 2016 in Brussels, clearly show how the report by the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development is relevant and timely.

2. Of course, the problem does not lie in having strong convictions or beliefs, but in the danger that these are turned into an absurd justification of violence against others and into a determination to annihilate their values. Indeed, values, or more correctly “democratic values”, are the key and our starting point should be that in taking a stand against radicalisation and extremism that leads to violence – including verbal violence as hate speech – and even to terrorism, there is nothing stronger and more effective than anchoring any future measures in democracy. We shall work not towards further divisions, but to bridge cultural and social divides, building trust, creating inclusive communities, fighting discrimination and cultivating civic engagement.

3. I am glad that Ms Fataliyeva referred in her explanatory memorandum to the 2015 edition of the Lisbon Forum on “How to combat radicalisation and terrorism: Prevention tools and shared knowledge in the Mediterranean and European space”, held in Lisbon on 3 and 4 December 2015. This event highlighted a great number of relevant initiatives and proposed concrete actions that member States could take in this area. It called, in particular, for community-based approaches to counter radicalisation that would involve a wide range of stakeholders, civil society, local authorities, schools, religious bodies, media and community centres. “Local and regional authorities have a key role to play by promoting exit programs using a multi-agency approach including partnerships with schools, civil society and other local stakeholders”.² This has also been

2. www.coe.int/t/dg4/nscentre/LF/LisbonForum/LF2015/LF2015_ConclusionsEN.pdf.

stressed by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, in its Resolution 384 (2015) on “Prevention of Radicalisation and manifestations of hate at grassroots level: guidelines for local and regional authorities”.

4. The role of media in preventing radicalisation and extremism is equally essential. Children and young people are exposed from an early age to the expression of violence through the media channels they have access to. Television, radio and, now, social media may lead to familiarity with violence without grasping the danger of such an exposure. The Assembly, in its [Resolution 2001 \(2014\)](#) on violence in and through the media, stressed that incidents of extreme violence have been perpetrated by individuals who have had intensive prior exposure to violence in the media, and that children (up to the age of 18) were especially exposed to all the attendant risks. Their situation therefore deserves particular attention. The Assembly should recall that governments, national parliaments and media service providers have the responsibility to combat violence in the media. Any incitement to violence through the media shall be prohibited by law in accordance with Article 20 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

5. I would also like to draw the Assembly’s attention to specific actions mentioned in its [Recommendation 1962 \(2011\)](#) on the religious dimension of intercultural dialogue. Acting towards greater respect of religious diversity is crucial. The Assembly insisted on the need for everyone to learn to share their differences positively and accept others, with their differences, in order to build cohesive societies that are receptive to diversity and respect the dignity of each individual. Religion is central to identity. It is referred to in children and young people’s lives as a foundation, based on which behaviour and values take shape. I therefore think that the religious leaders should consider enhancing their communication strategy, seeking to reinforce positive messages on our shared values and the foundations of our democratic societies, and to avoid moves that divert religion from their core and proper beliefs. As Mr Jorge Sampaio³ mentioned at the Lisbon Forum, religious leaders “should not allow extremist views and fundamentalism to make their religion an instrument of violence and terror”.

6. The European Union Education Ministers, meeting in Paris on 17 March 2015, adopted a Declaration on education and radicalisation.⁴ It called on European Union member States to boost EU-level co-operation on four overarching priorities:

- ensuring young people acquire social, civic and intercultural competences, by promoting democratic values and fundamental rights, social inclusion and non-discrimination, as well as active citizenship;
- enhancing critical thinking and media literacy, particularly in the use of the Internet and social media, so as to develop resistance to discrimination and indoctrination;
- fostering the education of disadvantaged children and young people, by ensuring that education and training systems address their needs;
- promoting intercultural dialogue through all forms of learning in co-operation with other relevant policies and stakeholders.

7. As a follow-up, the Commission and the Council – in November 2015 – jointly decided to adapt their policy co-operation in the fields of education and training and youth to give priority attention to the implementation of the Paris Declaration. In 2016, two dedicated expert groups were launched – one focusing on education and training and the other on youth work – to accelerate the exchange of good practices, inspire policymakers on issues listed in the Declaration and prepare concrete policy guidance tools. To underpin policy change with financial support, when allocating the €400 million envelope for the 2016 Erasmus+ co-operation projects, priority will be given to those projects tackling the objectives of the Paris Declaration. A specific call with a budget of €13 million has just been released with the main objective of supporting dissemination, replication and mainstreaming of good practices at grass-roots level in areas falling under the scope of the Paris Declaration⁵. Promoting inclusion and fundamental values is one of the topics for another specific call for proposals on policy experimentations with a budget of €14 million.

8. We should bear in mind that children and young people are often influenced by people they relate to as role models. In the absence of positive role models, and in need of recognition by their peers as leaders in their own right, they tend to associate with movements or persons that challenge authority, be it family, school or society at large. In this sense, radical movements provide them with the opportunity to demonstrate their

3. President of the Portuguese Republic (1996-2006) and United Nations High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations (2007-2013).

4. http://ec.europa.eu/education/news/2016/0316-paris-declaration-education_en.htm.

5. http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.C_.2016.099.01.0004.01.ENG&toc=OJ:C:2016:099:TOC.

capacities. Society therefore needs to deconstruct the arguments used by radical movements to enrol new recruits by providing children and young people with positive opportunities to prove themselves. Sport and culture offer such opportunities.

9. Recently, the European Union gathered examples of EU member States' actions to prevent radicalisation and published a report entitled "Promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance, and non-discrimination through education". This effort is to be welcomed; though I have doubts about the choice of "tolerance" as an objective of education policies. As Pastor Kent DelHousaye phrased it, "people like the idea of tolerance because it sounds like it is a palatable "live and let live" approach to life. It is a mentality that sells well in a postmodern world because it seems so inclusive and it sounds so accepting. Everyone wants to be tolerant of everyone else because apparently the worst thing you can be today is intolerant or judgmental." However, this is a kind of "minimum" standard that owes more to rhetoric than to positive action.

10. Societies need to go beyond tolerance to full acceptance of others, praising the value of diversity. Tolerance alone just keeps the distance between individuals, fostering indifference and eventually resulting in isolation of those who are different. This does not solve the problems. We should create opportunities for dialogue in order to discuss openly what may be disturbing and then find solutions acceptable to all parties.

11. Based on this analysis, I propose a series of amendments and give further details below as to the specific reasons for them.

Specific explanations of the amendments

Amendment A

"Muslim background" and "Muslim community" immediately stigmatise. The concern relates, potentially, to extremism and fundamentalism in all or any faiths.

Amendment B

As explained before, "tolerance" does not necessarily imply positive steps towards understanding the position of the other and could limit the interaction to a passive observation at a distance, without engaging in a dialogue or co-operation with the other party. Democratic citizenship and European values involve more than just respect and tolerance; emphasising them narrows the scope of the meaning of this sentence.

Amendment C

The suggested addition is intended to clarify the meaning of the reference to child participation.

Amendment D

Assembly [Resolution 1803 \(2011\)](#) on education against violence at school addresses the issue of violence at school from a number of perspectives. The premise that a school free from violence generates positive behaviour stands true also as regards the likelihood of young people being drawn into extremist movements. It lists specific measures, also bearing in mind the influence that teachers and educators have on children and young people, which is the main target of Ms Fataliyeva's report. It proposes, for instance, that "17.2.3. school teachers and staff should have mandatory training to better understand the different forms of violence (physical, psychological, verbal and behavioural violence) and learn how to combat such violence and respect the right of children to a non-violent school".

Amendment E

Committee of Ministers Recommendation CM/Rec(2015)3 on the access of young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods to social rights⁶ was adopted on 21 January 2015, after the *Charlie Hebdo* shooting in Paris. The recommendation lists a series of measures that should be taken as regards education, employment and occupation, housing, etc., and is not referred to in Ms Fataliyeva's explanatory memorandum. It asks member States, *inter alia*, to: "(1.a) improve the living conditions of young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods by providing accessible, affordable and youth-friendly public services and other measures in the fields of education and training, employment and occupation, health, housing, information and counselling, sports,

6. https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectId=09000016805c46f7.

leisure and culture; and (1.b) implement concrete measures to work towards abolition of the segregation and isolation that negatively affects disadvantaged neighbourhoods irrespective of their location". A series of concrete measures is listed in the Appendix to this recommendation.

Amendment F

It is important to involve the associations of victims of terrorism and other civil society organisations in the actions aimed at raising awareness of children and young people about the danger of radicalisation. Visits to schools or open dialogue at local level should involve parents' associations. This can help detect first signs of radicalisation. It should also allow early intervention and help for young people at risk of being radicalised.

Amendment G

I believe it would be a serious omission not to refer explicitly to media in the text; I understand the focus on Internet, but we cannot forget the other media. This amendment is also related to the following one (I) concerning the introduction of an additional sub-paragraph on the protection against violence through the media after sub-paragraph 4.5.2.

Amendment H

Grammatical correction.

Amendment I

Article 20 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights underscores that any propaganda for war and any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence shall be prohibited by law. Even though Article 20 does not explicitly mention incitement to hatred through the media, in the context of the report, it would be advisable to highlight the importance of prohibiting by law any incitement to violence through the media.

Amendment J

It is important to invite religious leaders to enhance communication to challenge radicalisation that may lead to terrorism.