



Resolution 2103 (2016)¹

Preventing the radicalisation of children and young people by fighting the root causes

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The radicalisation of young people is not a new phenomenon: children and young people, building their identity and looking for a sense of purpose, are more likely to be attracted to radical ideas and movements of different types (political, ideological or religious) than people in other age groups. Some of those radicalised turn to violence, with harmful consequences, as history has shown.
2. The phenomenon of “home-grown” radicalisation has seen a significant increase in recent years. Young people, including many minors, sensitive to ideological discourse and the apparent “sense of social purpose” offered to them by radical organisations, are drawn into extremist movements involved in violent conflict, for example in Syria and Iraq, and carrying out terrorist acts, including in Europe.
3. The Parliamentary Assembly is very concerned about these developments. It believes that prevention is the key solution. Preventing children and young people from turning to extremist movements must start at an early age when values and beliefs are formed. Prevention, deradicalisation and rehabilitation strategies must target the individual in his or her specific context, be comprehensive and based on multi-agency local partnerships.
4. Hate speech, Islamophobia and discrimination against young people of Muslim background or Muslim communities as such (including refugees arriving in Europe) contribute to exclusion and may further reinforce religious radicalisation of children and young people. While the European response to terrorist activities must be provided in a highly targeted manner by specialised agencies, notably information services, the judiciary and law enforcement services, the endogenous root causes should be tackled at the national and, in particular, the local level, in the daily living environment of children and young people. One of the main challenges is to prevent their social exclusion from the very start to ensure that they enjoy full and equal access to decent living standards and social rights, including education and training. Relevant strategies need to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms in order to avoid inciting further resentment.
5. The Assembly recognises that religious belief and faith play extremely important roles in the lives of countless citizens throughout the member States and add to pluralism and diversity in our society, and in that regard it further recalls the rights enshrined in Article 9 and Article 2 of the Protocol to the European Convention on Human Rights (ETS No. 9). The Assembly reaffirms that the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion is inherent to any true conception of a democratic society. Therefore, in taking action to counter trends of radicalisation, member States' authorities must ensure that they respect these rights as guaranteed by the European Convention on Human Rights (ETS No. 5).

1. *Assembly debate* on 19 April 2016 (13th Sitting) (see [Doc. 14010](#) and [addendum](#), report of the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development, rapporteur: Ms Sevinj Fataliyeva; [Doc. 14025](#), opinion of the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media, rapporteur: Sir Roger Gale; and [Doc. 14024](#), opinion of the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination, rapporteur: Ms Gabriela Heinrich). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 19 April 2016 (13th Sitting).



6. In the light of these concerns, the Parliamentary Assembly calls on the Council of Europe member States to:
- 6.1. as regards social inclusion via education and training:
 - 6.1.1. provide all children and young people with equal opportunities, life perspectives and a sense of social purpose, as well as perspectives for social mobility;
 - 6.1.2. educate children and young people on democratic citizenship and European values, including by encouraging their participation in all decisions affecting them and give them the tools to take a critical approach to information and to reflect carefully about what they read and are told;
 - 6.1.3. implement specific measures to make schools safe and free from bullying and other manifestations of prejudice, discrimination, segregation and all forms of violence;
 - 6.1.4. develop the teaching of history of religious issues by insisting on the peace-oriented dimension of religions, while raising awareness of teachers and expanding the curriculum in this area;
 - 6.2. as regards targeted strategies:
 - 6.2.1. support families of radicalised young people, as well as dedicated institutions and civil society organisations, appoint local reference persons and develop targeted programmes for prevention, deradicalisation and rehabilitation purposes, by following gender-specific approaches, so as to take account of the growing number of radicalised girls and women;
 - 6.2.2. develop counter-narratives based on the accounts of persons who have left extremist or terrorist movements, notwithstanding the responsibility of everyone in society to counter extremism;
 - 6.2.3. offer specific training for all parties involved (law enforcement, social workers, non-governmental organisations, families), providing them with the tools to prevent the (further) radicalisation of children at risk;
 - 6.2.4. conduct public awareness campaigns and create specific programmes for government officials to combat Islamophobia;
 - 6.2.5. encourage religious communities to take a stronger preventive approach, emphasising the peaceful dimension of religions, and to develop further their activities in the field of prevention, particularly with young people and as regards religious representations on the Internet;
 - 6.2.6. actively support the deradicalisation of young people leaving extremist movements, facilitating their rehabilitation to prevent them from being used as “multipliers” for terrorist causes;
 - 6.2.7. implement specific programmes for young people in prisons;
 - 6.2.8. promote multi-stakeholder partnerships building on mutual trust, with clear “firewalls” between reporting and supporting services;
 - 6.2.9. record, monitor and maintain reliable information and statistics about Islamophobic hate crimes committed within the State and make such reports publicly available;
 - 6.3. as regards urban policies, invest in improving disadvantaged neighbourhoods and their social infrastructure and, in particular, ensure implementation of Committee of Ministers Recommendation CM/Rec(2015)3 to member States on the access of young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods to social rights;
 - 6.4. as regards social action and dialogue more generally:
 - 6.4.1. facilitate the dialogue between religious communities and families to identify children and young people at risk and to foster mutual understanding and respect between and within religions;
 - 6.4.2. develop awareness-raising and prevention campaigns and targeted measures against Islamophobia and other forms of hate speech which may further reinforce vicious circles of discrimination and mistrust between political and religious systems that fuel extremism;

6.4.3. support the work of 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;

6.5. as regards safer media and Internet policies:

6.5.1. encourage families and schools to educate children on Internet use in order to make them aware of extremist content and critical of the manipulative methods used by radical organisations;

6.5.2. take legal measures to combat Islamophobic and other hate crimes, which can be fuelled by hate speech on social media;

6.5.3. fight the dissemination of radical propaganda and hate speech via the Internet, social media and other means of communication by reinforcing alert mechanisms;

6.5.4. 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;

6.6. as regards law enforcement and intelligence services, create systems to identify and facilitate the exchange of information on radicalised persons and convicted offenders in order to monitor their movements across European borders and prevent future crimes, while respecting their human rights and fundamental freedoms.

7. The Assembly further invites member States to:

7.1. sign, ratify and implement, if they have not yet done so, the Council of Europe Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism (CETS No. 196) and its Additional Protocol (CETS No. 217);

7.2. support and implement the Council of Europe Action Plan on “The fight against violent extremism and radicalisation leading to terrorism (2015-2017)”, the Guidelines for prison and probation services regarding radicalisation and violent extremism adopted by the Committee of Ministers in March 2016, as well as the Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2016-2021) to be launched in April 2016, which also aims to prevent the radicalisation of children;

7.3. exchange information and good practice with regard to the best strategies and tools aimed at preventing radicalisation, deradicalising the young people concerned and rehabilitating returnees from foreign conflicts and extremist organisations.

8. The Assembly urges religious leaders to enhance efforts to prevent young people from becoming instruments of violence and terror.