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European Muslim communities confronted with extremism

Reply¹ to Recommendation 1831 (2008)

Committee of Ministers

1. The Committee of Ministers examined with interest [Recommendation 1831 \(2008\)](#) of the Parliamentary Assembly on “European Muslim communities confronted with extremism”, including in the light of [Resolution 1605 \(2008\)](#), and has drawn it to the attention of member states’ governments. The Committee of Ministers also forwarded the recommendation to the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights and the European Committee on Migration (CDMG), who took note of it.

2. The Committee of Ministers is firmly committed to a policy which encourages intercultural dialogue, as could recently be seen from the launching of the White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue. It has, on numerous occasions, acknowledged the importance of dialogue between the representatives of various religions and cultures and contributed to the dialogue in April 2008 by holding the first Council of Europe Exchange on the religious dimension of intercultural dialogue. This event, which was generally considered positive, will be repeated in 2009 with a continued focus on the Council of Europe’s fundamental missions, including the protection and the promotion of human rights. The Committee of Ministers is currently considering the practical action that should be taken in response to the 2008 Exchange in the context of the follow-up to the White Paper. The aim is to ensure that these exchanges, and all future exchanges of this type, have a real impact on achieving the Council of Europe’s core objectives, for the benefit of multicultural Europe. In this field, attention should also be drawn to the Council of Europe Anti-Discrimination Campaign “Speak out against discrimination” which addresses the mounting problems of everyday discrimination against certain population groups, observed in many European countries. The key focus of the campaign will be on various aspects of discrimination arising out of racist attitudes and prejudices, in particular those with an Islamophobic, anti-Semitic and anti-Gypsy background. The recent establishment of the European Wergeland Centre in Oslo, in co-operation between Norway and the Council of Europe, should also be mentioned in this context. The Centre will carry out and support research as well as provide training for teachers and teacher training professionals in the areas of intercultural understanding, human rights and democratic citizenship.

3. The Council of Europe is engaged in active co-operation with its international partners in the field of intercultural dialogue, including its religious dimension. In this respect, the Committee of Ministers wishes to draw special attention to:

- the practical and regular co-operation between the various organisations actively involved in this field, in particular in the context of the Faro Platform set up jointly with UNESCO, and through the Memorandum of Co-operation with the Anna Lindh Euro-Mediterranean Foundation for dialogue between cultures as well as the co-ordinated programme of activities between the Council of Europe and ALECSO;

1. adopted at the 1044th meeting of the Ministers’ Deputies (10 December 2008)



- the EU European Year of Intercultural Dialogue, which opened up possibilities of co-operation, and the implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding between the Council of Europe and the European Union; the joint programme between Council of Europe and the European Commission “Intercultural cities” addresses the issue of intercultural and inter-religious relations at the local level and the way local policies can enhance dialogue and the celebration of diversity;
- co-operation between the Council of Europe and the OSCE, particularly through the Co-ordination Group set up for that purpose, which has four main aims including the promotion of tolerance and non-discrimination;
- finally, the establishment of a memorandum of understanding with the Alliance of Civilisations on co-operation in the field of intercultural dialogue.

4. The Assembly rightly underlines the action taken by the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), which monitors racism and all related forms of intolerance and discrimination in member states, and by the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, who also plays an important role in promoting human rights education and awareness of the importance of respecting such rights. The Committee of Ministers has drawn the attention of these two bodies to the proposals made by the Assembly in paragraph 4.5 of its recommendation.

5. With regard to the integration of migrants and persons of immigrant background, the Committee of Ministers draws attention to the work of the European Committee on Migration (CDMG), in particular with regard to access to employment. This work resulted in Recommendation CM/Rec(2008)10 on improving access of migrants and persons of immigrant background to employment, which the Committee of Ministers adopted in July 2008. This recommendation invites member states to “view the effectiveness of all relevant policy and practice in their country” and proposes a series of measures based on general principles for the respect of cultural diversity, understanding and mutual respect and on guidelines concerning non-discrimination, partnership, information and training. The implementation of these measures should help to achieve the Assembly’s objectives.

6. In addition, the Committee of Ministers draws the Parliamentary Assembly’s attention to the conclusions of the 8th Council of Europe Conference of Ministers responsible for Migration Affairs held on 4 and 5 September 2008 in Kyiv (Ukraine) on the theme “Economic migration, social cohesion and development: towards an integrated approach”.² The conference adopted a final declaration and an action plan setting out general principles and specific measures aimed at working together in the management of migration. These texts put the focus particularly on protection of the human rights of migrants and those of persons of immigrant background and of their rights to equal treatment and opportunities; on strengthening dialogue and co-operation between receiving, transit and origin countries, with a view to, *inter alia*, facilitating integration and re-integration; and on promotion of coherence between migration, development and integration policies at all levels (international, national, regional and local).

2. See document CM(2008)134.