ASSEMBLÉE PARLEMENTAIRE
DU CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

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Final version

Living together in 21st-century Europe: follow-up to the report of the Group of Eminent Persons of the Council of Europe

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Parliamentary Assembly takes note of the Group of Eminent Persons' report "Living together – Combining diversity and freedom in 21st-century Europe", presented on 11 May 2011, on the occasion of the 121st session of the Committee of Ministers in Istanbul. The Assembly expects that the report will give a fresh impetus to, and generate a higher political commitment for, a range of current and future Council of Europe activities, against the backdrop of the Organisation's reform process.

2. The analysis of the Group of Eminent Persons provides a basis for further reflection on Europe's future which should involve politicians, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), trade unions, youth organisations and academics, as well as representatives of religions, the media and local authorities from different backgrounds and countries. On several issues, the group's findings corroborate positions already taken by the Assembly, while in some cases suggesting different ways of achieving similar goals. The challenge has been, and still is, to ensure implementation in a situation which the group correctly refers to as a "crisis of leadership".

3. For its part, the Assembly is ready and willing to contribute to the changes which are needed to ensure greater cohesion in European societies, so that everyone may fully benefit from living together. It therefore wishes to share with the Committee of Ministers its own reflections on the matter and propose concrete ways of implementation of the proposals within the remit of its competences and priorities.

4. Europe is multicultural and European peoples have proved their capacity to live together in diversity and build together their common future. Although multiculturalism is facing increasing difficulties at national level in various European countries, the Assembly firmly believes that assimilation is not an alternative. The response to these difficulties is an intercultural approach which implies an active interaction among the culturally different groups within society in order to develop the best model of living together. The strengthening of common European values and identity should be promoted in a way which does not eliminate the different cultures of specific groups, but preserves and incorporates their specificities in the common European framework. This process can be endangered by growing populist, xenophobic and identity politics and similar such rhetoric coined for short-term electoral purposes, and the Assembly therefore calls on member states to develop policies to prevent such negative practices.

5. Respect of one's own culture helps to understand the culture of others and accept differences as normal and enriching. Apart from respect for the law as an important part of the democratic culture, other cultural elements should also be taken into account.

6. People coming lawfully to live in a country should not be expected to leave elements of their identity (faith, language, culture, etc.) behind. However, they are expected to show willingness to integrate into the society of their new country, by not only learning its language, but also gaining knowledge and understanding of the local culture, and they must respect democracy, human rights, including the rights of women, and the rule of law. The communities of origin should not ostracise those who choose to change their faith or culture.

7. As the Assembly has stressed time and again, education is the main tool – but not the only one – against misleading information and stereotypes about specific groups. Moreover, education is indispensable to individual and societal welfare and cultural development, without which democracy, human rights and the rule of law would lose their foundations. The capacity to be open to and value diversity is highly dependent on quality education. An emphasis on teacher training should be added to the specific recommendations of the Group of Eminent Persons in this area. The work of the Council of Europe in areas such as education for democratic citizenship or history teaching should be enhanced.

8. In this context, the Assembly recalls the 1999 Committee of Ministers Declaration and Programme on education for democratic citizenship, based on the rights and responsibilities of citizens, and believes that their implementation could substantially contribute to the development of a European spirit within society. It thus urges member states to strengthen the implementation of the 1999 programme, as well as the more recent Council of Europe Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education, adopted by the Committee of Ministers in 2010, taking concrete steps adapted to their local specificities.

9. The Assembly recalls its Resolution 1754 (2010) on the fight against extremism: achievements, deficiencies and failures, in which it "regrets that the challenge of establishing a more ethical attitude in

1. Assembly debate on 22 June 2011 (23rd and 24th Sittings) (see Doc. 12631, report of the Political Affairs Committee, rapporteur: Mr Toshev; Doc. 12653, opinion of the Social, Health and Family Affairs Committee, rapporteur: Ms Kaufer; Doc. 12650, opinion of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population, rapporteur: Mr Díaz Tejera; Doc. 12651, opinion of the Committee on Culture, Science and Education, rapporteur: Mr Flego; and Doc.12640, opinion of the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, rapporteur: Ms Kovács). Text adopted by the Assembly on 22 June 2011 (24th Sitting).

politics, when dealing with issues related to race, ethnic and national origin, and religion, is still to be met". Elected representatives have a special responsibility to change the situation both as individuals and as members of the bodies to which they are elected, be it at local, regional, national or international level. The Assembly reiterates that politicians have a special responsibility to eliminate from political discourse negative stereotyping or the stigmatising of any ethnic, minority or migrant group, be they present or not within the borders of their states. They should promote a message of non-discrimination, tolerance and respect for people from different backgrounds.

10. The Assembly regrets that, as stated in several passages of the report of the Group of Eminent Persons, women from minority groups are particularly affected by marginalisation. This situation must be addressed as a priority, not only to ensure gender equality but also to strengthen women's potential to act as a bridge between their communities and society at large, by educating children in a culture of diversity and dialogue and helping them reconcile multiple identities.

11. The Assembly wishes to stress the need to focus on youth and implement youth rights as an investment in Europe's cohesion and future. Youth policies should be at the core of member states' strategies aimed at building up "living together" societies. In this respect, national authorities should adopt specific measures to encourage youth participation in economic and democratic life, and offer all young people equal opportunities to contribute to the development and well-being of their societies. In addition, more attention should be paid to the potential of sport as a powerful tool to further intercultural dialogue and living together among young people.

12. The Assembly also stresses the central role the media can play in strengthening democracy, the respect of fundamental rights and the development of culture. It believes that the Council of Europe should strengthen its relations with the media world.

13. The Assembly considers that an important role can and should be played by the European Centre for Global Interdependence and Solidarity (North-South Centre); appropriate means should be given to it in order to develop a specific comprehensive "living together" programme, including the educational, intercultural and youth policy dimensions, to support development in non-member countries of the Mediterranean region.

14. The Assembly, prompted by the relevant proposals and recommendations made by the Group of Eminent Persons, resolves, for its part, to:

14.1. initiate its own reflection on ways to encourage politicians and elected representatives at all levels to speak out on the challenges raised at present by the threats to the European project and solidarity;

14.2. pursue reflection on the proposal for an annual forum against extremism, while keeping in mind the necessity for the Assembly to maintain its capacity for rapid reaction in the face of new disturbing developments;

14.3. consider organising jointly with the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), and in co-operation with all relevant sectors of the Organisation and, possibly, the European Parliament, a conference to take stock of best practices and shortcomings in the implementation by member states of the 2003 Charter of European Political Parties for a Non-Racist Society, as well as the 2005 Declaration on the use of racist, antisemitic and xenophobic elements in political discourse and the earlier Committee of Ministers Recommendation No. R (97) 20 on "hate speech";

14.4. consider organising an Assembly campaign to promote the European Convention on Nationality (ETS No. 166) and the Convention on the Participation of Foreigners in Public Life at Local Level (ETS No. 144);

14.5. address the issue of ageing societies in Europe, *inter alia* through appropriate family support policies;

14.6. address the democratic deficit resulting from the lack of democratic participation of migrants, Roma and other groups susceptible to marginalisation.

15. Recalling that in Recommendations 1927 (2010) on Islam, Islamism and Islamophobia in Europe, 1933 (2010) on the fight against extremism: achievements, deficiencies and failures, and 1962 (2011) on the religious dimension of intercultural dialogue, the Assembly addressed a number of concrete proposals to the Committee of Ministers with respect to the fight against extremism and the promotion of intercultural dialogue calling for "a new culture of living together", it urges the Committee of Ministers to consider those proposals also in the light of the recommendations of the Group of Eminent Persons.

16. The Assembly further recommends that the Committee of Ministers, in implementing the recommendations of the Group of Eminent Persons, give priority to the following issues:

16.1. promote further the European Convention on Nationality and the Convention on the Participation of Foreigners in Public Life at Local Level;

16.2. consider launching a major campaign on "living together", along the lines of the two "All Different – All Equal" campaigns;

16.3. explore the possibility of enhancing the role of the Council of Europe Development Bank in integration projects in member states;

16.4. call on member states to build cultural bridges by encouraging their citizens to familiarise themselves with and respect the culture, language, traditions and history of immigrant groups;

16.5. consider the development of guidelines addressing both the rights and responsibilities of migrants and the links between them through, as

a minimum, a code of good practice on living together, possibly leading at some stage in the future to a framework convention;

16.6. take urgent measures to implement Assembly Recommendation 1963 (2011) on combating poverty, to improve access for people experiencing poverty, in particular from migrant and minority communities, to all human rights (civil, political, economic, social and cultural);

16.7. examine the steps needed to guarantee the basic rights of irregular migrants and their children, recognising that many of these people are exploited and cannot or will not be returned to their countries of origin;

16.8. reinforce all its programmes aimed at assisting member states in the design of sound educational policies and the proper implementation of the right to education, with no discrimination, in particular as regards people from disadvantaged, minority or migrant backgrounds, in order to combat the educational and cultural divide in our societies;

16.9. enhance the work of the Council of Europe in the areas of education for democratic citizenship based on the rights and responsibilities of citizens, which should include education in multiculturalism, and history teaching with a special emphasis on teacher training;

16.10. establish pilot projects on intercultural dialogue with local authorities, schools and higher education institutions and media in member states, including, where possible, a multilateral dimension in such pilot schemes;

16.11. call on representatives of religions to contribute, when appropriate, to the debates on common values, common heritage, protection of religious freedom, respect for human rights and democratic citizenship and the fight against terrorism, xenophobia and intolerance;

16.12. create a regular process to assess the development of intercultural dialogue in member states, including a thematic European forum on intercultural dialogue to be organised periodically;

16.13. have regular contacts with the main European media networks, with a view to further implementing the Council of Europe recommendations on training, ethics and content production issues;

16.14. fully integrate gender mainstreaming in the implementation of the recommendations of the Group of Eminent Persons;

16.15. propose positive measures to member states to avoid the risk of women from minority groups being subjected to double discrimination – compared to men and compared to other women – and to promote their active participation in social, economic and political life;

16.16. promote the signature and ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (CETS No. 210).

17. The Assembly recommends that the Committee of Ministers, in implementing the recommendations of the Group of Eminent Persons, take specific measures to ensure the protection of those who are particularly vulnerable or at risk of exclusion and marginalisation, enabling them to live in dignity. In this connection, the Assembly stresses that everyone is entitled to respect for social rights, and these cannot be denied. The Council of Europe, in its Committee of Ministers Recommendation No. R (2000) 3 on the right to the satisfaction of basic material needs of persons in situations of extreme hardship, stressed that this right should contain as a minimum the right to food, clothing, shelter and basic medical care.

18. The Group of Eminent Persons proposes to appoint a high-level special representative mandated to bring the content of the report to the attention of political leaders and monitor its implementation. In this respect, the Assembly recalls that, in its Recommendation 1928 (2010) on democracy in Europe: crisis and perspectives, it proposed that "a high-profile personality, a sort of a delegate for democracy, [be entrusted with the task of] … disseminating, on a permanent basis, the Council of Europe's message on democracy-related issues of major current interest". The Assembly believes that the two proposals are not mutually exclusive and that a possible way forward would be for one and the same person to embrace both the actions proposed by the group and those proposed by the Assembly and invites the Committee of Ministers to examine this proposal.

19. The Group of Eminent Persons proposes to offer a special status in the Council of Europe to countries of the southern and eastern Mediterranean shores and of Central Asia. The Assembly recalls its status of "Partner for Democracy" for parliaments of countries in neighbouring regions and its Resolution 1818 (2011) on the request for Partner for Democracy status with the Parliamentary Assembly submitted by the Parliament of Morocco and Resolution 1819 (2011) on the situation in Tunisia. In view of recent developments on the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean, the Assembly wholeheartedly supports ways of bringing countries from that region closer to the Council of Europe.

20. The Assembly resolves to pursue its reflection on this matter, *inter alia* by organising a conference, involving the Secretary General, representatives of the Committee of Ministers and of the Group of Eminent Persons, the rapporteur and other members of its Political Affairs Committee, as well as the rapporteurs of the other committees seized for opinion, in order to deepen and enlarge the debate related to the development of our multicultural societies. Following this conference, an action-based agenda for the Council of Europe should be set during a ministerial session, and this should feed into any future Council of Europe summit of heads of state and government.