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The fight against violent extremism and radicalisation leading to terrorism

- Action Plan

Introduction

It is the task of the Council of Europe to safeguard European values and individual rights at pan-European level. The European Convention on Human Rights is our basis, in addition to the numerous other Conventions, as well as programmes and activities that we have developed and adopted over the years.

We remain determined to make a strong contribution to the fight against violent extremism and radicalisation leading to terrorism, firmly basing our action on the respect of human rights, rule of law and democracy, which constitute the three areas of activity of the Council of Europe. Any successful action against terrorism, violent extremism and radicalisation must closely build upon these values.

While the main responsibility for preventing and combating terrorism is at the state level, porous borders and digital communication require a collective effort.

The purpose of this Action Plan is to develop, within the Council of Europe mandate and drawing on the Organisation's strengths and comparative advantages, targeted activities capable of supporting and reinforcing the efforts of member States and to contribute to the objectives defined at international level (UN). In doing so, the Council of Europe will use the unique foundations provided by:

- its pan-European membership;
- its legal instruments, in particular the European Convention on Human Rights; and finally,
- its monitoring and advisory bodies and its practical tools.

The Action Plan will cover the period 2015-17, building on and complementing the activities set out in the "Immediate action by the Council of Europe to combat extremism and radicalisation leading to terrorism" (SG/Inf(2015)4rev, 9 February 2015) and subsequent deliberations in the Committee of Ministers, as well as during the Annual Retreat hosted by the Secretary General.

The importance of complementarity and co-operation with other international actors on these matters is underlined.

The Action Plan has two objectives:

1. to reinforce the legal framework against terrorism and violent extremism;
2. to prevent and fight violent radicalisation through concrete measures in the public sector, in particular in schools and prisons, and on the Internet.

1. Reinforcing the international legal framework against terrorism and violent extremism

In order to give maximum support to the efforts of member States in preventing and combating terrorism, the relevant Council of Europe legal instruments should be examined to remove all potential legal gaps and inconsistencies that terrorists could exploit.

The legal toolbox has to be updated and completed and its effectiveness improved in order to address new developments, such as foreign terrorist fighters, cross-border terrorist travel, terrorist training, financing of terrorism and terrorists acting alone.

1.1 To help member States, and neighbouring countries, as a matter of priority, to sign and ratify relevant Council of Europe instruments:

- The Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism (2005 - No 196) – so far 32 countries have signed and ratified it.
- The Additional Protocol on “foreign terrorist fighters” to the Council of Europe Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism (2015 - tbc)
- The Council of Europe Convention on Laundering, Search, Seizure and Confiscation of the Proceeds from Crime and on the Financing of Terrorism (2005 - No 198) – so far 26 countries have signed and ratified it.
- The Additional Protocol to the Convention on Cybercrime, concerning the criminalisation of acts of a racist and xenophobic nature committed through computer systems (2003 - No 189) – so far 24 countries have signed and ratified it.

Proposed action

- The draft Additional Protocol to the Council of Europe Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism was finalised by CODEXTER on 10 April 2015. The draft protocol was approved by the Ministers’ Deputies on 12 May 2015, in the light of an opinion of the Parliamentary Assembly, with a view to its adoption by the Committee of Ministers on 19 May 2015.
- Activities will be organised to ensure an effective follow-up and implementation of the Additional Protocol, which will provide the international legal framework for criminalisation of certain acts related to the phenomenon of “foreign terrorist fighters,” and will be the first international legal instrument implementing the main criminal law aspects of UNSC RES 2178 of 24 September 2014.
- CODEXTER will continue its review of the Council of Europe legal instruments in the field of counter-terrorism, assess possible gaps in the legal framework provided by the Council of Europe in the area of the prevention and suppression of terrorism, and review the assistance available to member States needing to overcome obstacles to signature and ratification.
- A co-operation project “Cybercrime XR” to promote implementation of the Protocol to the Convention on Cybercrime on Xenophobia and Racism (ETS 189) will be initiated.

1.2 To elaborate a new recommendation on terrorists acting alone, providing guidelines to member States on how to efficiently prevent and suppress this particular form of terrorism

In addition to the threat posed by foreign terrorist fighters, another major concern is the phenomenon of terrorists who act independently of cells and groups. Such terrorism is typically very difficult to detect in advance. However, a number of member States have already suffered attacks of this kind and useful experience in identifying such terrorists at an early stage has been gathered. It is vital to ensure that this experience is shared Europe-wide.

Proposed action:

- To start developing the scope of a new recommendation on terrorists acting alone, providing guidelines to member States on how to efficiently prevent and suppress this type of terrorism and to share good practices amongst member States.

1.3 To further disseminate updated and relevant case-law of the European Court of Human Rights, offer Council of Europe expertise to member States, and distribute relevant legal texts

Proposed action:

- To set up net-based compilations of relevant case-law of the European Court of Human Rights on freedom of assembly, freedom of expression, freedom of religion and issues related to counter-terrorism. In this regard, the work of CODEXTER on the establishment of a database on the case law of the Court relevant for counter-terrorism should be reinforced. This work will form a useful tool within the existing HELP programme.
- To make more efficient use of CODEXTER in providing member States with legal advice on anti-terrorism measures under preparation at national level.
- To enhance co-operation on countering terrorists, including foreign terrorist fighters, the CDPC (European Committee on Crime Problems) and the PC-OC (Committee of Experts on the Operation of European Conventions in the Penal Field) will be tasked to propose recommendations to facilitate the implementation of the European Convention on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters (CETS 030) and its Protocols.
- A special MONEYVAL procedure will be implemented to monitor the extent to which the mandatory UN asset freezing provisions in respect of adherents to terrorist organisations are being implemented. FATF (Financial Action Task Force) recommendations and standards on terrorism financing will also be used.

2. To prevent and fight radicalisation through concrete measures in the public sector, in particular in schools and prisons, and on the Internet

Action is needed to prevent violent radicalisation and increase the capacity of our societies to reject all forms of extremism. Formal and informal education, youth activities and training of key actors (including in the media, political fields and social sectors) have a crucial role in this respect. Schools, prisons and detention centres, vulnerable neighbourhoods, places of worship all require tailored measures, mostly at local level.

Tools to assist those who can play a crucial role in countering radicalisation on the ground – such as teachers, social workers, local authorities, women, youth and sport representatives, religious leaders - and the exchange of good practices, both in terms of the content of programmes and the training and guidelines provided to staff, must be developed. In particular women and girls are often some of the most effective voices in countering violent extremism.

A clearer understanding is required of the way social media and internet are used as a vehicle for radicalisation and greater emphasis must be placed on both preventing the spread of extremist views and the recruitment of terrorist fighters through new communication networks. An important part of the response will be to develop a convincing counter-narrative, drawing on grassroots initiatives, spread through the same communication networks. As underlined at the Washington Summit to Counter Violent Extremism in February, this requires increased co-operation between stakeholders from all key sectors, respecting at the same time the fundamental principle of freedom of expression.

2.1 Education

2.1.1 “Living Together as Equals in Culturally Diverse and Democratic Societies: Setting Out Competences Required for Democratic Culture and Intercultural Dialogue”

The best way to develop an understanding of “democratic culture” is through education. The Council of Europe is currently developing key competences for democratic citizenship for use in school curricula across Europe.

The starting point for this project is the assertion that preparation for life as active citizens in democratic societies is one of the major purposes of education. To make this a reality, European education systems need to be able to specify what students at different levels of formal education should know, understand and be able to do in this respect, and what attitudes they should develop. The project will aim to describe the main competences citizens require in order to participate effectively in democratic society and in intercultural dialogue. The competences and their descriptors (i.e. indicators) are intended as guidelines, a competence framework or reference point for member States, which will be able to use and adapt them in their own education system, at all levels of education, as they see fit.

The required competences include developing certain values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and critical understanding.

The work to implement the Council of Europe Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights forms the background for this project.

The main target group for the project will be education policy makers and practitioners, including ministries, schools and universities, teachers, teacher trainers, educators and curriculum developers.

The objective will be to ensure that young people acquire values, knowledge, understanding and the ability to act as responsible citizens. Upon the instruction of the Secretary General, this work has been given a high priority in order for it to be completed by the end of this year.

Proposed action:

- The work on the model on competencies required for democratic culture and intercultural dialogue will be completed by the end of 2015. In 2016, the model will be tested. Implementation will subsequently take place under the guidance of the Council of Europe’s Steering Committee for Educational Policy and Practice.
- To help ensure that the competences are widely used in schools and other educational contexts, a Council of Europe Conference of Ministers of Education will be organised to provide the strong political impetus.
- The competences will be promoted in the framework of the next Strasbourg World Forum for Democracy, which will help identify ways for democracies to deal with security risks, such as terrorism, without jeopardising freedom and democratic stability.

2.1.2 Building inclusive societies

The Council of Europe will develop and implement new transversal actions on “Building Inclusive Societies,” based on the report “Living together – Combining diversity and freedom in 21st-century Europe”, the relevant standards and on findings and recommendations of our monitoring bodies.

The projects will aim at supporting, through concrete initiatives, the work of actors such as local authorities, media, civil society (including the private sector), social workers and educators which are key in the construction and in the consolidation of more inclusive societies. They will include initiatives to combat stereotyping and discrimination, to support inclusion strategies at local level, to build trust among citizens across social and cultural differences and to support intercultural communication and skills.

The Council of Europe project “*Signposts*” on religions and non-religious convictions within intercultural education will also be given higher priority.

Proposed action:

- New, transversal actions on “*Building Inclusive Societies*” will be finalised and upon adoption, implemented.
- The Council of Europe publication “*Signposts*,” based on Recommendation CM/Rec (2008) 12, will be widely disseminated.

2.1.3 Providing a counter-narrative to the misuse of religion

Efforts will be made to counteract the destructive messages of extremists with counter narratives. This will include raising the profile of and providing a platform for religious leaders and academics who speak with authority about how the activities of terrorist organisations are in conflict with religion. In addition, students and community leaders will be encouraged to emphasise how terrorist groups such as ISIL, also known as Daesh, are harming people of the Muslim faith and causing damage to wider society. The testimonies of victims of terrorism will be taken into account in this context.

Proposed action:

- The Secretary General has convened a group of leading figures to draw up a reference document for better understanding of religious and convictional issues. This document will be broadly distributed and made available for a number of different purposes, including education and training.
- The format of the Council of Europe Annual Exchange on the Religious Dimension of Intercultural Dialogue will be adapted to make it a forum for discussions on issues relating to preventing radicalisation.
- The Secretary General will consider inviting associations of victims of terrorism in Council of Europe member States to submit testimonies and documents on their activities and to report on the initiatives they have undertaken.

2.2 Prisons

A number of those who succumb to recruitment by terrorists are radicalised and recruited in prison, either through direct exposure to radical and extremism views, or on the Internet. The Council of Europe’s draft guidelines on the role which prison and probation services can play in dealing with violent extremism and radicalisation which may lead to terrorism are expected to be ready for adoption by the Committee of Ministers in December 2015.

The main aim of the guidelines will be to provide the prison and probation services of the 47 Council of Europe member States with practical guidelines to help them prevent, detect and deal with radicalisation that can lead to terrorism. While making general recommendations on prevention, it will highlight good prison management, mentoring, preparation for release, and post-release supervision and work with former prisoners.

The guidelines will also contain basic principles and safeguards regarding the co-operation and exchange of information between prison and probation services and police and intelligence services.

Proposed action:

- The issue of radicalisation in prisons will be introduced as a main topic at the 20th Council of Europe Conference of Directors of Prison and Probation Services, 9-10 June 2015 in Bucharest. The Directors will also be consulted regarding the draft text of the guidelines.

2.3 Internet

Internet and the social media are widely used by those advocating hate speech and radicalisation and those who seek to recruit terrorist fighters. Accordingly, action in this area must be stepped up, with due respect for the fundamental principle of freedom of expression and information, as enshrined in the European Convention on Human Rights.

The Council of Europe's two-year "No Hate Speech" campaign, to combat hate speech, online, was to come to an end in its current form on 31 March 2015.

This campaign is driven by the need to counter on-line hate speech in all its forms, including those that most affect young people, such as cyber-bullying and cyber-hate, racism and other forms of discrimination. The campaign is based upon human rights education, youth participation and media literacy.

It is a "campaign of campaigns" with co-ordination being provided by the Council of Europe but with national campaigns run by the member States paying due attention to their own national context. Some 37 member States of the Council of Europe are now on board and, outside the borders of Europe, Mexico and Morocco have launched campaigns. Plans are under way in Belarus and Canada (Province of Québec) and other countries not members of the Council of Europe for similar campaigns.

The Parliamentary Assembly has established a No Hate Parliamentary Alliance to support the work of the national committees.

Other tools to fight against hate speech have been developed by the Organisation and their effective use will be promoted.

Proposed action:

- The "*No Hate Speech Campaign*" will be enhanced and extended for three more years (2015-17).

Future activities and developments in the fight against online Hate Speech will in part be based on new approaches, such as a "zero tolerance" approach involving all citizens, but especially young people, and a universal "call to act".

The extended No Hate Speech Campaign will focus on continued support to existing and new National Campaign Committees, including providing institutional support and practical tools to national authorities wishing to train educators, youth and social workers and law enforcement staff, and in the production and wide dissemination of distribution items to children, young people, parents and other adults through schools, universities, youth clubs and youth organisations.

There is potential to build on and increase the impact of the campaign by extending it to Hate Speech off-line. This could be achieved with the following actions:

- Member States will be encouraged to make full use of the new and revised ECRI General Policy Recommendations on Combating Hate Speech, which provide an important input for States when drawing up relevant national strategies and policies.
- Due attention will be given to the effective follow-up of recommendations adopted at the Conference "*Tolerance trumps hate*" which was held in Brussels on 8 May, with a view to developing recommendations for fighting radicalisation and extremism.
- The No Hate Parliamentary Alliance will exchange information on good legislation, policy and practice and promote legislative initiatives.
- The Additional Protocol to the Convention on Cybercrime concerning the criminalisation of acts of a racist and xenophobic nature committed on internet will also be promoted, as a tool to fight hate speech online.
- As a concrete follow-up to the Committee of Ministers' Thematic Debate on "*Ensuring freedom of expression on the Internet*," a conference with the title "*Freedom of Expression is STILL the issue*," will be organised in Strasbourg on 13-14 October 2015. Due attention will be given to the effective follow-up of recommendations adopted at the conference.
- Work will continue to update and promote the visibility of the website containing information on Council of Europe standards and tools to fight radicalisation and terrorism.

As the fight against racism is an essential component of a strategy against radicalisation, a link will be established with the Council of Europe website and the initiative launched on 27 January this year by Mr Jacques Toubon, the French Defender of Rights (“Le Défenseur des Droits”) to put in place, inter alia, an online site where all documents and legal texts relevant to the fight against racism are available, including those of international institutions.

Similar arrangements can also be made with other member States’ institutions in order to give more visibility to the Council of Europe standards and tools in this field.

- To continue the work to fully operationalise the Platform on the Safety of Journalists and Protection of Journalism.

The primary focus of the Platform will be the conduct of governments in ensuring the conditions for the freedom of expression and not unduly interfering in its exercise. This includes the responsibility of governments to protect journalists from extremist threats. This Platform can also contribute to the respect of the principle of proportionality in case of restrictions to freedom of expression in the context of the fight against terrorism.

Implementation of the Action Plan

The proposed actions take into account complementarity and co-operation with the European Union and other international actors.

Gender and civil society dimensions are mainstreamed as relevant throughout the activities.

Co-operation in the framework of the neighbourhood policy will, where relevant, take account of issues relating to countering radicalisation and extremism.

Member States are encouraged to continue on a regular basis the sharing of “best practices,” as well as other types of relevant information.

Internal and external coordination of the Action Plan will be ensured at central level within the Secretariat and the Committee of Ministers will receive regular updates on the progress and results of the Action Plan through interim and final reports.

Subject to discussions on the Council of Europe Programme and Budget 2016-2017, funding will be provided from the Council of Europe’s Ordinary Budget, as well as voluntary contributions from member States and international organisations and partner institutions.

The Secretary General will submit to the Committee of Ministers an interim report on the progress and results of the Action Plan by mid-2016 and a final report by end 2017.
