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(Notices)

NOTICES FROM EUROPEAN UNION INSTITUTIONS, BODIES, OFFICES AND AGENCIES

COUNCIL

Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, on the prevention of radicalisation leading to violent extremism

(2016/C 467/02)

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE GOVERNMENTS OF THE MEMBER STATES,

RECALLING the political background to this issue as set out in the Annex and in particular the Declaration on promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education ⁽¹⁾ and

RECOGNISING that:

- the European Union is a common space to build a prosperous and peaceful area of coexistence and respect for diversity based on common values and principles recognised by Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union,
- the challenges to Europe from recent acts of terrorism underline the urgency to prevent and counter radicalisation leading to violent extremism ⁽²⁾. Many terrorist suspects were radicalised European Union nationals often subverted by externally driven, ideological influences employing potent and nimble technological means of recruitment and inducement in addition to face-to-face methods,
- the human and social conditions which provide fertile ground for radicalisation, particularly in young people, are complex and multifaceted and may include: a profound sense of personal and/or cultural alienation, real and/or perceived grievances, xenophobia and discrimination, limited education, training or employment opportunities, social marginalisation, urban and rural degradation, geo-political interests, distorted ideological and religious beliefs, unstructured family ties, personal trauma or mental health issues,
- the challenges to mitigating society's underlying vulnerabilities to radicalisation and to identifying and disabling the ideological triggers of violent extremism call for a cross-institutional alliance of actors cutting across different policy areas,
- it is crucial to address all types of radicalisation leading to violent extremism, regardless of the religious and/or political ideology behind it;

ACKNOWLEDGE the imperative need for a cross-sectoral cooperation, as well as EU support to Member States' actions in prevention of radicalisation, to safeguard our way of life and provide better opportunities for youth ⁽³⁾;

UNDERLINE the importance of strengthening cooperation with international organisations actively involved in preventing radicalisation and promoting human rights, such as the United Nations (in particular Unesco), the Council of Europe, the OECD and other multilateral fora;

⁽¹⁾ Declaration on promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education, Paris, 17 March 2015.

⁽²⁾ Recognising that not all radicalisation necessarily leads to violent extremism, for the purposes of brevity of this text hereafter referred as radicalisation.

⁽³⁾ The Bratislava Declaration of 16 September 2016.

WELCOME the Communication from the Commission ⁽¹⁾ supporting the prevention of radicalisation leading to violent extremism;

Preventive role of education and youth work

AGREE that education and training, including formal, non-formal and informal learning, represent powerful means of promoting common values ⁽²⁾, e.g. through human rights and citizenship education, educational programmes with a focus on learning from the past and an inclusive learning environment, fostering participation, social mobility and inclusion, thereby laying stronger foundations for society and democratic life;

AGREE that youth work, grassroots sport and cultural activities can also be effective in reaching out to young people at risk of radicalisation. As their backgrounds are diverse, an individual approach is essential;

STRESS that it is vital to detect alarming behaviour and act on the early signs of radicalisation, by having all relevant actors ⁽³⁾ communicate and work closely with parents, peers and wider family;

STRESS that while cognitive skills remain essential, social, civic and intercultural competences, communication and conflict resolution skills, empathy, responsibility, critical thinking and media literacy ⁽⁴⁾ need to be equally developed in the learning process;

AGREE that teachers, educators ⁽⁵⁾ and other teaching staff need to be better trained and equipped to address diversity and the needs of all learners and to pass on common values through positive narratives, life experiences and peaceful worldviews;

CONSIDER that the prevention of radicalisation should be supported through actions funded notably by Erasmus+, European Structural and Investment Funds, Horizon 2020, Creative Europe, Europe for Citizens, the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme and the Internal Security Fund;

Security dimension of addressing radicalisation

- NOTE that radicalisation leading to terrorism and violent extremism raises significant and evolving challenges to the security of our citizens which must be comprehensively addressed, primarily by the Member States, particularly at the local level, but also with coordinated support at EU level in accordance with the Treaties,
- NOTE that the recent terrorist attacks and attempted attacks in Europe reflects that the global terrorist threat has become more decentralized, more complex, and in many respects harder to detect, due in part to an ever more rapid process of radicalisation,
- TAKE INTO ACCOUNT that the number of returnees, including, in particular, returning foreign terrorist fighters, their families and minors might increase,
- ACKNOWLEDGE that a robust response to the transnational threat of radicalisation besides EU-internal preventive measures, requires quick implementation of EU external efforts to tackle its root causes, particularly focusing on cooperation with and support to the Western Balkan region, Turkey and North Africa;

Countering terrorist propaganda and hate speech online

- NOTE the need to involve and cooperate with service providers in the fight against illegal hate speech online ⁽⁶⁾, in full respect of freedom of expression, in view of the role of social media as a prime vehicle for targeting, grooming and triggering potential radicals to commit violent acts, and UNDERLINE the importance of a multi-stakeholder approach ⁽⁷⁾,

⁽¹⁾ 10466/16.

⁽²⁾ The Treaty on European Union, Article 2.

⁽³⁾ Doc. 9640/16 — Such as teachers, educating staff at universities, social workers, youth workers, healthcare providers, volunteers, neighbours, sports coaches, religious and informal leaders, local police officers.

⁽⁴⁾ 9641/16.

⁽⁵⁾ For the purposes of this text the term 'educator' refers to people providing formal, non-formal and/or informal learning.

⁽⁶⁾ Code of Conduct on countering illegal hate speech online of 31 May 2016 (Commission together with Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Microsoft).

⁽⁷⁾ Noting in this context the Commission proposal (doc. 9479/16) to extend certain provisions of the Audiovisual Media Services Directive, in particular the prohibition of incitement to violence and hatred, to video-sharing platforms.

- EMPHASISE the role of the EU internet Forum in developing means to reduce the accessibility of terrorist content online and to empower civil society partners in delivering alternative narratives online,
- RECOGNISE the valuable work done by the Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA), the Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN) and its Centre of Excellence and the Syria Strategic Communications Advisory Team (SSCAT) and EMPHASISE the importance of proper connection between national and local actors,
- CONSIDER that online and offline initiatives that present alternative, positive and moderate narratives can be crucial in promoting mutual respect and preventing radicalisation; NOTE the need for further evaluation and analysis of the impact of counter-narratives,

INVITE THE MEMBER STATES TO

- encourage cooperation between education and training institutions, local communities, local and regional administrations, parents, the wider family, youth field actors, volunteers and civil society to enhance inclusion and strengthen a sense of belonging and positive identity,
- broaden the competences of teachers, educators and other teaching staff to be able to recognise early signs of radicalised behaviour and hold 'difficult conversations' ⁽¹⁾, which open a dialogue with students and other young people about sensitive topics related to personal feelings, principles and beliefs,
- where necessary, use existing or develop new tools and materials for teachers, educators and other teaching staff, including networks where they can share advice and guidance on how to handle challenging cases, as well as help-hotlines for young people,
- promote global and citizenship education, as well as volunteering, to enhance social, civic and intercultural competences,
- encourage inclusive ⁽²⁾ education for all children and young people, while combatting racism, xenophobia, bullying and discrimination on any ground,
- address, with the support of the Commission and the concerned EU agencies, the use of the internet for radicalisation leading to terrorism and recruitment purposes, notably by developing cooperation with service providers, cooperation on strategic communication and, where appropriate, internet referral units while respecting fundamental rights and in compliance with obligations under international law,
- support the work of the EU internet Forum and the work of the Europol's European Counter Terrorism Centre (ECTC), in particular the work carried out by the EU IRU,
- support civil society organisations to promote mutual respect and counter hate crime, hate speech and terrorist propaganda with positive alternatives to violent extremist narratives and ideologies as well as developing counter-narratives to violent extremist ideologies,
- use the EU-wide networks to continue the exchange of 'best practices' in relation to the fight against radicalisation, such as the RAN Centre of Excellence,
- with the transition of SSCAT (Syria Strategic Communications Advisory Team) to the European Strategic Communication Network (ESCN) continue to make use of ESCN consultancy and information-sharing services to understand and respond better to radicalisation and polarisation in Europe's communities, for example by embedding staff into ESCN in Brussels,
- continue developing de-radicalisation, disengagement and rehabilitation programmes for returnees, including in particular returning foreign terrorist fighters, their families and minors;

⁽¹⁾ RAN Manifesto for Education — Empowering Educators and Schools.

⁽²⁾ As referred to in 2015 Joint Report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020) (2015/C 417/04).

CALL on the Commission to

- pursue in close cooperation with the Member States the work on a specific toolkit ⁽¹⁾ based on best practices for youth workers to help young people develop their democratic resilience, media literacy, tolerance, critical thinking, and conflict-resolution skills,
- promote and support peer learning and research for teachers, educators, and other teaching staff, experts, policy makers and researchers, in order to enable the sharing of best practices and gaining better understanding of the issue of radicalisation, including developing a policy framework and an online compendium of good practices ⁽²⁾,
- given the pressing and enormously multifaceted challenge to prevent and counter radicalisation, organise a multi-stakeholder conference ⁽³⁾ bringing together different sectors and relevant stakeholders (e.g. from the fields of justice, home affairs, education, youth, sport, culture and social affairs), and young people,
- promote mutual understanding and respect between students and other young people from the EU and third countries through direct and virtual exchanges, such as the extension of eTwinning Plus network to selected countries of the EU's neighbourhood and Erasmus+ virtual youth exchanges,
- encourage direct contacts between young people from disadvantaged backgrounds and positive role models, such as artists, sportspersons or entrepreneurs and any success story relevant for young people to inspire them through real life experiences ⁽⁴⁾. To help create credible positive alternatives to violent extremist narratives, formerly-radicalised people could also speak about their own experience,
- enhance the cooperation with service providers, welcoming the strong involvement of digital industry and civil society and the development of initiatives to further enhance the effective removal of terrorist content (in particular through the development of a Joint Referral Platform) as well as the dissemination of alternative narratives, in particular through the announced civil society empowerment programme,
- build on the work of the EU Fundamental Rights Agency in promoting mutual respect, non-discrimination, fundamental freedoms and solidarity throughout the EU,
- take account of these conclusions when preparing and implementing the proposed actions.

⁽¹⁾ Ongoing work of the expert group on youth work for active citizenship, preventing marginalisation and violent radicalisation, as set out in the EU Work Plan for Youth 2016-2018 (OJ C 417, 15.12.2015, p. 1).

⁽²⁾ Within the mandate of the ET2020 working group on promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education.

⁽³⁾ Such as the regular RAN High Level Conference on Radicalisation.

⁽⁴⁾ The network will be managed locally by the Erasmus+ National Agencies, which will also allow adaptation to local circumstances.

ANNEX

In adopting these conclusions, the Council RECALLS in particular the following:

- the EU Counter Terrorism Strategy (14469/4/05),
 - revised 'EU Strategy for combating Radicalisation and Recruitment' (9956/14),
 - Foreign Affairs Council conclusions on Counter-Terrorism of 9 February 2015 (6026/15),
 - the European Council of 12 February 2015 at which Heads of State and Government called for a comprehensive approach, including initiatives regarding social integration, among others, which are of great importance to prevent violent radicalisation,
 - the Declaration on promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education adopted at the Informal meeting of European Union Education Ministers in Paris on 17 March 2015,
 - the European Agenda on Security (8293/15),
 - Draft Council Conclusions on the Renewed European Union Internal Security Strategy 2015-2020 (9798/15),
 - conclusions of the Council of the European Union and of the Member States meeting within the Council on enhancing the criminal justice response to radicalisation leading to terrorism and violent extremism (14419/15),
 - the ET 2020 Joint Report on education and training of November 2015 (14440/1/15 REV 1),
 - note from the EU Counter-Terrorism Coordinator to the Council on the 'State of play on implementation of the statement of the Members of the European Council of 12 February 2015, the JHA Council Conclusions of 20 November 2015, and the Conclusions of the European Council of 18 December 2015' (6785/16),
 - joint statement of EU Ministers for Justice and Home Affairs and representatives of EU institutions on the terrorist attacks in Brussels on 22 March 2016, calling for 10 measures in the CT area, incl. continuing to develop preventive measures (7371/16),
 - communication on delivering on the European Agenda on Security to fight against terrorism and pave the way towards an effective and genuine Security Union (8128/16),
 - the Council conclusions of 30 May 2016 on the role of the youth sector in an integrated and cross-sectoral approach to preventing and combating violent radicalisation of young people (9640/16),
 - the Council conclusions of 30 May 2016 on developing media literacy and critical thinking through education and training (9641/16),
 - the Council conclusions on the application of the Charter of Fundamental Rights in 2015 (in particular the part concerning non-discrimination, hate speech, racism and xenophobia) (10005/16),
 - the Bratislava Declaration of 16 September 2016,
 - the Renewed European Union Internal Security Strategy and Counter-Terrorism Implementation Paper: second half of 2016 (11001/1/16 REV 1),
 - the first progress report towards an effective and genuine Security Union of 12 October 2016 (COM(2016) 670 final).
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