

Committee of Ministers
CM Documents

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Declaration of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe
“United around our principles against violent extremism and radicalisation leading to terrorism”

Terrorism has a global character and represents a growing threat to human rights, democracy and the rule of law in Europe and all over the world. In the face of such an enduring threat, the Council of Europe is more than ever duty-bound to promote and uphold the principles which are its *raison d'être*.

The terrorist attacks perpetrated in recent months in Europe and elsewhere in the world were unacceptable infringements of the principles of tolerance, freedom of expression and media freedom which underpin our democratic societies.

We strongly condemn terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, committed by whomever, wherever and for whatever purposes. We express our full solidarity with the individuals and communities whose lives have been blighted by these attacks.

To those who seek to divide our societies and weaken our democracies, it is our duty to reply firmly that we shall not give ground and that the protection of human rights will remain the unquestionable basis for our action. The European Convention on Human Rights and the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights provide us with guiding principles on how to combat terrorism whilst respecting the rule of law and fundamental freedoms.

Our action needs to be stepped up to deal with the transnational nature of this threat at national level, but also collectively, at pan-European level and beyond. The Council of Europe has experience and expertise which can reinforce the European response.

In this spirit, we are determined to strengthen our legal instruments to combat violent extremism, ensuring that the levers already available to us are fully used and adopting new instruments appropriate to the changing threats.

The combating of terrorism, however necessary it may be, does not seem to us to be enough. Long-term prevention of radicalisation is of equal importance. This is a field in which the Council of Europe has universally acknowledged expertise and in which we will act in a multidimensional manner.

We are in particular convinced that education for democracy and the building of more inclusive societies are vital components of the democratic response that we must give to the upsurge in violent extremism. Restoring trust and promoting “better living together” are challenges vital to the future of our societies.

We are pleased that these issues will be at the core of the forthcoming World Forum for Democracy (Strasbourg, 18-20 November 2015), which will allow all the component parts of civil society to be involved in our discussions and action.

Action Plan

The cross-border nature of the terrorist threat means that a **joint international effort** is needed. We must avoid having any gaps in our approach which terrorists can exploit.

Building on its long-standing expertise, the Council of Europe has an important role to play in developing and coordinating the efforts of member States, given its mandate, intergovernmental nature, pan-European membership, binding standard-setting instruments and co-operation tools.

We therefore adopt today an **Action Plan** to combat violent extremism and radicalisation leading to terrorism.

Our action will combine measures to prevent and to combat terrorism; development, implementation and monitoring of standards; assistance and co-operation; exchanges of best practices.

Combatting terrorism

We will use all the legal **instruments** already at our disposal for combating and bringing to justice those who commit or attempt to commit terrorist acts, as well as those who recruit, arm, finance or support them. To this end, we will draw on the relevant Council of Europe texts, in particular the Council of Europe Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism of 16 May 2005 and the guidelines on human rights and the fight against terrorism.

We will reinforce the international legal framework against terrorism, if necessary developing **new instruments** to close any loopholes used by terrorists. The first result of these efforts is the **Additional Protocol to the Council of Europe Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism, concerning foreign terrorist fighters**, which we have adopted today. We will analyse the specific issue of terrorists acting alone and the feasibility of a legal instrument on the subject.

We call for the swift signature and for the ratification of the Council of Europe’s conventions in the field of terrorism by those States which have not yet done so and by the European Union. We will promote these instruments internationally and draw on the assistance of the Organisation in their implementation. We will step up our counter-terrorism **co-operation in criminal matters**, in particular to combat the financing of terrorism.

Preventing radicalisation

The international legal framework against terrorism will be supplemented by measures designed to prevent radicalisation. To this end:

We will step up action at the national level and collectively to promote the **cohesion of our societies** by encouraging inclusion and combating stereotypes and discrimination. We will reinforce efforts to combat **hate speech** and incitement to violence, while respecting the fundamental right to freedom of expression and information. In this connection, we support the continuation of the Council of Europe youth campaign to combat hate speech online. Due attention will be given to the effective follow-up to the recommendations adopted at the Conference “Tolerance trumps hate” held in Brussels on 8 May 2015.

The Council of Europe’s work to promote **intercultural and interfaith dialogue** will also be strengthened, in close co-operation with international intergovernmental organisations (such as the OSCE and the United Nations and their initiative concerning the Alliance of Civilisations) and non-governmental bodies active in this area.

In the field of **education**, we call for the development and utilisation of tools for education for democratic citizenship, intercultural education and history teaching. We call for the adoption by the end of 2015 of the key elements of the **competence framework for the exercise of democratic citizenship** and thereafter the holding of a Council of Europe Conference of Ministers of Education to promote the implementation of that framework.

We also call on the relevant Council of Europe bodies to make use of their know-how to draw up instruments to prevent radicalisation in **prisons** and upon release from prison, drawing in particular on best practices in the member states.

We will encourage initiatives to combat radicalisation and the recruitment of terrorists **online**, in co-operation with the media and new communication services and while respecting their independence and freedom of expression. In this context, we support the development of counter-narratives to extremist messages. We also call for the signature and ratification of the relevant Council of Europe legal instruments by the largest possible number of States in order to better combat the transfrontier dimension of hate speech disseminated through the internet.

We will endeavour to enlist all the bodies which can be used to reach the various **stakeholders** who can help to prevent radicalisation on the ground: political leaders, local elected representatives, heads of associations, in particular those representing victims of terrorism, representatives of women’s and youth movements and religious leaders, representatives of the corporate sector and trade unions, etc. We underline that women and young people have a key part to play in this context.


We call on the **Secretary General to implement** the Action Plan without delay, under the authority of the Ministers’ Deputies.

Related Documents

Meetings

- [CM125 Session of the Committee of Ministers](#) / 19 May 2015

Other documents

- [CM\(2015\)74addfinalE](#) / 19 May 2015 
- [CM/PV\(2015\)125add1/Item2E](#) / 19 May 2015 