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PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY– UNION FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN

ASSEMBLÉE PARLEMENTAIRE – UNION POUR LA MÉDITERRANÉE

الجمعية البرلمانية للاتحاد من اجل المتوسط

Committee on Improving Quality of Life, Exchanges between Civil Societies and Culture

RECOMMENDATION

Countering radicalism and encouraging inter-faith dialogue and economic development as instruments for a new Euro-Mediterranean pact

The Committee on Improving Quality of Life, Exchanges between Civil Societies, and Culture

1. Expresses its deep concern at the continuing instability of the Mediterranean region, which is shaken by conflicts old and new that demand an effective and coordinated response from the international community to help restore peace and socio-economic development in the region; it is convinced that the Union can effectively contribute to solutions to the region's crisis as it is the only platform that maintains dialogue and communication lines among parties.
2. Underlines that stabilization processes leading to peace are the result of a cultural and educative process that begins since childhood and create the building base of a society based on respect, tolerance and reciprocity. It believes that culture and education are essential to combat radicalization and recognizes the role of prevention in countering both Islamism and Islamophobia; is convinced that the sense of unity, social

cohesion, collective growth, shared values in intrinsic diversity are concepts that must be rooted in human beings from the earliest age; a path of growth of young people today will allow the building, in the future, of integrated societies that will be able to put an end to wars and conflicts;

3. Notes that the ongoing conflicts have led to the exodus of millions of people, a humanitarian crisis and created an emergency that has affected in particular bordering states, which, already burdened by the migratory inflows from previous conflicts, have to deal with situations on the verge of collapse without receiving adequate economic or logistic support. The Committee calls on the international community to mobilise more resources and concerted strategies in favour of refugees, and to lend support to those countries that are taking in migrants.
4. Underlines there are other causes contributing to the mass displacement of people and migration including poverty, unemployment (especially youth unemployment), corruption, social exclusion and inequality and climate change; believes that the governments and the international community at large should focus particularly on addressing these root causes;
5. Is deeply concerned about the phenomenon of violent radicalisation and extremism which is gaining ground and constitutes a serious threat to the security of people and stability of countries; urges the exchange of best practices and the adoption of common preventive and counter-strategies through the definition of a comprehensive strategy that addresses the sources and relies on reinforced cooperation between the two shores of the Mediterranean;
6. Emphasises the need to develop a common understanding of the effects and impact of terrorism on populations and good governance in the Mediterranean region; highlights the necessity to avoid counterproductive effects of counter-terrorism policies on the political space of civil society; recalls

that respect for human rights for all and the rule of law are the fundamental basis of the fight against extremism;

7. The Committee calls for attention to be focused on prisons, which have become breeding grounds for radicalisation and recruitment, and emphasises the importance of organising courses of spiritual education and guidance both in prisons and in reception centres for asylum-seekers, so that official religious institutions might collaborate in preventing radicalisation and identifying situations of risk.
8. Urges the promotion of training courses and education in prisons, so that inmates can develop critical thinking to be able to face attempted radicalization and have the necessary skills for an active inclusion into society, especially with regard to the labour market, and can take advantage of good practices in terms of partnerships between prisons and the community. Youth should also be the focus of attention, since they are also mentioned as part of the population at risk and can become more easily vulnerable to radicalization. The economic and social instability nowadays makes young citizens more likely to be recruited, hence the importance of public investment in quality education and training as well as in job creation;
9. Strongly condemns the attacks and persecutions of religious minorities, and considers it crucial to strengthen the measures designed to protect the freedom of religion, religious diversity and interreligious dialogue;
10. Firmly condemns any attempt to identify Islam, a religion of peace, with acts of violence. The Committee also highlights the problem of rising Islamophobia, which the Internet and the media often amplify, and warns against the dangerous consequences of biased and stereotyped attitudes to immigration and the Islamic world; stresses the importance of intercultural and interreligious dialogue as powerful means to fight intolerance and extremism; recalls the need to develop the teaching of history of religions by insisting on the peace-oriented dimension of religions, while raising the awareness of teachers and expanding the curriculum in this area. Invites local authorities to develop initiatives at a local level to promote inter-

religious dialogues and forums to promote cohesion to fight islamophobia, highlighting education as a priority tool to promote inter-religious dialogue;

11. Believes that poverty, political instability, the prolonged crisis, oppression, marginalization, lack of employment, of education and prospects as well as discrimination have fostered radicalisation, and calls on the main international actors to act urgently to stabilise the Mediterranean region, support the economies, the democratic processes and institutions of the countries in greatest difficulty as well as leverage the socio-economic development potential of all the countries in the region, in order to achieve an increased political and economic integration between the southern Mediterranean countries, on the one hand, and between the countries on both sides of the Mediterranean on the other hand, in order to resolve the current crises and meet the common long-term interests;
12. Underlines that radicalism cannot be countered solely through control, law enforcement and intelligence systems, but it is also necessary to invest in education and training, to promote a culture of dialogue, respect for diversity and reciprocal trust between the peoples of all countries and religions, especially towards young people who, if sufficiently motivated and properly guided, mostly through all types of education, can achieve extraordinary results both in terms of their professional careers and as champions of the values of a multi-ethnic, multicultural and tolerant society. Recalls that the two aspects of the fight against radicalism – prevention and repression – must remain distinct;
13. Points out that the fight against Islamophobia also involves the promotion of religious freedom and freedom of expression by the authorities of the countries of the Mediterranean region; also reminds that hate speeches, Islamophobia and discrimination contribute to exclusion and may further reinforce religious radicalisation of young people. In this context, highlights the training provided to imams and ‘mourchidates’ at the Mohamed VII institute and the cooperation agreement between France and Morocco in this field;

14. When addressing the “youth question” of the Mediterranean region, believes that it is therefore of the utmost importance to offer in the short term a future perspective to young people from the region also by engaging them in policies addressing their needs and promoting youth entrepreneurship through enhanced cooperation between the public and the private sector. With around 30 million more young people entering the labour market between now and 2030, it is essential to develop effective vocational and educational strategies taking into account job market needs, expanding exchange programmes - in particular Erasmus+ and Erasmus Mundus -, strengthening cooperation between universities and enterprises of the Euro-Mediterranean region to offer opportunities for traineeships and jobs to young people. The aim must be to bring up a new generation that is amenable to dialogue and engagement, so that we may build a 2030 Euro-Mediterranean identity.
15. Therefore reiterates its full support for and appreciation of the projects launched by the Secretariat of the Union for the Mediterranean, with particular reference to education programmes for responsible citizenship, programmes offering secondary, tertiary and postgraduate education, and programmes designed to promote the respect for human rights and to encourage education and the employment of women and young people; calls for reinforcing the engagement of civil society in the debate on the regional challenges and possible solutions in all aspects of preventing and countering extremism and the terror threat. Together these initiatives constitute an exemplary instance of good practice that can be adopted as a concrete response to the needs of the region.