

Statement by the Council of Europe Prevention of aggressive nationalism, chauvinism and ethnic cleansing

"Never again" was the leading motto of foundation of the Council of Europe in 1949. Never again the atrocities of the Second World War, never again aggressive nationalism, racism, chauvinism and ethnic cleansing which were among the root causes of the World War II. This is why the CoE has always been active in the fight against these evils, unfortunately still alive at present. Today the Council of Europe's principal organ for combating these phenomena is ECRI: the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance.

I will not go into details describing the ECRI's activities. However, I would like to draw your special attention to the work of other CoE bodies in the field of prevention of nationalism, extremism and chauvinism, which are relevant to the OSCE concerns.

In 2003 the PACE debated the Threats posed to democracy by extremist parties and movements. As a result a Resolution was adopted underlining that extremism corresponds to a form of political activity, which rejects the principles of parliamentary democracy, basing its ideology and its practices on intolerance, exclusion, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and ultra-nationalism.

Last week PACE debated a report in which it recommended the establishment of a European remembrance centre for victims of forced population movements and ethnic cleansing". The aims of this centre would be to favour reconciliation, act as an instrument of conflict prevention and combat racism and xenophobia by sensitizing European public opinion to the human and human rights aspects of forced population movements and ethnic cleansing.

In its work in the field of prevention of nationalism, chauvinism and extremism the CoE also pays special attention to education, and in particular to history teaching. One of the roles of the Council of Europe is to build an ever closer union of its Members. Education build bridges between cultures, societies and nations on the basis of the integration of democratic values aiming at strengthening reconciliation, tolerance and mutual understanding at all levels: national, regional, European and world.

The Council of Europe has been involved in history teaching since the early fifties. Over the last decade, our Organisation has acted as an important international catalyst in promoting new thinking about history teaching. During this time co-operation was mainly concentrated on the development of new approaches to history teaching including such issues as how to teach controversial and sensitive issues and how to teach history for reconciliation and tolerance.

As a follow up to Recommendation (2001) 15 of the Committee of Ministers on "History Teaching in the 21st Century in Europe" and in the framework of the work on strengthening and developing intercultural dialogue, being done in

all sectors of the Council of Europe, its Steering Committee for Education has decided to run a project on “The Image of the Other in History Teaching” from 2006 to 2009.

This project aims at drafting general guidelines for policies on history teaching within the framework of intercultural dialogue; proposing strategies, methods and instruments which can be used to turn these general guidelines into specific projects; and making proposals on the training, not just of history teachers, but of all those involved in the history learning process.

The Council of Europe has made it a priority to promote intercultural and inter-religious dialogue in order to ensure not only a better understanding among cultures but also cohesion and stability in our societies, on the basis of the principle of accepting others, with their differences, and the principle of freedom of expression. To this end, the Council of Europe is to publish a White Paper on intercultural dialogue.

The concept of “the White Paper on intercultural dialogue” is based on the view that intercultural dialogue is one tool – among several others – contributing to the democratic management of (cultural) diversity within European societies and Europe’s relations with neighboring regions. It can also make an important contribution to the prevention of tensions.

On 7 and 8 September 2006, an international conference on intercultural and interfaith dialogue was held in Nizhny Novgorod, organised by the Russian Federation in conjunction with the Council of Europe. Those taking part looked at the challenges and opportunities of cultural diversity, the religious dimension of intercultural dialogue and the contribution the media can make to greater mutual understanding.

In October last year the Conference on “Intercultural Dialogue – the way ahead” was held in Faro. The main focus of the Conference was the promotion of intercultural dialogue within European societies and between Europe and neighboring regions – the southern shores of the Mediterranean, the Middle East and Central Asia. The conference adopted the “Faro Declaration on the Council of Europe’s Strategy for Developing Intercultural Dialogue”.

The project on Intercultural Dialogue and Conflict Prevention, launched in 2002, aims to secure intercultural dialogue, including the aspect of religious diversity. Its main objective is to provide policymakers, civil society and cultural actors with instruments and models for effective cultural action and co-operation to support dialogue in order to prevent violent conflict, manage and control conflicts and favour post-conflict reconciliation.

Anguelina Prokhorova
Council of Europe
Directorate General of Political Affairs
e-mail: anguelina.prokhorova@coe.int
Tel.: + 333 88 41 26 36