

Extract of the statement 2016/17:KU12 on the Communication from the Commission on supporting the prevention of radicalisation leading to violent extremism, COM(2016) 379.

The position of the Committee

The Committee on the Constitution values highly the Commission's ambition to support the member states in their efforts to prevent radicalisation that leads to violence-promoting extremism and terrorism. Democracy must be safeguarded, and society must become more resistant to radicalisation and violence-promoting extremism. As the Commission notes, these efforts fall primarily within the area of self-determination for the member states, but public authorities and actors at all levels – local, regional, national, European and international – need to work together.

The measures the Commission proposes as part of the European security agenda include counteracting the effects of terrorist propaganda and hate propaganda on the Internet and promoting an inclusive, open and resilient society. It is absolutely essential that radicalisation be counteracted, and the Committee considers that we need to confront disinformation and messages on the Internet that glorify violence as a tool to radicalise people, destabilise society or control the description of political reality.

The Committee on the Constitution therefore welcomes various communication initiatives to spread factual information and positive counter-messages about our democracy and the fundamental values that are expressed in the European Convention on Human Rights and in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. At the same time, the Committee wishes to emphasise the importance of safeguarding freedom of information and expression as regulated in the Swedish constitution. The Committee has previously commented on binding provisions that place demands on Swedish authorities to block or require Internet providers to block websites, stating that such provisions are difficult to reconcile with freedom of information and Swedish legislation on freedom of expression. The Committee continues to maintain this position and would like to stress solutions on a voluntary basis. Finally, it may be worth recalling what the Committee on Justice has stressed –that the focus should be on the fact that most radicalisation does in fact take place in real life and in real meetings between people.

As the Committee on Justice notes, a prison environment constitutes a risk; an environment in which it is especially important to have well-functioning routines to discover and counteract radicalisation. It is important that preventive efforts in such institutional environments are developed. In response to a proposal by the Committee on Justice, the Riksdag has recently made an announcement to the Government stating that it is essential that the Government is proactive and takes measures to ensure that the Swedish Prison and Probation Service carries through and prioritises efforts to discover and counteract radicalisation (Committee report 2016/17:JuU 19, Riksdag Communication 2016/17:203). The Committee on the Constitution shares the view of the Committee on Justice that a continuous exchange of knowledge and experience between the EU member states is important and can help develop efforts to prevent and counteract radicalisation in prisons.

The Committee on Justice further emphasises that work on security is important in preventive efforts against radicalisation and recalls that international efforts to combat terrorism must be given high priority. The Committee emphasises the importance of good and well-functioning cooperation in the EU in which Sweden actively participates to strengthen European cooperation to prevent, hinder and to prosecute acts of terrorism. The Committee further notes that efforts at the EU level need to be intensified. The Committee on the Constitution shares this view.

Like the Committee on Justice, the Committee on the Constitution considers that exchange of information between member states is of central importance for efforts to counteract violence-promoting extremism. The Committee on Justice emphasises the importance of the information contained in the Schengen Information System (SIS) and is positive to the Commission's intention to propose an adjustment to the SIS in order to further increase its added value for crime-prevention

operations and the fight against terrorism. The Committee on the Constitution notes that the Commission presented proposals for changes to the SIS on 21 December 2016.

The Committee on the Constitution shares the opinion of the Commission and the Committee on Education that the preconditions for discovering and preventing radicalisation are best at the local level and that there is a need for increased knowledge in municipalities and schools on how radicalisation can be discovered at an early stage. In its statement, the Committee on Education highlights EU support to teachers in the form of exchanges and other tools to better equip teachers to discover early signs of radicalisation and to manage diversity in the classroom.

The Committee on the Constitution welcomes the Commission's various initiatives regarding research on radicalisation and realises, as does the Committee on Education, that relevant research areas should be prioritised. In a statement to the Committee on Education (statement 2016/17:KU4y), the Committee on the Constitution emphasised that there is a great need for knowledge on violence-promoting extremism, and this is particularly the case for knowledge on violence-promoting radical islamism. This is a relatively new phenomenon in our country compared with left-wing and right-wing extremism. The Committee stressed that it is important to broaden and deepen existing knowledge on radical islamism in Sweden because, as is the case with other anti-democratic ideologies, it challenges fundamental democratic values. The Committee therefore considered that, when deciding the direction of research policy, account should be taken of research directed towards violence-promoting islamic ideology and how it is expressed and formulated in Sweden.

The basic causes of extremism must be prevented, and as the Committee on Foreign Affairs stresses, the causes of extremism must be sought on a broad basis. The Committee on Foreign Affairs welcomes the increased exchange of knowledge and experience that has developed for example via the European Radicalisation Awareness Network consisting of experts from authorities, local authorities and organisations (RAN). In the opinion of the Committee on the Constitution, this network provides welcome support for member states in preventive efforts against violence-promoting extremism by providing guidance and handbooks on introducing structures for cooperation between authorities and a platform for exchange of experience and practice and mapping of research on radicalisation.

The Committee on the Constitution also shares the opinion of the Commission and the Committee on Foreign Affairs that preventive efforts should be the focus of the EU's international work to combat violence-promoting extremism and terrorism and that democracy and good governance are important components for creating stable societies, thereby avoiding conflicts that are a breeding ground for extremism. The reasons why people are radicalised must, as mentioned above, be sought on a broad basis. The Committee wishes to stress the fact that in efforts to prevent violence-promoting extremism account must be taken of the fact that such extremist opinions that originate from a strong ideological conviction on the part of the individual cannot only be explained in terms of socio-economic exclusion, discrimination or similar circumstances.

The Committee on the Constitution agrees with the Committee on Foreign Affairs that also international organisations such as the UN, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Council of Europe are important for the promotion of peace, security and development and consequently for the prevention of terrorism.

The Committee on the Constitution shares the Commission's opinion that it is important that the member states ensure that EU legislation is followed concerning the fight against racism and xenophobia, as well as discrimination on grounds of religion or conviction. Like the Committee on Foreign Affairs, the Committee on the Constitution also wishes to underline the importance of safeguarding human rights and that the rule of law is respected in all work concerning violence-promoting extremism.