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## **Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination**

### **NGOs' role in combating intolerance, racism and xenophobia**

#### **Draft report**

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## **Preliminary draft resolution**

1. Since its inception, the Assembly has striven to eradicate intolerance, racism and xenophobia. The Council of Europe was founded after the Second World War and its resultant atrocities precisely to avert the return of ideologies and practices opposed to human dignity.
2. In a Europe where violent acts motivated by racism, intolerance and xenophobia are multiplying and where parties circulating messages of a racist and xenophobic nature manage to gain seats in the parliaments, constant vigilance and opposition to intolerance, racism and xenophobia become political imperatives.
3. The Assembly regards non-governmental organisations (NGOs) as the natural allies of parliaments in the performance of their function of oversight, prevention and awareness-raising in this matter. It is indispensable to take measures to support and promote NGOs' action in order to refine policies and legislation in the area of racism and xenophobia, and ensure that the point of view of minority groups is taken into account in their preparation, implementation and monitoring.
4. Intolerance, racism and xenophobia are fed by stereotypes and prejudices which must be prevented and eradicated at every level. Visible minorities are too often depicted in the media by conveying a stereotyped image of their culture and traditions. Intolerant attitudes are exacerbated by the effects of the economic crisis and the dissatisfaction experienced by an increasing number of persons who feel more and more exposed as regards employment, security and social protection.
5. The Assembly urges political leaders not to use fear to fuel their electoral campaigns, but continually to reaffirm the democratic values of our societies, of respect for human rights and human dignity. In that regard, it recalls its recent Resolution 1889 (2012) on the portrayal of migrants and refugees during election campaigns. It is urgent to undertake courageous, sustained work on diversity and migration, in co-operation with civil society.
6. In the light of the foregoing considerations, the Assembly recommends that member and observer States, and parliaments in particular:
  - 6.1. in conjunction with the qualified NGOs, take measures to:
    - 6.1.1. advance knowledge of the various cultures and traditions, including those of minority groups, by providing positive models or success stories that can show public opinion the positive contribution of minorities in society;
    - 6.1.2. promote equality in a multicultural society;
    - 6.1.3. establish and develop structures for dialogue in which NGOs and public institutions participate on an equal footing ;
    - 6.1.4. give qualified NGOs a consultative function vis-a-vis public institutions to advocate, in the light of their expertise, specific policy measures in preventing and combating intolerance, racism and xenophobia;
    - 6.1.5. alert civil society to the rise of these phenomena and mobilise it to prevent and combat them, by organising public campaigns on a national or European scale;
    - 6.1.6. ensure the application of the relevant measures and legislation;
  - 6.2. develop proactive youth policies aiming to eradicate discrimination and exclusion;
  - 6.3. encourage the media to give minorities the possibility to make their voices heard and build their media capacity in civil society.
  - 6.4. encourage and support NGOs in their actions aiming to :
    - 6.4.1. ensure liaison with local and regional authorities;
    - 6.4.2. monitor, document and denounce discrimination;

6.4.3 prevail upon the authorities to tackle racism, intolerance and xenophobia through appropriate laws and measures;

6.4.4. monitor the actions of the public institutions in this field;

6.4.5. enhance their qualifications and capacity to act as a source of information for monitoring structures such as ombudspersons and equality advocacy bodies;

6.4.6. support victims of discrimination in their access to justice by providing them with advice and legal representation;

6.4.7. empower groups to engage in campaigns, to be their own advocates and to assert and enforce their rights;

6.4.8. inform minorities of the relevant legal framework for the defence of their rights;

6.4.9. develop communication strategies to make the voice of minorities heard and provide journalists with consistent and reliable information, in order to combat hostility to refugees and asylum-seekers, Islamophobia, anti-Gypsyism and antisemitism.

7. Furthermore, the Assembly encourages the Secretary General of the Council of Europe to review and reinforce co-operation with international non-governmental organisations namely to propose implementing agreements for the instruments already in existence against discrimination, racism and intolerance with the competent Council of Europe directorates and organs in order to provide solutions to specific situations and further the culture of participation in the member States.