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REPORT

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Joint debate:

**Regulating foreign funding of Islam in Europe in order to prevent
radicalisation and Islamophobia**

Radicalisation of migrants and diaspora communities in Europe

The following texts were submitted for inclusion in the official report by members who were present in the Chamber but were prevented by lack of time from delivering them.

Ms AGHAYEVA (*Azerbaijan*) – First of all, I would like to thank and congratulate my colleague the rapporteur Ms Gafarova for this very interesting and comprehensive report. The topic of this report is very important, although the process of writing it was not very easy. As a member of the committee, I remember how many discussions we had, but as a result we now have an excellent report.

Indeed, the issue of migrants, refugees and IDPs is very topical in Europe nowadays. In this report, the rapporteur addresses the questions of why migrants and refugees who arrive in Europe are at risk of radicalisation, how it happens and how this dangerous phenomenon can be prevented. However, the facts show that it is not only newly arrived migrants who are at risk of radicalisation, but also citizens of European countries of migrant origin who feel segregated and are facing the loss of their identity and culture of origin.

It is important to underline that a large part of the report is devoted to the counter-radicalisation action taken by different European countries, international organisations and religious communities. In the report, Ms Gafarova analyses prevention strategies that work with vulnerable groups at community level, aimed at promoting counter-narratives to the propaganda of radical views. Special attention is paid to the use of social media by radical organisations and ways to counteract this dissemination.

In the report, the rapporteur writes about the role of education, diaspora communities and women in preventing radicalisation. I especially want to stress one point: I agree with the rapporteur that women and women's organisations play an important role in preventing radicalisation. Women, as mothers, can be the first to identify signs of radicalisation and their voice, as a counter narrative to the radicalisation process, could be decisive. However, their role should not be limited to the family environment and they should be encouraged to be involved in policy shaping, educational activities and community work on the prevention of radicalisation.

I believe that this report will help to promote legislative measures aimed at the prevention of radicalisation and violent extremism, co-ordinate preventive strategies and promote the exchange of information on good practices and experience in combating radicalisation.

Ms ANTTILA (*Finland*) – Let me start by congratulating the rapporteurs, Ms Fiala and Ms Gafarova, on their excellent and well-written reports. The topics of radicalisation and regulating foreign funding of Islam in Europe are sensitive and highly important issues that need a wide and reflective discussion today.

First, it is extremely important to understand the main factors that make migrants vulnerable to the influence of extremist organisations. To prevent radicalisation and extremism, we must be aware of their strong link to marginalisation, isolation, discrimination and the failures of integration. We should also examine how a lack of transparency in the regulation of foreign funding allows radicalisation to flourish.

I agree with the rapporteur that member States must require transparency and accountability of Islamic as well as other religious associations. We must reject all attempts to put in place parallel societies and not allow foreign funding of any organisations that undermine human rights and dignity. In my view, we should also increase our efforts to combat Islamophobia – one of the breeding grounds for radicalisation.

Radicalisation is fuelled by violence and hate speech; it is a vicious circle that we all must fight against. We must stop anti-Muslim rhetoric. It can reinforce violent terrorist organisations such as Daesh and its anti-western messages addressed to migrants, who are more vulnerable to radicalisation to begin with. We need educational programmes promoting tolerance and the understanding of different religions, cultures and traditions – this, however, does not mean accepting or tolerating violence or undermining human rights.

Combating radicalisation and violent extremism requires close and co-ordinated co-operation between governments, municipalities, law-enforcement authorities, individuals and civil society. Our countries must engage in an interfaith dialogue as a tool to counter violent extremism and radicalisation. In addition, we must focus on the rehabilitation of fighters who return to Europe from Syria.

Ms CHRISTODOULOPOULOU (*Greece*) – The external financing of Islam in Europe has existed in the past; it is a long-term phenomenon. Europe, however, began to worry after the bloody terrorist attacks that took place in a number of European countries. Why now and not before? What has happened in people's lives, what has pushed second and third generation immigrants to be attracted to so-called radicalisation?

In this question, the dialogue that was developed was both poor and superficial. All the governments preferred to stereotype a class of their citizens based on religion, as well as origin and color rather than to provide answers. An extreme example was France, which preferred to impose an emergency regime in the

country rather than highlight a serious social problem such as the marginalisation of new immigrants in poor suburbs. It preferred to ignore the wars in Iraq, Syria and a number of Muslim countries, incriminating the religion of millions of her own citizens.

The development of Islamophobia in Europe has been the result of this defensive policy chosen by European governments. The doctrine of collective responsibility reverted to the world stage. We hope it will not cause the same tragic consequences. Already, this doctrine is the foundation of the rise of the extreme right in Europe. The politics of fear is dominant.

Europe, the European Union, does not talk about austerity, unemployment and the insecurity of its citizens, especially the most vulnerable. The result is that both Islamophobia and the extreme right on one hand and, on the other, so-called radicalisation are developing in a manner that renders them two sides of the same coin.

Ms EROTKRITOU (*Cyprus*) – Radicalisation and Islamophobia are both on the rise throughout Europe and are a core issue among societies and governments alike.

It is a reality that certain States use the pretext of aiding a religious community to practise its faith freely to export a radical form of Islam and to promote national political expansion. Financial reporting identifying the origin of foreign funds and detailed accounts on where, how and when such funds are spent must be made obligatory. In a world where detailed financial reporting is a primary obligation for any financial organisation, the same should apply to funding under the pretext of religious aid to any religious group.

Foreign funding does not always only apply to money. Foreign funding relevant to radicalisation is just as effective in kind and the best example would be the content of the preachings of certain imams who are trained abroad and return to Europe to spread a vision of Islam which is incompatible with the values of the European Convention of Human Rights. It is just as dangerous as the spreading of fascist ideology. Therefore, projects to train imams on European soil uphold the fundamental right to freely practise one's religious belief whilst at the same time ensuring that radical rhetoric adverse to European values is precluded.

The best way to tackle radicalisation and Islamophobia is not only via regulating foreign funding, but primarily through education, integration and social inclusion. The stepping stone of radicals is Islamophobia and therefore teaching, strengthening and practising tolerance and acceptance is the best way to block the pathway of any radical. If governments and societies manage to accommodate the needs of all their citizens and all the people living on their soil, there will be no need for foreign funding. However, until then, regulation is plainly a necessity.

Ms HARDER (*Canada, Observer*) – We know that some individuals have exploited mass migration and refugee flows in order to enter western Europe and carry out violent attacks. We also know that terrorist recruiters are radicalising others by taking advantage of the isolation that is all too common to refugees and migrants.

Canada's experience differs from that of western Europe, most significantly in that we are physically further from many of the world's major conflict zones and largest refugee camps. Nevertheless, we know from experience that the impacts of radicalisation anywhere in the world can endanger the lives of Canadians. Some of the most serious terrorist attacks in our history did not happen on our soil, including the bombing of Air India Flight 182, which claimed the lives of 280 Canadians, and the terrorist attacks of 9/11.

In addition, Canada shares the longest international border in the world with the United States, and we are acutely aware of the difficulty of regulating border crossings across a vast geographic area.

As of 2017, Canada's intelligence agencies were aware of nearly 200 extremists with a connection to Canada who were abroad, and more than 60 who had returned to Canada. Although, in these cases, the authorities were able to identify and track these threats, concerns about border security and the need to improve our intelligence capabilities remain. Radicalised individuals anywhere in the world can ultimately be a threat to Canadians. Terrorists do not respect international borders, so our intelligence efforts must not be limited by them.

In 2012, Canada developed its national counter-terrorism strategy, which echoes many of the themes in this report. As part of our strategy, Canada continues to recognise that in order to prevent terrorism, we need to bolster the resilience of communities, challenge extremist ideology by producing effective counter-narratives, and ultimately reduce the risks of violent extremism.

I am pleased to see reference in this report to the particular importance of women and women's organisations in these efforts. Women are often uniquely capable of countering radical views at the early stages and thus have a significant role to play in preventing radicalisation. Much of the prevention work in Canada has focused on community outreach and liaison activities by our national security and police authorities, because we know that diaspora communities, and particularly women in these communities, are an important source of strength in counter-radicalisation efforts.

Mr HASANOV (*Azerbaijan*) – The report of Ms Gafarova is pretty comprehensive and is a good analysis of the situation. The radicalisation of migrants and diaspora communities in Europe is an issue which must be addressed as soon as possible. Migrants and ethnic communities are people who left their homeland for different reasons: military conflict, social or economic instability. Unfortunately, the outbreak of instability across the Middle East and North Africa has caused an uncontrolled flow of migrants and refugees. Europe is not ready for the prompt reception and effective integration of millions of refugees. As a result, refugee camps and detention centres have sprung up in some European countries.

Throughout the history of humanity, the life of a migrant or refugee has never been easy. The cultural and social adaptation of a migrant in a new country is always accompanied by various problems. And when there are millions of migrants, this turns into a regional and global issue.

The report says that religious fanatics are trying to actively work with migrants and acquire their loyalty. We have to admit that refugee camps and detention centres in European countries are risk zones. Social and economic problems cause disparity among migrants. These circumstances turn the newcomers into some kind of breeding ground for radicals.

We can often see examples of extremist propaganda. The Internet and social media are sometimes a platform for inciting nationalist and extremist sentiments.

In short, all necessary steps to integrate migrants must be undertaken, otherwise, these people will be a soft target for radical propaganda. At the same time, European countries need to actively co-operate with countries from where the flow of refugees occurs. Intergovernmental co-operation can help to resolve this issue.

The report by Ms Gafarova reflects the current situation across Europe on migrants and diaspora communities. The report clearly assesses the situation. In addition, it proposes mechanisms for resolving the crisis concerning migrants and refugees. I thank Ms Gafarova for her brilliant work.

I also support the conclusion of the report, especially regarding the appeal that the fight against radicalism should not encourage anti-Islamic sentiments. I fully approve this approach. Anti-Islamic rhetoric can contribute to extremist and terrorist propaganda. We need to find the best balance between security and human rights.

Mr HOWELL (*United Kingdom*) – This report covers a difficult area. It wants to steer clear of creating or furthering Islamophobia. But equally, it wants to take a hard line on radicalisation and extremism, which is the biggest challenge we face.

The aim of the report is to remove suspicion of Islam by making sure that one faith in particular operates in a fundamentally open and transparent way. All religions should operate in an open and transparent way and should operate on an equal footing, whether they are funded by the State, by donations or by foreign sources. The question we have to ask is the extent to which this can be policed by the State and how organisations that really want to, will not avoid the systems that have been set up. But another question we have to ask is the extent to which religions of any type are the primary conduit for radicalisation now, and the extent to which they will be in future. We have seen the extensive use of social media to take forward a number of different agendas. And this route is likely to play an even more important role in the future.

I believe that few Muslims are looking for a radical message. We have a Muslim as the Home Secretary in the United Kingdom. It is also increasingly wrong to see the Muslim community as a single bloc. If one looks for example at the Ahmadiyya Muslims, they are a peaceful community who wish to play their role in the societies in which they have settled and they have worked with me in my own constituency to stimulate debate. We need to tackle the security situation wherever it arises. But I think we need to avoid raising the temperature of Islamophobia.

Sir Edward LEIGH (*United Kingdom*) – This report makes it clear that refugees and migrants who fail to integrate are at increased risk of radicalisation. The dissolution of a common culture that binds a nation together results in an atomised and individualistic society. How can immigrants integrate if there is no culture to integrate into? As the report mentions, migrants and diaspora radicals are “usually young individuals who have lost their sense of identity and purpose in life”. For this, liberalism has no answer. The attempts we have seen to reassert the communal bonds of our national cultures are small but welcome. In Bavaria and in Italy we have seen moves to introduce or maintain crucifixes in public buildings and affirm Christian identity. This is not about making non-Christians feel excluded but about dialogue: how can we have dialogue and exchange with other cultures and newcomers to our culture if we have no culture left to offer?

Another key to integration is equal dignity and equal protection under the law. As the report mentions, ghettos and self-segregation are a threat. Migrants and refugees of whatever colour, race, or background deserve the same protection of law and freedom from criminals as the rest of us. The existence of “no-go” areas for police must not be tolerated.

The greater point is: we need to stop the flood, stem the tide, and prevent illegal entry into Europe. Vulnerable people are being taken advantage of by human traffickers and criminal people smugglers. Ignoring these problematic and sensitive areas only increases the threat to our security.

We welcome the positive examples of involvement of existing Muslim communities in Europe. These groups are now of long standing in many of our countries. In many European countries, we have Muslim communities which now date back over half a century. We should do more to facilitate integration through these communities. Learning lessons from one another and exploring best practice is precisely the kind of role the Council of Europe was founded to facilitate.

Securing Europe’s borders, stemming the flow of refugees and migrants, will allow us to devote more attention and resources to integrating others and deprive radicals of fertile recruiting ground.

Ms MUFLIH (*Jordan, Partner for Democracy*) – Thank you, Ms Doris Fiala, for this report, which includes useful information about political attitudes towards Islam and the transparency of the funding and donations that some communities receive in Europe.

Some people believe that the lack of transparency allows the phenomenon of radicalisation to flourish. We must not mix up the financing of Islam and the financing of terrorism. Regrettably, some terrorists and the behaviour of some extremist groups that transfer money illegally to finance their groups using the name of Islam have defamed the image of Islam. People start to fear Islam as a religion of terrorism and radicalisation as a result of Islamophobia. Islam is a religion of tolerance and it is innocent of these extremists who hide their evil actions behind the name of Islam as a religion. The Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) said “A Muslim is the one from whose tongue and hands people are safe”.

We totally agree with this report and we must stop funding these terrorists and also stop any type of donation that may help them to flourish. We must combat radicalisation and extremism that spoils the real image of Islam. Governments should regulate the amount of money that can be transferred on a daily basis by those extremists. There is a lot of difference between the funding of Islam and the funding of organisations whose activities are opaque. The funding of Islam should only go to the construction of places of worship and their maintenance as well as the remuneration of clerics.

Charity is one of the five pillars of Islam and is therefore a duty of the faithful and it must not be compulsory. Real Muslims know these obligations, but extremists cover them up in the name of Islam to hide their violent radicalisation attitudes which lead to terrorism and hatred.

People should be aware of social media and fake charities collecting donations, trying to take advantage of people’s generosity and compassion.

Mr NISSINEN (*Sweden*) – I am happy to take the floor in this joint debate on two important and closely related reports: one by Ms Fiala of Switzerland on the financing of radical Islam in our countries, and the other by Ms Gafarova of Azerbaijan on the threatening spread of radical views among some migrants to our continent. This shows that our Assembly is now waking up to these major threats against our European civilisation.

Ms Fiala puts her finger on several vital points. We have to know who finances radical Islam in our member countries. Is it certain foreign States? Or some shady donors within States? If so, what can we do to expose them and stop them? Furthermore, who receives the money, and by which channels? And for exactly

what uses? Is there any risk that some of the funds will go towards criminal, or even terrorist, activities? How do we ensure proper accounting, before, during and after announced projects? Transparency is needed, and can be achieved only if we are all willing to ensure such accounting. Ms Fiala is on the right track, and our Assembly must act on her lucid conclusions.

Ms Gafarova, for her part, places her trust in the power of reason and moderation, as a bulwark against blind fanaticism from wherever it comes. Our civilisation stands and falls with the principle of tolerance towards others, of freedom of religion and opinions. That is how we built our civilisation over centuries, and saw it spread across the world in the form of democracy. We must defend that tolerance against those who seek to destroy it through intolerance, as they seek to forbid any views of religion or society except their own. The fight for freedom never ends.

Ms Fiala and Ms Gafarova – both young, both women and coming from opposite ends of Europe – deserve our appreciation and support as we carry their respective – and very like-minded – messages forward.

Mr SIRAKAYA (*Turkey*) – First, Europe still continues to see migrants and diaspora communities differently from ordinary citizens, even if they have lived in Europe for their entire life. Europe must treat them as equals and peers and not marginalise them.

This already starts, for example, in school: non-Christians are not admitted to confessional schools, like in Germany. Furthermore, migrants are categorised as a single category without taking their diverse roots into account. On the contrary, migrants come from different countries, religious practices and cultural attitudes; therefore, each community needs to be evaluated individually.

When it comes to tackling radicalisation in Europe, we need to put effort into understanding the culture of immigrants. They must be given more possibilities to integrate and be involved. In this connection, accepting their identities is crucial.

Let us look at the European value study from 2009: 32% of the people questioned said that they didn't want to have Muslims as their neighbours. In 1999 it was just 15%. It is very unfortunate that the western media did not cover the racist mosque attacks in Germany – there were at least 950 mosque attacks in 2017 alone. Intolerance and racism against migrants led Europeans to vote for extremist parties. If there is no understanding of Islamic history and no co-operation with Muslim immigrants from diverse backgrounds or the organisations established by them, the only ones who will benefit will be the radical groups.

The spreading of propaganda, hate, fear and smear campaigns against Islam and Muslim immigrants will not benefit anyone but the extremists. In Europe, many political parties started employing Islamophobic populism to gain votes. The ideology of nationalism will further divide society and create the concept of "the other" which may eventually endorse future conflicts.

To eradicate migrant-phobic attitudes and the stigmatisation of migrants, it is vital to provide European people with accurate knowledge on and understanding of migrants, and Islam in particular. To do this, the curriculums in the education system must include comprehensive information about Islam, and focus on the positive gains brought to Europe by the migrants.

Mr SOLEIM (*Norway*) – There are two ways to work against the growing extremism and radicalisation in Europe. One way is to strengthen our police forces and to come down on people breaking the law harder than before. We can increase our surveillance, pass laws that give criminals longer sentences and we can strengthen our border controls. The other way is to fight extremism and radicalisation before it even starts.

These past years have maybe been too much about the first way, rather than the second way. This report reminds us all that, if we succeed in integrating new people coming to our countries, there will be no reason for anyone to seek these radicalised groups and networks.

For many young migrants without any networks in terms of school or education, work or social activities, these radical networks and groups can be easier to join because you don't have anywhere else to go. So, colleagues, it is absolutely crucial that we all work hard to integrate every new person coming to our countries immediately.

I will acknowledge Rapporteur Gafarova's section in her report regarding Norway as a positive example. We have been working on this for a long time, and especially over the last few years. The youngest

directly start school so that the children and youths can make friends, learn the language and culture, and be a part of society. As a result of this, we can also see that they continue to participate in activities outside school time: for example, different kinds of sports and playing music. In Norway, we have pledged that every child should have one social activity outside school time.

It is also crucial, both for the women themselves and for the nation's economy, that more migrant women join the workforce instead of staying at home. States should provide introduction programmes so that you can learn the language and learn about the society you are to live in. These programmes must be good and mandatory.

It is not possible to work if you do not have a job, and in that area, society as a whole needs to participate. Employers have to be more open to hiring people with different backgrounds, and governments have to give better incentives for employers to do so. If we manage to keep those at risk of being radicalised on the right side, we both fight the problem and give society a new labour force to grow on.

The key to stopping radicalisation is to integrate everyone outside of the community, because no one wishes to attack or harm a society you are part of yourself.

Mr WHALEN (*Canada, Observer*) – While the issues discussed in this report are certainly sensitive, we can, and must, address them in a reasoned and principled fashion. Without transparency about the sources of financing for religious institutions, we lack facts. Without facts to inform our policy, we risk creating a climate of suspicion and fear that can extend beyond individual institutions to an entire faith community.

There are a variety of means to achieve this end. In Canada, our taxation regime ensures that religious institutions account for their finances and activities. To enjoy the benefits of operating as a registered charity in Canada, a religious institution must file an annual information return. This return must provide a complete financial statement, including any foreign sources of funding above \$10 000, and a description of the institution's charitable activities.

We also have the means to enforce compliance. In July of this year, the Canada Revenue Agency revoked the charitable status of an Ottawa-based mosque that had "allowed its resources to be used for activities that promote hate and intolerance." Through audits and correspondence with the mosque's board of directors, the CRA learned that the board had permitted four individuals known to promote extremist and biased views to use its facilities to speak. The CRA also found that the mosque had provided resources to non-qualified donees; provided an undue benefit to a director; failed to maintain proper books and records; and failed to file an information return as and when required by law. These actions disqualify the mosque from continuing to operate as a registered charity.

Though the mosque may be able to remain in operation, it will not escape the requirement under Canadian law to file annual tax returns. Working within a broader framework of initiatives and activities designed to detect and counter foreign influence operations against Canadian interests, Canada's taxation regime provides an important – and faith-blind – accountability mechanism.

Equally important is the maintenance of open lines of communication with Canadians of Islamic faith. Members of this community are instrumental in alerting Canadian authorities to foreign interference activities and attempts to radicalise individuals to violence. This kind of co-operation cannot occur in the absence of mutual trust and a belief that what Canada has to offer is worth defending against external influences. We can only maintain this trust and belief by vigorously defending the rights of all Canadians, including their fundamental right to freedom of conscience and religion.