



Committee of the Regions

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**76th plenary session
8 and 9 October 2008**

**OWN INITIATIVE OPINION
of the
Committee of the Regions
on
STEPPING UP THE FIGHT AGAINST TERRORISM:
INVOLVEMENT OF REGIONAL AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES**

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS:

- firmly agrees that the global threat faced from terrorism is a serious threat to democracy, human rights, and economic and social development across the international community;
- underlines that local and regional authorities will be central to the implementation of the EU Counter Terrorism Strategy. In particular these authorities will drive the delivery of the Prevent pillar and forthcoming counter terrorism and de-radicalisation initiatives across Member States;
- recognises the importance of the EU Anti-Radicalisation strategy which is implemented alongside the EU Counter Terrorism Strategy but stresses that these strategies must include space for localised implementation, drawing upon local experiences and understanding, developing clear frameworks for community intelligence and providing support and resource to local authorities to deliver counter violent radicalisation projects where necessary; underlines that the development of a regional and local public administration role in the prevention of terrorism and violent radicalisation should be conducted in partnership with the EU and governments of the Members States;
- recommends that public consultation at a local level be conducted in Members States to establish a multifaceted understanding of local experiences and concepts of terrorism and motivations towards extremism. Member States should ensure that consultation and engagement opens up participation to those who do not normally interact with local democracy;
- welcomes the second peer review of crisis management plans currently being carried out by the Commission; however calls upon the Commission to ensure that local and regional authorities play a full and active role in the review;
- calls upon the Union to ensure that all counter terrorist policy has direct consideration for equality and human rights and ensures that interventions do not result in a negative experience for certain communities fuelling alienation and motivations towards extremism.

Rapporteur:

Lord Graham Tope (UK/ALDE), Member of London Borough of Sutton and of the Metropolitan Police Authority

Reference documents

Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council: Stepping up the fight against terrorism
COM(2007) 649 final

Proposal for a Council Framework Decision amending the Framework Decision of 13.6.2002 2002/475/JHA on Combating Terrorism
COM(2007) 650 final

I. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

Stepping up the “Prevent” pillar

1. firmly agrees that the global threat faced from terrorism is a serious threat to democracy, human rights, and economic and social development across the international community;
2. acknowledges that attention will inevitably focus on Al Qaeda inspired terrorism and the radicalisation across our communities into violent extremism; however recalls that many recent acts of terrorism have been committed by people born and raised within the country in which the act was committed or elsewhere within the EU, often in response to situations internal to the country where the attack took place, and may not have had religion as their principal motivation. Nevertheless, the CoR recognises that the threat faced from Al Qaeda inspired terrorism is a key security issue faced by the EU today;
3. feels that the EU's counter-terrorism activities must have a twofold focus: (i) a direct assault on terrorist activities; and (ii) preventive action. The earlier the chain of causes that result in terrorist activity can be broken the better. In this regard, it may be very useful to step up research into the causes and motives that induce people to support, finance or take part in terrorist activity;
4. acknowledges that religious factors cannot be ignored when dealing with terrorism. More must be done to spread the message that terrorist activity cannot be justified under any circumstances;
5. thinks therefore that the EU must take the initiative and back moves designed to mitigate terrorism through religious and cultural dialogue;
6. feels that EU cooperation with non-EU countries is a vitally important tool in the prevention of terrorism. Steps must be taken to bolster external cooperation strategies of this kind in a bid both to promote exchanges of information and to foster enhanced practical cooperation among police forces, and cooperation among customs administrations;
7. underlines that local and regional authorities will be central to the implementation of the EU Counter Terrorism Strategy. In particular these authorities, alongside both national and regional law enforcement partners with powers to protect persons and property, will drive the delivery of the Prevent pillar and forthcoming counter terrorism and de-radicalisation initiatives across Member States;
8. draws attention to the considerable progress made in the delivery of the other three pillars: Protect, Pursue and Respond across Members States since the framework legislation of 2002.

Furthermore welcomes proposals in the current initiative to step up the fight against terrorism; to establish a legal basis for aspects of the counter-terrorism strategy including the criminalisation of terrorist training, recruitment and public provocation to commit terrorist offences, the prevention of the use of explosives by terrorists, the use of airline passenger information in law enforcement investigations, preventing and penalizing the funding of terrorism, and in recognising the need for technological research and development to assist policing across the Union to protect citizens from terrorist attacks;

9. nevertheless states that, in stepping up the fight against terrorism, the EU should intensify investment into the development of the Prevent pillar in partnership with Member States, law enforcement agencies and regional and local authorities, together with the enforcement bodies accountable to them. Prevention of terrorism and violent extremism cannot be achieved through legislative means and enforcement alone. Furthermore, punitive measures alone will not be effective and efforts must focus on providing people who are particularly susceptible to radicalisation and recruitment to terrorism with positive prospects and a place in society;
10. believes that an essential approach to dealing with terrorism is prevention based on combating the factors that are closely linked to and encourage radicalisation and are likely to lead to terrorism;
11. recognises that terrorism is often global in nature and inspiration. However states that the impact of terrorism is experienced directly by citizens and communities in a real and individual way. Those planning and supporting acts of violent extremism live and act freely as European citizens and residents within our communities, using and interacting with local services, local democracy and local people. Drawing upon experiences across the EU, Member States therefore recognise the need to fully analyse, elucidate and address the reasons, motivations and processes that lead European citizens into the pathway of violent extremism and the Al Qaeda movement;
12. believes that dealing with radicalisation requires targeted action at local level. The role of local and regional authorities, which have better access to susceptible groups, is particularly important in ensuring that people residing in the EU are as socially well-integrated as possible, without discrimination and under peaceful and democratic conditions;
13. recalls that in 2003 the Congress of the Council of Europe adopted specific recommendations on the role of local authorities in tackling terrorism;

Action Plan: the role of local and regional authorities

14. welcomes efforts made by the European Commission to focus attention on the Prevent Pillar of the counter terrorism strategy and welcomes plans to publish a Communication on combating violent radicalisation in 2008. However would note that Prevent is a significant

cultural shift for counter terrorist agencies and requires the knowledge, experience and cooperation of local and regional authorities;

15. endorses the EU initiative declaring 2008 the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue, since this is an excellent way of encouraging effective dialogue, tolerance and understanding between different cultures and faiths;
16. underlines that the development of a regional and local public administration role in the prevention of terrorism and violent radicalisation should be conducted in partnership with the EU and governments of the Members States. Therefore recommends that a system of local and regional authority networks be established in each Member State in partnership with national governments, the police (with the involvement of regional bodies with exclusive powers to protect persons and property) and local communities to facilitate the exchange of good practice in relation to social integration, professional learning and understanding of violent extremism growing out of local districts and neighbourhoods;
17. recommends that public consultation at a local level be conducted in Members States to establish a multifaceted understanding of local experiences and concepts of terrorism and motivations towards extremism. Member States should ensure that consultation and engagement opens up participation to those who do not normally interact with local democracy;
18. intends to supplement the present Opinion by supporting the Commission and the Counter-Terrorism Coordinator in establishing practical guidance setting out best practice across areas conducting engagement and partnership projects to counter radicalisation;
19. recommends that the CoR hosts an annual event to facilitate strategic learning through the exchange of experiences between local and regional authorities on a pan European level and to provide support to further develop local interventions for the prevention of terrorism and pathways to violent extremism;

Delivery

Learning from engagement and working in partnership

20. recognises the importance of the EU Anti-Radicalisation strategy which is implemented alongside the EU Counter Terrorism Strategy but stresses that these strategies must include space for localised implementation, drawing upon local experiences and understanding, developing clear frameworks for community intelligence and providing support and resource to local authorities to deliver counter violent radicalisation projects where necessary;
21. recommends adoption of the provisions of the Prüm Convention on stepping up cross-border cooperation to combat terrorism;

Community intelligence

22. calls upon Member States and the police to develop clear and safe systems for the exchange of information between local and regional partners (including local and regional policing units) with counter terrorist and anti-violent radicalisation units;
23. emphasises that systems in place to gather community intelligence must have clear consideration to security implications, fundamental rights of citizens and data protection in relation to the exchange of any information between local partners and the police. Citizens must be given the option of anonymously informing municipal authorities and police of potential terrorist attacks;
24. also, considers it essential that the boundaries between police, police agencies and local authorities in relation to community intelligence are clear; that systems are established to provide local and regional partners with the reassurance that participation will not result in harmful effects to community relations; that information sources are protected and that non-policing partners provide a voluntary supplementary role;
25. proposes that guidelines be devised by the European Union to support the development of information sharing and to ensure that systems are robust, fair and secure;

Counter radicalisation

26. calls upon Member States to support local and regional authorities to establish closer working relationships with police (including both national and regional forces) and criminal justice authorities to deliver counter radicalisation projects; and that projects are established and targeted from an informed picture using police intelligence alongside local and regional knowledge and experiences;
27. suggests that support be given to intercultural dialogue and implementation of social integration plans at local level, so as to avoid radicalisation and use of force;
28. recognises that the level of resources committed by Member States will vary according to the intelligence picture. However emphasises that continued engagement with communities remains necessary in order to scrutinise the effectiveness of current projects, to build a long-term relationship between the citizen, law enforcement agencies and governments in relation to counter terrorism, and to consider changing viewpoints and demographics. Resource and project focus should thus adapt accordingly;
29. recommends that Member States and local and regional authorities develop projects with communities to undermine violent extremist ideology and to support mainstream voices. Such projects should be supported by robust professional guidance and evaluated independently to

assess effectiveness. Therefore, CoR proposes that Member States and local and regional bodies jointly identify mainstream community leaders to discredit violent radicals and support credible alternative messages to those of these extremists;

30. notes the well-known phenomenon that terrorism flourishes where people are disaffected with society and feel powerless and excluded. In a well-functioning democratic society, there is less of a risk that terrorist ideas and terrorist networks will gain a foothold and begin to grow. The CoR thus considers it vital that the promotion of democracy and compliance with civil and political rights should be a key element in any moves to combat terrorism;
31. recognises that terminology is a complex and sensitive issue, and requires considerable knowledge and exploration by those managing counter radicalisation initiatives;
32. recommends that Member States and regional authorities support vulnerable local institutions such as schools, further education centres, universities, mosques and religious institutions to identify violent radicalising activities on campus, to disrupt radicalisers and support those vulnerable to violent radicalisation in resisting extremist voices by providing positive and compelling alternatives;
33. recommends that Member States work closely with prison and probation/rehabilitation services to identify, disrupt and deter violent radicalisers held in detention;
34. believes that the delivery of such projects should be co-ordinated regionally with the police and police agencies and monitored by local and regional authorities or equivalent, reporting back to the central state to assess development;
35. considers it essential that to support such projects, the European Union, Member States and police should develop EU networks – including policing units accountable to regions with powers to protect persons and property, and counter-terrorist units – to establish best practice, guidance, support and training for practitioners responsible for local delivery;

Civic engagement and leadership

36. recognises that the leadership role of local and regional authorities is critical to the delivery of prevention of terrorism strategies across Member States;
37. recommends that local and regional authorities should increase the capacity of the community to resist violent extremists through providing strong leadership. Therefore recommends that authorities should seek to:
 - demonstrate shared values across local communities, working with community groups, partnerships and leaders to build community cohesion;

- facilitate ways to rebut, or acknowledge and address, grievances that can contribute towards alienation and motivations towards violent extremism;
 - effectively address hate crime by working closely with police and community support projects;
 - provide a community mediation role when security operations are under way;
 - provide support and guidance to community groups and organisations working to challenge violent extremist ideology;
38. believes that a transparent and accountable police service is fundamental to building trust and confidence in policing counter terrorism and generating public support for counter terrorist operations and national and local interventions to challenge violent extremism. Therefore CoR proposes that both Member States and regional authorities responsible for enforcement and protection of persons and property and with counter-terrorism units or commands consider ways in which accountability of policing can be strengthened locally, seeking support and learning from European and international partners where appropriate;
39. calls upon the Commission to propose ways in which it can support Member States to consider how counter terrorist policing can be mainstreamed across the policing service, facilitating learning between Member States and forces where appropriate;
40. recognises the importance of a police service that reflects the diversity of the population it serves in building trust and confidence and opening positive channels of communication between the police and the public. CoR therefore believes that positive discussions to promote diversity and equality of opportunity across policing should be facilitated at a local level across Member States;

Preparedness and civil contingencies

41. welcomes the second peer review of crisis management plans currently being carried out by the Commission;
42. however calls upon the Commission to ensure that local and regional authorities play a full and active role in the review. Learning from a review into the July 2005 London bombings, it should ensure that a clear division of responsibility and chain of command is established as a matter of urgency between different agencies and bodies called upon to prepare contingency plans and provide emergency services;
43. firmly supports the establishment of networks of associations providing support for victims of terrorist attacks and recognises the role of the CoR in facilitating learning across Member States;
44. welcomes plans to provide support to research and develop technical solutions to assist in the policing effort across the Union to protect citizens from terrorist attacks; calls upon the Union

to support technological solutions across the four pillars, including making the internet a hostile place for extremists expanding developments outside law enforcement alone. CoR therefore calls upon Member States to provide adequate resources for such development projects;

45. calls upon Member States to set up coordination mechanisms in line with the law enforcement powers of local and regional authorities so that, within their remit, they may ensure public safety in crowded places, particularly in relation to designing out terrorism through planning processes;
46. calls upon the Union to ensure that all counter terrorist policy has direct consideration for equality and human rights and ensures that interventions do not result in a negative experience for certain communities fuelling alienation and motivations towards extremism.

Brussels, 8 October 2008.

The President
of the Committee of the Regions

Luc Van den Brande

The Secretary-General
of the Committee of the Regions

Gerard Stahl

II. A. PROCEDURE

Title	Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council: Stepping up the fight against terrorism
Reference(s)	COM(2007) 649 final
Legal basis	Article 265, fifth para.
Procedural basis	-
Date of Council referral/Date of Commission letter	-
Date of Bureau	5.2.2008
Commission responsible	Commission for Constitutional Affairs, European Governance and the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice (CONST)
Rapporteur	Lord Graham TOPE, Member of London Borough of Sutton and of the Metropolitan Police Authority (UK/ALDE)
Analysis	DI 4/2008
Discussed in commission	16.4.2008
Date adopted by commission	12.6.2008
Result of the vote in commission	Adopted unanimously
Date adopted in plenary	8.10.2008
Previous Committee opinions	Opinion on Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament - The Hague Programme: Ten priorities for the next five years – The Partnership for European renewal in the field of Freedom, Security and Justice; Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament Establishing a framework programme on Security and Safeguarding Liberties for the period 2007-2013; Proposal for a Council Decision Establishing the specific Programme : Prevention, Preparedness and Consequence Management of Terrorism, Prevention of and Fight against Crime for the period 2007-2013 as part of the General Programme "Security and Safeguarding Liberties"; Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament Establishing for the period 2007-2013 a framework programme on Fundamental Rights and Justice; Proposals for Decisions establishing for the period 2007-2013 the specific programmes: Fight against violence (Daphne) and drugs prevention and information, Fundamental rights and citizenship, Criminal justice, Civil justice as part of the

	<p>General programme Fundamental Rights and Justice CdR 122/2005 fin¹ - COM(2005) 184 final - COM(2005) 124 final – 2005/0034 (CNS) – 2005/0035 (CNS) - COM(2005) 122 final – 2005/0037 (COD) – 2005/0038 (CNS) – 2005/0039 (CNS) – 2005/0040 (COD)</p> <p>Opinion on Communications from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament: Prevention, preparedness and response to terrorist attacks; Prevention of and the fight against terrorist financing through measures to improve the exchange of information, to strengthen transparency and enhance the traceability of financial transactions; Preparedness and consequence management in the fight against terrorism; Critical infrastructure protection in the fight against terrorism CdR 465/2004 fin² - COM(2004) 698 final - COM(2004) 700 final - COM(2004) 701 final - COM(2004) 702 final</p>
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¹ OJ C 192 of 16.8.2006, p. 25.

² OJ C 81 of 4.4.2006, p. 1.

II. B. PROCEDURE

Title	Proposal for a Council Framework Decision amending the Framework Decision of 13.6.2002 2002/475/JHA on Combating Terrorism
Reference(s)	COM(2007) 650 final
Legal basis	Article 265, fifth para.
Procedural basis	-
Date of Council referral/Date of Commission letter	-
Date of Bureau	5.2.2008
Commission responsible	Commission for Constitutional Affairs, European Governance and the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice (CONST)
Rapporteur	Lord Graham TOPE, Member of London Borough of Sutton and of the Metropolitan Police Authority (UK/ALDE)
Analysis	DI 4/2008
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	<p>citizenship, Criminal justice, Civil justice as part of the General programme Fundamental Rights and Justice CdR 122/2005 fin³ - COM(2005) 184 final - COM(2005) 124 final – 2005/0034 (CNS) – 2005/0035 (CNS) - COM(2005) 122 final – 2005/0037 (COD) – 2005/0038 (CNS) – 2005/0039 (CNS) – 2005/0040 (COD)</p> <p>Opinion on Communications from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament: Prevention, preparedness and response to terrorist attacks; Prevention of and the fight against terrorist financing through measures to improve the exchange of information, to strengthen transparency and enhance the traceability of financial transactions; Preparedness and consequence management in the fight against terrorism; Critical infrastructure protection in the fight against terrorism CdR 465/2004 fin⁴ - COM(2004) 698 final - COM(2004) 700 final - COM(2004) 701 final - COM(2004) 702 final</p>
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³ OJ C 192 of 16.8.2006, p. 25.

⁴ OJ C 81 of 4.4.2006, p. 1.