

Preventing extremist violence and defending Europe's liberal principles

The Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe Party convening in Amsterdam, the Netherlands on 1 to 3 December 2017:

Notes that:

- in recent years, European cities have suffered a number of terrorist attacks inspired or directed by the extremist organisation which calls itself Islamic State;
- in many of these attacks, young Muslim men born and/or brought up in Europe have carried out the attacks or have played an active part;
- this has raised questions about the integration of immigrants in Europe's cities;
- one of Islamic State's aims is to create a conflict between Muslims and non-Muslims in Europe;
- a climate of rejection and fear towards immigrants and refugees has developed in Europe;
- Islamophobia in Europe is on the rise and is openly espoused by some extremist political parties, some of which have had significant electoral success.

Considering that:

- respect of freedom of thought and religious diversity is a core liberal value, as well as freedom of expression;
- about 1,5 billion Muslims in the world cannot be generalised nor blamed for the horrific terrorist attacks by radical Islamists in recent times. Many Muslims in the Western world have felt hatred towards them originating in the failure to realise the important distinction between a Muslim and a radical Islamist;
- many European countries have experienced a great increase in the migration from Muslim countries in the last decades, and Europe has become a more multi-religious society, however, struggling with xenophobia;
- the freedom of expression and freedom of religion allows government employees in many European countries to wear religious symbols at work, such as in schools, in the military, in the police and in the bureaucracy, as long as it does not prevent them from executing their tasks.

Believes that:

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- Europe's culture and economy have benefited from immigration, and that Europe needs immigration to stay competitive in the global economy;
- the state should be secular, individuals have the freedom of expression and religious freedom as long as it is not harmful against others;
- Islamic State has the objective of creating a totalitarian society and uses religion to further its cause;
- the extreme-right rejects an open and diverse Europe and pursues a closed and intolerant society;
- the battle we are facing in Europe is for the hearts and minds of those Europeans who are being pulled away from the liberal values of the Enlightenment towards the extremes of totalitarianism and Islamophobia;
- Liberals must defend with more determination than ever Europe's liberal principles of human rights and civil liberties, democracy, the rule of law, human dignity, the potential of individuals and non-discrimination to ensure a positive and peaceful future on our continent and demonstrate that they have learnt the clear lesson of European history;
- the pursuit of successful integration policies must become a top priority for all levels of government in Europe, in the rhetoric that is used, in the legislation that is enacted, and in the management of local communities;
- the rule of law must be enforced with determination and conviction – crime and lawlessness in neighbourhoods provide ideal conditions for recruitment of youth to extremist ideologies;
- discrimination must not be tolerated – all individuals have a right to fulfil their potential, and all political leaders must clearly reject any form of discrimination;
- ghettos destroy trust, be it in schools, neighbourhoods, or the work environment – local leaders must use creative measures, incentives, and investment to encourage mixed societies where co-existence and collaboration builds trust within the local communities, and where immigrants feel they are part of, and have a stake in, the host society;
- the police and city administration must reflect the society they represent – this is key to having a relationship of trust and a fluid dialogue which helps to identify problems early on, such as the presence of extremist recruiters, criminal behaviour, etc.

Calls on:

- all ALDE representatives in EU institutions to ensure that the pursuit of successful integration policies is an integral part of discussions related to immigration;

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- the EU and the Member States to go against any ban of religious symbols that are not harmful to fellow citizens;
- governments and the EU to refrain from institutional display of religious symbols in public schools and universities, while recognising the right of any individual to display their private religious affiliation;
- Liberal Mayors and local Councillors to implement the relevant steps outlined above, and to share at European level their own successful integration policies;
- the EU and the Member States to respect the freedom of expression and freedom of religion for their government employees, therefore allowing them to wear religious symbols at work, such as in schools, in the military, in the police and in the bureaucracy, as long as it does not prevent them from executing their tasks in a normal way;
- ALDE member parties to work with liberal-minded people in the Middle East and North Africa to help promote liberal values in Europe's southern periphery;
- Liberals throughout Europe to defend and promote with determination and conviction the liberal principles that underpin our societies;
- ALDE member parties to promote the importance for liberals to work against anti-Islamic sentiment in Europe, or any other religion, and promote a Europe where religious diversity is respected;
- nation states to emphasise education on religion as a historical, and cultural phenomenon and general discussions on ethics, free of any preaching, in order to create mutual understanding.

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