

European Citizen Initiative “Stop Extremism” launched

Striving for an EU Anti-Extremism Directive—1 million signatures required

Berlin, 7/3/2017—The European Citizen Initiative’s “Stop Extremism” was launched today in Berlin with a kick-off press conference. The initiators presented a package of measures against political and religious extremism in Europe. Its aim is to achieve an EU directive that will close the loopholes in the fight against extremism and establish effective protection against extremism all over Europe. For the EU Commission to review this package at all, one million signatures of EU citizens from at least seven EU countries are required. The European Citizen Initiative (ECI) wants to collect these within a year.

Seyran Ates, a lawyer from Germany and co-initiator of the citizens' initiative, sees political and religious extremism as a scourge of our time. “It needs to be fought on all levels—politically, in the media, and legally. We have launched the Europe-wide “Stop Extremism” citizens' initiative to equip Europe with an appropriate tool for the fight against extremism. Our goal is an effective EU directive,” says Seyran Ates, who attended the press conference with bodyguards as she had received death threats.

Co-initiator of the ECI, Sebastian Reimer: “It is about protecting our society, about preserving the European community of values. This requires a clear legal framework, which is not only concerned with active extremist actions.” “The mere support of political and religious extremism is already directed against the fundamental values of the European Union, including condoning and tolerating extremisms and its financing,” says the Austrian specialist for constitutional and community law. “Only a society without fear facilitates top performances in the areas of business, education, art, and culture. Extremism of any kind affects the foundations of prosperity of present and future generations.”

The list of requested measures contains protective measures for especially vulnerable groups, such as women and children, and improved protection for workers and employers, as well as measures to fight extremism financing. The proposed anti-extremism directive is based on the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and follows strict rule-of-law principles.

Efgani Dönmez, former delegate in the Austrian Federal Council, emphasizes the European dimension of the project as the provider of ideas and co-initiator of the platform: “Through my activities, I know that people from Portugal to the Baltic countries are united in the feeling that we must set a European signal against extremism. I will use the coming months to create alliances in civil society that support us.”

In order to achieve the targeted one million signatures, “Stop Extremism” is building a Europe-wide network of all those citizens, NGOs, and political groups interested in a consistent EU-wide fight against extremism.

“We want to set a signal in the name of the silent majority of people in Europe who have simply had enough of reading daily about attacks, violence, and agitation, or who have even been affected by extremism. We want to encourage politicians to act more boldly against extremism. Our list of measures is an offer for political discourse,” says Seyran Ates.

About the initiators:

Seyran Ates, a lawyer from Germany and author, is involved in minority rights, anti-discrimination, and human rights. She regularly comments on the topic of Islamic reform and migration on television and radio. When she established a liberal mosque open to everyone, she attracted a lot of attention and subsequently even received death threats by extremists.

Sebastian Reimer, an Austrian lawyer, worked for the Constitutional Service of the Austrian Federal Chancellery before he founded his firm, and specializes in constitutional and community law, in particular basic rights.

Efgani Dönmez, former Federal Councilor member in Austria, conflict and mediation consultant, is one of Austria's admonishing voices reminding us to observe basic and human rights.

You can find all information on the ECI, including specific requirements and support options online at www.stopextremism.eu, on Twitter: twitter.com/StopExtremismEU, and on Facebook: facebook.com/StopExtremismEU

You can watch the press conference live stream on the Facebook page facebook.com/StopExtremismEU

Press contact

Efgani Dönmez

Phone: +43 (0)664 519 10 50

E-mail: media@stopextremism.eu

Twitter: twitter.com/StopExtremismEU

Facebook: facebook.com/StopExtremismEU