

Urgent need for more interreligious and interconvictional dialogue at the local level



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“Facing the rise in violent extremism, anti-Semitism, racism and anti-Muslim hatred observed in recent years, freedom of religion and mutual tolerance and respect must be upheld in our local communities,” stressed Marc Cools, President of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities. The President was speaking at the side event *For a Permanent Platform of Interreligious & Interconvictional Dialogue* organised on 28 January 2025 by the Conference of INGOs of the Council of Europe on the sidelines of the 1st part-session of 2025 of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

The President pointed to the duty of every democrat to combat hatred and rejection of those who are different. In response to such direct threats to the ecosystem of solidarity and peaceful living in local neighbourhoods, he underlined the need for a step-by-step approach, and said that action should start with “spreading the message about good local practice that may inspire stronger interconvictional dialogue in other communities, including by compiling inspiring action and looking into existing education and training programmes”. In this spirit, he rereferred to the Congress’ toolkit on intercultural and interreligious activities and its 12 Principles of Interfaith Dialogue at Local Level, which could be the starting point for future action in this area.

[Congress Toolkit on Organising Intercultural and Interreligious Activities](#)

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