

CROATIA

Berislav Pavišić PhD, Professor in the Law Faculty, University of Rijeka

Conclusions/ International Conference «DESTRUCTIVE GROUPS AND YOUTH»
Rijeka/Croatia / 26/XI/ 2010

Rijeka Declaration

- 1.** The Republic of Croatia is a country in transition. In such an environment it is necessary to undertake measures to protect the most vulnerable groups, such as children, the elderly and the ill as well as those who can barely make ends meet. Protection from destructive groups includes first and foremost prevention of their illegal activities.
- 2.** The bodies in charge of legalized groups must prevent destructive groups from becoming legalized. Hence, the mere fact of the likelihood that a certain group is destructive implies a duty to initiate the appropriate procedure and undertake preventive measures.
- 3.** The police must set up data records concerning: a) destructive groups; b) individuals performing prohibited activities, and c) victims, while complying with the applicable legislation on the protection of their right to privacy.
- 4.** The police and other state bodies must immediately establish communication and cooperation with the appropriate European and other bodies. Setting up an information network is of vital importance.
- 5.** It is necessary to constantly monitor destructive groups and to coordinate the respective legislative acts and bylaws regarding this matter. Under no circumstances can the Republic of Croatia become an oasis for the activities of such sects or cults.
- 6.** Destructive groups tend to operate with success where social content is relatively poor, if not missing. Therefore, systematic forms of education have to be organized according to the age of the target beneficiaries that would take into account the destructive impact of the groups in question.
- 7.** Nevertheless, protection against the actions of destructive groups should not be misused to the extent of restriction of human rights. All repressive measures have to be "ultima ratio" and strictly defined by law. Education plays by far the most important role and should be provided for all those participating in the education or care of vulnerable groups.
- 8.** Overall, more attention should be paid to the activities of destructive groups. The media, both printed and electronic, exercise tremendous influence in that respect. However, the media have not yet carried out that role to the fullest.
- 9.** All individuals participating in the educational process and all those who take care of potential addressees should undergo appropriate training and education (judges, prosecutors, lawyers, police officers), but also parents.
- 10.** In general, the public should be made much more aware of the activities of such destructive groups, and of their possible repercussions.
- 11.** Prevention and eradication of the activity of destructive sects demand the related activity of civic associations and lasting cooperation with the relevant institutions. It is necessary to establish a central national centre and at least four regional centres, which must have an advisory role, the role of linking the activities for the prevention and eradication of the destructive effects of sects, and especially the implementation of international cooperation.
- 12.** The activities listed under 1 - 12 require appropriate funds. Space and staff are to be provided by the Republic of Croatia, and financial resources by the Council of Europe and the European Union.