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# Prevention of ethno-religious radicalism among youth in Volga federal district

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# Abstract

This article considers the measures taken by the regional ministry and department of youth policy of VFD concerning realization of the plan to increase the level of tolerance and conflict-free interethnic and interreligious interaction within the framework of Russian youth policy via project and program-target methods. As a result, it is necessary to teach young people conflict-free interreligious (and thus interethnic) interaction. In conclusion, variegated interethnic and inter-confessional composition of the population in VFD puts important tasks before regional ministries and departments of youth policy.

Keywords: Youth, Volga Federal District, Dialogue.

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# Prevención del radicalismo etno-religioso entre los jóvenes en el distrito federal de Volga

#### Resumen

Este artículo considera las medidas tomadas por el ministerio regional y el departamento de política de juventud de VFD con respecto a la realización del plan para aumentar el nivel de tolerancia y la interacción interétnica e interreligiosa sin conflictos dentro del marco de la política de juventud de Rusia a través de métodos de proyectos y objetivos del programa. Como resultado, es necesario enseñar a los jóvenes la interacción interreligiosa (y por lo tanto interétnica) sin conflictos. En conclusión, la variada composición interétnica e interconfesional de la población en VFD pone tareas importantes ante los ministerios regionales y departamentos de política de juventud.

Palabras clave: Juventud, Distrito Federal de Volga, Diálogo.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The specific character of modern international reality often sets a task for sociologists, political scientists, specialists in the sphere of international relations and geopolitics to find ways to interethnic consent, international peace and inter-confessional dialogue. Multiethnic Russia is not an exception. Such research has practical application: it can help to significantly decrease the number of negative examples both in the capital (the event on Manezhnaya Square and in Birulovo) and in regions (riots in the town of Pugachev in Saratov region, in the town of Arzamas in Nizhny Novgorod region) which demonstrated how dangerous it is if interethnic conflicts are brought to an extreme degree when the criterion of nationality prevails in dividing people into friends and foes. The general social altercation is considered to be the main reason for such tendencies. It presupposes ideological, economic, cultural and national split within Russian society.

# 2. METHODOLOGY

The term ethnicity is crucial for sociology and anthropology. For the first time, it was used by American anthropologist William Warner (Furseth and Repstad, 2006). The term has two interpretations and indicates both social characteristics of an individual (individuals) and purely biological. The concepts of ethical and religious interaction are tangled nowadays as representatives of one ethnic group do not always belong to one religious confession and vice versa. Religion is a kind of basis for a mental matrix of any nation (Rogozhina and Ustinkin, 2012), it explains the interaction of individuals in ethnic groups from the point of view of axiological approach. Thus, cultural and psychological conception is the most acceptable methodological approach to consider problems of ethno-religious radicalism among youth. Cultural and psychological conception reflects the way an individual perceives a number of markers (for example, language, religion, history), thus, becoming a part of cultural and historical context where self-identification of this individual takes place. In the context of the cultural and psychological conception of ethnicity there can happen a conflict of a religious or ethnic character if an individual, perceiving certain cultural and psychological characteristics, starts to see the world around as a threat to his own identity (Ross, 1995). This negative phenomenon can appear in the territory where there live a lot of ethnoses and religious confessions, like on the territory of modern Russia. Because of this, to increase the level of tolerance and conflict free international and interreligious interaction in the Russian Federation a few projects and program-target methods are used. They allow to increase positive tendencies in multi-ethnic and multiconfessional sphere among youth in modern Russia and to minimize risks and threats connected with the tendency for the radicalization of modern youth.

#### **3. THE AIM OF THE ARTICLE**

The article aims at analyzing the real measures and steps to harmonize inter-ethnic and inter-confessional relations, to preserve and develop national cultures and to intensify inter-cultural and interreligious dialogue. The activities of the governments of the subjects of Volga Federal District are taken as an example.

To achieve the aim the authors of the article formulated the following objectives:

1. To consider ethno-confessional peculiarities of the subjects of the district and the number of young people in each of them;

2. To analyze the main course of actions of the departments which duties are to carry out the youth policy in the regions of VFD?

3. To define the general tendency of measures taken to prevent the development of youth religious radicalism in VFD;

4. To reveal the essence of project and program-target methods in the course of analysis of the activities of the departments responsible for youth policy in the regions of VFD in the context of a cultural and psychological approach.

## 4. THE MAIN PART

In order to harmonize interethnic relations modern Russian state counts on youth. It is understood that it is important to bring up young generation in the spirit of awareness of historically formed multinational character of Russia and of the country's inclusion into the global outer space. The latter means that migration flow is inevitable and it has its pluses and minuses (Alexandrova, 2014). Taking into consideration the work of IL 'in, it can be noted that radicalism is an ideology used to formulate aims and programmes to radically change the existing order and to create a stereotype friendfoe in spite of the possibility of consequences incompatible with the interests of society. Radicalism is developing into a form of extremism and there is a call for immediate realization of changes and the activities to resist the existing social order out of the legal field (Il'in, 2014).

To analyze in detail the possibility of effective dialogue between youth organizations and the executive power it is necessary to consider the fundamental measures concerning the realization of state youth policy in VFD and ethno-confessional composition of the population of the district (Zorin and Rudakov, 2008). Composition of the population of the district in ethno-confessional sense according to the expert report includes: the Russians (65 %), the Tatars (14 %), the Chuvash people (5 %), the Bashkirs (5 %), the Mordvins (2 %), the Udmurt people (2 %), the Mari people (2 %), the Ukrainians (1 %), the Kazakhs (1 %), the Armenians, the Azerbaijani people, the Komi-Permyaks and also representatives of other nations, nationalities and ethnic groups. The majority of the population worship Orthodoxy (approximately 70-75 %); more than 20 % - Islam. Young people of VFD constitute 18,5 % which is a significant number.

Thus, there appears a question concerning the bases for intensification of work connected with the interaction between the governments of the regions and youth. To establish such a platform it is necessary to teach young people conflict-free interreligious (and thus interethnic) interaction. This platform forms a value component of the mentality of the Russian population and Russian national identity on the whole Rogozhina and Ustinkin (2012) and helps to harmonize international and interethnic relations, to preserve and develop national cultures, to develop inter-cultural and interreligious dialogue. Let us consider the main steps concerning the realization of state youth policy in Volga Federal District that comprise in themselves the measures taken by the regions which are parts of the district within the framework of state youth policy for the prevention of ethno-religious radicalism and establishing an interethnic and interconfessional dialogue. Let us turn to the corresponding experience of each subject of VFD.

#### 4.1. The Republic of Bashkortostan

The population of the republic is 4 071 987 people – the first place among the republics of the Russian Federation. There are 1 432 906 Russians, 1 172 287 Bashkirs, 1 009 295 Tatars, other nationalities include 457 804 people (Valiakhmetov et al., 2012). On the territory of the republic there live more than 1 million young citizens at the age of 14-30 (26 % of the total population of the Republic). The main religions of the region are Islam and Orthodoxy. On the territory of The Republic of Bashkortostan there are more than 1000 mosques, more than 270 orthodox churches and more than 40 other religious buildings of other confessions (Shahvaliev and Shahvaliev<sup>, 2014)</sup>. A long-term republican purpose-oriented program Development of youth policy in The Republic of Bashkortostan for the period of 2012-2017 was approved. It presupposes the following measures: competition among the organs and establishments of youth policy for the best organization of work concerning prevention of law violation among youth; participation of students in realization of federal projects concerning youth policy; organization of the action Race for friendship aimed at propaganda of tolerance among youth; organization of the contest for the best program of prevention of extremism among youth. In May 2014 youth forum Dialogue of religions – the base for national unity completed its work (Epikhin et al., 2018).

#### 4.2. Kirov region

The population of the region is 1 304 348 people. The majority of the population constitute the Russians -91.8%, then come the Maris -2.6 %, the Tatars -2.2 %, the Udmurts -1.4 %. According to the data collected in 2012 there are 292 977 young people in the region. The traditional religions for the region are Orthodoxy and Islam. There are more than 50 thousand Muslims in the region, the majority of them are Tartars living in the south of the region and also representatives of Azerbaijan, Dagestan, Uzbek, Tajik and Chechen Diasporas (Smolin, 2014). On the territory of the region there is a state program Increase of effectiveness of realization of youth policy and organization of healthy rest for children and youth for the period of 2014-2020. According to the data from Kirov government, the activities aimed at harmonizing international and inter-confessional relations are carried out within several regional programs. They are: the state program Increase of effectiveness of realization of youth policy and organization of healthy rest for children and youth for the period of 2014-2020, the state program Development of culture, regional purpose-oriented program Prevention of law violation and fight against criminal activities in Kirov region.

At the end of 2013, there took place the Festival of national cultures dedicated to the International day of tolerance. There is an inter-regional contest of scientific and creative works on the topic Young people against extremism. In June of 2014 in Kirov there took place a scientific practical conference Pilgrimage and religious tourism. Traditions and modern times organized by the Department of the culture of Kirov region with the participation of Vyatskaya eparchy of The Russian Orthodox Church. The purpose of the conference is to emphasize the importance of pilgrimage for the spiritual development of citizens and moral education of growing generation; to define the principles of interaction between church and tourist business during the visits of religious objects.

#### 4.3. The Mari El Republic

There are more than 50 nationalities in the Mari El Republic. The population of the republic is  $687\,435$  people. The Russians constitute 45,1%; the Maris – 41,8%; the Tatars – 5,5%; the Chuvash – 6,0%; the Ukrainians – 3,6%; the Udmurts – 1,9%; the Byelorussians – 1,4%; the Mordvins – 1,3%; the Azerbaijanians – 1,2%; the Armenians – 1,1%; the Germans – 1,1%. Young people of the republic constitute 24\% (Balanchuk, 2014). The republic is distinguished by a high level of ethno-confessional consent. According

to the data of the poll in 2011 the question Are serious religious conflicts possible in the republic? Was answered negatively by 52 % of people (12,1 % answered in the affirmative, 32,9 % found it difficult to answer). Religious population of the republic worship Orthodoxy, Islam and Mari traditional religion. Within the framework of the Republican program, Patriotic education of citizens in the Mari El Republic during the period of 2011-2015 activities aimed at prevention of ethnic and religious intolerance are held. Young people of the Republic take part in regional (Patriot 6, iVolga) and federal (Seliger, Tavrida) forums.

#### 4.4. The Republic of Mordovia

The population of the republic is 808 888 people. The Republic of Mordovia is distinguished by a high level of interethnic tolerance. According to the data of 2010 the ethnic picture of the republic is the following: the Russians -444.1 thousand people; the Tatars - 43.4 thousand people; the Mordvins - 333.1 thousand people (Loginova, 2014). The number of young people in the region – 197 thousand (22 % of the population). There are 90 % of Orthodox in the region, 6,8 % of Muslims (Sunni Islam), Protestants constitute 0.3 %. There is a complex republican program aimed at tightening measures to fight criminal activities, terrorism, and extremism and to prevent law violation for the period of 2011-2015. Within the framework of purpose-oriented program Youth of Mordovia from 2011 till 2015 there were held or are to be held the following activities: republican contest among student The Earth is our global home; republican stage of All-Russian contest My country is my Russia; organization of open tables for students concerning questions of enter-ethnic and enter-confessional relations; organization of open tables with representatives of different confessions concerning the problems of education of growing generation in special establishment for under-age people who are in need of social rehabilitation.

### 4.5. Nizhny Novgorod region

The population of the region is 3 270 203 people. The number of young people is 738 thousand (22,2 % of the population). The ethnic picture is the following: the Russians – 3 109 661 people; the Tatars – 44 103; the Mordvins -19 138; the Ukrainians – 17 657; the Armenians – 13 294; the Chuvash – 9 765; the Azerbaijanians – 8 494; the Maris – 6 415; the Byelorussians – 4 673; the Gypsy – 4 469; the Jews – 3769; the Uzbeks – 3 504; the Tajiks – 2 145; the Moldavians – 1 894; the Georgians – 1 792; the Germans – 1 248; and some other nationalities. In this region there live both traditional religious confessions (Orthodoxy, Islam, Judaism, and Old Belief) and other religious groups (Pentecostalism, Adventists, and Catholics). In 2009 Prosecutor General's Office of the Russian Federation included the central for VFD Nizhny Novgorod region in the number of regions where extremist criminal activities happen more often.

At the end of 2013, the Government of the region adopted a state program Harmonization of inter-ethnic relations in Nizhny Novgorod region for the period of 2014-2016. Within the framework of this program there were held the following activities: organization of Congress of peoples of Russia (took place in September at Nizhny Novgorod Fair during the third International business-summit 2014); realization of inter-regional inter-ethnic project We, the children of different nations, live in harmony dedicated to the Children's Day: organization of excursions to the objects of cultural heritage for children and youth; creation and support of the activities of multiethnic adaptation centre for children and youth ETHNOGLOBU us. RF; realization of educational activities aimed at spreading knowledge about peoples of Russia, forming civil patriotism, strengthening traditional spiritual and moral values, prevention of falsification of history (Ustinkin et al., 2013). The region is included in the number of regions together with the two other subjects of VFD where will be held a monitoring of inter-ethnic situation (Ivanov and Gorodetskaya, 2014).

#### 4.6. Orenburg region

The ethnic picture of the region is the following: the Russians – 1 519 525 (75,9 %), the Tatars – 151 492 (7,6 %), the Kazakhs – 120 262 (6,0 %), the Bashkirs – 46 696 (2,3 %), the Ukrainians – 49 610 (2,5 %), the Mordvins – 38 682 (1,9 %), the Chuvash – 12 492 (0,6 %), the Germans – 12 165 (0,6 %), the Armenians – 10 547

(0,5%), the Azerbaijanians – 7 421 (0,4%), the Byelorussians – 5 590 (0,3%), and other nationalities. The number of young people is 458,9 thousand (in 2012) (1/5 of the population of the region) (About youth of Orenburg region, 2014). The population of the region is multi-confessional. The dominating religions are Orthodoxy and Sunni Islam. A small part of the population worships Catholicism. There are also Lutherans, Jews and representatives of other confessions. There is a purpose-oriented program Youth of Orenburg for the period of 2011-2015. Within the framework of this program the following activities are planned: formation of Russian identity and prevention of ethnic and religious and political extremism among youth (support for youth unions of the region); activities I – a citizen of Russia! Activities Serve the Motherland aimed at the development of interstate and interconfessional cooperation of youth.

#### 4.7. Penza region

The ethnic picture of the region is the following: the Russians – 1 165 668 (86,8%), the Mordvins – 54 703 (4,1%), the Tatars – 86 431 (6,4%), the Chuvash – 8 595 (0,7%) (All-Russia Centre of Polls, 2010). The number of young people in the region at the age of 14-30 is 249 109 (data collected at 01.01. 2014) (About the development of youth policy in Penza region, 2014). The Penza region is a multi-confessional region in which there are 468 religious organizations, including 64% of Orthodox, 20% of Muslims, 10% of Protestants and 0, 6% of Jews. The realization of state youth policy is

carried out within the framework of state program Youth in Penza region for the years 2014-2020. Some activities aimed at prevention of antisocial and extremist behavior among youth are included as separate subprograms into the state programs of Penza region Proving social order and prevention of criminal activities in Penza region for the period of 2014-2020, Regional policy, and development of civil society in Penza region for the period of 2014-2020. Since 2012 on the basis of Penza State University youth forums of VFD Resist extremism.

#### 4.8. Perm Krai

Perm Krai is quite diverse ethnically. The population is 2 635 276 people. There are more than 120 ethnoses and nationalities on the territory of Perm Krai. The most numerous are: the Russians - 2 191 423 (83,18 %), the Tatars - 115 544 (4,38 %), the Komi-Permyaks - 81 084 (3.08%), the Bashkirs – 32 730 (1.24%), the Udmurts – 20 819 (0.79%), the Ukrainians -16269(0.62%), the Byelorussians -6570(0.25%), the Germans -6252 (0,24%), the Azerbaijanians -5626 (0,21%), the Armenians -5464(0.21%), other nationalities constitute less than 4000 people(Ethnic composition of Perm Krai, 2010). There are 632 thousand young people (23,4 % of the population). Perm Krai is one of the biggest multiethnic subjects of the Russian Federation on the territory of which at present there are more than 120 nationalities. Orthodox, Islam and Pentecostalism prevail in the region. There is a long-term purposeoriented program Patriotic education of the population of Perm Krai for the period of 2013-2017, a regional purpose-oriented Program of development and harmonization of national relations among the peoples

of Perm Krai for the period of 2009-2013. The topics for the three-day social dialogue are the questions concerning the establishment of civil consent, mutual understanding and cooperation among representatives of different nations and ethnic groups, the increase of tolerance of representatives of different religious confessions and different layers of society.

#### 4.9. Samara region

National composition of the region according to the data of the population census of 2010 is the following: the Russians -85.6%; the Tatars -4.1%; the Chuvash -2.7%; the Mordvins -2.1%; the Ukrainians -1.4 %; the Armenians -0.7 %; the Kazakhs -0.49 %; the Azerbaijanians - 0,44 %; the Uzbeks - 0,35 %; the Byelorussians -0.29 %. The number of young people is 725 thousand (22,9 % of the population). In the region, there are 550 religious organizations, 23 confessions, with the prevalence of Orthodoxy and Islam. There is a regional purpose-oriented program Realization of the strategy of state youth policy in Samara region till 2015, the state program of Samara region Development of education and increase of effectiveness of realization of youth policy in Samara region for the period 2014-2020. The expected result: reduction of the risk of social tension in Samara region that can be caused by pathological manifestations of youth; increase in efficiency of realization of youth policy that can result in innovative socially oriented development of Samara region.

#### 4.10. Saratov region

There are 130 ethnic communities. The ethnic composition of the region is represented by the following nationalities: the Russians -1 661 845 (91.2 %); the Tatars – 35 538 (1.9 %); the Ukrainians – 28 781 (1.5%): the Kazakhs – 20 452 (1.1%), the Armenians – 17 042 (0.9%): the Azerbaijanians  $-9\,806\,(0.5\,\%)$ ; the Byelorussians  $-5\,623\,(0.3\,\%)$ ; the Mordvins -5541 (0.3%): the Chuvash -5384 (0.3%): peoples of Dagestan -4729(0.3%); the Germans, the gypsy, the Jews, the Uzbeks, the Chechens constitute less than 4000 people each ethnos (Ethnic composition of Saratov region. 2014). The number of young people is 592 thousand (23.1 % of the population). On the territory of the region in 2012 there were registered 376 religious organizations. This number is growing annually and thus the number of communities of the Russian Orthodox Church and Muslims is increasing too. There is a departmental purposeoriented program Youth of Saratov region in 2012-2014 which presupposes certain activities aimed at developing tolerant attitude among youth.

#### 4.11. The Republic of Tatarstan

There are 857 049 people at the age of 15-29 which constitute 22,4 % of the total population. The Tatars constitute 53,2 %; the Russians -39,7 %; the Chuvash -3,1 %; the Udmurts -0,6 %; the Mordvins -0,5 %; the Maris -0,5 %; the Ukrainians -0,5 %; the Bashkirs -0,4 %; the Azerbaijanians -0,3 %. There are also the

Byelorussians, the gypsy and the Jews. Within the framework of state vouth policy on the territory of Tatarstan was organized a forum aimed at prevention of extremism and terrorism among youth We are one country – we are one nation; with the support of the Security Council. The Assembly of Nations, City Hall of Kazan there was held an action dedicated to The Day of Peace and Consent; for the first time The Republican International Youth Forum Friendship of nations is Tatarstan's wealth was organized. Within the framework of the forum master-classes, training, round tables, discussions were held aimed at prevention of ethnic extremism, stabilization of inter-ethnic relations in the republic. Taking into consideration the results of the contest of socially important projects and programs, the following programs aimed at the development of tolerance are being prepared in the Republic Peace begins with me, the wreath of friendship, together we are strong! The center of Slavic culture, Days of Tatar Youth, We are the citizens of Russia.

#### 4.12. The Udmurt Republic

There are 380 506 young people in the Republic (25 % of the population). There are the Russians – 62,2 %; the Udmurts – 28,0 %; the Tatars – 6,7 %. The main religions are Orthodoxy and Islam. There is a republican purpose-oriented program Patriotic education of the citizens of the Russian Federation living on the territory of the Udmurt Republic for the period of 2013-2015 (within the framework of state program Realization of youth policy in 2013-2015). In 2013 the

number of citizens taking part in patriotic activities increased in comparison with the year 2012 by 50 thousand (from 130 000 till 180 000). There are also such inter-regional youth festivals as V interregional festival of Orthodox youth Rivers of the water of life; specialized camp change Patriot and Citizen; youth actions Tricolor of unity and other activities aimed at consolidation of youth.

#### 4.13. The Ulyanovsk Region

The ethnic composition of the region is represented by: the Russians  $-901\,272$  (73,6%); the Tatars  $-149\,873$  (12,2%); the Chuvash people  $-94\,970$  (7.7 %), the Mordvins  $-38\,977$  (3.2 %); the Ukrainians -10484 (0.9%); the Azerbaijanians -5006 (0.36%); other nationalities -20164 (1,6%). The number of young people in the region is 297 000 (22 %). Orthodoxy is worshiped by 61% of the population, Islam -6 %. Within the framework of the state program of The Ulyanovsk region Development of youth policy in The Ulyanovsk region in 2014-2018 different activities are planned aimed at formation of Russian identity and prevention of ethnic and religious and political extremism among youth. The project aimed at creating the cultural complex National Village that has been realized since 2009 is a very significant project strengthening inter-ethnic peace and consent in the region. Within the framework of the project in 2014 it is planned to start the construction of the cultural complex consisting of 9 courtyards. Each of them will include a museum, an object of national cuisine and a place to hold national holidays. In 2009 in The

Ulyanovsk region was held All-Russian Sabantui. In summer of 2011 on the territory of the region was held All-Russian Chuvash national holiday Akatui. A complex departmental plan aimed at prevention of extremism among youth has been realized for 3 years.

## 4.14. The Chuvash Republic

The ethnic composition of the republic is the following: the Chuvash people – 814,8 thousand (67,7 %); the Russians – 323,3 (26,9 %); the Tatars – 34,2 (2,8 %); the Mordvins – 13,0 (1,1 %). There are 266 386 young people living in the republic (data collected on  $1^{st}$  January 2014) at the age of 14-30. There is a program Youth of The Chuvash Republic (within the framework of the state program of the Chuvash Republic Development of education for the period of 2012-2020). One of the aims of the program is to develop youth patriotism, respect for history, culture, traditions of Chuvash Republic; to increase the number of military-patriotic clubs.

#### **5. CONCLUSIONS**

Thus, variegated interethnic and inter-confessional composition of the population in VFD puts important tasks before regional ministries and departments of youth policy. To cope with these tasks it is necessary to provide not only close collaboration among youth unions, but also high-level departmental interaction on the territory of each subject and the district on the whole. It is clear that state youth policy remains the main field for dialogue between the authorities and youth. This policy is built on the principles of point impact: career. sport, accommodation, information support, introduction of innovative consciousness, and call for constructive civil activity. Embracing a great part of young people who are ready to accept the rules of the game this policy remains ineffective for those who have chosen other ways of self-realization, for those who just live, but not take part. Such young people are potentially protesting voters and it is taken into account by the government aiming at using a wider arsenal of technologies to involve young people into the prepared niche of the political process. Methods described in the main body of the article are aimed at giving something to do for modern vouth: educational projects during which meetings with politicians and successful managers take place, leisure activities with an unobtrusive political line, cultural events and so on. We can single out project and programtarget methods as the leading ones within the framework of state youth policy in VFD to harmonize interethnic relations and prevent the development of religious radicalism. They are aimed at:

1. Reduction of destructive potential among youth;

2. Strengthening the role of traditional institutions (family, traditional for the territory confessions);

3. Creation of opportunities for various ways of self-realization of youth;

4. Preparation of competent staff to work with youth;

5. Working out and actively using the system of monitoring of inter-ethnic and inter-confessional relations;

6. Legalizing the basis for interreligious interaction;

7. Establishing the system of effective collaboration with social organizations.

Such measures can unite the representatives of different ethnic and religious communities making them a part of the cultural and historical context of the country, where self-identification of an individual takes place, and, thus, minimizing risks and threats connected with the tendency for the radicalization of modern youth. The disadvantage of such measures is the short duration of the achieved positive tendencies and the necessity for constant financing from the regional and federal government as any project is a timelimited phenomenon at the end of which every youngster will have to come back to reality with all its problems and contradictions. On the whole, in each subject of VFD multifaceted work is carried out. It is aimed at prevention of nationalistic and religious radicalism and of its turning into extremism. The system of monitoring of the state of interethnic and interreligious relations that has been launched on the territory of the Russian Federation will allow sometime later to define the degree of efficiency of the policy that has been carried out and will show whether it is necessary to change it.

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