



Extremist religious policy activism in Europe: state of play

Closed Workshop

6 November 2013, 9.00-17.30

Brussels

Like many other civil society organisations, religious communities are entitled to share their views at the European level. But besides official and moderate representation, **extremist religious groups increasingly seek to impose ideologically-driven, draconian and undemocratic agendas onto the rest of society by influencing laws and policies**, with no respect for religious and philosophical views which may diverge from their own.

These extremist groups go far beyond religious convictions or democratically expressed conservative opinions. They regularly attempt to hijack the human rights discourse in order to advance hard-line agendas based on extreme interpretations of religious doctrine which go against the fundamental European principles in many ways.

Organised by the European Humanist Federation (EHF), the European Parliament's LGBT Intergroup, Catholics for Choice (CFC) and the European Parliamentary Forum on Population and Development (EPF), this closed workshop will gather progressive civil society organisations committed to oppose such views and agenda and will:

1. Discuss **who** these extremist religious groups are, **how** they operate, **what** their impact is and **why** they are important, relying on concrete case studies;
2. **Inspire greater collaboration** among organisations working on diverse issues and in different sectors, but who are united in their opposition to the undemocratic imposition of a religious ideology upon those who do not share the same ideology.

This workshop is on invitation only. Please confirm your presence before 1 November 2013 by registering at julie.pernet@laicite.net

Venue : Centre d'Action Laïque / European Humanist Federation, Campus de la Plaine ULB, accès 2, Boulevard de la Plaine, 1050 Brussels, Belgium (metro 'Delta', bus 71 and 95 'Fraiseur', for more see: <http://humanistfederation.eu/contact/>)

Agenda

- 9:00 – 9:30** Welcome & coffee
- 9:30 – 11:00** **Introduction** – Presentation of the day, reflexions and preparations leading to it, expectations of the day (including participants') and planned follow-up – **by core group**
- Setting the frame: Context, Networks, Discourse** – Presentation of existing research and intelligence on extremist religious groups:
- Foundational frames and concepts – **by CFC**
 - Key players and organisations in the field – **by EPF**
 - Hijacking the Human Rights discourse – **by EHF**
- 11:00 – 11:15** Coffee break
- 11:15 – 12:30** **Case study: European Commission public consultation on EU civil status legislation (2011)** – **by Bruno Selun, EP LGBT Intergroup**
- 12:30 – 13:30** Lunch buffet
- 13:30 – 15:30** **Case study: Anti-choice lobbying on women's sexual and reproductive health rights** – **by Nadine Krysostan, EPF**
- Including the [European Citizens' Initiative "One of Us"](#) (2013), anti-choice amendments on the EU budget to stop funding NGOs working on SRHR in developing countries and [European Parliament resolution on sexual and reproductive health and rights](#) (2013)
- Case study: Council of Europe 2010 Resolution on conscientious objection** (McCafferty report) overturned by extremist religious groups – **by David Nolan (CFC)**
- 15:30 – 15:45** Coffee break
- 15:45 – 16:45** **Case study: Subsequent PACE debates**, including the 2013 Resolution on [Safeguarding human rights in relation to religion and belief and protecting religious communities from violence](#) and setting up the Alliance for a Secular Europe – **by David Pollock, IHEU**
- 16:45 – 17:30** **Moving forward** – Based on previous discussions and addressing needs for the future: how to engage with political actors to make these patterns and activities known? How to crystallise and share knowledge to counter extremist religious policy activism? How to work cross-sectorally, i.e. by going beyond single issues (reproductive rights, LGBT, women's rights, other religions or beliefs, etc.)? – **all participants**