

EUROPEAN HUMANIST FEDERATION

SUMMARY OF EHF WORK IN THE LAST TWELVE MONTHS

FEBRUARY 2007

We were one of the key sponsors of the “Brussels Declaration” and “A Secular Vision for Europe” (see www.vision4europe.org). We helped recruit many signatories to the Declaration. We took part in the presentation of the Declaration to the German Presidency of the EU at a meeting of the European Parliament Working Group for Separation of Religion and Politics.

We contributed to a meeting of the Committee on Culture, Science and Education of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

MARCH

We published “The European Dream” to mark the 50th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome and presented a copy of it to EU Commission President Barroso.

APRIL

We protested to the President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe at his proposal to give the churches official status at the Council of Europe and about his invitation to the Pope to address the Assembly.

We wrote to the President of the European Parliament protesting at his invitation to the Pope to address the Parliament.

We protested to the President and Prime Minister of Poland about the persecution of homosexual people, the encouragement of creationist education and various attacks on human rights.

MAY

We wrote to the President and President-designate of the EU Council of Ministers opposing inclusion of “Article 52” in what later became the Lisbon Treaty.

JUNE

We took part in a meeting in Bucharest of the OSCE Ministerial Conference on Combating Discrimination, Promoting Mutual Respect and Understanding, submitting recommendations and intervening in the plenary session.

We took part in a meeting of the European Parliament Working Group for Separation of Religion and Politics on “Dialogue of the European Parliament with churches, religions and non-confessional organizations: the upcoming Year of Intercultural Dialogue”.

We held our General Assembly and other meetings in Torino (Turin), Italy, plus a one-day conference on “Secularism, civil rights and neutrality of public institutions: comparison of experiences in an intercultural Europe”.

JULY

We had a meeting with President Barroso and raised various questions with him which we are now pursuing.

We secured that the EU should support a one-day EHF colloquium in Brussels in April 2008, which President Barroso intends to open in person.

We took part in a meeting of the European Parliament Working Group for Separation of Religion and Politics addressed by the President of the European Parliament, putting questions to him.

AUGUST

We took a short holiday! But of course we continued with our long-term work - the church and state database, for example, and development of policies, and work on a new website. And constant monitoring of the news, including statements from the Vatican and others.

SEPTEMBER

Two EHF delegates attended the OSCE's annual meeting of states and NGOs in Warsaw on democracy and human rights. We intervened in plenary sessions and held a successful side-meeting. We lobbied several of the delegates from member states, including the forthcoming presidency.

We took part in a meeting of the European Parliament Working Group for Separation of Religion and Politics on "Freedom of Religion and Freedom from Religion: European ex-Muslims and their views on Islam and secularism" which was addressed by three ex-Muslim women.

OCTOBER

We co-sponsored an important colloquium, held at the Council of Europe in Strasbourg in October, on "Social cohesion in a multicultural Europe" with particular attention to the role and impact of religion and secular thinking.

We responded to an EU consultation on Schools for the 21st Century.

We took part in a meeting of the the European Parliament Working Group for Separation of Religion and Politics on the position of churches, religions and non-confessional organisations in the EU Reform Treaty.

We submitted a recommendation of an OSCE conference in Cordoba.

We wrote to the Director of the OSCE Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights about the need for equal recognition and treatment of non-religious people.

NOVEMBER

We gave EHF support to a petition to the European Parliament against illiberal treatment of immigrants.

We contributed to a conference held by the European Parliament Working Group for Separation of Religion and Politics on "Religion and Politics in the New Europe".

We wrote to the President of Pakistan protesting at the house arrest of Mrs Asma Jahangir, the UN special rapporteur on freedom of religion and belief.

DECEMBER

We took part in a consultative conference in Brussels for civil society stakeholders organised by the EU Fundamental Rights Agency.

We submitted a recommendation to the OSCE Mediterranean Seminar on promoting tolerance and non-discrimination.

We took part in a small conference in Berlin of a new organisation called Focus on Freedom of Religion and Belief.

JANUARY 2008

We wrote to President Barroso about the implementation of Article 16C and the need for equal treatment of the non-religious with the religions.

We took part in a roundtable discussion in the European Parliament on how the EU co-operates with the OSCE and the USA on issues involving freedom of religion and belief.

We wrote to all members of the Socialist Group of MEPs about Article 16C and other matters after the Group discussed a proposal that the Parliament should invite a humanist speaker to address it to balance the many religious spokespeople invited.

We took part in a meeting of the European Parliament Working Group for Separation of Religion and Politics on Education and Religion.

We asked for and have been promised changes to prejudicial wording in the EU website page dealing with dialogue with the churches and non-confessional organisations.

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