



EU ELECTIONS 2014

Stand for **Secularism** and **Human** **Rights!**



European **Humanist** Federation

EHF Manifesto

November 2013

European elections in May 2014 will be crucial for humanists in Europe. The rise of radical populist parties, the persisting societal conservatism in several EU Member States and the extremist religious lobbying at EU level are challenges to the progressive values we defend.

In the perspective of coming EU elections, the European Humanist Federation (EHF) believes that the EU should take the following considerations into account for the benefit of all European citizens.

Secularism and European institutions

EU institutions must remain independent of all religions and beliefs. Individual EU office-holders must assiduously maintain neutrality in their public and official pronouncements and behaviour, whatever their personal beliefs.

Every citizen has the right to believe or not, which is a private matter, but it is necessary to ban any religious influence on policies and on the organization of the society itself. Since the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty in 2009, the European institutions are required to conduct "an open, transparent and regular dialogue" with churches and non-confessional organisations. Too often the non-religious have been ignored or given inferior treatment, though an EHF complaint to the EU Ombudsman has produced some improvement recently.

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EHF believes that the EU must:

Fully respect the principle of the **separation of public institutions and churches**;

Remain vigilant to **defend secularism against those who attack – directly or indirectly – fundamental rights** such as gender equality, LGBT rights, freedom of thought and expression, sexual and reproductive rights of women, sexual education, freedom of scientific research, access to education for all etc.;

Clarify its guidelines regarding the implementation of Article 17 TFEU by the European institutions, covering (for example) who is allowed to take part and what topics are discussed;

Guarantee **complete transparency in appointments to expert and ethical committees** assisting the working groups of the European institutions.

The defense of the rule of law, democracy and human rights

Populist movements have been growing in Europe for more than 20 years and the financial and economic crisis has reinforced the problem. They attack democracy in depth and do not constitute a credible political alternative. They exacerbate social tensions and popular suspicion of democratic processes. They also contribute to the spread of racist, xenophobic and homophobic attitudes which oppose human rights and undermine the European project. Such situation demands a strong and coordinated European answer.

The EHF calls on the EU to:

Uphold the fundamental values of the Union and to act by all diplomatic and legal means against Member States violating these values and derogating from common EU rules and to **set up a rule of law mechanism** (“Copenhagen Commission” or high-level group) to ensure compliance with the rule of law by all Member States;

Set up a **coordinated strategy** to fight against the spread of fundamentalism and populist parties;

Adopt a pro-active attitude in all its institutions (Commission, Council and Parliament) in order to **complete its system of anti-discrimination legislation**;

Press for removal of all national laws against blasphemy as recommended by the Council of Europe.

Defend economic and social rights of European citizens, especially in the Member States that are most exposed to austerity measures imposed by international institutions;

Defend the maintenance or the creation of **high-standard public services**;

Promote European citizenship and the **active contribution of citizens** to the public decision-making process.

Scientific research policy

Scientific research policy must be free from religious vetoes. Scientific research should be guided only by reason, experimentation and demonstration subject to ethical approval by impartial bodies.

EHF calls on the EU to:

Defend freedom of inquiry as the basis for scientific research: its limitations are those of means, public order and the law itself which is the result of societal choices democratically decided;

Resist to the attempts of some religious organisations to obstruct the development of European research on the basis of religious doctrine;

Take into account, in its decision process, **the criteria of general interest** that European research must necessarily involve. The priorities of this research should not be based only on economic criteria.

International relations

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International relations should respect human rights, individual freedoms guaranteed by the state and reject all forms of discrimination including those based on gender, sexual orientation, ethnic origin, religion or beliefs.

EHF calls on the EU to:

Pay a special attention for **respect for human rights and the rule of law in any future accessions** to the European Union;

Ensure that cooperation agreements of the European Union contain **strong clauses of democratic conditionality**;

Adopt a proactive approach to **promotion of freedom of conscience and religion** among the partners of the European Union, which implies the freedom not to believe and the freedom to change one's belief;

Defend freedom of expression which includes freedom to criticise religious and philosophical beliefs, and to advocate for the suppression of blasphemy laws in the world.