

## General Assembly and Conference – Stockholm Report

This year our meetings were held in Stockholm, Sweden. We started with a well attended open meeting in the morning of Friday May 28. Our General Assembly followed in the afternoon. The next day – Saturday May 29 – we held a one-day conference on Women and Religion, as detailed below. The meetings were held at ABF, 41 Sveavägen, in central Stockholm. Stockholm offered excellent opportunities for tourism, which many of us took before or after the EHF events.

### Friday 28 May:

#### **EHF open meeting**

The meeting started with short reports of our work in the OSCE (from Staffan Gunnarson), the Council of Europe (from Andrew Copson), the EU and the European Parliament, including our successful lobby of MEPs in January (from David Pollock).

We then heard about the implications of the judgement of the European Court of Human Rights in the case of *Lautsi v Italy* from Pierre-Arnaud Perrouy, the Europe and International Director at the Centre d'Action Laïque, Belgium, before discussion of human rights abuses in **Romania** (introduced by Beth Ciesielski, Executive Director, Fundatia Central pentru Constiinta Critica – the Romanian Branch of Center for Inquiry Transnational), and in **Poland** (introduced by Andrzej Dominiczak, from the Polish Humanist Association).

#### **EHF General Assembly**

The annual General Assembly dealt with the usual annual formal business including approval of our annual report for 2009, our accounts and our plans for 2010/11.

In the election of board members, Suzy Mommaerts and Andrew Copson had reached the end of their terms of office and did not stand again, and Marianne Marchand was no longer eligible as a board member, having left her sponsoring organisation.

In their place we elected four new members: Naomi Philips (British Humanist Association, UK), Marina Van Haeren (Unie Vrijzinnige Verenigenen, Belgium), Renate Bauer (Dachverband Freier Weltanschauungsgemeinschaften, Germany) and Hans Christian Cars (Humanisterna, Sweden).

### Saturday 29 May:

#### **Conference: Women and Religion**

Our conference this year was entitled “Women and Religion: A Humanist Critique” and was held in association with Humanisterna – the Swedish Humanist Association – and European Humanist Professionals. We were welcomed by Christer Sturmark, president of Humanisterna, cradling his baby as he outlined the importance of the subject.

Our first speaker, on Religion and Women's Rights, was Maria Hagberg, a sociologist from EQUITA (Sweden). She was followed by Eduardo Grutzky, ALMA Europa and Swedish Humanist Association, on the oppression of women in religious contexts, and by Azar Majedi from England, who is President of Organisation for Women's Liberation-Iran, talking on inherent misogyny in religion, with a special focus on Islam.

Sara Mohammad, educational leader, “Glöm aldrig Pela och Fadime” project against honour related violence (Sweden), spoke on political Islam, cultural relativism and the problem with honour related violence; and Monika Karbowska, from RACJA (Reason of the Polish Left) on the Catholic Church’s political influence over women in Poland.

Finally we heard from Elfriede Harth (from Germany and from Catolicas por el Derecho a Decidir de España – Catholics for the Right to Decide, Spain) on “Organizing resistance of women against religious oppression in their faith community: the case of Catholicism”.

After lunch there were two parallel workshops, one on “Women and religion – an interesting, but challenging topic for humanist professionals” led by Ulrike Dausel, a Humanist counsellor and psychologist from Belgium, the other on “Honour related violence in the European context” led by Eduardo Grutzky, of ALMA Europa – Sweden and by Gilly Coene, of European Humanist Professionals, who is a visiting professor in the Philosophy Department of the Free University Brussels.