

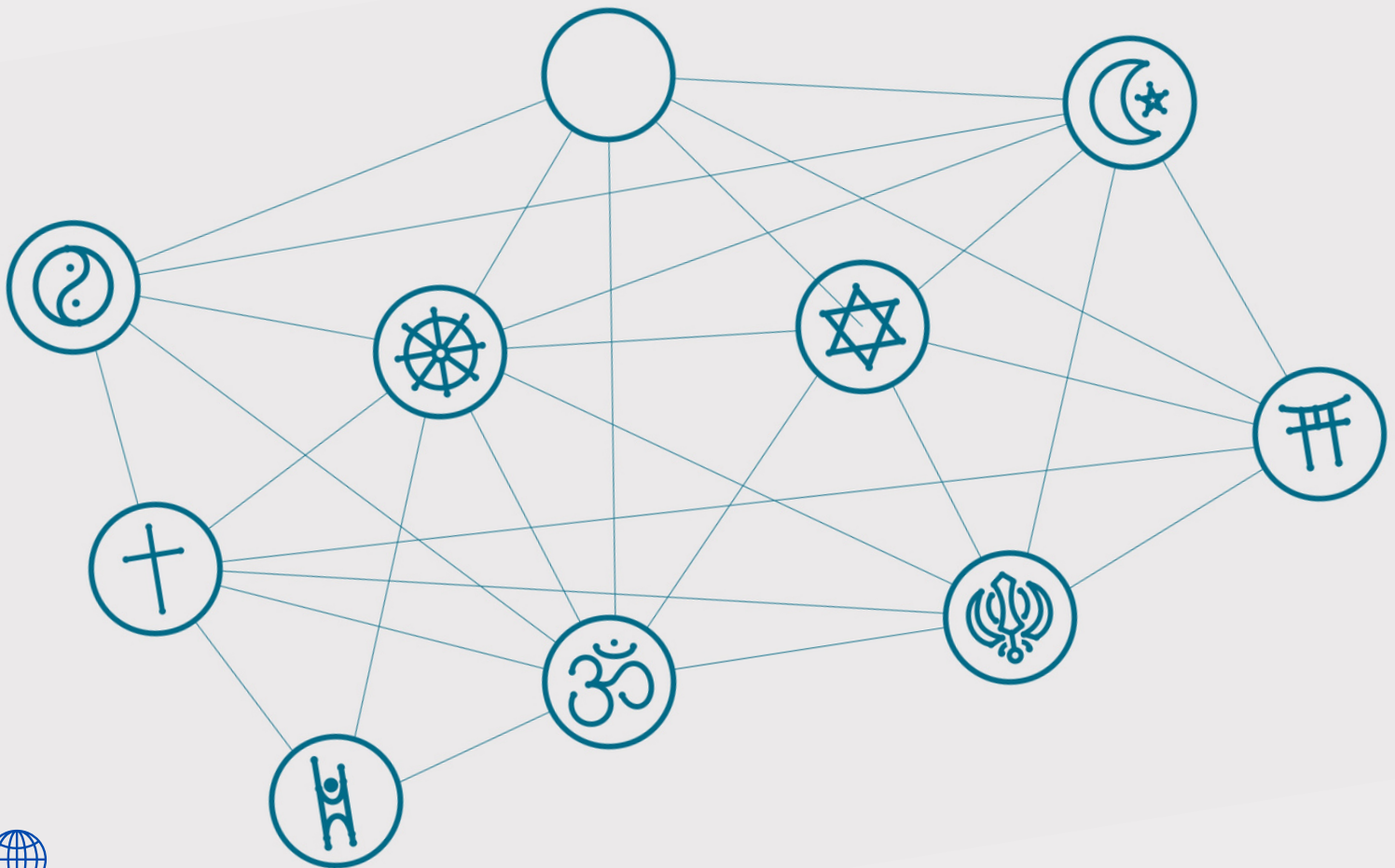


ENORB

European Network on Religion & Belief

FUNDRAISING APPEAL 2023-24

Help us to continue our collaboration with faith, belief and anti-racist organisations, to promote interfaith dialogue, mutual understanding and 'Steps to Togetherness' across Europe.



Overview



Living in Europe today, you don't have to look far to see that over recent years there has been a sharp rise in rates of social isolation, political polarisation and a growing intolerance of minority groups and the issues surrounding migration.

With society becoming more fragmented than ever before, Europe is now facing its biggest challenge in post-war times. The climate crisis, rising levels of immigration and climate change refugees, a growing Islamophobic, antisemitic and anti-Hindu sentiment, and an ever-worsening culture war fuelled by political populism are some of the main factors prompting the shift of far-right political parties and their harmful agendas into the mainstream.

It is important that we recognise these interrelated issues and attempt to tackle them through positive social engagement and connection-building at the grassroots level. At ENORB, we take a collaborative approach towards seeking solutions, and try to engage people from a diverse array of backgrounds to promote a more understanding and harmonious society for everyone.

Anti-Religious Hatred

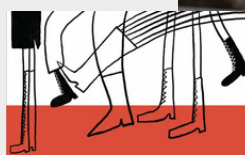
According to the 2022 Islamophobia Report, which provides a comprehensive overview of the state of Islamophobia within each European country, many nations are failing to tackle rising rates of institutionalised Islamophobia, and in particular are lacking in adequate monitoring mechanisms for tracking and reporting anti-Muslim hate crimes. In July 2023 Europe saw a number of incidents across various states in which copies of the Quran were publicly burned or destroyed. This blatantly disregards the rights enshrined in the Treaty of Lisbon and the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights to freedom of religion and belief.

“Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right includes freedom to change religion or belief and freedom, [...] to manifest religion or belief, in worship, teaching, practice and observance.”



Article 10 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights (2009)

Rates of antisemitism have also seen a steady rise since 2016. A report published by B'nai B'rith International in March 2023 revealed a concerning increase in hostile rallies taking place across Europe, which sought to spread antisemitic ideologies through such methods as Holocaust denial and Nazi glorification. Often these violent, antisemitic beliefs go hand-in-hand with bizarre and exaggerated conspiratorial claims that fester online amongst clandestine communities.



New study shows rise in antisemitic online content during the pandemic

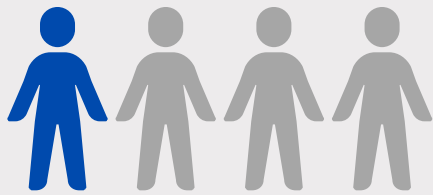
On Europe's Streets:
Annual Marches Glorifying Nazism



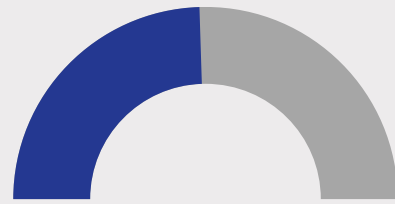
Loneliness and Social Fragmentation

Isolation and poor mental health are issues that can seriously impede our day-to-day lives as individuals, and they also have a huge impact on broader society as well. Studies have shown that loneliness can also be a detriment to our physical health, increasing the risk of death by 26%. This is as damaging as smoking 15 cigarettes a day.

For young people in particular, our fast-paced and increasingly technological modern world can exacerbate this sense of social isolation profoundly. For instance, younger adults aged 16 to 29 years are in fact more likely than those in older age groups to report feeling lonely 'often or always'. The Covid-19 pandemic and the necessity for social isolation further compounded many of these pre-existing problems and also worsened inequalities for those most likely to be impacted by loneliness, such as ethnic minorities, LGBTQI+ communities, and people from lower-income areas.



Nearly 1 in 4 university students report feeling lonely 'all' or 'most' of the time



49% of people who had experienced discrimination at work or in their local neighbourhood reported being always or often lonely.

Loneliness is also fundamentally a political issue. Violence, hatred and intolerance feed on isolation, entrenching people's loss of faith in collectivism and creating an extremely socially fragmented society, and these are the foundations upon which oppressive and totalitarian regimes are built.

To some degree, we are once again witnessing this phenomenon in Europe. With an ever-increasing number of far-right and populist parties gaining political power, without developing a stronger sense of community and an empowered population, this could have a detrimental impact on the prosperity of the European project.

Political polarisation and the growth of the far-right

It could be argued that a wide number of factors have contributed to the increase in far-right political orientations within the European Union, and Europe more broadly. The ongoing ideological dissonance between the Islamic and Western worlds, widespread opposition to immigration and its vilified portrayal in the media, the Covid-19 pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine which have amounted to an international cost of living crisis right across the European continent. What is certain though is that Europe is facing a widespread cultural, social and political polarisation.

A mounting distrust of mainstream media and political parties, fuelled in part by the growing use of social media, has been adopted by some right-wing populist parties as a tool through which to amass more support for their causes. The unrest seen in Europe over recent years has caused many to doubt the capacities of their governing institutions to address its citizens' needs and function efficiently.

For instance, a recent barometer conducted by the Open Society Foundations painted a "sobering and alarming" picture of young people's faith in democracy at the global level. With many worried about growing social and economic inequalities, governmental corruption, and the impending climate crisis, a shocking 42% of those surveyed aged between 18 to 35 were shown to be "supportive of military rule". According to OSF's president and a former UN deputy secretary general Mark Malloch Brown, "Confidence in the foundational elements of democracy coexists with profound doubts about its real-world practice and impact".

That is why it is now more important than ever to strengthen our democratic systems by targeting them at their very roots. A strong civil society is an essential part of any prosperous democracy, creating a space for the promotion of equality, human rights, mutual respect, and fair representation, particularly of minorities.



Finland's center-right leader announces four-party coalition including anti-immigrant party



How Europe's far right is marching steadily into the mainstream

Whether in Italy, Spain, France or Finland, parties that were once outcasts are fast gaining respectability - and power



Younger people more likely to doubt merits of democracy - global poll



Italy's hard-right government is starting to look more radical

Georgia Meloni indulges in cultural and economic populism

About ENORB



The European Network on Religion and Belief plays a vital role in supporting and strengthening the work of civil society organisations across Europe by challenging discrimination and hate crime, creating engaging content to educate people on the importance of diversity and critical thinking, and facilitating the space for a dialogue which promotes the rights and freedoms enshrined in democratic and European principles.

Our vision is a Europe **free from discrimination** where we all take **responsibility together** to **value the diversity** of religions, beliefs and convictions.

Our Values

We believe that by embracing the many virtues of diversity, and **encouraging alternative narratives** in response to intolerant agendas, ideologies and regimes, that we can pave the way for a **safer, more peaceful, and more democratic Europe.**



We advocate for stronger civil society communities by **fostering connections** and promoting **open-dialogue** between religious and non-religious groups, with the hopes of seeing a more inclusive interfaith network within Europe.

Our Projects

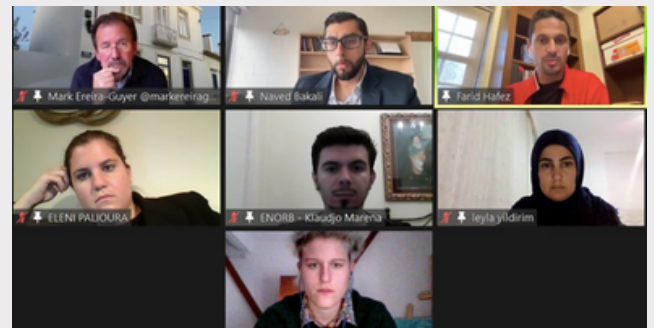


Considering the many issues facing the people of Europe today, and particularly racial, ethnic, and religious minorities, ENORB hopes that through our own work, and our engagement with other organisations, that we can help build stronger ties between people in order to create safer spaces for fostering a sense of mutual understanding, friendship, and solidarity.

Together for Reflections and Connections

In partnership with organisations including the United Religions Initiative Europe, the European Network Against Racism, and Civil Society Consulting CIC we invite people to attend our series of interfaith sessions aimed at reflecting on the key issues currently facing faith and belief communities today.

Through exchanging ideas on thought-provoking topics such as politics, history, racism, climate change and Islamophobia, ENORB hopes to strengthen connections between individuals and civil society and faith organisations.



You can watch our past events [here](#).

EUROPEAN BOOK CLUB - “We should all be feminists”

Reflecting on the disturbing rise in intolerant anti-gender and right-wing populist movements, as well as the growth in false narratives and an increasing polarisation between genders, we saw the need to develop a project which examines the ideas at the core of the feminist movement(s) in order to gain a deeper understanding of feminist issues in contemporary society.

Through the EUROPEAN BOOK CLUB we invite different feminist authors to discuss their work, and subsequently engage in conversation with attendees, answering their questions and inviting their input.



32 Steps to Togetherness Europe

Following the success of Civil Society Consulting CIC's '32 Steps to Togetherness' manual, which was disseminated across organisations throughout the UK, ENORB has decided to develop and share this initiative within a European context.

The 32 Steps manual calls each of us to take action to build connections in our communities, and with people from all walks of life, with the aim of countering loneliness, intolerance, and social fragmentation.

When we experience society as a shared space, we can develop a shared vision for tackling other issues.

Led by a group of young Europeans, including three of our own interns, we looked to distilling each of the steps down to its core principle in order to better translate them into different cultural contexts and languages across Europe.

In order to do this, we hosted 3 workshops, welcoming people from across a variety of European countries to establish how we could adjust wording and focus, so that each step is made more universal.



“Humans are creatures of Togetherness.... Our health is moulded not only by community and a feeling of being connected to others, but also by kindness. The kindness of friends and family, colleagues, employers and neighbours, but also by the kindness of strangers.”

NOREENA HERTZ

AUTHOR OF 'THE LONELY CENTURY - COMING TOGETHER IN A WORLD THAT'S PULLING APART'

Events



Anti-Racism in the European Union - People of African Descent: Recognition, Justice and Development 2nd-3rd November 2023, Barcelona

On 2nd-3rd November we attended the event “Anti-Racism in the EU: People of African Descent”, within the framework of the Spanish Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

Following a silent protest demanding a **ceasefire in Gaza**, we listened to different panels with institutional and grassroots representation: representatives of Member States and EU institutions, third countries, international organizations, equality bodies and civil society. The key topics that were discussed were:

- Structural racism and the need and opportunity to collect data disaggregated by ethnic origin in statistics, studies and surveys.
- The representation of people of African descent in public office and the media.
- Anti-racist legislation and national action plans.

Racism is deeply rooted in colonialism. It is systemic and structural. This was brought up by different activists, including Lilian Thuram, former football player and antiracist activist, who also stated the need to dismantle white supremacy and the categories that came with it. “When do we become white or black?” It is critical to acknowledge the historical components of racism to a comprehensive recognition.

Data collection was discussed as a key need to create appropriate policies. Most EU member states are currently not collecting it and not willing to do it. Without data, we cannot study how racism is systematically affecting racialised groups and how to best create policies that tackle this. The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights presented the report “Being Black in the EU - Experiences of People of African Descent”, which states worrying realities: due to high accounts of by racial profiling, leading to lower trust in the police, only 9% of victims of racial discrimination and harassment report to authorities.

Overall, it was discussed that the EU needs a paradigm shift at the domestic, regional and international politics. The current legal norms of the EU are not fit to recognise structural racism, as people of African descent continue to face multiple grounds of discrimination: in the housing market, in accessing healthcare, education, the labour market, among others. Responsibility of states is to be highlighted, which includes guaranteeing the rights of undocumented people and asylum seekers, who suffer a double vulnerability.

#MakeRacismHistory Festival 11th October 2023, London

In October, we were delighted to present our 32 Steps to Togetherness initiative at a collaborative workshop with [Civil Society Consulting](#). This event was presented as a part of the **#MakeRacismHistory festival**, celebrating the [European Network Against Racism](#)'s 25th anniversary of fighting racism.

The 32 Steps project provides individuals with a practical roadmap to **build connections within and between communities**. It aims to inspire people to foster a sense of togetherness, to equip CSOs with **a valuable resource to combat social fragmentation**, to create an anti-racist community around the manual to facilitate future civil society collaborations, and ultimately, to **strengthen social cohesion by promoting inclusivity** within communities.

During the workshop event, we divided into focus groups to discuss strategies and brainstorm ideas on how to build upon the steps outlined in our current manual. We decided to focus on four key thematic areas:

1. Change your habits
2. Help Out & Join Something
3. Get Political
4. Be a Great Neighbour

Over 40 community organisers and social action leaders took part in the event, and we were absolutely delighted to see so many new ideas being brought to the table. We are looking forward to implementing these within our future work on the 32 Steps project.

We were also delighted to have the opportunity to work with [ThroughFilm](#), a production company focused on supporting organisations in the VCSE sector, who produced for us a fantastic film showcasing the workshop and promoting our 32 Steps to Togetherness project.

You can view this short film on our website.



Events



Sermon by the Reverend Canon Philip Banks 10 September 2023, Bury St Edmunds

The Director of European Network on Religion and Belief, Mark Ereira-Guyer, recently participated in a [sermon delivered by the Reverend Canon Philip Banks](#) at the St Edmundsbury Cathedral. This sermon emphasised the importance of trust in society and relationships, especially in a world where the media and politicians are constantly attempting to polarise people. The sermon highlighted the essential need to resist these divisive tactics and rhetoric that seek to undermine our personal relationships and interactions. Thus, these divisive influences should not disturb the fabric of our connections with others. Reverend Canon Philip Banks further emphasized the importance of loving one's neighbour and underscored the essential role of trust and goodwill in our lives.

At ENORB, we share these sentiments and are actively addressing the issues of loneliness and disconnection we are seeing across the continent through our '32 Steps to Togetherness' project, working towards a happier and a healthier society. It is of an immense value for us to support other initiatives and events addressing these issues, showing our solidarity and recognising that a more interconnected world can only be achieved through collective effort.



The Parliament of the World's Religions (PoWR) 14-18th August 2023, Chicago

This summer, our President Maryana Hnyp, along with board member Heidi Rautionmaa attended the Parliament of the World's Religions event in Chicago, alongside more than 7000 people from more than 95 countries, and representing 212 different faiths and traditions.

The Parliament of the World's Religions saw its founding in 1893 in Chicago, in what later became the starting point of the interfaith movement in the United States. Created to promote and cultivate harmony among the world's religious and spiritual communities, 130 years later the call to dialogue and peace work still remains a priority for people across the globe.

Read more about Maryana and Heidi's reflections on the event [here](#).



Climate Migration discussion at UK Parliament & Scoping Paper

13 July 2023, London



On July 13, we attended Faith and Belief Forum's Research and Policy Briefing on climate migration at Parliament on the 13 July, to contribute to the conversation about the implications of climate-induced displacement and looking forward to how we can promote social integration of climate migrants.

ENORB recently co-authored a paper with Civil Society Consulting, which investigates what we currently know about the intersection of climate migration and religion, and which enabled them to bring informed perspectives to the table.

The paper looks at — in particular — how religion can address the needs of climate migrants, in the context of resettlement & integration and the role of routinely-displaced indigenous communities (and their nature-based belief systems) in opposing environmental destruction.

We evidenced a lack of contemporary knowledge and research into the relationship between climate migration and religion, and the current absence of international cooperation to address the impending challenges caused by the climate crisis.

The report cites the difficulties in establishing a clear causality between climate change and migration as one of the main reasons for this ongoing failure to extend the protections afforded by refugee status to climate migrants. We also outlined the link between right-wing ideology and a scepticism of climate change, which of course has worrying implications considering the rise of the far-right in the European political landscape.

A Word from Our Members



Maryana Hnyp
President and Board Member,
European Network on Religion and
Belief

"Dialogue has been increasingly referred to as a fruitful method to resolve conflicts and build peace. ENORB thus creates a safe and brave space for people of different religious and cultural traditions to meet and enter into a meaningful conversation, **based on mutual respect and nourished by a desire to better understand one another.** As such it provides an inspiration and guidance to strive towards **more inclusive and tolerant societies.**"

"ENORB is gathering the progressive religious and non-religious communities, in order to foster peace and cooperation, **in a spirit of brotherhood and respect.**"



Yvan Dheur
Vice President and Board Member,
European Network on Religion and
Belief



Abdullah Faliq
Board Member, European
Network on Religion and
Belief

"As people of faith and none, at our core we are peaceful beings despite our differences and experiences. Our diversity is a source of strength, as Malcolm X put it, **"We need more light about each other. Light creates understanding, understanding creates love, love creates patience, and patience creates unity."**

ENORB has been working to provide a meaningful platform in the heart of Europe where dialogue and engagement constitute a central plank of developing a more socially inclusive society.

Donate today to help us in this endeavour."

"ENORB'S role in today's Europe is essential since it seeks to bridge differences through mutual understanding [...] but also **gives alternatives to difficult questions.**

If there is a quote that sheds light on ENORB's work, it would be the following by Martin Luther King Jr: **'Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.'**



Enrique Tessieri
Board Member, European
Network on Religion and
Belief

Call to Action



We need your support!

Considering the many challenges we have yet to face as a European community, at ENORB we are committed to stepping up and fighting for a Europe that is democratic, inclusive, and representative of all its members.

Next year looks to be our most testing in recent times - with vital elections being held in many European countries, and of course the European Union itself - for the values we hold dear: political and social democracy, human rights and freedom of speech, religion and belief; and to ensure we have a vibrant civil society based on anti-racism, equality, social inclusion and interfaith principles.

It is these values that we aim to embody at ENORB, and in particular through our 'Steps to Togetherness' project. We believe we must all step up, and take collective and collaborative action to develop compassionate responses to the complex global challenges currently faced by humanity.



To retain our independence and critical friendship role, we urgently need core funds for next year to keep our team in place! You can make a real difference.

Please support our 2024 appeal. If we can raise €50,000, ENORB can continue to be an effective and collaborative facilitator to all our faith-based, non-confessional and secular partner organisations right across Europe.

Mark Ereira-Guyer, ENORB Director

Looking Forward



We have many exciting plans and events scheduled for the upcoming months.

With your support, we can put these plans into action and continue to advocate for the importance of civic spaces, of learning, fostering open dialogue, and of building long-lasting interfaith connections.



Welcome Refugees? Fortress Europe in 2023 December 2023

2023 has been one of the deadliest years at Europe's borders since 2015. The lived realities of those facing forced displacement and migration is bleak, challenging, and often fraught with uncertainty.

In recognition of the increasingly tough conditions faced by Europe's refugees, at the end of the year we will be hosting an online event in partnership with No Name Kitchen, a non-profit movement supporting refugees and asylum seekers on their routes to safer and better futures.

No Name Kitchen work primarily in the Mediterranean and the Balkan regions, providing safe and accessible healthcare, distributing food and warm clothing, and even monitoring instances of violence at the borders to help raise awareness and advocate for legal protection for refugees and asylum seekers.

The purpose of this event will be to help spread awareness on the situation of asylum seekers in and around Europe, and support NNK's winter campaign. Joined in conversation by a panelist of activists, migration experts, and people with a lived experience of migration, we will discuss topics surrounding the EU's policies towards migration, including the EU Migration Pact, the EU's deal with Tunisia, the Pylos disaster, and the regularisation of migrant workers vs fight against immigration.

We look forward to seeing many of you there for what is sure to be an interesting and eye-opening discussion.

The Legacy of Frantz Fanon March 2024

With this event, led by ENORB's anti-racism intern Lorenzo Capomaggi, we hope to stimulate an interesting discussion with participants surrounding Frantz Fanon's legacy on social and political colonisation.

Discussing some of Fanon's key works, including "Black skin, white masks" and "Wretched of the Earth", we will explore how his ideas have impacted the notion of 'development' and its rhetoric, which is often seen by its critiques as a new form of colonisation.





Help us to continue making our vision a reality

See the link to our fundraising page here



or

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Thank you for your support

