

Assemblée Générale/AGM 2014

ENORB's AGM was held in Brussels in June, with an attendance of around fifty.



Two priority policy areas for action were agreed for the coming year, both associated with the project for which OSF have provided a [small grant](#):

1. The joint programme with ILGA-Europe on the interface between religion and belief and LGBT rights; a joint ENORB/ILGA task force is preparing an action programme
2. The development of a policy on freedom to manifest religion and belief in the form of wearing religious symbols or clothing, in the broader context of human rights and religious freedom.

The European seminars will be held during 2014-15 – one on each priority topic – and a series of at least five meetings or seminars will be held in member states, also focusing on the topics, or on a local priority issue.

We would like to hear from members/partner organisations in any member state which would like to organise one of these seminars/meetings. Send us an email outlining what you would like to do. We can provide up to €250 to help with expenses.



The formal agenda included reports on the year's activities, the presentation of annual accounts, and confirmation of current officers for 2014-15. The year's activities have included two seminars at European level, both held in Brussels, and exploratory meetings in several member states. The objectives for the year which ENORB had set out at its 2013 AGM had been almost entirely achieved as set out in our [Annual Report](#) and a programme on similar lines was approved for 2014-15.

Action on Hate Crime

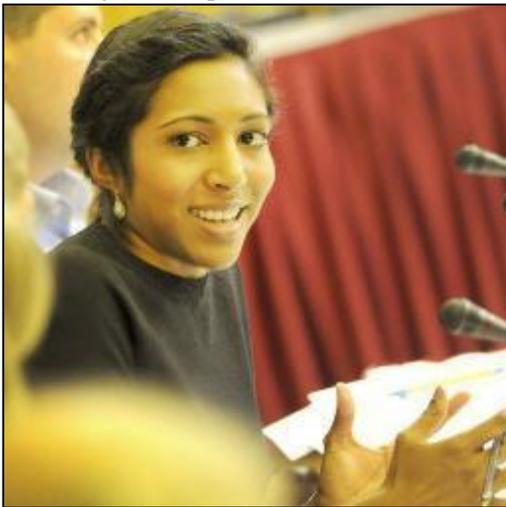
The AGM followed shortly after the murderous attack on the Jewish Museum in Brussels: the rising tide of hate crime across Europe on Religion/Belief grounds was a constant theme in discussion at the AGM.



A joint action at the Jewish Museum was planned as a follow-up to the AGM discussions. Han Steijnebrugh made a symbolic poster of peace and reconciliation, and a group of some 20 ENORB members of different faiths and beliefs went on a visit to the Jewish Museum for a formal presentation of the framed version of the poster to members of the Brussels Jewish community, followed by speakers and discussion of common action as well as expressions of sympathy and solidarity.

European Elections, the Far Right and Religious Diversity

Our Keynote Speaker at the AGM was Vidhya Ramalingam, from the Institute of Strategic Dialogue in London, who has just directed an EU project with the Swedish Ministry of Justice, and 10 member states including the Netherlands, Germany, Poland and Hungary, researching far right extremism, and what works in prevention, intervention and response.



She started by pointing out that in the EU elections, the far rights gained seats in only seven countries – but lost seats in six countries! But the French result, plus the fact that two of the newly represented parties are extreme Neo-Nazis, does mean there is serious cause for concern. However, she also showed that the strategy of refusing to engage with far right parties has not worked. Feeling that they are ignored and persecuted has helped them to grow.

Her full paper is available on the [website](#). Key points for ENORB and member organisations were:

1. We need to admit openly that some issues clearly do worry people: identity and cultural values; political culture and corruption; migration and jobs; religion and belief;
2. We need to engage with the far right in debate and dialogue – including at the emotional (often unpleasant) level which the far rights appeals to. Correct facts and figures don't convince on their own;
3. A community-level work is vital: dialogue in religiously diverse communities – understanding what different communities really say and stand for; local interfaith demonstrations against hate crime etc; dialogue at national level between religious and belief communities.

Responding to a Context of Change

The events of the summer seemed to many people to have set back the work of understanding between faiths by several years. First the appalling Israel – Gaza conflict, with its wider impact on relationships between Jews and Muslims; then the equally appalling violence in Iraq as ISIS spread a message of violence, murder and expulsion of whole populations – of any religious faith or none – who would not commit to their extremist (and, to most, non-Muslim) policies.

But internal dialogue within ENORB demonstrated that in fact these events had had the opposite effect – at least in Europe – of bringing closer together the mainstream membership and hierarchies of both Jewish and Muslim faiths, alongside Christians, Zoroastrians and others who were affected by the events. The Joint Action of Muslim and Jewish leaders in several EU countries – of publicly meeting together, and promoting peace and reconciliation – was an advance on what had seemed possible.

Several ENORB member organisations were involved in organising these activities, in at least five EU countries, including public statements, joint declarations by different faiths, public meetings and a religion & belief peace conference. Let us know of other events in your countries – at enorb@enorb.eu.

Next Event – ENORB/ILGA Seminars in Brussels and Member States



Following our successful exploratory (closed) seminar with ILGA last year, we will be holding a follow-up event, open to representatives from member organisations interested in pursuing this important dialogue, this winter, probably in February.

We will be looking at the interface between Freedom of Religion and Belief and LGBT Rights, and focusing on what we share in commitment to human rights for all and in the shared experience of hate crimes and hate speech directed at religious minorities and LGBT people.

News and upcoming events across Europe

We hope to include regular news from different member states: do send news of your initiatives. Here is a first selection:

- Rosalind Parker gave a paper at the 17th Biennial Conference for the International Society for Religion, Literature and Culture took place at the University of Leuven, Belgium, 18 - 20 September. The theme was *Re-Imagining Human*. [Check the website](#) for short summaries.
- **15-23 November:** *Semaine de rencontres islamo-chrétiennes 2014: SERIC* is organising Christian/Muslim dialogue meetings, linked to wider inter-faith week events in eight European countries. Contact Han Steijnbrugh: training@steijn.net
- **12 November:** ENORB UK & LBFN [*Humanism, Laïcité, Atheism, Secularism across Europe: how do we work together across religious & belief traditions for fair treatment for all?*](#) Andrew Copson, British Humanist Association, speaking at Europe House, London.

.....

For further information and to contact ENORB, email enorb@enorb.eu, visit the website www.enorb.eu and follow ENORB on twitter [@enorb_eu](https://twitter.com/enorb_eu).