



# **European Network on Religion and Belief**

## **ANNUAL REPORT 2013**

European Network on Religion & Belief  
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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Background**

ENORB is a Europe-wide network which covers the Religion and Belief (R&B) strand of EU Fundamental Rights and Equalities policies (registered as an ASBL May 2012 after 2 years preparatory work). ENORB was formed, in response to the increase in discrimination and hate crimes on religion/belief grounds in Europe, as an inter-convictional network, and developed by an exploratory group, including a wide diversity of religious, non-religious and humanist/atheist groups.

Religion/Belief is increasingly a proxy for racism and xenophobia in Europe, so ENORB's core mission, to combat discrimination and to promote equal treatment and mutual understanding among R&B groups across Europe, focuses especially on minorities subject to exclusion. ENORB will not have access to significant EU funding until it has 3 years history as a legally registered European network (in June 2015), so has no paid staff, but its current work programme is organised and delivered by its energetic executive committee and members on a voluntary basis.

### **1.2 Summary of Progress**

This report, prepared for the Annual General assembly in 2014, covers our activities in the year 2013, which was a year of growth for ENORB and its activities, but a year of mixed success in terms of funding. A two day conference was held at the European Parliament, as a consultation exercise in relation to the DG Justice Review of the Equalities and Non-Discrimination Directives. This attracted nearly 100 participants, and OSF funding enabled the participation of a number from distant member states, such as Estonia, Hungary, Bulgaria, which had not previously contributed to ENORB activities.

Two further successful European seminars were held, both in collaboration with EU Equalities Networks: one with ILGA-Europe, on the interface between Freedom of Religion and Belief, and LGBT Rights; the other with minority religious networks and ENAR on Freedom to Wear Religious Symbols and Dress in secular states.

In addition, ENORB increased its numbers of membership organisations, including full members and adherents to a total of over 200, and continued to make the voice of freedom and equality for religion and belief heard in European institutions, through its seminar and reports, contributions to EU meetings, conferences and workshops, and its publications – including a ten-point manifesto for the EU elections.

Membership activities increased in member states – with meetings/seminars in four member states and support for member's network development, also in four member states, and for campaigning activities in several others.

### **1.3 Work Programme 2013**

The previous ENORB Annual Report, for 2012, was written at a time when large funding application was being prepared, with an ambitious work programme of which several of the objectives and targets could only have been achieved with funding. When funding for the programme was not forthcoming, the Executive Committee agreed that the Work Programme should be simplified – with some objectives amalgamated and some targets reduced. It is this revised Work Programme 2013 which formed the basis for the year's work, and has been used as the basis for Section 2 of this Annual Report.

#### **1.4 ENORB Future Plans**

ENORB's ineligibility (until 2015) to apply for longer-term EU funding to underpin a professional office and staff, with the capacity to develop the kind of action campaigning and support to member state activities which is available for the other five strands of European Equality and Non-Discrimination policy, is likely to continue until the 2015-16 funding year. By which time ENORB will have achieved the necessary 3 year qualification period since registration to be eligible to apply for ongoing operational funding. However, the political landscape of Europe is changing, and the funding climate for equalities work may not be secure. In any case, there is no guarantee that ENORB's application would be successful.

In these circumstances, ENORB has again made an application for a DG Justice Action Grant, and has also been carrying out a review of its vision, aims and strategy, of which the first part will be presented to the 2014 AGM for consideration.

## **2. REVIEW OF PROGRESS IN 2013 AGAINST WORK PROGRAMME OBJECTIVES**

ENORB's Work Programme for 2013 was revised when our 2012 application for major EU funding was unsuccessful. It is the revised objectives against which progress in 2013 has been reviewed. We are grateful to the Open Society Foundation's Small Grants Fund for a grant which funded part of our 2013 programme and which is again funding part of our 2014 programme. An application has also been made for a DG Justice Action Grant to support our 2014-2015 programme.

During 2013 ENORB held its first full AGM (Assemblée Generale) in May, which was attended by over 50 representatives of member organisations (full or adherent members). It fulfilled nearly all the objectives set out in its annual work programme.

### **2.1 Objective 1 – ENORB Organisation and Membership**

- (i)** To increase ENORB coverage of European member states through networking and supporting membership activities in selected regions
- (ii)** To hold regular central meetings of ENORB's Council and Executive Committee and encourage similar meetings in 3-4 member states and/or regional groups of member states
- (iii)** To identify member organisations (or potential partners) in member-states with the capacity to act as initial hub for a Religion and Belief Network. (Or individuals able to act as contact points for ENORB.)

#### **Targets:**

- 4 Executive Committee meetings, 3-4 Officers' Groups, 3-4 Regional Meetings in member states
- Attendance at ENORB seminars from 20 member states
- Member organisations in 12 member states, contact points in 20 member states/European countries

#### **Progress on Objective 1**

- (i)** Four meetings of the Executive Committee were held in Brussels and three meetings of the Officers' Group, which meets between Executive meetings.

- (ii) Member-State Meetings of ENORB and link networks were held in UK, France, Belgium and Sweden. These were inaugural meetings designed to explore the context in each member state.
- (iii) Partner/Member Organisations in Member-States The targets were for organisations in 12 member states, with contact points in a further 8 member states. ENORB now has partner organisations in 13 member states, UK, France, Belgium, Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, Spain, Latvia, Poland, Italy, Greece, Romania, Slovenia, with contact points in a further 8 – Croatia, Ireland, Finland, Norway, Hungary, Austria, Czech Republic and Portugal.

## 2.2 Objective 2 - Mapping Exercise on Religion and Belief Organisations

To undertake a preliminary survey of Religion and Belief Networks across EU member-states – inter-convictional, inter-religious, religious, humanistic/atheist.

### Target:

- Research Report with brief country data (with short reports if possible) on 10-20 member-states depending on funding.

### Progress on Objective 2

This objective was the subject of a separate funding application which was not successful. The Executive Committee decided that ENORB did not have the financial (it was not included under the OSF application), or personnel resources – in volunteer time from officers – to undertake a full survey. The survey was therefore included as part of the application for a DG Justice Action Grant in 2014.

## 2.3 Objective 3 – Action for Mutual Understanding and against Discrimination and Hate Crime

To support action by member state organisations for inter-convictional understanding and against discrimination and hate crimes.

### Target:

- ENORB support for 3-4 Actions Against Discrimination and for Mutual Understanding

### Progress on Objective 3

Actions in Member States – were supported in UK – Inaugural Meeting to plan role and priorities of ENORB UK; France – Inaugural Meeting to discuss feasibility of an ENORB France organisation focussing on the issue of *laïcité* and the wearing of the *hijab* in public buildings, and the *niqab* and *burqa* in public places; Spain – Inaugural Inter-Religious Network Meeting in Madrid; Netherlands – Re-launch and Planning Meeting of SERIC in Rotterdam.

## 2.4 Objective 4 – European Seminars, Conferences

- (i) to hold regular seminars on topics of current interest to Religion and Belief groups and other Equalities networks
- (ii) to set up smaller working groups or workshops on specific issues; at European and member state levels

### Targets:

- 2-3 seminars including building up an on-going programme with other Equalities networks, notably ENAR and ILGA-Europe

- 1-2 Workshops/Working Groups at European level, plus 1-2 pilots in member states

#### **Progress on Objective 4**

- (i) European Seminars and Conferences – One conference, at the European Parliament, was held in March 2013 with the aim of building a consensus around a response to the DG Justice Consultation on the Review of the Implementation of the EU Directives on Equality and Employment. The conference was successful, attracting nearly 100 participants over the two days, with an audience consisting of academics, European Commission and European Parliament representatives, as well as ENORB member organisations and other activists in the field of freedom of religion and belief, including representatives from 16 member states, several of which were local grassroots organisations.  
Two further seminars were held:
  - An exploratory seminar, organised jointly with ILGA-Europe in September, on the interface between freedom of religion and belief and LGBT rights, which brought ten members from each organisation to find common ground and common ways of working together.
  - a seminar organised with minority religious organisations and ENAR in December, on the topic of wearing religious symbols and clothing in the public space, which attracted an attendance of over 50.
- (ii) Working Groups – A Joint Task Group was set up with ILGA following the exploratory seminar in September. One meeting was held, which led to the development of a joint working paper on common values shared between both organisations, on the basis of human rights.

#### **2.5 Objective 5 – Contributing to Policy-Related Discussions**

- (i) Contributing to EU policy discussions through ENORB Reports, meetings with EU officials and contributing to European Conferences, Seminars etc
- (ii) Assessing the impact of EU Policies – especially on Religion and Belief groups – primarily through seminar papers, conference contributions from member organisations.

#### **Targets:**

- To continue to distribute seminar reports widely, and specifically to European Commission and Parliament contacts throughout 2013
- ENORB participation in 4-5 events at European level and 4-5 at member state level

#### **Progress on Objective 5**

##### **Contributions to European Policy Discussions**

- (i) ENORB reports have been written on the basis of each seminar and have been distributed to the European Commission and European Parliament contacts, to other relevant European Institutions and networks and to ENORB's member organisations and wider mailing list. Meetings have been held with European Parliamentary Working Groups – on Freedom of Religion and Belief; and Secular Europe, as well as with European Commission and other officials.
- (ii) ENORB has also been consulted on current or controversial issues around Religion and Belief by European Commission officials, notably from DG Justice and EEAS. ENORB representatives, notably from DG Justice, but also EACAR and Employment, have also contributed regularly, or provided speakers to a number of European-level and member state seminars, including those organised by DG Justice,

EQUINET, HRWF, Religions for Peace, inter-faith and religious networks such as SERIC, COMECE, CEC/KEK, HFE, FIOE, and non-religious, such as European Humanist Federation. These have included at least seven member states, including: UK, France, Belgium, Netherlands, Croatia, Germany, Hungary.

### **3. ENORB WORK PROGRAMME 2014**

ENORB's Work Programme for 2014 is at a similar level to that proposed for 2013, in that it is conditional on securing funding in 2014, of which the OSF small grant has supplied part of our needs, and the DG Justice Action Grant would make the whole programme possible on a larger scale. In the 2015-20 funding cycle, we hope to be successful in bidding for funding under the DG Justice calls for proposals of Operational Grants for Equalities networks. The objectives and targets of the Work Programme are set below:

#### **3.1 Objective 1 - Membership Structure**

- (i) To hold regular meetings of ENORB's Council and Executive Committee and encourage similar meetings in member-states and/or regional groups of member states.
- (ii) To increase coverage of European member-states through networking, more active membership activities in selected regions (eg Scandinavia, Eastern and Southern Europe).

##### **Targets:**

- 3-4 member state or regional meetings
- Members/contact points in 25 EU member-states

#### **3.2 Objective 2 – Building on ENORB's partnerships with EU Equalities Networks**

- (i) To develop the work of the Joint Task Group with ILGA to define common ground on the basis of EU Fundamental Rights, explore the interface with LGBT Rights and seek to undertake joint action
- (ii) To develop the partnership with ENAR with further work to improve the European context for Freedom of Religion and Belief, especially relating to religious symbols and clothing

##### **Targets:**

- With ILGA – produce initial document, hold larger joint seminar, develop roadmap for action
- On Religious Symbols and Clothing hold joint seminar, produce policy document, develop collaboration on Islaophobia.

#### **3.3 Objective 3 - Action for Mutual Understanding and against Discrimination and Hate Crime**

- (i) support for action by member-state organisations against discrimination and hate-crimes.
- (ii) increased participation in member state actions/meetings/seminars on inter-convictional dialogue or Religion/Belief actions against discrimination and hate crime.

##### **Targets:**

- ENORB support for 3-4 Anti-Discrimination actions at member state level
- ENORB participation in 4-5 events at member state level

#### **3.4 Objective 4 - Seminars, Conferences**

- (i) To hold regular seminars on topics of current interest to Religion and Belief groups (including joint activities with other Equalities networks)
- (ii) To set up and maintain smaller working groups, or workshops on specific issues at European or member state levels

**Target:**

- 2-3 seminars

**3.5 Objective 5 - Mapping Exercise on Religion and Belief Organisations (NB only feasible if DG Justice Action Grant application is successful)**

- (i) to undertake a preliminary survey of Religion and Belief Networks across EU Member-states – inter-convictional, inter-religious, humanist/atheist, religious
- (ii) to identify partner organisations (or potential partners) in member states with the capacity to act as initial hub for a Religion and Belief Network.

**Targets:**

- Research Report with brief country data (with short reports if possible) on 20 Member states depending on funding.
- Partner organisations in 18 member-states, contact points in 25 member states/European countries.
- Improved administrative support to enable reports and shorter papers to be produced more quickly and efficiently

**3.6 Objective 6 – Contributing to Policy-Related Discussions**

- (i) Contributing to EU policy discussions through ENORB Reports, meetings with EU officials and contributing to European Conferences, Seminars etc.
- (ii) Assessing the impact of EU Policies – especially on Religion and Belief groups - through seminar papers, conference contributions from member organisations.

**Targets:**

- Continued distribution of reports on seminars widely, and to European Commission and Parliament contacts
- ENORB participation in 4-5 events at European level

**4. ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES**

**4.1 (i) Religion and Belief Networks**

ENORB has been represented at the major EU conferences and seminars in 2013-14, including events held by DG Justice, EEAS, Religare, FiE (Faith in Europe), EPRID, CEJI/Belieforama, European Parliament Article 19 Dialogue, plus EP groups on Secular Europe, and on Religion and Belief. ENORB has been represented at the SERIC Annual Seminars in 2013-14 in Rotterdam and Brussels, and, through member organisations, held several local events during the annual Inter-Faith week in November.

- (ii) **EU Equalities Networks** – Our main partnership has been with ENAR, with whom we have made joint funding applications, and is a partner organisation in seminars as appropriate. ENAR continues generously to provide office space for ENORB when needed, and member organisations provide meeting space as required. ILGA-Europe has become an important partner this year, with a joint seminar and the launching of a joint task group.

## 4.2 Identifying existing activities and supporting actions in this field

A primary objective for ENORB is to contribute the expertise of Religion and Belief organisations to the Europe-wide struggle for equalities and against discrimination and hate-crimes, not necessarily through central action, but by supporting local action.

- (i) **Mechanisms to monitor equalities/discrimination.** ENORB does not yet have the central capacity to monitor discrimination across Europe on grounds of religion or belief, nor to record and respond to breaches of fundamental rights such as hate-crimes. But many of our partner and member organisations are involved in this work at national or local levels in member-states, and ENORB officers have worked with several member organisations to develop capacity at member-state level. Action on this area is a 2014 priority for ENORB.
- (ii) **Exploratory work with ENAR and other Equalities Networks**  
In addition to joint collaborative work with ENAR and ILGA-Europe there have been initial discussions about joint activities with EWL, the European Women's Lobby.
- (iii) **Exchanges of experience and Inter-Faith/Belief activities between organisations across Europe (in collaboration with SERIC and others)**  
As part of the ENORB AGM 2013, a Networking Exchange session was held, at which some 35 organisations came for networking and exchange of expertise.

## 4.3 Conceptual Mapping Exercise

This is an important method by which the 'mutual understanding' component of ENORB's primary aims could be addressed. Discussions and dialogue on several topics of current moral and political importance have been held with a view to helping to identify the values shared across religions and non-religious philosophies. In the early ENORB meetings, concepts such as secularism, laïcité, belief were discussed, sometimes on the basis of short written papers, (see website – documents section).

Recent topics included equality issues where there are distinctive views such as sexual orientation, freedom to wear headscarves, religious symbols etc. As ENORB moved from the exploratory phase to action most discussions have been held either within the framework of formal seminars. We are still working out a model for dealing with these issues, and how ENORB can make public its dialogues, and maybe position statements in the future.

## 5. BACKGROUND AND EUROPEAN CONTEXT FOR ENORB

The emergence of ENORB over five years has been a response to the more urgent European context for religion and belief developing both at European level and in member-states. The text for this section is primarily taken from ENORB's initial publications, and describe this background, context and our main aims.

### 5.1 Aims and Objectives

**Aims** - to support the maintenance and development of action-oriented networks to combat discrimination and hate crime in member-states – based on the shared European values which bind diverse groups and communities together in a strong and sustainable Europe.

#### **Objectives**

- (i) To build a European Network to combat discrimination and prejudice, and promote harmony and shared values between different religious and non-religious traditions, thought joint activities including dialogue, seminars, exchanges and social actions for the common good;

- (ii) To bring religious and non-religious groups together to work in partnership and in dialogue with the European Union, on EU policy priorities, and key current issues for religion and belief;
- (iii) To develop a shared discourse and common values between religions, philosophical associations, and politicians, based on the values enshrined in the European Treaties, and promoting high ethical standards in EU policies;
- (iv) To support the development of similar networks in member states committed to action to combat discrimination and hate crime for inter-convictional understanding.

## 5.2 What European Background?

ENORB aims to be a European Network which:

- (i) Draws on the common heritage and the modern diversity of Europe's historical faiths: Christian (Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant), Jewish and Muslim;
- (ii) Draws equally on the long European traditions of free thinking, secular humanism and non-religious social action;
- (iii) Affirms Europe's modern diversity: Buddhist, Hindu, Sikh and other religions from across the world;
- (iv) Defines common ground and promotes collaboration between secular institutions and religious and non-religious organisations.

## 5.3 Why Joint Action between Religious and Non-Religious Organisations is urgently needed

- (i) Hate crimes on the grounds of religion/belief as well as race are increasing and the two are becoming explicitly or implicitly associated with religion/belief as much as with racial or ethnic origin.
- (ii) Acts of discrimination (and some hate-crimes) are increasing at the interface between Religion/Belief and other Equalities issues especially gender (eg dress and head-wear for women); religious symbols/headwear and employment; employment for non-religious in certain sectors (e.g. education); banned religious practices (Roma).
- (iii) Inter-Convictional dialogue and practical collaboration between religious and non-religious organisations has been increasing for several years, especially in member states. With the "shrinking of the state" in some part of Europe increasing numbers of public services, housing, health, and educational provision are being contracted out to, or delivered in collaboration with religious organisations or religious/non-religious partnerships.
- (iv) Tensions between Religion/Belief and other Equalities issues have been identified in recent years including: eg religious prohibitions v LBGT rights; secular restrictions v religious freedom; social v religious norms on peri-natal and end-of-life issues (eg abortion, assisted dying); government contracts with religious/charitable organisations (eg adoption, marriage/relationship counselling).

## 5.4 What European Union basis?

The increasing importance of matters of Religion and Belief in public life across Europe has been recognised in the treaties governing the European Union. New Articles in the Treaty of Lisbon 2008, and the incorporation of the Charter of Fundamental Rights treaty, have led to commitment across Europe work to combat discrimination and promote mutual understanding between Religion and Belief traditions of all kinds, on the basis of these texts, as set out below:

### Article 10 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights guarantees:

*“Freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right includes freedom to change religion or belief and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or in private, to manifest religion or belief, in worship, teaching, practice and observance.”*

**Article 13 of the Treaty of Lisbon:**

*“In defining and implementing its policies and activities, the Union shall aim to combat discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation.”*

**Article 17 of the Treaty of Lisbon which states that the European Union:**

*“Respects and does not prejudice the status under national law of churches and religious associations or communities in the Member States; equally respects the status under national law of philosophical and non-confessional organisations; recognising their identity and their specific contribution, the Union shall maintain an open, transparent and regular dialogue with these churches and organisations.”*

## **6. CURRENT AND FUTURE PRIORITIES**

**6.1** From the issues raised above at ENORB’s AGM and meetings in member states, the two priorities identified for action during 2013-14 were:

- (i)** Freedom to wear Religious Symbols and Clothing in Public Sector Premises and in public space
- (ii)** Interface between Freedom of Religion and Belief and LGBT Rights and Freedoms

**6.2 Future Development.** ENORB remains a voluntary network, though with a grant from the OSF Small Grants scheme for 2014, primarily to support our joint work with ILGA. If our aim to become one of the funded EU Equalities networks is successful, ENORB will recruit a specialist team to carry out our objectives and programme and meet EU targets. If there is no funding, we will decide how these can best be realised in partnership with others, on the basis of the current review of our work since 2010, which will be completed in late 2014.