

*Invitation to the*

# **1st Baltic Humanist Conference**

Stockholm

November 10th-12th, 2006

## **State, Secularism and the Humanist Challenge**



Swedish Humanist Association (Humanisterna)  
Box 16241, SE-103 24 STOCKHOLM, Sweden  
Phone: +46 8 50862290 or +47 23271166  
baltic@humanisterna.se - [www.humanisterna.se](http://www.humanisterna.se)

## **How can we make the world safe for democracy and a secular society?**

Some say this is the most important question of our time. Relativistic attitudes articulated by postmodernists, unsubtle and dangerous views on the values of multiculturalism in politics, fundamentalist religious groups trying, day by day, to move their positions forward, superstition and pseudoscience spreading in many fields - these are real and serious threats against our humanist ideals. Ideals which include pluralism, tolerance and an open mind, as well as freedom of speech, critical inquiry and human rights.

How the state should relate to different religious and life stance organisations is one key topic we would like to discuss. Another is how humanists best can meet the challenges in an age of globalism. We will also try to find more effective ways of cooperation between the humanist organisations involved in this conference.

### **Invitation to a Baltic Humanist project**

Two years ago the Swedish and Norwegian Humanist Associations began to plan for a Nordic event. Soon it became clear that it would be a good idea to expand the plans to include the whole Baltic Sea region. When we presented the project to humanists internationally, in the area as well as outside, we received great encouragement.

This year's First Baltic Humanist Conference is not to be seen as a single event, but rather as one step forward towards closer relations in the future. The follow-up after the November meeting in Stockholm is even more important than the conference itself.

The main reason for this Nordic and Baltic Sea project is threefold:

- The Swedish Humanist Association would like to increase its international engagement

- We have discovered a need and a possibility to improve the exchange of ideas and sharing of experiences among neighbouring countries in Northern Europe
- Humanist organisations that are nationally already well established could make a bigger difference in supporting activities abroad, especially where secular forces are weak or even absent today

In the actual area this last point means a challenge for us to reach out in nations where, until now, the international humanist movement has no associated partners.

As far as we know this is still the case in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. A long term goal is therefore to search for and invite people from these countries, who are willing to join us in our common project. Hopefully it may lead to a more dynamic and influential role for humanism in the whole region.

### **Humanist report**

A more immediate result, already in sight after this year's conference, is a clearer view of the conditions under which humanist groups live. In order to be able to compare the different situations in countries around the Baltic Sea region we will prepare an enquete, complementary to the questionnaire the IHEU already sent out last year. This will be carried out before the Stockholm meeting.

A preliminary report is then going to be presented before the conference, during which it will be analysed and thoroughly discussed. The final report is to be completed afterwards. We ask for your help with this task. The enquete will be distributed to all existing humanist organisations in the region.



We are happy to invite active humanists, primarily from this part of Europe, to a three-day-event in Stockholm. The conference will be held at Campus Konradsberg, premises of the Stockholm Institute of Education. The Campus is located in one of Stockholm's most beautiful parks, only 5 minutes by underground from Central Station. For further information, map etc.: [www1.lhs.se/lhskonferens/eng\\_kom.html](http://www1.lhs.se/lhskonferens/eng_kom.html)

## Programme

### Friday 10th

13.00-15.00 Registration (coffee, tea will be served in the entrance hall)

15.00 Opening: *Welcome Speeches*

Staffan Gunnarson from the organizing committee

Christer Sturmark, Chairman of SHA

Sonja Eggerickx, President of IHEU

15.15 Public debate: *Secularism and the Modern State*

Morgan Johansson (Minister for Public Health and Social Services, Sweden)

and political representatives from other countries

16.30 Break

16.40 Religious and secular values in the Baltic region: *An exceptional case*

Professor Thorleif Pettersson, Uppsala University

17.30 Social activity (drinks will be served in connection to the conference hall)

Evening free

### Saturday 11th

09.30 Debate: *Secularism, Tolerance and the Freedom of Speech*

The Demarcation of Humanism in a Democratic Society, in the aftermath of the Muhammed drawings in a danish paper

Speakers: Andrzej Dominiczak (President, Polish Humanist Association), Lars Gule (Ph.D., Oslo University College/NHA), Arne Ruth (Journalist/Author, Sweden), Dhyen Vermeulen (Ambassador for Humanist Ethical Education, Humanist Alliance of The Netherlands) and others

10.45 Coffee break

11.15 Report: *Organized Humanism in Northern Europe*, Findings from an IHEU questionnaire

11.30 *Organized Humanism – different situations, common strategies*

Speakers: Levi Fragell (IHEU/NHA), Bjarni Jónsson (Sidmennt, Iceland), Prof. Paul Knutsen (University College of Lillehammer, Norway), Marie Prott (DFW, Umbrella for Secular Organisations, Germany) and others

12.30 Lunch

## SEMINARS

13.30-16.30 A. Report and discussion: *State and religion in a Secular Society*. Based upon a recent enquete and an IHEU questionnaire

Speakers: Prof. Carl-Johan Kleberg (SHA), Bente Sandvig (NHA), Jussi Tuovinen (Vice President, Humanist Union of Finland), Jesper Vind (Chairman, Danish Atheist Society) and others

13.30 B. *How to be Visible? - Humanism and the Media*

Speakers: Adam Cioch (Journalist, Weekly Magazine "Fakty i Mity", Poland), Jens Brun-Pedersen (Public Relations Manager, NHA), Christer Sturmark (Chairman, SHA), Henrik Örnebring (Ph.D. in Journalism and Mass Communication, Roehampton University, London)

15.00 Coffee break

15.30 C. *Empowering women – Empowering humanism*

Speakers: Maria Carlshamre (Member of European Parliament), Haideh Daragahi (Ph.D., President, Women's right, Sweden), Sonja Eggerickx (President of the IHEU), Kaj Fölster (SHA), Kristin Mile (Secretary General, NHA)

19.30 Official Conference Dinner

## **Sunday 12th**

### SEMINARS

09.30 D. *Free of Confession: Humanist approaches towards the School system*

Speakers: Sonja Eggerickx (President of the IHEU), Pekka Elo (Senior Advisor, National Board of Education, Finland), Dr. Volker Mueller (President, DFW, Umbrella for Secular Organisations, Germany), Bente Sandvig (NHA), Christer Sturmark (Chairman, SHA)

09.30 E. *What's in a word? How we can understand the notion of Humanism, Secularism, Religion and related concepts*

Speakers: Terje Emberland (Ph.D., NHA) and others

11.00 Coffee break

11.30 Reports

12.30 Lunch (coffee, tea, sandwiches)

13.30 Panel discussion – conclusions

Chairman: Roar Johnsen, President of NHA

15.00 Closing

## **Co-organizing parties:**

Swedish Humanist Association (SHA, Humanisterna)  
Norwegian Humanist Association (NHA, Human-Etisk Forbund)  
European Humanist Federation (EHF)  
International Humanist and Ethical Union (IHEU)



## **Conference fee**

Full participant            60 Euros  
Student                        30 Euros  
Dinner Saturday 11th    35 Euros

## **How to pay?**

From Sweden: Plusgiro 663659-1  
From abroad: IBAN: SE8495000099604206636591  
BIC/SWIFT: NDEASESS

Bank address: Plusgiro, SE-105 71 STOCKHOLM, Sweden

Please give the reference "Humanisterna/BHC"

## **Accommodation**

Nearby hotels are (for a discount, give the reference "LHS rabatt/  
discount" when booking):

- *Haga Kristineberg*: [www.hotelhagakristeneberg.se](http://www.hotelhagakristeneberg.se) - approx. 70 Euros /night (single room/weekends).
- *Långholmen*: [www.langholmen.com](http://www.langholmen.com) - approx. 100 Euros/night (single room/weekends)

Youth hostels

- *Långholmen*: (website same as above) – approx. 30 Euros/night
- *STF Fridhemsplan*: [www.fridhemsplan.se](http://www.fridhemsplan.se) – approx. 25 Euros/night

If you would like to attend the conference, please fill in form and send it to us. We need it along with your payment no later than October 1st.

Applications can also be made over our website as from August 1st:  
**[www.humanisterna.se](http://www.humanisterna.se)**

**Yes, I want to attend the 1st Baltic Humanist Conference!**

**Personal information:**

Name: .....

Address: .....

Postal Code: .....

City: .....

Country: .....

Phone: .....

Email: .....

Title/Occupation: .....

Organisation: .....

**Preferred choices of seminars:**

Saturday 11th November:

A or  B/C

Sunday 12th November:

D or  E

**Other:**



STAMP

Humanisterna  
Box 16241  
SE-103 24 STOCKHOLM  
Sweden