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**Proposals by the  
International Humanist and Ethical Union,  
jointly with the (UK) National Secular Society  
to the European Union  
Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA)**

**for inclusion in its  
Annual Work Programme 2010**

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At the request of the FRA, this submission is limited to two pages.

The Appendix does not form part of the Submission and is merely for reference of anyone requiring more information.

*Numbers in square brackets refer to blocks of URLs and other references given in the Appendix. The key to thematic areas. is given at the end of the Appendix.*



## Major areas of concern

We draw attention to the following contraventions of the general principle that **there should be no direct or indirect discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief below** and make three principal groups of recommendations on the following page:

- I. We contend that there is significant **direct and indirect discrimination suffered by the non-religious**.
- II. **The level of awareness of these issues is very low** and it seems that the non-religious are a group that is uniquely under-represented and under protected; freedom of religion should also include freedom *from* religion.
- III. **Unrepresentative religious bodies seek to impose their dogma** on the general population often with the cooperation of public bodies. They are often able to secure exemptions from laws and regulations, including those on equality, which privilege them to the detriment of others, and enable them to impose their view on others, for example on Voluntary Euthanasia. It is generally the more orthodox that speak for the religions and denominations. These powerful religious voices seek to influence public policy in a way that is frequently not representative even of their own followers, nor in some cases compatible with Human Rights. For example, the Vatican's stance on contraception and homosexuality is widely ignored. It is not shared by a majority of Catholics nor an overwhelming proportion of the population. This divide also holds, to a lesser extent, over abortion law. [P1]
- IV. There appears to be a default assumption that religions are the purveyors of morality and ethics and that what they do, or is done in their name, is automatically of public benefit. This is far from being the case. [P2]
- V. Most of the exemptions from equality legislation, e.g. on sexual orientation, and start and end of life issues are based on religious objections, and those exemptions create victims (those who would have benefitted had the exemption not been granted). Some religious practices (or religio-cultural practices), more often in minority religions, are incompatible with human rights. [P3]
- VI. Abusive practices associated with religion and culture are rarely acknowledged, far less tackled effectively, we fear this often for fear of threats, misplaced cultural sensitivity, and because of the growing tendency to accuse critics of religion or culture of racism or "Islamophobia". [P4]



**We recommend:**

*Collect, record, analyse and disseminate relevant, objective, reliable and comparable information and data in all EU Member States on:*

**1. (mainly) minority religion, race and cultural practices** that are incompatible with Human Rights, in particular:

- a. on religious law in use, and about the extent of and anticipated effect of developments in religious law in member countries in relation to Human Rights and Equality, and to make recommendations. We believe it is a fundamental of Human Rights that one law should apply equally to all in any jurisdiction. [R1] (*Thematic area i*)
- b. on the levels of “honour killings”, forced marriages, female genital mutilation and the effectiveness of measures to reduce these, the obstacles to greater success, and to make recommendations [R2] (*Thematic area b*)
- c. on the levels of caste discrimination in the immigrant community and the effectiveness of measures to reduce this, the obstacles to greater success, and to make recommendations [R2] (*Thematic areas abde*)
- d. on the extent of conformity to restrictions on freedom of expression imposed directly or indirectly on religious grounds. [R3] (*Thematic area a*)

**2. how the human rights of children are being ignored or flouted** (*Thematic area d*):

- a. where they are taught the beliefs of one religion as fact in religious education which ignores or largely ignores the fact that many do not have a belief, and that others have beliefs in different religions [R5]
- b. they are denied objective and complete sex education [R5]
- c. they are subjected to the teaching of creationist dogma in science classes [R6]
- d. their right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion are still assumed to be subject to parental diktat, so that, for example, older children may not withdraw themselves from religious education or worship [R7]

**3. the extent to which the non-religious or religiously unconcerned are disadvantaged, whether this should be remedied, and if so how** (*Thematic area b*):

- a. by being discriminated against on grounds of belief in admissions to publicly-funded faith schools, and that publicly-funded faith schools are privileged because they alone are permitted to select pupils in a way that allows them in practice to cherry-pick the most able pupils, thus disadvantaging nearby non-faith schools. [R8]
- b. by having fewer employment opportunities in publicly-funded jobs, especially in schools and faith-based welfare [R9]
- c. by restricted access to contraception and abortion services [R10]
- d. by restricted access to registered relationships akin to marriage, e.g. civil partnerships [R11]



APPENDIX

**a selection of on-line and other references**

**P1 Privilege**

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/1530660/Anger-in-Holland-over-%27apartheid%27-Islamic-hospital.html> 5.10.06 (health services)

and <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1577426/Female-Muslim-medics-%27disobey-hygiene-rules%27.html> 4.2.08

[http://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/c/1050688\\_morningafter\\_pill\\_its\\_against\\_my\\_religion?page=2](http://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/c/1050688_morningafter_pill_its_against_my_religion?page=2) 22.5.08

and <http://www.ippf.org/en/Resources/Statements/The+Right+to+Freedom+of+Thought.htm>

**P2 Morality/religion**

<http://philosophy.hku.hk/think/value/religion.php>

**P3 Exemption from equality laws**

<http://www.pinknews.co.uk/news/articles/2005-7598.html> 9.5.08

[Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at, Canada.](#)

[http://www.galha.org/briefing/2003\\_03.html](http://www.galha.org/briefing/2003_03.html)

[http://www.stonewall.org.uk/education\\_for\\_all/research/1731.asp](http://www.stonewall.org.uk/education_for_all/research/1731.asp)

**P4 Conflation of religion and race**

<http://www.newstatesman.com/uk-politics/2008/08/religious-state-secular> (Southall Black Sisters)

<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/uk/education/article5697694.ece> 2009.02.10  
(interfaith assemblies described as racist)

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/4708216.stm> 13.2.06

<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/article728757.ece> 9.2.06

**R1 Religious law**

[http://www.theasianews.co.uk/news/s/1061862\\_muslim\\_marriage\\_contract\\_revolutionary\\_for\\_uk\\_women](http://www.theasianews.co.uk/news/s/1061862_muslim_marriage_contract_revolutionary_for_uk_women)

[http://www.theasianews.co.uk/community/heritage/s/529/529128\\_in\\_the\\_name\\_of\\_the\\_law.html](http://www.theasianews.co.uk/community/heritage/s/529/529128_in_the_name_of_the_law.html) 14.6.07

<http://www.newstatesman.com/religion/2008/02/sharia-law-archbishop-needs>  
14.2.08

[No, we do NOT want sharia law](#)

<http://www.concordatwatch.eu/>

**R2 Cultural practices**

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2005/nov/05/ukcrime.topstories3>

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2007/jul/27/ukcrime.uknews4>

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2008/jul/28/health.lords?gusrc=rss&feed=worldnews>

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2005/jun/01/health.healthandwellbeing>

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2006/jul/04/india.world>



**R3 Freedom of expression**

[www.odysseustrust.org/lectures/274\\_Hungarytalk.pdf](http://www.odysseustrust.org/lectures/274_Hungarytalk.pdf)  
[http://www.timeout.com/london/features/3960/Religion\\_and\\_free\\_speech.html](http://www.timeout.com/london/features/3960/Religion_and_free_speech.html)  
[http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/columnists/mick\\_hume/article4509698.ece](http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/columnists/mick_hume/article4509698.ece)  
[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/johann-hari/stand-up-for-the-right-to\\_b\\_161456.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/johann-hari/stand-up-for-the-right-to_b_161456.html)  
(Organisation of Islamic Conference)

**R5 Children's rights**

<http://www.lancasterrcdioocese.org.uk/mission%20review/school-report.pdf> (RC bishop on indoctrination)  
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml;jsessionid=FDIBPPQLPO4Y3QFIQMFCFFWAVCBQYIV0?xml=/news/2008/01/05/nsex105.xml> (sex education)  
and <http://www.lifesitenews.com/ldn/2007/dec/07121202.html> 12.12.07

**R6 Dogma as fact (creationism)**

<http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=/Documents/WorkingDocs/Doc07/EDOC11297.htm>  
<http://www.ihcu.org/node/2768>  
<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1041089/Atheist-Richard-Dawkins-blames-Muslims-importing-creationism-classrooms.html> 5.8.08

**R7 Child's freedom of religion**

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/jt200506/jtselect/jtrights/247/24705.htm> 28th Report publ 28 February 2006, Section 2 together with UK School Standards and Framework Act 1998 S. 71(1)

**R8 Admission to faith schools**

<http://www.ekklesia.co.uk/news/uk/070117churchschools>

**R9 Employment**

<http://www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2003/20031660.htm> (The Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003)  
<http://timescolumns.typepad.com/gledhill/2007/12/christian-claim.html>  
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2007/dec/04/faithschools.schools> 4.12.04  
[http://www.atl.org.uk/atl\\_en/news/Media\\_office/archive/archive07/March\\_2007/faith\\_school.asp](http://www.atl.org.uk/atl_en/news/Media_office/archive/archive07/March_2007/faith_school.asp)

**R10 Access to Contraception and Abortion Services**

<http://www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/health/2008/0715/1215940925049.html>  
<http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1058524.html>  
<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/ireland-caught-in-battle-over-teenagers-right-to-abortion-447378.html>  
<http://www.iht.com/articles/ap/2008/11/02/europe/EU-FEA-NIreland-No-Abortions.php>

**R11 Registered Relationships akin to Marriage - Civil partnerships etc**

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2007/mar/01/religion.gayrights>  
<http://www.pinknews.co.uk/news/articles/2005-10900.html>  
<http://www.pinknews.co.uk/news/articles/2005-10590.html>



**Thematic areas**

- Ta** Thematic area a) Racism, xenophobia and related intolerance
- Tb** Thematic area b) Discrimination based on sex, race or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation and against persons belonging to minorities and any combination of these grounds (multiple discrimination)
- Td** The rights of the child, including the protection of children
- Te** Asylum, immigration and integration of migrants
- Ti** Thematic area i) Access to efficient and independent justice
- Tg** Participation of the EU citizens in the Union's democratic functioning