



# Fédération Humaniste Européenne

## European Humanist Federation

association internationale de droit belge

### NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2001

*EHF-FHE wishes you, your family and your organisation  
a Happy New Year !*

*May Humanism flourish in 2001,  
in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and in the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium... !*

Drawn up by Georges Liénard and Edith Nagant

#### News of the board

The board will meet in Brussels, in the building of the Centre d'action Laïque, on Saturday 24 February 2001.

Members who wish to see issues examined by the board are kindly requested to send a note to the secretariat for 12 February at the latest.

#### European News

##### European Parliament - European Commission

###### The president of the European Parliament and the religious communities

Mrs Nicole Fontaine, president of the European Parliament organised, on 27 October, in Strasbourg, a meeting with the representatives of the French religious communities.

She declared to the press that they had "agreed to meet quite frequently to discuss the values that unite us and to extend this reflection to the whole of the religious community, in other countries also".

The Belgian Conseil Central Laïque - CCL (composed of the French-speaking Centre d'Action Laïque and of the Dutch-speaking Unie Vrijzinnige Verenigingen) reacted by asking Nicole Fontaine to invite their representatives when she has such a meeting in Brussels. The CCL asked EHF-FHE to organise a reaction on a European level. A letter was sent by EHF-FHE to the president of the European Parliament presenting the federation and its aims, asking for an audience and explaining that humanism is a life stance that must be taken into account.

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The president replied that “ there is a misunderstanding between us, ... for the point was to ask the various religions to help try to stop as quickly as possible the religion-linked violence that had occurred, particularly in France, as a consequence of the Israel-Palestine conflict. This initiative does not exclude that, on other subjects, your collaboration may be extremely useful. ”. Noted.

Our members based in countries of the European Union, should react in a similar way, by requesting the president of the European Parliament to meet with representatives of their humanist organisation(s), should such a meeting be organised in their own country.

#### European Commission Draft Directive 565, establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation

Aware of the amendments presented by the European Parliament in October 2000, EHF-FHE sent a vigorous protest to the Commission, the Council and the Parliament so that the special dispensations allowed by article 4 were strictly limited.

See the Newsletter of October 2000. EHF-FHE letter was taken into consideration by several European Commission Directorates General and by President Prodi.

### **Council of Ministers**

#### Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union

The European Council (“summit”) of Nice, of 6 December 2000, made a “common statement” on the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.

But this text, after all inaccurate and incomplete, will remain powerless but might generate a series of events leading to a European Constitution.

EHF-FHE took part, along with other NGO’s gathered in a Forum of civil society, in the study of various possibilities for the future.

In June 2004, the European citizens will vote. Could it be required that the Parliament they would elect then be the core of the Constituent Assembly. And that the text it would draw up be submitted directly for ratification. The enlargement treaty could then be signed in 2005 and ratified in 2006.

Provided that the civil society really wants this and prepares it unremittingly !

### **Council of Europe**

#### Euthanasie

EHF-FHE strongly protested when the Council of Europe issued a statement on euthanasia :

“Euthanasia is contrary to the European Convention on Human Rights”, says Assembly Rapporteur

STRASBOURG, 29.11.00 – “The law on the legalisation of euthanasia which the Second Chamber of the Dutch Parliament adopted yesterday is contrary to the European Human Rights Convention,” Edeltraud Gatterer (Austria, EPP/CD), Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly Rapporteur on euthanasia said today. She also launched an urgent appeal to the First Chamber (Senate) not to adopt this text.

“Article 2 of the European Convention on Human Rights states that no one shall be deprived of his life intentionally and thus recognises the right to life, especially with regard to a terminally ill or dying person in the 41 member States of the Council of Europe, including the Netherlands. A

recommendation to our governments aimed at upholding this prohibition was adopted by the Parliamentary Assembly in June 1999,” Mrs Gatterer explained.

“A terminally ill or dying person’s wish to die never constitutes any legal claim to die at the hand of another person and cannot of itself constitute a legal justification to carry out actions intended to bring about death,” she stressed.

“The obligation to respect and to protect the dignity of a terminally ill or dying person derives from the inviolability of human dignity in all stages of life. This respect and protection find their expression in the provision of an appropriate environment, enabling a human being to die in dignity,” Mrs Gatterer concluded

#### EHF-FHE press release

Mrs E. Gatterer (Austria, EPP/CD), Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly Rapporteur on euthanasia, has declared in a press release that the law on euthanasia adopted by the Dutch Parliament is contrary to the European Human Rights Convention.

Article 2 of this international convention states that “no one shall be deprived of his life intentionally”.

Mrs Gatterer infers that “a terminally ill or dying person’s wish to die can never constitute a legal justification to death” and has urged the Dutch Senate not to adopt the law on euthanasia.

Such misinterpretation is particularly offensive and excessive as, for the sake of the “right to life”, she takes no account of the will of the person, terminally ill or dying.

The right to life is transformed into an obligation to live, even in a situation of great suffering.

The European Humanist Federation (EHF-FHE) is indignant that Mrs Gatterer goes beyond her competence by setting up as a dogmatic moral authority and by deciding for other persons, which affects their dignity.

EHF-FHE and European humanists defend the right to “a dignified death”.

They have to be taught no lesson on Human Rights by a representative of a European party to which belong the friends of Jorg Haider.

EHF-FHE urges the European democrats and members of parliament to put an end to such attempts at exerting undue influence.

### **News of the members**

#### **UAAR (Italy)**

##### Anti-concordat Week – Rome - 9-18 February 2001

The Unione degli Atei e degli Agnostici Razionalisti (Union of rationalist atheists and agnostics - UAAR) will organise a week of mobilisation on Campo de' Fiori where Giordano Bruno was burned to death on 17 February, 401 years ago.

Moreover, following the first referendum by universal suffrage of the millenary history of Rome, on 9 February 1849, was proclaimed the Republic of Rome which marked the end of the temporal power of the Catholic Church. Two other disastrous dates also fall during that same week : on 11 and 18 February were signed by Benito Mussolini and by Bettino Craxi, the concordats between the Italian State and the Catholic Church.

UAAR, along with other humanist associations, will peacefully occupy Campo de' Fiori every afternoon between 9 and 18 February in order to hold a dialogue with the citizens and to

distribute material, and will organise various activities during the same period, among them a round table on Italian fiscal system and the catholic Church.

Information on the web site: [www.uaar.it](http://www.uaar.it) - e-mail: in Italian: [uaar@tin.it](mailto:uaar@tin.it), in French and English: [vpegna@iol.it](mailto:vpegna@iol.it)

## Websites

EHF-FHE new website will be soon operating at the direct address :  
<http://www.humanism.be>

A few more sites worth to visit :

BEZ Dogmatu (Poland)	<a href="http://www.medianet.com.pl/~kip/bezdog.htm">http://www.medianet.com.pl/~kip/bezdog.htm</a>
Polish Humanist Association	<a href="http://free.ngo.pl/humanizm">http://free.ngo.pl/humanizm</a>
North East Humanists (Great-Britain)	<a href="http://members.aol.com/NEHumanists">http://members.aol.com/NEHumanists</a>
Asociacion Laica (Spain)	<a href="http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Atrium/6633/">http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Atrium/6633/</a>
Galigan (Spain)	<a href="http://www.audinex.es/~dariogon/">http://www.audinex.es/~dariogon/</a>
Republica e Laicidade (Portugal)	<a href="http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/Senate/4801/">http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/Senate/4801/</a>

We draw your attention to the site of the Mouvement Europe et Laïcité (ex CAEDEL) on which one can find a list of French-speaking humanist organisations present on internet :  
<http://www.europe-et-laicite.org/Annuaire.html>

You can advertise YOUR website HERE ! Just let us know the internet address.

## News of the Networks

### Bioethics

#### “Genetics and the Future of Europe” –Brussels, 6-7 November 2000

The conference was an initiative of the Life Sciences High Level Group of Experts, established by Commissioner Busquin and chaired by Dr Axel Kahn. It was organised by the DG Research of the European Commission. The two Commissioners, Philippe Busquin (Research Policy) and David Byrne (Consumer Protection and Health Policy) were present. Participants (over 100 people) came largely from organisations representing the general public in the Union, and from the research DG itself (Life Sciences unit). It was mentioned that this was the first, but not the last initiative calling for broad public debates aiming at closing the gaps between scientists and the citizens of Europe.

The EHF general secretary attended the meeting. Commissioner Busquin invited EHF to contribute to the debate. European Humanists interested in these subjects are invited to contact the EHF-FHE secretariat.

### EHF –FHE egroup

EHF-FHE Network Officer, John Leeson, who is a member of the Board, has launched an egroup, as decided by the General Assembly of 27 May 2000.

You are invited to join the discussion group for EHF-FHE members.

If you want to learn more about this egroup, please visit <http://www.egroups.com/subscribe/ehffhe>  
Or send an email to: [ehffhe-subscribe@egroups.com](mailto:ehffhe-subscribe@egroups.com)

### **International Observatory of “Laïcité” (by Claude Wachtelaer)**

This coordinating body was created in 1998 at the initiative of the Grand Orient de France (GODF), the most important French masonic organisation. One must know that, in France, the Masons, and specially those who are members of the GODF, are strongly supportive of the separation between Church and State and of humanist values.

The four founding associations are the GODF, the Ligue Française de l’Enseignement, the European Humanist Federation and the CAEDEL, better known as “Europe et Laïcité”.

The objectives are to improve the circulation of information and to increase awareness of the problems related with the separation between Church and State, religious intolerance, freedom of thought, etc..., among its members.

The start has been rather difficult because of the lack of a minimal permanent secretariat. During its last meeting on 21 October, the participants decided to focus on the development of a good network that should include the creation of a web site. The Observatory should not develop into a new organisation but concentrate on circulation of information only.

"Europe et laïcité" will take charge of the secretariat. A new meeting is scheduled in January 2001 and will approve the strategy for the development of this new tool intended to be complementary to the existing organisations.

During the last meeting the members also issued a statement about the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union that was transmitted to the press.

## **News of the Federation**

### **Appeal for financial support**

EHF-FHE has asked its member organisations to consider to voluntarily increase their yearly contribution.

Many thanks to those which have already done so.

Besides the financial support which is vital for the management of EHF-FHE, it also displays encouragement for its activities of promotion, development and defence of humanism in Europe.

## **In the near future**

### **Thinking freely about Europe – 2 February 2001**

The next lunch and debate will take place on 2 February, in Brussels, in a restaurant nearby the European institutions.

Daniel Guégen will talk on “ Will the European Union survive after the Nice summit”.

If you wish to attend, please notify the secretariat.

Here are the dates for 2001 : 2 March, 6 April, 4 May, 1 June, 5 October, 7 December.  
No lunch and debate in July, August and November due to holidays.

## **Miscellaneous**

### **See Change Campaign**

Dutch parliamentarians, drawing attention to the Vatican's opposition to the use of condoms to prevent the spread of HIV and AIDS, have called into question the Vatican's status at the UN. Belgian parliamentarians followed this example

What you can do:

Contact politicians who are likely to be sympathetic to the initiative and ask them to send messages of support to these parliamentarians.

Consider asking women's and HIV/AIDS awareness groups in and out of parliament to support the campaign.

Contact journalists who cover international and domestic politics, the EU, health care and women's issues alerting them to this story, and your willingness to comment as an endorser of the campaign.

This campaign is conducted by "Catholics for a Free Choice". Email: [info@seechange.org](mailto:info@seechange.org)  
<http://www.catholicsforchoice.org/>

### **Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation**

The B. Russell Foundation had organised a two days second consultation at the European Parliament, in Brussels, on 7 and 8 December 2000 to prepare a "European conference for peace and human rights."

The general perspective of the consultation was based on what follows.

Most people believe that, due to disarmament after the cold war, threats of wars have diminished. But there is much tension in the world and technological escalation is growing up. Furthermore a world destabilisation is observed on the role of the UN, as for example in the Iraqi and in ex Yugoslavian conflicts. It is urgent to propose non military solutions to this kind of problems.

EHF-FHE had been invited and attended a workshop which debated on "Peace and human rights after the Nice European Council with special reference to the crisis in Israel-Palestine". EHF-FHE was asked to deliver a part of the final report in relation with this subject.

The reports are available on the web site [www.russfound.org](http://www.russfound.org)

The B.Russel Peace Foundation invites organisations "to join in organising, promoting and popularising such a gathering in your own country." Email: [elfeuro@compuserve.com](mailto:elfeuro@compuserve.com)  
If you intend to do so, please refer to EHF-FHE.

### **Next newsletter**

EHF-FHE member organisations are welcome to send information to be published in the Newsletter.

For the next issue it should reach us before 15 March 2001.

### **How to contact EHF-FHE**

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