



NEWSLETTER

APRIL 2001

Drawn up by Georges Liénard and Edith Nagant

General Assembly

The general assembly will take place on Sunday 10 June at the Humanist House (Geuzetorre) of Ostend (Belgium) which is a seaside resort on the North Sea at about 120 km from Brussels.

In the afternoon of Saturday 9 June a conference on “ Civil society in Europe ” will be held in the same place.

Affordable and comfortable hotels are easily available in Ostend.

More detailed information on the general assembly and on the conference is going to be sent shortly.

We will be happy to meet again all our member organisations.

You are reminded that only the representatives of organisations having duly paid their dues have a right to vote.

Article 5 of the statutes states that EFH-FHE is constituted of full members that is to say humanist associations, legally established in a European country according to the laws and customs of their home countries, and of consultative members that is to say associations whose purpose is consistent with the EHF-FHE statutes but which do not wish to have a vote at the general assembly.

By humanist organisation is understood organisations that, respecting democratic values, promote humanism and work for the development of human values, by seeking to secure for everyone guarantees of freedom of thought and action including freedom to use the method of free inquiry.

Points of the agenda will deal with the approval of the report on activities for 2000, of projects for 2001, modification of the statutes and of the dues, and the application for membership of new organisations.

Application for membership must be made in writing.

News of the board

At its last meeting on 24 February, in Brussels, the Board elected Suzy Mommaerts as deputy treasurer, drew up a draft modification of the statutes and of the dues that will be submitted to the next general assembly, approved several projects of activities and collaboration among which the project of the development network.

The next meeting will take place on 4 May in Oslo.

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Members who wish to see issues examined by the board are kindly requested to send a note to the secretariat for 25 April at the latest.

European News

European Parliament

Committee on Citizen's Freedoms and Rights, Justice and Home Affairs

A hearing was held on 21 March, on the subject of "The situation of fundamental rights in the European Union and the establishment of the European area of freedom, security and justice". Different analyses of the situation of human rights in Europe were presented as well as the position of several European countries on how to improve, at the European level, the security of the citizen.

The civil society had been invited to participate, so did EHF-FHE.

European Economic and Social Committee (ESC)

ESC issues opinions on different matters to the European Commission.

The members of "A soul for Europe – Ethics and spirituality" had been invited to attend, on 2 February, a presentation of the working of ESC.

Some participants suggested that churches and religions be invited, in the future, to ESC meetings as members of the "organised civil society". EHF-FHE is going to prepare a clear position on this proposal.

Permanent Forum of Civil Society

The Permanent Forum of Civil Society is preparing, with the participation of EHF-FHE, a draft position on "civil governance".

This interesting approach aims at counterbalancing the actual "co-regulation" of the European Union with the commercial firms and with the civil society. It is, let us say, a draft charter for participative democracy in the E.U.

Council of Europe

On the occasion of their participating to meetings of ONG at the Council of Europe, in Strasbourg, Marius Déés de Stério, EHF-FHE Vice-President, and Georges Liénard, Secretary General, got informed of the publication of a document intended for teachers : "The European Convention on Human Rights – Starting points for teachers".

The Council of Europe has published it to mark the 50th anniversary of the European Convention on Human Rights. Opportunities for including human rights in lesson plans exist across the curriculum from civic to history to mathematics and even physical education.

This publication aims to provide some starting points to make use of these opportunities, gives basic information sheets on the Council of Europe and on its main areas of human rights work, on the European Convention on Human Rights and its practice, as well as ten activity sheets relating human rights to the lives and experience of school students.

This publication is available free of charge and in several languages from the Council of Europe, F-67075 Strasbourg Cedex - Tel : +33 (0)3 88 41 20 33 - Fax : +33 (0)3 88 41 27 45 - Email : HumanRights.Info@coe.int - Website : <http://www.droitsdelhomme.coe.int>

Humanist news

Centre d'Action Laïque - Unie Vrijzinnige Verenigingen (Belgium)

Both the French-speaking Centre d'Action Laïque and the Dutch-speaking Unie Vrijzinnige Verenigingen have been appealing for the last 20 years to the Belgian government to have religious symbols taken out of the courts of justice.

The actual minister of justice has just issued an order to have all crucifix removed from all the courts of justice of Belgium.

The Belgian humanist organisations' demand has finally been met !

Asociacion Europa Laica (Spain)

The Spanish association "Europa Laica" was founded on 3 March 2001, in Madrid. Even though it will take a month or two in administrative proceeding to obtain a legal personality, it already exists.

The General Assembly appointed Gonzalo Puente Ojea as Honorary President of this new organisation and took decisions concerning the work for 2001:

- Close co-operation with the movements which defend humanism in Europe, in particular with the movement "Europe et Laïcité".

- The first campaign, which will give some experience to this new association, will be "against the privileged status of the Holy See at the United Nations."

- A web site is already under construction : <http://perso.wanadoo.es/mrgonzalez>

In the meantime the documents of "Europa Laica" can be consulted on the site:

<http://usuarios.tripod.es/galigan/galigan/>

European Humanist Professionals

Seminar on humanist counselling in prison

The EHP is preparing a seminar on humanist counselling in prison to take place in the Netherland from 31 August to 2 September. Exchange of experience, discussion groups and lectures aimed at developing professionalism are planned.

Journal 2000

The EHP Journal 2000 has just come out. It includes lectures from the European symposium of Gent, in May 1999 "From a multicultural society to a tolerance for all life-stances", and articles relating to moral teaching, moral counselling in prisons, humanist funerals and others shedding a humanistic light on more general social issues.

Humanistisch Verbond (Belgique)

On 21st June, the HV will award the Prize for Freethinking Humanism to Hubert Lampo, defender of freethinking values, novelist and essayist, considered as one of the most eminent authors in present-day Dutch literature. His works have been translated into many languages and some have been adapted for the screen.

This prize is awarded, every second year, to a person or a group who provided for an important contribution to the spirit of freethinking humanism in Flanders.

Thinking freely about Europe

The next lunch and debate will take place in Brussels, in a restaurant nearby the European institutions, on 4 May, 1 June, 5 October and 7 December.

All information on the topic that will be debated can be found on the web site of EHF-FHE (www.humanism.be).

Stowarzyszenie Wolnomyslicieli (Poland)

The Polish Freethinking Society informs you that their web site http://free.ngo.pl/stowarzyszenie_wolnomyslicieli is an internet humanist journal. For the moment it is in Polish and is updated every three months, but from next year onwards, it will be updated monthly and will have an English version.

Towarzystwo Humanistyczne (Poland)

The Polish Humanist Association has sent a "Letter to the European Union", outlining the problems regarding freedom of conscience and belief, human rights, the separation of church and state and equality in today's Poland. It shows how far Polish standards relating to these subjects and similar issues contradict E.U. standards.

The text of this "Letter" and the appeal attached to it is available on the Polish Humanist Association web site <http://free.ngo.pl/humanizm/theng.htm>

Websites

EHF-FHE <http://www.humanism.be>
The version in English will soon be finished !

Sites worth the visit :

Asociacion Europa Laica	http://perso.wanadoo.es/mrgonzalez (under construction)
British Humanist Association	http://humanism.org.uk
Humanist Society of Scotland	http://www.humanism-scotland.org.uk
Humanistischer Verband Deutschlands	http://www.humanismus.de
Prometheus-leirin tuki ry	http://www.protu.fi
Pro-Seremoniat	http://www.pro-seremoniat.fi
Stowarzyszenie Wolnomyslicieli	http://free.ngo.pl/stowarzyszenie_wolnomyslicieli
Towarzystwo Humanistyczne	http://free.ngo.pl/humanizm/theng.htm
Vapaa-ajattelijain liitto ry	http://vapaa-ajattelijat.fi

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

News of the Networks

Development

Several members of EHF-FHE development network, with the collaboration of the French-speaking Free University of Brussels are studying a project to establish humanist guest houses where humanist development workers and students can find office assistance, in main towns in Central Africa.

The aim is to make humanists abroad in the same country get in touch with each other. EHF-FHE job is to find humanist organisations and people ready to collaborate on this project.

News of the Federation

Some more help

A member of the staff of the Unie Vrijzinnige Verenigingen, Gert Van Eeckhout, co-operates, since the beginning of March, with EHF-FHE. One of his tasks is finding subsidies.

Leaflet

A leaflet presenting EHF-FHE is now available in English and in French. One can find the aims and the activities of the federation, its representative role with the European institutions, its publications ...

It is free. Just ask for it and we will be pleased to send as you many as you need.

Conference "The Ethics of Business"

The proceedings of the conference on "The Ethics of Business" which took place in Brussels, on 25 and 26 May 2000, have just been published – in French- by La Pensée et les Hommes (Belgium).

The book is available from the publisher Espace de Libertés, at the Centre d'Action Laïque.

Civil society in Europe

EHF-FHE organises on 9 June, the day before the general assembly, in Ostend, a conference on "Civil Society in Europe".

The situation in Central European countries will more particularly be presented.

Miscellaneous

See Change Campaign

During the past months, the role and status of the Roman Catholic church in the United Nations has been debated throughout Europe and the world. Hundreds of organisations from more than 80 countries and tens of thousands of individuals have signed on to support the campaign to have the Holy See status at the UN changed.

To know more about this campaign and to take part in it : www.seechange.org

Next newsletter

EHF-FHE is pleased to publish information you care to communicate.

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

How to contact EHF-FHE

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