

*If you use pieces of information for publication would you please mention that it comes from the EHF Newsletter.*

## **Board of Directors**

### **Meetings**

The Board met in March in Brussels (Belgium) and in July in Noordwijkerhout (The Netherlands).

A Working Plan for 2002-2003 was adopted.

It was decided to make a study of discrimination against non-believers in Europe in order to inform the European Institutions, as well as study on the blasphemy legislation in Europe.

The Board agreed on EHF joining the European Network for Peace and Human Rights and the Permanent Forum of Civil Society and to ask for official recognition from the European Commission.

The membership committee reported on the applications for membership to be presented to the 2002 GA.

It was agreed to sign the petition of the European Women's Lobby "Convention for the future of Europe – Where are the women ?" and the International Planned Parenthood Federation petition to change the abortion legislation in Portugal.

The Board issued a press release on "Death sentence for religious reasons" which can be found on the EHF web site.

It also worked on the organisation of a two-day conference "Humanism and democracy in Central Europe : co-existence of different life-stances", in collaboration with the Polish Humanist Federation, to be held in Warsaw (Poland) on 25 and 26 October 2002. And also on the celebration of the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of EHF.

The possibility of a meeting with Romano Prodi, President of the European Commission was discussed. It was felt important that he should be told that EHF was the only organisation representing humanism in Europe and that 50 % of the European population consisted of non-believers.

### **New board**

The General Assembly has elected two new Directors : Jacqueline Costa-Lascoux, President of the Ligue Française de l'Enseignement et de l'Education permanente (France) and Vera Pegna, National Vice-Secretary of the Unione degli Atei e degli Agnostici Razionalisti (Italy).

At its meeting of 6 July 2002, the Board appointed :

President : Steinar NILSEN (Norway)

First Vice-President : Werner Schultz (Germany)

Vice-President : Tryntsje de Groot (Netherlands)

Secretary General : Georges Liénard (Belgium)

Treasurer : Suzy Mommaerts (Belgium)

Members : Jacqueline Costa-Lascoux (France), Marius Déés de Stério (Luxembourg), Vera Pegna (Italy)

Claude Wachtelaer was re-appointed EHF representative to “A Soul for Europe-Ethics and Spirituality” and to the Observatoire International de la Laïcité.

The Board was grateful to Nadine De Loore, President of Thinking Freely about Europe, for all the excellent work she was doing.

### **Next meeting of the Board**

The Board will next meet at the end of October 2002, in Warsaw (Poland). If you want particular issues to be examined, please send a note and the necessary information to the EHF secretariat before 20 October 2002.

## **General Assembly**

The General Assembly was held on Saturday 6 July, in Noordwijkerhoud, in the Netherlands.

It started with a keynote lecture delivered by Georges Ingber, European Civil Servant on “Humanism in Europe, a matter of survival”. He showed how vital it has become for humanism to be really and concretely present in all the European institutions and explained that the future of humanism on a European level depended on how well its standpoints and the values it promoted can be made to prevail.

The GA approved the report on activities for 2001-2002 (it is on the EHF web site [www.humanism.be](http://www.humanism.be)), the accounts for 2001, the budget for 2002, a provisional budget for 2003 and a working plan for 2002-2003.

A new board was elected.

The GA re-appointed Tryntsje De Groot, Georges Liénard and Werner Schultz to the Membership Committee for 2003.

EHF GA was particularly pleased to admit 8 new member organisations : Dachverband Freier Weltanschauungsgemeinschaften (DFW) ( Germany) - Delphi Society (Greece) - European Humanist Professionals (EHP) - Het Humanistisch Archief (The Netherlands) - Sidmennt (Iceland) - Union des Familles Laïques (UFAL) (France) - Vrijzinnig Trefpunt (Belgium) - Vrijzinnig Studie-Archief-en Documentatie Centrum Karel Cuypers (Belgium).

## **European News**

### **European Commission**

#### **White Paper on European Governance**

The European Commission issued in July 2001 a White Paper on European governance which contained a set of recommendations on how to enhance democracy in Europe and increase the legitimacy of the institutions [http://europa.eu.int/comm/governance/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/governance/index_en.htm)

EHF sent in its a contribution which is posted on the European Commission White Paper web site. You also can read it on [www.humanism.be/english/04act-europinstitut.htm](http://www.humanism.be/english/04act-europinstitut.htm) or get a copy from the EHF secretariat.

5 main subjects are dealt with : the European Union foundations : values, rule of law – civil society – science and society – role of public sector – lines of action to reinforce direct democracy.

European Humanist Federation  
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## “Consultation, the European Commission and Civil Society” (Coneccs)

EHF has registered with Coneccs, the database for “Consultation, the European Commission and Civil Society”. One can find there information about the Commission formal or structured civil society consultation bodies and search a directory of pan-European civil society organisations representing a wide range of interests in Europe.

[http://europe.eu.int/comm/civil\\_society/coneccs/index\\_en.htm](http://europe.eu.int/comm/civil_society/coneccs/index_en.htm)

## **European Parliament**

### Committee on citizens' freedoms and rights, justice and home affairs

EHF attended the public hearing on « The respect for fundamental rights : situation within the EU in 2001 ».

### Spolocnost Prometheus

On behalf of Spolocnost Prometheus (Slovakia), EHF had sent an issue of the special edition of their magazine Prometheus to all the members of the European Parliament in Brussels. It presents the discriminations against of non-believers in Slovakia, Poland and the Czech Republic. EHF asked that the respect of the rights of non-believing citizens be taken into account in the negotiations with these three countries applicant to the enlargement of the UE. Several European MP's have sent us an answer. But the most important is that the European Commission replied to a written question from Glyn Ford. Günter Verheugen, European Commissioner to the enlargement, gave the following answer, on 28 June 2002 : « Respect of human rights, including non-discrimination, is among those essential political criteria that candidate countries must fulfil in order to become members of the Union. The treatment of non-denominational citizens and non-governmental organisations representing non-denominational life stances has to match with those principles.

## **Convention for the Future of Europe**

EHF has been represented at all the meetings related to the Convention for the Future of Europe : sessions of information and dialogue in April, May and June – contact groups preparing the Plenary Session of 24-25 June - Plenary Session of 24-25 June - ...

The Convention on the future of Europe will be the topic of a special edition of the EHF Newsletter to come out soon.

Moreover, all the documents drawn up by EHF are posted on [www.humanism.be](http://www.humanism.be)

## **GOPA**

EHF has taken part to the briefing meetings organised by the Group of Policy Advisers of the European Commission after each Council of Ministers for the representatives of various life stances.

## **Council of Europe**

The special edition of the magazine Prometheus of Spolocnost Prometheus was also sent to the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe who replied he would use this information when dealing with issues of relations between states and religious and non-denominational communities.

## **European Economic and Social Committee (ESC)**

EHF has been invited as the European organisation representative of the European humanist life stance, to several meetings dealing with the definition of the role and of the contribution of the civil society organisations to the building of Europe. One key issue being debated is the representation of "civil society". Important questions arise when trying to define "civil society organisations". For example :can churches and religions be considered as belonging to this category...?

## **Initiative "A Soul for Europe – Ethics and spirituality"**

The Group of Political Advisers of the European Commission and the Initiative "A Soul for Europe – Ethics and spirituality" will hold a two-day on invitation only symposium on "Giving a chance to dialogue : the role of communities of faith and conviction for a mutual understanding in the cities of Europe today", on 14 and 15 October 2002, in Brussels.

The report on last year's symposium (November 2001) on "The legal aspects of the relation between the European Union of the future and the communities of faith and conviction – The role of these communities and co-operation for a common European future" has been published in French, English and German. You can get it from the EHF secretariat or from Win Burton, co-ordinator of a Soul for Europe (soul@cec-kek.be).

## **European Network for Peace and Human Rights**

EHF has joined the European Network for Peace and Human Rights that was launched in February 2002 by the Bertrand Russel Peace Foundation. The network aims at building and securing peace, guaranteeing human rights and protecting the environment. It calls for new concepts of security, nuclear disarmament, welfare not warfare, education for peace, ...

George Liénard attended the June meeting of the Liaison Committee in the European Parliament which dealt, among other items, with the analysis of current conflicts and on how to react, of the arms lobbies. How the EU could get organised to maintain peace was also discussed.

## **Observatoire International de la Laïcité**

EHF will take part in an inter-association meeting, in Paris, to discuss "Laïcité and Islam".

## **Humanist news**

### **Centre d'Action Laïque (Belgium)**

A very interesting study on "Today's families" has just been published. It shows that next to the traditional hierarchical Christian model, there are now all sorts of other ways of living in a family. Only in French from [espace@ulb.ac.be](mailto:espace@ulb.ac.be).

### **British Humanist Association (Great Britain)**

In a policy paper "*A Better Way Forward*" launched very recently, the British Humanist Association calls for a third way forward on the controversial and closely related matters of religion in schools and religious schools. The paper claims that there is institutional discrimination in the education system on grounds of religion and belief. Based on its reading of human rights and anti-discrimination legislation, the BHA, which supports and represents the non-religious in schools and society, calls for the phasing out of religious schools. It may seem paradoxical to use human rights to argue against religious schools, but less so if one begins with children's rights, says the report, which also proposes reforms in schools that would accommodate the religious as well as respecting the beliefs and consciences of the non-religious.

Available on [www.humanism.org.uk](http://www.humanism.org.uk)

### **European Humanist Professionals**

A seminar on "Humanist identity and sense giving" is organised for humanist counsellors in hospitals, rest homes, prisons and the armed forces, from Belgium and the Netherlands (Dutch will thus be the working language), from 15 to 17 November 2002, in Antwerp (Belgium). For more information : [john.brobbel@wxs.nl](mailto:john.brobbel@wxs.nl) or [freddy.boeykens@uvv.be](mailto:freddy.boeykens@uvv.be)

### **Het Humanistisch Archief (The Netherlands)**

They are launching, with the Universiteit Voor Humanistiek, a European Humanist Information Network (EHIN) webportal to further the international exchange of information among humanist organisations. Contact [humarc@uvh.nl](mailto:humarc@uvh.nl).

### **II Encuentro por la Laicidad en Espana (Spain)**

Quite a few Spanish humanist organisations took part in Barcelona, on 20 and 21 July, to a conference on "Laicidad y derecho al espacio publico". In 2001, the first Encuentro por la Laicidad had issued the Motril Manifesto, now in 2002 the Barcelona Manifesto has been drawn up. To know more about this : <http://www.europalaica.com> - <http://www.laic.org> - <http://pyimargall.org> - <http://www.ateus.org>

### **National Secular Society (Great Britain)**

The NSS campaigns vigorously to protect the rights of non-believers : (<http://www.secularism.org.uk/join.htm>). If you want to subscribe to their electronic newsletter "Newsline" send a blank email with "Subscribe to Newsline" on the subject line to [enquiries@secularism.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@secularism.org.uk)

### **Pedagogisch Studiecentrum HVO (The Netherlands)**

They have published a most interesting book of lesson plans and teaching suggestions for humanist ethical education called « Mastering the art of living and becoming a citizen of the world. It isn't something that just happens ». Of course, it is for educators, but parents will find it useful too, the art of living and how to be a citizen is not always very easy to explain. It is in English and available from [psc@hvo.nl](mailto:psc@hvo.nl)  
By the way, one of the authors is Trytsje de Groot, EHF Vice-President.

### **Polska Federacja Humanistyczna (Poland)**

A two-day conference will be held in Warsaw, on 25-26 October, co-organised by EHF and the Polska Federacja Humanistyczna. More details below.

### **Thinking freely about Europe (Belgium)**

A lunch and debate is organised once a month in Brussels. In December it will be the 80<sup>th</sup> !  
More information on [www.humanism.be](http://www.humanism.be)

### **Unione degli Atei e degli Agnostici Razionalisti (UAAR) (Italy)**

Vera Pegna, UAAR National Vice-Secretary, represented EHF at a lecture by Stefano Rodotà on the Convention on the Future of Europe and on the European Constitution, that took place in Rome. She set out the main points of the EHF contribution to the White Paper on European Governance.

### **2004 : una Costituzione laica per l'Europa (Italy)**

UAAR organised, in Rome, with the Società laica e plurale and many other organisations, a conference entitled "2004: a humanist Constitution for Europe". Georges Liénard gave a talk on "From the Charter of fundamental rights to the European Constitution" and met with representatives and members of different Italian humanist organisations.

## **News of the Federation**

**In the last months, EHF has been particularly active in the field of discrimination**

### **Press release**

EHF Board issued a press release on "Death sentence for religious reasons"  
[www.humanism.be/english/04act-discrimination.htm](http://www.humanism.be/english/04act-discrimination.htm)

### **Studies**

The Board decided that a study of discrimination against non-believers in Europe as well a study on blasphemy legislation in Europe should be carried out.

### International Planned Parenthood Federation

EHF has signed the petition to change the restrictive abortion legislation in Portugal that leaves many women with the only option of back street abortion.

### Workshop on “Developing Humanism in Europe”

EHF set up a workshop on “Developing humanism in Europe” during the 15th world humanist congress organised by IHEU and the Dutch Humanist Movement in the Netherlands, early July 2002.

In the first part of the workshop, it was shown how to apply for subventions from the European Commission which should be done with the utmost accuracy. A document on this is available from the EHF secretariat.

The second part was dedicated to European humanists in action.

The European Commission is in a process of consulting civil society. EHF and its member organisations have thus an increased possibility to intervene. Now they can have a say in European matters and therefore shape and construct a Europe in which humanism is taken into account.

### Talk on “Humanism in Europe, a matter of survival”

EHF General Assembly 2002 started with a most interesting talk, given by Georges Ingber, European civil servant, on how vital it has become for humanism to be really and concretely present in all the European institutions. He explained that the future of humanism on a European level depended on how well its standpoints and the values it promoted can be made to prevail. Religious people were lobbying for god in the European Institutions. Humanists should get together and lobby for humanism, tolerance, freedom and human rights !

### “Humanism and laicity in Europe”

This is the title of the latest issue of the brochures “A Key to Humanism in Europe” which has just come out of press. In this 36 page brochure, the European diversity in the notions of laicity and humanism is explored by different authors. The aim is to show what is common to these views and what unites the people of Europe instead of cultivating the differences.

It has been published with the financial support of the European Commission. It is available in French and in English. A Dutch version is going to come out soon.

You can get it from EHF for 3 euros plus postage.

### EHF 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary

EHF has been officially constituted in 1992, year of the publication of the bylaws. The 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary will be celebrated in Warsaw, on 26 October 2002. There will be speeches by EHF actual President, Steinar Nilsen, and by the first Secretary General, Claude Wachtelaer, and of course much rejoicing and congratulating ! All welcome !

### Projects on “Humanism and democracy in Europe”

There are currently two projects dealing with the coexistence of humanism and other lifestyles and religions in the European area :

**“Humanism and democracy in Central Europe : coexistence of different life stances. Elaboration of a humanist platform for human rights”**

Conference in Warsaw, on 25 and 26 October 2002, co-organised by EHF and the Polska Federacja Humanistyczna

**25 October – Human rights and freedoms in the Constitution of the European Union**

Panels on : Protection of human rights in the European Union – Freedom, its friends and enemies – Human rights and the principle of subsidiarity – Freedom of science and education – Humanism and the challenges of multicultural societies – Situation in Poland and in other candidate countries – Socio-economic human rights - ...

**26 October – Coexistence of different life-stances : discrimination**

Session organised by EHF that will deal with discrimination in law and in practice and with different possible solutions on a national level and on a European level.

**« Islam and Muslims in the European area. Europe between Islamic fundamentalism and Muslim Humanism”**

Conference in Brussels, in 2003, co-organised by EHF and la Pensée et les Hommes, the Belgian French-speaking humanist media organisation.

## Miscellaneous

### **UNITED**

UNITED, European network against nationalism, racism, fascism and in support of migrants and refugees, of which EHF is part , reminds you of the following dates :

09.11.02      International Day against Fascism and Anti-Semitism

16.11.02      International Day for Tolerance

25.11.02      International Day for the Elimination of Violence against women

To know more : [www.unitedagainstracism.org](http://www.unitedagainstracism.org)

## Next Newsletter

Information for the next issue should reach us **before December 10 2002**. Thank you !

*This issue has been drawn up by Georges Liénard, EHF-FHE General Secretary and by Edith Nagant, International Relations Officer.*

*Many thanks to all that have supplied information.*