



ife@efi-europa.org

FEMINIST PROPOSALS for a SECULAR EUROPE

Never before women have been on the verge of becoming the first victims of a clerical and ultraliberal Europe which strengthens its political, social and economic domination through religious instrumentalization in the public and the private spheres.

More than ever we, as European women, must unite to say STOP and make our voices HEARD!

Churches, religious institutions, religious movements and organizations, as well as fundamentalist political platforms are launching an unprecedented attack against the fundamental rights that women conquered after 100 years of harsh battles. This attack has intensified considerably over the past two years. Attacks against women's rights to have control over their own bodies, massive disparagement campaign of women in powerful media entities, young people being brainwashed through religious teaching, obvious tolerance for gender violence against women, ideological attacks and media campaigns against the principle of secularism...

Secularism for Europe is Our Political Answer to fundamentalisms and clericalism and for the Promotion of Women's Rights

The European Feminist Initiative analyzed the actual influence of religious entities and ideologies on the lives of women living in Europe. This enabled IFE to elaborate a feminist programme for secularism in Europe.

The Conference "Feminist for a Secular Europe", held on 31st May and 1st June 2008 in Rome, developed and widened these proposals with the participants' analysis and testimonies. The following claims were agreed upon:

- Religious structures must be separated from State structures and may by no means interfere in the political sphere. They must have their own financing as any association of common right.

- No religion, no religious structure ought to be supported by the State or considered as "State Religion". Religious freedom cannot justify violations of women's rights.
- Family and civil laws must be free from any religious reference. Laws whatever must not be based on religious principles.
- The State must not recognize foreign family codes and laws related to personal status based on religious principles that violate women rights. They must stop to enforce them and tolerate them on their own territory and, if necessary, renegotiate bilateral treaties which violate women's rights.
- Civil marriage and divorce must be the standard in Europe and social discrimination against bachelors and homosexuals must be considered as discriminatory and punished on this behalf.
- The teaching of religious ideology must end in public schools. However, the history of religions should be taught in history lessons under the control of the state.
- Sexism and the inferiority positioning of women in religious ideologies, the incitement to hate and to submit women, the propaganda against contraception and abortion must be strongly fought against in the same way as racism and homophobia and punished by the law.
- The right to contraception and abortion must be uncontrolled and free of charge in all Europe. All religious inspired laws ruling that abortion is a criminal offence must be immediately revoked. The rights to contraception, abortion and secular sex education programmes must be guaranteed as fundamental rights by the European Union.
- Education against sexism and for equality must be carried out since childhood particularly in public structures.
- Our body belongs to us and we must support actively the secular associations fighting for sexual rights of reproduction as well as secularism in Europe and in the world.
- The international religious institutions must be submitted to civil law in all countries where they are effective. Their privileged position as regards the European Union and the international institutions must be abolished. (Particularly in the UN where the Vatican should not have the status of State but the status of an NGO in an advisory capacity).
- Churches and religious institutions must be formed as associations. The working rules of these institutions must comply with the fundamental rights of women and men citizens.

- The respect of culture and tradition and religious freedom must not be a reason to justify the violations for women's rights.

- We must all fight for the freedom of conscience for women; a democracy which includes women fully and a system which gives the insurance of economical and social equality between men and women.

On the basis of this common political basis, our proposal is to organize of a 4-step campaign on a wide-scale to promote secularism in Europe:

1. Widening the European working group on secularism. This group will analyze, complete the comments received and apply the modifications accordingly.

2. Spreading information about our feminist proposals for a Secular Europe among local, national and European elected personalities, associations members mainly the feminist ones and political parties in each European country. Launching a campaign in the media.

3. Organizing a meeting on secularism in Europe to be held in 2009 in Brussels in view of the European elections.

4. Campaigning to have our claims included in the European elections platforms.

IFE-EFI, November 2008