

Newsletter - EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT WORKING GROUP ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION OR BELIEF - first issue

- EP FoRB working group launched on 17 December 2012 -

What came before

In 2009 MEPs Dennis de Jong and Peter van Dalen started to promote an issue that had up to then been somewhat ignored in EU foreign policy: **freedom of religion or belief**. The importance of religion and religious identity in global affairs has been recognised ever more widely, also with the establishment of the **European External Action Service (EEAS)** in 2010.

MEPs De Jong and Van Dalen founded a group of **like-minded MEPs** with whom they began to promote religious freedom in the EEAS. These efforts were paralleled in the Council of Ministers where some Member States pushed the EEAS to do more to protect freedom of religion or belief. The combined efforts have proven effective, as the EEAS is currently drafting **guidelines** for EU delegations around the world on freedom of religion or belief.



Launch working group

On 17 December 2012 the group of like-minded MEPs together with interested colleagues officially **launched** the EP working group on Freedom of Religion or Belief at a well-attended event in the European Parliament.

Keynote speaker at the event was the European Union Special Representative for Human Rights, **Mr. Stavros Lambrinidis**. He told the audience he shared the belief that religious freedom is a key human right and committed to closely cooperate with the working group.



Core tasks

The core tasks of the working group are the following:

- Being an **interlocutor** between the EEAS and the European Parliament in the field of Freedom of Religion or Belief.
- Being a **focal point** for other organisations (like for example the US Commission on International Religious Freedom) in the field of FoRB.
- Providing for an **annual overview** of the priorities and key concerns in the field of freedom of religion or belief, and have these issues included in the European Parliament's annual report on human rights.
- Providing for input for human rights clauses in the annual **budget** lines of AFET, DROI and BUDG.
- Organising **hearings** and meetings in the European Parliament on issues that

are relevant for the work of the Working Group.

The Group's Members:

The working group consists of the following MEPS:

Dennis de Jong and Peter van Dalen are jointly chairing and coordinating the working group's activities.

Co-founding MEPs László Surján, Gianni Pittella, Pat the Cope Gallagher, Hannu Takkula, and Margrete Auken jointly form the working group's Bureau.

Directly after its launch, the following MEPs have joined the working group: Mario Mauro, Marian Harkin, Laima Andrikiene, Paul Rübige and Konrad Szymanski.

Contact

If you are interested in the activities of the working group or if you perhaps would like to become a member, please contact:

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