



INVITATION

For a Permanent Platform of Interreligious & Interconvictional Dialogue at the CoE

Making European societies more resilient against hate speech, polarisation and religious extremism

Side-Event hosted by Frank Schwabe (SOC) & Gusty Graas (ALDE)

28th of January 2025, Council of Europe, Palais, room 11, 13 h à 14 h

[Zoom link](#) - meeting ID: 611 3021 6605 – Code: 216860 - Host: 166664

We live in a highly globalised world and European countries in particular are getting ever more multicultural and multireligious. At the same time the world is witnessing increasing polarisation and many frozen conflicts are heating up again. Conflicts near and far from Europe spread to our shores and lead to violent behaviour. Unfortunately, some people use religion to fuel conflicts. Religion is also stigmatised or used as an argument against certain members of our society or to justify violence and war. Hate speech and hate crimes, including terrorism, are the result. When members of religious groups in Europe no longer feel safe, when teachers dare not teach the fundamental principles of a liberal democratic society and discuss religious stereotypes openly in class, when communities have difficulty finding candidates for elections because they fear violence against politicians and their families, when journalists censor themselves, then we know it is high time to act.

*This is why we would like to **relaunch PACE's REC-2080**, which proposes **establishing a dialogue platform** recognised by the Committee of Ministers, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities and the Conference of International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs), because these problems cannot be solved without a committed civil society. This side event aims to promote a process dedicated to interreligious, interconvictional, democratic and equality-based dialogue. This is sorely needed if we are to turn the fire accelerator into an extinguisher, overcoming stereotypes and countering the arsonists through positive, well-managed dialogue.*

The creation of a platform for interreligious and interconvictional dialogue to strengthen the positive forces of religion and belief will contribute to making European societies more resilient to polarisation and extremism and is therefore in the fundamental interest of the Council of Europe.

Gerhard Ermischer
President of the Conference of INGOs

The Committee of Interreligious and Interconvictional Dialogue warmly invites you to participate and debate in this side event addressing these complex challenges. This side event aims to establish a permanent platform for interreligious and interconvictional dialogue and to strengthen the Council of Europe's role as a leader in the defence of human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

Speakers:

1. **Frank Schwabe** - Chairperson: Socialists, Democrats and Greens Group)
2. **Gusty Graas** - Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe)
3. **Marc Cools** - President Congress of Local & Regional Authorities
4. **Michael O'Flaherty** - Commissioner for Human Rights
5. **Alexandre Guessel** – SRSF on antisemitic, anti-muslim and other forms of religious intolerances and hate crime
6. **Gabriela Frey & Lilia Bensedrine Thabet** - Co-Chairs Committee for interreligious & interconvictional Dialogue