



Religious Diversity and
Secular Models in Europe –
Innovative Approaches
to Law and Policy

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RELIGARE meeting with the European Commission: bridging research results with EU policy needs

With the final year of RELIGARE approaching, project researchers met on the 7th December 2011 with officials from the European Commission in a bid to ensure that results and recommendations stemming from the RELIGARE project meet the needs and expectations of EU policymakers. RELIGARE ('Religious diversity and secular models in Europe: Innovative approaches to law and policy') is a socio-legal project which examines questions relating to management of religious pluralism under State Law via four thematic research areas: the Family, the Workplace, the Public Space and State Support.

The meeting, which took place at DG Research and Innovation, provided the first opportunity for RELIGARE researchers to sit together and discuss in an intimate setting the relevance of their research with policymakers whose everyday work is touched by the law and policy dilemmas of religious diversity. Representing the Commission were officials dealing with fundamental rights, non-discrimination policy and equal treatment legislation in DG Justice as well as representatives from the DG for Employment, Equal Opportunities and Social Inclusion and the Bureau of European Policy Advisors (BEPA).

The meeting identified intersections between RELIGARE research topics and EU law and policy, including in unexpected domains where - at first glance - the EU has no explicit mandate. For instance, in family law where decision-making is largely left to national governments, the (non)recognition of certain religious marriages might impede EU free movement, bringing such questions within the EU's sphere of concern.

During the exchange of views Commission officials questioned RELIGARE researchers on dilemmas affecting their work. Policymakers specialising in equal treatment highlighted the problem of ‘multiple discriminations’ where anti-discrimination initiatives in support of one group come into conflict with the rights or interests of another. Here, views were sought on how the Commission could promote anti-discrimination policies for religious groups, without hindering work on other grounds of discrimination such as gender and sexual orientation.

Discussions also looked to the future. It was highlighted that developments in non-discrimination legislation may bring new domains entailing religious pluralism challenges under EU competence in the years to come. The importance of linking RELIGARE recommendations with the flagship initiatives and priorities of the Europe 2020 Strategy was also underscored as a means to ensure the continuing relevance of RELIGARE’s output long after the close of the project in 2013.

The meeting proved constructive for both Commission policymakers and RELIGARE researchers, providing a clear insight into how their research will feed into the policy work of the Commission.

The RELIGARE project is a three-year European research project funded by the European Commission’s Seventh Framework Programme which examines religions, belonging, beliefs and secularism. This socio-legal project investigates the diversity of convictions in contemporary Europe with a focus on law and on questions relating to management of pluralism under State Law via four thematic research areas: the Family, the Workplace, the Public Space and State Support. For more information, see: www.religareproject.eu.

Annex

Meeting on Policy Relevance Issues of RELIGARE Research

Brussels, 7th December 2011, 9.00-11.30am

DG Research and Innovation, Unit B.5 Social Sciences and Humanities, SDME 1E1

List of Participants

Name	Surname	DG	Unit
Katharina	VON SCHNURBEIN	BEPA	Adviser-Outreach Team
Benoit	PAUL	EMPLOYMENT	A2 Social Analysis
Emanuela	TASSA	EMPLOYMENT	D4 Demography, Migration, Social Innovation, Civil society
Aristotelis	GAVRILIADIS	JUSTICE	C1 Fundamental Rights
Pia	LINDHOLM	JUSTICE	Legal officer D1 Equal treatment legislation
Thomas	LJUNGQUIST	JUSTICE	D4 Non discrimination policies and Roma coordination
Juan	GONZALEZ MELLIZO	JUSTICE	D4 Non-discrimination policies and Roma
Louisa	ANASTOPOULOU	RESEARCH	B5
Name	Surname	Project	Area Responsibility
Marie-Claire	Foblets	RELIGARE Consortium	Coordinator
Jorgen	Nielsen	RELIGARE Consortium	Steering Committee
Prakash	Shah	RELIGARE Consortium	wp2 – theoretical framework
Mathias	Rohe	RELIGARE Consortium	wp3 – family life
Katayoun	Alidadi	RELIGARE Consortium	wp4 – the workplace
Silvio	Ferrari	RELIGARE Consortium	wp5 – the public space
Jogchum	Vrieling	RELIGARE Consortium	Project Manager
Joanna	Parkin	RELIGARE Consortium	wp8 - dissemination
Pasquale	Annicchino	EUI-Florence	RELIGIOWEST project