

Religions and LGBTI Rights: A Liberal Perspective

The Congress of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE) Party convening virtually on 11-12 June 2021:

Recognises that:

- over decades, our history witnessed the fight of the LGBTI community for equal rights and equal dignity. It was – and still is – a fight against traditional conservative forces that often refer to religious beliefs when arguing against the equality of LGBTI people;
- in addition to this, there is increased immigration from countries whose values again don't recognise LGBTI rights. Moreover, those from different religious and/or ethnic identities who also identify from the LGBTI community face multiple levels of discrimination because of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity and therefore have increased fear and prejudice within their own community as well.

Considers that:

- in our societies we are familiar with anti-LGBTI positions coming from evangelical, strictly catholic or orthodox communities. Today, our open society is facing an additional challenge due to the increased immigration of people from conservative Muslim regions, leading to tensions with both Jewish citizens and LGBTI persons, including those of Muslim belief. This trend is exacerbated by the radicalisation process increasingly happening in Europe. Muslim LGBTI people often face multiple discriminations due to their sexual orientation or gender identity, their religion and their ethnic background;
- Conservative voices calling for moral values and religion are increasing.

Notes that:

- neither playing down tensions between liberal values and conservative religious organisations, and in particular the impacts on LGBTI rights, nor exploiting such tensions to instil fear and prejudice inside society, including inside the LGBTI community, helps to improve the rights of LGBTI people in Europe.

Believes that:

- we as liberals should accept neither that conflicts are swept under the carpet nor their instrumentalisation by those trying to position themselves as defenders of LGBTI rights against religious beliefs while, at the same time, denying equality to LGBTI people;

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- no state, no dictator, no religious leader and not even a democratic majority decision can strip a human being of their dignity and rights; self-determination is protected in the United Nations Charter and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights as a right of “all peoples”.

Calls on ALDE Party and its member parties to follow these policy recommendations in their work at the local, national and European level:

- human rights are individual, universal. The main *raison d'être* of a liberal democracy is their protection;
- public authorities at any level should stick firmly to the concept of secularism, thereby refusing any interference from religions when legislating on LGBTI rights;
- public authorities at any level should fight against religious intolerance and all religious extremism, regardless of their nature and origin;
- freedom of religion can never be a pretext to question other basic rights, including LGBTI rights;
- discussing, and even criticising, religions and their tenets, including when they discuss about LGBTI rights, should not be avoided;
- law enforcement agencies at any level must ensure an adequate protection of LGBTI people against harassment, violence and discrimination, in all neighbourhoods, with special attention to those where most homophobic/transphobic episodes occur;
- authorities should make sure that any religious actor involved in social services and education, directly or indirectly supported or promoted by the State, commits to the constitutional principles guaranteeing individual rights and does not promote discriminatory and autocratic narratives or the supremacy of religion above the law;
- all religious communities and leaders are expected to accept – regardless of their own personal or religious beliefs – the application of constitutional values for all state policies and individual rights;
- journalists' associations and editorial teams should encourage their members to work according to a code of conduct that includes non-discrimination regarding LGBTI people, regardless of the personal religious background of the journalist;
- public authorities, political parties and NGOs, each in their own capacity, should promote and support liberal and progressive religious actors whenever they integrate religious groups in dialogues and activities;
- schools shall educate about diversity, tolerance and LGBTI rights, including peer-education by LGBTI people to reduce prejudices. The State should promote and not prohibit such education;

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- governments have to ensure that LGBTI asylum seekers and refugees are treated in a non-discriminatory way and that no discrimination against them, caused by any religious belief, takes place;
- integration courses for newcomers should include compulsory education on liberal-democratic values, including LGBTI rights;
- awareness should be raised on the experience of LGBTI asylum seekers and refugees, in order to counter at once any theocratic views, as well as the populist argument whereby migrants are coming to „destroy European liberties“;
- an ongoing dialogue with religious communities about acceptance of LGBTI people and their individual rights is necessary;
- gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics to be added to EU non-discrimination grounds;
- the EU to actively pursue avenues to ensure the rights of LGBTQ+ people within all parts of the Union.

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