

# Belieforama

**LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE  
LEADING TO ENGAGEMENT**

**For a Europe of  
Religion and Belief Diversity**

**A Policy Brief Document  
for the European Institutions  
and Civil Society Groups**

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Report produced on behalf of the Belieforama Partnership  
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# Table of Contents

An Executive Summary	p3
Sources for these Recommendations and Reflections	p4
European Religion or Belief Landscape	p5
European Policy Context for Religion or Belief	p6
The Belieforama Training, Trainers and Participants as Policy Resource	p7
Religion or Belief Unfair Treatment in Europe: Interviews and Survey Responses	p9
Wider Research on Religion or Belief and Unfair Treatment in Europe	p14
Analysing and Tackling the “Spectrum” of Religion or Belief Unfair Treatment	p16
Learning into Action in Relation to Religion or Belief	p18
Religion or Belief: Good Practice in Europe	p19
Broadening, Deepening and Transforming Religion or Belief Literacy	p20
Recommendations	p23
Reflections	p24
Religion(s), State and Society: Theses for Reflection	p25



# An Executive Summary

Informed by analysis of what has been learned from Belieforama's Community of Practice (<http://www.belieforama.eu>) and trainings, the following Recommendations and Reflections have been identified for European Institutions, national authorities and civil society groups.

## Recommendations

### 1. EU Accession to ECHR and strengthening of human rights in member states

The EU should as soon as possible accede to the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and, together with member states, conduct a systematic and critical review of the implementation of human rights measures in each member state.

### 2. More focused EU and member state support in tackling employment discrimination

The EU and member states should, in their understanding and application of equality measures, take more account of the personal characteristics of employees including their religion or belief identities, rather than relying on a formal equality of opportunity approach that tries to be "blind" to the personal characteristics that equality laws seek to address.

### 3. Further EU and member state support for transformational educational initiatives

The EU and member states should provide incentives to employers, public authorities and educational institutions to engage in religion or belief literacy training that supports the transformation of attitudes and behaviours in order to move towards substantive equality.

### 4. Transversal review of EU and member state policies bearing on religion or belief

The EU and member states should especially, but not only, in relation to the adequacy of national implementation of EU Directives, undertake reviews of their policy interfaces with matters of religion or belief to achieve a more consistent approach throughout the EU.

### 5. Implementing the Lisbon Treaty's consultation with religion or belief groups

The EU should develop a concrete action plan for implementation of the Lisbon Treaty's provisions for "open, transparent and regular dialogue" with religion and belief groups.

## Reflections

### 1. Using a "spectrum" for understanding unfair treatment in religion or belief

How helpful might the model of a "spectrum" of unfair treatment on the basis of religion or belief (prejudice; hatred; disadvantage; direct discrimination; indirect discrimination; institutional discrimination) be for analysing the dynamics of this and for identifying which measures, either singly or in combination, might most appropriately be deployed for tackling unfair treatment along various parts of the "spectrum"?

### 2. Striking the balance between education, law and inclusion

Is the policy implementation balance right at EU and member state level between legal frameworks and requirements and educational and training initiatives that promote the empowerment and inclusion of religious and cultural minorities?

### 3. Taking of more responsibility by religion or belief groups in relation to unfair treatment

How far do religion or belief groups accept the responsibility to take initiatives and find mechanisms for addressing ways in which their own traditions, teaching and/or philosophy might lead to unfair treatment of other religion or belief groups – and/or others who see their identity partly or primarily in terms of ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation?

### 4. Promoting greater sophistication about individual and social forms of religion or belief

What opportunities could there be to enable civil society groups to work together with public bodies in order to try to help policy-makers understand and take better account of the complexity that can often characterise shared and individual religion or belief identifications?

### 5. Reflecting on structural issues in religion(s), state and society relationships

How far are civil society groups (including the religious groups) enabled to reflect and contribute to debate about the structural relationships between religion(s), state and society?

### 6. Moving beyond the Christian-secular tension for framing European social reality

Instead of framing the cultural, religious and political landscape of Europe in terms of what might be called a "two dimensional" Christian-secular tension, how far might thinking about the current European social reality as a "three dimensional" one, with contours that are Christian and secular – but also (and increasingly) religiously plural - help to open up the European future to a more inclusive participation for all?

# Sources for these Recommendations and Reflections

## The Belieforama Training, Trainers and Participants as Policy Resource

Since 2004, with European Union and charitable Foundation funding support, partner organisations from across Europe have developed the educational processes and training materials that now form part of the Belieforama (<http://www.belieforama.eu>) community of practice. Its award-winning and externally-evaluated approach has been to generate transformative learning from experience around the diversities of religion or belief, including the intersections of religion or belief with other diversities, such as culture, gender, and sexual orientation that contribute to the formation of individual and social identities. Its training includes generic modules on Religious Diversity and Anti-Discrimination; and specific ones on Overcoming Antisemitism; Overcoming Islamophobia; Reconciling Religion, Gender and Sexual orientation; and Confronting Discrimination: How to Facilitate and Take Action. Since 2004, over 2000 people have engaged with at least an aspect of Belieforama's training.

## Belieforama: Generating Change and Informing Policy

Building on an interplay of commitment, action and reflection, the Belieforama community of practice aspires to contribute to lasting change in attitudes and behaviours and through its trainings to inform constructive policy development. The current phase of the EU Grundvig-funded project tasked Belieforama with securing "feedback gathered systematically from participants and trainers," the aim of which is to derive "added value" for policy-making from Belieforama's primary educational role. Professor Paul Weller and Dr. Sariya Contractor of the University of Derby's (UK) Centre for Society, Religion and Belief were commissioned to develop and implement research to gather data from Belieforama participants, trainers and other relevant sources, and from this to identify reflections and recommendations for European policy-making.

## Policy Context for European Institutions and Civil Society Groups

It is often stated that the EU does not have competence in matters of religion or belief, and that relations with religion or belief groups are reserved to member states. But especially after the Amsterdam Treaty (1999); the Proclamation of the Charter of Fundamental Rights (2000); and the Treaty of Lisbon (1999), European institutions have increasingly intersected with matters of religion or belief, especially when European Institutions deal with citizenship and fundamental rights, non-discrimination, immigration and integration, social inclusion, education and culture. Civil society (including religion or belief) groups have areas of extensive engagement with religion or belief that permeate wide areas of individual and social identity, life and organisation.

## Key Themes from the Belieforama Research

The research that informs the full Policy Brief document gives vivid examples of the kind of data identified in broader European research such as the Eurobarometer special reports on discrimination in the EU and in the European Values Study. It also highlights examples of good practice and identifies the kinds of approaches that participants explain have led to transformational change for them and others in dealing with conflicts and in developing more inclusive approaches relating to religion or belief. ***Among the key themes identified are those of transformative learning that translates into structural change through educational multiplication, the inspiration of community initiatives and multi-level actions; together with the importance of personal encounters within safe spaces, through which understanding can be broadened and both the individuality and shared complexity of religion or belief appreciated.*** Out of these themes, the key "recommendations" and "reflections" for European Institutions, civil society groups and national contexts were identified.

# European Religion or Belief Landscape

**Diverse Europe** Together with its diversity of cultures, languages, nations and states, the Europe of history has by no means been monolithic. Rather, both its history and its contemporary religion or belief landscape has been one of considerable diversity, and is now of increasing plurality.

**Christian heritage and presence** The (western) Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant forms of Christianity have been Europe's primary religious traditions. Together with the inheritance of Roman law and civilization, they have shaped many of the institutional and legal systems of Europe. Christianity's origins – like those of the Jewish and Muslim traditions - were, of course, not in Europe but in the Middle East. However, Christianity has been formative for European history. It remains a very important contemporary feature of European life with a significance that goes beyond the numbers of those who actively practice the religion. In recent times, Christianity has been undergoing transformations in which older forms of Christian organisation have experienced a decline. In contrast, "New Church" movements that seek to recover what they see as a more authentic form of Christian life, as well as forms of Christianity associated with African-Caribbean, African, Latin American and East Asian minority communities, have seen development and growth.

**Jewish heritage and presence** The Jewish heritage and presence is integral to the European history, present and future. Among other things, the wealth of European literature and philosophy is unthinkable without the profound influence and contribution of the Jewish religion and people. Even after the attempt at extermination of European Jewry during the Nazi period, a substantial presence and contribution continues from around a million Jewish people.

**Muslim heritage and presence** The story of Europe is also inconceivable without recognising the mediating role played by Islam in transmitting to European culture the philosophy and science of other civilisations through the substantial historic Muslim presence in the Iberian peninsula and in the Balkans. Through the large scale economic and refugee migrations of the post-Second World period, there is now a very large continental presence of around thirteen million Muslims.

**Other religions and convictions** Although accurate numbers are not possible, from among the other "world religious traditions" in Europe, there are also around two million Hindus, a probably much larger number of Buddhists; and at least a million Sikhs. There are also significant numbers of people involved in other new religious movements and groups. In addition, although historically there was a systematic attempt to destroy the indigenous Pagan traditions, in many parts of Europe aspects of these were preserved through Christianised folk customs. In more recent times, this inheritance has re-emerged through the modern reinterpretations to be found among the neo-Pagan movements.

**Secular heritage and presence** Alongside this diverse religious presence has also been a variety of philosophical and ethical traditions reflected in the Enlightenment, including those of Freethinkers, Humanists and Atheists. Marxist materialism also played a substantial role, especially in central and eastern Europe after the Second World War until the 1989 fall of the Berlin Wall. From the nineteenth century onwards a political secularism developed out of the context of the historical tensions and conflicts between socially and politically dominant traditional (Christian) religious bodies, state authorities, civil societies, and emergent nationalisms. Revolutionary upheavals in a number of European countries changed historic patterns of Church and state relations and the separation of religion and state advocated by secularism has, to varying degrees, been implemented across member states of the contemporary EU.

# European Policy Context for Religion or Belief

## European Union competence

It has often been stated that the European Union does not have competence in matters of religion or belief and that relations with religious and philosophical organisations are reserved to the member states. But especially following the Amsterdam Treaty (1999); the Proclamation of the Charter of Fundamental Rights (2000); and the Treaty of Lisbon (1999), matters of religion or belief have increasingly intersected with the European Institutions.

## Amsterdam Treaty religion, belief and discrimination

In Declaration 11, the Amsterdam Treaty (1999) affirmed that *“The Union respects and does not prejudice the status under national law of churches and religious associations or communities in the Member States”*<sup>1</sup> At the same time, the Treaty provided a legal basis for the EU to develop Directives related to discrimination, including on grounds of religion or belief. The Employment Directive (2000) has been particularly important. While unevenly implemented in different member states, in creating an EU-wide framework of minimum expectations, it has had far-reaching implications.

## Treaty of Lisbon and the place of religion or belief

During the work of the Convention on the Future of Europe (begun in 2004), and the original process towards a Treaty for Establishing a Constitution for Europe, there were significant and substantial debates about a reference to God and/or Christianity in the constitution of the EU. Because the Constitution could not be ratified by all member states it was superseded by the Treaty of Lisbon (2009) of which Article states that the EU: *“Respects and does not prejudice the status under national law of churches and religious associations or communities in the Member States; Equally respects the status under national law of philosophical and non-confessional organisations; Recognising their identity and their specific contribution, the Union shall maintain an open, transparent and regular dialogue with these churches and organisations.”*

## Charter of Fundamental Rights And European Convention on Human Rights

The Charter of Fundamental Rights (2000)<sup>2</sup> – the implementation of which is monitored by the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights – includes Article 10 that affirms: *“Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right includes freedom to change religion or belief and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or in private, to manifest religion or belief, in worship, teaching, practice and observance.”* This reflects Article 18 of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights and of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Both have been ratified by all member states of the EU although the EU is not a Party to the Council of Europe’s European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. But Protocol No. 14 (2010) of the Convention amended it to provide the legal basis for the accession to the Convention of the EU, which it is committed to do under the Treaty of Lisbon, thus bringing the EU legal system within the scope of the European Court of Human Rights.

## Religion or belief and other aspects of EU policy

In addition to the above, it is also arguable that *“there is a complex and highly heterogeneous patchwork of EU normative approaches delineating the relationship between religion and the EU”*<sup>3</sup> in so far as Directorates General and other Commission services deal with areas such as citizenship and fundamental rights, non-discrimination, immigration and integration, social inclusion, education and culture in their interactions with religion or belief.

1 Declaration on the status of churches and non-confessional organisations, Declaration No.11 to the last act of the Treaty of Amsterdam, Official Journal C 340, 10/11/1997 P.0133.  
2 See: [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/charter/pdf/text\\_en.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/charter/pdf/text_en.pdf)  
3 Sergio Carrera and Joanna Parkin, The Place of Religion in European Union Law and Policy: Competing Approaches and Actors inside the European Commission, Religare Working Document No. 1 /September 2010, RELIGARE (Religious Diversity and Secular Models in Europe) project, Leuven.

# The Belieforama Training, Trainers and Participants as Policy Resource

## A developing European partnership

Since 1994, partner organisations from across Europe<sup>4</sup> have developed and used the educational processes and training materials that form part of the Belieforama (<http://www.belieforama.eu>) community of practice. Its aim has been to generate transformative learning from experience around the diversities of religion or belief - including their intersections with other diversities, such as culture, gender, and sexual orientation that contribute to the formation of individual and social identities. It has been supported over three phases (2004-6; 2007-9; 2009-12) by funding from the European Union<sup>5</sup> and other bodies (including the Ford Foundation; Edmond de Rothschild Foundations; and the Open Society Foundation, as well as other donors),

## An award-winning approach

Belieforama's approach has been developed with input from both religious and non-religious organisations and people, and tested in a variety of national, language and other contexts. It works by drawing, in an inclusive way, on the experience of participants – both religious and non-religious. Its methods are highly interactive and try to bring participants not only into better personal consciousness about the issues, but also to take responsibility for contributing to the resolution of issues of social conflict and for creating more inclusive environments for the diversities of religion or belief. In 2008, Belieforama's foundational Religious Diversity and Anti-Discrimination Training programme won the Gold Prize for quality in adult education from the European Commission's Lifelong Learning Programme. In 2010, it won the BMW Group's First Prize for Intercultural Commitment. It is also featured in an international good practice guide on human rights education,<sup>6</sup> and has been subject to an independent and systematic evaluation.<sup>7</sup>

## Religious diversity and anti-discrimination training

Belieforama began by developing a generic programme of training in in Religious Diversity and Anti-Discrimination. This training combines personal interpersonal and social analysis in an integrated pedagogical process in which perspectives are exchanged across identity, belief, sector, and social positioning in an holistic approach to engaging with the personal and social challenges and opportunities presented by diverse religions or beliefs.

## Overcoming Antisemitism

This training aims to develop an understanding that Jewish identity has diverse expressions in which Jewish people have found balances between religio-cultural belonging and other (national, ethnic, linguistic) identifications. It aims to help participants appreciate Jews' contribution to constructing an inclusive Europe and to develop skills and strategies that prevent and confront prejudice, antisemitism and hatred against Jews.

## Overcoming Islamophobia

This training aims to increase awareness of Muslim peoples and cultures while developing an appreciation of their contribution to European society. It explores contemporary and historical manifestations of islamophobia and racism against Muslims; develops individual skills and institutional strategies for confronting prejudice and discrimination, and encourages responsibility by individuals and institutions to create inclusive environments for all.

- 4 Partner organisations (listed inside the back cover) are based in Belgium, Bulgaria, Germany, the Netherlands, Romania, Spain and the United Kingdom: in earlier phases, also in Denmark and France.
- 5 The most recent phase of development is supported by the Lifelong learning programme of the European Union 504667-LLP-1-2009-1-BE- GRUNDTVIG-GMP
- 6 Human Rights Education in the School Systems of Europe, Central Asia and North America: A Compilation of Good Practice (Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the OSCE, Council of Europe; Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and UNESCO), 2009.
- 7 "E-valorisation of Religious Diversity and Anti-Discrimination Training" was a project under the Transversal Programme (KA4 135651/2007-2010 of the European Commission and the title of the external evaluation report. See: [http://belieforama.calidemo.be/sites/default/files/documents/rdad-belief\\_execsum\\_2010-01.pdf](http://belieforama.calidemo.be/sites/default/files/documents/rdad-belief_execsum_2010-01.pdf)

Reconciling religion, gender & sexual orientation

Some of the most sensitive topics among the challenges faced in religiously diverse societies revolve around issues of gender and sexuality, including understandings of the roles of men and women, sexual and reproductive rights, and conflicts of rights (real or perceived) between religious rights and gay rights. This programme offers a framework for transforming the discourse around these issues, raising awareness of other perspectives and views, and finding ways in which tensions can be reconciled so that all can express their full identity with shared respect for mutual rights and responsibilities.

Confronting discrimination: how to facilitate and take action

This most recently developed training extends aspects of the Religious Diversity and Anti-Discrimination Training's generic programme by further equipping participants with skills and tools that enable them better to facilitate transformative personal learning from experience into anti-discriminatory engagement particularly in social environments such as the workplace, neighbourhood, and wider society.

Generating change and informing policy

By building on an interplay of commitment, action and reflection, as a community of practice Belieforama aspires to contribute to lasting change in attitudes and behaviours and to translate the knowledge and orientations developed through its trainings into informing constructive policy development. The results of the research that inform this policy brief do not claim to be anything more or less than they are. That is to say, they are not based on a stratified sample study of citizens or residents of the EU, but they are informed by a survey and analysis of the learning and change experienced among those who, over the past eight years, have been participants and/or trainers within Belieforama, as well as of perceptions and issues identified by them in relation to their countries of normal residence and across the EU as whole. These perceptions and issues need, of course, to be considered in the context of other, more extensive, relevant European research and documentation which this document discusses on pp. 14-15.

Research of participant and trainer views and experience

Since 2004, over 2,000 people have engaged with at least an aspect of Belieforama's training. The current phase of the European-funded project tasked Belieforama with securing "feedback gathered systematically from participants and trainers" with the aim of deriving from Belieforama's primarily educational role, some "added value" for policy-making. Belieforama therefore commissioned Professor Paul Weller and Dr. Sariya Contractor of the University of Derby, UK, to develop and implement a research to gather data from participants and trainers and to identify implications from this for policy-making among the European Institutions and civil society initiatives. The research design was reviewed via the University of Derby's research ethics systems and processes. An English, German, French and Spanish on-line survey of over 360 training participants was conducted during February-April 2012 and 110 responses were received. From a pool of individuals who had submitted survey responses but had also themselves have been involved in delivering aspects of the training, a sample of 18 individuals were interviewed on-line between April-June using Skype (where necessary using interpreters).

From research process to this Policy Brief document

Quotations from survey respondents and interviewees included in this report appear (where appropriate) in translated form. The researchers also reviewed reports from participants and trainers in from across the range of Belieforama trainings; documentation from the previously mentioned e-Valorisation evaluation of the training; reports of user seminars and other relevant primary source materials. Finally, in July 2012, a consultation on key draft aspects of this Policy Brief was undertaken in Brussels with representatives of religion or belief organisations and NGOs concerned with religion or belief. On the basis of this whole process, the remainder of the document endeavours to provide insight into the results of this research and to identify some key "reflections" and "recommendations" for European institutions and civil society groups.

# Religion or Belief Unfair Treatment in Europe: Interviews and Survey Responses

In the following three pages, the right hand column gives examples of the types of unfair treatment identified by those who have participated in Belieforama trainings and the left hand column highlights these by reference to specific religion or belief groups and/or themes.

Of course, as one of the survey respondents put it: "It is difficult objectively to evaluate real unfair treatment and especially to identify the main reason for it as being especially in terms of faith." The perception of unfair treatment does not necessarily mean that discrimination has taken place. Equally unfair treatment can occur without it being perceived. So care needs to be taken in interpreting the reporting of such treatment .<sup>8</sup>

## Unfair treatment of Muslims

*There is so much unfair treatment that it will be too long to write them all! The increase of institutional islamophobia, the stereotypes and prejudices, the recent controversy of Halal meat...the fact that Muslims will be stigmatised and targeted.*

[Jewish religion in background of life, white European, Belgium]

*I think that Muslims are the most discriminated against community in Europe or at least in the countries which I know best which are France, Belgium. [...] I sometimes imagine what it would be like to be a Muslim in France now and I think I wouldn't feel good about it.*

[No religion (Agnostic) belief in background of life, white European, Luxembourg]

*Anti-immigrant policies are often laced with fears over the growing Muslim population.*

[Christian (other tradition) religion in foreground of life, white European, Belgium]

*Muslims, in general, are stigmatized too much... The banning of use of the veil in places of learning is a state practice that is condemned by numerous international organisations.*

[Muslim religion in foreground of life, Arab, Spain]

*Stereotypes are being followed regarding Muslims. They are being scapegoated to community upheaval, members of the community are being suspected of terrorism without any proof.*

[No religion (Agnostic) belief in background of life, white European, UK]

*There is a special hostility towards Islam.*

[No religion (Humanist) belief in background of life, South East Asian, Denmark]

## Unfair treatment of Jews

*Jews are responsible for their own security. This costs Euro 800.000. I am of the opinion that the national government of a democratic country is responsible for the security of its citizens. Every synagogue service, every event the Jewish community pays for its own security.*

[Jewish religion in foreground of life, The Netherlands]

*Not really facing the threats some Jewish people live with. The official part seem to hide behind the rescue of the Danish Jews during WW II not seeing today's problem.*

[Spiritual beliefs (but not aligned with one religion) in foreground of life, Jewish ethnicity, Denmark]

*For the Jewish people in France there are 500, 000, more or less.... For Jewish people, [...] its more the myths of the Jews – in the mind of a lot of people: all the Jews are rich, all the Jews own all the banks... the media. This kind of ideas, they are still alive in France. And Jewish people of course experience discrimination in France.*

[Jewish religion in background of life, white European, Belgium]

8 Because of this, some relevant headline findings from the much wider Eurobarometer research and into discrimination (including on the grounds of religion or belief) and the European Values Study are set out and discussed on pp. 14-15 of this document. These results, along with those from other projects referred to, can help better to contextualise.

- Unfair treatment of Christians** *Unlike most other religious groups, it has become quite acceptable to publicly express anti-Christian biases, even coming from public officials. Similar remarks made concerning Jews or Muslims would often be subject to quick sanctions.*  
[Christian (other) religion in foreground of life, white European, Belgium]
- Impossible to answer because of the wide spectrum of beliefs held by Christians eg same-sex marriage may be welcomed by some Christians, spurned by others. The more conservative the Christian, the more likely they are to experience unfair treatment.*  
[Christian religion in foreground of life, white European, UK]
- Display of symbols in the work place...offence to 'others'...used as an excuse.*  
[Muslim religion in foreground of life, UK]
- Unfair treatment of people of other religions** *I think anyone Asian looking such as Sikhs and Hindus are affected by the mass media hatred campaign of Muslims. The ignorance is so bad that people don't know the difference and racially abuse any Asian looking person.*  
[No religion (Atheist), white European, voluntary sector, UK]
- Pagans and members of so-called New Religious Movements continue to experience a considerable degree of unfair treatment that can sometimes include quite a lot of hostility based on ignorance and media examples relating to particular stories. This can lead to people from these groups needing to feel that, to some extent, they have to keep their religion or belief identities relatively hidden, especially in the employment contexts, and in particular in relation to any employment that has to do with children.*  
[Christian (Protestant), religion in foreground of life, white European, UK]
- We need to make more visible the invisible groups (Buddhist, Baha'i, Sikh, Hindu, etc.) as a to ensure their inclusion and consideration of their rights and also as a way also to diffuse a disproportionate and perhaps unconstructive focus on Muslims in Europe.*  
[Christian (Eclectic), religion in background of life, Belgium]
- Unfair treatment of the non-religious** *Last 21st of March 2012, on the basis of specific reports issued by Madrid's of Town Hall, the National Police Corps and the State Legal Profession, a non- Government Delegation refused a group of the "Asociación de Ateos y Libre Pensadores AMAL" (Freethinkers and Atheists Association) permission to demonstrate because it coincided with a Catholic procession of Holy Thursday. AMAL advocates stopping Catholic Church tax privileges. Since we live in a secular state, the lack of protection for these citizens is itself a factor of discrimination.*  
[No religion (Humanist), mixed heritage, Spain]
- Religion or belief structural disadvantage** *The whole country's legal and political infrastructure still tends to show a distinct Christian [.....] bias.*  
[No religion (Atheist) belief in background of life, white European, UK]
- It may not be a discriminatory treatment but the Spanish Government funds the Church taxes from atheist and agnostic people, or simply non-Christian taxpayers. It has also funded the conference of Christian youth by taxes from citizens, some of whom are not Christians.*  
[Muslim religion in foreground of life, Arab, Spain]
- I think that both the government and the Catholic Church are in an adaptation process from a Catholic state to a non-confessional one. It is hard to find the balance and sometimes things are interpreted as discriminatory actions.... the ideological hegemony of Catholics over all other religions is confirmed by legal treaties that determine categories and types of unequal treatment for other religious groups.*  
[Christian (Catholic) religion in foreground of life, Romany, Spain]
- The basic education curriculum is infused with major Catholic religious holidays (Christmas, Easter, etc), therefore children of unbelievers are still in an environment full of the beliefs of others, with the symbols, etc.*  
[Daoist, religion generally in background of life, European, Belgium]
- It is still generally a Christian oriented continent which shows in many national governments' social policies.*  
[No religion (Atheist) belief in background of life, white European, male, UK]
- The question remains in the European Union: is there a Christian-Jewish "leading culture"? And if so, which one?*  
[Christian (other) religion in background of life, mixed ethnicity, Germany]

**Various other themes** *Most people in EU consider themselves as non-practicing Christians, secular and non-believers. They are very hostile towards people who practice their faith openly and visibly, like Muslims and some Jews.*

[No religion (Humanist) belief in background of life, South East Asian, Denmark]

*Roma are treated badly, regardless of religion.*

[Muslim religion in background of life, Arab, Belgium]

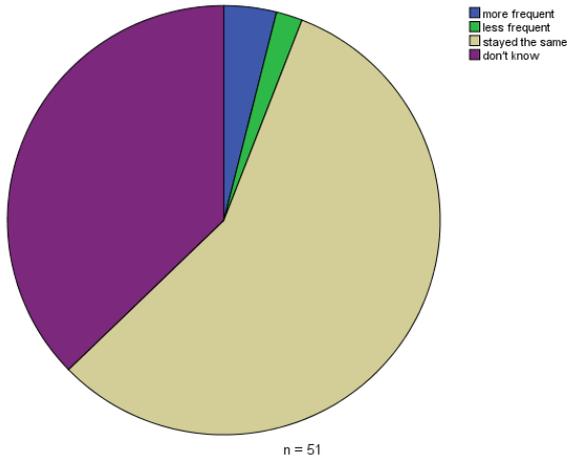
*"We [...] don't know how different groups will use the problems like economic crises and things like that, because although people are alert about oppression, they are also very easy to manipulate. If some group is pointed out as a threat, people gather around this because fear is very easy to manipulate."*

[No religion (Humanist), white European, Bulgaria]

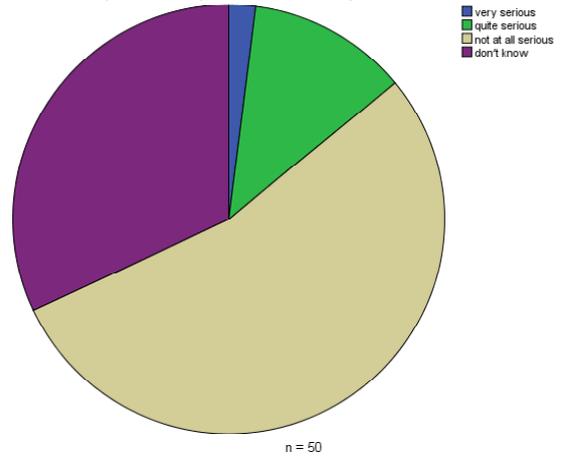
The preceding quotations from Belieforama survey respondents and interviewees give a human flavour of attitudes and actions that affect particular groups in specific ways. They are also informed especially (though not exclusively) by particular national contexts within the EU.

On a more general level, the questionnaire survey also asked survey respondents, when looking across the EU taken as whole to evaluate whether, over the past five years, hostility towards particular groups on the basis of religion or belief had become "more frequent", "less frequent" or had "stayed the same". It also asked them to evaluate whether such hostility was "very serious", "quite serious" or "not at all serious". The results of the responses to these questions follow in the pie charts that appear on the next two pages.

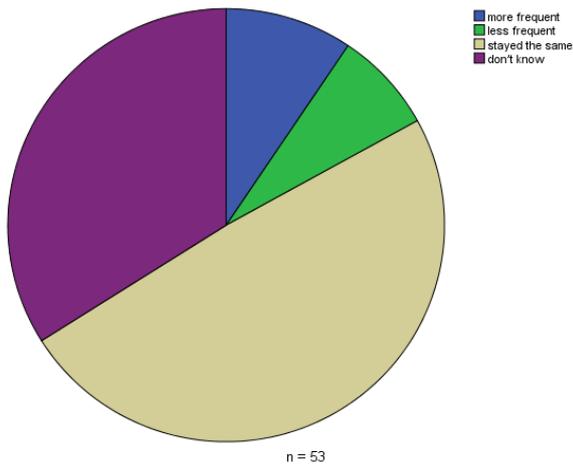
Across the European Union taken as a whole, do you think that, over the last 5 years, problems/experiences of hostility have become more or less frequent for Christians?



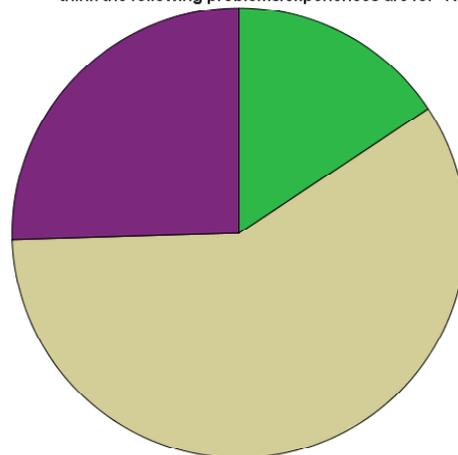
Across the European Union taken as a whole, how serious do you think the problems/experiences of hostility are for Christians?



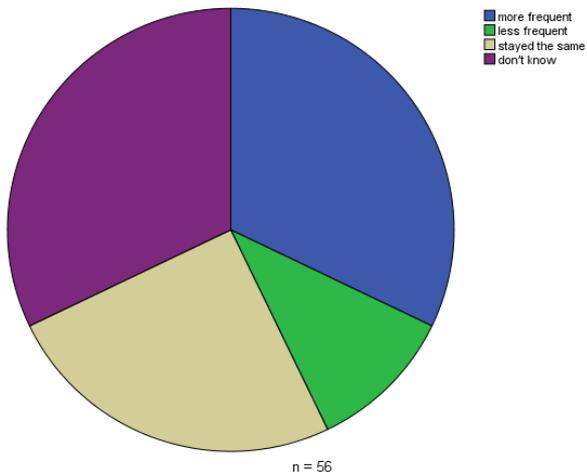
Across the European Union taken as a whole, do you think that, over the last 5 years, problems/experiences of hostility have become more or less frequent for "Non-Believers"?



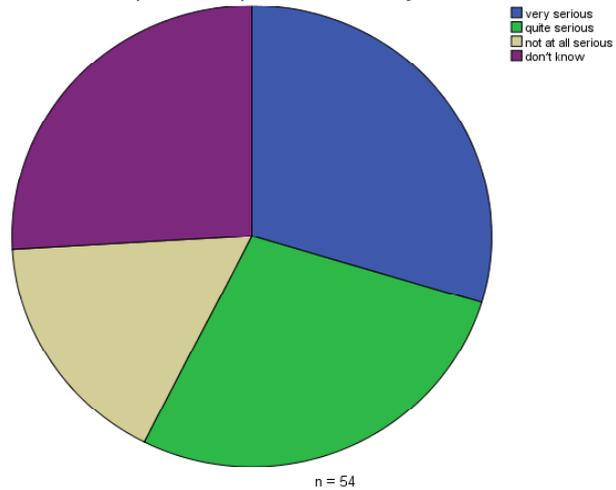
[Hostility] Across the European Union taken as a whole, how serious do you think the following problems/experiences are for "Non-Believers"?



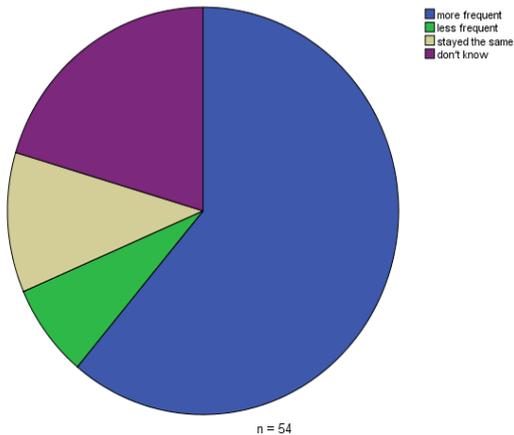
Across the European Union taken as a whole, do you think that, over the last 5 years, problems/experiences of hostility have become more or less frequent for Jews?



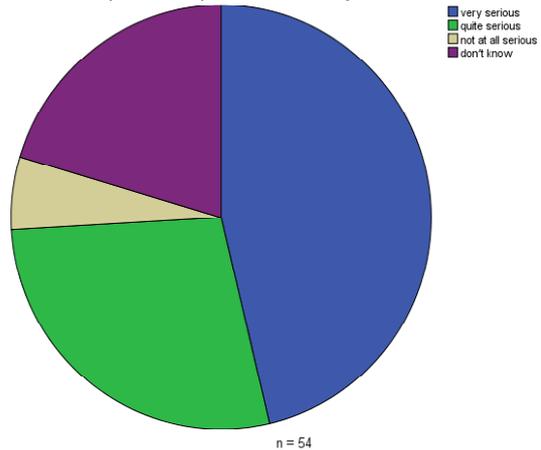
Across the European Union taken as a whole, how serious do you think the problems/experiences of hostility are for Jews?



Across the European Union taken as a whole, do you think that, over the last 5 years, problems/experiences of hostility have become more or less frequent for Muslims?



Across the European Union taken as a whole, how serious do you think the problems/experiences of hostility are for Muslims?



The survey sample consisted neither of large numbers nor was it stratified by potentially influential personal and social characteristics. Therefore it is not possible to place too much weight on the results of such questions. However – and particularly in relation to Jews and Muslims - the results at least suggest a coincidence between the respondents' evaluation of increased frequency of hostility over the past five years and their evaluation of its seriousness. Such results would not be inconsistent with some of the data relating to attitudes to Jews and Muslims that was identified in the European Values Study and is discussed on p. 15.

# Wider Research on Religion or Belief and Unfair Treatment in Europe

## Eurobarometer research

Eurobarometer is a programme of cross-national and comparative social research, conducted for the European Commission and designed especially to monitor social and political attitudes in public opinion. From the early 1990s onwards, special surveys have also been conducted, including the ones referred to below on discrimination (including in relation to “religion or beliefs”, conducted in 2007, 2008 and 2009). The 2008 and 2009 reports were based on research conducted in those years while the 2007 report was based on research undertaken in 2006. All three special research reports are based on a multi-stage, random (probability) sample and are based on face-to-face interviews with member state residents, aged 15+, conducted in people’s homes in appropriate national languages.

**Table 1 : Respondents stating discrimination on grounds of “religion or beliefs” is widespread, 2006-09**

	Per cent:	Base:
2006	44%	26,822
2008	42%	26,746
2009	39%	26,756

**Notes :** EU data for 2006 are for EU-25; for 2008 and 2009, they are for EU-27.

**Source :** TNS Opinion and Social, 2007: 68; 2008: 66; 2009: 100.

No explanation is offered in the 2009 report for the reduction (as compared with the previous two surveys) of respondents reporting that discrimination on grounds of religion or belief was widespread. A possible explanation is that the 2009 responses could reflect a greater distance in both time and public reaction to the events of the Madrid railway bombing in Spain, the London Transport attacks in the UK, and the killing of Theo van Gogh in Netherlands. Table 2 sets out a comparison of responses in relation to perceptions of discrimination for six different grounds of discrimination in 2009. This shows that more respondents identify other grounds of discrimination than those of religion or belief, although well over a third of respondents perceived religion or belief discrimination to be “widespread”.

**Table 2 Perceptions of discrimination in relation to various group in the EU-27 countries, 2009**

EU-27	Age	Disability	Ethnic Origin	Gender	Religion or belief	Sexual orientation
Widespread	58%	53%	61%	40%	39%	47%
Rare	37%	41%	32%	53%	53%	43%
Non-existent	2%	2%	3%	3%	4%	3%
Don't know	3%	4%	4%	4%	4%	7%
Base	26,756					

**Notes :** The alternative options were ‘rare’ or ‘don’t know’. The non-existent figure is based on spontaneous responses. The base numbers of respondents for each strand were the same.

**Source :** Perfect, D. (2011), Religion or Belief. Manchester: Equality and Human Rights Commission Briefing Paper No.1, Table 17, citing TNS Opinion and Social (2009), Tables 1.1 to 1.6.

The data in both of the tables above relate to public “perceptions” of discrimination, while the data in Table 3, below, serves as a reminder that there can be a discrepancy between the general perception of discrimination in wider society and reported personal experience of it. At the same time, it should be noted that the Eurobarometer surveys do not appear to contain any kind of religious or ethnic ‘booster’ and therefore answers to this question may not reflect the extent of experience of discrimination among specific groups that may particularly experience this in comparison to the general population.

But in any case, while one per cent and two per cent reporting personal experience of discrimination or harassment on grounds of religion or belief may not - in percentage terms – appear to be high, if projected into numbers across the EU population as a whole, they represent a substantial number of individuals reporting personal experience of religious discrimination and hence underline the importance of tackling the issues that may inform this in ways that can lead to transformative change.

**Table 3 : Respondents reporting experience of discrimination or harassment on grounds of religion or belief, 2008-09**

	Per cent:	Base:
2008	2%	26,746
2009	1%	26,756

**Notes :** EU data are for EU-27.

**Source :** TNS Opinion and Social, 2008: 70, responses to question A3; 2009: 105; responses to question E3.

The 2008 Eurobarometer research also asked the question: “how you would personally feel about... Having a person with a different religion or belief than yours as a neighbour?” Respondents were asked to rank their responses on a scale from 1 to 10 (with 1 as “very uncomfortable” and 10 as “totally comfortable”). On this question, the average score for the EU 27 was a relatively high 8.5. However this obscures individual countries with lower scores (6.9 in Austria, 7.2 in Italy and 7.3 in Portugal).

### European Values Study

The European Values Study (EVS) is a well-established longitudinal research programme constituted by social and political scientists. It started in 1981 in 10 West European countries. Its main purpose is empirically to uncover the “basic values, attitudes, and preferences of the European population and to explore the similarities, differences, and changes in these orientations... The project provides standardized cross-national measures of people’s perspectives and views in a broad range of important areas of life.”<sup>9</sup> A fourth wave of the research was begun in 2008 and by 2010 included 47 countries (thus going beyond EU member states).

In the fourth wave of the EVS research, when asked which groups of people respondents would “not like to have as neighbours”, 16.6% respondents across the 47 countries identified Jews (including in EU member states as many as 28.3% in Lithuania; 28.2% in Slovenia; 25.1% in Cyprus; 22.3% in Estonia; and 29.8% in Malta) and 22.5% identified Muslims (including in EU member states as many as 47% in Lithuania; 36% in Cyprus; and 33.9% in Estonia; 31.6% in Malta; 30.9% in Austria; and 30.7% in the Czech Republic).<sup>10</sup>

A question was also asked about the importance of religion to a respondent’s life and, across the 47 countries, 26.9% said “very important”, said 31.9% “quite important”, said 24.5% “not important” and 16.7% said “not at all important”. Although these results varied from an EU member state high end in Malta of 65% “very important”, 24% “important”, 7.5% “not important”, and 3.0% “not at all important” through to a low end in the Czech Republic of 6.6% “very important”, 13.0% “quite important”, 25.3% “not important” and 55% “not at all important”. Even at the low end, they underline how religion has continued to be important for many individuals in Europe. Because of this, the significance of religious discrimination when it occurs can be better understood.

But in identifying and trying to tackle unfair treatment on the basis of religion or belief it is important also to recognise how religious groups can themselves both generate and sustain such unfair treatment. In recent research based on responses from eight European countries about attitudes to Jews and Muslims (as well as some other groups) conducted for the Network of European Foundations’ Initiative on Religion and Democracy in Europe, the relationship between “the extent of individual religiousness and prejudice towards other groups” has been explored. In analysing their results, the authors of the report<sup>11</sup> on this research identified a syndrome they termed as ‘Group-focused Enmity’, highlighting this as something that religious individuals and groups can generate and contribute to, as well as experience from others.

9 Halman, L. (2001) European Values Study: A Third Wave. Sourcebook of the 1999-2000 European Values Study Surveys (Tilburg, the Netherlands: EVS, WORC Tilburg University) p. 1, 3.

10 EVS (2011): European Values Study 2008: Integrated Dataset (EVS 2008). GESIS Data Archive, Cologne. ZA4800 Data file Version 3.0.0, doi:10.4232/1.11004

11 Küpper, B. and Zick, A. (2010) Religion and Prejudice in Europe: New Empirical Findings. London: Alliance Publishing Trust.

# Analysing and Tackling the “Spectrum” of Religion or Belief Unfair Treatment

Belieforama survey participants and interviewees have identified what might be called a “spectrum” of forms of unfair treatment related to religion or belief. In order to consider how best to tackle the full spectrum of unfair treatment and to create the conditions for more inclusive societies and institutions, it is necessary to differentiate the kinds of unfair treatment that can occur and how these might be, or might become, related.<sup>12</sup> Such analysis can then inform consideration of appropriate possible measures for tackling these – also in their relationship with forms of unfair treatment on other grounds.

## **Religion or belief prejudice**

Involves the stereotyping of particular religious or belief groups through attitudes that can wound individuals and form a basis for exclusion and unfair treatment. It can sometimes be rooted in the historical inheritance of a conflictual relationship that has developed over many centuries, sometimes involving the overlap of religion, communal identity, warfare and/or politics.

## **Religion or belief hatred**

Attitudes of religion or belief prejudice may result in no specific discriminatory outcomes. But when intensified in a settled attitude of mind, emotion and will, “religion or belief prejudice” can spill over into, and fan, manifestations of “religion or belief hatred”. When such hatred becomes intense it can result in intimidatory and/or violent behaviour towards the religion or belief “other” which can also be stimulated and nurtured by organised racist groups.

## **Religion or belief Disadvantage**

There is a more structural expression of unfair treatment on the basis of religion or belief that can, in at least some measure, be experienced by all religion or belief groups that are non-majority/established/recognised. Such groups do not have the traditions of historical presence and/or legal rights of access to a range of social institutions that are available to many majority/ established/recognised ones. Or, if they are to some extent available, they are not available on the same terms. Such factors can impact significantly upon the possibilities of social inclusion/exclusion of religion or belief minorities.

## **Direct religion or belief discrimination**

This occurs where there is deliberate exclusion of individuals from opportunities or services on grounds related to their religion or belief, identity or practice, as when an employer might exclude individuals from employment opportunities because of their religion or belief identity or practice.

## **Indirect religion or belief discrimination**

This is rooted in the policies and practices of organisations which can result in patterns of exclusive recruitment policies, employment practice and service provision. Such discrimination therefore is to do with the exclusionary effects of historical decisions, contemporary structures or patterns of behaviour and organisation. It may or may not be informed by individual attitudes of “religion or belief prejudice” or “religion or belief hatred”, although it may be related to aspects of “religion or belief disadvantage”. Where historic patterns have not been reconsidered in the light of a contemporary plurality of religion or belief, then they can unintentionally result in discrimination against people of various religious or belief traditions. Examples include, among other things, culturally exclusive requirements and provisions such as diet, clothing and religious festivals.

## **Institutional religion or belief discrimination**

This concept is an attempt – by analogy with that of “institutional racism” – to describe what can happen when forms of discrimination become endemic and structurally embedded within organisations in which “religion or belief prejudice”, “direct” and “indirect” religion or belief discrimination and sometimes, also, “religion or belief disadvantage”, combine in the collective failure of an organisation to provide an adequate and professional environment and/or service.

<sup>12</sup> Adapted from Paul Weller, Alice Feldman and Kingsley Purdam et al (2000), Religious Discrimination in England and Wales: Executive Summary of an Interim Report, January 2000, University of Derby, Derby produced for the UK Government Home Office.

In the light of this kind of analysis consideration can be given to what measures might best address which aspects of unfair treatment. Thus in relation to direct and indirect religion or belief discrimination and hatred on the grounds of religion or belief, the law may have a very important role to play in restraining unfair treatment and creating a context for change. At the same time the law may not, on its own, be capable of bringing about change in relation to prejudicial attitudes related to religion or belief. And by its emphasis on the rights of individuals, it may not so directly address structural disadvantage and institutional religion or belief discrimination. The Eurobarometer special reports previously referred to asked if respondents were in favour of, or opposed to, anti-discrimination measures in the field of employment in so far as these relate to religion. The responses, as shown in Table 4 below, highlight that a large majority of the EU population support the role of law in this regard:

<b>Table 4 : Respondents' views of anti-discrimination measures in employment relating to religion, 2006-09</b>						
	Favour	Opposed	Favour	Opposed		
2006	70	23	70	23	1,313	26,822
2008	76	20	70	24	1,306	26,746
2009	72	20	67	25	1,317	26,756

**Notes :** EU data for 2006 are for EU-25; for 2008 and 2009, they are for EU-27. The question wording in 2008 was slightly different from that in 2006 and 2009.

**Source :** TNS Opinion and Social, 2007: responses to question A9.4 ; 2008: responses to question A9.4 ; 2009: responses to question E7.5

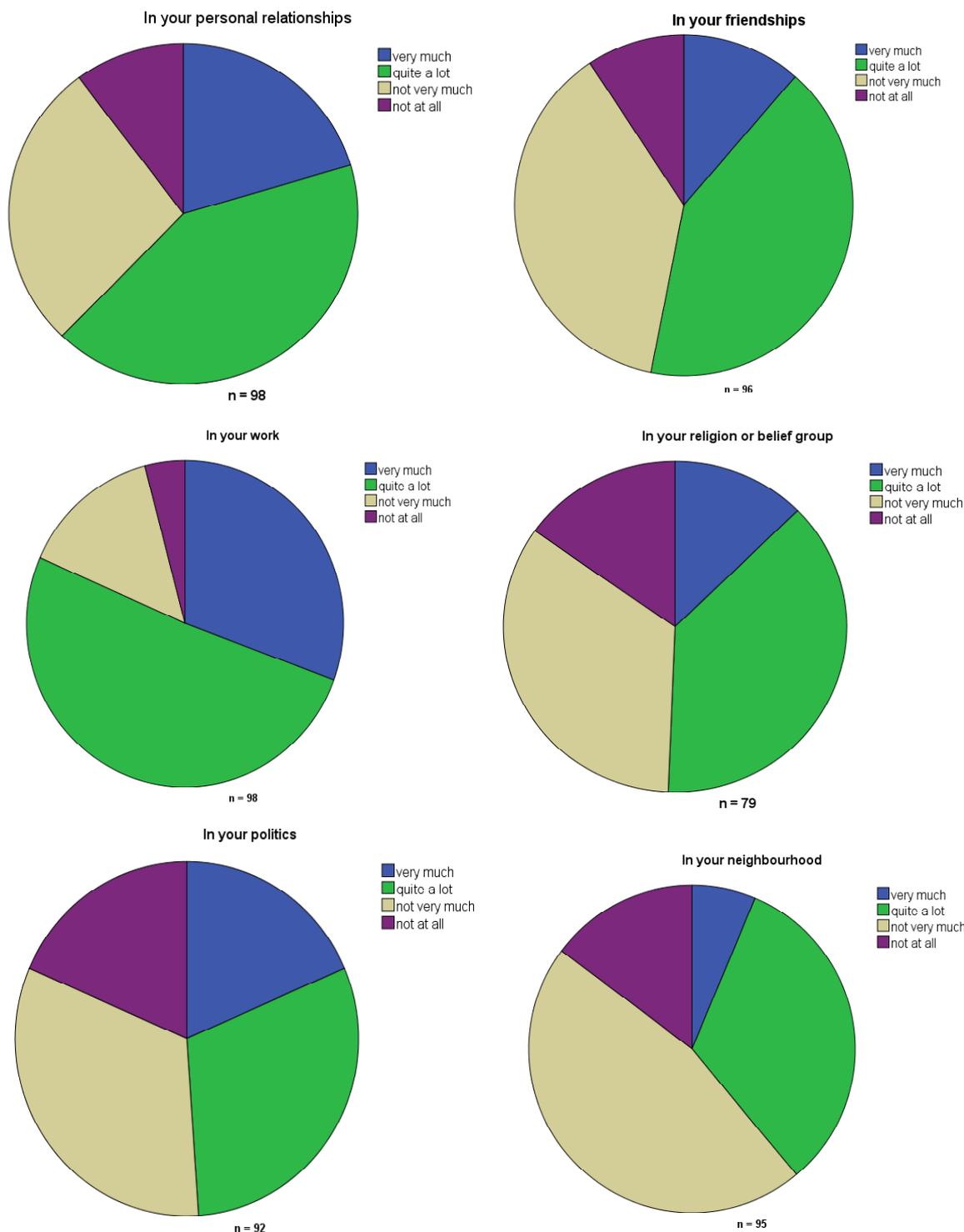
Among Belieforama participants and trainers who were surveyed for this report, when they were asked: "Considered across the European Union as a whole, which of the following measures, if any, do you think should be considered in order to combat unfair treatment on the basis of religion or belief?" the responses ranked by the respondents in order of importance are set out in Table 5 as follows:

<b>Table 5 :</b> "Considered across the European Union as a whole, which of the following measures, if any, do you think should be considered in order to combat unfair treatment on the basis of religion or belief?"	Rank 1 Valid Percent N = 90	Rank 2 Valid Percent N = 86	Rank 3 Valid Percent N = 83	Rank 4 Valid Percent N = 78	Rank 5 Valid Percent N = 78	Rank 6 Valid Percent N = 78
More teaching of comparative religion in schools	30.0	7.0	13.3	1.3	3.1	1.8
Policy reviews in each sector of society to promote equal treatment	32.2	16.3	9.6	7.7	10.8	16.4
Adapting social services to religio-cultural needs and limitations	2.2	10.5	10.8	7.7	6.2	9.1
Provision of training of the kind provided by Belieforama	14.4	25.6	13.3	6.4	6.2	3.6
More public education programmes	8.9	19.8	15.7	17.9	18.5	12.7
Creation of voluntary codes of practice	2.2	4.7	2.4	11.5	9.2	7.3
Introduction/development of new law	5.6	2.3	6.0	7.7	4.6	12.7
Reasonable accommodation of work place religion or belief practice	3.3	5.8	8.4	3.8	10.8	5.5
Engaging religion or belief groups in community development	6.7	5.8	13.3	9.0	18.5	10.9
Negotiating the use of public space by religion or belief groups	3.3	2.3	7.2	20.5	10.8	3.6
Other	1.1	0.0	0.00	0.00	1.5	12.7
Total	100.00	100.00	100.0	100.00	100.00	100.00

From this it can be seen that the majority of responses prioritised educational measures of various kinds, coupled with policy reviews in various sectors of society. This is not to say that Belieforama participants felt law was unimportant – rather that there is a need to support the environment in which law operates and so help give practical effect to legal rights. Education includes the possibility of learning from good practice, and of using methods that can empower individuals and groups to give effect to their rights – research examples of both of which follow in the next four pages of this report.

# Learning into Action in Relation to Religion or Belief

How far have participant actions in relation to religion or belief diversity and anti-discrimination been positively influenced by that training? Responses from the survey



From these pie charts it be seen that, in the responses of those who took part in the project's survey of Belieforama participants, the spheres of personal relationships, of work, and of friendship were those in which they evaluated the trainings as having had the most positive influence. Of course, given the profile of the participants, it might be that part of the reason that work is so strongly identified could at least partially reflect that a number of respondents themselves work in educational settings where there is the possibility of a more direct transfer between learning in the programme to implementation in one's work. However, many other participants have worked in other fields and Belieforama has extensively customised its trainings for varied workplace environments. Examples of the kinds of learning into action given by survey respondents and interviewees can be found on the next page.

# Religion or Belief: Good Practice in Europe

Belieforama participants have not only identified issues that need to be tackled in terms of the unfair treatment on the grounds of religion or belief, but the trainings in which they participated also enabled a sharing of good practice in a way that gave concrete examples of, and inspiration for, the kind of action that can be taken as a result of engagement with opportunities for transformative learning.

## Participants' own learning translated into good practice

*I identified the following Good Practice: how to facilitate discussion on contentious issues (especially problems related to religions); how to solve a conflict of attitudes on the problems of religions - how to organize an information session on problems related to religion.*  
[Religion in background of life, Romania]

## National good practice initiatives from the authorities

*The formation of the Fundación Pluralismo y Convivencia (Foundation for Pluralism and Coexistence), during the socialist government, and which aims at the study of diversity and religious pluralism, investigation and spreading in Spain. (<http://www.pluralismoyconvivencia.es>)...The Religious Affairs Office (OAR) is a local authority service that builds bridges between local government and the religious institutions in order to guarantee the exercise of freedom of religious worship and to facilitate collaboration between local authorities and these institutions in everything related to their activities (places of worship, use of equipment and public places etc).*  
[No religion (Humanist), mixed heritage, Spain]

## National good from religion or belief groups

*The "Federación de Comunidades Judías de España (FCJE)" is the institution practice initiatives that represents Jewish communities to the Spanish state. The FCJE's function is therefore to liaise between the various Jewish communities and between these communities and public authorities in the territory of Spain. This way, one of its main tasks is to oversee the complementary development of the Co-Operation Agreement signed with the Spanish government, by negotiating everything that is needed for its modification, improvement and application.*  
[No religion (Humanist), mixed heritage, Spain]

## Local good practice initiatives

*Open Day in Badajoz's mosque. The neighbourhood was specially invited to go.*  
[Muslim religion in foreground of life, white European, Spain]

*In my opinion, the orientation and integration courses that are carried out in adult education centres are examples of good practice.*  
[Christian (Other) religion in background of life, mixed ethnicity, Germany]

## European added Value

*In discussions with other participants in the programme I realised that everyone is trying to build bridges in their own country and to remove barriers. For example, I can especially refer to the Radar institution in the Netherlands, which seems to do outstanding work.*  
[Christian (Other) religion in background of life, mixed ethnicity, Germany]

*It has brought a much more positive view of diversity. The wider European experience added value has given huge insights into the cultural and legal influences that tend to constrain thinking and approaches.*  
[No religion (Atheist) belief in background of life, white European, UK]

# Broadening, Deepening and Transforming Religion or Belief Literacy

The reported experience of Belieforama participants and trainers is that the learning they have experienced takes place in two directions: a “broadening” of learning through gaining new information and understanding and a “deepening” with regard to the complexity of religion or belief beyond stereotypes. Participants and trainers also highlighted a number of characteristics of their experience of learning that transforms. The key points of broadening, deepening and transforming are highlighted in the left column and illustrated by a quotation or quotations from interviewees or survey respondents.

## Personal encounter in learning

*I used to say that the hijab is male oppression on women, they are discriminated against. Thanks to my work I met some Muslim women – one particularly – the first time I met her she was wearing the hijab and I was like poor woman she is obliged to wear the hijab, etc. We attend the training together and when I started to speak to her and know her, all my previous values about the hijab collapsed. And I was like, this woman is one of the most open-minded and feminist women I had ever met. She told me she wore the hijab because she wants to wear it.”*

[Jewish religion in background of life, white European, Belgium]

## Broadening understanding

*These courses about religious diversity, anti-discrimination, etc, are a clear example of good practice related to this topic because they bring people closer to the reality of a variety of religions and their practices that, for various reasons, is sometimes unknown to people.*

[Muslim religion in foreground of life, Arab, Spain]

*After the training, I have become generally more aware of religious diversity and how religion or belief influences people’s thinking, attitude, daily routine, etc. Now I often look beyond, question and seek explanation for people’s behaviour also through the prism of religion/belief.*

[No religion (Agnostic) belief in background of life, white European, Bulgaria]

*I understood better some aspects of some beliefs and traditions that are different from mine.*

[Christian (Orthodox) religion in background of life, white European, Romania]

*I really didn’t have that good understanding before [...] it did help me to understand how close the main religions’ beliefs are and the humanistic movements are also. [...] Religion was a little vague and distant for me [...] This course open my mind and helped me see what people seek in religion.*

[No religion (Agnostic), white European, Bulgaria]

## Individuality of religion or belief

*Yes above all at the level of the uniqueness of each personal faith: in each religion, each believer understands and lives his/her faith differently.*

[No religion (Agnostic) belief in background of life, white European, Belgium]

*I am convinced that knowing and knowledge can help to reduce prejudice concerning other beliefs and ideologies. In the meantime it is very important to give one’s opinion and to know about one’s own roots and faith biography.*

[Christian (Other) religion in background of life, mixed ethnicity, Germany]

*There is an exercise that teaches how to differentiate between personal belonging and shared membership (Religion is not a personal belonging, but I am belonging to it, my belief is my individual matter).*

[Muslim, mixed heritage ethnicity, Austria]

*Being more sensitive about these issues. Or... more in terms of being a bit more cautious around stereotyping any type of religion and just acknowledging that every person has kind of a very individual identity with regard to spirituality and religion. On this awareness rating level it did have quite a large impact. And maybe also in terms of being more confident in addressing all these issues also.*

[Christian (Protestant), religion not in foreground of life, white European, Germany]

## Complexity and inclusivity

*The meaning of the religious diversity or spiritual diversity versus non-religious or non-spiritual diversity became clear to me in its whole explosiveness. For me the exchange with representatives of various beliefs and ideologies was really important and the practical approaches that were taught in the seminar are helping me a lot.*  
[No religion (Atheist) belief in background of life, Germany]

*No simple answers with such complex challenges but the processes and consistency help move the dialogue forward - it is the process that makes the delivery of the training impactful. Secondly the fact that humanists, atheists, agnostics are included and their views given equal weight makes a huge difference and helps mark the training out from other interventions.*  
[Christian (Other) religion in foreground of my life, white European, UK]

*In official sociological studies, a report of Spanish Council for Social Research in July 2009 found that 76% of Spaniards declared themselves "Catholic", 13% "non-believers", 7.3% "atheists" and 2.1% "believers in another religion". It recognises how difficult it is to distinguish between "non-believers" and "atheists". "Atheists" are more or less clear, but it's impossible to determine whether self-identification as "non-believer" means "agnostic", "sceptic", "indifferent" or even "atheist who does not want to discuss". There is no formal or public recognition for people who define themselves in that kind of way.*  
[No religion (Humanist), mixed heritage, Spain]

## Safe spaces to deal with fear

*And a lot of it is around people's fear and a level of misinformation of course that is pushed out of the media [...] and also around general ignorance around different religions but its not that the people are resistant, its just that they simply do not know. It used to be like this when you wanted to talk about race years ago - people were so frightened about saying the wrong thing that they would not say anything at all. And I think faith is certainly like that now.*  
[Christian (Other), religion in foreground of life, white European, UK]

*I very strongly believe that one of the strong points of this training programme and the philosophy of Belieforama is especially [...] that there is a space, a way of working, a very clear didactic approach, that in group that feels okay with fact that there is difference – we have to start at that point. We then create a space where people learn to listen to themselves about their own identity and to listen to others and to confront issues in order to be a more able citizen and to go into social action.*  
[Spiritual beliefs not aligned with one religion, and in foreground of life, white European, The Netherlands]

*In educational trainings it is necessary to deal openly with existing fears. In order to have a common basis (and not just to achieve a mutual alienation between religious and non-religious people), it is important to separate the personal component from the components of beliefs and ideologies and to emphasise each one's own individual identity.*  
[Respondent]

*Our ignorance of one another is at the heart of violence. Discriminatory practices are part of that violence. The more we know the Other, the less we fear. This is an ongoing process. Especially in our globalised world, opportunities for this to happen must be a priority for government and civil society.*  
[Christian (Other) religion in foreground in life, white European, Belgium]

## Structural translation of learning

*I think we need awareness-raising but we also need also practices. We need to support or work with these structures or create these structures if they don't exist. We need to ensure that any case of intolerance or discrimination is not acceptable. It's not only awareness-raising [...]"*  
[Bulgaria]

**Learning transfer to  
workplace practice  
Educational  
multiplication**

*Working with people from different cultures and religions, Gypsies, Arabs, to South American people... I used everything that I learned in my work place. With the help of Belieforama, a number of years ago I created a programme named Alif-Aleph-Alpha for young female peer trainers of various religions and faiths. This was very successful and I am still in contact with many peer trainers that were trained at that time. Many of them are now very active in the field of tolerance and some told me that that experience was really formative for them. Currently I am active in JUMA (JUnG Muslimisch Aktiv – Young, Muslim Active)/JUGA (JUnG Gläubig Aktiv - Young, Believing, Active), a project that is developing very well. ([www.juga-projekt.de](http://www.juga-projekt.de))*  
[Germany]

*I was able to identify some methods in order to communicate better with my students who have different beliefs.*

[Christian (Orthodox) religion in background of life, white European, Romania]

*[used] in the seminar for teachers.*

[Christian (Protestant) religion in background of life, Estonia]

**Inspiring community  
Initiatives**

*I used the training to establish Jewish Muslim network in Copenhagen and got many wonderful new ideas for inter-faith work.*

No religion (Humanist) religion in background of life, South East Asian, Denmark]

*I used the learning from the training in a practical way when the borough was challenged by far right extremist members of a number of faiths and none came together and expressed their concerns in one voice.*

[Muslim religion in foreground of life, UK]

**Multi-level  
action**

*1. In private life: willingness to immerse myself in the lives of “the others”. Creation of a Speakers’ Corner in my hometown. 2. In my work: less instruction and more fieldwork (i.e. intercultural and interdenominational police projects with minorities). The motto is: “We don’t have to like everything, the most important thing is that we are interested in the world of the others”. 3. Both in my work and in my private life: human rights as a common basis.*

[Pagan religion does not feature in foreground of life, white European, Austria]

**Informed by analysis of what has been learned from Belieforama’s Community of Practice (<http://www.belieforama.eu>) and trainings, the following Recommendations and Reflections have been identified for European Institutions, national authorities and civil society groups:**

# Recommendations:

## EU accession to ECHR and strengthening of human rights in member states

Belieforama trainings, participants and trainers have identified the importance of international human rights standards and mechanisms in relation not only to religion or belief alone, but also in their intersection with other aspects of equalities and human rights. Discrimination can often be multiple and overlapping. In order that residents in the European Union can have the protection of the Convention and the possibility of review and intervention by the European Court of Human Rights in relation to the laws and actions of the European Union institutions as well as their own member states:

***The EU should as soon as possible accede to the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and, together with member states, conduct a systematic and critical review of the implementation of human rights measures in each member state.***

## More focused EU and member state support in tackling employment discrimination

Employment or the lack of it is a centrally important aspect of people's lives. The EU's 2020 long-term strategy includes the creation of a high employment economy. But in the Commission's strategy document the word discrimination appears only once and, as identified by RELIGARE's Policy Brief,<sup>13</sup> implementation approaches taken by national authorities are often religion or belief "blind":

***The EU and member states should, in their understanding and application of equality measures, take more account of the personal characteristics of employees including their religion or belief identities, rather than relying on a formal equality of opportunity approach that tries to be "blind" to the personal characteristics that equality laws seek to address.***

## Further EU and member state support for transformational education initiatives

What is clearly reported from Belieforama participants and trainers is the importance, in effecting change leading into action, of educational and training processes that work with both personal and social experience; that allow space to confront fears and explore uncertainties; that enable an appreciation of complexity and individuality in matters of religion or belief, but that also equip individuals to transfer such learning more widely. Therefore:

***The EU and member states should provide incentives to employers, public authorities and educational institutions to engage in religion or belief literacy training that supports the transformation of attitudes and behaviours in order to move towards substantive equality.***

## Transversal review of EU and member state policies bearing on religion or belief

Although, as noted, the EU has very little policy that is specifically focused on religion or belief, there are a whole range of policy areas in which matters of religion or belief either themselves form part of a broader policy area defined in a different primary way (for example in relation to cultural diversity and inter-cultural dialogue) or in which policy areas (such as security and immigration) can have a differential bearing on various religion or belief groups. Member states have much more policy, across a wider range of areas, that has a bearing on matters of religion or belief:

***The EU and member states should especially, but not only, in relation to the adequacy of national implementation of EU Directives, undertake reviews of their policy interfaces with matters of religion or belief to achieve a more consistent approach throughout the EU.***

## Implementing the Lisbon Treaty's consultation with religion or belief groups

Through the Lisbon Treaty, the EU is committed to establishing "open, transparent and regular dialogue" with religion or belief groups. Based on the collective experience of its trainers and participants, Belieforama is building a Community of Practice in which those engaged with religion or belief diversity and anti-discrimination practice and the creation of learning opportunities for transformational change can share their experience and contribute, alongside other relevant bodies, to the development of wider platforms for engagement with the European Institutions.

***The EU should develop a concrete action plan for implementation of the Lisbon Treaty's provisions for "open, transparent and regular dialogue" with religion or belief groups.***

13 See Sergio Carrera and Joanna Parkin, *The Place of Religion in European Union Law and Policy: Competing Approaches and Actors inside the European Commission*, Religare Working Document No. 1 /September 2010, RELIGARE (Religious Diversity and Secular Models in Europe) project, Leuven. In more technical language, the report distinguishes between what it calls a "formal" approach to equalities and a more "substantive" one that takes account of such personal characteristics.

# Reflections:

## Using a “spectrum” for understanding unfair treatment in religion or belief

Given the range of different kinds of unfair treatment on the grounds of religion or belief identified by Belieforama participants and trainers:

***How helpful might the model of a “spectrum” (see p. 13) of unfair treatment on the basis of religion or belief be for analysing the dynamics of this and for identifying which measures, either singly or in combination, might most appropriately be deployed for tackling unfair treatment along various parts of the “spectrum”?***

## Striking the balance between education, law and inclusion

Given that member states of the EU must implement measures to prevent discrimination on grounds of religion or belief and Belieforama participants have argued that, in tackling such discrimination, the emphasis now needs to be more on education and training measures than on developing further law:

***Is the policy implementation balance right at EU and member state level between legal frameworks and requirements and educational and training initiatives that promote the empowerment and inclusion of religious and cultural minorities?***

## Taking of more responsibility by religion or belief groups in relation to unfair treatment

Religion or belief groups do not only themselves experience unfair treatment, but also have perpetrated it. This includes by some religious groups in relation to others (for example, dominant Christian traditions in relation to Jews) and/or the non-religious; and from some of the non-religious (for example, during the period of Marxist-Leninist power in parts of Europe) in relation to the religious. ***How far do religion or belief groups accept the responsibility to take initiatives and find mechanisms for addressing ways in which their own traditions, teaching and/or philosophy might lead to unfair treatment of other religion or belief groups – and/or others who see their identity partly or primarily in terms of ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation?***

## Promoting greater sophistication about individual and social forms of religion or belief

Belieforama’s trainings indicate that group identifications are often more important than many in liberal democratic societies appreciate. But the trainings also start from the lived experience of individuals. From this it is clear that, even where individuals identify with a specific and broader religion or belief group, the traditional identification categories of “believer”, “non-believer”, “humanist”, “secularist” may not do justice to the complexity and fluidity of how individuals understand and live their lives.

***What opportunities could there be to enable civil society groups to work together with public bodies in order to try to help policy-makers understand and take better account of the complexity that can often characterise shared and individual religion or belief identifications?***

## Reflecting on structural issues in religion (s), state and society relationships

A number of the aspects of “unfair treatment” identified by Belieforama participants relate to structural matters in the relationships between religion(s), state(s) and society. These include special financial arrangements and other legal privileges of some religions compared with others or with non-religious philosophical and ethical bodies. Because they pertain to “the status under national law of churches and religious associations or communities in the Member States” (Amsterdam Treaty), such matters go beyond the current competence for European Institutions. Despite this legal position:

***How far are civil society groups (including the religious groups) enabled to reflect and contribute to debate about the structural relationships between religion(s), state and society? How far might the theses outlined on p.25 of this document help focus such reflection?***

## Moving beyond the “Christian-secular” tension for framing European social reality

The Belieforama trainings reveal a Europe that goes beyond a “one dimensional” historical dominance of the Christian tradition, or of a politically and/or philosophically secular reaction to it which, together, have produced the tension of a “two dimensional” Christian-secular cultural and socio-political heritage.

***Instead of framing the cultural, religious and political landscape of Europe in terms of what might be called a “two dimensional” Christian-secular tension, how far might thinking about the current European social reality as a “three dimensional” one, with contours that are Christian and secular – but also (and increasingly) religiously plural - help to open up the European future to a more inclusive participation for all ?***

# Religion(s), State and Society: Theses for Reflection

A number of the aspects of “unfair treatment” identified by Belieforama participants (eg. matters relating to the financing and other legal privileges of some religions and not others) relate more to the structural relationships between religion(s), state and society that go beyond the current competence of the European Institutions.

The following “theses” have been used in the Religious Diversity and Anti-Discrimination Training in order to facilitate participants’ exploration of the complex and varied relationships between religion(s), state and society in different states and across Europe. They originate with the Belieforama Consultant, Paul Weller, and have been published in slightly variant forms, including in Paul Weller (2005), *Time for a Change: Reconfiguring Religion, State and Society*, T & T Clark International, London. They are offered here not as an expression of the position of Belieforama or of those who have participated in its training, but as a tool to stimulate reflection and debate on the relationships between religion(s), societies and states throughout Europe. It should be noted that they only address the place of “religions” and their bodies and organisations rather than also philosophical and ethical traditions and their organisations.

## **The Need for A Reality Check**

National and political self-understandings that exclude people of other than majority religious traditions, either by design or by default are, historically speaking, fundamentally distorted. Politically and religiously such self-understandings are dangerous and need to be challenged.

## **The Importance of Religious Inclusivity**

Religious establishments as well as other traditions and social arrangements that provide particular forms of religion with privileged access to the social and political institutions need to be re-evaluated. There is a growing need to imagine and to construct new structural forms for the relationship between religion(s), state(s) and society that can more adequately express an inclusive social and political self-understanding than those which currently privilege majority religions.

## **The Imperative for Religious Engagement with the Wider Community**

Religious communities and traditions should beware of what can be seductive calls from within their traditions to form ‘religious unity fronts’ against what is characterised as ‘the secular state’ and what is perceived as the amorality and fragmentation of modern and post-modern society.

## **The Need to Recognize the Specificity of Religions**

Religious traditions and communities offer important alternative perspectives to the predominant values and power structures of states and societies. Religions are a reminder of the importance of the things that cannot be seen, touched, smelled, tasted and heard, for a more balanced perspective on those things which can be experienced in these ways.

## **The Importance of Not Marginalizing Religions from Public Life**

A tendency to assign religions to the private sphere will impoverish the state by marginalising important social resources and might unwittingly be encouraging of those reactive, backward- and inward-looking expressions of religious life that are popularly characterised as fundamentalisms.

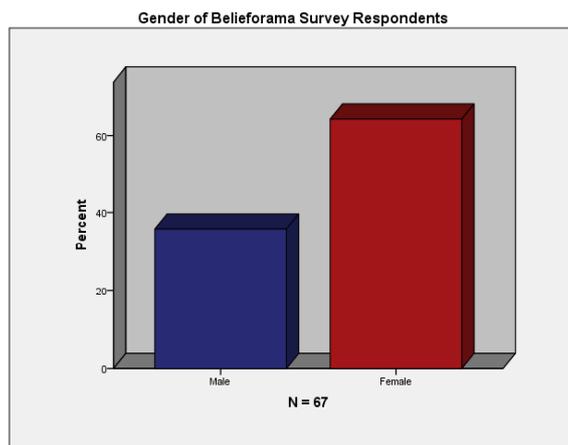
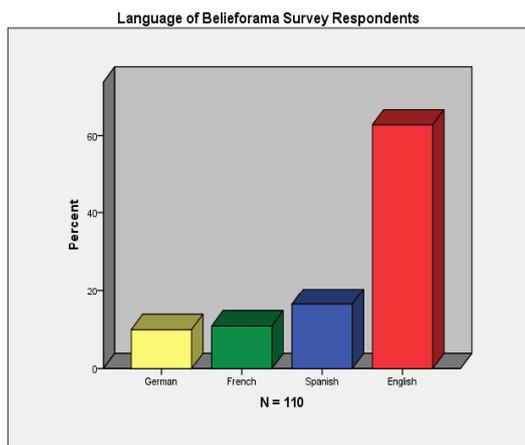
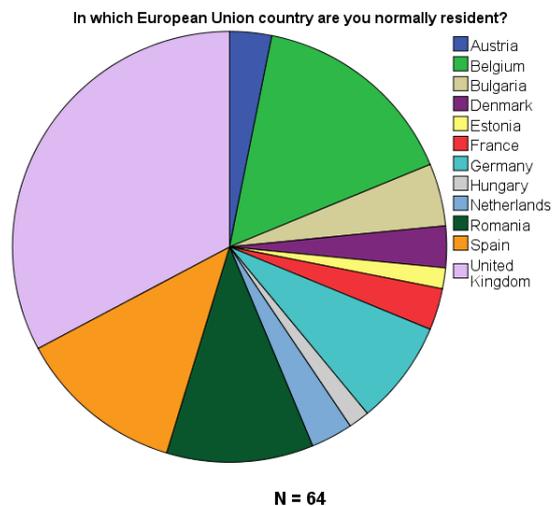
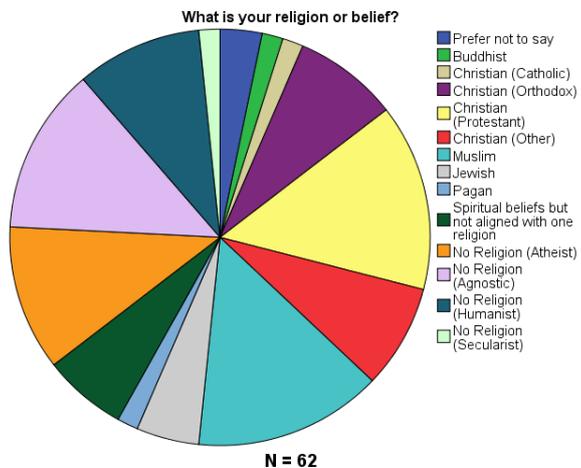
## **The Need to Recognize the Transnational Dimensions of Religions**

Religious communities and traditions need to pre-empt the dangers involved in becoming proxy sites for imported conflicts involving their co-religionists in other parts of the world. But because they are themselves part of wider global communities of faith, religions have the potential for positively contributing to a better understanding of role of the states and societies of their own countries within a globalising world.

## **The Imperative of Inter-Religious Dialogue**

Inter-religious dialogue is an imperative for the religious communities and for the states and societies of which they are a part. There is a need to continue the task of developing appropriate inter-faith structures at all levels within states and societies and in appropriate transnational and international structures.

Gender, language, religion or belief, and country of normal residence characteristics of respondents to the on-line survey for respondents who chose to answer these questions are set out in the charts below. In addition, Table 6 gives the declared reasons of respondents for participating in the Belieforama trainings:



<b>Table 6 : Main motivation for undertaking the training</b>	1st Ranked Choice Frequency	1st Ranked Choice Valid Percent	2nd Ranked Choice Frequency	2nd Ranked Choice Valid Percent	3rd Ranked Choice Frequency	3rd Ranked Choice Valid Percent
My own self-interest	42	39.6	15	16.5	15	16.5
My religion or belief commitment	9	8.5	22	24.2	22	24.2
My educational commitment	7	6.6	32	35.2	32	35.2
My political commitment	2	1.9	5	5.5	5	5.5
My professional commitment	45	42.5	11	12.1	11	12.1
Other	1	.9	6	6.6	6	6.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>100.00</b>





**BELIEFORAMA**  
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